

© 2018

This is an open access article distributed under the CC-BY 3.0 License.

# How to Analyze Islamist Politics: Is it possible to make a Political Study without Sociology of Islam?

Özgür Olgun Erden  
Middle East Technical University

## ABSTRACT

This article embarks on making a political analysis of Islamist politics by criticizing the hegemonic approach in the field and considering a number of the institutions or structures, composing of either state and its ideological-repressive apparatuses, political parties and actors, intellectual leadership and ideology, and political relations, events, or facts in political sphere. The aforesaid approach declares that the social and economic factors, namely class position, capital accumulation, market, education, and culture, have been far better significative for a political study in examining any political movement, party, and fact or event. However, our study will more stress on political structures, events and struggles or conflicts produced and reproduced by the political institutions, the relationships and the processes in question. Taking into account all these, it will be argued that they have been more significant as compared to class position, capital accumulation, market in economic structure, or culture and education, in a political study.

**Keywords:** Religion, Islamist Politics, Sociology of Islam, Political Analysis

## 1 Introduction

The question, ‘how politics in Islamic world is studied’, is rather all-important in terms of clarifying and comprehending Islamist politics in Muslim societies. It asks what kind of the structures or the institutions, the relations and the processes we should look at when examining politics. Notwithstanding, there seems to have been a dominant approach that attempts to analyze Islamist politics in Muslim world and paves the way for being overlooked at other approaches. By a dominant approach, what we imply is that it has been interested in paying more attention to some structures and relations like education, economy, class position, capital accumulation, market, globalization, and technological and communicative improvements than anything else in

---

Özgür Olgun Erden, Middle East Technical University, Department of Sociology. Email: [ozerden@metu.edu.tr](mailto:ozerden@metu.edu.tr).

analyzing Islamist politics. It would essentially found a direct relationship between politics and society, where the far-reaching changes and transformations have carried out in line with global economic progresses, by reducing politics to socio-economic-based changing in Muslim societies. Having considered a good number of variables such as education, economy, capital accumulation, social classes, market, computer-based technologies and communication tools, and globalization within Islamic societies, this approach would embark to study Islamist politics, namely Islamist political parties, and movements in the light of these changes, by referring more to sociology of Islam, including the social and economic transformations mentioned above, as a theoretical-analytical approach. It will be one of the essential points of our criticism in the context of how to analyze Islamic politics.

Our criticism will basically contain a debate as to why these social and economic changes or transformations have dominated such a political analysis. The main line of our discussions will be about questioning a reductionist relationship which this dominant approach has established between the changes/transformations at issue and politics in the Muslim societies whose structures and/or institutions would be asserted to have been exposed to comprehensive social and economic changes. With a more society-centered perspective, it has been an approach challenging political structures and institutions. So, given the above-mentioned approach's arguments and remarks, in our debate the main point will be more related to why a political analysis should be made which appraises the political movements, parties, facts and events shaped by certain political structures or institutions in political sphere involving state, political parties, ideology, intellectual leadership, political culture, political actors and leaders, and political relationships and processes. Our analysis that endeavors to deal with a variety of the political changes and transformations in the Islamic societies will draw attention to more political structures and processes than social and economic transformations, computer-based technologies and communication tools, and globalization as a whole. Therefore, unlike the approach stated above, we will argue that it should be regarded the political structures and institutions in a political analysis.

Besides, interestingly the approach in question sets up a correlation between Islamist politics and some modern ideologies, among which have been conservatism, liberalism, and so forth, for explaining and comprehending the present Islamic politics. It thinks that an Islamist politics can be synthesized with modern ideologies by paying regard to a number of changes or transformations in economy and class position, including new middle classes with religious-Islamic disposition and particular a capital accumulation. At this point, for instance, it has asserted that a political position, such as Islamic liberalism, can be formulated by blending Islamic elements with liberal ones, alongside the formation of a capitalist class within Muslim groups. What is more, there have been manifold discussions with regard to whether such a political position, supported by new social classes who have capitals and economic powers, would be a politics more moderate and pro-reform rather than a revolutionary and radical one. As a result of this, this approach would speak of the different ways of Islamist politics precisely separated from one other, which have been represented by the multiple and heterogeneous Islamic communities or groups. They have entered into capitalist economic relations, got a modern education, tended to be more rational, and at the same adopted the dominant patters of a capitalist consumption and market-oriented lifestyle in keeping with new social classes. They have had intellectuals and technical intelligentsias (engineers and technicians) getting education in modern educational institutions with the religiously-conservative disposition. Accordingly,

there were thus no longer a monolithic Islamic politics. It would be a politics more complicated and differentiated, supported by the Islamic groups who have different economic interests and contra-political orientations, fragmented and divided into classes in globalized world. In this context, there would be mentioned from having been numerous Islamic politics dissimilar to one another from radical, revolutionary, and authoritarian Islamist politics to reformist, moderate, and even liberal Islamic one.

