

MUSLIM RESPONSE TO THE “WESTERN QUESTION”:
ALİ BULAÇ’S CONTRIBUTION

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

SEVEN ERDOĞAN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

AUGUST 2010

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

MUSLIM RESPONSE TO THE “WESTERN QUESTION”: ALİ BULAÇ’S CONTRIBUTION

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June 2010, 82 pages

This thesis will examine Ali Bulaç’s distinctive ideas and approach to modernity and democracy as two significant aspects of the Western Question within the framework of Muslim-West relations, with the aim of judging his contribution to the Western Question of Muslim. The West and Muslim world have been in contact with each other since the appearance of Islam on the global scene. The nature of this contact has changed throughout this 1400 year long interaction as peace or conflict reigned. In the past two centuries, the dominance of the West over the Muslim world increased dramatically. Consequently, the West transformed into a subtle question for the Muslims. The Western Question has become more complex as Western influence over the Muslim world increased with colonization, modernization and democratization policies pursued by the West. Conflicts have prevailed in Muslim-West relations in the past two centuries. Muslims have not remained indifferent to the rising dominance of the West in their society. They began to seek an appropriate response to the Western Question; but failed to devise a common one thus far, and proposed many different alternative solutions, including the one elaborated in this thesis, to deal with the Western Question.

Keywords: Muslim-Western relations, Ali Bulaç, modernity, democracy.

ÖZ

MÜSLÜMANLARIN BATI SORUNSALINA CEVABI: ALİ BULAÇ'IN KATKISI

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Temmuz 2010, 82 sayfa

Bu tez, Ali Bulaç'ın Batı Sorununun iki önemli boyutu olan modernite ve demokrasiye ilişkin kendine özgü fikirlerini, eserlerini temel alarak Müslüman-Batı ilişkisi genel çerçevesi kapsamında ele alarak, Ali Bulaç'ın Müslümanların Batı Sorununun çözümüne olan katkısını saptamaya çalışacaktır. İslamın dünya üzerinde görülmesinden itibaren İslam ve Batı dünyaları birbiriyle ilişki içindedir. 1400 yıllık bu uzun ilişkide savaşın mı, yoksa barışın mı hakim unsur olacağı dönemselsel olarak değişkenlik göstermiştir. Son iki yüzyılda Batının İslam dünyası üzerindeki baskısı önemli ölçüde artmış bulunmaktadır. Bu nedenden ötürü, Batı İslam dünyasının karşısına çözülmesi zor bir sorun olarak belirmiştir. Batının Müslüman dünyaya yöneliminde benimsemiş olduğu sömürgecilik, modernleşme ve demokratikleşme politikaları neticesinde, Batının İslam dünyasındaki baskısı artınca Müslüman dünyanın Batı Sorunu oldukça karmaşık bir hal almıştır. Geçen iki yüzyılda Müslüman- Batı dünyası ilişkisinin hakim unsuru çatışma olmuştur. Müslüman dünya karşısında beliren Batı Sorununa kayıtsız kalmamıştır. Bu amaçla, söz konusu soruna en uygun tepkiyi geliştirmek üzere çaba içine girmişlerdir. Müslüman dünya Batı Sorununa karşı ortak bir tepki geliştirmeyi henüz başaramamıştır. Ancak, bu kapsamda Müslümanlar tarafından Batı Sorunu'na cevaben geliştirilmiş alternatifler bulunmaktadır. Bu tezde de söz konusu alternatiflerden birisi ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam-Batı ilişkisi, Ali Bulaç, modernite, demokrasi.

To My Parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis owes a lot to a number of supporters and commentators at every phase of its preparation materially or spiritually.

I must thank to Prof. Dr. A. Nuri Yurdusev for his invaluable academic support and guidance throughout this thesis.

My greatest debt is to my wonderful parent, my mother GÜNGÖRDÜ ERDOĞAN and my father NİHAT ERDOĞAN. They always gave me unconditional support in the painful process of writing this thesis. I am very lucky just because of having a family like them and grateful to the God for being their daughter.

I must thank to my friend, SİBEL ÖZDEMİR, who has always encouraged and supported me in times of uncertainty and desperation.

This study was supported by TUBITAK through 2228 – The Graduate-level Scholarship Scheme for Senior Under-graduate Students.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

Muslim societies, and particularly Turkey, have been going through a process of change for a long time. This is a process experienced under the influence of internal and external factors operating in an interdependent or intermingled manner. The West can be labeled as an external factor which has always had an undeniable role in this change, either as an initiator or a source of inspiration. The process of change has been perceived differently throughout the Muslim world. However, Muslims' reaction to the privileged position of the West in this process of change has drawn from the rising and dominant power of the West over Muslims in the past two centuries.

Western dominance over Muslims has intensified with the rising political, economic, military and discursive power of the West in the past two centuries. As a result of this, the balance of power between Western and Muslim worlds changed in the 18th century; and a new balance of power was established, in which the West emerged as the superior and Muslims as the inferior. This led to the beginning of a new era in Muslim-Western relations and created a deep sense of loss, bitterness and rage among Muslims.¹

As the Ottoman Empire declined as a military power vis-à-vis Europe, she turned into a question in the minds of Westerners in the 18th century. The situation of Ottoman Empire was frequently labelled as the Eastern Question by the Europeans, as they did not know how to deal with the decline and possible death of the Ottoman Empire.² According to Yurdusev, the Western Question can be considered as a by-product of the Eastern Question.³ Yurdusev explains the link

¹ Francis Robinson, "Islam and the West: Clash of Civilizations?" *Future Islam* (2002), pp. 4-6 passim.

² A. Nuri Yurdusev, "From the Eastern Question to the Western Question: Rethinking the Contribution of Toynbee", *Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Fall 2005, pp.323-324 passim.

³ *ibid*, p. 325.

between Western and Eastern Questions as such: “What was the Eastern Question for the Europeans was in fact a Western Question for non-Europeans”.⁴ That is, Muslims coined a Western Question in order to deal with the rising power of the West, especially when the West began to spread its own model universally in the second half of the 18th century.⁵ Western domination over Muslims or non-Western societies has taken various forms throughout history. Modernization and democratization can be seen as two means used by the West in order to establish its worldwide dominance. As a scholar responsive to the problematic relationship between Muslim and Western worlds, it could be impossible for Bulaç to stay indifferent to modernity and democracy as two important aspects of the Western Question. Therefore, Bulaç has been trying to contribute to the Muslims’ efforts to come up with an appropriate response to the West, aiming to establish dominance over them. But, it should not be denied that there were also those who pushed for complete modernization or democratization in the Muslim world.⁶ In other words, the West is not perceived as a question by all Muslims.

The Western Question still keeps its legitimacy and relevance in the Muslim-West relations, due to the continuing domination of the West. Dağı argues that the otherized West has become influential in the formation of the modern Islamic identity and modern Islamic movements have also taken their legitimacy from enmity of the West.⁷ However, it is difficult to claim that a common Muslim response exists to the Western Question, and Muslim responses to the Western domination have taken several forms. However, within the framework of this thesis, Islamic movements will be deemed one of the most effective Muslim responses to the Western Question. Since, by means of Islamic movements, Muslims have been pushing for their own Islamic alternative in order to replace

⁴ ibid.

⁵ ibid, p. 327.

⁶ ibid, p. 329.

⁷İhsan D. Dağı, *Batılılaşma Korkusu: Avrupa Birliği, Demokrasi, İnsan Hakları, Liberte Yayınları*: Ankara, 2003, p. 164.

the Western model prevailing in many parts of the Muslim world as a result of Western domination.

