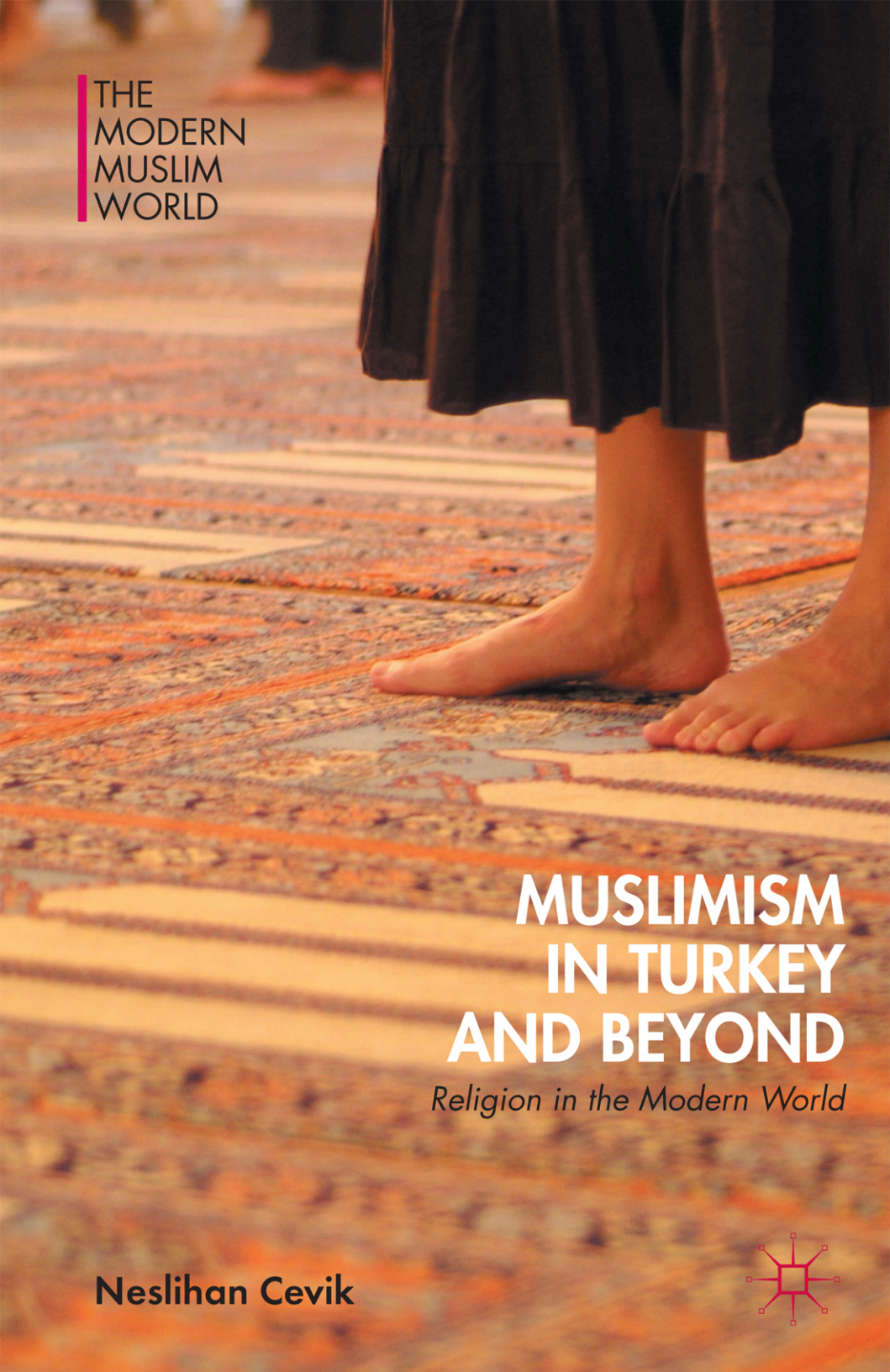
THE
MODERN
MUSLIM
WORLD
MUSLIMISM
IN TURKEY
AND BEYOND
Religion in the Modern World
Neslihan Cevik

Muslimism in Turkey and Beyond

The Modern Muslim World

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To my late Grandmother, Hayat Dagistanli
May her soul rest in peace

Contents

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Introduction: Turkey's Muslimists: From Veil-Chic Women to a New Political Ethos