This article discusses three major points: first, the basic claims that dominant approach has alleged and used to analyze Islamist politics, based on the socio-economic transformations and changes in technology and communicative tools in Muslim societies, located in globalized world; second, how a political analysis there has been made by this approach, considering its arguments and views stated above; finally third, what type of a political analysis there should be made in order to be able to clarify and understand Islamist politics better. We shall argue that another political analysis is highly possible which pays regard to the political structures, consisting of state and its apparatuses, ideology, intellectual leadership, political movements and parties, facts and events, and conflicts and struggles between groups. We will try to give a more concrete framework to this analysis through the cases of Indonesia, but mainly of Turkey, on the basis of our assertion that all everything that is political, composing of its structures and/or institutions mentioned above, are more constitutive and significant, without making a political reductionism, than a socio-economic change and transformation in structuring a political party, movement or ideology in Islamic world.

## 2 The Main Arguments for an Analysis of Islamic Politics: Economy, Education and Culture in Muslim World

To begin with, we will directly associate our analysis to some basic questions with ‘what kind of analysis should be made in order to explain Islamic political groups and movements?, how the major changes and transformations in Islamic politics should be comprehended’, which will debate the fundamental theoretical and conceptual framework of the dominant approach in the analysis of Islamic politics. This framework to elucidate Islamic politics have had a main argument. The relevant argument would be that the engine force of change in Islamic politics has been more society-centered changes like economy, education or culture. For instance, for it economy gives rise to transforming the political structures or institutions, the ideologies, the intellectual leadership, the political organizations and actors, by the virtue of occurring some economic changes like developing a capital accumulation, changing class positions along with emerging new middle classes with religious or conservative dispositions, or forming a global economy visible with the emergence of a market-centered neoliberal economic structuring throughout the world. For instance, education shifts one’s cultural appreciations and perceives, paves the way for forming a new opinions and viewpoints relating to religion, and brings new outlooks and thoughts in some fields, namely politics, economy, or culture. The changing culture under the influence of economic structures and education redesigns one’s political ideas and ideology, views about state, political party, or democracy. Taking all of these into consideration, one thinks it is only possible to make a political analysis with regard to Islamist politics by grounding on those society-centered changes in Muslim societies. On the other side, this also expresses a dominant form of analysis that has specified what structures should be looked at and

how Islamic politics should be analyzed in order to explain and understand Islamism and the Islamist political currents in the Islamic world.

Economy, one of the most discussed points, is one of the topics on which is most dwelled to clarify the transformations tied to the political structures and institutions in Islamist politics. What is implied by the economy has been primarily new class positions, expressing the emergence of the religious-conservative middle classes, and the increasing of capital accumulation produced by the foregoing classes in various economic sectors, namely textile, food, or construction. These variables have been interpreted as an outcome of neoliberal capitalist globalization. In a globalized era, the world had socially and economically gone into new history commemorated as a revolutionary turning point between 1978-1980 years. It was meaning the emergence of an industry-based capitalism and rapid urbanization, the rising of level of education with increasing number of those who get training in secular educational institution, and the formation of market-oriented democratic institution and mechanisms in developing countries.<sup>1</sup> The widening place of globalization and the growing global capitalism had reshaped the positions of Muslim individuals in contemporary Muslim societies. One was, too, class position. It has been underlined that many entrepreneurs and Muslim businessmen emerged in a great deal of economic sectors.

Conjunction with the change in class position stated above, a new middle class, who have more conservative and devout tendencies and works in media, educational institutions, and professional management in companies and bankings, has been pointed out to have arisen in Muslim societies. As Nasr has indicated, all these developments created a new elite stratum, and middle classes, sharing similar views about globalization and neoliberal capitalism and economy policies. In his opinion, it can be told that they have been religious followers of capitalism who have caused a true modernizing change in the Islamic world.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on a range of issues like capitalism, class, or state in Turkey, Güllalp does state that globalization started to weaken the power of nation states since they would no longer freely continue full-employment, provide economic development and conserve reformist welfare policies. Political Islam in Turkey, points out Güllalp, engendered a convenient ground in rise of petty entrepreneurship and decline of traditional working class politics between 1960s and 1970s. Having improved under the globalization conditions in Turkey, political Islam was a classic populist movement, mobilizing urban poor with combination of upper and middle classes into action against the status quo.<sup>3</sup> It is quite considerable to try to explain the impact of these special actors because there has been an Anatolian bourgeoisie which had given monetary support to promote emergence of divergent Islamic movements and discourses through communicational-technological apparatus, including written-visual media like television, radio, and newspaper. Asking question of “Who are these actors”, Yavuz signifies that an Islamic capitalist class has arisen as the result of the neoliberal-economic policies in Turkey, establishing a ground for the leading economic conditions and the major financial networks as an outcome of deregulation and open economy.<sup>4</sup> The expansion of enterprising mobilized by Islamic social groups has expedited the ratio of capital accumulation and export-based growth, which enables the formation of Anatolian entrepreneurs. This new situation, including an increasing wealth and capital accumulation, had shifted Anatolian cities’

viewpoint in addition to the growth of new middle classes.<sup>5</sup> In consequence of neoliberal policies, these classes, which had gradually grown stronger, had anymore a more effective role economically and politically among Islamist groups. To be sure, new conservative-religious middle classes was not comprising of merely capitalist class, having capital accumulation and apparent economic power, there were at the same time Muslim intellectuals and intelligentsia (engineers and technicians), who have got training in modern educational institution.