Turkey is not an exception in the Muslim world in terms of the emergence of Islamic movements as a response to the Western Question. This thesis will concentrate on one of those movements that have become visible in Turkey after 1980s, which has been the emergence of Muslim intellectuals. In post-1980 Turkey, thanks to the steps taken towards democratization and liberalization, there have been significant transformations in all fields of life. In this setting of enhanced freedoms, Islamic movements had a chance to become more visible.

The difficulty of considering as a meaningful totality, the ideas of all Muslim intellectuals who have been influential in shaping the mental landscapes of Turkish Muslims in the last decades led me to focus on one intellectual in a detailed manner, instead of taking a holistic approach. Within the scope of this study, Bulaç's works will be referenced as the primary source, taking into consideration that he is one of the most popular Muslim intellectuals in Turkey of post-1980 era, especially among Muslim youth. This thesis argues that Ali Bulaç has a distinctive approach in dealing with the Western Question. Bulaç, as an intellectual who is interested in political, economic and social issues and problems in the global agenda and Muslim societies in particular, and who has an extensive knowledge of Quran and Sunnah, feels entitled for contributing to Muslims' search for an Islamic alternative to the Western systems. He is trying to realize this objective by drawing public attention to the availability of this alternative solution and consciousness rising by means of his works, especially by using the power of written and visual media. Besides, since the Western Question is a multi-faceted issue, it is impossible to examine all aspects of it. Therefore, in this study, Ali Bulaç's contribution to the Western Question will be examined on the basis of his ideas on modernity and democracy within the general framework of Muslim-West relations. The study will consist of three main chapters and the following issues will be examined in each chapter:

First chapter of this thesis will try to examine the historical relations between Muslim societies and the West in a selective manner, i.e. it will concentrate more on the key moments that are still alive in the memories of Muslims and have played a decisive role in the arising of a Western Question in the minds of Muslims. Then, the rise of Islamic movements throughout the Muslim world, as well as in Turkey, will be evaluated as Muslims' attempt to find a way for dealing with the Western Question.

The second chapter will start with a short biography of Ali Bulaç with the aim of making the reader of this thesis familiar with Bulaç. However, this chapter is in fact designed to convey Bulaç's opinions regarding modernity and modernization experience of Muslim societies, with a special emphasis on the case of Turkey. Firstly, Bulaç's approach towards different aspects of modernity will be explored. Within this framework, an account of his opinions regarding modern individual, secularization, modern nation states, science, art, etc. will be provided, with his alternative solution to replace modernity.

The question of whether Islam is compatible with democracy has always been a widely discussed issue both in Muslim and Western spheres. Taking this general discussion as its basis, the fourth chapter will try to determine Muslim's or Ali Bulaç's approach to democracy. After Muslim societies gained their independence and formed their own national states, democracy has emerged as one of the decisive factors in the agenda of Muslim societies. Muslim attitudes towards democracy cannot be examined separately from the relations between the West and Muslims. Since, it was the West that constructed itself as democratic and pushed for the promotion of democracy worldwide, including Muslim states, even sometimes through means completely undemocratic.

The thesis will conclude by pointing out that Western-Muslim relations will probably keep its cyclical nature. While the ascendant party will pay effort to maintain its superiority, the other party will challenge it to weaken the superior to replace it. One can make sense of contemporary Muslim-West relations and

Western Question of Muslim societies better, if it interprets them by using this framework.

CHAPTER TWO

2. MUSLIMS AND THE WEST: THE WESTERN QUESTION?

It is difficult to deny the legacy of the past in shaping the present. History makes us aware of the past, it gives us clues which make easier to construe contemporary developments accurately and enables us to make plausible assumptions and predictions about the future. Therefore, this chapter aims to provide an account of the historical relations between Muslims and the West to understand the influence of historical developments on their current relations.

The first meaningful contact between Muslim and Western worlds was established when the Prophet Mohammed sent his messenger to convey a letter to the Eastern Roman Empire Heraclius in 628 AC with the aim of inviting him and his society to comply with the message of Islam.⁸ If one is to consider that Muslims and Westerners have been interacting ever since the emergence of Islam, these two groups have been related with each other for approximately 1400 years.

“For a thousand of years, for much of the period from the 8th to the 18th century, the leading civilization on the planet in terms of spread and creativity was Islam.”⁹ Yet, the power balance between the two worlds altered significantly in the past two centuries at the expense of the Muslim world and the West turned into a question for Muslims. Rather than providing a full account of the Muslim-West relations, this chapter will have its focus on the key developments in the emergence of the West as a question in the minds of Muslim peoples, beginning with an analysis of the relations between Muslim and Western worlds until the ascendancy of the West.

⁸ Khurshid Ahmad, “Islam and the West: Confrontation or Cooperation?”, *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXXV, No: 1-2, 1995, p. 63.

⁹ Robinson, op. cit, p. 2.

2.1 Early Encounters Between the West and Muslims

Islam is a term which has many meanings. Essentially, it is one of the religions with the highest number of believers around the world. If Islam is comparable to the West, Islam cannot be reduced to the status of merely a religion. On the other hand, the West is a civilization limited to a certain geographical area. If Islam is considered as an alternative to the Western civilization, Islam can also be categorized as a civilization. Civilization can be defined as the sum of material and moral products created by a group under the influence of a certain mindset. Therefore, while Islam as a religion was sent by God through the Prophet Mohammed; Islam as a civilization has been created by Muslims under the influence of the belief system provided by Islam. Within the scope of this thesis, Islam, besides being a religion and a civilization, will be entertained as a force of inspiration for Muslims in their mobilization against the contemporary West from its emergence as a question.

The history of Islam starts when the Prophet Mohammed received the first revelation from Allah in the year of 610 AD. Then, Prophet Mohammed started to spread the message of Allah to the people and invited them to believe in Islam. The eras following the establishment of Islam in the Arabian peninsula are marked by an effort to spread Islam everywhere until the message of Allah would reach to all creations of Allah, because Islam by nature was applicable for all times and places. In the expansion process of Islam, the first encounters between the West and Islam occurred. Yet, it should be noted that at that period the West was not yet seen in the world scene as a civilization, and the members of the contemporary Western civilization defined themselves through Christianity, their religion. Christianity had remained as the counterpart of Islam for almost a millennium, and lost its privileged role in the identity of Westerners as a result of the secularization process, which prepared a fertile ground for the emergence of the West as a civilization.

During the medieval ages, Islamic civilization, which was living its golden ages, expanded at the expense of territories ruled by the Christians, and in particular the

Byzantine Empire. Westerners were trying to defend their territories in the face of Islamic expansion. Therefore, conflict was the dominant element of the relations between these two civilizations. However, to Ahmad, it should not be denied that,

...military confrontation, colonial clashes, and missionary encounters have not been the whole story; there have also been long spells of diplomatic understandings, trade relations, intellectual cross-fertilizations, the sharing of scientific and technological developments and cultural exchanges. Understandably, there have been periods of rivalry and confrontation; but there have also been eras of peace and tranquility. Islam and the West have not been merely 'civilizations at war'; they have also been 'partners in the history'.¹⁰

This proves that Muslim-West relations have many dimensions that make it susceptible to interpret as both ridden with conflict and cooperative.

