

**WORKSHOP 5  
THE NEW "OTHER EUROPE": PROSPECTS AND LIMITS OF DEMOCRACY  
OUTSIDE THE EU**

**Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism and the Transformation of Islamic Discourse  
DRAFT - Not for quotation**

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One of the distinguishing features of the contemporary study of Islam has been its essentialization, i.e., Muslims have been seen as bearing certain attributes such as the central role of the status of the warrior, contempt for the worldly, enduring enmity for non-Muslims and the inability to establish permanent organization or to enter modernity. The cliché is widespread and sophisticated sociologist such as Max Weber have fastened on the tribal, war-making élan of the Arabs as the core of Islam. This approach of Weber is particularly interesting because it also identifies the behavior of Muslims with that of Arabs, a second aspect of essentialization. In fact, at least three poles of Islamic culture have been identified: the Perso-Islamic, the Arab and the Ottoman, each one of these aspects of Islam bear the stamp of their preceding pre-Islamic societies. For the Ottoman this specificity is related to their unique ability of political organization. No other Islamic political entity ever approximated the sophistication of the Ottoman state machine.

What I propose, echoing the title of a book on the U.S. by Seymour Martin Lipset, is that Turkey is marked by an Islamic "exceptionalism", a way in which the state and religion have worked in tandem for centuries.<sup>1</sup> Exceptionalism may even go so far as to explain the rise of the present majority party in the Turkish Parliament, the AK Party.

I see three stages in the interaction that have contributed to Turkish exceptionalism. First, the praxis of the Ottoman pre-bureaucratic ruling class, what we may call its operational code (algorithm), and its extension into the Turkish Republic. Second, the rupture caused by the encounter, during the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries of Ottoman state praxis with the quite different operational code that of the *Nakşibendi* brotherhood, a so-called "Sufi," but in reality, politicized religious order. Third, the gradual redrawing of the operational code of the *Nakşibendis*, during the Republican era of Turkish history. This subsumed the *Nakşibendi* encouragement of participation in political life through the creation of a political party of its followers, and the AK Parti itself may be seen as the product of this *Nakşibendi* redrawing and of its appropriation of the Turkish Republican democratic version of the praxis of the Ottoman state.

**Emergent Secularism and Modern Turkey**

Both Turks and other historians writing about Turkey have, in their work on modern Turkey focused on the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 as the origin of the secular ideology of the Republican regime.<sup>2</sup> The contribution of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to the secular discourse has been a second focus characterizing studies of Turkish modernity. This origin and link cannot be disputed. In fact, however, my first argument here will be that Turkish Republican secularism can only be understood as an end-point of a much longer

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<sup>1</sup> Hasan al-Turabi state that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Sudan the only legitimacy against the state was to claim to be a *mahdi*. In the Ottoman Empire persons claiming "mahdihood" were either exiled to distant regions or summarily executed. "Hasan al-Turabi" in *Makers of Contemporary Islam* ed. by John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> See Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