In 2008, during New York Couture Week, one of the most prestigious fashion events in the world, "the most innovative fashion designer award" went to *Rabia Haute Couture Line*, owned by Rabia Yalcin. Rabia is a veiled Turkish woman and a mother of a young veiled girl. In the West, Rabia is renowned as a "gown guru." In Turkey, however, she is a fashion authority on "veil-chicness," advising Muslim women how to combine Islamic modesty with contemporary design and aesthetics. This new combination, according to Rabia, is very easy to attain and requires neither lavish expense nor the sacrifice of Islamic modesty; one simply needs to observe some basic rules:

> Don't use bright colors; otherwise, you would look like a walking ball of fabric . . . If you have an orange veil and orange shoes, no way you would look aesthetic; unless you want to look like a fruit! . . . Wear the bone under your scarf, so your hair won't show, but loosen the scarf to lessen the claustrophobic affect . . . Instead of square scarves, prefer rectangular ones. Hang down your scarf underneath your jacket and create a Grace Kelly effect . . . Be careful with your diet. Extra pounds are the enemies of *tesettur* chic-ness![1]

In Turkey, a growing number of Muslim women across classes and ages, including the first lady and prime minister's wife, self-style their veil in observance of contemporary trends and in accord with their unique individual features: body figure, age, and personality. There are various Turkish companies specializing in modish Islamic wear, and some of these companies, like the high-fashion brands of Milan and New York, have their own catwalks introducing new lines for every season.

Beyond catering to personal preference for color and style, the veil-chic companies provide veiled women with a whole new wardrobe, redefining what a Muslim female body can do under the veil: office

wear for work, dry-fit textured, Islam-proper workout clothes (*hesofmans*) for fitness, and suits that cover the whole body *(hashemas)* for swimming. The message that these designs suggest is revolutionary: a woman can keep the veil on but still be career-oriented and look professional, or go to yoga classes, or even swim. These Islam-observant designs and the message they convey are now becoming trans-Islamic, followed by veiled women in other Muslim countries and in the West.

Going well beyond the Islamic fashion industry and its veil-chic apparel, however, Turkey today is a host for much more curious engagements between Muslims and modernity. Since the 1980s, Muslims in a broad strata of society in Turkey have formed human rights associations that refer both to the United Nations Human Rights Convention and Islamic theological sources to define human rights; women's organizations that aim to empower women by retrieving progressive Islamic concepts (particularly "*masalih*"[2] and "*ijtihad*,"[3] both simply referring to adaptation to contemporaneous currents); and business associations that embrace the free market while drawing Islamic moral limits to commercial activity.

Such unconventional Muslim engagements of modernity have moved into the political sphere as well, generating a new Islamic political ethos that embraces modern political values, especially individual rights and pluralism. Although rooted in broad Muslim segments coming from across spheres of society, this new political ethos gained its greatest public visibility by the formation in 2001 of a new Islam-inspired party, the Justice and Development Party (JDP or AKP). The founders of the JDP were a group of self-defined devout politicians coming from the National Vision Movement cadres marked with a strong anti-Western and anti-secular discourse. These politicians, however, many of whom defined themselves a reformists, claimed to break all past ties with the Movement, refused any affiliation with Islamism, and, instead, identified the new party with conservative democracy. This new political language was critical both of secularist and Islamist formations, and was able to present the party as a new political actor committed and able to advance a liberal national polity and a conciliatory foreign policy, while not refusing but using Islam to promote these elements.

The JDP was able to maintain this image throughout its early terms in office (2002–2007 and 2007–2011), acquiring remarkable electoral success. This aspect of the party led many to debate whether it built an exceptional "Turkish model" of Muslim-democracy that could possibly be transferred to the region, or whether it was a mere

façade for Islamism. This broad policy of the party in fact was not unchangeable but historically contingent. Since its third term in office (2011–), the party seems to have moved to a top-down, statist approach, and thus away from the broader new political ethos, raising the question of whether the "Turkish model" has failed, or whether the party is revealing its true self. Nevertheless, the party's earlier liberal, pro-European Union (EU), and pluralist style, and associated electoral successes, functioned to bring the emerging Muslim engagements with modern political values and contemporary institutions in Turkey to the surface. It is this period of the party and its resonance with the new Islamic ethos that was emerging that is the focus of this study.

In response to these puzzling developments, many scholars as well as secularists have suggested that there is not much to celebrate. Muslims' engaging markets, human rights, or liberal political notions were neo-fundamentalist attempts upgrading the old formula of "Sharia plus electricity[4]" from technology to modern fashion or democracy. Or, as with the JDP, a mere front for Islamism.