The conflict between Muslims and the West reached its peak with the Crusades. According to Bulaç, these violent contacts between the two worlds served to Westerners' interests by making them informed about the civilized life of Muslim societies.¹¹ Since, Western warriors stayed in Muslim territories during the Crusades, they had the opportunity to observe closely the culture and civilization in Muslim cities. In addition to the Crusades, there were also other factors that made Westerners aware of the Muslim world in the medieval era. Firstly, many sacred places of Christianity and Judaism are located in the Middle Eastern region, which were under Muslim rule in the medieval era, and were visited by the pilgrims of those religions. These pilgrimage voyages, in turn, made Westerners acquainted with the Muslim world. Secondly, there were economic ties between Muslims and Westerners – they were trading with each other.¹² Lastly, there were also Western explorers who visited different parts of the Muslim world, driven by wanderlust.¹³

Not only Westerners came in to the territory which was under Muslim rule, but also Muslims went to the homelands of the Westerners, which was mainly Europe

¹⁰ Ahmad, op. cit., p. 63.

¹¹ Ali Bulaç, *İslam Dünyasında Toplumsal Değişme*, Beyan Yayınları: İstanbul, 1993, p. 20.

¹² ibid, p. 32.

¹³ Ali Bulaç, *İslam Düşüncesinde Din Felsefe Vahiy-Akıl İlişkisi*, Yeni Akademi Yayınları: İstanbul, 2006, p. 376.

in those times. For example, Muslims conquered the Iberian Peninsula and they established one of the biggest civilizations there, the Andalusia civilization, and ruled for seven centuries over most of the Peninsula. In addition to the abovementioned factors affecting the Muslim-West relations, there were also intense cultural and philosophical exchanges between Muslims and the West in that era. When Muslims started to expand outside the Arabian Peninsula, they met with ancient, deeply rooted cultures, ancient religions, and philosophical systems on a firm footing.¹⁴ Muslims tried to utilize the wisdom entrenched in these alien cultures through a selection process which aimed to eliminate harmful and superstitious elements in them, because Muslims also wanted to protect the cultural, scientific and philosophical background of mankind originating from Greece, Egypt, Persia or India.¹⁵ As a result of these encounters, many works produced in different parts of the world in different eras were translated into Arabic. That is to say, Muslims played a vital role in keeping the cultural, scientific and philosophical heritage of mankind and transferring it to future generations, but also to the West. According to Bulaç, in the absence of inheritance transfer through Spain and Sicily to Europe, the West could not have triggered the Enlightenment, Renaissance or Reformation.¹⁶

Consequently, when Muslims encountered different cultures, they both learned from them and taught them. However, the West, which met with different cultures as a result of its worldwide expansion since the 18th century, did not recognize other peoples' right to live as they wish and opted for annihilating their cultures with its destructive assimilative attitudes. After this short account of both conflictual and cooperative nature of the relations between Muslims and the West in the medieval era, their relations in the modern times will be examined below.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 130.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 125.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 367.

2.2 The West and the Muslim World in Modern Times

2.2.1 A New Balance in Muslim-West Relations

After the end of the Crusades, Muslim-West relations continued at the political and diplomatic fields for a long time, especially during the Ottoman era. As well known, the West experienced a great transformation in the modern era. The belief in the supremacy of their system, however turned Ottoman Empire, which was the ruling power of the Muslim world for a long time, blind to the developments in Europe.

As the West expanded its power, it desired to rearrange the world in line with its demands. As indicated by Robinson,

Over the past two hundred years, Muslim world system has been overwhelmed by forces from the West, forces driven by capitalism, powered by the Industrial Revolution, by the Enlightenment. The symbolic moment, when the leading standard overtly passed to the West, was Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. From this moment, Western armies and Western capital overran the lands of Muslims: The British took India, the British and Dutch South East Asia, the British, French, Germans, Italians, North East and West Africa, the Russians swamped Central Asia, and the British and French carved up West Asia between them.¹⁷

That is, in the colonial era, many Muslim countries were ruled by Western imperial powers, and natural and human capital of these countries was transferred to Western metropolises. The influence of the industrial revolution, and the fundamental social, economic, political and cultural developments that took place in the West in the second half of 19th century reverberated globally, albeit in different forms. Not only did Westerners plunder the natural and human capital of the non-Western world, but also they destroyed the cultural life, traditions, religious beliefs and social structure of the non-Western societies with whom they established contact.¹⁸ Thereafter, Muslims not only lost their independence when the colonial powers conquered their territories, but they also lost their identity, and were forced to adopt a new vision that completely contrasted with their own

¹⁷ Robinson, op. cit., p.3.

¹⁸ Ali Bulaç, *Ortadoğu'dan İslam Dünyasına*, İz Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 1996, pp. 318-319.

belief.¹⁹ In short, Muslim indifference to the developments in Europe, such as overseas expansion of Europe or its new trade route explorations, caused major issues for Muslims; and as a result of these developments, the balance between Muslims and Europe shifted in favor of the latter.²⁰ As a result of this shift, Muslims lost their cultural, scientific, technological, intellectual and military superiority over the West.

According to Bulaç, the problem of the Muslim societies is also related to the changes Muslim individuals experienced throughout history, because such changes swerved them from the true path of God (Sırat-ı Müstakim, the path that will lead man to God).²¹ Moreover, traditional structures which could not revive themselves in line with contemporary demands also amplified the decline of Muslims relative to the West.²² As a result of their decline, Muslims began to have a sense of loss and strived to restore the glory of the golden days in order to transcend the dominance of Western power and civilization. Similarly, a worldwide rise of Islamic movements was interpreted by Fuller and Lesser as a Muslim reaction to their decline in order handle effectively their weakness by rediscovering the true gist of Islam which can enable them to restore their greatness.²³

2.2.2 The World Wars and the Cold War

After the First World War, colonial Western powers retained their control over their colonies to a large extent through mandate regimes. However, the mandate system was a reformulated version of colonialism, based on the fact that mandatory states will support their mandates, until when their mandates have the capacity to rule themselves. After the Second World War, Europe, the colonial

¹⁹ Ali Bulaç, *İslamın Anlaşılması Üzerine*, Zafer Matbaası: İstanbul, 1980, p. 14.

²⁰ Ali Bulaç, *İslam Dünyasında Düşünce Sorunları*, İz Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 1995, p. 48.

²¹ Ali Bulaç, *Tarih, Toplum ve Gelenek*, İz Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 1996, p. 269.

²² Bulaç, *İslam Dünyasında Düşünce Sorunları*, p. 48.

²³ Graham E. Fuller & Ian O. Lesser, *A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, Westview Press: Oxford, 1995, pp. 27-28 passim.

wing of the West, completely lost its leading position in the Western camp. Therefore, the rule of colonial powers in their colonies declined, which gave way for a period of decolonization. In this period, many of the colonies declared independence, one after another, including Muslim colonies. However, decolonization cannot be considered as the end of Western Question for Muslim societies; on the contrary, the Western Question retained its relevance in a different guise during the Cold War.

