UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI TORINO

Introduction

The last decades of the Twentieth Century witnessed a global resurgence of religion, within all world regions and all major religious traditions, labelled as "revenge of God" by French scholar Gilles Kepel (Kepel 1991; Tank-Storper, s.d.). According to Jose Casanova (1994), it implied a process of de-privatization (or re-publicization) of religions, that started to claim a renewed role in politics, at the domestic and the international level, both in terms of values, and in terms of the role played by religiously oriented political actors. Although this process has been universally acknowledged (albeit with different interpretations), mainstream political science still seems reluctant to take it properly into account. Particularly, as explained in the introduction to this special issue, there are just a few comparative works about the role played by religious political actors in democratization processes; and, even in these cases, the analysis is mostly devoted to religious organizations active in the civil society, rather than to religious parties active in the political society.

This paper will try to contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon in the context of Muslim democratizing countries taken into account by the special issue, by addressing a crucial case such as Turkey. Its first section will analyse the existing literature about religion and democratization, describing the main approaches to the subject, and particularly the 'multivocality' hypothesis proposed by Alfred Stepan and others. The second section will take into account the different phases of Turkey's recent political history, by analyzing both the development of democratization processes and the role played by in them by religiously oriented political actors. The purpose of this paper is to understand the interrelations between religiously oriented political actors and democratization in the Turkish case. Particularly, according to a 'multivocality' perspective, it will try to demonstrate that different kinds of religiously oriented political actors, with different political theologies, had a different impact on Turkey's democratization processes.

Religion and Democratization: Different Points of View

The perspective adopted by most of the 'classical' literature about democratization rarely viewed religion as influent on democratization. Most works relied instead on other kinds of variables, such as socio-economic factors (Lipset 1960; Huntington 1991; Przeworski et al. 2000; Dahl 1961; Boix and Stokes 2003) or relations among social classes (Moore 1966; Rokkan 1970; Rustow 1970). Most of these authors shared the point of view known as 'secularization paradigm',, and regarded religion as a factor hindering socio-economic development and, consequently, the transition to and the consolidation of democracy. Particularly, the strand of literature commonly referred to as "Western exceptionalism" regards democracy as fully developed only in Europe and the Anglo-Saxon countries, because of their success in fulfilling the process of secularization (Frisch and Hoffnung 2007).

In the late 20th century, however, some religious actors started to be actively engaged in democratization processes, leading some scholars to take into account the possibility that the religious influence on democratization is not necessarily negative. However, their works mostly agreed on the 'essentialist' idea that every religious tradition entails an almost unchangeable set of beliefs, rules, and images of society (or, at least, some 'core beliefs') that can be favourable or unfavourable to democracy (Bruce 2003). At first, they mostly focused on Protestantism, regarded as particularly pro-democratic (Bruce 2006); however, after the pro-democratic shift of the Catholic Church in the 1960s, this perspective widened to focus on the whole of Western Christianity (see for example Huntington 1997). This positive evaluation does not regard, however, Eastern Orthodoxy, marked out, according to many, by an authoritarian tradition and a quietist orientation (see Stepan 2000), as well as Buddhism (see Harris 1999) and Confucianism (see Fukuyama 1995).

The focus of most of the debate about religion and democracy in the latest decade has however been Islam: scholars particularly highlight its stress on God's sovereignty, making difficult an effective delegation of power to the people, and delegitimizing secular rulers (Badie 1986); an

allegedly insufficient separation between religion and the state (Lewis 1991); and the difficulty in adapting Islamic law to the evolution of society, due to an old interpretive tradition based on a method called *naskh*, that repeals the more 'progressive' and democracy-friendly Mecca verses (promulgating freedom of choice and religion, and non-compulsion) in favour of the later, much more 'conservative', Medina verses (An-Na'im 1996; Sachedina 2001).

Islam has thus become the focus of a 'negative exceptionalism' thesis, apparently supported also by empirical data, related to the scarce presence and quality of democracy in Muslim-majority countries (Lakoff 2004)[1] and, even, in states with a sizeable Muslim minority (Anckar 2011). A thesis which is opposed by others, who contend that the scarcity of democracy in the Muslim world – at least until the start of the so-called 'Arab spring', which might change this landscape – is due to other factors, not related to religion: social traditions, the underdevelopment of civil society, and the legacy of colonialism (Halliday 1996, 116). Therefore, they theorized an 'Arab [rather than Muslim] exceptionalism' (Stepan and Robertson 2004).