Yet, what many discard as neo-fundamentalist encounters or a façade for political Islamism is for steadfast Islamists in Turkey and beyond a degeneration of Islam. For Niyazi, a former congressman of Turkey's Welfare Party closed down by the army in 1998 for promoting radical Islam, for example, the JDP does not have an Islamic identity. Describing modernity "as a furious bull attacking Islam," for him, the JDP not only failed to protect the society against this bull, but it also turned Turkey away from Islam and allied it with the West. While under the AKP, Turkey seeks to enter the EU, he contends: "The EU will eventually demand the banning of *ezan* [the public call for the five-time prayer]... This is the information we got from the very inside of the EU." Niyazi, for whom the JDP is degenerate, also sees the emerging Islamic fashion as "the biggest measurement that illustrates... the deformation among the Islamic community." Similar to him, a group of conservative merchants in Iraq displayed mannequins wearing colorful and stylish veils on the street as examples of degenerate Muslim women who "will burn eternally for turning men into voracious monsters."[5]

Despite the fact that secularists and Islamists use opposite approaches, they arrive at the same conclusion: Islam and modernity are not compatible and any attempt by Muslims to go beyond this divide is a mere façade for political Islamism, or the degeneration of Islam. What I have found in the field, however, did not replicate any of these accounts. Instead, my empirical research introduces

pious Muslim men and women who moved away both from Islamist and secularist approaches and engaged modernity in a distinctive or alternative way in markets, in everyday life, and in politics. This book aims to examine, understand, and introduce this alternative form.

A Distinctive Form: Muslimism

Whereas Niyazi depicts modernity as a furious bull attacking Islam, Derya, a veiled woman, and a women's rights activist who defines herself as a devout Muslim, talks about the virtues of modernity in relation to Islam. For Derya, liberty is necessary for Islam because "true faith," she suggests, emerges "in an atmosphere of freedom and liberty." She continues, "modernity extends freedoms and liberties . . . and by that, it enables a truly Islamic life."

Nur and Yasemin, also veiled Muslim women, talked about other virtues of modernity. Nur, a human rights activist, thinks that by purifying Islam from the residues of tradition and by stimulating an investigative mind, modernity can allow Muslims to reclaim the essence of Islam. She explains, "in Turkey Muslims are generally traditional Muslims; this is called *taklid* [imitation] . . . people imitate what they see from family and community. On the other side, there is *tahkik* [enquiry]. *Tahkik* is when you investigate, when you ask what it is that I believe . . . modernity . . . challenges *taklid* but it encourages people to investigate and to ask. This is . . . good and necessary."

Similarly, for the pious but self-defined "democrat" women of the Capital Women's Platform (*Baskent Kadin Platformu*), rather than degenerating Islamic authenticity and identity, modernity enables "identity-finding and formation." Both the new veil designs and civil society organizations were seen through this lens too. In our discussions on the veil, Yasemin, like other women, complained that in her college years as a young, veiled girl she had no alternatives. "Our veils and wardrobes looked all the same, and all dark colors." But the new veiling styles, she says, allow self-expression and individual autonomy. Similarly, for these women, the Platform, as a professional association, was a place of freedom; unlike *cemaats* (religious orders), it welcomed individual difference and self-expression.

The more I observed and engaged various Islamic groups and organizations, both in Istanbul and Ankara, the more obvious it became that the realities of the field were resisting the premises of

classical sociological theories on religion and contemporary academic scholarship in multiple ways.

For one, the sharp division of religion versus modernity that is built into social science theories of religion simply did not apply to these groups. In their engagements with modernity and modern institutions and values, these groups were neither submitting to modernity nor rejecting it. Their lifestyles, political preferences, and religious temperaments significantly differed both from Islamists and liberal-like religious formations, invalidating the counter-posing of religion and modernity.

Second, these groups challenged another binary commonly used by the scholarship on Islamic movements: a movement must be either political or cultural. If we find even a hint of political involvement, then a movement must be oriented toward control of the state—hence "political Islam"—and if it is not state-oriented, then it must be apolitical—hence "cultural Islam."

If the current Muslim engagements of modernity in Turkey are neither fundamentalist nor liberal, and if they are neither solely cultural nor solely state oriented, then how can we make sense of them? I argue that the new Muslim engagements of modernity in Turkey present the emergence of a "new Islamic orthodoxy," and I term this form as "Muslimism."