The primary characteristic of the international system during the Cold War was insecurity. Following the onset of the Cold War, Muslim countries, which became newly independent, felt obliged to mobilize on the side of one of two superpowers, as they were unable to defend themselves and felt they were under the threat of being occupied by one of these superpowers. The countries who sided with the USA or joined the Western Camp did not question the US hegemony and the values promoted by the hegemon in such an insecure international environment. Turkey also pursued a very similar foreign policy towards Muslim countries throughout Cold War. Turkey wanted to get involved in the Western Camp and consequently sided with the USA against the Communist Bloc. American interests and American definition of security were the main factors that shaped Turkish foreign policy behavior in this period like many other Muslim states. Furthermore, by siding either with Americans or Soviets, Muslim states also made a choice between two different systems, namely capitalism and communism. Bulaç saw it as a meaningless choice, due to the common Western and imperialistic nature inherent in these two systems.²⁴

In the same period, the West also understood that colonialism was not profitable anymore. Therefore, they devised a new type of colonialism which was based on free trade and the export of excessive Western capital to the non-Western world. Moreover, the presence of Western-oriented elites of the non-Western countries, who sided with the West and tried to achieve modernization in their countries by means of education, secularization, social institutions and communication

²⁴ Ali Bulaç, *Çağdaş Kavramlar ve Düzenler*, İz Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 2003, p. 38.

technologies, etc. also contributed to the success of the new colonial policies of the West.²⁵

Muslim countries entered into several alliances among themselves during the Cold War era, but Bulaç has never interpreted them in an affirmative manner. The Baghdad Pact, which was named as CENTO in 1958, was an alliance formed with the participation of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and the United Kingdom in 1955. However, it was not an alliance formed as a result of free choices of its parties. It was ultimately an alliance that was formed as a result of American initiatives in order to prevent any Soviet attempt at putting the Middle East under its sphere of influence.²⁶

Muslims started to regain their confidence in their relations with the West after they gained a ‘victory’ against the West in the Iranian Revolution. As a result of the failure of pro-Western regime in the face of Islamists; the West, which had been seen as undefeatable until the revolution, witnessed a defeat in the face of a Muslim state, which had been unable to complete its economic and technological development yet. Besides, the Soviet Union, one of the two superpowers in the Cold War era, was forced to put an end to its occupation in Afghanistan, one of the poorer countries in the world, when faced with the resistance of Afghan guerrillas. This struggle also further contributed to the rise of Muslims’ confidence in their relations with the Western world.²⁷

As it was indicated before, “in face of US support for Israel, a number of Middle Eastern nations wooed the Soviet Union. In South Asia, the opposite was true. In the face of India’s close relationship with the Soviet Union, the US wooed Pakistan. For a while, Afghanistan successfully played one off against the other for aid and development. However, the sudden collapse of the Soviet empire radically transformed world politics and the perceptions of the world towards US

²⁵ Bulaç, *Ortadoğ’u’dan İslam Dünyasına*, pp. 318-319 passim.

²⁶ Bulaç, *İslam Dünyasında Düşünce Sorunları*, pp. 71-72 passim.

²⁷ Bulaç, *Ortadoğ’u’dan İslam Dünyasına*, pp. 25-27 passim.

dominance.”²⁸ In other words, the international balance established between two superpowers after the WWII came to an end with the fall of communism and a search for a new balance began. In the absence of the old balance, the nature of the Muslim-West relations also changed.

2.2.3 Search for a New Balance in the Muslim-West Relations

International politics had started to take a new appearance in the 1990s. The balance of international politics that lasted for forty years finally came to an end with the demise of communism. Bulaç identifies the year of 1990 as a turning point as well. The emergence of a new balance was inevitable after the end of the Cold War. More explicitly, the USA could not have stayed as the sole superpower for a long period of time; it needed to be challenged and its power be checked. The ethnic and religious conflicts in the Balkans, Caucasus, Asia and Africa were interpreted by Ali Bulaç as the indicators of a search for a new multi-polar balance in international politics.²⁹ In such an international setting, Islam emerged as a factor that has a potential of shaping the international system. In other words, Islam has started to play a more active role in world politics in the aftermath of Cold War.

Since the times of ancient Greeks, Westerners have been keen on justifying their existence on the basis of an external enemy. That is, historically the West, for most of the time, maintained its existence against an enemy. The only viable way for the West to keep its existence is to eradicate or assimilate the party it defines as its enemy. After the demise of the Soviet power and communism as the enemy of the West, the West started to search for a new external enemy as a direct consequence of its historical tendencies. In such a period, Islam was defined as one of the potential enemies of the West. However, it is difficult to suggest the existence of a bloc of Muslim countries. They are divided and they have not yet

²⁸ Ron Geaves and Theodore Gabriel, “Introduction”, in *Islam and the West Post 9/11* edited by Ron Geaves, Theodore Gabriel, Yvonne Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, *Ashgate Press*: England, 2006, p. 4.

²⁹ Ali Bulaç, *Kutsala, Tarihe ve Hayata Dönüş*, Yeni Akademi Yayınları: İstanbul, 2006, p.19.

achieved sufficient economic and military power to resist the West. Therefore, the West has been widely utilizing a discourse focusing more on the activities of Islamic movements in order to legitimize its misdeeds against the Muslim world. The only and real objective of the West is to expand its area of influence by taking control of the critical regions of the world that have been under the control of Muslim states and to create a secure environment for Israel.³⁰ On the other hand, the rising assertiveness of Islamic movements in the post-Cold War international system is also contributing to Western policies of enemization of Muslim world. Yet, it is worth noting that from the point of Muslims, they have no direct enmity towards the West. They have been only struggling to make a change in the international status quo that has been operating at the expense of the Muslim world and in favor of the West. Such an objective renders the clash between Muslims and the West inevitable.

The tension between the Western and Muslim world reached its peak with the September 11, 2001 attacks, which left a major legacy in the Muslim-West relations in the recent history. Geaves and Gabriel describe the September 11, 2001 attacks as “a watershed in Islam’s relation with the West. Apparently, the polarization of Muslims and the West has deepened.”³¹ The attacks were performed by a group whose primary source of motivation was Islam and who desired to make a radical change in the international status quo that disfavors Muslims, by attacking the biggest defender of the international status quo. According to Bulaç, Muslim countries have not been acting in the international arena in accordance with their historical, geographical and historical realities. Instead, they have been integrated into the strategies determined by others, and especially Westerners. As a result of this, if Muslim countries want to get involved as a key actor in the international system that has been in the process of reconstruction; they need to build a vision of the future by taking into account the

³⁰ Ali Bulaç, *Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye*, Eylül Yayınları: İstanbul, 2001, p. 77.

³¹ Geaves & Gabriel, op. cit., p. 10.

historical background of all recent developments in world politics.³² Under the following section, Islamic movements will be analyzed in detail in relation to their role in Muslim response to the Western Question.

2.3 The Rise of Islamic Movements

Perwita argues that Islamic movements aim to establish an alternative world order which will replace the existing one based on Western norms and values, that is, by definition, not compatible with the religion of Islam. She also adds that Islamic movements can only be understood if they are considered in the context of the relations between Islam and the West.³³ The arguments of Perwita fit well into the approach of this thesis which sees Islamic movements as a response given by Muslims to the Western Question.

Islamic movements have taken different forms in different Muslim societies, even within the boundaries of the same society. Despite the diversity of Islamic movements across the Muslim world, there is something that is more or less shared by many of them: the fact that they emerge as a reaction to the West. In addition, the emergence of Islam as an independent political force in the scene of world history differs from one country to another. For example, while Islam emerged as a political force in the 1930s in Algeria, it could only manage the same in Turkey in the 1960s.³⁴ Islamic movements turned into a common phenomenon nearly in all Muslim societies after the 1970s.

“Islamism in Turkey, as in the Middle East, is traditionally constructed and legitimated by a strong anti-Westernism. In the face of Western political, economic and cultural challenges, the ‘indigenous’ identity based on Islam was to

³² Bulaç, *Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye*, pp. 35-36 passim.

³³ Anak Agung Banyu Perwita, “Political Islam Versus Globalization?”, *Policy, Organization & Society*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2001, p. 155.