historical process. Neither Turkish secularism per se, nor its relation with Islam, nor the position taken by current government of Turkey can be understood without recapturing this historical process. Modern Republican Turkish secularism should be seen as an emergent, the result of a set of interactive forces that antedated the foundation of the Republic. The sometimes perplexing complexity of Turkish Republican secularism also fits into such an explanation. What we have to remember is first, that the Ottoman ruling elite was conscious that it ruled over a state, and second that the Muslim religious hierarchy, the *ulema*, the Doctors of Islamic Law were integrated into that state in ways that existed nowhere else in the Islamic world.<sup>3</sup> One of the ways of pinpointing the first of these characteristics would be to set it in a comparative frame. Here the work of S. N. Eisenstadt on the structure of Empires is relevant. In his epoch making *The Political Systems of Empires*<sup>4</sup> Eisenstadt emphasized the difficulties encountered by the central administration of empires in establishing control over the periphery. Some of such failings of the center of the state certainly can be found in the Ottoman Empire. But Ottoman administration in tandem with its military and judicial institutions together established a sophisticated structure with considerable measure of control over what we may broadly describe as the periphery.<sup>5</sup> While the most common source for the compensation of prayer leaders in Islam had been pious foundations that had a relatively independent administration, the Ottomans created a top layer of religious personnel (the *Ilmiyye*) that were compensated by prebends controlled by a central bureaucratic office. This interlinking of religious personnel with the state establishment resulted in the minimization of the conflictual potential between otherworldly values and the affairs of this world. Or more, it allowed both orders, the bureaucratic and the religious to share a discourse giving priority to the state. To my students I usually illustrate this Ottoman feature with the simplified image that the Ottomans placed the state one millimeter ahead of Islam. The foundation for this theme I use may be retrieved from the latest work of Patricia Crone on medieval Islam. I have written about the Ottoman legitimation of the state elsewhere and I shall not go into it here. But the contemporary practice of the Directorate General of Religious Affairs of the Turkish Republic, an organ linked to the office of the Prime Minister distributing identical sermons to all Turkish mosques to be used on Friday prayers by preachers may be one way in which we may begin to remember ways in which Islam was earlier linked with the state in the Ottoman Empire. More appropriate even is the most interesting contemporary undertaking by the Directorate of Religious Affairs to organize a program among Turks in Germany that can only be described as that of social work. The contrasting picture is that of similar services been taken over Islamic brotherhood in Egypt with its somewhat superficial state practice. Despite the pretensions of ecumenism, Ottoman ecumenism had limitations that underlined the characteristics of the Ottoman state. The fact that Ottoman judges supposedly well versed in Arabic as carriers of the *Şariat* used Arabic translators when they were posted to Arab lands in the Ottoman Empire give us glimpse of an early Ottoman “Turkification.” In short, the Ottoman state carried Central Asian pre-Islamic features. This aspect of Ottoman Islam as well as its compromise with “heathen” practices was often criticized by Arabs who accused “Tartars” of being somewhat insensitive Muslims, a compliment Ottoman-Turk returned considering the Arabs nomads, unable to organize into a stable collectivity.

An aspect what I have called the Ottoman ruling class was its origin in the chanceries of the palace. Ottoman sultans and the palace as such had a decreasing role in the administration of the Empire from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards and chancery officials filled this gap.<sup>6</sup>

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman central state apparatus that had already acquired considerable autonomy, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it went on to more clearly degrade the Sultanic function. From the 1840's onwards bureaucrats engineered a wholesale reform of Ottoman

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<sup>3</sup> See Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, trans. Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973.

<sup>4</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires*, New York, Free Press, (1963) 1969.

<sup>5</sup> Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, pp. 318-324.

<sup>6</sup> See my *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962.

institutions, the *Tanzimat*, establishing a framework for a relatively secular education, a new administrative corps and secular courts that sharply diminished the role of the *ulema*. Structural reform carried on the model of Western Europe and with much input from the Austro-German cameralists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century became the central motor of the Ottoman Empire in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The re-building of the apparatus of the state became so much an autonomous force that, as recent history has demonstrated, even the “red Sultan” Abdulhamid II (r. 1876-1909), conservative as he was, had to bow to the requirements of this dynamic.<sup>7</sup> The somewhat shapeless “pan-Islamic” policy of the Sultan shows the same pragmatic Ottoman state-centered concerns. In fact, it is possible to see the Hamidian era as one when a peculiar mix of administrative reform as well as the growth of a civil sphere elaborated the ground for an Ottoman citizenship among Ottomans and prepared the foundation for later Turkish nationalists.

By the 1880’s a new generation formed in the new *Tanzimat* schools focused for the first time on the importance of Islam as a world religion in the modern world. The relevance of this threshold is that the discussion of religious issues was seized from the somewhat hapless *ulema* who had been downgraded by the reform policy. A new set of intellectuals took over, religious issues became what may be termed “civil” issues. Even the codifier of the *Şeriat*, Cevdet Paşa, could be seen as the secret agent of the reformist bureaucracy.