In using the term "orthodoxy," rather than referring to the separation of orthodoxical and orthopraxic religions, I denote a commitment to a sacred truth. (Although, Muslimism, in fact, exhibits both being embedded in cultural schema—doxa—and a focus on articulating practices—praxis). This orthodoxy is "new," however, because it rejects both the attitude that modernity and religion are absolutely incommensurable and the attitude that there is little conflict between global modernity and religion. In other words, it is neither a liberal translation of religion into modernist terms nor a fundamentalist rejection of modernity. Instead, Muslimism is a hybrid identity frame that embraces aspects of modern life while submitting that life to a sacred, moral order. It, moreover, is not a self-identified movement organization, but a cultural frame and identity that inform individuals throughout society.

Within this hybrid framework, the main aim is not a political takeover of the state or the Islamization of the community; it is to construct a lifestyle in which the individual believer can be incorporated into modern life while carrying an Islamic identity. This new form, therefore, is neither state- nor community-centered but individual-oriented. The term "Muslim[ism]" aims to reflect the strong

individual-orientation of this new form while clearly distinguishing it from other, particularly Islamist, types of religious orthodoxies and formations.

My fieldwork has shown that the Muslimist individual orientation is informed by a theological empowerment of *iman* (inner belief) over external authority, be it the state or religious community. Muslimists claim that faith is a matter of individual choice, which is voluntary and *kalbi* (from the heart), and moral action flows from this heartfelt choice. Therefore, instead of atomistic individualism, Muslimist individual orientation presents the theological primacy of the individual with respect to spiritual decisions and moral behavior. This theological inclination toward the individual branches out to shape Muslimist cultural preferences and core political metaphors and values. Relative to social relations and religious community, Muslimists cherish individual autonomy and welcome self-expression and uniqueness while moving away from communitarian/traditional religious establishments (i.e., *cemaat*) that minimize individual agency and marginalize self-expression.

Relative to the political sphere, on the other hand, they tend toward a liberal state model that allows individual agency, choice, and autonomy with respect to religious, economic, political, and civic action. This particular political setting requires separation of state and religious affairs. Neither a religious state nor a secularist state can provide such freedom, for each equally eliminates and violates individual autonomy—the former, for example, by enforcing veiling and the latter by banning it. Thus, while not state-centered, Muslimism is neither a mere cultural expression. On the contrary, it articulates a distinct political ethos and attempts to influence political actors and political change in line with this ethos.

In this book, I tell the story of this emerging form and its main architects, "Muslimists." I examine the historical conditions that made this new form possible and introduce its substance and content based on empirical research.

Encounters of the Pious with Modernity

"Some of our daughters who are not sufficiently educated wear headscarves under the influence of their social environments, customs, and traditions—without giving any special thought to it. Yet it is known that some of our daughters and women who are educated enough to resist their social environments and customs wear headscarves just to oppose the principles of the secular Republic, showing that they

adopt the ideal of a religious state. For those people, headscarf is no longer an innocent habit, but a symbol of a world view that opposes women's liberty and the fundamental principles of our Republic."[6]

This statement was made by the Turkish Council of State in 1984 to end the controversies on the headscarf ban following the Council of Higher Education policies that expelled veiled girls from universities. The statement on the headscarf reveals that the Turkish state viewed Muslims either as "innocent victims of tradition" or as "Islamic fundamentalists" threatening the secular/modern character of Turkey.

This particular view of religion is certainly not unique to Turkey. It finds its broader expression in the almost three-centuries-old secularization paradigm and its normative binaries that continue to inform contemporary social theory and public policy on religion: "religion versus modernity" and "cultural versus political."

Stepping Out of the False Divides: Religion versus Modernity, Cultural versus Political

The Western adherents of the secularization paradigm as well as the modernizing elite in the Muslim world presumed a sharp divide between religion and modernity. According to this divide, as modernization penetrated in societies, religious institutions were to withdraw into the private sphere. Faced with an increasing plurality of value systems, the modernized self would eventually lose its faith in religion,[7] leading to religion's permanent decline. These presumptions were normatively advocated as well; secularization was promoted as the engine of individual and societal progress.

The late-modern context, however, presented contradictory evidence. Since the 1960s, religiosity has been growing, not declining,[8] and, from the 1980s onward, instead of becoming more and more limited to the private realm, religions and religious groups have moved more and more into the public space,[9] taking on new public roles.[10] More recently, religions have also begun to organize beyond the territories of the nation-state, exerting influence on and being acknowledged by intergovernmental organizations[11]; for example, some religious international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) now hold consultation status with the United Nations (UN).[12]

Modern proponents of the secularization paradigm view the continuing presence of religion in contemporary societies as an anomaly that requires special explanations: religiosity must be epiphenomenal—a tool to express all sorts of social and economic crises[13]—or a feature of a selected few whose modernization is incomplete or has

seriously failed. While seeking special explanations, the modern proponents of the paradigm[14] also extended the normative privileges of "secular," presenting it as the automatic solution for complex issues surrounding contemporary societies and governance, from relations of state and civil society, to democracy, justice, and pluralism and to interstate order, multi-culturalism, immigration, and globalization.[15]

