

# The Changing Perception of Islam in Pakistan and Turkey: A Comparative Analysis\*

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## Abstract

With regard to the perception and shaping of societal and political orientations in Muslim societies, interpretations of Islam have been divergent amongst countries with different social, cultural and political structures and conditions. This article assesses the perception of Islam from a historical perspective, examining the factors that define the perceived differences between Turkey and Pakistan's relationship with Islam. The analysis shows that variability in perception of Islam in Pakistan and Turkey has not only been product of interpretive tradition of fundamental sources, but also developed concurrently with changing socio-political conditions, all of which contributed to shape the various societal dispositions and political orientation of these states. The study concludes that the constantly changing socio-political conditions, as well as the state or ruling elites' insight, approach and responses to such changes, have been key to the shaping of the different perceptions of Islam in Pakistan and Turkey.

## Keywords

Islam, perception, politics, Pakistan, Turkey.

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## Introduction

With regard to the perception and shaping of societal and political orientations in Muslim societies what we are witnessing in Turkey and Pakistan, since the end of the colonial era, is transformation of different Islamic identities where the former transformed state power from Islamic sultanate to secular aristocracy and later struggled to personalise Islam as public identity, which has encouraged religious groups to challenge the ascendancy of secularism in the country. For example, Islam in Pakistan is closely associated with the establishment of the state, the emphasis being that no laws can be enacted that violate the basic principles of Islam (Esposito 1998: 118). Upon the advent of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Islam was rigidly excluded from public and political spheres and perceived as responsible for the backwardness and flaws that eventually culminated in the defeat and collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Grigoriadis 2009: 1194).

The attempts of modification - while asserting their eternal validity and immutable principles - raise questions about whether centuries old threaded tenors of Islam that claims the sanction of antiquity for their own modalities will be inclusive to attempts of alterity. Under what conditions a Muslim society transforms and what are the factors that define significant change - modification of traditional principles - in perception of Islam. For instance, why Islam in some countries remained inclusive to attempts of moderation and secularism while others' collective and individual identities resonated with deeply-felt religious loyalty, yet, with an emphasis that secularism, and moderation is discharged as inimical to the core principles of Islamic faith? For the answers to these questions, Turkey and Pakistan provide good examples where one can posit that it is not always religious circles alone that play key role in delineating role of Islam in private and public spheres, rather political factors, cultural preference, and historical events, often remain key in determining role of religion in the social and political spheres of society.

This paper examines the factors that define the perceived differences between Turkey and Pakistan's relationship with Islam. The analysis shows that variability in perception of Islam in Pakistan and Turkey has not only been product of interpretive tradition of fundamental sources, but also developed concurrently with changing socio-political conditions, as well as the state or ruling elites' insight, approach and responses to such challenges,

have been key to the shaping of the different perceptions of Islam in Pakistan and Turkey. However, this study does not intend to provide an in-depth interpretive analysis comparing the various interpretations of the fundamental source, *usul al-fiqh*, or the models of law espoused by the different schools of jurisprudence. Rather, employing both an analytical and historical comparative research framework, this study assesses the variables manifest in the shaping of Muslim perceptions of Islam in both Pakistan and Turkey. It uses desk research method that is largely based on extensive analysis of academic texts on Islam, particularly those that dominate the contemporary debates on the role of Islam in Pakistan and Turkey.

### **Islam, Monolithic Entity or Diversified? A Brief Historical Account**

Islam was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (570–632 C.E.) in 610, - viewed by Muslims as the last messenger, *Khatam un-Nabiyyin*, in a long line of messengers (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus) - against polytheism, idolatry, stratified feudalism, and warfare which marked socio-political realities of lands of Arabs, a period known as age of ignorance, *jahiliyyah* (Bakircioglu 2010: 425). In fact, the religion the Prophet proselytised was based on two fundamental principles. First, metaphysical and ethical bases of worship, *al-hikma*, that constitute faith, *al-aqida*, that are subjected to testimony and submission to ultimate authority of one God (Ghamidi 2009: 71-72). Second, legal rulings, *ayat al-abkam*, that governs a wide spectrum of social and political affairs that are collectively known as the revealed law of *Shari'a* (Ramadan 2009: 88). In other words, incorporating metaphysical, *al-hikma*, and ethico-legal injunctions, *ayat al-abkam*, the divine revelations (collectively known as the holy book of Qur'an) was gradually received by the Prophet in the course of 22 years in accordance with the social, political, economic and cultural prerequisites of the Arabs in those days. Yet, the Qur'an containing highly detailed rules that govern both temporal and spiritual affairs, has been subject to various interpretations. While alive, the Prophet was the absolute and ultimate instructor whose views, judgements, and practices were to contextualise the Qur'an - what has later become known as *Sunnah* (the second fundamental source of Islam).