Once again, the central concern of this new intelligentsia’s response to the news of European industrialization, the spread into Turkey of evolutionary theories and the echo of materialism resulted in the centrality of a new issue, i.e., what to do with Islam. In other words how to deal with Islam in a setting where the hegemonic thrust of progress had to be tackled. To save the faith of the individual believer when Islam was under attack was the concern of only a minority of thinkers.<sup>8</sup> The emerging secular intelligentsia also believed that Ottoman Islamic institutions had decayed beyond repair. In short, the organic link between *ulema* and their sharing of a discourse of the state remained a weak residual component of socio-political power. A further development of the concern for Islam and a new shape assumed by these discussions after 1908 was to relate Islam as a belief to the social structure of the Ottoman Empire. Durkheimian ideas took over and Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), a Young Turk with a legitimate history of opposition to Sultan Abdulhamid, used these to elaborate a new Durkheimian theory. Interestingly, what Ziya Gökalp<sup>9</sup> did, was grounding a theory that was essentially a theory of society, even though he used all of the classical concepts of Islam as the components of his social project. According to him, the *umma*, the Islamic community, has been gradually transformed and displaced by the “idée force” of nationality. What remained was a diminished area of faith that could not anymore claim transnational foundations. Faith was to continue as practiced within the frame of nationality without claiming to be a bond for all Muslims. Finally, links with all men rather than Muslims was what the internationalism of the new civilization demanded. Even stronger blow to the Islamic idea of the *umma* as the community of all believers was the argument developed at length by Seyyit Bey. Seyyit Bey, a man trained in the *medrese*, is remembered today by his lengthy argument (1924) in the Grand National Assembly of the emerging new Turkish state that the Caliphate, a title that Ottoman Sultans had claimed for themselves, was a purely political position.<sup>10</sup> Seyyit Bey’s speech met by acclamations, initiated the abolition of the Caliphate the very same day. Students of Turkey will recognize in Ziya Gökalp and Seyyit Bey some of the origins of the secularism of the Turkish Republic.

### ***Nakşibendi* Revival**

But then what of the real revival of religion in Turkey since the 1950’s? Where did that movement originate if its support by Ottoman intellectuals had disappeared by 1924? That revival can only be understood placed in the context of the history of the *Nakşibendi*

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<sup>7</sup> François Georgeon, *Abdülhamid II : Le Sultan Calife (1876-1909)*, Paris: Fayard, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> See the thinkers gathered by İsmail Kara, *Türkiye’de İslamcılık Düşüncesi: Metinler, Kişiler, v. I*, İstanbul: Risale, 1986.

<sup>9</sup> *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays of Ziya Gökalp*, trans. and ed. by Niyazi Bekes, London: Allen and Unwin, 1959.

<sup>10</sup> İsmail Kara, *Türkiye’de İslamcılık Düşüncesi: Metinler, Kişiler, v. I*, İstanbul: Risale, 1986, pp. 115-236.

“Sufi” brotherhood in the Ottoman Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its importance for my central theme is that the *Nakşibendi* revival has direct links with the emergence of the AK Parti, the political party of the government in power today.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century Anatolian revivalism of the *Nakşibendi* order represents a clear and unequivocal rupture with the earlier element of Ottoman history I have attempted to describe up to this point. The clearest sign of this rupture is the contrast between the praxis of the order and the long lasting Ottoman state praxis I have attempted to highlight. The praxis of the *Nakşibendi*, like that of all brotherhoods, had and has been the construction of networks, networks of students, followers and clients. By contrast, the operational code I have described as that of Ottoman statesmen is one that may be broadly characterized as institution-building. That earlier Ottoman practice facilitated the opening of a sphere of this worldly citizenship, a type of linkage between humans that *transcended* religious bonds. On the other hand, network organizing by brotherhoods facilitated the use of religion as a linkage. Here, religion was the lever that translated organizations into influence. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century structural innovations such as the transformation of the leader of the order into a political leader through various psychological and organizational devices politicized the “Sufi” bond itself.

Students of Turkish history have only considered the *Nakşibendi* influence as a fluctuating element of discord and dislocation, with its ups and downs but certainly not a long-lasting structuring force. Recent studies, however, increasingly shows the enormously important role of the revivalist branch of the *Nakşibendi* in 19<sup>th</sup> century Anatolia.<sup>11</sup> I shall omit the details of this growth of influence and make the next point that through the 19<sup>th</sup> century clear opposition to the reformist movement, once it had assumed its clear delineation after 1856, was carried out by the *Nakşibendi*.

This position towards reform and the demand for a return to religious law as the foundation of Turkish society may be followed in 20<sup>th</sup> century *Nakşibendi* rebellions. These have inspired a fear among intellectuals that has not yet disappeared. Relevant aspects of this *Nakşibendi* opposition are the rebellion of privates against the Young Turks in power (13 April 1909) and the attempt of Sheikh Said to destroy the Republican regime in 1925. This rebellion was crushed and, except for one incident in 1930, the *Nakşibendi* thereafter went underground in Turkey for many years. Yet it is possible to trace the influence of some of the *Nakşibendi* Sheikhs, working without much fanfare, on prominent Turkish “modernists,” Turkish poets such as Necip Fazıl Kısakürek and some early theoreticians of nationalism such as Nurettin Topçu.

