

No Bourgeois, No Moderation:
Change in Political Islam in Turkey, Egypt and Algeria

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Mahmood Mamdani claims that the most influential scholars in the western academia regarding Islam are Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington. Bernard Lewis (1993, p.89) once claimed: “Islam seems to offer worst prospects for liberal democracy.” Huntington (1996), likewise, argued that civilizational differences between Islam and the West couldn't be overcome, implying incompatibility between Islam and liberal democracy. Some other, and apparently less influential scholars¹ argued that Islam and democracy are indeed compatible.

The debate between the two camps regarding Islam and democracy has often focused on the essence of Islam as a religion. Both camps derived evidence to support their claims from the religious texts and religious structures. As a result, both groups lost their focus on reality of politics and what Muslims actually have been doing in the political realm. In fact, there has been substantial variation within Muslim communities and political Islamists in terms of their disposition towards democracy. One of the main objectives of this paper is to show this variation by pointing at recent moderation within political Islam.

Since religions can be source of legitimacy for both authoritarian and democratic political practices, rather than the essences of religions, we should focus on the objectives of religious political groups. Therefore, this paper focuses on the relationship between political Islam and democracy and not Islam and democracy. This position gets support from the literature that sees the role played by religion in democratization process as not pre-determined. As opposed to functionalist arguments, there is no distinction between essences of religions in terms of their viability for democracy. Therefore, it is futile to argue that Protestantism is predisposed to democracy while other religions (such as Islam and Catholicism) are not.

¹Ayubi and Halliday are among scholars who argue that Islam and democracy are in fact compatible. H. Yavuz is a scholar who argues so for Turkish political context.

Although the role of religion in democratization is not pre-determined this paper argues that there are certain conditions under which religions, regardless of their essence, facilitate transition to and consolidation of democracy. The most important condition concerns the goals of the religious-political groups. Religious mobilization serves democracy if these groups perceive democracy as the optimal solution to their problems. Therefore, the process during which religious political groups accommodate to democracy (this process is referred to as moderation in this paper) is of utmost importance. This paper focuses on the causes of moderation of religious political movements, and particularly the case of recent partial moderation² of the political Islamic movements. The argument is that the expansion of middle classes due to structural changes in the society is the real cause behind this recent moderation in the political Islamic groups. In many Middle Eastern countries economic liberalization programs triggered a structural change that limited the state's reach in society and empowered society vis-à-vis the state. Political Islamic groups have significantly benefited from this liberalization process and the resultant expansion of the middle classes within political Islamic movement led to consequent moderation of a part of the movement.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: the first section discusses the conditions under which religion serves democratization. The significance of moderation is highlighted in this section. The second part reviews the literature on moderation of political movements. The third part lays the central argument out and provides the causal logic why the expansion of the middle classes leads to strengthening of democracy. The final section includes a discussion of Turkish, Egyptian, and Algerian political Islamic experience.

² Although there are some debates about this recent change in political Islamic enterprise, this paper accepts that this recent change signifies a substantial moderation. With this change, moderates accept democracy as the ultimate objective. The moderation is partial because the movement in one country as a whole does not moderate. Rather, a group of political Islamists separate from the wider movement and establish their own political organization, which is different in many aspects than the rest of the political Islamic movement.

RELIGION AS A PRO-DEMOCRATIC FORCE

Under certain conditions, religion serves as a positive force that supports democratization. First, as Waldner (1994) asserts, religion can be a solution to the collective action problem that excluded social groups face. Reuschemeyer et al agree: “religious affiliation can be an important factor in collectivity formation.” Moreover, religion can be a source of autonomy for the movements it aids to form. In Reuschemeyer et al’s model of democratization the autonomy of the organizations is decisively important. These organizations “protect subordinate classes from the ideological hegemony of the dominant classes, a necessary condition for a democratic impulse.” (1991, p.50) Hence, religion emerges as a source of mobilization and organization that can provide protection for sub-ordinate classes.

Second, religion and religious parties become crucial elements of democracy when they incorporate and represent the excluded classes in society and limit the state’s autonomy in favor of the excluded classes. In this case, religion serves democracy because “a state apparatus that enjoys considerable autonomy vis-à-vis the masses—petty bourgeoisie, small farmers, and workers—is unlikely to be a factor favorable for democracy” (Reuschemeyer et. al. 1991, p. 65). Kalyvas (1996), like Reuschemeyer et al, argue that the “politicization of religion had beneficial effects for democratic development. By integrating newly enfranchised masses and by turning themselves from opponents into supporters of parliamentary democracy, confessional parties contributed to the consolidation of democratic regimes” (Kalyvas 1996, p. 25).

Although it is true that religion can solve collective action problems and represent previously excluded groups in the political arena, these arguments assume that politicization of religion automatically enhances democratic impulses. In other words, democracy is asserted as an end whose virtues are evident to all groups. However, it is not inherent in religious

mobilization that democracy will emerge as the ultimate political goal. For religious mobilization and representation may not entail democratic impulse, the objectives of those groups, who overcome their collective action problems through religious mobilization, become equally important. Therefore, a final condition under which religion serves democracy is that religious political movements should agree that democracy is the optimal solution for their political and social problems. Otherwise, their mobilizational power and ideological radicalism may jeopardize the democratic endeavor.

This paper asserts that some political Islamic movements fulfill these conditions and they strengthen democracy in their societies. Political Islam solves the collective action problems of the excluded segments in the society, and fights for their inclusion in the system. Political Islamic movements, its both moderate and radical strands,³ were not compatible with democracy. They had an initial aim of establishing a true Islamic society. Recently, parts of political Islam have evolved into a stage of moderation⁴ that renders this wing of political Islam fully compatible with democracy. As a result of this evolution, the last and most important condition is fulfilled. By fulfilling all the conditions listed above, moderate Islamic parties now constitute one of the most important forces of democratization in the Middle East. Understanding the role that political Islam plays in transition to and consolidation of democracy in the Middle East therefore depends on the answer to the question: under what conditions do political Islamic

³ Political Islamic movements are classified into moderate and radical fundamentalists in the literature. The principle of distinction is not their goals, which is establishing a true Islamic society because it is common across all groups, but it is their perception of the best means in achieving this goal. Moderates prefer a bottom-up strategy, which entails intensive propaganda and persuasion of individuals short of violence and confrontation with the regime. Radicals, on the other hand believe in the utility of violent confrontation and top-down change that comes as a result of violent conflict with the regime.