After the demise of the Prophet, as Islam expanded – geographically/religio-political power – experiencing different cultural, social and political milieu

(Persian, South Asian, Turkic, African), contestations took place within the realm of hermeneutics between the *ulema* (sing. *alim*, religious scholar) from different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures and political ideology. Religious discourses recoding new contents as *Shari'a* law through the science of interpretation, jurisprudence, or *usul al-fiqh*, often imbricated with different cultures and politics, delineated new modalities of Islam. In fact, changing socio-political, cultural and economic conditions have raised disputes and arguments amongst Muslim scholars on how to adapt with new socio-cultural developments and environments from an Islamic perspective and more importantly how to protect quintessence of Islam (Qur'an and *Sunnah*) from non-Islamic substances. Efforts to secure the fundamental principles of Islam, Islamic identity and to define Islamic parameters in light of reforms within the Muslim communities led to emergence different schools of thought, *fuqaha* - such as Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi'i (collectively known as *Sunni*), and Twelver, Ismaili and Zaidi (collectively known as *Shi'a*).

Yet, variability in perception of Islam has not only been product of interpretive tradition, but also product of fierce political conflicts between internal or against external forces. According to Bruce (2003: 3), "religions do not have variation characteristic by 'nature' but acquire it as the result of fierce historical struggles." The rise of civil war, *fitna*, (conspiracy), for instance, as a result of the assassination of the third caliph, Uthman bin Affan, in 656, by a group of Muslims on the basis of inadequate distribution of political power (Qutbuddin 2005: 69), was a paradigm shift that gave rise to emergence of conflicting religio-political divisions, such as *Sunni*, and *Shi'a* and *Khawarij*.

This gave rise to a new group of ascetic Muslims, devoted to transcendental affairs of Islam, known as *Sufis*, between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. *Sufism* played key role not only in building up inner faith of Muslims, but also in helping the ruling class maintain a policy of peaceful socio-political order. In fact, proponents of *Sufi* tradition sought to promote Islam that is oriented less towards temporal matters and more to embodied metaphysical and transcendental ethics (Ansari 1983: 86). In later centuries, the *Sufi* tradition organised into larger groups, known as *tariqah*, path, (Turkish *Tarikat*) based on order of master, *pir* or *murshid*, and disciple, *murid*. According

to Bowering (2015: 11), *Sufism* was source of political strength to the three great Islamic empires, the Ottomans (Bektashis), Safavids (*Sunni Sufi* roots), and Mughal (Qadiri and Naqshbandi).

At the other end of the spectrum, however, have been those who rejected *Sufism*. For instance, engaging in bitter controversies with *Sufism*, Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328), a renowned Hanbali jurist, proclaimed that “temporal prosperity is achieved only when *Sharia* is put in place” (ibid). In fact, linked with this perception of Islam was the intention to revive caliphate based on the premise that originally the ruling authority implemented a divinely law of *Shari'a* with a mission to develop a society where sovereignty belongs to omnipotent God. The Wahhabi and Salafi movements – puritanical conservative practice of Islam - are considered as inspired by Ibn Taymiyya's Islamic philosophy.

Yet, the very notion of religious confrontation with secularism (often nationalist authoritarian), collective/individual, produced its own diverse forms of perception of Islam - often associated with mythical history, cultural or ethnic hatred, lust for political power, and distorted phantasms of emancipation.

### **Understanding Islam in Pakistan**

Islam existed in a variety of social, cultural and political spheres in the geographical domain which, on the 14 August 1947, was to become the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Yet, the interpretation of Islam in Pakistan has been the subject of many different scholarly and popular debates and perspectives. Following the independence of Pakistan, the Islamic population divided into distinct sectarian orientations (*Ahli-i Hadith wa'l Jama'at*, *Ahl – I Sunnat wa'l –Jama'at Ahmadis*, *Qadiyanis*, *Salafi*, *Ithna Ashari*, *Tablighi Jamaat* and *Isma'ili*) (Borchgrevink 2011: 4). In fact, this was product of the various socio-political conditions – internal/external–, such as disagreements on the Islamic identity of Pakistan amongst the secular and religious elites, the Kashmir war in 1947, the widening rift between *Shi'a* and *Sunni* sects (particularly after the Iranian Revolution in 1979), the Afghan jihad (since 1979), and the emergence of regional and international non-state Islamic militant groups, such as Al-Qaeda and the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban.