³⁴ Ali Bulaç, “Dinlerin Meydan Okuyuşu: Entegrizm ve Fundamentalizm”, *Birikim*, Sayı:37, Mayıs 1992, p.25.

be a genuine alternative to the West, to the Western ideas and models.”³⁵ However, after Muslims established their independent nation states, Western Question acquired a new dimension. Since then, there have been Western-oriented elites inside Muslim countries defending that the salvation and progress of their country is only possible by following the Western model. In other words, the West is not the only enemy, but those within the community of Muslims who have adopted Western ways and departed from the comprehensive way of life revealed by God were also identified as the new enemy.³⁶ This shows the scope that the Western Question attained in the post-colonial era. In summary, West-oriented elites of Muslim countries became a target due to their attitude towards the West and all its values.

In line with the West, there were also other factors that have played significant roles in the emergence of Islamic movements; such as the continuing lack of power and influence, the internal divisions between Muslim peoples, the continuing poverty, lack of education, and the internal corruption of Muslim regimes. These factors also motivated some Muslims to see Islam as a force that will solve their problems. Besides, one can argue that common people and young educated professionals, who were dissatisfied with capitalism and socialism, and had high Islamic sensitivities, turned to Islam as a political ideology.³⁷ In other words, the failure of modern systems originating from the West led to the emergence of Islam as a force, and source of hope for a great number of Muslims.

Since the 1960s, Muslims have been trying to purify their mind from the dominance of Western thought. This process nears completion. Today, many people in the Muslim world think as a Muslim and are trying to practice Islam as a religion, but they are not living as a Muslim because they are living in a system which does not take its legacy from Islam. That is, they are believing as a Muslim,

³⁵ İhsan D. Dağı, “The Justice and Development Party: Identity, Politics and Discourse”, in *The Emergence of a New Turkey* edited by Hakan Yavuz, (University of Utah Press, 2006), p. 92.

³⁶ Geaves & Gabriel, op. cit., p. 3.

³⁷ Geaves & Gabriel, op. cit., pp. 2-3 passim.

but living as a capitalist.³⁸ Once the mental shift of Muslims is complete, they will enter a new process in which they try to organize their lives in line with the directives of Islam. If Muslims do not achieve this objective, they cannot keep the dominance of Islam in their thinking.³⁹ After dealing with Islamic movements in general on the basis of the role the West plays in their emergence; in the next heading the development of Islamic movements in Turkey will be presented.

2.3.1 The Rise of Islamic Movements in Turkey

2.3.1.1 Islamic Movements in the Pre-Republican Era

Islamism⁴⁰, initially emerged in the Ottoman era in the form of one of the ideologies designed for saving Ottoman Empire from dissolution. Islamists, thus, aimed to reorganize Ottoman Empire from dissolution. Islamists, thus, had some additional goals too, namely enabling reorganization of the Ottoman state with the guidance of Quran and Sunnah to eliminate some wrong historical practices that were responsible for the decline of Muslims in general and Ottomans in particular. Early Islamists offered a solution which consists of three elements, and which, according to Bulaç, retain their validity even in the current era⁴¹:

- 1) Relying on the guidance of two main sources of Islam, Quran and Sunnah.
- 2) Opening the path to jurisprudence (interpretation), this makes Islam dynamic and responsive to the needs and demands of the era.
- 3) Reawakening of the jihadist spirit to resist against the West.

There are two common characteristics of Islamic movements that became influential in Turkey before the declaration of the Republic. Firstly, they were reactionary; not only against the Western modern system and its promoters inside

³⁸ Bulaç, *İslamın Anlaşılması Üzerine*, p. 198.

³⁹ *ibid*, p. 204.

⁴⁰ In this study, Islamism will be used as a term that denotes for all the ideas defended by Islamic movements.

⁴¹ Bulaç, *Kutsala, Tarihe ve Hayata Dönüş*, p.37-38 *passim*.

the country, but also with respect to Islam, and especially against Muslim traditions that led to a decline in the fields of art, science and technology. Secondly, they were influenced widely by the modern Western philosophical systems in their theoretical and practical reactions to the Ottoman state. The products of the Western philosophy were not rejected; instead they were approached as datum that needed to be invalidated.⁴² In summary, such Islamist movements adopted a reconciliatory attitude towards the West and its system and concluded that the Western science, art, and technology must be adapted with a reservation to Western morality, culture, social life, thought and institutions. In other words, they accepted the defeat of the Muslim world in the fields of art, science and technology.⁴³

2.3.1.2 Islamic Movements in the Republican Era

Despite the long saliency of Islam in Turkish political life, its role has changed dramatically in line with the prevailing conditions of era. Islam was a means for social control throughout the Ottoman era. It was turned into cement in the War of Independence in order to unite Anatolian peoples to fight against enemy. In the Republican era, its influence reduced and it used as a means of protest by the ones who were not fond of Western-oriented Turkish elites. After democratization of the country, Islam turned into a source of mass political mobilization.⁴⁴ Within the scope of this section, the last two forms of Islam will be primarily elaborated.

As indicated above, the role of Islam was redefined frequently in Turkey and Turkish society. As the role of Islam changed, the nature of Islamic movements followed suit. The Western oriented elite managed to dominate the political landscape in Turkey after the War of Independence and reorganized the country in line with the Western model. Islamists who fought together with pro-Western elites of Turkey during the War of Independence, on the other hand, were

⁴² Bulaç, *İslam Dünyasında Düşünce Sorunları*, p. 60.

⁴³ Bulaç, *İslamın Anlaşılması Üzerine*, p. 21-23 passim.

⁴⁴ Stephan Vertigans, *Islamic Roots and Resurgence in Turkey: Understanding and Explaining the Muslim Resurgence*, Praeger Publishers: London, 2003, p. 21.

excluded from the process of organizing the new state. Some policy measures aimed at removing their presence from the political landscape were taken in the name of secularism.⁴⁵ Therefore, after the foundation of the Republic, Islamist movements of the pre-Republican era lost their effectiveness in Turkish political life. In the face of oppressive secular policies of the new regime, Islamic movements of Turkey were forced to operate covertly in order to survive.

After the end of the Second World War, Turkey made a decision to be a part of the Western Camp and wished to participate in all types of international organizations established by the Westerners. In this context, it took steps towards democratizing its political system by reconsidering its internal politics, practices in the area of human rights and capability in providing freedom to its citizens.⁴⁶ With the introduction of the multi party rule in the 1950s, Islamic forces, which were forced to operate underground by the Kemalist regime, made a return to economic, social and political arenas of Turkey. Until this first return, they had increased their power and presence in every field of life in Turkey, particularly with diffusion of their claims outside the private zones to the public spaces.⁴⁷ To put it differently, as Turkey became more democratic, Islamic groups found more opportunities to organize and operate freely, and they started to become more actively involved in political, economic and social life of Turkey.

Bulaç identifies some defining features of pre-1960 period Islamist movements as follows: 1. They did not have any political consciousness. 2. They were devoid of a strong intellectual basis. They heavily relied on borrowings from the West. 3. They were reactionary, in a way similar to the Islamism of 19th century, but with

⁴⁵ Ahmet Hakan ořkun, *İslamcılık*, Eylül Yayınları: İstanbul, 2001, p. 18.

⁴⁶ Ali Bulaç, *Gündemdeki Konular*, Akabe Yayınları: İstanbul, 1988, p. 65.