In the last few decades, however, there have been several attempts to rethink the legacies of the secularization paradigm.[16] New metatheoretical frames, such as New Social Movements,[17] Religious Market theories,[18] Political Processes Perspective,[19] as well as the contextual[20] and constructive approaches[21] used by various disciplines, have shifted our scholarly attention from special explanations to organizational aspects of religious mobilization and social movements, state formation and structure, religious market regulations and rational choice, post-industrial demands, and questions of identity and identity production.

Another line of work addressed the short sightedness of the religious versus modernity divide more directly[22] and highlighted that religion and modernity can, in fact, coexist. Evidence of coexistence has been observed even among conservative and orthodox religious formations. James. D. Hunter, a prominent figure in the sociology of American religion, did an empirical study on American Evangelicals that has shown, for example, that a substantial portion of contemporary American Evangelicals has been moving away from literalist readings of the Bible while experimenting with political civility, cultural tolerance and tolerability, and even feminist sensibilities.[23] Aspects of modern cultural and political order have been ingraining themselves within segments of Orthodox Judaism, as well (e.g., pursuit of secular occupations, encouragement and institutionalization of secular learning in arts and sciences, tolerant attitudes toward broader culture).[24]

Similarly, in the Muslim context, discussions about "post-Islamism," most notably in the works of Asef Bayat[25] and Gelles Kepel,[26] renowned scholars of Islamic movements, have brought to academic and public attention Islamic groups' departure—even of strictly Islamist groups, such as the Muslim brotherhood of Egypt—from anti-modern and radical Islamic idioms. Islamist rejections of democracy and popular will as alien constructs "westoxificating" Muslims are no longer appealing, especially for the globally connected and educated pious youth of the Middle East.

Other works, moreover, have called the normative assumptions of the secularization paradigm into question, showing that religious

groups were not only able to adapt to the pluralist nature of the public sphere, but they actually contributed to it. Christian democratic parties in Western Europe, for example, incorporated Catholic masses into a pluralistic political frame and accommodated Catholicism with democracy.[27] In other places, including the US, Latin America, Eastern and Western Europe, India, Iran, and Indonesia, religious groups have acted as progressive civil forces, challenging authoritarian states, extending borders of the public sphere, and siding with prodemocratic forces.[28] Within the international arena, as well, religious groups have managed to enact and observe universal values (e.g., rationality and pragmatism)[29] and, at times, have even contributed to global problem solving.[30]

The Turkish case poses more dramatic challenges to the normative divide of the religious versus the secular. Studies on Turkish modernization and Islamic movements are now saturated with critiques of Kemalist-secularism (*laïcité/laiklik*). These critiques, most vocally coming from liberal intellectuals, point out that secularism in Turkey is too assertive[31]; rather than separating state and religious affairs, it actually oppresses religion, thus failing to observe principles of democracy and pluralism. On the other hand, it is "too Sunni and too Muslim"; by marginalizing religious and denominational minorities, it fails to accommodate principles of impartiality and neutrality.[32]

Other studies direct our attention to the flipside of modern Turkish history: pious groups. These works discuss how religious actors, especially in the last decade, have been engaging global processes and universal values and norms of human rights or democracy more effectively than the non-religious segments.[33] These engagements certainly help religious actors to secure and open up space for religion in the public sphere; however, such engagements have also influenced the national polity at large, at times by broadening the scope of civil rights, and at times by directly challenging the rigid and state-oriented nature of laicism in Turkey.

Works that have paid close attention to such complex realities of religion and secularism in contemporary Islamic and Western contexts have undermined traditional presentations of religion and modernity as two opposite cultural categories that are sharply separated from each other. They showed, in contrast, that modernity and religion interpenetrate and converge and that the boundaries thought to separate them are, in fact, blurred. These observations have opened up new epistemological space for the social scientific study of religion in which we can finally step out of the religion versus modernity divide and rethink both categories along new lines.

This book and my work on Muslimism find its place in this new epistemological space. Yet, by defining Muslimism as a "new religious orthodoxy,"[34] the book also attempts to expand this new space and to push the rethinking of religion and modernity to a deeper level.