In terms of the current hegemony amongst such orientations across Pakistan, the *Deobandi*, *Ahli-i Hadith* and *Barelvis* sects have been the most successful in spreading their influence. Since sectarian orientations are important variables shaping the religio-political attitudes of both individuals and the collective society of Pakistan, it is important to provide a brief account of the dispositions of each sect. The *Deobandis*, academically, the most important and politically the most significant, with fast growing branches all across Pakistan, advocating a strict interpretation of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, support the Hanafi school of jurisprudence (Zaman 2007: 62). The Ahli-i Hadith (people of *hadith*, the revered words of the Prophet) is a branch of the *Salafist* (forerunners) movement that decries reform, *ijtihad*, rejects *Sufism* and advocates a nostalgic revival of the perceived original practices of Islam (ibid). The *Barelvis*, focusing on venerating the Prophet and saints, follow the saintly and mystical traditions of Islam, *Sufism* (ibid). However, although the aforementioned sectarian orientations exhibit a notable diversity in both their perceptions and interpretations of Islam, their various contestations with the state are largely about their desire for the institutionalisation and acknowledgment of *Shari'a* as the rightful body of law. What is worrisome in this context is the religious justification of violence propounded by the independent jurists, the *muftis*, who advocate, in furtherance of the demands of *Shari'a*, that believers take the law into their own hands. For example, Mumtaz Qadri, the assassin of the former governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer – who sought to reform Pakistan's blasphemy laws – claimed to have been inspired by Mufti Muhammad Hanif Qureshi's, a jurist whose sermons incited people to take the law into their own hands and act against those perceived to insult Islam (Porter 2016). Moreover, under the leadership of Maulana Abdul Rashid Ghazi, the Red Mosque, *Lal Masjid*, was known for publically decrying the government of Pakistan as un-Islamic and demanding the implementation of *Shari'a* law (Schmidle 2007: 2-4). Those who were galvanised by Ghazi's sermons started vigilant operations, raiding brothels and castigating activities perceived as un-Islamic (ibid). Such religious rulings have bolstered the legitimacy and moral conscience of militants engaged in sectarian violence (Zaman 2007: 73).

Additionally, it is worth mentioning here the religious preachers in mosques and madrasas play a key role in shaping the perception of Islam across the country. According to Ramadan (2009: 221), the “mosque is a religious

space expressing a certain idea of authority, the substance of a discourse, and distribution of roles ... that have impact on Muslims' collective psychology and attitudes and behaviours in daily life." Unlike Turkey, where imams (the 'clergymen' who leads prayers) are appointed by the state, except for those leading big mosques, such as the Badshahi Masjid, imams in Pakistan are not part of any establishment. Rather, traditionally belonging to a mullah family, they are chosen by the local people based on their perceived piety and knowledge (Mughal 2015: 169). Moreover, independent religious institutions, as schools of legal ruling (*darul iftas*) and as producers of jurists (*muftis*), play a key role in shaping the religio-political attitudes of Muslims in Pakistan.

It is worth noting here that what makes Islam so contested and influential a force in Pakistan is its power to resonate with and impact Muslims' social and political behaviour. However, before addressing this question, it will be helpful to engage in an historical analysis of the role of Islam in South Asia, in order to provide the essential context of Islam as political entities in Pakistan.

### **Islam in South Asia: A Brief Background**

Islam was introduced to the Indian subcontinent in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century. However, Islam has largely remained unsuccessful in terms of both converting and overtaking Hindus (here referred to as a conglomeration of the various sects) as the dominant religion in South Asia (Abbas 2005: 3). Islam only flourished and spread into the greater regions of South Asia when the Central Asian Turkic Muslims presented the mystic and tolerant face of Islam, *Sufism*, to Hindu societies between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Abbas 2005: 3-4). Many converted to Islam, particularly from the lowest tiers of the caste system, the *shudra* (untouchables) flocked to the *Sufi* message of equality to escape the hierarchic discriminations of Brahman-dominated 'caste' society" (Metcalf and Metcalf 2002: 6). Those who did not convert remained largely loyal to the Muslim saints who called for a peaceful coexistence, regardless of one's religious identity (Abbas 2005: 3-4). According to Abbas (2005: 4) this was the Islam to which India was introduced.