One of the main indicators of economic and social development was the educational institutions that had emerged new educated actors in Islamist groups and movements, who consists of executive elites politically, and culturally writer, journalist, and –organic- intellectuals. Those political and cultural elites were mostly a product of modern education, getting education in mass in the modern-secular institutions. This modern institution has also paved way for the formation of new social groups differentiated from one another with the emergence of new elites in Islamist communities. For this reason, the education has usually been referred to explain the reasons why the Muslim societies started to change. Stating that universal higher education has smashed the traditional religious institution's monopoly on religious scholarship, Kurzman states that this at the same time caused pluralism and differentiation in intellectual and political discussions with respect to religion and Islam.<sup>6</sup> The basic reason for differentiation has been Islamist new intellectuals, though they were challenging all secular presuppositions about society, state and culture, who are educated in modern institutions. Roy, one of those closely well-known with the book, "The Failure of Political Islam", mentions from a same thing. He expresses that the actors of political Islam arose substantially from modern educational system. However, they were, states Roy, rejecting the ulamas, who they supposed to be in the charge of making a political alliance in modern society, without accepting having a theological knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

In the case of Turkey, Göle speak of the presence of a similar social group. She alleges that counter-elites arose with conservative and pious tendencies, including intellectuals and intelligentsia mentioned above. For, in her thought tin Turkey secularism became exceedingly functional in creating a counter-elites, besides republican elites, taking initiative for the establishment of a Republican Turkey and adopting and defending its founded principles and values. This fundamentally became through the national education system, which was performed under the authority of the Ministry of Education. These new agencies were symbolizing the transition of Islam from the periphery of Turkish society to its center, namely the state and its institutional apparatuses, and yet were be a product of the educational institutions provided by the center, consisting of secular-national elites.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, the large part of new engineering administrators were coming from the modest lower-middle class families in small Anatolian provinces and towns. They have performed a leading role in building up Turkey's new export-oriented industrilization model. They express that their logical-scientific outlook, mathematical reasoning, and access to technical language have made them possible to find better solutions to Turkey's problems. The Muslim engineers, propounds Atasoy, have not had a preconceived,

stereotypical image of West. On the contrary, their ideas seem to have reflected a give-and-take relationship within a tactic of economic competition.<sup>9</sup>

Besides that the modern institutions/structures, economy and education, have both differentiated economically Muslim masses and provided to gain different views about religion, Islam, society, state, or politics through education, new cultural orientations in Muslim groups were also slowly changing the patterns of consumption, and lifestyles. Because the one way to create and differentiate an identity in Muslim societies is to anymore find religious symbolic expressions in the domain of consumption. Especially, following 1980s, a period when a rapid liberalization process, and neoliberal economic policies emerged, these expressions have showed themselves in new social classes' lifestyle. Those classes have been conservative in values but avant-garde in consumption practices. As in a secular media tool advertising a non-religious lifestyle, and a variety of cultural patterns and consumption, the religious televisions and radio channels, financed by Islamic capital, have played an important role in communicating religious lifestyle. A rich and prolific Islamic media tools, ranging from Islamic pop music to romance novels, women's magazines, best sellers, and movies, have advertized a popular Islamic culture<sup>10</sup>. Bearing all of these in mind, Introvigne makes a classification by politically separating the consumer group in question into five categories, in the form of ultra-conservative, conservative, moderate conservative, liberal, and ultra-liberal. Liberal category is the consumers ready to accept dominant liberal values and principles. Ultra-liberals have consisted of 'modernists'<sup>11</sup>, which embrace liberal values and wish to be granted them a religious approval. Conversely, conservatives think that the dominant liberal values have been unfavourable and dangerous. Ultra-conservatives do say that these values have not been required, by arguing that they have been immoral and even satanic ones. Lastly, moderate-conservative consumers wholly reject modern values but do abstain from explaining them on the basis of religious traditions, and attempt at reinterpreting religion for appearing a religious opinion in compatible with modern world<sup>12</sup>. At the moment, considering all these mentioned here, it seems that alongside economic and social transformations, a cultural structure –in a more way of consumption and lifestyle- has paved the way for emerging new political forms and appearances, by transforming itself in contact with those structures in a global world. This is because they shape one's identity, taste structure, and lifestyle, and even affect how money would be spent. Immediately after the transformations in question within economic structure, new area that religiosity itself expresses would be anymore market. Market both provides religion a large area of motion in order to exceed the loyalty to ineffectual political parties and state apparatuses by creating an area, like market, for increasing religiosity outside political power and institutions, and opens it to a culture of market-oriented world. One of the most significant and decisive wars of position would be market that furnishes the stones of path to a social –and economic- liberalization and the accurate defeat of extremism. The market has been anymore a sphere of struggle.<sup>13</sup> To be sure, the issue is not to persuade masses to a reality unchangeable or unshakable, quite the contrary it is “to supply a religious product” appropriate for focusing groups' real and/or assumed expectations. This has had two results. One is that “a religious thing or product” is to find itself place in a conservative-

moderate course by cleansing its radical ingredients. Other is that a partial secularization is to begin.<sup>14</sup>