⁴ Moderation here refers to recent changes in the political Islamic movements that start with an emergence of a group within the wider movement that accepts the principles of liberal democracy and human rights as the ultimate objective. They perceive democracy, and not an Islamic state that is ruled by Sharia, as the most legitimate alternative to the regimes that they operate in.

movements (or any other religious political movement for that matter) pursue moderation and accommodate to liberal democracy?

Before getting to various responses given to this question in the literature, it is necessary to explain what this paper means by moderation. Brumberg (1997) divides political Islamic movements into three main groups. The first is radical fundamentalists who pursue violence to build a true Islamic society. The second group is moderate fundamentalists who are more lenient and less prone to violence, and who agree to play by the rules to achieve an Islamic society. Final group is the Islamic liberals (or Muslim democrats), who believe in democracy, human rights, and pluralism. It is this third group that is fundamentally different in their disposition towards democracy. Moderation of political Islam mentioned above refers to the emergence and predominance of Islamic liberalism over moderate or radical fundamentalism. This is what this paper means by moderation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The recent moderation in the political Islamic movements has encouraged some scholars to survey the causes of moderation of political Islamism.⁵ Although there are no systematical explanations for moderation in the literature on political parties, or political Islamic movements for that matter, there are some important arguments that heavily borrow from the literature on socialist parties.

First possible cause of moderation cited in the literature is strategic calculation. According to strategic calculation argument, pre-elections moderation of political parties is due to a desire to be included in the new democratic system (Huntington, 1991), as seen in the case of the PSOE in Spain (Share, 1985). This type of moderation induced by strategic calculation, however, does not entertain the possibility that radical parties can emerge after the transition to

⁵ For a recent example, see Carrie Wickham Rosefsky, *Comparative Politics*, issue 2 vol 36, January 2004

democracy. The first problem with strategic calculation lays in the fact that the Islamic political parties that enter politics after the transition do not feel an obligation for moderation. This is actually what happened in Turkey in 1970s with the emergence of the National Salvation Party. Secondly, strategic calculation before transition cannot explain the cases of moderation where there is no hope for democratic transition in the near future, as seen in the cases of Egypt and Tunisia.

Moderation of radical parties in already consolidated competitive systems, on the other hand, can emanate from electoral strategies that seek maximization of electoral support (Przeworski et. al. 1986). The socialist parties, when they first decided to participate in elections, believed that they would gain the majority of the votes, since they thought they had a demographic advantage. It soon turned out that they could not secure majority of the votes in the elections unless they dilute class politics and appeal to the middle class voters. Przeworski and Sprague (1986) argue that this concern with vote maximization shook the very basis of the socialist project. Most of the socialist parties gave up their ideal of socialist victory to achieve electoral victory.

The experience of socialist parties at best sheds a dim light on moderation of political Islamists because the logic of class politics works differently than religious politics. Religious political parties have been very successful in building cross-class coalitions by relying on conservative values. Religion is in fact a crosscutting cleavage that connects voters of very different socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, they do not suffer from a dilemma like the socialist parties, which are forced to choose between electoral victory and enforcement of class politics. Secondly, moderation due to a desire to maximize electoral support cannot explain the delay in moderation in political Islam. Although the Islamic movements have been active in

politics for several decades now, moderation has occurred pretty recently. For instance, Erbakan's four successive parties of political Islam had not demonstrated meaningful moderation since they first emerged in the political scene in early 1970s. It was after thirty years of political Islamic existence in the electoral politics that a group of politicians within the political Islamic enterprise decided to establish a moderate conservative party in 2002. Therefore, the desire to maximize votes can neither explain the partial nature of moderation nor can it explain the delay in moderation.

Second cause of moderation is cited as rational calculation of political Islamists that emanates from the desire to avoid repression. In other words, it is the state repression that motivates Islamists to adopt a more moderate stance. The weakness of this argument is in its inability to explain why it is a segment of the political Islamists that pursue moderation despite the fact that the state represses the whole movement. This is not to say that repression does not cause moderation. On the contrary, a significant portion of earlier moderation, which was short of acceptance of democracy as the optimal preference, can be explained by state repression (The changes from Welfare to Virtue in Turkey and shift from radical fundamentalism to moderate fundamentalism in the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt); however, it cannot explain why a group within the movement splits, takes moderation several steps forward, transforms their political objectives, and claims loyalty to the principles of liberal democracy. In other words, this argument cannot explain the variation in the level of moderation within political Islamic movements. For example, current Justice and Development Party (AKP) members in Turkey were former members of the Welfare and then the Virtue Parties. After the Welfare Party was shut down, the political Islamic cadres established a more moderate political party, the Virtue, as a response to closure of the Welfare. However, this shift towards the center was not enough for

the AKP leaders, who established their own party once they lost the party congress. A very similar series of events occurred in Egypt with the emergence of the Wasat Party by the former members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Therefore, state repression argument fails to explain why a group within the party splits and accommodates to democracy while the rest of the party does not.

Finally, moderation can be a product of political learning that transforms the beliefs and values of political Islamists. The combination of regime's accommodation and repression of Islamist groups provides institutional opportunities and incentives for interactions with other opposition groups (Wickham, 2004). This sort of cooperation increases contact between groups with different dispositions resulting in invaluable experience and political learning. A similar explanation of moderation in Turkish and Iranian contexts claims that political Islamists have realized the virtues of democracy as they had been subject to severe authoritarian practices (Tezcur, 2004). As a result, these politicians appreciated the Western democratic values, and they transformed.