However, it would be misleading to consider Turkic reign in South Asia as

an Islamic rule (Metcalf and Metcalf 2002: 3). Turkic Sultans of South Asia, practiced plural law system where authority was distributed based on loyalty to the sultan, not religious affiliation (Metcalf and Metcalf 2002: 26-27). In fact, the ruling class in the Turkic Empire, such as Zahir Uddin Babar, were people of letters who built great and renowned madrasas, such as the Great Mosque of Delhi. The most influential Islamic thinker of the Naqshbandi *Sufi*, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), according to Metcalf and Metcalf (2002: 25) “serves as a reminder that the subcontinent itself has been a centre of Islamic thought and practice.”

However, this intellectual and cultural flourishing was devastated by the British colonisation of the Indian subcontinent in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The response of South Asian Muslims to the Western colonisation of India was diverse. While some attempted to revolt by decreeing a jihad against British forces in 1857 (Noor et al. 2008: 15), others, seeking to incorporate aspects of Western modernisation, science and culture into South Asian culture, saw the decline of the Turkic Empire as residing in the misperception of Islam (Esposito 1998: 55). For example, Sayid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) founded the Scientific Society in 1864 and established the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh 1874, which was modelled on Cambridge University (named the Aligarh Muslim University in 1920) (Esposito 1998: 55). On the other hand, those who believed the incorporation of Western advances and culture in South Asia to be a corruption of the scholarly history and culture of South Asian Islam rejected modernisation “as sign of weak faith and ...straying from the path that the elders of the past have trod” (Sikand 2008: 33-34).

It is noteworthy that various sectarian orientations have founded a network of religious institution designed to strengthen and spread their version of Islam across the Indian subcontinent. Two remarkable examples are (1) the Deobandi, centred in Dar –ul – Ulum Deobandi, built in 1867 in Deoband town of Uttar Pradesh and (2) the Bareilvi, based on the Bareilly madrasa, founded in 1880 in the Bareilly districts of Uttar Pradesh (Noor et al. 2008: 15). Pakistan inherited a large number of Deobandi and Bareilvi sects alongside *Shi'is* upon its creation as an Islamic Republic (1947).



## The Political Role of Islam in Pakistan

Although the founding father of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a man who, according to Abbas (2005: 6), was, in many ways, “more British than the British,” advocated a secular nation state, Islam has remained as an important strategic preference for Pakistani strategists. In other words, in Pakistan, Islam, as a conceptual entity, has remained intrinsically tied with the process of state-building. In fact, in support of their political agenda, the Pakistan movement used Islam to convince the general population that Hindus and Muslims, due to their separate socio-religious systems, were inherently antagonistic towards each other and prone to violence. Religious slogans, such as “Islam in Danger” became an integral part of the political movement that eventually curved Pakistan out of India (Esposito 1998: 96). For those supporting an Islamic Pakistan, Islam represented a social, cultural and political identity. Support for the movement was such that many were ready to use violence and sacrifice their lives in the fight for an Islamic Pakistan.

After the establishment of independence, religious leaders continued to debate how best to draft the national constitution of Pakistan in accordance with the Islamic order (Esposito 1998: 117-118). The constitution includes provisions such as, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is based on Islamic beliefs (Part I, Article 2), thus, the head of state must be a Muslim (Part III, Article 41: 2); the reform of Islamic society under Islamic principles (Part I, Article 31); and that no law contrary to Quran and *Sunnah* of the Prophet could be enacted (Part IX, Article 227) (The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 2012). Consequently, although Pakistan inherited its governing institutions from the British rule of India, it declined to pursue the secular path of western governance. In fact, the political identity of Pakistan as an Islamic state developed alongside an on-going power struggle between the various secular and religious camps.

Notably, there have been several attempts by modernists to establish a secular authority over the state (such as the 1962 Constitution, in which an Islamic provision was omitted from the Republic of Pakistan). Nevertheless, a backlash amongst religious circles forced the secularists to redraft the civil and state law in accordance with the principles of *Shari’a* (Esposito 1998: 121). Such events demonstrate both the potential roles and political nature

of Islam in Pakistan. In fact, this phenomenon has since coerced political leaders into demonstrating that their political policies and agendas are religiously justified. For example, the policies of the Pakistan People's Party, such as nationalisation and land reforms, have been postulated, through the use of religious language, as "*Musawat-i-Muhammadi* (the Equality of Muhammad) and Islamic *Musawat* (Islamic Equality)" (Esposito 1998: 172-173).