Most defensive elaborations about Islam[2] are however focused on its multivocality, which founds another, more recent, strand of the literature on religion and democratization. According to this perspective, the attitudes showed by any religion in its relation with politics (and particularly democracy) can change when one takes into account different local contexts and even different periods within the same context (Stepan 2000). Unlike Huntington's essentialism, the idea behind the concept of multivocality is that "any religion is far from monolithic and that all religions require interpretation to give them meaning in a given context" (Minkenberg 2007, 896; see also Norris and Inglehart 2004). An idea also supported by the fact that all religious texts are complex entities, including different – and not rarely contradictory – kinds of messages: as showed for example, in

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[1] For a discussion about the validity of such data, see also Goldsmith (2007).
[2] See for example Moussalli (2003), Campanini (1999) and Sachedina (2001), who focus on Islamic concepts such as *shura* (consultation) and *ijma* (consensus) and the possibility to change the *naskh* interpretive method.

the case of Islam, by the above mentioned discussion about Mecca and Medina verses included in the Quran (An-Na'im 1996; Sachedina 2001).

The multivocality of religious traditions can be fruitfully linked to the concept of 'political theology', defined by Daniel Philpott (2007, 507-8) as "a set of ideas that a religious body holds about legitimate political authority". Philpott highlights the possibility of multiple interpretations of religious law, since "some planks of a political theology may be shared within a religion", while "others, by only certain communities and factions", and points out that political theologies can change and evolve, since they are influenced "by ancient, formative teachings, but also by historical development and by the circumstances of time and place", and by the activity of intellectuals and ideologues. This idea has been developed in relation to the Muslim world by scholars such as Asef Bayat, according to the conviction that "national cultures, historical experiences, political trajectories, as well as class affiliation, have often produced different cultures and sub-cultures of Islam, religious perceptions and practices across and within different Muslim nations". According to the author, it is the social actors who "render a religion inclusive or exclusive, mono-vocal or pluralist, democratic or authoritarian": an ability "closely linked to a group's capacity to mobilize consensus around their truth" (Bayat 2007, 7-12). The role of religious actors in elaborating political theologies and in mobilizing people around their projects – and the responses of state institutions and other political actors – seems therefore to represent the crucial factor to determine the impact of a religious tradition on democratization processes in a specific context.

The Role of Religious Actors in democratization

Despite this relevance of religious actors, as highlighted in the introduction to this special issue, the research field about their role in democratization processes is still underdeveloped: which is not surprising, considering the main democratization theories reviewed above. Only recently, in

fact, scholars have engaged in a thorough empirical assessment of the role played by religious actors in democratization, with a comparative perspective taking into account cases belonging to different religious traditions (Künkler and Leininger 2009; Philpott, Shah, and Toft 2011; Brocker and Künkler 2013).

This literature, however, mainly focuses on religious actors active in civil society, while works about religious parties active in political society are still scarce (Ozzano 2013; Ozzano and Cavatorta 2013). In Nancy Rosenblum's words, religious parties are indeed mostly regarded as not real parties, "opportunistic and not committed to electoral democracy […] intransigently ideological, uncompromisingly militant, extremist", as well as anti-modern, and internally and externally authoritarian. Particularly, they are regarded as negative to democratization, since their "sectarian vision" allegedly favours political instability (Rosenblum 2003, 42). In other words, "politics based on the sacred is often seen as antithetical to liberal democracy" (Tepe 2008, 1). As a consequence, wherever Islamist parties have become engaged in democratic politics, the secular forces have often tried to exclude them on the ground of the so-called paradox of Islamist participation in elections: that is, "the fear that democratic elections might bring to power an anti-democratic regime" (Schwedler 1997, 25). Clearly, religious parties are seen by many as anti-system parties aiming not at a change of government, but at regime change (see Sartori 1976).

However, as Schwedler (1997) observes, there is so far no empirical evidence of religious parties conquering power through the ballot box, and then subverting democracy. On the contrary, in many cases, democracy was subverted by secular forces allegedly intending to protect the system from religious takeover. Even moderate and reformist religiously-oriented actors are often regarded with suspicion, on the ground that they might have hidden agendas, aiming at the Islamization of their country.

While this kind of attitude is today common with regard to Islam, similar suspicions were once raised about the political participation of Catholics (and of Catholic forces) in democratic

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elections, both in the US and in Europe. Secularists were in fact afraid about an alleged "double loyalty" of Catholics: to the democratic state, and to the Papacy. Such ideas were partially revised when the role played by some Catholic parties in the democratization of Western Europe – and, later, of some Latin American and Asian countries – became clear (Kalyvas 1996; Gill 1998). Which supports the multivocality thesis, contending that a religious tradition is not monolithic, and that its influence on democratization processed can vary according to geographical and cultural contexts and political cultures.

The multivocality thesis is supported, particularly, by the findings of the literature on the so-called moderation through inclusion thesis, taking into account the possibility of change of a party's ideology as a consequence of its prolonged involvement in democratic institutions. Developed first about European parties (both in relation to Christian democratic, and to left-wing secular parties), this perspective has been recently adopted in several works about the Muslim world, to analyse the role of democratic participation in the moderation processes endured by some Islamist parties (see Schwedler 2006; Clark 2006; Cavatorta and Merone 2013).