Consequently, a new market for commodities, media, advertising, business and consumption termed as “Islamic” has enabled the formation of a new culture industry. This Islamic culture industry has moved more and more into a good many sectors, such as production, packaging, distribution of religious products, embedded to capitalist relationships from traditional written media, cassette preaching, online fatwas to fashionable hijab. As Gökariksel and McLarney have stated, Islamic knowledge, performances and selves have been increasingly presented by a commoditized cultural forms and spaces. “Embedded into traditional-nonmodern structures and relations, Muslim identities have been anymore created in a commodified practices and consumption patterns, from memories, novels, lifestyles, magazines, and newspapers to television channels; from religious education centers, and halal markets and restaurants (where food is prepared according to Islamic rules)”.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, in Islamic world religious views have been ever-increasingly shaping the ways of consumption. Likewise, asserting that one of the most important characters of capitalism, which sprout in Islamic world, has been that this development (of capitalism) has gone parallel with the resurrection of Islamic belief, Nasr points out that people, who live according to Islam, have demanded that the products, which they are using, should be Islamic, not only halal foods and headscarf, but also Islamic housing, fashion, banking, education, entertainment, consumer goods (as in examples of Mecca Cola and Oibla Cola, preferably to European-origin Coke and Pepsi), and even holiday.<sup>16</sup> From all these views, we can conclude that Islamic movements and groups have not existed outside of the modern institutions and practices. A Muslim identity itself can be no longer constructed by being isolated from entirely secular everyday life’s experiences and activities. An entity embedded to modern capitalist relations and structures, an Islamic culture then can be alleged to have transformed by harmonizing itself with new conditions of the global-capitalist world. So, there would not be purely a unique Islamic culture that leaves itself out modern cultural patterns and practices and rejects, all-modern capitalist values and principles. It is a fragmented culture more synthesized with the capitalist lifestyles and practices than with a original Islamic tradition and culture

### 3 How to Conduct a Political Study: Analyzing Islamist Politics Using the Sociology of Islam

The question, ‘how can a political change be explained and apprehend?’, unavoidably encourages us to ask that of ‘what makes a political change possible?’. The answer to those questions are, in a sense, hidden in a perspective that argues how we should look at analyze political structures, relationships and processes. No doubt, a perspective firstly attempts to study any fact or event, whatever political or social, by using certain form of analysis which provides us various concepts and conceptualizations in order to examine an issue. Because, as Allan remarked, the perspective includes a theory and theoretical explanations, described as a way of seeing the world. It is based on many assumptions and arguments composed of particular ideas, concepts and language. Ranging from functionalism, conflict theory, interactionist theory, and critical theory to exchange theory, rational choice theory, ethnomethodology, and social phenomenology, all perspectives

express us 'how to see the social –political- world and how to analyze it'. They are filters which provide that we can perceive and interpret whole things around.<sup>17</sup> For instance, any perspective might suggest that one should pay regard to some socio-economic factors such as the formation of new social classes, the economic development and the wealth, the capital accumulation, when studying the transformations in the political structures and relationships. Another asserts that one should consider a range of the political structures, consisting of state, political parties, ideologies, intellectual leadership, political actors, relationships and so on, by emphasizing that the changes in political sphere have been directly associated with political institutions/structures, facts and processes as an autonomous sphere with contradictions, antagonisms and conflicts peculiar to itself, independently from economic structure. In the case of Turkey, asking question of “What is the role of the Islamic bourgeoisie in the fragmentation, and even in a possible end, of fundamentalist Islamism in Turkish politics?” Yavuz signifies that the emergence of new middle classes have played a role important in transformation of Islamic groups, and thus of Islamic politics. It has been argued that in Turkey Islamist movements have not emerged the shantytown of big cities, on the contrary they have become more visible by the rising of new economic-social groups by way of the wealth and the education. In his view, it was these groups, particularly Islamic bourgeoisie, who had happen the main actor of Islamization of consumer patterns and the pioneering of the existing democratization in Turkey.<sup>18</sup> As would be seen, the transformations in the political structures, namely state, political parties and actors, ideology, and intellectual leadership, have been depended on a series of changes or transformations in economic sphere. Put it another way, it would be claimed that the changing structures, like economy, education or culture, in society have influenced and designed the political institutions and relationships. What is more, these changes would be implied to have had a rather revolutionary essence. For, they have integrated those societies with the global economy and transformed them by exposing Muslim societies to a revolutionary transformation in political sense towards democracy, rights of woman, the respect for diversity, and the remove from extremisms.<sup>19</sup> Thus, there would be a modernist- fragmented representative politics, meaning that the Islamic social groups have been represented by different political ideologies and parties in society, in keeping with the dispersed and disjoined religious groups and organizations in virtue of the changes and transformations in the economic structure. Therefore, a political analysis must be directly begun by taking social or economic changes into consideration, by very reason of fact that a political event or fact has been more linked to those.

