On Islamism: Its Roots, Development and Future

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Islamism in its historical trajectory as well as its current standing and likely evolution. After pointing out to the problems stemming from the lack of an agreed-upon definition, the article presents a definition that constitutes the basis of analysis. It identifies three generations of Islamists and evaluates them by using three criteria: the framework of reference, political theme-tendency, and leadership profile. The article presents a self-criticism of the second generation Islamists, of which the author is also a member, and identifies areas in which the third generation Islamists have faced a serious test. The paper then turns to discuss the experience of the AK Party in Turkey, focusing on the debate on whether it is an Islamist movement. Next, the article seeks to drive an analytical distinction between Islamism and theology, before concluding the analysis with a critical engagement of an ongoing debate on whether Islamism is dead.

The ambiguity surrounding "Islamism," which will clearly have a large presence in regional and international agendas, arises from the difficulty in defining it. Because there is no agreed definition, many people or groups who are called "Islamists" are in fact hardly Islamists. For some, it is an "ideology" like liberalism, socialism, or nationalism. For others, it is a method of "politics or politicizing," which has been reduced to a certain interpretation or doctrine. There are also many people who see it as "religious manipulation in politics."

Even if it is not possible to completely eliminate the confusion, it is possible to define the general framework. In any case, a definition is needed to draw the boundaries of the concept and differentiate it from related concepts. My definition is as follows: Islamism is an intellectual, moral, societal, economic, political and inter-state movement that is based on Islam as the main reference

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point and aims for a "new" conception of the person, society, politics/state and thus a new model of social organization and universal Islamic Union. In other words, it is Islam coming to life, following its authority and ideals, with the intention of it to be established in every historical and societal condition in the world.

From the perspective of Islam, or a*l Din*, this defining framework is an invitation, cause, and prayer for every Muslim. In this sense, every Muslim is necessarily and naturally an Islamist. If they are not, this means that there is a problem in this Muslim's "perception of religion." A clear and undisputable divine authority has been sent to humanity to be implemented. While these authoritative rules can transform depending on the various problems they are addressing, they cannot be changed to serve against their purpose, nor can they be permanently disregarded.

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Religion, reduced merely to faith, morals, and worship, is not "the religion that Allah has chosen for us and brought to perfection" (5/Maide, 3) and is a completely different consideration, which essentially delegitimizes processes and punishments by either canceling them or rendering them ineffective. This is called the reduction of religion to "devoutness." Those who argue that religion cannot be brought into politics, economic life, inter-state relations, societal and public policies within the autonomous borders that they draw, or that religion cannot be taken as a reference point for the organization of areas of life, including those who want to reform religion, are those whom the Qur'an clearly describes as "people who accept part of the Sacred Book and reject the rest." The Qur'an also says "Or do you believe one part of the Sacred Book and reject the rest? The punishment for those in the mortal life is none other than to be unworthy; and on judgment day they will face the harshest of torment" (2/Bakara, 85). For this reason we can say that, like the sons of Israel, every Muslim who cannot risk "believing part of the Sacred Book and rejecting the rest" is necessarily and naturally an Islamist. Of course, they do not need to label themselves as "Islamist," but they must regard the relations of religion with life, humans, and society in this framework.

Islamism did not exist before the second half of the 19th century. It is natural that this was so, because the Ottoman Empire had Islam as its founding ideology and more or less the framework of its legitimacy. Despite its shortcomings, the Ottoman Empire was *Dar al-Islam*. One does not aspire to have what it already

has. The Ottoman Empire's military, economic, and political defeats to the West pushed the government elites to go on new pursuits and, parallel to Westernization, return to the main sources of Islam in order to reorganize. The groundwork for Islamism was prepared in this historic and societal context. In this sense:

1. Islamism is a modern movement, though at the same time it is a response and challenge to modernism. However, we should not be mistaken: a) Islamism is not a similar, offshoot, or legitimizing framework to the hegemonic rhetoric and systems with modern roots; b) it is not an intra-system opposition method such as Marxism-socialism; and c) it is not a rejectionist and integrist movement.

2. Islamism is the act of ascending to "the transcendent" from "the temporal." It is not a time/horizontal ascension as a result of the conditions that created it, but the moral/vertical ascension. The ascension of Islamism is the ascension to Allah under modern conditions. This is why it criticizes the era dominated by the Enlightenment and hegemonic modernism. Unlike them, its epistemology and policy is alive, efficient, and transformative.

3. Some of its legitimate versions are improvement, restoration, and renewal.

Three Generations of Islamists

There have been three generations of Islamists that have followed each other. First-generation Islamists were active in 1850-1924. Second-generation Islamists played a role from 1950-2000. The third generation of Islamists stepped onto the scene in the first years of the 21st century.