This argument is problematic because, like the previous argument of rational calculation, it cannot solve the puzzle of partial moderation within the Islamic movement. Why is it a segment of Islamic politicians whose beliefs and values are transformed so drastically? If it is state repression that induces moderation, the new ardent democrats within the ranks of political Islamic movements should be predominantly those politicians who had been the target of severe state repression. However, this is not the case. Most of the new Muslim democrats were already moderate when they were in their previous Islamic parties. Secondly, and more importantly, those who argue in favor of political learning cannot systematically show that political Islamists actually *learned* the value of democracy and internalized the democratic norms. Hence it is

plausible that the change attributed to political learning might be very well caused by another factor that is overlooked by these scholars. In other words, political learning can obscure another independent variable that is more fundamental in explaining moderation.

The existing explanations of moderation are analytically problematic and limited in their ability to solve the puzzle of moderation. This problem can be fixed by studying factors that have been ignored in the literature so far.

ARGUMENT

This paper brings structural factors back in the analysis of religion and politics. Rational choice approach has dominated the moderation literature, and it evidently missed the actual dynamic behind moderation (as indicated above in the literature review). It is this paper's claim that structural factors are more helpful in understanding the real causes of and variation in moderation of political Islam. The argument is that expansion of middle classes within the political Islamic movements would lead to moderation defined as acceptance of democracy as the ultimate preference. This argument assumes that middle classes are inherent democrats. But why do middle classes perceive democracy as their best option?

The relationship between middle classes and democracy has been the focus of attention of many prominent scholars, starting with Aristotle. Aristotle argued that democracy would be stable and inclusive if the class balance yields a majority middle class. A skewed class balance would generate an exclusionary oligarchy or tyranny. Glassman (1995) argues that Aristotle has not specified the nature of the middle class that is key for democracy. A commercial and trade-capitalist middle-class, made up of independent entrepreneurs selling to a market economy constitutes the basis of the class that demands and sustains democracy. Mills argued that old middle class of small businessmen (industrial-capitalist middle class) are independent from

economic and political control. They answered to no one--and they were their own bosses. Answering to no one, and independent of everyone, they were the perfect citizens of the emerging legal-representative governments (Glassman 1995, p. 161).

The small business middle strata—in business, shops, farms, or the professions—favored *laissez faire*, law, and democracy (Glassman 1995, p. 159). Because “law protected the individual from the central authority; law guaranteed the rights of the individual against the state” (Glassman 1995, pp.102). “Emergence of a self-generating capitalist economy created by, operated by, and expanded by, commercial entrepreneurs producing agricultural and manufactured goods for the market is the foundation of the *laissez faire* principle, which demands separation of the economy from the polity and in doing so engenders an institutional limitation of the power and the scope of the state” (Glassman 1995, p.111).

Although there is a consensus on the democrat nature of the old middle class, Mills was skeptic about the new middle classes and their relations with democracy. He argued that a salaried middle class dependent on a giant bureaucracy might not be a favorable factor for democracy (Glassman 1995, p.161). Mills may be right, if the new middle classes are ultimately dependent on the state’s largesse for its survival. However, if a structural change undermines this dependence and generates new options for the new middle classes, they might as well be agents of democracy. Economic liberalization has produced these new options for the new middle class who became more autonomous and independent as a result.

The economic reform processes have introduced significant change in the Middle Eastern societies. This structural change triggered by the economic liberalization contributed to further separation of economy from state power. At the same time economic liberalization strengthened the middle and new middle classes. As a result, these devout middle classes witnessed

significant increase in their power and capabilities vis-à-vis the state, which had to resign from its traditional duties after liberalization. In other words, the number and power of the devout entrepreneurs, who are autonomous and independent of state's power, increased. They, then, like any middle class, asked for rule of law, laissez faire, and limits on the state power.

Democracy became the optimal option for the devout middle classes because it would provide them with protection from the state's arbitrary power as well as the political means, such as representation and inclusion, necessary for these classes to protect their interests in a competitive political system. Democracy became a better option also because the devout middle classes, who are more affluent after liberalization, had much more to lose if they confronted the regime with Islamic radicalism.

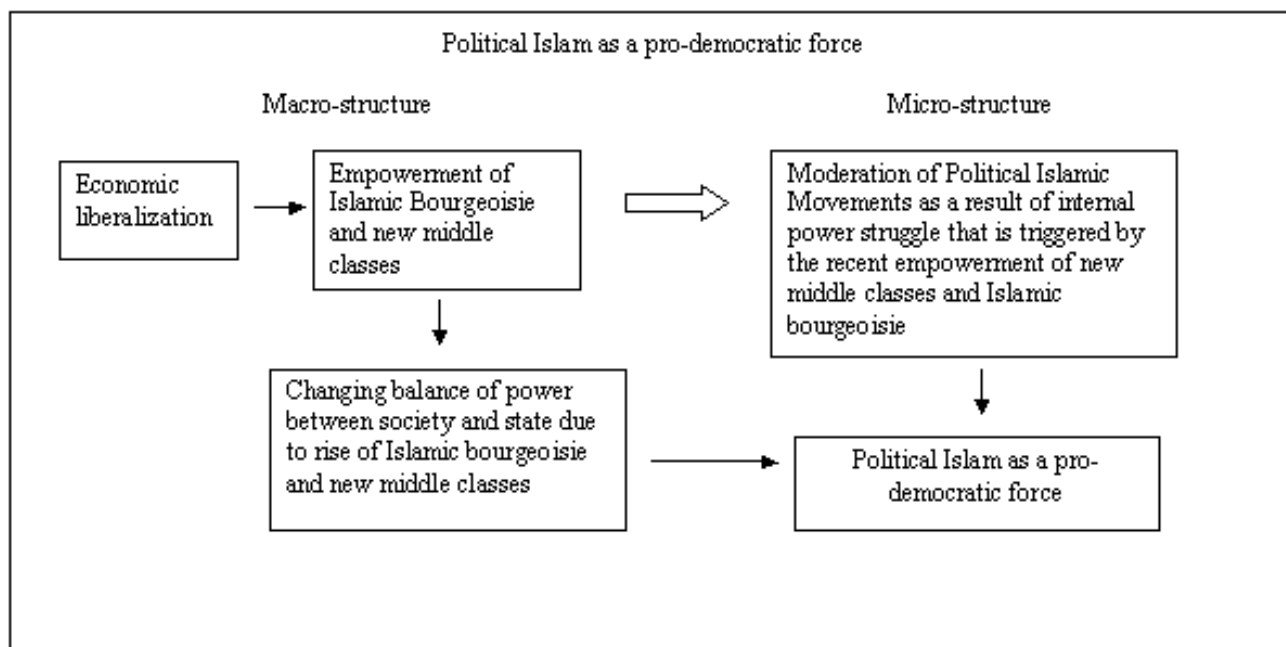
The expansion of the middle classes within political Islamic movements as a result of structural change, triggered by the economic liberalization process, meant that those who asked for a limited state and rule of law increased in number and effectiveness. After this increase in their capacity, the devout middle classes had no reason to fear electoral competition, as Reuschemeyer et al asserts, given the expanded resources and mobilizational capability they had acquired due to economic liberalization. As a result, the middle classes have constituted the most significant force behind moderation in political Islam.