Although Islamic parties never performed well in national elections (Ayoob 2008: 29), religious groups have remained a force of influence upon Pakistan's domestic and foreign policy. According to Rizvi (2002: 319) Islam "figures prominently in political and military discourse" in Pakistan. The political role of Islam in Pakistan reached its zenith when, in 1977, General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq (1977-1988) became the 6<sup>th</sup> President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan in a bloodless coup d'état. His shift towards Islamic policies earned respect in religious circles. Islamic political parties fervently backed Zia's Islamic policies, such as the *Zakat* (a 2.5 % tax) that was levied from all bank accounts, the reconstitution of the Council of Islamic Ideology (a collection of religious conservatives offering advice and rulings on Islamic law), and the establishment of *Shari'a* Benches in the Federal and Supreme Court of Pakistan, known as the 'System of the Prophet' or *Nizam-i Muhammadi* (Islamic Order) (Abbas 2005: 106). Similarly, Islam became an important determiner of foreign policy initiatives pursued by Pakistan during Zia's reign. Within this context, General Zia allowed international and regional powers such as Saudi Arabia to join the Afghan 'holy war,' spending millions of dollars establishing madrasas that advocated Wahhabism – an Islamic movement founded by Muhammad ibn Al-Wahhab (1703-1792) (Coll 2004: 81-88) which denounces *Sufism* and, disapproving of the *Shia* sect, advocates a nostalgic revival of the perceived original practices of Islam (Esposito 1998: 36-37). Critics of Zia's Islamic policies claim that many of the issues currently faced by Pakistan, such as the militancy of religious parties, mushrooming extremist groups, and an increase in sectarian violence, are the outcome of Zia's Islamic policies (Rashid 2008: 38). However, although religious actors play a key role in Pakistan's politics – not always acting as adversaries to the state, but also brokering peace deals between the government and Islamic militant groups (Akbar 2015) –, Islam in Pakistan, unlike Saudi Arabia or Iran, is not a unified single-doctrine mass capable of taking over and governing the state.

## Understanding Islam in Turkey

Turkey is one of the few Muslim-majority countries that has remained largely impenetrable to religiously inspired violence and militancy since its inception as a secular democratic state in 1923. Given the geographical proximity of Turkey to divergent representations and perceptions of Islam in Egypt, Iran, Palestine (the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Revolution in Iran, and Hezbollah) and, more importantly, to recent interpretations of Islam espoused by militant groups such as Al-Qaeda and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the question, really, is what are the factors that make Turkey seemingly impervious to radical versions of Islam? In answering this question, one must understand the contextual and historical synthesis of Islam in Turkish societies. In fact, the dynamics of the secular movement were inherited from the Ottomans, who implemented large-scale modern reforms in administration, education, and law, particularly during the last decades of their reign (for example, the Tanzimat reforms between 1839 and 1876) (Karpaz 2001: 9). Moreover, through the incorporation of the advances of European science and the adoption of a Western style of education between 1876 and 1909 (Hefner 2007: 14), the Ottomans discouraged the revival of a nostalgic Islamic origins movement. Rather, by adopting western modernisation, the Turks, reacting to the requirements of the changing socio-political environment, created their own political models. These reforms gained momentum during the era of the republic. With great intensity, key voices within Turkish society concurred that a progressive interpretation of Islam, in which the principles of Islam were viewed as concordant with those of the rational sciences, was indispensable when seeking to promote democracy, tolerance, and the rule of law. Such a perspective not only separated the Turkish perception of Islam from that of other Islamic states, but also countered the rooting of radical religious militancy in the country (Rabasa and Larrabee 2008: XI, 23-25).

Yet, not all agree with this perspective. Employing social movement theory and political process models, Eligür (2011: 11) defines Islamist circles – often interchangeably using the terms Islamic, Islamism, and Islamist to refer to Islamic figures in the country (1-3) – in Turkey as “noncivil marginalised resource-poor movements [that] oppose democracy.” However, Çınar (2011: 543) criticising such a perception of Islam as a “statement of personal

opinion,” highlighting that religious circles, particularly those involved in Turkish socio-political activities, are civilised, resources-rich and pro-democratic entities. On the other hand, Rabasa and Larrabee (2008: 11-12) divide Muslims in Turkey into the urban modern secular and the poor rural that is faithful to the Islamic tradition. However, the presence of such a dichotomy between the wealthy secular urban and the poor religious rural populace is not exclusive to Turkey and can be applied almost anywhere across the world. Nevertheless, along with urbanisation, the transformation of Islam in contemporary Turkey has been viewed as correlated to the social, political (including EU reform packages) and economic factors that have fused the Turkish perception of modernity, democracy and economic policy with Islam. According to Toprak (2005: 37-38), the progressive and scientific perception of Islam in Turkey developed through the combination of institutional arrangements (the military, judiciary and legal systems protecting the secular state) and changing socio-political conditions.