We need clear-cut criteria to be able to demonstrate each generation's relations with the other and their own internal ideas and political status. We can describe these criteria as framework of reference, political theme-tendency, and leadership profile. Thus the framework of reference for the first generation of Islamists between 1850 and 1924 was "the return to the Qur'an and tradition." As a result, first-generation Islamists brought the goals of "opening the door to *ijtihad*" and "awakening the spirit of *jihad*" to the forefront. From their point of view, the Ottoman Empire needed to reform to overcome its weakening position as a power at that time. To do so, the *ulama* needed to return to the Qur'an and

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tradition, and "do *ijtihad*." If there was no *ijtihad*, Western reforms would be adopted and the mental and legal foundation for secularism would be integrated into the society, which is exactly what happened. What they understood from "awakening the spirit of *jihad*" was the moral motivation to actively fight colonialism and to take steps for socio-economic development of their societies.

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The first generation of Islamist intellectuals, opinion leaders, and political spokesmen had the *ulama*-intellectual profile. Almost all of them were privy to Islamic sciences, Islamic contemplation, and Islamic history. Aside from this, they were Western educated. These people, who were more or less familiar with the West and the Islamic world, were both challenging the public sphere like the Umayyad-Abbasid *ulama*, and, distinct from the Ottoman official *ulama*, were able to protect their "civilian characters." This is why the Ottoman rulers and the official *ulama* hardly welcomed them.

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The first generation of Islamists fell victim of the Çanakkale war, and were then eliminated by Turkey's single-party rule in the 1920s and 1930s. After this radical dissolution, Islamism went through a major redefinition until the 1950s. The reference framework for second-generation Islamists who were on the stage from 1950 to 2000 was the "modern nation-state." Domestically, in order to overcome the legitimacy crisis, they gave great importance to the effort of Islamicizing Western socio-political structures. In the mental universe of the Islamists of this time, knowledge, education, social organizations, and the political and economic agenda were formed with a Western character. However, this was either wrapped in Islamic colors or added on invented ethical-moral/spiritual-metaphysical autonomous fields.

The main political theme for second-generation Islamists was to form an "Islamic state and Islamic society." During this era, the totalitarian and oppressive regimes of Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan managed their dissolution policies against Islam through a "centralized state." Arab and Islamic countries other than these three were actively fighting against colonialism, and what was to follow after being freed of colonialism is none other than the "new nation-state." In

this mental and practical conjuncture, the caliphate was terminated and Muslims, struggling under oppression and colonialism, started to Islamicize the modern nation-state. This is comparable to the first Christians who exalted Rome in their heads and embodied religion with the Vatican. The Islamists' leadership cadres at this time were oblivious to Islamic sciences, ignorant of Islamic contemplation, and had weak ties to Islamic history. But they were "intellectuals, academics, and politicians who aimed for a modern government" and held professions such as scientists, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and journalists, and went through Western education.

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The era of the third generation of Islamists in Turkey and Iran begins in 1997. In this year, on February 28, there was the post-modern coup in Turkey and Mohammad Khatami became the president in Iran. In Egypt, the third generation emerged at the Tahrir Square. In modern history, the main milestones between Turkey, Egypt, and Iran have been parallel and within a few years of intervals from each other.

It is natural, in fact essential, for the Islamist journey to change parallel to the historic and societal conditions as long as the reference framework, parameters, and main ideals remain the same. If a movement flows through history while staying loyal to its own sources and aim, it means that it is protecting its essence and is changing. It is worth questioning whether in the transition from the second generation to the third generation, the Islamists stayed fully loyal to sources and aims within their own tradition.

In this course, second-generation Islamists, which the author of this article is also a member as a witness and an actor, should have determined their following weaknesses, had they been able to hold themselves to serious self-criticism so that they would not have passed them on to the third generation. First, the second-generation Islamists had wrongfully inherited "enmity towards tradition" from the first generation. They did not make the necessary distinction between "the tradition of practices and authentic customs" that had renewed and continued true to its roots throughout history, and "traditionalism and integrism as its product." This resulted in their perception as *bidat* of traditional practices, and led to their radical inclinations from time to time. Western modernism maintains its Orientalist and hegemonic presence through "hostility towards tradition," which the earliest Islamists should have been aware of.