The relationship between middle class and democracy has already permeated the democracy studies in the Middle East, although there is no special attention given to devout middle classes. Accordingly, expansion of the middle classes would solve the problem of democratic deficit in the region. Langohr, on the other hand, asserts that this perspective overlooks the fact that middle classes indeed support Islamists, and even if there is a preponderant middle class it is not organized well enough to trigger democratization (2002,

p.119). The problem in Langohr's analysis is twofold. First, her assumption that political Islamic movements are anti-democratic and hazardous for the evolution of a pluralist political system is problematic because it neglects the potential of moderate Islamic movements as agents of democratization. Although I agree that political Islamists have received substantial support from the middle classes, I also argue that expansion of middle classes within political Islamic constituency is not necessarily a negative development for democracy in the Middle East. On the contrary, expansion of the middle class within political Islamic movements leads to moderation of political Islam. Secondly, Langohr is pessimistic in her discussion of the role of the middle classes in democratization. She argues that a sizable but unorganized middle class would not be able to affect regime changes in the society; and she gives Tunisia as an example. However, she ignores the mobilization potential of moderate political Islamic movements. Preponderant middle classes would be more assertive in their demands for democracy if they utilize the mobilizational power of moderate political Islam. As a result, a moderate and capable political Islamic movement supported by the middle classes will emerge as one of the most important forces for democracy in the Middle East.

We can summarize the discussion so far by going back to the conditions under which religion plays a favorable role in instituting and sustaining democracy. Accordingly, expansion and empowerment of middle classes within the political Islamic movements generates three significant and simultaneous outcomes. First, the power of society increases vis-à-vis the state. Second, the religious political mobilization solves the collective action problems that the devout middle classes, who had been excluded from the political system, face. At the same time, devout middle classes moderate the political objectives of the religious political movement and make the

movement more compatible with democracy. But how exactly did devout middle classes benefit from economic liberalization? The section below answers that question.



Economic reform refers to economic liberalization programs that governments implement in order to overcome economic stagnation and crisis in cooperation with the IMF and the World Bank. The underlying economic logic comes from neo-liberal economics, which perceive state as a significant part of the economic problem that interferes with the market mechanism. Because state intervention in economy encourages rent-seeking behavior and decreases efficiency and productivity in the economy, state's intervention in the economy should be minimized. Instead, market should be the primary mechanism that organizes the economic activity.

A typical economic reform consists of two parts. The first part is stabilization that aims elimination of budget deficits. In order to balance their budgets many governments are encouraged to cut subsidies, rationalize and privatize state owned enterprises, deregulate labor

markets, and reduce state's expenditure especially on social services, health and education. The first steps of state's retreat from the economic activity are, thus, taken.

Second part of the economic reform programs concerns long-term change that is called structural adjustment. The main objective of the structural adjustment is to shift the growth strategies of the countries from import substitution to export orientation. Provision of incentives to exporters through tax reductions and cheap credits, reduction of the internal demand and creation of surplus to export in the international markets, reduction of real wages, and devaluation of the currency constitute the common methods of adapting export orientation. The next section explains how these policies specifically enhance the power of the Islamic political movements in the Middle Eastern societies that undergo economic liberalization.

The first mechanism that increases power and opportunities of the Islamic movement concerns allocation of benefits to the devout middle classes. Economic liberalization generates expanded economic opportunities through trade and economic liberalization. A new group of exporters emerge with the export led growth strategy. Expansion of markets allows these exporters to achieve economies of scale and increase their profits. Globalization of production also contributes to the expansion of small and medium enterprises, which engage in production through sub-contracting. Finally, freer movement of capital allows foreign capital to enter into domestic markets, rendering capital relatively abundant and reducing its cost compared to the ISI period. As a result, the range of economic activities pursued by Islamic businesses significantly increases as they take benefit of expanding markets as well as new sources of capital.

The second and more indirect mechanism through which economic reform empowers Islamic movements concerns the retreat of state from social and economic services. First of all, privatization and rationalization of state economic enterprises is a major cause of increasing

unemployment. Since public sector has been an important source of employment in many developing countries, privatization or rationalization of the state owned enterprises destroys one of the most important hopes of new middle classes for employment. Public enterprises no longer serve as sources of employment, which has been a crucial element in sustaining urban coalitions.