Despite the current attempts to rethink religion, especially Islam, discussions mainly criticize the false separation of religion versus modernity at a conceptual level. When it comes to examinations of actual religion-modernity interactions, however, most studies resort back to a binary analysis, expecting religion to choose between "a sterile conservation of its pre-modern characteristics and a self-effacing assimilation to the secularized world."[35] In other words, the general perception is that, in response to modernizing processes, religions will either become fundamentalist orthodoxies, rejecting modernity with an impulse to protect authenticity, or liberal formations, secularizing tradition to accommodate modernity.[36]

In studies of Islam-modernity encounters, these prescriptions (accommodation and rejection) become slightly modified. This is partly due to the depiction of Islam as an "exceptional" religion (Islam is intrinsically anti-modern, secularization-resistant, and political)[37] and partly due to the domination of the religious field of Muslim countries either by Islamist or by secularist establishments. Accordingly, the academic observations of Islam-modernity interactions have been mostly confined to a narrow spectrum polarized between extreme examples of state-imposed secularization, aggressively pushing religion into private/cultural spheres, and state-imposed Islamization and its theocratic designation of public/political spheres. In the case of Turkey, for example, until the early 1990s, we would mainly find either Kemalist (secularist) appropriations of Islam, fully submitting Islam to modernity and to the state, or state-centered Islamist expressions, depicting secular-modernity as anti-Islamic and hence forbidden to Muslims.

Informed by this framework, within the divide of rejection/accommodation, most studies suggest that Islam gears toward a rejection of modernity, and that this rejection is geared toward a political takeover of the state. It follows, then, when or if Islam adapts to modernity, it also simultaneously withdraws from the political realm, making a social/cultural turn and becoming depoliticized.

Is there really no alternative for the pious individual, Muslim or otherwise, than totally rejecting modernity or fully assimilating to it? More specific to Islam, are Muslims stuck between the options of "political Islam" and theocracy as ways to conserve tradition and "cultural Islam," which means abandoning the political sphere and

submitting Islam to the foster care of an aggressively secular-state and public policy?

Muslimism as a New Islamic Orthodoxy: A Guilt-Free Modernity and Islam without Apology

Undermining the traditional binary views, Muslimism is a "new religious orthodoxy" that allows Muslims to embrace modern institutions and values while observing sacred imperatives. Muslimists neither reject nor submit to modernity; instead, they embrace aspects of modern life while simultaneously submitting that life to a sacred, moral order. More specifically, Muslimism is a hybrid identity frame empowering engagements between Islam and secular-modernity in innovative ways.

This hybrid frame challenges the hegemony of the secularist state in defining modernity and how to be modern and the hegemony of Islamist establishments on defining "true Islam" and authentic Muslims. Muslimists transform the forbidden modern[38] into a guilt-free modernity[39] in which modernity is no longer reduced to a sum of evil effects destroying religious sensitivities or offending the Muslim conscience. For example, for Muslimists, self-styling the Islamic veil in accord with modern fashion does not degenerate the veil or the women who wear the veil, nor does a pluralistic public sphere and desacralization of the state prevent the emergence of truly faithful individuals and societies.

While reformulating modernity, Muslimists also redefine Islam to be unapologetic. This is not an exercise of liberal religious reform accommodating Islam to modernity. Rather, it is an effort to revitalize faith in the context of contemporary modern life, in particular by attempting to filter out traditional practices arrogated to Islam throughout Islamic history. This conscious effort to free Islam from tradition most notably includes Muslimists' active engagement of intellectual and theological debates across classes and gender. In fact, Muslimist women often spearhead such efforts; they openly promote a new Islamic female politics by retrieving evidence from sacred texts, Islamic history, and figures. The unapologetic Islam, then, frees Islam from its national and global stigmas; Islam is no longer understood as the sacred antithesis of modernity. One can be a devout Muslim woman and still look like Grace Kelly and choose career over marriage, or an Islam-inspired party can be pro-EU and favor a democratic and liberal national polity at the same time.

In sum, going beyond the formula of "sharia plus electricity," the Muslimist hybridization allows Islamic and modern identities to interpenetrate and even complement each other (e.g., the Muslimist argument that modernity allows for true Islam by undermining "incorrect" tradition). Importantly, rather than secularizing Muslims, hybridity makes Islamic identity more salient by enabling the pious to practice religion within a secular cultural program without either rejecting it or submitting to it.

Individual-Orientation

My empirical observations have shown that within this hybrid framework, believers' orientations toward the social order (politics, religion, social relations) and its agents (state, community, individual) are significantly different from what we find within fundamentalist orthodoxies and liberal-religious frames. Paralleling this, the political and sociological implications of Muslimism are also significantly different from that of Islamist and liberal formations.