Within this context, it is worth mentioning that a dual authority (religious and secular) has never been allowed to govern the Turkish state. In fact, contrary to Pakistan, the constitutional declaration of Turkey as a secular state (chapter VI, Article 24) emphasises the state’s position of neutrality regarding religious beliefs. However, this does not mean the state is completely disconnected from Islam. Rather, the state’s neutrality towards religion was a means to both control and promote Islam by proselytising the value of scientific rationality, with an emphasis upon the democratic and secular values of the state. Unlike Pakistan, this has restricted religious entities from procuring an autonomous state and providing legal opinions regarding the interpretation and implementation of the religion. In Turkey, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, (Diyamet İşleri Bakanlığı - DIB), the successor to the Chief Religious Office of the Ottoman administration, the Şeyh-ül İslam (Ağai 2007: 150), monitors and regulates Islamic matters, including the religious sermons in mosques across the country.

Additionally, the development of a peaceful, tolerant understanding of Islam can be attributed, subject to various interpretative traditions, to the longstanding teachings of the *Sufi* orders (*Bektaşî*, *Nakşibendî*, and *Kadiri Tarikats*). Historically, *Sufism* played a key role not only in shaping the disposition of Islamic society within the Ottoman empire, but also in helping

the ruling class maintain a policy of peaceful multi-ethnic coexistence and socio-political order throughout the empire (Lewis 2000: 239). However, despite, its mystical disposition, *Sufism* in Turkey has been used to further various social, political, economic and military interests. Eligür (2010: 3) argues that followers of the *Sufi* order (particularly *Tarikat*) have utilised the socio-political opportunities presented by Turkey's secular, democratic, and economic condition to further their religio-political interests. Within this context, an example of the perceived use of Islam for political ends within Turkey is the recent 15 July 2016 failed coup, apparently masterminded by Fethullah Gülen (the self-exiled religious cult leader of the Fethullah Organisation, designated a terrorist group by Turkey). This event caused considerable political alarm in terms the perceived role of non-state Islamic actors in the country. A survey by the MAK Danışmanlık on how the Islamic appearance of the failed coup affected the perception of *Cemaat* (Islamic congregation) or *Tarikatlar*, (paths) in Turkey shows that 50% of those surveyed believed that there should be strict state control and monitoring of such non-state religious groups and that 30% of the people has since become suspicious of such groups (MAK 2017: 21). In order to provide a contextual assessment of the political role of Islam in Turkish society, it is important to engage in a brief historical account of Islam in Turkey.

### **The Ottoman Legacy**

The Ottoman Empire (1260-1923) was one of the most powerful empires in the history of the world (Quataert 2005: 3). The Ottoman's cultural, political and scientific reach encompassed the advances of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilisations, as well as Roman and Greek philosophy. Whilst preserving their Turkic culture, the Ottomans were influenced by the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multicultural values of both Arabs and Europeans. Eventually forging their own mode of governance, the Ottomans practiced both customary, *Kanuni Osmani*, and *Shari'a* law (Jackson 2007: 32). Although the Ottoman sultans (rulers) believed themselves to derive their duties from God, they recognised the necessity for secular law, *Kanun*, in order to maintain the socio-political order of the various societies under their rule (Lewis 2000: 225). In Ottoman times, the social order and political relationship with the various spheres of non-Muslim authorities – positions of authority being distributed based on a person's personal acquaintances

and loyalty to the sultan, not their religious background (Ismael et al. 2016: 31) – were subject to the Millet system, which was based on the religio-ethnic identities of the various communities. In the Millet system, each community was autonomous in terms of maintaining and regulating their social welfare, religion, justice, and cultural values (Bardakoğlu 2008: 118-19). According to Quataert (2005: 4), “the Ottomans practiced a kind of caesaro-papism,” where the state controlled religion.

Moreover, according to Karpat (2001: 11-14), such ideas of nationalisation and civilisation pre-existed notions that were practiced by Ottomans. Karpat (2001: 11) argues that the Turks regarded the concept of “civilization [ , *medeniyet*] ... , as the yardstick of national achievement...[and] began to view Islam ... as a civilization with material components,” in some ways openly defying Islam’s emphasis on spirituality. However, upon the foundation of the Republic in 1923, the political order deemed Islam responsible for the collapse of the Ottoman state. Islam was thus banned from the public sphere during the initial years of the republic (Agai 2007: 150). For example, unlike in South Asia, where educational reforms were conducted within madrasas, religion was eliminated from the general education curriculum (Hefner 2007: 14-15). This was due to fact that the Turkish struggle of modernisation was not solely based on the adoption of a Western system of governance, but was an attempt to structurally change the entire socio-political system of the Ottoman state to the secular principles of the newly formed nation-state of Turkey.