Connectedly with socio-economic context in the light of the foregoing perspective, there would be also alleged that transformations in political structures or institutions have made way for forming a more moderate and non-radicalism politics in Islamist political movement. What lies behind such an assertion have been, as stated above, differentiation, pluralization, and separate social classes and economic interests in question among Islamic groups. They have set the stage for forming divergent political views and stances within Muslim societies, and thus arising a political tolerance as sign of a moderateness far from dogmatic. On this point, for instance, Demiralp links this political moderation to the changing economic interests in socio-economic groups that have had a certain economic capital and power and redesigned their own political preferences, because of getting changed their class positions. According to her idea, the



moderation can just be functionalized with embracing a politics that approaches easy-going to West and its basic principles, and with accepting market economy and liberal democracy as a political-economic system. In case of Turkey, "This definition of moderation has been termed as moving away from the "national view," formulated to express the political views of the Islamist parties in Turkey until the late 1990, led by Necmettin Erbakan, a prominent Turkish-Islamist politician and the founder of Islamist politics in the late 1960s."<sup>20</sup> The reason is that these social groups have tended to support a more moderate Islamist politics as connected with shifting their own economic interests in globalized era, when an open market economy and minimal state has been implemented and defended since the late 1970s and early 1980s. They have been seeing their future in a Turkey integrating with global world and embracing its political and economic principles. Therefore, by abandoning from the radical political course of National View, they have directed to a moderate-conservative politics that would advocate their economic interests. While new religious elites have politically and ideologically conflicted with secularist state elites on the one hand, on the other they have tried to come to power by challenging the outmoded Islamist politics of Erbakan movement and other centre-right politics represented by Justice Party in 1960s and 1970s, and True Path Party and Motherland Party after 1980.

However, Somer argues that rather than a conflict between the elites mentioned above, the present battle has been a class struggle: between conservative and secularist middle classes. According to him, the former has stood close to moderate and "pro-modern sort of Islamism". The latter has consistently discredited all types of Islamism.<sup>21</sup> The new political position of the Islamist politics in Turkey, states Somer, would be more connected with what economic policies have been implemented since it was be a result of the changing economic interests. Once upon a time, in Turkey the pious-conservative small and middle-sized corporations had supported pro-Islamic politics, National View's parties, with the aid of protecting their own economic interests against the dominant secular political elites and the state-promoted capital groups from the end of 1960s up to the beginning of 1980s. However, they changed their political tendencies in 1980s, when neoliberal and market-focused economic policies were implemented by Özal, who was a conservative-Turkish politician and the founder of Motherland Party after 1980 military coup d'état. This situation has laid the economic and social bases of a new political position in Islamic politics. They withdrew their support from a more radical and religious-minded Islamist politics as soon as they increased their capital accumulation, and started to compete with the more advanced markets of Turkey and Europe in the late 1990s. They thus abandoned an Islamist politics performed by National View tradition, following a more aggressive politics in conflict with secular-state elites.<sup>22</sup> All in all, the changing economic interests would cause different political separations among Islamic groups as well. They would be a propelling force of new political positions preferred by those conservative-religious middle classes. Put another way, what makes a variety of political choices and/or ideological positions possible would be class positions becoming differentiated from upper classes to lower classes.

Indeed, considering all these changes and transformations, namely globalization, neoliberal policies, and religious market(s), it seems that the class structures and the economic interests have given rise to differentiation and pluralist structurings and groupings. In the pursuit of

globalization and neoliberal policies of economy, new religious markets established around the world but particularly in the Muslim world. In those markets, Introvigne asserts that the extremist religious consumers have identified religion with culture, and thus politics with religion, and they have been seeing no difference between them. Moderate conservatives allege that there has been, and should be, a difference between religion, politics and culture. However, they would like to be an active religion in public sphere, and rejects separation between religion and politics, although a difference between two.<sup>23</sup> Here Introvigne more focuses on the present relationship between class and the market, and their links to consumption. He states that with the positions within economic structures, they have politicized religion differently from others and politically defined themselves as radical Islamist, or moderate conservative. Most of all, he underlines that the foregoing structures have unavoidably caused political divisions separated from one another in Islamist politics. For him, this would be explicitly seen in a series of divergent political fractions like radical Islamist, moderate-Islamist, conservative, moderate conservative, and even liberal-Islamist or/and liberal-conservative.

#### 4 The Autonomy of Politics: Is it possible to make a Political Study by thinking in the Boundaries of '*Political*'?

The political structures, included state, political parties, ideologies, intellectual leadership, political actors and participants, or political events and facts, should be paid attention in order to clarify and comprehend a political movement or ideology in a political analysis. If the political structures is accepted as an autonomous sphere in Althusserian sense from others such as economy, culture or market without falling into a reductionist viewpoint, this attention begins to be a more important. In the preceding title, we have mentioned from a reductionist form of analysis, which has been rather dominant in the political studies of Islamic politics, in sense of accounting for political structures/institutions and relationships in others' supervision, namely economy, or culture. On the contrary, at this point we will argue that it is a more accurate analysis to study any political movement, ideology, group or party, by regarding Islamist politics and organizations, their political ideologies, practices, conflicts, experiences and relationships in its own political history. The analysis based on a sociological background, included economy, class position, education, culture, and consumption or lifestyle, have not explained us too much in political sense. For, the political structures and activities are ones that have several dynamics, contradictions and antagonisms inherent in themselves in Althusserian sense<sup>24</sup>. So, we will state why a political study is more important than other approach based on certain sociological changes or transformations in Muslim societies and composed of economic and social factors like economy, capital, class structure, education, culture, and consumption. In case of Turkey, for instance, a analysis of Islamist parties should be made by considering the present political organizations, ideological-political relationships, experiences and battles in Turkish political history, rather than with whom these parties have represented, they have been supported by which social classes, and what the cultural bases and patterns, and the social bases of those parties have been. As Jenkins has stated, despite the fact that an Islamist sentiment has been on the rise in Turkey since the end of 1980s, and at the beginning of 1990s, the electoral success of Welfare Party, an Islamist party founded by Erbakan, was due to well-funded, highly effective

party organization and to widespread public disappointment with the mainstream political parties.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the ideological organization and activity of a political party, as in example of Welfare party, to get masses' supports would be one of the most efficient mechanisms. The main reason for the political achievement of the party in question would 'its organizational flexibility and strategic use of modern means to mobilize traditional networks.'<sup>26</sup>