Second, the second-generation Islamists over politicized Islamism and failed to establish in their own locations the "civilian Islam-official Islam" balance that

has been more or less maintained throughout history. Third, Islamism, which became extremely politicized in its rhetoric, became a stranger to mysticism and religion's wisdom and lacked a moral dimension. For this reason, an adequate intellectual, philosophical and ideological response was not given to the Enlightenment philosophy. Politics was the highest priority, and this produced superficial, culturally lacking policies and politicians. Fifth, under the influence of Tanzimat and Turkish modernization, Islamic rhetoric was generally the monopoly of poets, storywriters and other literary persons. In the Abbasid model, there was no influence of arts, literature, and poetry on contact and interaction with the philosophy, knowledge and wisdom in the surrounding areas. Especially today, the biggest weakness and handicap of Turkish Islamism is that it is still in the hands of poets, writers and other literary persons who do not have a foundation in Islamic jurisprudence and philosophy instead of hard-core intellectuals and scholars.

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Islamists, who could not generate a lively debate on these topics, suddenly found the opportunity to take over government. This excessive demand for power led to their unquestioning acceptance of the modern and unequal structure of government. As a result, first, Islamism was unable to develop a real answer to modernism. It accepted the parameters of "individualism, secularism, and the nation-state" as given and settled with only making them more conservative. This mental weakness is the reason why Islamists became statist, nationalist, pro-*Reelpolitik*, and global cooperators after assuming government positions. Second, along with this, the ideal of returning to the Qur'an and the Sunna was dropped from the agenda. *Ijtihad* was skipped in favor of a roadmap to the EU and liberal policies were adopted. In light of the bad and artificial examples, "*jihad*" has almost become synonymous with "terror" and has been forgotten. Third, the relationship between the individual and family, Islamic community-society, and socio-political institutions has not been redefined in the framework of Islam.

These were "what should have been." What has actually happened is a different story: The unexpected success brought power, but because ideas regarding the nature and modern structures of power could not be developed accordingly, the principle of "power for the sake of power" was adopted. Global and

national actors happily interpreted this as "yesterday's Islamists have become today's conservatives." The intellectuals, who had the potential to be the makers of a new world, became the employees of the state and the analysts of global strategies. The civilian Islamic communities who are expected to socially and morally strengthen society became part of the struggle for power.

The Course of Islamism

The territories of Ottoman-Turkey, Egypt, Iran, and the Indian subcontinent have played determining roles on modern Islamism. Even if this may sound strange to most people, the deepest influence on Islamism was the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan whose foundation was the "first modern" incident that transformed the political thoughts and projects of Islamists in Egypt, Turkey, and Iran.

Those who exaggerate the sectarian differences in the context of modern history think as if Iran is in a different galaxy than other Islamic countries and disregard its shared experience with Ottoman-Turkish, Egyptian, and Indian Islam. One of the two important factors that have motivated Iran in modern times is undoubtedly Islam as a religion, and Islam's and Iran's confrontation with modernity and its attitude towards the modern world. During the 30-year period after the 1979 Islamic revolution, despite it being highly undesirable, Iranian Islamism has faced the handicap of "sectarian and national interests." It seems that Islamism, which was the inspiration and the reference framework of the revolution, will experience negative effects of these in the future.

Despite protecting its intellectual vibrancy and claim, the active political form of Turkish Islamism has turned into "conservatism," and because it gave in to liberal philosophy and the individualization of religious life it has got secularized and Protestantized. The Muslim Brotherhood's victory in the elections has brought Egypt back on the stage of history. The Ikhwan in Egypt will greatly affect and transform the Arab and Islamic world as almost every Arab country and Muslim region has affiliated parties and active movements connected with the Ikhwan. From this perspective, if Islam can continue its claim of being the ontological, epistemological, and the moral reference point in

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a socio-political framework, it will become the uniting force and inspiration for a new regional integration. But if Iran evolves towards Shiism, Egypt towards Sunnism, and Turkey towards secular conservatism, and national policies and national interest calculations shape Iran, Turkey and Egypt, these countries will drag the region into a new process of conflict.

In all these countries third-generation Islamists have found themselves facing a serious test in three areas of tension. First, in their struggle against the global hegemonic powers the support that the Islamists seek may compel them to engage with unwanted socio-cultural and political-military elements. Syria seems to be the most painful example of this. On the one hand there is a cost for Iran, which is supportive of the Assad regime, for cooperating with Russia and China.

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On the other hand there is the burden for the Syrian rebels of engaging with the US, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey. Second, as the Islamists look for internal alliances, how much and in what direction will the political alliances they establish with the liberal, leftist, and partially nationalist intellectuals and powers transform their paradigms, dogmas, societal and political thoughts? Turkey is the most concrete—and in places most tragic—example of this experience. Egypt will also have this problem in the future. Thirdly, there is the issue of which political and societal thoughts the Muslims will base their internal relations on.