This contribution tries instead to apply the multivocality thesis to the Muslim world through the analysis of the role played by religiously oriented political actors in Turkey's democratization during the main phases of the country's recent political history.

The Turkish case

Unlike the other papers included in this special issue, this paper is indeed specifically focused on political actors: therefore, an important specification has to be made. Turkey in some ways presents an inverse situation of the picture encountered in two other case studies of this special issue, Mali and Senegal. Whereas religious political parties are prohibited in these two countries, and religious actors therefore work predominantly in civil society, Islamic associational

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life in Turkey came to an end in 1937 when religious associations were prohibited. This prohibition is upheld, in some degree, until this day. Islam in civil society is therefore very limited in Turkey (although some groups, such as the Hizmet movement led by Fethullag Gülen, have risen, in the last decades, to a more significant role in Turkish public sphere, especially through its media and educational networks) and has to treat carefully lest it cross the line of legality: particularly, it cannot have any voice on political affairs. In reaction to this situation, since the early 1970s Islamic actors have promoted the creation of political parties, officially disguising their religious orientation in nationalistic and cultural terms. Islam in political society, therefore, has been a forceful actor in Turkish politics since the early 1970s. Islamic parties (although officially self-defining as secular) have emerged again and again and become part of ruling coalitions, despite repeated closures and bans initiated by the military or the Constitutional Court. If we study the impact of Islamic actors on political development in Turkey therefore, we need to turn our focus toward political society rather than civil society (Linz and Stepan 1996): which represents, as already mentioned, the real peculiarity of the Turkish case in comparison to other Muslim-majority countries. Among the five cases reviewed in this special issue, Turkey is an outlier. In no other democratizing state in the Muslim world do we find similar prohibitions against associational life, and inversely, in no other state do we witness a centrality of Islamic parties comparable to that in Turkey. The following paragraphs will analyse the role played by Islamic political actors in the different phases of Turkey's recent political history and the trends of democratization processes according to the main international indexes.

This analysis will be carried out by outlining the main phases of Turkey's recent political history. In each phase, the paper will try to single out the main political theologies proposed by the country's religiously oriented political actors, the interplay among them, and their influence on democratization. Particularly, it will analyse the relation between – and the different role played by – fundamentalist, 'anti-democratic' political theologies, and reformist, pro-democratic ones. The

development of democratization processes will be accounted for by considering the main democratization indexes available in the literature (such as Freedom House's and Polity IV), already showed in the introduction to this special issue.

The 1980 coup and its aftermaths

The year 1980 represented a turning point in Turkey's contemporary history, since it witnessed the last full-fledged military coup, following a decade of growing unrest and political crisis and polarization, marked out by the inability of political parties to tame the conflict between factions (extreme right, extreme left and Islamists), and worsened by a severe economic crisis and a massive immigration wave from the rural east towards the cities. The military junta reshaped the institutional structure of the country, by crafting a new constitution that entered into effect in 1982. On the one hand, this worsened the opportunity structure for the Islamist movement, since the reform enhanced the role of the military as the caretaker of the Turkish political system, especially through the strengthening of the National Security Council (NSC), and increased the power of the Presidency of the Republic, an office occupied until 1989 by the leader of the junta, general Kenan Evren (Özbudun 2000). Moreover, hundreds of political activists were banned from politics for 5-10 years, while all the existing political parties were closed.

The junta temporarily suspended nearly all political rights and many civil liberties of the Turkish people, introducing moreover undemocratic clauses in the constitution. For these reasons, Turkey's rating in the Polity IV authority trends collapsed from 9 to -5, while the Freedom House evaluation of Turkey's political and civil rights changed from the pre-coup 2-3 to 5-5 in 1980 and 4-5 in the following three years, shifting the country from the 'free' to the 'partly free' category (Freedom House s.d.; Polity IV s.d.).

However, the military coup also opened unexpected opportunity spaces for a renewed role of Islam in the public sphere. The junta (and particularly general Evren, whose father, according to some sources, was an imam [Yavuz 2003, 70]) was less secularly-oriented than those who had led the previous military coups, and conceived instead a mild and privatized version of Islam as a bond for a country torn by factional struggles. It adopted as its official ideology the so-called "Turkish-Islamic synthesis", elaborated by a group of thinkers known as "hearth of the intellectuals", which merged a secularized Islam with Turkish nationalism. The junta – also crafting a new version of the myth of the founder Mustafa Kemal, portrayed as a pious man willing to promote an 'enlightened' version of Islam – aimed to restructure Turkish society around three basic pillars: family, mosque and barracks. Its main enhancement of religion in society was probably the re-introduction of compulsory religious education (always promoting a secularized version of Islam) in the primary and secondary school: which, paradoxically, was an old Islamist project (Cizre Sakallioğlu 1996; Tank 2005). Such openings would prove very relevant when the country came back to democracy through a gradual process strictly supervised by the military.