Differing from Islamist orthodoxies, within the compass of Muslimism, the main aim is not a political takeover of the state to Islamize the society nor is it the Islamization of the community to eventually bring on an Islamic state. Thus, Muslimism is neither state- nor community-centered. The main concern, instead, is to formulate a lifestyle in which the individual believer can be incorporated into modernity without being marginalized and while preserving an Islam-observant living. Thus, Muslimism is individual-oriented.

Empirical evidence shows that Muslimist individual-orientation is filtered through theological notions, specifically the definition of true faith or true piety as *iman*. According to Muslimists, true faith emanates from the individual's *iman* (inner belief) and *kalb* (heart), and neither *iman* nor *kalb* can be controlled or regulated by external authority (the state or the community) and its interventions (law enforcement or societal pressures). As such, Muslimists see faith as a matter of individual choice, that is voluntary and from the heart, and they cherish "faith as choice" to be more meaningful and valuable than faith as forced by state or community. Moreover, when faith is an individual choice, it also becomes a conscious choice rather than blind submission to tradition.

Faith as a voluntary and conscious choice or the emphasis on *iman* works as an overarching cognitive frame informing the theological meaning and functions ascribed to the individual, community, and the state. This theological framing, in turn, configures political and

social relationships among the individual, state, and society as well as their position vis-à-vis matters of faith.

Iman and Individual

For Islamists, external authority is theologically central for establishing and maintaining a true Islamic community and faithful individuals. The Muslimist emphasis on *iman,* in contrast, increases the theological value of the individual while undermining the theological value and functions of external authorities—the state and/or community.

This theological shift from external sources to the individual, however, does not create a vacuum of religious authority (nor did Calvinist critiques of the Catholic Church). Instead, *iman* acts as a much more powerful and effective source of control than external authority: *Iman* is constant and ever present, directing the Muslim self toward *hayir* (permissible) and away from *haram* (impermissible). This function of *iman* continues whether law/state or community is present,[40] and at the most clandestine and private levels, where external control is least relevant and ineffective. Accordingly, Muslimism depicts the individual as the main locus of faith and religious conduct.

Iman and Community

As the self becomes key to spiritual decisions and moral action, Muslimists also move away from traditional religious communities that minimize individual autonomy and agency. For Islamists, the community reinforces or takes on the state's role by conforming to prescribed conduct and accepted interpretations of such conduct—for example, veiling in particular formats such as using particular colors and styles—as external indexes to measure one's faithfulness. Deviation from prescribed conduct—self-expression or modification—is depicted to be degenerate and inauthentic.

Muslimists, in contrast, redefine and reorganize religious community into a sort of a sodality where they can still be strongly committed to a moral community (*umma*), a common good, and a shared identity, but, simultaneously, discover and realize individual choice, preference, difference, and independency. This process is not a rejection of communal life per se, but its conservative transformation, a quest for community's recognition and legitimization of one's uniqueness. This is not an individual self that is autonomous, freed from God or Islam, either, but from particular communal religious forms that have accreted power over the ages as socially constructed expressions

of supposed piety. Self-fashioning the veil, forming and joining professional and voluntary associations while leaving religious orders (*cemaat*), or consulting with theology professors or religious intellectuals instead of submitting to prophetic elites for religious learning make strong statements about these Muslimist demands for individuation, self-expression, and individual autonomy. These demands have in fact brought the self into a broader relief by challenging traditional social codes and relations. Within that, Muslimist women are playing a particularly significant role by questioning patriarchal codes and notions about gender and womanhood, showing, therefore, the potent agency of women in transforming Muslim conceptions of the self and community. These emerging practices also illustrate how Muslimist theological demands and perceptions result in sociological demands and shifts.

Iman and Liberal State

The undermining of external authorities (state and community) both theologically and sociologically, nevertheless, does not indicate an apolitical orthodoxy or a mere cultural expression. Both Islamists and Muslimists articulate a political ethos in line with their theological and sociological demands, one emphasizing external control and homogeneity and the other internal ethics and individual autonomy. Similarly, they both ascribe to the state a theological function. For Islamists, the state grants Allah's will by enforcing religion and religious conduct (e.g., banning alcohol). In contrast, for Muslimists, the state grants Allah's will by guaranteeing freedom of choice, allowing believers to voluntarily choose between *haram* and *helal* (e.g., drinking or not).

The theological function that Muslimists assign to the state cannot be exercised by an Islamic state because it imposes religious conduct, thereby eliminating individual choice and violating individual autonomy. However, this does not remove Muslimists (or Islam) from the political sphere. Muslimists are also distrustful of the secularist state for the state's tendency to co-opt the sacred, equally eliminating individual choice and violating individual autonomy.