Islamists' "Religion", Conservatives' "Devoutness"

The "devoutness" discussed here is not the government institution of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. It is the substitution and compensation mechanism that one uses to make up for his spiritual sentiments, excitements, and exuberance, but more so for the guilt of his crimes and sins; the endless show of rituals and ceremonies isolated from concrete judgments. If "devoutness" occurs in the form of exaggerated rhetoric and rituals among Muslims, that means "religion" has weakened there. Humans yearn to compensate for the spiritual emptiness arising from the ineffectiveness of religious authority and rules with devoutness. Of course, it is not very easy to distinguish religion and devoutness. But devoutness emerges in the emptiness created by material-concrete life practices that are fundamentally hampered and do not have protective functions. There is another reason that devoutness is the subject of mass demonstration and consumption:

Photo: REUTERS, Ümit Bektaş

Women walk past a mosque in Ankara.

We live in the era of mass media and the consumption culture, which empties and turns everything into a show through globalization, and the liberal market, which through its fake sanctity, transforms religious life into devoutness.

What I mean here by "religion" is the agenda of Islam's procedures and the rules related to justice, freedom, and for a superior moral life. For example, as a rule, exploitation, laborless profits, bribery and corruption are sins. In a country in which these have become the path for acquiring wealth and status, everyone focuses on their own "personal, familial, class or national interest" as a "right", and fairness is disregarded in the distribution of capital and status. Those who succeed distribute plentiful charity and go on pilgrimage every year in order to ease their conscience. Sacred nights, holy days, or celebrated birthdays which in reality have no authenticity are invented, and rituals which have no basis in the Qur'an or Sunna are carried to television screens and football stadiums, accompanied by exaggerated performances as if they were worship. In short, rituals take the place of religious rules. The inclination of the Muslim masses towards devoutness both replaces "religion" with "devoutness", and consoles the feeling of sin, thus allows for the liberal market to operate. In this system, consciences, governments, and global capitalism are content because devoutness has concealed religion.

Is the AK Party Islamist?

We must emphasize one point: Islamists who take their religion seriously and look at the world through the perspective of Islam owe gratitude to the founders and theorists of the AK Party. When they founded the party, they declared "We have changed, we are not Islamists, we will not do politics based on religion; money and the economy is not related to religion; we will follow the roadmap of the EU and IMF." They had made this commitment internally to military-civilian bureaucrats, big capital, and externally to global powers. Their theorists stated that they had grounded the framework of their newly chosen "conservative democracy" on Anglo-Saxon and American theorists, and were influenced by nationalist-conservative authors such as Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, Nurettin Topçu, Peyami Safa, and Ali Fuad Başgil.[1] This declaration meant the abandonment of the historic and modern Islamic/Islamist reference framework dating back to the four imams, and represented by Ghazali, Mohammad Iqbal, Mehmet Akif, Maududi, and Sayyid Qutb.

It was good that they declared this. But those who have criticized the "conservative AK Party" criticized the party's Islamism. This was interesting because the party itself had rejected it being Islamist for whatever reason. In other words, the AK Party is criticized on the basis of a religious foundation that the party did not take as a reference. This is a gross injustice to both the AK Party and Islamism, and it is a "great sin" against Islam. Their criticism against the AK Party—for example, that it is not able to solve the Kurdish problem, does not allow Alevi cemevis, does not return the confiscated properties of non-Muslims' foundations and does not open their schools, interrupts the reforms that would dissolve the tutelage regime, has brought Turkey to a

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tragic point in the Middle East and on Syria, is feeding the wealthy classes and weakening the middle class with its economic policies, and is feeding the lower classes with donations that it distributes, is dissolving society and the family, has gotten caught up in arrogance, or is stopping television programs with just one phone call—is not because "it takes religion as a reference or is an Islamist" but, on the contrary, it is because religion is not taken as a reference and because it is "conservative and nationalist-statist." The attempt to take refuge in devoutness by emphasizing religious symbols is the political method of rightist-conservative-nationalism. This has nothing to do with religion or Islamism.

Mümtaz'er Türköne[2] is not interested in this side of the issue. In fact, he tries to conceal this to a certain degree and, if possible, tries to send the single original movement from these lands to a museum. Today the strongest intellectual movement is Islamism. There is no one who says differently among Islamist intellectuals. Hayrettin Karaman, Abdurrahman Arslan, Mustafa İslamoğlu, Akif Emre, Yusuf Kaplan, Müfit Yüksel, Ömer Lekesiz and tens of other distinguished intellectuals. These are not names for a museum, they have not been the intellectuals of the state, and they are not strategists. They are its guiding stars.