Turgut Özal's era

Turkey returned to democracy in December 1983, when new elections took place, with a new proportional electoral system including a 10% threshold (aiming at substantially reducing the number of parties). Only three parties were admitted to participate: two of them, the Nationalist Democratic Party and the Popular Party, were directly sponsored by the army – probably in an attempt to create an American-style two-party system – while the third was the Motherland Party (MP), led by Turgut Özal, the mastermind of the IMF-supported economic reforms enacted by the junta (which prevented the military from forbidding its participation). The results of the election unexpectedly rewarded this latter, which presented itself as an umbrella party including different factions outside the military-sponsored establishment (Vertigans 2003). The junta was also

apparently unaware (according to general Evren's memoirs) of the mild pro-Islamic orientation of Özal, who was close to the Nakşibendi Sufi brotherhood (Shankland 1999, 40; Acar 2002, 165).

During the following decade of Özal's rule, not only Turkish democracy normalized, with the elimination of most restrictions on political activities, but the country also underwent a strong economic liberalization, which reduced the predominance of the traditional financial and industrial elite, strongly connected to the Kemalist establishment. Özal's reforms also made possible the growth of a new commercial and entrepreneurial bourgeoisie that would play an essential role in the following political developments. Özal also partially widened the field of religious liberties (particularly about freedom of activity of organized religious bodies) (Yavuz 2003). Such improvements are clear also in the main democratization indexes: during Özal's years in power, Polity IV's rate for Turkey rose to 7, to remain stable in the following years, while the Freedom House rate constantly improved from 4-5 to 3-5 in 1984, 3-4 in 1986, and 2-4 from 1987 onward (although Turkey was still included in the category of the partly free countries) (Freedom House s.d.; Polity IV s.d.).

Such changes were made possible not only by the fact that Özal was a well-grounded technocrat with international experience, but also by his being a sincere believer, close to the Iskenderpasa lodge of the Nakşibendi Sufi brotherhood that had promoted the creation of the Islamist political movement in the country in the 1970s (Shankland 1999, 40; Acar 2002, 165; Yeşilada 2002, 64). However, his political theology was shaped not only by the Islamic upbringing, but also by experiences such as his travels to the US (and the experience of a kind of secularism different from the Turkish version): [3] it was not radical, but liberal, based on "a tripod of beliefs [...]

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[3] The Turkish model of secularism "with its origin in the Jacobin tradition, seeks to remove all manifestations of religion from the public sphere and put religion under the strict control of the state" (Yavuz 2009, 26), unlike the American model, where religious institutions and the state are separated and the stress is put on the protection of religion from the excesses of the state.

freedom of thought, freedom of religion and conscience, and freedom of enterprise" (Acar 2002, 172). Therefore, although he was "a devout Muslim, religion was not the most important factor in shaping his social and political views" (Acar 2002, 168); moreover, he was apparently free from the influence of particular religious organizations in his political activity. He never regarded secularism as a problem, was truly committed to both democracy and economic liberalism, and, in foreign policy, although showing a certain neo-Ottoman bias (especially in relation to the newly-independent Central Asian Turkic republics) never took stances hostile to Israel and to the West. On the contrary, he was a staunch promoter of Turkey's integration in the EU (Zarcone 2004; Yavuz 2003).

He contributed to the re-introduction of religion in public life through private acts (such as a well publicized – and much criticized – travel to Mecca), new ceremonies and procedures (such as prayer breakfasts similar to those organized by Ronald Reagan at the White House), but mostly through some relevant policy changes: among others, the repeal of the ban on the Sufi brotherhoods; the permission to open religiously-oriented private schools and theology faculties; the permission to freely enter the university for students coming from the *imam hatip* religious schools; the attempt to liberalize the use of the Islamic veil in the universities; and also some 'moralizing' provisions, with new rules about alcohol, tobacco and pornography, and a law punishing insults against Islam (Zarcone 2004; Özdalga 1998; Touzanne 2001; Yavuz 2003). However, religion was not the main plank of the party's platform, which was based on four different ideological strands (that Özal regarded as the main pillars of the middle class): (Islamic) conservative, liberal, nationalist and social democratic. In religious terms, the party programme simply declared that secularism should not be an excuse to curb religious freedom (*Anavatan Partisi Programi* 1983; Kalaycioglu 2002).

In the 1980s, however, a new full-fledged Islamist party was created by Necmettin Erbakan (who had already led two other Islamist parties in the periods before the 1971 and 1980 coups): the

Welfare Party (WP). Its political theology, described in the following paragraph, was much more extremist than the one proposed by the MP and it found a natural basin of voters among those strata of society that had impoverished as a consequence of Özal's pro-free-trade reforms. (Yıldız 2003; White 2002). Although not allowed to participate in the 1983 elections, in 1987 the party gained more than 7% of the popular vote, and conquered the municipalities of some middle-sized cities in eastern Anatolia, starting its path towards power.