### ***Nakşibendi* in the Republic**

A speculation that would explain how the *Nakşibendi* eventually reemerged in the 1970’s as engineers, economists and lawyers is that the secular mobilizational thrust of the Turkish Republic had, paradoxically, provided *Nakşibendis* with the means to equip themselves with elements of Republican culture. Where it was effective Republican educational mobilization mobilized even the conservative who saw in it a means of upward mobility in the Republic. Economic mobilization, where it was effective, taught even conservatives of the ways in which they would become part of the entrepreneurial class the Republic wanted to create. The foundation of citizenship taught in schools prepared conservatives to use their status as a citizen in participating in politics. The lingering force of the Hamidian project of Ottoman citizenship and even earlier linkages with the state seem to have lived as an item of the popular imaginary. This made it easy for the *Nakşibendi* to partake of the offerings of the Turkish Republic without losing their faith. In sum by the 1980’s the *Nakşibendi* appropriated from the Turkish Republic its project of an autonomous civil society but also its main philosophical foundation, i.e. rational action [action “that best achieves one’s goals ... when these goals are considered forming a system” of rationality.<sup>12</sup>]

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<sup>11</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, London ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Zed Books, 1992.

<sup>12</sup> *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1999, p. 783.

I believe that all of this amounted to a gradual redrawing of the *Nakşibendi* code, and my third point on the integration of the AK Parti to the institution of the Republic is one to which I now turn.

### **Later *Nakşibendis***

The *Nakşibendi* lineage that takes us to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan begins with a student of Mawlana Khalid, Ziyaeddin Gümüşhanevî ( - 1895). One of his disciples, Mehmed Zahid Kotku ( - 1980)<sup>13</sup> seems, once more, to have been instrumental in changing the cognitive style of the *Nakşibendi* traditions he had taken over during his years as a prayer leader in various mosques, a state-bureaucratic position in Turkey. In the Turkey of the 1960's, when the "voice" of Islam was beginning to link with world representatives of a revival of Islam such as Sayyid Kutub and Hawwa a somewhat different process was also at work: the *Nakşibendi* became influential in the Turkish "civil" sphere. A group of Turkish university students had gathered around Kotku.<sup>14</sup> These young men had been won over by technology which for them represented the core of modernization and Western power. They had acquired influence in the State Planning Organization due to their links with and the increasing prominence of Turgut Özal, then Head of the SPA, and later Prime Minister. Kotku took a personal interest in economic, political and cultural issues and encouraged his followers to do the same. We know today that the first prominent "Islamic" party in Turkey, the National Order Party (dissolved by the Supreme Court in 1972) and the National Salvation (Millî Selamet) Party were established through his promotion and support; we also know that he supervised their activities.<sup>15</sup> Here, "national" a primary motto of the secular Turkish Republic promoted as it was by the National Order Party was not an obstacle but a shared feeling of pride – first "Ottoman" then "Turkish" – that had been building since Abdülhamid II.

Kotku did not see the state as an absolute enemy, and, in that sense, did not hold much esteem for more radical Islamists in the Islamic world. To this attitude was added what one author has described as "mystical environmentalism".<sup>16</sup> Professor Necmettin Erbakan, the founder of the three "Islamic" parties who attempted to keep abreast of dissolution by court decrees the National Order (est. 1970), National Salvation (est. 1972) and Welfare (Refah) Party (est. 1983) entered Kotku's circle. The relation between the two men is not entirely clear. At any rate Erbakan was influenced by Kotku's recommendation to establish control over the world of media and industry as well as politics. His underlining of a "national" interest in the background of Islamic values is one of the truly "Turkish" elements that centered his political discourse. This was due to the success of Turkish nationalism as a Republican ideology. Possibly this success itself was due to the fact that the Republican government benefited from the earlier association of the state and religion that lived in the popular imaginary.

An explanation of Mehmed Zahid Kotku's transformation of the *Nakşibendi* tradition could be the following. Kotku had created a new version of the "operational code" of the *Nakşibendi*, synchronized with the *political* code promoted by the Republic, that of constitutional legitimacy. The most interesting part of this change is that by the 1970's the *Nakşibendi* Sheikh probably had come to the conclusion that this particular political operational code had developed sufficiently deep roots in Turkey for *Nakşibendis* to promote a second layer of legitimacy. This layer, working in tandem with Islamic legitimacy, was that of politically grounded institution-building. This was a development showing greater originality and adaptability than the theme Ottoman-Turkish Islamic authenticity that had been around since the defeat of Russia by Japan in 1905. It, no doubt, was an aspect of a positive view of the state as an institution. This time the positivistic support of the state came as a gift from the secular Turkish Republic.