The ease of evolving their beliefs into "conservative-democracy" for old Islamists is their own choice and problem. Our debt of gratitude to them is because they said "Our efforts are to become the government,

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we decided that this will not be achieved through Islamism, we will not take Islam as a reference." My question to Mümtaz'er Türköne is the following: Why are you holding the conservative AK Party government, which has rejected Islamism, responsible for being Islamist? All the positives in the AK Party are being attributed to liberalism and conservatism, while all the negatives are being attributed to Islamism. This is not fair. Our life is our preferences; we are all products of our choices. They were "once upon a time Islamists," they changed their minds and became the government. Why would we attribute to Islam and Islamism what they do? Does the fact that they changed orientations indicate that Islamism is over? Can this conclusion be drawn? Türköne's criticisms relieve those who avoid facing the real problems of Islam and society. They are able to say "So Islamic propositions had no chance of being applied, it was good once upon a time, that time has ended. How good! We abandoned it and became the government."

In the chronology of the three generations, there are different types of Islamism. In an interview that the magazine *Aksiyon* did with me in 1998, I said that "the Islamic movement does not demand government."[3] The topic was portrayed as if "Islamism is death." Hayrettin Karaman had corrected this, pointing out that "One Islamism ends and another begins."[4] Undoubtedly, he was right. My intention was not to declare the end of Islamism, but to indicate that, according to my own formulation, the Islamic movement which was an important characteristic of second-generation Islamism had run its course and from now on

"the first generation's effort to save the state" or "the second generation's effort to establish a state" must leave its place to third-generation Islamists' efforts to try to transform the concept of the state in a global and societal conjuncture in reference to Islam.

Is Islamism a Theology or Ideology?

Islamism is not a "theology" (divinity) because it is not preoccupied with that which is above human conception. Since "the nature of God" is not the subject of research in Islam, it is not the "knowledge of god (theology)" in this sense. Mümtaz'er Türköne asks "Why is the label of 'Muslim' not enough for Islamists? Because religion is put in a completely different mold in the questions of the modern world and its speculations. An 'ism' emerges which does not challenge other religions but worldly ideologies. Instead of leaving the calculations for eternity, Islamists try to establish heaven in this life."[5]

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It is clear that the mind that contemplates this question gives legitimacy to "secularism that takes religion out" or regards the field of "non-religious secular" that has become synonymous with the church. This is a mistake that the Qur'an tries to correct. "That which is secular" is not possible in Islam. But despite this, if people are creating their own fields that are outside of divine will and religious organization and are establishing the world on these fields, they are doing this despite Allah. This is the main message of all prophets.

Islam is not concerned with "theology", nor with the debates around "religiosity or devoutness" which is not in touch with religion. Islam for example calls upon us to deal with justice, freedom, exploitation, tyranny, and poverty. Türköne tells us to deal with the theology of religions, to abandon "religious judgments", and instead take up "religiosity or devoutness."

Third-generation Islamists should stay away from "theology"-divinity and should revive the Word of Islam to reinterpret this world and explain it. Of course, Islamists do not experience divine revelations. They try to understand time and interpret the founding principles and declarations determined through the revelation, and try to respond to historical and societal situations. The relationship of Islamists with revelation is, in the light of "legible or illegible revelation," the effort of searching for solutions to the problems of the society and the world they live in using the gift of thought and the authority to think. Those

who use their minds through the light of revelation are those who are able to take advantage of revelation and the blessings of the mind.

When looked at through this perspective, Islamism—depending on its definition and especially the form of its relationship to politics—is an ideology. Yasin Aktay's definition of politics as "taking a side for an idea" beyond daily hustles is accurate.[6] In this sense, Islam's first political division was Shiism, which emerged as support for Ali, one of the four imams after the prophet Mohammed. The fact that the various sects of Islam were at the same time party to a particular political choice or political idea and group shows the importance of politics in history. We can consider ideology as a political preference and an expression of the party that was derived from a reasoning process and comparison. Those who think "ideologies" are dead are grossly mistaken. In reality, the ideology that declares the death of all ideologies (other than itself) is liberalism. With this declaration of death, it has actually turned into an ideology whose spirit is dogmatism.