⁴⁷ Ömer aha, "Ana Temalarıyla 1980 Sonrası İslami Uyanış: Demokrasi, oğulculuk ve Sivil Toplum", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık* edited by Ahmet İnel and Murat Belge, *İletişim Yayınları*: İstanbul, 2001, p. 479.

a concessive attitude towards the West and Western institutions. 4. They integrated to the system through external intervention.⁴⁸

In 1960s, the works of many contemporary prominent Muslim intellectuals, such as Sayyid Qutb from Egypt, or Ebu'l Ala el-Mevdudi from Pakistan, were translated into Turkish. Turkish Muslims who read the works of such intellectuals met with a different form of Islam. Exorcist, rightist, conservative and coward Muslims of Turkey came face to face with a new type of Muslim who was dynamic and anti-systemic.⁴⁹ In such a context, Islamists declared their independence from the right, the Justice Party, and they formed the first openly Islamic-oriented party of Turkey in the 1970s, the National Order Party. After the Coup of 1980, Turkish political arena turned into a struggle between Islamist and Kemalist forces, which still shapes the Turkish political landscape to this day. In short, the continuous existence of religion in Turkish society was interrupted in 1923 and revitalized after the 1950s and made its real return in the 1970s.⁵⁰

Turkey has been going through a tremendous process of change since the beginning of the 1980s. It is not surprising to see the effects of this process of change over Islamic movements and groups in Turkey. As it was indicated by Hermann, "...in the 1980s a new market economy and a new civil society created new Islamic elite. For the first time, Turkey had Islamist businessman and companies, Islamist intellectuals and media. So Turkish society was now made up of two segments, with two elites, which did not mix: the secular and Islamist."⁵¹ Islamists started to demand to take their place in every field of life in Turkey as active agents, and equals of the seculars, whose ideas were the primary reference that shaped every field of life in Turkey until the 1980s, more assertively in this era.

⁴⁸ Bulaç, *İslam Dünyasında Düşünce Sorunları*, p. 74.

⁴⁹ Bulaç, *İslamın Anlaşılması Üzerine*, pp. 34-35 passim.

⁵⁰ Ali Bulaç, *Nuh'un Gemisine Binmek*, Umut Maatbacılık: İstanbul, 1992, pp. 20-22 passim.

⁵¹ Rainer, Hermann, "Political Islam in Secular Turkey", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 2003, Vol.14, No.3, p 267.

Vertigan identifies some factors that have been useful to understand the growth of Islam's appeal in Turkey in last decades: 1. Economic consideration: Especially after the 1980s, losers of globalization or the poor have sought their hope in Islamism. 2. Urbanization: In the urban context, religion emerged as an identity provider. 3. Age: Young people have always been more inclined towards Islamism, and Turkey has a young population. 4. Social mobility: the availability of social mobility makes people less prone to Islam. 5. Democracy and fragmented politics: In the absence of a dominant power that dominates social political life, and thanks to democracy, Islamists easily found the opportunity to participate in Turkish political life. 6. Freedom of expression: Thanks to it, Islamist media, that reaches a wide audience, emerged. 7. State support: Islam was used as a panacea for extreme rightist and leftist movements after the Coup of 1980. 8. Patronage: The presence of Islamists in key positions in bureaucracy. 9. Social welfare: Social assistance provided by Islamist groups. 10. Populist appeal: The promise to realize many popularly attractive actions once they govern the country. 11. Psychological issues: The feeling of exclusion generally increases the likelihood of participation in the Islamist groups.⁵²

Reiner Hermann argues that both Islam and Islamic movements in Turkey are different from its counterparts in the Arabian and Persian peninsulas. He highlighted five factors behind this difference: Firstly, Islam in Turkey has been never used as a political tool to liberate the country from colonial powers or authoritarian governments. Secondly, Islam has always been practiced in Turkey as a tool for networking or religious orders, even after the ban on the activities of sheiks and religious orders in the Republican era. Thirdly, under the influence of their previous religion, Shamanism, Turks practiced Islam more in the form of a cult rather than a religion. The fourth factor is the increase in the presence of the Alevi minority in the formation of public discourses with their secular inclinations in the recent decades. Lastly, there is a well-entrenched secularism tradition in

⁵² Vertigans, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80 *passim*.

Turkey, so even the Muslim intellectuals have been educated in a secular education system.⁵³

This chapter aimed to provide a selective account of the Muslim-West relations in the context of Western Question, and handled the issue in two parts. In the first part, the historical process through which the West emerged as a question was examined. This part also included information regarding the developments in Muslim-Western relations after the emergence of the Western Question. In the second part, the rise of Islamic movements was evaluated as the most powerful response given to the Western Question by Muslims. The following chapter will deal with modernity which was conceptualized as one of the significant aspects of the Western Question within the scope of this study.

⁵³ Hermann, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-266 *passim*.

CHAPTER THREE

3. ALİ BULAÇ ON MODERNITY

3.1 A Short Biography of Ali Bulaç

After providing a historical account of the relations between the West and Muslim worlds against which the responses of political Islamist groups and Islamic intellectuals were set, a biography of Ali Bulaç will be provided. Since the remaining chapters of this study will be heavily built on his ideas, the reader might benefit from some details on his life and his personal experiences.

Ali Bulaç was born in Mardin in 1951, a small city in the southeastern part of Turkey and the majority of its population is composed of Turkish citizens of Arabic origin. Ali Bulaç, too, was born to a family with an Arab origin.

He lived in Mardin until the end of his high school education. He attended the Imam Hatip School which is frequently preferred by families with a high level of religious sensitivity in Turkey and many of the contemporary leading figures within Islamist groups in Turkey had also attended these schools. In addition, he received an extensive education on Islamic sciences in a madrasah in Mardin for seven years. Then, he moved to Istanbul to pursue his university degree. First, he attended the Istanbul Theological Institute. Then, he graduated from the Sociology department of Istanbul University in 1980.

As a result of this information, we can conclude that his ideas were shaped through an education process which combines elements from religious and secular circles. His educational background had a major influence on the way he dealt with the issues. He speaks English and Arabic. His Arabic is fluent enough to publish a Turkish translation of Quran and his English is sufficient to read books and articles with a high level of academic value. He utilizes these sources in his writings.

From the late 1970s onward, he wrote in different newspapers, such as Milli Gazete, Zaman, Yeni Devir, and journals, such as Düşünce, İlim ve Sanat, Bilgi ve Hikmet, Birikim, Hareket, Tohum, Sur, etc. He also worked as an editor in Kitap and Endülüs publishing companies. In 1983, he won the prize of Fikir of Turkish Writers Association. He was named as one of the most influential five hundred Muslims in the world published by Georgetown University and Jordan Strategic Studies Center in 2009. Today, he is writing in Zaman Daily and Today's Zaman and making a weekly programme in a private television channel, Mehtap. Besides, he is the writer of many widely read books.

He generally writes about the issues of contemporary Islamic world, problems in Muslim thought, social change and modernization. In addition, it can be argued that the main theme in his works is modernization and its critique. Yet, he also elaborates on many other issues, such as hippie movements, atheism, homosexuality, environmental problems, feminism or postmodernism with a constant link with modernity.

To conclude, Bulaç can be defined as an Islamist intellectual who is a product of mutual interaction of urbanization, secular education and worldwide rise of Islamization in the Turkish context. When all these factors mixed with his intellectual potential, a Muslim intellectual emerged who has an enormous influence among the Islamic oriented groups in Turkey.