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<sup>13</sup> Through Ömer Ziyaeddin Dağıstanî and Dağıstanî's death Mustafa Fevzi Efendi. A student of Mustafa Fevzi Efendi Abdülaziz Bekkine was the Shaikh of Nureddin Topçu, the theoretician of a Turkish, culturally founded nationalism.

<sup>14</sup> Ersin Gürdoğan, *Görünmeyen Üniversite*, İstanbul: Seha Neşriyat, 1989.

<sup>15</sup> Ruşen Çakır, *Ayet ve Slogan*, İstanbul: Metis, (1990) 1994, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

When Turgut Özal with his degree in Engineering came to power in 1983 with the victory of his liberal Motherland Party, the link between his entourage of *Nakşibendi* supporters, technological knowledge as encouraged by the secular Kemalist republic and democratic politics had been brought together into the civil, public sphere that was the very creation of the republic. Here the “civic” aspect of this new construction was the tacit, shared element of an alliance that could not anymore be described as clearly “Islamic”. Other developments shaping this new Islamic location followed.

During the 1991 electoral campaign, the leader of the Islamic Welfare Party, Prof. Erbakan’s increasing emphasis on the political process as such, i.e., his immersion into a new discourse, was underlined in television presentations where he appealed to “everyday people” and avoided a “readily recognizable Islamic idiom, symbols and Koranic quotation”.<sup>17</sup> This shift to populism was an anticipation of the much expanded political persona of R. T. Erdoğan. Organizationally, however, Erbakan was still lagging in the formation of a mass party.<sup>18</sup>

When Kotku, after his death (1980), was succeeded by his son-in-law, Prof. Esat Coşan the latter had the accusation of “excessive” politization ready to be hurled against Erbakan. It is true that even though Coşan was also changing his operational code or style – once again with inputs of civil society – he had been doing it somewhat differently than Erbakan. In 1983 Coşan began publishing a periodical *Islam* that took up the discussion of the appropriate strategy for Turkish Muslims but also promoted a more general ideological line emphasizing at greater length than before the strength of Islam as a culture. *Islam* was followed by three more periodicals, *Science and Art*, *Women and the Family* and the *Roseflower Child*. All these publications were targeting issues that were, indeed, aspects of the current discussions in Turkey and had titles that were strikingly modern. In other words, while Erbakan was busy with politics the *Nakşibendi* operational code had been made redundant and, in a way, replaced by a discourse modeled on current discussions taking place in civil society. This discourse soon began to displace the more radical expostulation of the Islamist magazines of the 1970’s. A second shift in the remaking of *Nakşibendism* had occurred: a new network that of the media had reinforced their own network organization. Contemporary “Islamic” journalism shows another version of this developed.

At least one memoir covering the 1980’s indicates that the Iranian Islamic revolution played an important role in changes of attitude among Turkish “Islamists” of the time. Abandoning the pro-Iranian position appears to have been the result of judging the Iranian regime by criteria that these Turkish appraisers did not realize they held. These were the criteria of citizenship and civil society that were part of the values promoted by a discourse prominent in the schoolbooks of the single party era (1923-1946).<sup>19</sup>

### **Enter Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan began his political career early as a successful organizer for the youth movements of the National Salvation Party. His links with the party were reinforced by his allegiance to the Kotku’s circle and to his successor, kotku’s son-in-law Esat Coşan. His Islamist credentials were clear, but his early fiery speeches, when carefully studied, reveal a foundation of activism that seems to have transcended the specifically Islamist content of his message as a youth organizer. One of his speeches of 1980, for instance, seems an anticipation of his later persona: “Our mission is not one of simple-minded fight or world conquest; it is to spread and promote the rule of the religion of Allah. The first condition of this mission is peace and concord.”<sup>20</sup> This may have been a cautiousness that related to the banning of Islamist organization by the military regime established after the coup of 1980.

But there were other straws in the wind showing Erdoğan’s specificity as an organizer.