"Ideology" can be defined as follows: In accordance with its Greek derivative, "ideology" is merely the "knowledge of idea." While talking about an ideology from the Islamic perspective, this can only be the opposite, "the idea of knowledge and news." Our ideology is the intellectual, social, and political forms of the human *ijtihad*, commentary, interpretation, and explanation of the knowledge and news revealed to us through revelation. If we are to name it with concepts using the method of laws, the ideological authoritative value of an Islamist's ideology consists of "human *ijtihad*." But this is not the "process of the critical mind" of Kantian mentality which processes revelation through its individual filter and takes what is convenient and leaves the rest. The activity which happens in Islamic epistemology is the mind's perception, understanding, and interpretation of the world through the light of revelation. There is no "relativism" in this *ijtihad* effort. Each Islamist's knowledge and ideas are not absolute but suppositional by nature. There is a framework and immovable limits (*Hududullah*) that encompasses Muslims from the Maghreb to Indonesia, and Yemen to Crimea. *Ijtihad* and interpretations do not dissolve the main

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framework or laws. The truth is not destroyed in this process, nor is there room for the postmodern "anything goes" or liberal "personal preference or depending on the individual mind." What "determines (determinative factor)" is the Qur'an and Sunna (laws), and what "affects (influential factor)" is historical and societal conditions, flow of time, and the changing character of rules parallel to the nature of the problems. When Islamists underline the constant of "return

to Qur'an and the Sunna," they copy Nesefi's principle of "*Hakaiku'l eshya-i sabitetun*: the truth of the being is consistent" and indicate the solidity of laws.

Islamism is pluralistic within itself. Mental and political deviations such as totalitarianism, monarchy, dogmatism, and absolutism belong to the West. These doctrines and systems are ways of challenging the Truth; they are alien to the heritage of Islam. Other than paradigms and methods like historicism, hermeneuticsism, or modernism, it is natural for there to be a variety of different Islamisms in accordance with their own actual and authentic methods. It is richness. Islamism is "vertically" pluralistic in the historical sense, just like it is "horizontally" pluralistic, as in pluralistic in the contemporary sense, and is open to differences. Abu Hanifa's attitude towards political government is not the same as his student, Abu Youssef's.

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Ehl-Ray and Ehl-Hadith are the same. I think this is the judgment of the difference between Salafis and Sufis as well. Coming to modern times, just as the differences between Jamal al-Din Afghani and Mohammad Abduh, Sayyid Qutb and Malek Bennabi, Nedvi and Maududi are legitimate, so are those between the National View, Naksibendi, Nurcu and Suleymanci Islamic interpretations in the context of Turkey. Each one is like a stream that joins the large river of Islam. One ends, another begins, but those who carry the claim, invitation, cause and prayer of Islam continue to flow through history.

Defending Islam and Islamists

It is wrong to confine Islamism only to "that which is political" or "official Islamism"; there is also a version of "civilian Islam."[7] All Islamist versions have sub-versions, theories, and many Islamist groups and movements that defend these theories.

In reality, there is no difference in the nature of what the Muslim scholars and scientists who are sufficiently aware of their historical and societal conditions are trying to do from the work of the scholars of the past who founded important schools of thought. Islamists of modern times are trying to do the same things that Imam Ash'ari, Imam Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, Imam Rabbani and others wanted to do in the past. Islamists do not define themselves in terms

of "anti-Westernism." They defend their ideological, social, and moral theories by leaning on their own authentic traditions while defending themselves against the challenges and attacks. If Ash'ari and Ghazali were alive today, they would be dealing with the Enlightenment philosophy and the movements that originated from it, such as secularism, positivism, materialism, feminism, nationalism, socialism-Marxism, capitalism, and liberalism. What Ash'ari was trying to do with "*Maqalat*" and Ghazali with "*Maqasid*" was to defend Islamism against attacks directed towards the faith. Both of them and their followers were standing up to philosophical and theological influences coming from the external world—India, Iran, Babel, Egypt, and Greek—while trying to include into the general circle drawn by the Qur'an and Sunna those who defended these non-Islamic faiths and ideas under the form of Islam, or defending against those who under the guise of religion and sect were trying to destroy the Islamic Sharia and the unity of Muslims. Ash'ari and Ghazali were making this important effort during a time when Muslims were militarily, economically, politically and culturally dominant. We, on the other hand, have been defeated for the past 300 years. It must be pointed out that our defeat is military, not ideological-intellectual or theological-philosophical. If some Islamists have ideologically entered the psychology of defeat like the Westerners—such as the liberals, leftists, and nationalists—this shows that they have, like others, contracted the disease Ibn Haldun describes as "the losers copying the victorious." Muslim ideologues, scholars, and opinion leaders of this mind may be quickly cured if they return to the origins, roots, and rich historic heritage of their religion. But if they open Islam—in their own minds—to liberalism, socialism, nationalism, and feminism, there is no cure to this.