The rise and fall of the Welfare Party

In the November 1991 elections the Turkish voters awarded the conservative True Path Party (TPP) led by Süleyman Demirel, whose government pursued policies not significantly different from Özal's. The reasons for the defeat of the MP were several, including the impoverishment of wide segments of the population (as a consequence of Özal's economic reforms), a high inflation rate, the dissatisfaction for Özal's management of the Gulf War, but also a rise of the Kurdish insurgency (Vertigans 2003). This latter in the first half of the 1990s shifted from a rural-based struggle to a strategy including also urban terrorism. Together with Ankara's harsh reaction, and to the activity of other 'anti-guerrilla' groups such as Turkish Hezbollah, it contributed to a growing social unrest and damaged Turkey's chances to be accepted as a full member in the European Union (Karmon 1997; Nugent, jr. 2004).

The incapacity of the government to solve the economic problems and to tame the terrorist groups gave rise to a growing dissatisfaction in the country, which created a favourable opportunity structure for the success of the Islamist movement. Erbakan's WP, that in the previous decade had built an impressive structure including hundreds of thousands of militants, benefited from this situation, managing to win both the 1994 municipal elections and the 1995 parliamentary ones. The party was also favoured by a pro-secular shift in the MP's platform after Özal's election to the

Presidency of the Republic, dissatisfying the religiously oriented segments of the MP's constituency (Yeşilada 2002, 67). Among the believers, the WP was particularly supported by people who had impoverished as a consequence of Özal's economic policies, often migrating from the rural areas to the new urban shantytowns, where the party carried out massive welfare activities (Yavuz 2003; Shankland 1999).

The WP platform answered the demands of those segments of the population with the populist proposal of a "just economic order" (*adil düzen*), founded on the Islamic tradition (*hak*) and opposed to both the Western ideas (*batil*) and to Communism (Yavuz 2003, 223). Erbakan's stance towards democracy was, also, contradictory: "on the one hand, he valued the secular political regime, which was based ultimately on the will of the people; on the other hand, he considered himself the champion of Islam and its holy law" (Özdalga 2002, 142). His party had strong connections to religion organizations, both sufi brotherhoods and nurcu 'textual' communities. Although, once established the party, the political identity overshadowed the religious one, Erbakan never developed a real secular view of his political activity and, on the contrary, even came to regard himself as a kind of spiritual leader "superior" to the leaders of the religious communities (Özdalga 2002, 141; see also Zarcone 2004). This was also engendered by the fact that "Erbakan and his followers longed for a past in which the Muslim communities were united under the same caliph (the Ottoman sultan)" – in a framework also involving the use of the concept of jihad (*cihad*) – rather than taking as their reference the secular nation-state (Özdalga 2002, 138).

Such points of view became clear after the 1994 municipal elections, when the party conquered the main Turkish municipalities. Particularly, the new administrators' Islamic orientation was evident in the attempts to 'moralize' public life (for example trying to restrict alcohol consumption and to promote gender segregation in public places), and in their celebration of the Ottoman past, which had always been neglected and downplayed by the Kemalists (Zarcone 2004; White 2002).

When the party won the 1995 parliamentary elections, Erbakan managed to form a government with the conservative TPP. Although partly refrained by the influence of the ally and by the fear of an intervention by the military, the Erbakan government showed its pro-Islamic orientation by trying to remove the ban on the headscarf in universities and public offices, promoting mass rallies invoking the adoption of *shariah*, and sharply changing the country's foreign policy orientation away from its traditional pro-Western course. Particularly, Erbakan visited countries hostile to the West such as Iran and Lybia, and promoted the creation of a Muslim-only economic organization (D-8) to counter the European Union, that he regarded as the Troy horse of US imperialism and Zionism. (Özdalga 2002; Kentel 1999; Yavuz 2003).

Such policies were disapproved by the military, which in February 1997 reacted by issuing a memorandum (asking for a sharp change in several crucial sectors of policy), *de facto* determining the fall of Erbakan's government (an event later labelled a 'soft coup' or 'post-modern coup' by scholars) (Shmuelevitz 1999).

As a whole, the first half of the 1990s increasingly witnessed a decay of the quality of Turkey's democracy, beginning with the growth of social unrest and the consequent repression – and, at the political level, with processes of polarization and fragmentation of the political centre, which ultimately allowed the legitimization of the military as the only force able to restore political order (Ünsaldi 2005; Uzgel 2003; Cizre and Çinar 2003; Akgün 2001) – and culminating in the rise to power of the WP and its subsequent removal promoted by the military. Turkey's rate in the Freedom House rankings thus worsened from 2-4 in 1992 to 4-4 in 1993 and 5-5 in 1994, with only a slight improvement to 4-5 in 1996. The Polity IV assessment also changed from 9 to 8 in 1994 (Freedom House s.d.; Polity IV s.d.).