Between 1923 and 1946, secular laws, replacing religious laws, had started regulating moral, civil, criminal, constitutional, administrative, and commercial matters (Agai 2007: 150). This, according to Eligür (2010: 47), constituted the Turkification of Islam. For example, the Latin alphabet replaced the Arabic; the Qur’an was translated into the Turkish language; between 1934 and 1947 the hajj pilgrimage was banned; and Turkish replaced Arabic in the five calls to prayer (Eligür 2010: 47). With the exception of revolts in 1925 and 1930, there was, in general, no serious resistance or violent movements against the abolishment of the Ottoman caliphate and the establishment of a secular order by the new state (Eligür 2010: 48). However, Agai (2007: 151) argues that “the notion that Islam had no place in Kemalism is deceptive.” According to Agai, it was Islam that

played the key role in making a single nation out of the Anatolians, Kurds, Caucasians, Albanians and Tatars in Turkey (ibid).

### **The Role of Islam in Contemporary Turkish Politics**

Recent debates on whether the governing party in Turkey, the Justice and Development Party, (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP) is secular or Islamic are diverse for a variety of reasons. While some discourses argue that AKP is not so much religious as democratic and socially conservative in its appeal (Ismael et al. 2016: 119-125, Rabasa and Larrabee 2008: 2 White 2014: 99), others accuse the party of using democracy and secular rhetoric as a means to the furtherance of a hidden Islamic agenda (Eliđür 2010: 249). Moreover, Çınar (2011: 540) emphasises that the AKP's perception of Islam is not based on the Turkish ethnic identity, but rests instead on a religious identity that utterly supersedes ethnic identities. Moreover, some political critics go so far as to hypothesise that Turkey is falling into a quagmire of religiously inspired violence and militancy, similar to the state of Pakistan during the pursuit of its Afghan policies (Tanchum and Karaveli 2014). Yet, such theories of the Pakistanisation of Turkey are oblivious not only to the Turkish perception Islam but also to the historical role of Islam in Turkish society. For example, the AKP's priorities in pursuing democracy, liberal reforms in the legal system and economic stability show the government as largely successful in responding to the socio-economic needs of the populace. Nevertheless, given recent internal (the Syrian refugee crisis, purges against terrorist groups and the terrorist attacks by the Kurdistan Workers' Party - PKK) and external political challenges (diplomatic disputes with Europe and the US regarding, Fethullah Organisation, ISIS, as well as the People's Protection Units (YPG) and the Democratic Union Party (PYD), held by Turkey to be the Syrian wings of the PKK) the future political development of the AKP remains open to question.

The re-emergence of Islam on political scene in modern Turkey has two main sources, the democratisation of politics in 1949 and the establishment of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, (*Türk-İslam Sentezi* - TIS) in the 1980s. A range of policy reforms – from the freedom to practice religion in the public sphere (Agai 2007: 152-156), to the fusion of Islam with nationalism in an effort to curtail the rise of left-wing groups, particularly communism, in the 1980s (Rabasa and Larrabee 2008: 37) – paved the way for practicing

Muslims to participate in the Turkish political system, fostering the establishment of the first Islamic political parties, such as the Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party) in 1970 (Eligür 2010: 1).

However, all the Islamic political parties that emerged on Turkish political scene between 1950 and 2001 were banned by military intervention and constitutional order—Islamic parties being perceived as exceeding the acceptable role of Islam in Turkish politics (Eligür 2010: 55). In other words, Islamic political parties are tolerated when they leave behind any religious agenda that challenges the ascendancy of secularism in the country. According to White (2014: 92), “the question...is not ...about whether Islam is compatible with democracy, but rather what kind of Islam enables a party ... to broaden its umbrella to such an extent that becomes a viable player in democratic system.”

Yet, over time, changing political and socio-economic conditions favoured Islamic circles. For example, Prime Minister Turgut Özal’s (in office 1983-1989) pro-Islamic policies led to the emergence of a liberal and entrepreneurial Muslim middle class (Heper 2013: 147). This has not only supported the progressive and scientific perception of Islam, “but also a viable democracy... political stability in the country” (ibid), which has, in turn, largely, if not fully, hindered the prevalence of jihadi culture in the country. According to White (2014: 93), the contextual factors that play role in shaping the process by which Islam is incorporated into mainstream in Turkey are four; (1) “dynamics of the secular movement inherited from the Ottomans; (2) Turkey’s relatively lengthy history of free election; (3) presence of powerful secular state and military; (4) a powerful entrepreneurial economy” (White 2014: 93).