This shows us that the undeserved criticism of Islamists being "reactionaries" must be revised. Of course, Muslims will react to military, political, and economic exploitation and invasion, and they will do *jihad* and defend *Dar al-Islam*. But this does not mean that they have been ideologically defeated or that they envision their challenges as a "reaction to the West." Just as the West is harming itself by practicing Orientalism and defining itself in terms of "anti-Easternism," Muslims will harm themselves if they define themselves in terms of "anti-Westernism" and practice Occidentalism. Mümtaz'er Türköne is making two mistakes when he tells us that "the West that you defined yourself in opposition to has changed."

Firstly, we need to remember that "The West is the West," and it has not changed. The West either emerges from "the darkness of Enlightenment" and enters the light of the authentic revelation and subjects its historic-philosophical heritage to new criteria, or it continues its destructive, nihilistic, colonialist and conflicting attitude. If the West had changed, at the very least it would not

have invaded Islamic lands and inflicted so much pain on Muslims. Not only is the West attacking militarily and plundering resources, but it also wants us to "imprison out religion to the private space, marginalize, and relativize it." What will be left of this type of religion would be one that does not stand up to tyranny, injustice, and exploitation, and one that cooperates with the global hegemony, an abstract faith without Sharia or *jihad*.

Second, the psychological foundation of accusing Islamists of abstract "anti-Westernism" arises from the need to bring nationalism, liberalism, and leftist-socialism to the level of universal truths or theories. Undoubtedly, information, scientific projects, human experiences, and in the interactive relations between these, not everything is absolutely black or white; there are gray areas in between. But one must be very careful of the gray areas between the faiths which are in the determinative position of the foundation: the opposition and conflict between monotheism-polytheism, faith-blasphemy, truth-superstition, justice-tyranny, beauty-ugliness, and morality-degeneration will not disappear from the first human to the last.

It is true that the Muslims are angry at the West for such reasons as the military defeats, extended invasions, colonialism, alienation, and global demonization throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. It is also true that one can come across traces of intolerance, excommunication, and alienation among the second generation of Islamists to the extent that they are fed by the West's ideas and cultural resources. But this is a disease that is easy to cure. The cure is in returning to the Qur'an and Sunna, and by following the methods of important historical figures such as Ash'ari and Ghazali. The Qur'an gives us two main parameters:

> "Guidance is from Allah, most people will not come to faith, will not think of it, and will not be thankful; in that case just remind them, inform them; do not fret that most people are not in guidance."
> "In any differences you may have over ideas, creed, politics, and social matters, Allah will make the (most correct and final) judgment in the afterlife. Continue your communication with kind words, advice, and wisdom, your competition in kindness."

These cautions will keep Islamists away from totalitarianism and "oppressive guidance."

When looked at from this perspective, it should not bother one that someone labels themselves an "Islamist". One should not take a brush and paint the face of Islamists black[8] and should not provoke hypocrisy. For example, if someone who is strongly against the term "Islam-ist" because of the suffix "ist"

does not react the same way when called a "Nurcu (Nurist), nationalist, rightist", this person should reconsider his internal consistency. Hayrettin Karaman says that "Each Muslim is simultaneously an Islamist who is 'a member of the Islamic cause.' The 'Islamist plan, program, method, and behavior' may change depending on the current conditions without deviating from its goal, but the different Islamic groups are brothers. Differences in ijtihad do not harm brotherhood, it should not."[9] And "I do not call one who tries to live 'Islamically' on his own or does not even try to live Islam in his family an 'Islamist.' I call one who starts from who is closest to him to who is farthest from him, one who makes it his cause to protect true Islam from deteriorating or descending from life, and one who makes material and spiritual sacrifices in pursuit of this cause, an Islamist."[10]

> Global powers who have a tight grip on the Islamic world through smear campaigns, namely the US and Europe, alienate Islamist movements if they cannot tame them and declare them "terrorists"

Is Islamism Dead?

A significant portion of those who make evaluations not based on concrete data claim that "Islamism is dead." They are in reality the ones who want to say "it should die." I call this the exploitation of information through the falsification of incidents. Social scientists do this often. While they appear to be "claiming what is happening," in reality they are referencing "what should happen." But they will not admit that they are doing this, because if this is revealed it would damage their academic and scientific careers. The distortions and exploitation of this method are in every information-producing process related to modern states and governments as a modern government would not be possible without universities and academic projects.

Let us take a closer look: Those who want Islamism to end would like to leave liberal capitalism or socialism, if it can be revived, in charge. Liberalism, which challenges the nation-state and collectivism, and socialism, which challenges the brutal market, are in an "intra-system conflict." There cannot be a threat to the system from within itself. The threat comes from opposition bringing criticism from other paradigms.