The simultaneous decrease in social spending, specifically health and education, on the other hand, creates a vacuum ready to be filled by the actors in the society. Islamic organizations were among these actors who seized the opportunity pretty quickly. First of all, organizationally Islamic networks had advantages that originate from the religious mobilization. Secondly, expansion of the devout middle classes and their economic power corresponded to a significant expansion in the resources for the Islamic organizations. The fact that these Islamic organizations did not only serve the needy explains how devout new middle classes expanded as a result of state's retreat. The devout new middle classes, who have established these organizations, have primarily focused on solving their own problems that arose with economic liberalization. Accordingly, they have found employment opportunities in these organizations as well as high quality-low cost services for their families. The unemployed doctors, nurses, and teachers worked for the hospitals built by the Islamic networks while they got their educational and health needs fulfilled in the very same institutions. Let's see how these mechanisms are played out in the cases of Turkey and Egypt.

TURKEY

Turkish economic liberalization started in 1980 with the military intervention. Political and economic instability of the 1970s indicated that the system of import substitution was bankrupt. To shift to a new development strategy the state engaged in stabilization and structural adjustment programs with the IMF and the World Bank. During liberalization process, state

subsidies for agriculture were eliminated, real wages were reduced to curtail internal demand and render Turkish exports competitive, and the share of the social services in the budget shrank.

The state also retreated from provision of social services. As proportions of GDP, expenditures on public health and education declined from 3.3 and 1.1 percent in 1980 to 2.4 and 0.6 percent in 1985 (Waterbury 1992, p. 140).

Turkish state retreated from social services but it has not surrendered its influence in the economic realm. The state remained interventionist especially in allocation of rents, export subsidies, and high-interest earnings. Meanwhile, Ozal government undermined the power of the bureaucracy and politicized economic decision-making (Onis 1996, p.772). This shift of power within the state led to personalization of economic favors and privileges. On the one hand, increasing rate of corruption as a result of this change alienated the small and medium entrepreneurs⁶ who lacked such close ties/relations with the politicians of the center-right. On the other hand, continuation of state's involvement in economy and politicization of economic-decision making raised the stakes of being in government. This has been an important factor in the calculations of the devout middle classes, which wanted to have access to political power.

Economic liberalization in Turkey caused fundamental changes in the social structure. The working classes, peasants, and public employees lost most of their privileges guaranteed during import substitution period. Commercial sectors gained significantly from the incentives provided for the exporters as well as those manufacturers who could adapt to the new liberal economic structure. Like all other center-right parties, the ANAP government favored the big business over the small and medium enterprises. Most of the subsidies and incentives were

⁶ Most of small and medium enterprise owners constitute the traditional base of support for Islamic movements. The conservative businessmen of the Anatolian cities provided political and financial support for the Islamist parties, organizations and foundations since 1970s. This was partly due to the neglect of the center-right parties of the small and medium entrepreneurs and partly due to conservative values represented by the political Islamic parties.

directed to the big business (Onis 1996, p.759). However, despite the lack of state assistance, the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) turned out to be among the winners of the economic liberalization as these exporters managed to integrate to the global economy through global chains of production.

Gulalp (2002) argues that transition to post-fordism and globalization enhanced a more flexible production style strengthening the small-scale manufacturing and self-employment around the world. As the fordist production in the industrialized countries got relocated to the post-fordist small-scale production in the Third World, small and medium entrepreneurs witnessed expansion in their economic power, independently acquired from state intervention. Globalization of production and subcontracting has been an important route through which these small firms are integrated into the world market (Gulalp 2002, 436-437). The new liberal economic environment also encouraged investment and inflow of capital from the Middle East (especially from Saudi Arabia) that expanded the economic activity within the Islamic sector along with globalization of production.

The structural change, namely expansion of the Islamic business, as a result of economic liberalization is evident in the emergence of the Independent Businessmen and Industrialists' Association (MUSIAD), in 1990. Expansion of the SMEs led to establishment of MUSIAD, which is the largest businessmen association in Turkey with 3000 members. The majority of the members are medium-size companies along with few big companies. MUSIAD represents the new and peripheral segment of the business class that supports political Islam in Turkey (Gulalp 2002, 440).

It is not only the Islamic business that has been ascendant in the new liberal economic era. The devout professional middle class, or the devout new middle class,⁷ who has constituted an important basis of support for the political Islam, have also benefited from the liberalization process. First route through which new middle classes of conservative backgrounds profited from liberalization is the expansion of Islamic business, which needed to hire professionals. The second route is the expansion of the Islamic sector in the social services. With the retreat of the state from provision of social services there emerged a void that is to be filled by private sector. Islamic networks proved to be effective in establishing the necessary institutions to meet the needs of the society from education to health care to childcare. It was the professional middle classes that discovered employment opportunities in these new institutions inside the Islamic sector. They have achieved not only employment but also fulfillment of their own needs in these institutions. In other words, Islamic sector opportunistically and skillfully employed its expanding resources when it faced the retreat of the state from provision of social services, and this maneuver contributed to the expansion of the middle classes within the Islamic political enterprise. In sum, expansion of Islamic bourgeoisie and Islamic social services corresponded to an expansion of employment for engineers, lawyers, teachers, and doctors of conservative backgrounds.

These conservative middle classes, who expanded as a result of economic liberalization, supported political Islamic parties in the 1990s. They expected the political Islamic parties to be their representatives in the political system that would work for their inclusion in the system and would reflect their conservative values. Waldner argues that in societies where constituency

⁷ The devout professional class combines its conservative background with modern education. They represent an elite identity that is alternative to the Western, Kemalist elite, who has been in power since the proclamation of the republic. The devout new middle class is primarily concerned with their status in the society and political Islamic parties happened to be the means of their inclusion in the system.

clientelism is established, challengers of the system recognize that the only way to alter inequities is to capture political power (1994, p. 6). However, the excluded classes have also recognized that there are multiple ways of capturing political power. This paper argues that the devout middle and new middle classes preferred a moderate and democratic method of addressing inequities (for reasons discussed in the argument section). That preference is embodied in the Justice and Development Party (AKP), established in 2002.