Years of Crisis

After the end of Erbakan's government as a consequence of the Army's intervention, the WP was closed by the Constitutional Court for alleged violations of the constitutional provisions about secularism. In the meantime, a coalition of centre-right parties formed a new government, subsequently turning into law most of the recommendations included in the Army's memorandum (Yavuz 2003). The results of the following elections, taking place in 1999, made necessary the creation of a heterogeneous government formed by the Democratic Left Party, the MP and the extreme-right Nationalist Action Party. The differences in orientation among these parties (basically bound together only by the need to oust Islamists from power) made it difficult for the new government to manage the country, which plunged into an economic recession forcing its government to follow a severe IMF-dictated economic policy (Zarcone 2004; Türsan 2004; Özel 2003).

The crisis forced Turkish parties to finally accept to pay the price of the reforms demanded by the EU and to draft a reform package, also including measures aiming at improving the protection of human rights: particularly, the EU applauded the abolition of the death penalty. The impact of this period on Turkey's democratization was therefore initially negative (as acknowledged by Polity IV which reduced Turkey's Authority Trend to 7 since 1997) but improving towards the end (with Freedom House improving Turkey's rate from 4-5 to 3-4 in 2002) (Freedom House s.d.; Polity IV s.d.).

The events following the deposition of the Erbakan government in 1997 led to a momentary sharp decline also in the role of religion both in public debate and public policies. The recommendations issued in the February 27 memorandum were mostly aimed at restoring secularism as it was conceived by the Kemalist establishment. Once turned into law by the new government, they curbed religious freedom, restoring, and in some cases harshening, the *status quo ante* the 1980 coup. For example, the rules about clothing in offices and universities were

strengthened, while a new law modified the organization of compulsory education cycles, causing the *de facto* extinction of the first cycles of religious education (White 2002; Özdalga 1999).

As already mentioned, the Constitutional Court closed the WP, and banned from politics several of its leaders (including the future Prime Minister Erdoğan, who was also jailed for some months because of an allegedly 'anti-secular' speech). The Islamist movement quickly created another party, the Virtue Party, that participated with some success in the 1999 elections, but was in turn banned, mainly because one of its female MPs had tried to participate to the inaugural session of the new parliament wearing a headscarf.

Such troubles catalysed a process of change that had involved the Islamist movement for a long time (according to Fulya Atacan, its roots can be traced to the times preceding the 1980 coup, when Erbakan's leadership in the Islamist movement was challenged by Turgut Özal's brother, Korkut) (Atacan 2005, 191). On the one hand, the traditionalists (*gelenekçiler*) led by Erbakan kept a strong grasp on the party; on the other hand, a new guard (*yenilikçiler*) emphasized "the need for a system-oriented party" (Yesilada 2002, 68) able to cope with the constitutional norms about secularism and put into question the undemocratic organization of the party (Atacan 2005). This latter faction relied as its social base on a new Islamic bourgeoisie demanding religious and economic freedom, rather than on the dispossessed of the urban peripheries that constituted the bulk of Erbakan's armies. After the closure of the VP, this faction, led by Erdoğan and by the future President of the Republic Abdullah Gül, split from Erbakan's followers (who recreated an Islamist party under the name of Felicity Party) creating in 2001 the Justice and Development Party (JDP). The platform of the new party was favourable to Turkey's accession to the EU, and supported free trade, Western-style democracy and human rights; on the other hand, the FP's programme did not change the core ideas already put forward by the WP and openly declared its connection to the tradition of the Turkish Islamist movement (Yavuz 2003; Yeşilada 2002; Atacan 2005).

The JDP enters the game

The victory of the JDP in the 2002 elections was described as an earthquake or a tsunami in Turkish political system, both because of the sheer size, granting the party an absolute majority, and because of the Islamic identity of the party (Çarkoğlu 2001; Özel 2003). As for the reasons for this outstanding event, many explanations have been put forward: the ongoing economic crisis, the widespread political corruption, the negative image of the traditional parties, the difficulties of the previous political elite in handling the economic crisis and the consequences of the 1999 earthquakes, the perception of the new party and its leadership as persecuted outsiders; but also, particularly, the changes in Turkey's social structure. As highlighted by M. Hakan Yavuz, the country had witnessed the rise, since the 1980s, of a new Islamic bourgeoisie aiming at more political, economic and religious freedom and oriented towards integrating in the EU rather than indulging in anti-occidentalism (Yavuz 2006). The party, also as a consequence of this different social base, was not simply a new version of Erbakan's Islamist parties: it included in its ranks several politicians from other centre-right parties, and proposed a political platform quite similar to Özal's (particularly because of its support of free-trade economics, and Turkey's EU membership). Political parties students have indeed assimilated the JDP to the catch-all party model, similarly to Özal's MP, and unlike the mass-based structure of Erbakan's parties (Tepe 2006). Also, as in the case of Özal's MP (and unlike the WP) "it does not contain only Islamic organizations and Sufi orders but also some center-right groupings" (Atacan 2005, 189).