Global powers who have a tight grip on the Islamic world through smear campaigns, namely the US and Europe, alienate Islamist movements if they cannot tame them and declare them "terrorists." And this is natural, as Muslim communities will only submit if they have no other choice. This translates to the

reduction of Islam to rules compatible with the West, integration into the global economy, a promotion of individual freedoms that destroy moral life, and the degradation of religion to personal choice and its limitation by devoutness, to feminism, which is the ideology of shrew attacks, and the securing of tolerance and legitimacy towards Israel's oppression. Another group of those who say that

Islamism will continue to exist as long as "modernism, postmodernism, and hypermodernism" exist, since this is what its nature requires

"Islamism is over" are those who quickly resigned from Islamism recently when they saw that they had a chance to create a government. They are the ones who watch the situation and bet on the winning horse in each era. The reason for this resignation is not *Reelpolitik* or an ideal political

Islamism that challenges social structures, but that they fail the test of human being with wealth and status (*jah-u mal*).[11] Those who previously exploited religion and Islamism are now uneasy that this page is being reopened.

Conclusion: Beyond Modernism

Manuel Castelles, who was the *Guardian*'s "extraordinary thinker of the era" in 1998 and who was declared by the American *Wall Street Journal* to be "the first big philosopher of cyberspace," said that Islamist movements who take their references from Islam "do not call us to a past project; to the contrary, indicate a hypermodern, supra-modernist world."
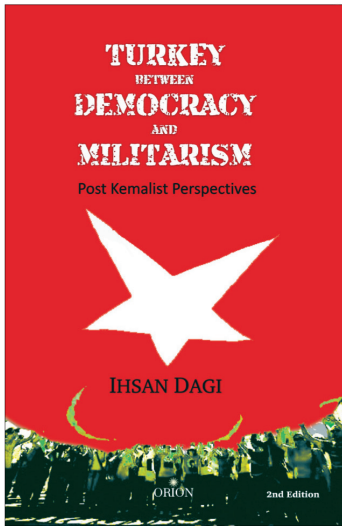
We should take these words as "evaluation of conditions." If we generally accept that Islamism was born in the 19th century "in modern conditions as a response to modernism," Islamism will continue to exist as long as "modernism, postmodernism, and hypermodernism" exist, since this is what its nature requires. And if there is to be a response to the hypermodern situation, the answer will only come from Islamists. It is wrong to define this as the attempt of the Muslims to construct an "other" and reactionism. In reality, the "reactionist" argument is not very meaningful. All prophets who preach monotheism, justice, and a high moral life have reacted to polytheism, tyranny, and moral degradation, and have informed that in the event that the "Truth" is established, superstition will disappear.

The attacks on the modern world are not just limited to causing inequality, injustice, mass poverty, conflict, and the damaging of material nature and natural life. They want to relativize and marginalize religion and to degrade it to individual mind and conscience. Muslims who believe in the oneness of Truth and that there are many paths to the One, *al Din,* not secularism, representing

the mainstream, and in the authority of universal criteria and judgment over individual mind and conscience will continue to confront modernism. This has been the occupation and path of all Muslim scholars and *mujtahid* who are *mujaddid*, reformist, and revivalist, from Ash'ari to Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah to Ibn Arabi, Mullah Sadrah to Shah Veliyollah and to Said Nursi.

Endnotes

1. Yalçın Akdoğan, *Muhafazakar Demokrasi* (Ankara: AK Party Publishing, 2003), p. 25.

2. Mümtazer Türköne, "*Islamcılığa ne oldu?*", *Zaman*, July 24, 2012.

3. Ali Bulaç, "Dinin Devlet Talebi Yok," *Aksiyon*, No. 205 (November 7-13, 1998), p. 29.

4. Hayrettin Karaman, "İslamcılarda İctihad ve Yöntem Farklılıkları," *Yeni Şafak*, June 21, 2012.

5. Türköne, "What Happened to Islamism?"

6. Quoted in Ali Bulaç, "İslamcılık ve İdeoloji," *Zaman*, August 9, 2012.

7. Ali Bulaç, *Nuh'un Gemisine Binmek* (Istanbul: İz Publishing, 4th Edition, 2012), part 1.

8. Uğur Kömeçoğlu, "Geçici Dönemsel Bir İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılık: Üç Nesil Hipotezi," *Zaman*, August 17, 2012.

9. Hayrettin Karaman, "İslamcılarda İctihad ve Yöntem Farklılıkları," *Yeni Şafak*, June 21, 2012.

10. Hayrettin Karaman, "İsme Değil Maksada Bakalım," *Yeni Şafak*, August 16, 2012.

11. See the dramatic scenes described in verses: 18/Kehf, 32-34; 41/Fussilet,50; 37/Saffat, 51-61.

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