The establishment of the AKP is an indicator of a fundamental transformation in the political Islamic enterprise in Turkey. As opposed to previous political Islamic parties, the AKP is a conservative democratic party that accepts moderation and democratic competition as the most legitimate method of representing interests of the devout middle classes. The party program openly rejects ideological confrontation and radicalism, embraces pluralism, democracy and human rights. The party, in its program and numerous publications, defines itself as a conservative democratic party that favors a minimal and effective state, which acts only to ensure proper functioning of the market. The state would be active only in areas where market fails, such as provision of social services for the poorest segments and most needy. Conservative nature of the party entails preserving norms and values, avoiding moral degeneration and erosion of community values.⁸ Onis and Keyman contend that the conservative liberal synthesis means reconciling the free market with community values, religious beliefs, societal norms, and local traditions (2003, pp. 101). In these respects, the AKP is not significantly different than the conservative parties of the west, i.e. Christian Democratic Parties of Europe or the Republicans in the US.

The AKP is fundamentally different than the previous parties of political Islam in Turkey. According to the AKP, democracy is the only political system where individuals would be free,

⁸ See the AKP Program and published documents at the party's official website, www.akparti.org.tr.

powerful, and protected from the arbitrary state action. In contrast to the Welfare and Virtue Parties, which succeeded the Welfare, the AKP advocates a minimal state that does not have a significant re-distributive role. In the AKP program, the emphasis on individual and human rights is greater, and there is no excessive stress on the religious freedoms, unlike the Virtue Party Program. Rather, the AKP supports rights and freedoms for every individual in the society without any reservations or conditions. Pluralism emerges as the ultimate principle for the party. Nationalistic flavor of the Welfare, and to some extent of the Virtue, is absent and replaced by a strong attachment to the international standards of liberal democracy and human rights. In conjunction with this objective, the European Union composes a core part of the party program. The Welfare Party had a strong anti-EU bias whereas the Virtue was neutral regarding the issue. In contrast to both parties, the AKP advocates a very strong pro-EU stance. Finally, as opposed to, what Onis calls, defensive and subdued tone of the Virtue Party and aggressive and populist rhetoric of the Welfare Party (2001, p. 14), the AKP is a confident, democratic, culturally conservative, and economically liberal party that rejects Islam as a political ideology and embraces it as a part of the social and cultural reality of the Turkish society along with other features that contributes to the richness of the people.

The factor behind this transformation lies in the expansion of the conservative middle classes. The interests of the devout middle classes, like any middle class, are vested in a democratic polity, which would place limits on the power of the state while it ensures the possibility of sustained participation of the devout middle classes in the economic and political decision-making. The AKP's excessive emphasis on the necessity to limit the scope of the state and consolidation of the liberal democracy, which would empower society and especially middle classes, is a crucial indicator of the fact that devout middle classes are behind this political

project. Moderation and playing by the democratic rules would provide the devout middle class with access to political power as well as inclusion in the system that they yearned for so long. Having access to political power would enable the devout middle classes to achieve rule of law, laissez faire, a better functioning democracy, and a chance to defend their conservative values. It is this objective that motivates the moderates within the Virtue Party along with novice politicians to found the AKP.

Almost all of the founders of the AKP are coming from middle class. Seventy-three of one hundred and twenty-five founders had successful careers as professionals, and they have not been affiliated with any political party prior to the establishment of the AKP. Twenty-two of these individuals have PhDs, and all but four of them have college degrees. Prominent figures of the party stated in several occasions that the primary motivation behind the founding of the party was to represent broader segments without confining themselves to the “mosque-crowd” of the Welfare and its incarnation, Virtue (Tezcur 2004a, 13).

The reason why the party succeeded in the 2002 elections gathering support primarily among the small and medium entrepreneurs, according to Keyman and Onis, is the fact that the AKP distanced itself from the Islamic parties and demonstrated itself as a center-right party (2003, p. 99-100). The AKP’s emphasis on democracy as the key solution to Turkey’s problems was a cardinal part of this effort of divorcing the party from Islamic political identity and building a conservative liberal synthesis, what one may call Muslim democracy. Yavuz (2003, p. 256) agrees with this assertion and claims that the 2002 elections were not about establishing an Islamic state but rather redrawing the boundary between the state and society and consolidating civil society. According to Yavuz, a new urban class is key to the success of the

AKP and the conservative liberal project since they have been the force that utilized the Islamic networks and worldview to overcome their exclusion by the Kemalist elite (2003, p. 257).

Ozel argues that the AKP has a historic task and opportunity to be the agent of Turkey's transformation from an illiberal democracy into a genuine liberal democracy. And as Zurcher claims, this is not impossible: "Perhaps the greatest success of Turkey's modernizing elite is the very fact that it has lost its monopoly of the political and cultural debate. Through the spread of higher education and wealth there has come into being a large and vocal middle class, important parts of which no longer regard a strong religious identity and a modern way of life as incompatible." (Zurcher, cited in Ozel 2003, p. 175) It is this middle class that makes political Islam compatible with democracy and constitutes a very powerful force for liberalization in Turkey.

EGYPT

Egyptian liberalization and transformation to a more open economy dates back to Sadat's government's Open Door policy. However, challenged with political problems and riots Egyptian state withdrew from the reform process and postponed it until 1991. In 1980s increasing external debt combined with reduced oil and tourism revenues and workers' remittances snowballed into a significant economic crisis in the Egyptian economy. The stabilization program that started in 1991 entailed devaluation of the Egyptian pound, raising direct and indirect taxes, and cutting back from public spending. As a result, the living conditions of the lower income groups deteriorated; incidents of malnutrition increased, and rate of poverty reached 48 percent of the population in 1996. Medi-care expenditures fell down to 0.6 percent from 2.3 percent in 1981. Population per physician increased to 1316 in 1989-1994 from 732 in 1980-85 (Clark 2000, p. 161). GNP per capita decreased 10 percent and real wages declined 14

percent in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Unemployment reached almost 20 percent of the workforce. The days when the state created majority of the new jobs were left behind due to the state's retreat from economic and social activities.