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<sup>17</sup> Ayşe Öncü, “Packaging Islam: Cultural Politics on the Landscape of Turkish Commercial Television” in *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Spring 1994, no. 10, p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Tanıl Bora – Kemal Can, “Bunalım Dönemine Girerken” *Birikim*, Jan. 1996, pp. 36-42.

<sup>19</sup> Metiner, *Yemyeşil Şariat*, pp. 367-386.

<sup>20</sup> See Ruşen Çakır and Fehmi Çalmuk, *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Bir Dönüşümün Öyküsü*, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001, p. 29.

Turgut Özel's brother Korkut Özel was a *Nakşibendi*. The scattering of *Nakşibendis* strength after many left the RP to join the Motherland Party had not discouraged Korkut Özel. Together with leaders of the Motherland Party he crafted an organization that would bring the religious and other conservative forces, as well as bureaucrats of the same persuasion under the same roof. This extra-political organization created by members of the Motherland Party harnessing shared cultural ideologies for the promotion of conservative policies was the so-called "Unity Foundation" (Birlik Vakfı). It was behind the scenes throughout the career of R. T. Erdoğan and replicated the well-known institution of the political action group.<sup>21</sup> This was still another level of the politization of the Islamist discourse and its inclusion into the games played in "civil society".

When Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won the mayoralty of Istanbul in 1994, exceptionalism assumed a new form: the forces of political power as structuring elements of behavior took over. This new structuration and the constraints that were part of it, as well as the history of *Nakşibendi* change over two centuries, provide one key to the rise of the Adalet and Kalkınma Partisi. Researchers who have analyzed the programs of the set of parties that followed upon the creation of the Islamist National Order Party in 1970 have found an interesting dichotomy in these organizations. On the one hand, one notices a set of foundational Islamic parties, The National Order, National Salvation and the Welfare Parties. Here, the inspiration is one of capturing the state and using it to bring about changes in society adopting the centralism of the Republic. On the other hand, the subsequently formed "Islamic" parties the Virtue, Felicity and AK Party have abandoned this stance and adopted a position much more synchronized with the World Economy and liberalism, a change which has often been stated to have proceeded since the 1990's.<sup>22</sup> Here, finally was the area of the modern structuring force of organization and institution-building, and world-economy that had taken over (rather than "been taken over by") the *Nakşibendi*.<sup>23</sup> Of course, the AK Parti has not exhausted the potential for Islamic socio-political movements in Turkey. But any rival to the AK Parti in the future will have to use similar venues based on knowledge, media technology and politics.

### Conclusion

There exists a progression in works on modern Turkish history which lead from the "red" Sultan Abdulhamid II, a conservative Muslim, to the libertarian Young Turks, their dethroning of the Sultan, the defeat of the Empire and the foundation of the Turkish Republic, its reforms and secularism. This, of course, is an extraordinarily simplistic view of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century history of Turkey. Fortunately, recent work by Deringil and Georgeon are redressing the balance. The political history of Turkey in the 20<sup>th</sup> century replicates the story of a progression to secularism. Key elements of the process, such as the role of the *Nakşibendi* order, figure only as "exceptions" to a set course.

The bias of the founders of the Republic carried over by social scientists seems even more bizarre in view of the continued influence of Islam in this country and in many others. What we observe here is that the fear that the secular foundation of the Republic would be destroyed has resulted in turning a blind eye to anything that would destroy the eschatology of secularism.

The least we can say is that such an approach blocks any understanding of the operation of religious forces in Turkey. My presentation, fortunately part of a new interest for less visible Islamic elements in the political history of the Republic may, I hope eventually produce a more interesting description of the extremely complex interactions of the secular and the religious in Turkey.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-48.

<sup>22</sup> See Serdar Şen, *Parti Programlarında Millî Görüş: AK Parti Millî Görüşü mü?*, İstanbul: Noktakitap, 2004, pp. 12-13.

<sup>23</sup> For Erdoğan's view on secularism/laicism see three foundational documents of the AK Party in Çakır and Çalmuk, *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*, pp. 236-244. For a description of the ways in which Islamic ideology was being loosened in the "Islamic" parties of Turkey simply through the overwhelming focus on parliamentary tactics see Yavuz Selim, *Millî Görüş Hareketinden Ayrışmanın Perde Arkası Yol Ayrımı*, Ankara: Hiler Yayınları, 2002 based on interviews of persons involved in the politics of Adalet, Refah and Fazilet Parties.