So closely interested in the issue regarding how to analyze Islamic politics, Mohammed Ayoop offers a political study, proposing that it has been more significant to look at the political structures, processes and relationships in the context of cases of Indonesia and Turkey. In his study, basically he signifies that legal-political restrictions on Islamist-political discourses have had a moderating effect on Islamist political groups. In the case of Turkey, he alleges that in the result of a series of events of past two decades, on the ground that the Turkish establishment had abandoned from its oppressive tendencies on Islamist parties, they became more moderate, thus forming a connection between democratization and Islamist modernization.<sup>27</sup> In Turkey, Jenkins states that the Virtue Party, one of prominent Islamist parties founded after the Islamist Welfare Party was closed down by the Constitutional Court, has preferred a more moderate political position, by emphasizing its loyalty of secularism and assing a number of secular women to the party rule.<sup>28</sup> With important resemblances to Turkey, Indonesia has undergone similar changes by moderating its Islamist politics in the wake of –political- struggle with secular-nationalist forces.<sup>29</sup> Indicating that Indonesia's islamist party, the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera; PKS), decided to take a range of steps to reshape its political stance for being a moderate religious party by rejecting the label *Islamism*, Tomsa underlines that in Indonesia political processes have drawn the party to a moderate line through the political-institutional constraints and opportunities in consequence of political learning.<sup>30</sup> On this point, particularly in both countries the compensative power of secular-nationalist forces have demonstrated the failure of Islamist parties. Thus, in the case of Indonesia and Turkey, the fact that the Islamist parties have had to politically compromise with secularist forces is so clear in moving towards a more moderate politics and demoratic struggle. However, considering Turkey, the ascending visibility of Islam in Turkish society and politics seems to have been associated more with "the democratization of state-society relationships" within the context of seamlessly breaking from militant laicism.<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly, in the light of Ayoop's and Jenkins' arguments above, when clarifying how to analyze Islamist politics, we have drawn attention to political institutions, facts, relationships, and struggles inside their own political history. They have significant components to comprehend and study any Islamist politics and political organizations within the borders of 'political'. They are analytical tools not to be ignored in a political study. At this point, in Turkey, one of the most remarkable political processes not to be overlooked would be 28 February intervention in 1997. Called as February 28 Process, this political event was eminently important to find out how the Islamist politics has transformed in Turkey. It was a process to start with decisions taken by

military and civil bureaucrats in one meeting of National Security Council, an institution comprised of the military and civil executives, on 28 February, 1997. It was one of the recent political conflicts between Turkish political Islamists and the secular military-civil establishment. No doubt, first and foremost, it was a political-military intervention that had been claimed to be interfered to stand out against the threats of Islamization, and at the same time, it was one of turning points to force the Islamist politics for change in Turkey. From now on, Turkish political Islamists started to change their ideological-political position following the political event in question. In pursuit of this intervention, the Virtue Party –Fazilet Partisi-, one of Islamist political parties replacing the former Islamist Welfare Party –Refah Partisi-, begun to more care about democratization, human rights and the rule of law for a democratic regime. In spite of its emphasis on the social and cultural aspects of Islam, the party cautiously refrained from the obvious references to Islam and the expressions against the secular establishment.<sup>32</sup> In the wake of rising to power by forming a coalition with a center right-prominent party, the True Path Party, in those times, the unsuccessful political experience of the WP –Welfare Party-, which was shut down after 28 February military intervention, compelled Turkish Islamists to a change just in strategy and tactics but also in political views and visions of the National View<sup>33</sup>. The idea of change in the political Islamists was not restricted with the rigid precautions of the 28 February Process. It has been, too, directly connected with the acceptance of democratization.<sup>34</sup> Soon after February 28 military intervention, the Virtue Party (VP) had diverged from its predecessor in many points, including its changing views with regard to West and its new stance towards human rights, rule of law, democracy, freedom of faith and religion. The party had changed its stance against the West and the western institutions, and unceasingly emphasized western political values such as human rights, rule of law, and democracy. These political principles and values constituted the new political position of the National View movement after the Welfare Party was shut down and its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, was banned from political life.<sup>35</sup>

For one things, in Turkey Islamist politics seems to have begun to change following the 28 February Process, one of important political events restructuring the Islamist political entities and relationships in Turkey. Likewise, in Indonesia the political conflicts, encounters or relationships between Islamist actors and secularist forces also reshaped political actors and formations. So then, in a political analysis all these things *per se*, namely economy, class position, capital accumulation, technological and communicational tools, globalization, education and culture, would not be able to account for reasons why one political party or movement has transformed. Other conceptual-analytical tools are needed to study a political thing, whatever a political party, movement, or ideology. Among them must be political structures, relationships and processes with political agencies, ideologies, and intellectual leaderships in Althusserian sense. Ultimately, the key to comprehend and examine political structures and processes is a political analysis based on all everything which become more visible within the boundaries of ‘political’ from political structures/institutions to political groups/actors and events/facts, ideologies, intellectual leaderships, and processes. All in all, such an analysis explains us why and how the foregoing political structures and organizations, ideological-political positions and identities/belongings,

intellectual leaderships, and political struggles and relationships have changed, and are still changing.