Elimination of the graduates program further exacerbated the problem of unemployment. According to Ibrahim, within the new economic system, the new middle class turned out to be "politically marginalized, economically impoverished, and culturally alienated" (1996, p.126). Clark argues that this new middle class,⁹ who realized their social contract with the state is now void, establishes Islamic social institutions, as a response to state's weaknesses. Hence, these new middle classes joined old petit bourgeoisie, which has been a traditional constituency of political Islam, and they have been the agents of moderate Islamism (2004, p.5).

In 1990, out of 12,832 voluntary associations 2,457 of them were Islamic associations, which according to Kandil and Nefissa constituted the most important type of social welfare associations, particularly the charity services for children, mothers, and family. This is the largest category of private voluntary organizations in Egypt (Clark 2004, p. 12). In the next two years total number of organizations increased to 15,109. Ibrahim estimates that 8,000 of them were Islamic organizations (1996, p.72). Islamic NGOs are active in provision of services such as Islamic medical clinics, welfare organizations, financial assistance and educational activities.

Moreover, Islamic organizations are least affected by the state's interference in NGO activity. In terms of funds that the NGOs receive, Islamic NGOs prove to be financially more independent compared to secular NGOs. 52 percent of their revenue comes from activity fees (Islamic commercial institutions that serve primarily new middle classes), 34 percent from

⁹ See Clark 2004, p. 4 and 12. "While the old petit bourgeoisie is made up of small traders, shopkeepers, self-employed artisans, and small and independent farmers the new middle class generally consists of white-collar workers engaged in technical, professional, and administrative occupations. They are teachers, bureaucrats, professors, students, technocrats, engineers, physicians, writers, journalists, and middle-ranking army officers." In contrast to the petit bourgeoisie new middle class' status is based on its secular education.

donations (directed towards Islamic welfare institutions) and 9 percent from foreign and state aid. The relative financial independence and self-reliance of the religious NGOs, which render them the most powerful network of civil society organizations, can be explained by *zakat* flows, which are immune to state's interference, to the Islamic NGOs (Clark 2000, p. 169). Hence, the Islamic NGOs are the most autonomous and financially independent civil society organizations. It is this autonomy that renders political Islam a powerful social force that challenges the authoritarian state.

Islamic NGOs can be divided into two types: Islamic commercial institutions, albeit nonprofit, with high fees, that cater to the middle class and Islamic welfare institutions, catering to the welfare of the poor (Clark 1996, p. 36). Within neighborhoods stricken with poverty where state-run services are limited, the Islamic welfare institutions turn out to be substitutes for the welfare apparatus of the state. Islamic commercial institutions, in Clark's term, on the other hand, cater to and benefit the educated and professional (new) middle class (2004, 12). They rely on the activity fees, which are higher than the fees in Islamic welfare institutions. Similarly, Wickham (1997, p. 122) claims that the younger generation of the educated middle class is a part of political Islam due to the "efforts to replicate the logic of the Nassirist social contract by providing employment and services to the unemployed and underemployed youth."

Along with provision of social services, the political Islamic movement has also been very active in professional syndicates. New middle classes' increasing support for political Islamic movement is apparent in these associations. Members of these associations are white-collar workers constituting the backbone of new middle class. These professional syndicates had quickly become a lively forum of political discussion and an arena of competition. By 1993, six of the seven biggest associations, including the Bar Association, Engineers, Doctors,

Pharmacists, Dentists, and Commerce syndicates, were led by Islamists (Ibrahim 1996, p. 166). The devout new middle classes with their peaceful participation in the syndicate elections and their adherence to the rules demonstrated their disposition towards democracy (Langohr, 591).

The fact that Islamic schools, clinics, community centers employed teachers, doctors and other professionals, and thus severed their financial dependence on the state (Wickham 1997, p.123) shows how state's retreat as a result of economic liberalization empowers political Islam that provides employment for new middle classes. Combined with Islamic businesses, these networks expand the Islamic parallel sector. In this period Islamic business have benefited from economic diversity due to liberalization. Islamic banks, investment companies and factories have gained from liberalization program that allowed these sectors expand their activities and increase their profits. Banks and investment companies benefited substantially from financial liberalization and currency convertibility, which rendered capital flows, especially from Saudi Arabia, easier. Islamic investment companies mobilized billions of dollars in customer deposits. In 1988 total funds were estimated at over US \$4.3 billion. Depositors numbered over 400,000 (Sullivan 1994, p. 63).

As shown above, economic liberalization has empowered political Islamic movements through various mechanisms. First, it forced Egyptian state to retreat from its traditional services. Then it enabled political Islamists to fill in this gap by expanding resources and enhancing their access to these resources. New economic structure and violation of social contract between state and society enabled Islamic civil society to replace that social contract with its own. As a result, economic liberalization limited the reach and power of the state in society, while it increased the power and capacity of civil society.