3.2 Modernity

Thanks to its rising power in the last two centuries, the West found the opportunity of exporting its modernity globally. That is, modernity turned into a globally experienced phenomenon. However, it is difficult to conclude that the diffuse of modernity was welcomed by everybody equally. This part of the study will focus on the Muslim response to the modernity, especially through elaborating on Bulaç's writings on modernity.

The social hegemon infects your society with the virus of alien value system, a virus especially potent among the young. Strange new kinds of music, food, clothing, books, movies, bizarre new expressions, disrespect for traditional

authorities, untraditional habits all arrive with dizzying speed and relentless force. Centuries of convention appear to be dying overnight. Years of effort to mold your children's values seem wasted as their behavior and language ape the outside influences more than your own. Suddenly, it is no longer certain what it means to be a member of your people. If everyone is parroting generic global values and habits, what makes your society unique in a globalizing world? What elements of national identity can you sustain?⁵⁴

This quotation is quite powerful in terms of expressing the feelings of the members of societies which met or underwent modernity and modernization. It might be argued that Muslims who faced modernity and modernization continuously ask themselves the same questions. Similarly, people all around the world will inevitably keep asking these kinds of questions, as long as they continue to be uncomfortable with modernity which has been replacing their traditional values and culture.

Modernity made its entrance to the Muslim world with Napoleon's arrival to Egypt in 1798. From then on, a process of constant and forced change through which every aspect of Muslim life reorganized with the guidance of modern principles started.⁵⁵ The West has seemingly created a discourse through which it has led non-Westerners to believe in their backwardness, and such a feeling of backwardness made them prone to shifting towards the Western ways.⁵⁶ Therefore, traditional forces, especially Islam, lost their privileged role in the system prevailing in Muslim countries in this process of change. Mazarr describes this process as a transition from 'war of arms' to 'war of words and ideas' that have facilitated Western dominance over other worlds.⁵⁷

Bulaç defines modernization as a combination of three factors: 1) military factors that were materialized in colonialism and militarism; 2) political factors which took the form of central nation states in the West and nation states ruled by totalitarian dictatorships in the East; 3) cultural factors which can be seen as an

⁵⁴ Michael J. Mazarr, *Unmodern Men in the Modern World*, Cambridge University Press: New York, 2007, pp. 33-34 passim.

⁵⁵ Ali Bulaç, "Islam and Modernity", *Today's Zaman*, 30 May 2008.

⁵⁶ Bulaç, *Gündemdeki Konular*, p. 32.

⁵⁷ Mazarr, op. cit., pp. 33-34 passim.

attempt for establishing hegemony through using channels, such as media, universities, education and intellectuals.⁵⁸ He also adds that modernity emerged when Satan imitated God by reversing religion. In the modern period, man tried to understand the world by putting himself and his desires in the centre. This drove him to a constant conflict with himself, his environment and his creator.⁵⁹

Modernization is based on three basic assumptions which make it problematic from the perspective of Islamic movements:

- The Western system or Western industrial development model is the only viable form of development in the modern world.
- The superiority and model status of the West over the others is undisputable.
- The Eastern or non-Western societies are obligatory to integrate or follow Western model.⁶⁰

Modernity has been operating to make these assumptions real through different means, such as secularization, modern nation state, science, universities, media, and etc.⁶¹. Throughout this chapter, both the basic assumptions and means of modernity will be considered according to the opinions of Ali Bulaç.

3.2.1 Modern Individual

Under the influence of modernity, humans are left without a clue as to where they came from, where he is destined to go, and the reasons behind his existence. He is

⁵⁸ Bulaç, *Kutsala, Tarihe ve Hayata Dönüş*, p. 212.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p. 125.

⁶⁰ İsmail Coskun, "Modernleşen Kuramı Üzerine", *Sosyoloji Dergisi*: İstanbul, 1989, p. 295; cited from Ali Bulaç, *Din ve Modernizm*, Endülüs Yayınları: İstanbul, 1991, p. 73.

⁶¹ Ali Bulaç, *Bütün Eserleri 2: İslam'dan Korkmalı Mıyız? Fanatizm-Fundamentalizm-İslamofobia*, Çıra Yayınları: İstanbul, 2009, p. 326.

only interested in his existence in this world, as modernity is restricted to this world.⁶² Bulaç discusses the situation of modern man.

First of all, Bulaç claims that modern man is neither free nor happy. But, he has not yet realized that what makes him unhappy is what he had given up with his accession to modern life, especially his belief in God. It is difficult for modern man to regain his freedom and happiness as long as the modern system prevails. Man can only achieve his freedom and happiness, if he starts living in this world as a guest who is longing for his homeland and waiting for the time he will return to his homeland.⁶³ That is, man can only achieve his freedom when he lives in a society based on wisdom.⁶⁴ In addition, to Bulaç, in the contemporary world, modernity is not a phenomenon that is limited to a certain area. It is capable of influencing the minds of every person. Therefore, Bulaç concludes that in every part of the world, modernity is operating as a barrier between man and wisdom, and preventing man from searching wisdom by preoccupying his life with things that are the products of his own mind.⁶⁵

Secondly, in the modern world, man believes that he can know everything by using his own capacity. Therefore, he assumes that he does not need the guidance of the God or prophets. Bulaç interprets the emergence of a man who believes he can reach the sum of all knowledge in this world without the support of God as entering into a competition with God.⁶⁶ In addition, such a man sees himself as the creator of true knowledge. Bulaç opposes this because he argues that true knowledge was created by God and provided to the service of man. Yet, even in the absence of man, true knowledge exists.⁶⁷

⁶² Bulaç, *Çağdaş Kavram ve Düzenler*, p. 128.

⁶³ Ali Bulaç, *İnsanın Özgürlük Arayışı*, Beyan Yayınları: İstanbul, 1993, p. 10-11 passim.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.28.

⁶⁵ *ibid*, pp. 56-57 passim.

⁶⁶ Ali Bulaç, *Bilgi Neyi Bilmektir?*, Bakış Yayınları: İstanbul, 2003, pp. 28-31 passim.

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 38.

Thirdly, one of the reasons that cause Bulaç to be cynical about the modern world is its constructed nature. Modern world is constructed, because it led to the dissolution of the traditional values and bonds with the new social and cultural innovations. That is, in the modern world, identities are a matter of choice. People have the opportunity of being who they choose to be, because their identities are not given any more. Therefore, the significance of constructed personal identities and social relationships has increased in the modern world.

Fourthly, modernity, in all settings has led to the emergence of a sense of deprivation. It forced man to pursue a life devoid of meaning, as its assault on religion intensified. That is, modernity imposed an unreligious life on men, but it failed to offer something powerful enough to substitute religion. People cannot bear to live in the absence of a meaning in their life. For years, man tried to live unconsciously without knowing that he lost the meaning of his life. Yet, he started to awaken and under such conditions, the return of religion and its demand for its earlier privileged role in people's life has become inevitable. This is probably one of the reasons Bulaç has positive expectations for future.

To sum up Bulaç's views; man has a nature which is a combination of different and conflicting tendencies. On one hand, he can kill and cause harm on others; on the other hand, he can search for the ways which lead him to live with others in harmony.⁶⁸ That is, man is capable of both benevolence and malevolence by nature, and God created man in this way to test him.⁶⁹ According to Bulaç, success of a system depends on its contribution to man's achievement in the test of God. Under the next heading, secularism will be dealt with as one of the decisive constituents of modernity.

3.2.2 Secularization

One of the undisputable aspects of modernity is its secular nature. With the emergence of a secular world, religion lost its privileged position in people's

⁶⁸ Ali Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, İz Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 1995, p. 293.