## 5 Conclusion

In this article, the aim has been fundamentally to ask if or not there would be an alternative perspective able to analyze how to change or transform Islamist politics in Muslim societies, by criticizing the dominant approach in the studies on Islamism, Islamist political movements and actors. This approach can be stated to have been more reductionist in sense of asserting that political structures, relationships, and facts/events have undergone a change, as a result of transforming the socio-economic structures and relationships of Muslim societies. from economy, class position, capital accumulation, culture, and education till technological-communicative innovations, globalization and neoliberal policies. Alleging that Islamist politics have been able to change in line with the transformation of sociological appearances of Islamic world in a globalized world, the analytical tools of an approach to study Islamist politics would consist of a range of sociological factors, such as economy, class position, capital accumulation, culture, and education till technological-communicative innovations, globalization and neoliberal policies, and more importantly it would attempt to study political structures or institutions by focusing on them. However, it is eminently disputable concerning how and to what extent we can account for Islamist politics on the basis of the claims of the dominant approach in question in a political analysis. For this reason, we have at first tried to show how a political analysis can be made by laying emphasis on the political events, like 28 February Process, and the political conflicts, antagonisms, relationships, and ideological-intellectual struggles between the political-Islamist actors and the secularist-nationalist establishment in the cases of Indonesia and Turkey. All in all, we have pointed out that a political analysis should concentrate on the present political-ideological structures and institutions within political sphere, each of which contain unique dynamics, contradictions and antagonisms in itself, as seen in the cases of Turkey and Indonesia, if it will attempt at explaining how the political currents, whether Islamic or not, has undergone a change.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Keskin Tuğrul, Sociology of Islam, in: *Sociology of Islam: Secularism, Economy and Politics*, Tuğrul Keskin, Ithaca Press, United Kingdom, 2011: 6
- <sup>2</sup> Nasr Vali, *İslam, Kapitalizm ve Türk Modeli: İslami Sermayenin Yükselişi [The Rise of the New Muslim Middle Class and What it mean for Our World.]*, İhsan Durdu (trans.), Ufuk Yayınları, İstanbul, 2012: 44, 304
- <sup>3</sup> Gülalp Haldun, Globalization and Political Islam: The Social Bases of Turkey's Welfare Party, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 33 (3), 2001: 435-437
- <sup>4</sup> Yavuz Hakan, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, Cambridge University Press, Newyork, 2009: 51-52
- <sup>5</sup> Özcan Gül Berna & Turunç Hasan, Economic Liberalization and Class Dynamics in Turkey: New Business Groups and Islamic Mobilization, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13 (3), 2011: 71
- <sup>6</sup> Kurzman Charles, Liberal Islam: Prospects and Challenges, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 3 (3), 1999: 13-14
- <sup>7</sup> Roy Oliver, *the Failure of Political Islam*, Harvard University Press, USA, 1994: 89
- <sup>8</sup> Göle Nilüfer, Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 51 (1), 1997: 49, 54
- <sup>9</sup> Atasoy Yıldız, *Turkey, Islamists and Democracy: Transition and Globalization in a Muslim State*, I.B. Tauris Publications, New York, 2005: 164-165
- <sup>10</sup> Sandıkçı Özlem & Ger Güliz. Comtemporary Turkish Consumptionspace: Polarity and Plurality in: *New Emerging Economy and Their Culture*, Janez Prasnikar and Andreja Cirman (eds.), Nova Publications, New York 2001: 148
- <sup>11</sup> Here, what is meant by ‘modernists’ refers to those who think that modernity has been positive and ‘good for religion. Otherwise, the term modernism has of course numerous different meanings. Also see for this explanations, Introvigne Massimo, Türkiye’de Dini Piyasa(lar) [Religious Market(s) in Turkey], in: *AK Parti: Toplumsal Değişim Yeni Aktörleri [The Emergence of A New Turkey: Democracy and AK Parti]*: 34
- <sup>12</sup> Introvigne Massimo, Türkiye’de Dini Piyasa(lar) [Religious Market(s) in Turkey] in: *AK Parti: Toplumsal Değişim Yeni Aktörleri [The Emergence of A New Turkey: Democracy and AK Parti]*, Hakan Yavuz (eds.), Kitap Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2010: 34
- <sup>13</sup> Nasr Vali, *ibid.*: 44
- <sup>14</sup> Haenni Patrick *Piyasa İslamı: İslam Suretinde Neoliberalizm [Market Islam: the Other Conservative Revolution]*, Levent Ünsaldı (trans.), Heretik Yayınları, Ankara, 2014: 53-54
- <sup>15</sup> Gökariksel Banu & McLarney Ellen, Muslim Women, Consumer Capitalism and the Islamic Culture Identity, *Journal of Middle East Women Studies*, Vol. 6 (3), 2010: 1-2
- <sup>16</sup> Nasr Vali, *ibid.*: 31
- <sup>17</sup> Allan Kenneth, *Explorations in Classical Sociological Theory: Seeing the Social World*, Pine Forge Press, California, 2005: 4
- <sup>18</sup> Yavuz Hakan, *ibid.*: 51
- <sup>19</sup> Nasr Vali, *ibid.*: 44
- <sup>20</sup> Demiralp Seda, the Rise of Islamic Capital and the Decline of Islamic Radicalism in Turkey, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 41 (3), 2009: 316
- <sup>21</sup> Somer Murat, Moderate Islam and Secularist Opposition in Turkey: implications for the world, Muslims and secular democracy, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28 (7), 2007: 1275-1276
- <sup>22</sup> Demiralp Seda, *ibid.*: 316
- <sup>23</sup> Introvigne Massimo, *ibid.*: 34-35
- <sup>24</sup> Althusser Louis & Bulbar Etienne, *Reading Capital*, Verso Publications, London, 2009: 61-63
- <sup>25</sup> Jenkins Gareth, Muslim Democrats in Turkey? *Survival*, Vol. 45 (1), 2003: 49
- <sup>26</sup> Yavuz Hakan, Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey, *Comparative Politics*, Vol.30 (1), 1997: 77. Also, in this article Yavuz broadly explains the model laying the base of the organizational structure of the Welfare party. He states that this organizational structure is “known as the tesbih model (that is, the provincial organizational committee has thirty-three members modeled after the thirty-three beads of the traditional Muslim rosary). Each neighborhood has an organizer who in turn appoints street representative to collect information about the age, ethnicity, religious origin, and place of birth of the inhabitants on each street. At the district level inspectors review the work of the neighborhood organizers every week. Each district also has a party divan (committee) consisting of thirty-three members. None of the other Turkish political parties is organized to communicate in this