The increase in the power of the devout middle class accompanied a process of moderation. Although there had been a non-violent fundamentalist Islamic movement led by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt prior to economic liberalization, recent empowerment of new middle classes generated a distinctly moderate political Islam initially within the MB then under the Wasat (Center) Party. The objectives of these moderate Islamists are compatible with liberal democracy, pluralism, and human rights—the areas where the MB had been hesitant and vague. Baker (1997, p. 122) argues that Egyptian reformist policy aims to curb the arbitrary power of the state that encapsulates ending presidential monopoly of power, instituting unrigged elections, suspending human rights' violations, legalizing a centrist non-violent Islamist party. The most important features that constitute the centrist political Islamic identity are: advocacy of change through dialogue and debate rather than violence, support of civil society against the authoritarian state, marked tolerance of diversity of viewpoint, and engagement with questions like cultural authenticity, democracy, and human rights.¹⁰

One of the founders of the Wasat Party, Essam Sultan—a young lawyer—characterized the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) as an undemocratic entity where the followers have to listen and obey the leader without discussion. And he continues:

...[T]he clearest difference between the Center [Wasat] Party and the Muslim Brotherhood is faith in these matters—faith in pluralism, faith in democracy, faith in freedom, faith in freedom of opinion, freedom of thought, freedom of creativity, relations with other currents.... In relation to us, the Center Party, we consider the other political currents part of the national framework.... It is not possible to bring about a renaissance for the future nation without joining forces with these other groups in society.¹¹

The Wasat Party program calls for free and fair elections, freedom of religion, speech and expression, right to establish political parties without government interference, an independent judiciary and the right to strike (Shadid 2001, p. 271). These characteristics combined with their

¹⁰ For a complete list of these forms of behavior and ways of thinking see Baker, p 123.

¹¹ Quoted in Shadid 2001, p. 262.

mobilizational capability render moderate political Islamists, particularly their centrist wing, the most significant pro-democratic force in Egypt.

These centrists, who departed the MB and established the Wasat Party, come predominantly from middle class especially new middle class. The professionals who have benefited from the expansion of the Islamic sector after the retreat of the state with economic liberalization have been the major force behind the recent moderation within the political Islamic enterprise in Egypt. As they became more independent of state's largesse they have transformed into an autonomous democratic force mobilized by the conservative values of Islam embracing democratic norms and pluralism. It is this devout new middle class that is powerful and willing enough to demand democracy that would replace the authoritarian Mubarak regime.

The Turkish and Egyptian experiences of political Islamic moderation are not exactly the same. However, the mechanisms of moderation are similar. A structural change, in these cases triggered by economic liberalization, strengthens and expands the devout middle classes. These devout middle classes push for moderation in political Islam for they believe that democracy, rule of law, and a limited state would serve their interests better.

In Algeria, on the other hand, there was no such moderation within the political Islamic movement. Islamic movement has followed a different course of development. With the political and economic crisis that emerged in the early 1980s political Islamic movement culminated in the establishment of the FIS. The party has been very successful in municipal elections in 1990. The actions of the municipal governments of the FIS have been radical; they entailed several bans and limitations on citizens' life. The party has not showed any sign of moderation as the parliamentary elections of 1992 approached. Instead the party's rhetoric became more radical when the president attempted to change the electoral law.

Algerian case is interesting because the course that the FIS followed contradicts the prediction of the moderation literature. The strategic calculation argument expects that radical parties would moderate their stance during transition to ensure their inclusion in the new democratic system. In the Algerian case, the FIS was confident that it would be victorious in the elections therefore, they felt no necessity to moderate their political ideology. Yet, the lack of moderation can be explained by structural factors. The reason why FIS kept its radical rhetoric is due to weakness of the devout middle class. Kepel (2002) argues that the party was divided between moderate and radical Islamists. Radicals were younger, more assertive, and powerful than the moderates, who were from middle and new middle classes. The weakness of the middle classes in the FIS left the party at the hands of the radical younger generations who opted for a radical and confrontational stance.

ALTERNATIVE ARGUMENT

A possible alternative argument to the mechanism of moderation given here is regime type. It can be argued that political Islamic movements would moderate in countries where political competition is allowed. In such cases, the desire to participate in electoral politics will encourage moderation. The problem with this argument is the fact that moderation occurs even in countries where there are no free and fair elections, or political competition is either strictly limited or it is futile in terms of affecting the distribution of power and positions in the state. Moderation of political Islamists in Egypt provides enough doubt against regime type explanation. Although the regime in Egypt is heavily authoritarian with a very dim chance of democratization in the near future, a group of political Islamists left the Muslim Brotherhood and established a moderate and democratic political party (Wasat) that embraces the core values of liberal democracy.

The second problem with this explanation is the timing issue. When and why do political Islamic movements decide to moderate their stance? Since regime type stays more or less constant during the period that these movements emerge and evolve, this argument cannot answer the question of timing. The case of Turkey is another example. The political Islamic movement has been an active participant in Turkish electoral system since early 1970s, however, moderation has occurred fairly recently.

	Authoritarian	Democracy	
Economic Reform	Egypt	Turkey	Moderation
No Economic Reform	Algeria		No moderation

CONCLUSION

This paper argued that political Islam could aid transition to and consolidation of democracy. This is possible if the political Islamists accept democracy as their ultimate preference. This paper argued that expansion of middle classes within political Islamic movements would transform the objectives of the political Islamism towards liberalism and democracy. Such an expansion was due to economic liberalization in Turkey and Egypt. In Algeria, where middle classes were not powerful enough to defeat radicals in the FIS, there emerged no moderation, and the country was thrown into a civil war as a result.

By showing the political Islamic experience as an example this paper suggests that religion can be a positive force for democracy under certain conditions. Secondly, by indicating the conditions under which political Islamists moderate it suggests that political Islam can play a crucial role in strengthening pro-democratic movements and agents in their societies. Furthermore, the mechanism of moderation of political Islam provided in this paper proposes a

different solution to the empirical puzzle of recent moderation of political Islamic movements. Understanding the mechanisms of moderation is important for several reasons. First of all, moderation, by indicating the existence of change in political Islam, challenges the static approaches of orientalism and culturalism. Secondly, it questions the approaches that perceive political Islam as a monolithic phenomenon and essentialize Islam. Thirdly, the empirical puzzle of moderation of political Islamists in the Middle East demands an explanation. And finally, it is possible to re-estimate the prospects for democracy in the Middle East if we have a better understanding of mechanisms of political Islamic moderation. This re-estimation will lend itself to a reevaluation of the role that political Islam plays in liberalization and democratization in the Middle East.

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