To understand the JDP's political theology, it is particularly useful to analyse Erdoğan's worldview, since during the past decade he has retained control of most of the party's agenda. As showed by Metin Heper and Şule Toktaş, the analysis of his speeches reveals a certain tension between the desires to be in accordance with God's and with the people's wishes. More than suggesting the idea of 'democracy as a means' in radical Islamist style, this contradiction seems however to be reconciled within a very pragmatic worldview including an 'American-style' idea of

secularism – utterly different from the 'traditional' (Kemalist) Turkish one, based on the subordination of religion to the state. A perspective well resumed in Erdoğan's statement "my reference is Islam at *personal* level. *Politically speaking*, my reference is the constitution and democratic principles" (Heper and Toktaş 2003, 170. Italics in the text). The difference between Erbakan and Erdoğan seems indeed to be demonstrated by the massive reforms promoted by this latter, involving the economy, the human rights field (particularly in relation to the Kurdish issue), the foreign policy realm and the role of the military in politics; but most of all by the party's very serious effort to get the admission to the EU (Yavuz 2009; *Ak Parti Programi* 2001).

According to some observers, the religious factor could indeed be the crucial force behind the reforms promoted by the JDP. According to this interpretation, the change in attitude towards the EU showed by part of the Islamic movement is motivated by the desire to get more religious freedom thanks to the protection of European institutions. This could also partly explain the slowing down in the pace of reforms after 2005, when the European Court of Human Rights endorsed the Turkish ban on the headscarf in universities and public offices (Robins 2007).

The rise to power of the JDP, strongly opposed by the secular forces, also turned again the role of religion into one of the main bones of contention in the domestic political debate. Therefore, every political proposal made by the government and involving religious values and institutions has given life to inflamed debates and even threats of intervention by the military: for example in the cases of the election of Abdullah Gül to the Presidency of the Republic, Erdoğan's proposal to criminalize adultery, and the attempts to repeal the ban on the headscarf in the universities. The pro-religious field sees in such proposals a way to enhance the religious liberty of the population, while the secular forces are worried about the possibility that changes in the laws and the constitutional rules about secularism can promote discriminations against secularly-oriented citizens (women in particular).

According to many, a pro-Islamic bias of the new government has also been evident in foreign policy, especially in the second half of the decade, after the emergence of problems hindering Turkey's perspectives for a full integration in the EU (Yavuz 2009). This allegedly new policy course involved not only critical statements against Israel, but also a more positive attitude towards states opposing the West, such as Iran; this was especially the case after the rise to the Ministry of foreign affairs of Ahmet Davutoğlu, an academic proposing an identity-based neo-Ottoman foreign policy. However, the Turkish government also enjoys good relations with the US administration: therefore, these new developments cannot be regarded purely as a turning away from the West Erbakan-style, but rather as a reorientation as a consequence of the resistance of some EU countries to Turkey's integration, and of some new developments in the Muslim world, such as the Arab spring (Duran 2006; Murinson 2006; Davutoğlu 1997-98). Moreover, this latter phenomenon has recently renewed the international appreciation of the JDP experience as a possible model for the democratization of the Arab world (Ozzano 2012).

The situation was more problematic in the domestic field, because of the negative perception of the party's pro-Islamic orientation shared by the military and the other Kemalist forces. These latter were very suspicious about the real aims of Turkey's new political leadership, accused of hiding an agenda aiming at the Islamization of the country. The struggle between pro-Islamic and secular forces flared up particularly when, in 2007, the JDP tried to elect to the Presidency of the Republic Abdullah Gül, a former Islamist. The controversies created by this event gave rise to a very polarized debate and to massive demonstrations held by both sides: which, in the end, brought the country to new elections. A new, undisputable victory of the JDP and the consequent election of Gül to the Presidency did not stop the confrontation between the government and the military, which however has entered a phase of stalemate.

As a whole, although characterized by a precarious equilibrium between the different Turkish institutions (also troubled by the discovery of a criminal plan, commonly known as

Ergenekon, aiming to facilitate a military coup), the first decade of the new century was marked by significant improvements in terms of political accountability and civil rights. Although these changes were not acknowledged by Polity IV, the Freedom House evaluation of Turkey improved to 3-4 in 2002 and 3-3 from 2004 onwards (Freedom House s.d.; Polity IV s.d.).

The role of religion in Turkey's democratization processes

The first section of this paper, as well as the introduction to this special issue, put forward the hypothesis that the multivocality thesis is the most suitable framework to analyse the role of religion in Turkey's democratization processes during the last three decades. Particularly, they pointed to the idea that different political theologies can have different kinds of influence on such processes – together with other factors taken into account by other works included in this special issue, such as the organization of religious movements and their relation with the state – in some cases playing a constructive role, in others an obstructive or destructive one. [4]

The analysis carried out in this paper confirms the multivocality thesis by showing that among Turkish religiously oriented political actors we can find indeed different political theologies, that apparently cannot be explained by the religious upbringing of the main party leaders and ideologues: as shown in the analysis, most of them were close to the same religious milieu, related to the Nakşibendi sufi brotherhood (Yavuz 2003; Atacan 2005, Yeşilada 2002; Acar 2002; Heper and Toktaş 2003). What really matters is indeed their view of the legitimate relations between religion and political institutions. On the one hand, in Erbakan we can find a deep ambiguity between commitment to democracy as popular consent and commitment to religion as the ultimate

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[4] See the introduction to this special issue.