way with the neighborhoods, the most crucial and vital units of Turkish society. By establishing hegemony over the symbolic structure of Turkish society, the WP seeks to become the hegemonic political force.”

<sup>27</sup> Ayoob Mohammed, *the Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*, Michigan University Press, USA, 2008: 100

<sup>28</sup> Jenkins Gareth, Muslim Democrats in Turkey? *Survival*, Vol. 45 (1), 2003: 51

<sup>29</sup> Ayoob Mohammed, *ibid.*: 100

<sup>30</sup> Dirk Tomsa, Moderating Islamism in Indonesia: Tracing Patterns of Party Change in the Prosperous Justice Party, *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 65 (3), 2012: 487, 490

<sup>31</sup> Ayoob Mohammed, *ibid.*: 100-101

<sup>32</sup> Hale William & Özbudun Ergun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP*, Routledge, New York, 2010: 9-10

<sup>33</sup> This tradition is known as Milli Görüş in Turkish, National View in English. It is an Islamist movement independent and too much important in history of Turkey, led by Necmettin Erbakan, who was founder of the movement. Its foundations of ideas are laid in the end of 1960s. However, there should also be stated that the concept National is more often used by being added either word ‘view tradition’, ‘outlook movement’ or ‘view movement’ to itself in literature. In other words, it seems that the literature sometimes preferred to use ‘National View tradition’, ‘National Outlook movement’ or ‘National View movement’ for defining this political group. Here we will be mostly using word tradition when referring to National View. In the context of which words were preferred, for discussions on the National View, see William Lale and Ergun Özbudun *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP*, New York: Routledge Publications, (2010): 10-29 Ümit Cizre (edit.), *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party*, New York: Routledge Publications, (2008): 3-201, Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, New York: Cambridge University Press, (2009): 45-50, Yıldız Atasoy, *Turkey, Islamists and Democracy: Transition and Globalization in a Muslim State*, New York: I. B. Tauris Publications, (2005): 115, Banu Eligür, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey*, New York: Cambridge University Press, (2010): 88-230, Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*, National Defense Research Institute, (2008): 40, Tanıl Bora & Murat Gültekinçil, *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce (6): İslamcılık*, İstanbul: İletişim, (2011) 544-575, Yalçın Akdoğan, Yalçın Akdoğan, *Ak Parti ve Muhafazakâr Demokrasi*, İstanbul: Alfa, (2004): 91-103, Ahmet Yıldız, “Politico-Religious Discourse of Political Islam in Turkey: The Parties of National Outlook”, *The Muslim World*, 93 (2), (2003): 187-190, İhsan Dağı, “Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization”, *Turkish Studies*, 6 (1), (2005): 1-16, Bilal Sambur, “The Great Transformation of Political Islam in Turkey: The Case of Justice and Development Party and Erdogan”, *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies*, 2 (2), (2009): 117-127, İhsan Yılmaz, “Beyond Post-Islamism: Transformation of Turkish Islamism Toward ‘Civil Islam’ and Its Potential Influence in the Muslim World”, *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies*, 4 (1), (2011): 245-280

<sup>34</sup> Çınar Menderes & Duran Burhanettin, The Specific Evolution of the Contemporary Political Islam in Turkey and Its ‘Difference’, in: *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party*, Ümit Cizre (eds.), Routledge, New York, 2008: 30

<sup>35</sup> Dağı İhsan, Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 6 (1), 2005: 8