## **Conclusion**

Contemporary discourses on the role of Islam in Turkey and Pakistan overlook the point that the perception of Islam differs on the basis of the various interpretative traditions, as well as agendas in accordance with various backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, political systems and ideologies of different peoples. From a historical perspective, what makes Turkey different to Pakistan is that the Turks curved a new Islamic identity out of an Arabian Islamic world. The Turks instrumentalised their cultural values



alongside their faith in their statecraft, the forming of their administrations, and the conduct of their wars. In short, the Turks have been less evangelical and more pragmatic when reacting to the constant change manifest in socio-political affairs. From a political perspective, they developed a modern secular governing system, in which the state always controlled religion. In other words, by not allowing a dual of authority, (religious and secular), Turkey has been largely successful in curbing the domestic spread of distorted versions of radical Islam.

On the other hand, unlike the Turks, South Asian Muslims, lacking the institutional capacity to build their own Islamic identity, followed the Central Asian Turkic tradition of *Sufism* imported in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Later, concurrent to the British colonisation of India, due to the absence of an Islamic state of their own, Indian Muslims remained divided on how to secure the fundamental principles of Islam and their Islamic identity in the light of various social reforms. This led to the emergence of non-state Islamic actors acting as guardians of Islam in both social and political spheres. Within this context, Islam (in all its different sectarian orientations) became an integral part of the political movement that carved an Islamic Pakistan out of India in 1947. This movement left a problematic legacy for the newly independent state of Pakistan, one where modernists strived to establish a secular Pakistan, whilst the religious elite sought to establish an Islamic Pakistan. One of the most serious issues in this respect (which remains an enduring problem in present-day Pakistan) is that of religious sermons advocating sectarian orientations and agendas, delivered by independent and often charismatic religious figures. Such figures provide legal rulings regarding the classification of socio-political matters as either immutable individual duties (*fardh*) or forbidden (*haram*), and have remained highly influential in terms of their ability to influence Muslims' perception of Islam.

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# Pakistan ve Türkiye’de İslam’ın Değişen Algısı: Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz\*

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## Öz

Müslüman toplumlarda toplumsal ve politik yönelimlerin algılanması ve şekillenmesi hususunda, İslam’ın yorumları çeşitli sosyal, kültürel ve politik yapılara ve koşullara sahip ülkeler arasında farklılık göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye ile Pakistan’ın İslam’la ilişkisi arasındaki algılanan farklılıkları tanımlayan faktörleri inceleyerek İslam algısını tarihsel bir perspektiften değerlendirmektedir. İncelemeler, Pakistan ve Türkiye’de İslam algısındaki değişkenliğin yalnızca temel kaynakların yorumlayıcı geleneğinin ürünü olmadığını, aynı zamanda değişen sosyo-politik koşullarla eşzamanlı olarak geliştiğini ve tüm bu gelişmelerin de bu devletlerin çeşitli toplumsal eğilimleri ve siyasi yönelimlerini şekillendirdiğini göstermektedir. Çalışma, sürekli değişen sosyo-politik koşulların yanı sıra devlet veya iktidardaki seçkinlerin bu değişikliklere ilişkin iç görüşü, yaklaşımı ve tepkilerinin, İslam’ın Pakistan ve Türkiye’deki farklı algılarının şekillenmesinde kilit rol oynadığı sonucuna varmaktadır.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

İslam, algı, politika, Pakistan, Türkiye.

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# ИЗМЕНЕНИЕ ВОСПРИЯТИЯ ИСЛАМА В ПАКИСТАНЕ И ТУРЦИИ: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ\*

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## **Аннотация**

В контексте восприятия и формирования социальных и политических ориентаций в мусульманских обществах, интерпретации ислама расходятся в разных странах с различными социальными, культурными и политическими структурами и условиями. В этой статье дается оценка восприятия ислама с исторической точки зрения, анализируются факторы, определяющие видимые различия между отношением к исламу в Турции и Пакистане. Анализ показывает, что разница в восприятии ислама в Пакистане и Турции была не только продуктом традиции по интерпретации фундаментальных источников, но также развивалась одновременно с изменением социально-политических условий, которые способствовали формированию различных социальных настроений и политической ориентации общества этих государств. В исследовании делается вывод о том, что постоянно меняющиеся социально-политические условия, а также понимание, подход и реакция государственных или правящих элит на такие изменения стали ключом к формированию различных представлений об исламе в Пакистане и Турции.

## **Ключевые слова**

ислам, восприятие, политика, Пакистан, Турция.

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