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frame of reference. [5] Indeed, we have seen that Erbakan even came to conceive himself as a kind of religious or spiritual leader with a moral authority even superior to that of the leaders of religious organizations. On the other hand, the leaders of the MP and the JDP, despite the differences at the personal level (Erdoğan and Gül are probably as devout as Erbakan, while Özal adopted a more secularized lifestyle) regard democracy as the only game in town, recognizing that political procedures are the only legitimate way to create a government, and fully accepting political and social pluralism, as well as economic liberalism.

This difference at the level of political theology has a deep impact not only on the ideology of the political parties, but also on their organization and composition. The WP was organizationally a mass-based party in which ideology played a strong role and whose internal pluralism was limited. Moreover, even after creating its own organizational structure based on a network of political activists rather than on religious brotherhoods networks, the party always retained special relationships with some specific religious organizations. On the contrary, both the MP and the JDP were more structurally oriented towards the catch-all party model, marked out by a reduction of the ideological baggage (proved by the pragmatism put forward by both parties' agendas), by a more relevant internal pluralism, and by the opening to different kinds of interest groups. This is true also in terms of less specific and exclusive relations with religious organizations.

The parties were also different in terms of social bases and demands put forward. When Erbakan's movement was created, it relied on an essentially traditionalist background, with a strong stress on religious values, social order, morality and social justice (Zarcone 2004). The bulk of the social base of the WP was therefore composed by people who essentially did not feel at ease with

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[5] The democratic commitment of political leaders is meant here in terms of "strategic" rather than "tactical" modernism (Brumberg 1997): that is, a behaviour engendered by a real adhesion to democratic values, rather than by purely tactical concerns.

modernization and often actively resisted it (Yavuz 2003). On the contrary, both Özal and the JDP leaders aimed to target a wider range of social milieus and particularly, among the Muslim believers, those who did not want to refuse modernity, but were ready to embrace it (wherever modernity implied wider personal and economic freedoms, while not impinging upon the right to profess Islam) (Acar 2002; Atacan 2005; Yavuz 2003, 2006 and 2009). This difference also engendered crucial differences in the parties platforms. On the one hand, Erbakan and his followers proposed a political platform clearly hostile towards democracy and the West, and oriented towards protectionism and Islamic social justice in the economic field; on the other hand, both Özal and the JDP leaders were staunch supporters of democracy, human rights and free-trade economic policies, and were strongly pro-Western (and, particularly, pro-EU) in foreign policy.

Therefore, while all the above mentioned political actors shared some features that the introduction to this special issue describes as crucial to have an impact on democratization processes (such as autonomy from the state, possibility to avert state co-optation, and strong organization), only the MP and the JDP have been able to play a constructive role in Turkey's democratization processes, by promoting significant reforms: as proved also by the main democratization indexes, showing an improvement in the quality of democracy in the country in the 1980s and the 2000s. On the other hand, Erbakan's WP played a more destructive role, failing to promote real reforms, and focusing mainly on the field of religious liberties: which contributed to polarization and political fragmentation processes and, ultimately, led to a harsh reaction by the military culminated in the '28 February process', which strongly hindered Turkey's democratic stabilization.

Conclusion: The Meaning of the Turkish Case for the Debate about Islam and Democratization

The analysis carried out in this paper on the Turkish case confirms the hypothesis put forward in the introduction to this special issue, according to which the multivocality point of view is the most suitable to explain the impact of religion on democratization in the Muslim world. The positivist and essentialist approaches, regarding religion – or more specifically Islam – as a factor hindering democratization are in fact not compatible with the development of democracy in Turkey under the governments of two religiously oriented political actors such as the MP in the 1980s and the JDP in the 2000s.

On the other hand, this paper shows that when – as in Turkey – political parties are the main religiously oriented actors playing a significant role in democratization processes, their political theologies play a crucial role in determining their impact on democratization processes. They play a constructive role when – as in the MP and JDP cases – the main political leaders and ideologues, although regarding religion as the ultimate reference in terms of values, consider democracy as the only game in town. On the other hand, when political leaders are divided between their commitment to religious goals and to democratic values, are unable to severe the ties to religious organizations (see Ozzano 2013 and Ozzano and Cavatorta 2013), and mix up political and religious roles – as in Erbakan's case – they play a more ambiguous role which – although not necessarily directly obstructing democratization processes – can trigger dynamics that negatively affect them.

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