Muslimists find the solution in embracing a state design that would observe principles of democracy and liberalism, and a separation of the bureaucratic state from religious organizations and authority. They push for a state design that would frame its attitudes about faith and the individual within a liberal polity. As such, Muslimists attempt to reframe state purpose and effect political change. For that, they mobilize as civil organizations; attempt to exert civic pressure

on political elites and public experts, at times by allying with international institutions (in particular, the EU); and give electoral support to political parties that are sympathetic to their sentiments. During the period of this empirical study, at the time of the interviews, and in the few years following, Muslimist support has been given to the JDP. As I discuss more fully in the concluding chapter when drawing out current implications, with the seeming drifting of the party away from core Muslimist sentiments, particularly individual rights, this relationship likely will evolve. In that sense, while not state centered, Muslimism is not a mere cultural expression either; it engages the political arena and seeks to effect political change by attempting to inform state and political actors.

A Note on Conceptualization

The current academic lexicon presents us with the term "Islamism" as the main conceptual tool to think about and speak of collective Islamic action (movements) and expression. However, despite the generous employment of the term by scholars and pundits, Islamism is far from being a neutral (or flexible) concept that is usable as an umbrella term. The term "Islamism" is derived from and definitive of a particular style of movement. It refers to a religious ideology that perceives an inherent divide between Islam and modernity, as such seeking retrieval of an Islamic moral-political order, either by establishing an Islamic state or by creating an ideological *umma*.

Representing this quite particular content or form, Islamism is an analytical category that carries with it particular ontological and epistemological assumptions. We implicitly reproduce and agree with these assumptions every time we employ the term to define a given Islamic movement, whether or not this movement really fits with the category of Islamism.

Contemporary Muslim engagements of modernity in Turkey dramatically challenge the assumptions that are embedded in Islamism, because they embody a new type of orthodoxy. This orthodoxy deviates from Islamism in its theological, political, and cultural orientations, as well as its temperaments and attitudes. For example, this new orthodoxy sees Islam as an identity commitment instead of a religious ideology, thus opening up space for religious innovation and reform. It emphasizes inner ethics, rights, and individual choice over external authority, and it acknowledges pluralism and promotes cultural tolerance, expanding interaction with the secular and non-Muslim "other." Furthermore, in its orientation to the state, this new

orthodoxy tends toward a liberal state in place of an Islamic state, addresses individual rights vis-à-vis authoritarianism, and favors voluntary associational agency and individual enterprise over the state and traditional religious communities.

These differences reveal how using the category of Islamism as a general label seriously limits our capacity to think about contemporary Islamic mobilization in Turkey. The category of Islamism blinds our academic sight to cultural shifts, religious innovations, lifestyle changes, and the ongoing identity transformations that are translated into a distinct Islamic expression and orthodoxy in the hands of a new Muslim status group in Turkey. This new orthodoxy calls for a new term that can communicate its novelty and that can clearly distinguish its content from Islamism and its variants.

Other scholars have also recognized the problems with using the term "Islamism" universally, as they observed the emerging Islamic discourses and movements that deviated from Islamist discourse and groups. As a response to these observations, several concepts have been suggested; the most prevalent one being "moderate Islamism." Although this has been helpful in drawing attention to major religious changes, there are various problems with the term "moderate Islam," or "moderate religion," more generally. For one, moderate Islamism is derived from the term "Islamism" itself by adding an adjective to it, hence, confining religious change within the epistemological package of Islamism. We need concepts that are versatile enough to be open to religious innovations and novel forms. More importantly, moderate Islamism/Islam still implies that Islam is intrinsically fundamentalist; moderate occurs when the "radicalism of Islam" is softened or pacified. This marginalizes any deeply held religious belief and, in fact, reinforces the assumed divide between Islam and modernity while provoking further questions: What sort of religiosity is moderate? Who is acceptable as moderate? Does moderate exclude any passionately felt religious commitments?

The concept "post-Islamism," as used by Asef Bayat, has been more successful in pointing to the emergence of new Islamic movements and expressions in various Muslim contexts that depart from state-centered and radical Islamic idioms. Nonetheless, although his description of post-Islamism[41] is extremely insightful, the concept says little about the actual content. On the other hand, Jenny White has made an efficient break from the category of Islamism by using the term "cultural Muslimhood,"[42] a model in which Islam becomes a personal attribute in one's public political identity, replacing political Islamism.[43] Muslimhood, however, is not fully adequate to describe