⁶⁹ Ali Bulaç, *Tarih, Toplum ve Gelenek*, p. 101.

lives. In contemporary world, while people are organizing their lives, they are doing it without taking religion as their point of reference. Modern man has the freedom to organize his life in line with the directives of his rationality without any further consideration of religion. Some aspects of secularism that are discussed by Bulaç will be presented below.

To begin with, in the past, people lived in a religious world. However, with modernity, for the first time in the history of mankind, all religions came under attack from non-religious forces.⁷⁰ Modernity was established on a notion of double reality which made a twofold division of life, namely the sphere of religion and metaphysics on one hand, and secularism or rationalism on the other. This twofold division of life seems to be in contrast with the teachings of Islam, which aims to regulate all aspects of man's life. However, modernity emerged with the claim of rendering religion as a matter of one's own consciousness, and so it does not envision any role for religion in political or social life.⁷¹

Secondly, the West has been trying to export its secular model that has been formed as a result of its historical experience. However, secularism and laicism emerged in Europe as a sound reaction to the privileged role of the church and the class of clergy. Due to the lack of any counterpart of the church and clergy in Islam, there is not any institution monopolizing religious interpretation and therefore there is hardly any ground to claim that secularism is needed in Muslim societies. Moreover, since Muslims believe in the existence of God as an inherent part of every ontological creature, it is impossible to think of a place absent of God. Bulaç asserts that, therefore, there is no need for secularism and laicism in Islam.⁷²

Thirdly, Bulaç distinguishes between two types of knowledge: the first type of knowledge was taught to people by the God. This knowledge was reminded to people through various prophets throughout history. When man was equipped

⁷⁰ Ali Bulaç, *Din Devlet ve Demokrasi*, Zaman Kitap: İstanbul, 2001, p. 190.

⁷¹ *ibid*, pp. 49-50 *passim*.

⁷² Bulaç, "Kutsal", p 156.

with the capabilities of perception, apprehension and expression, another type of knowledge emerged, i.e. learnt knowledge, the type of knowledge that man attained by using his own capacity. This knowledge is valuable and labeled as wisdom (hikmet), as long as it was generated by looking at the world using a perspective acquired as a result of God's revelation.⁷³ Since, man cannot reach the latter in the absence of the former; the latter can be labeled as a derivative of the former. In addition, although there is a single wisdom (hakikat), it can manifest itself in our world in multiple forms. This makes different forms of knowledge and models of understanding the world possible and legitimate, notwithstanding that they can even conflict with each other. God alone has the right to judge the knowledge that man relies on throughout his life to determine his fate in the world hereafter. In other words, life of man in the world is a process through which man will be tested by God in order to determine his final destiny.⁷⁴ In the modern world, man is relying on secular knowledge, a kind of learnt knowledge that is produced without the guidance of wisdom.

Fourthly, according to Bulaç, laicism was misunderstood in Turkey and as a result of this misunderstanding, it has been applied mistakenly. In reality, it is the emancipation of state and politics from church and clergy domination. It is not a total elimination of religion's influence over state or politics. In Turkey, influence of the religion on state was totally eliminated and state established domination over religion as the promoter of a single form of Islam, i.e. Sunni Islam.⁷⁵ In addition, under the influence of secularism, Turkish society and politics divided into two hostile camps and such a division has been still keeping its legacy in contemporary Turkey.⁷⁶

⁷³ *ibid*, pp.112-113 *passim*.

⁷⁴ Bulaç, *Bilgi Neyi Bilmektir?*, p. 73.

⁷⁵ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, p. 119.

⁷⁶ Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey" in *Religion and Politics in Turkey* edited by Ali Çarkoğlu & Barry Rubin, Routledge Press: New York & London, 2005, p. 29.

To sum it up, Bulaç does not view the secular world as a genuine one, since, to him, modernity has been defined by using main parameters of religion.⁷⁷ This in turn makes modernity a kind of religion devoid of any sacred origin. Besides, man's need for believing made modernity necessary to be organized in the form of religion, after its eradication of religion from man's life.⁷⁸ As a result of this, to Bulaç, despite its seemingly secular discourse, modernity has never in fact had a secular nature.

3.2.3 Modern Nation State

Nation state is a globally manifest phenomenon.⁷⁹ In the modern world, it is impossible to find any piece of land outside the boundaries of nation states. Therefore, it is a well established fact that nation states are the prevailing form of political organization in the modern world. Nation state achieved this status by emerging victorious over a system that derived its legitimacy from religion.⁸⁰ There is a close link between the nation state and modernization. Ali Bulaç also observed this link and concluded that modernization policies can only be viable in a setting which is organized as a nation state. The opposite of this statement is also true. Any society which is organized in the form of a nation state is eventually and inevitably involved in the modernization process and internalizes modernity.⁸¹ In short, according to Bulaç, nation state is the primary tool of modernization. It mobilizes all its sources to achieve worldwide modernization in order to serve the Western objectives and intentions over the non-Western world which have kept their saliency since the colonial era.⁸²

⁷⁷ Bulaç, *Tarih, Toplum ve Gelenek*, p. 77.

⁷⁸ Bulaç, *Kutsala, Tarihe ve Hayata Dönüş*, p.13.

⁷⁹ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, p. 95.

⁸⁰ Daniel Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations", *World Politics*, Issue 55, 2002, p. 72.

⁸¹ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, p. 258.

⁸² Bulaç, *Gündemdeki Konular*, pp. 14-15 passim.

According to Bulaç, modern nation state is based on three main premises, namely centralization, territory and nation.⁸³ These three components of modern nation state can also be seen as the features of nation state which Bulaç thinks make it problematic. This section will be built on his opinions regarding these three fundamental elements of nation state, with a special emphasis on centralization.

Firstly, in pre-modern times, people were living as members of natural and organic communities. These structures served as intermediary mechanisms between man and state, protecting man from the totalitarian and oppressive interventions of the state.⁸⁴ Bulaç claims that such traditional community structures were more plural in comparison to modern state.⁸⁵ This is evidenced by the lack of a higher authority over the people, imposing how they should believe, be educated, wear, eat, etc.

Modern nation state has two main problems. First of all, it aims to determine every aspect of individual life in a totalitarian manner, without granting any space in which individuals can live freely in accordance with their own choices. In addition, the modern nation state, by its anti-plural nature, denies the existence of different local identities in order to promote its monist culture.⁸⁶ It pushes for a society formed around the central culture of the modern nation state.⁸⁷ It does not refrain from using oppression to achieve these objectives. This leads Bulaç to argue that the modern nation state owes its emergence and survival to oppression and it can protect its power so long as it continues to apply its totalitarian and oppressive policies.⁸⁸

In contemporary era, citizens of nation state are rediscovering their local cultures and challenging the central culture of the nation state by gathering around such

⁸³ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, p. 230.

⁸⁴ *ibid*, p. 168.

⁸⁵ *ibid*, p. 238.

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p. 16.

⁸⁷ *ibid*, p. 57.

⁸⁸ *ibid*, p. 14.

local cultures. Modern nation state and the modern ideology upon which it is built are unable to generate appropriate answers to these two serious challenges. Therefore, man has no option but to find a different source of reference for solving his problems.⁸⁹ In addition, the modern nation state operates to establish dominance over both the moral and material existence of man. Such a notion of state is alien to Islam, where state cannot be superior to the Ummah, or society.⁹⁰

Secondly, the modern nation state is based on an artificial and constructed ideology: nationalism, which is the product of man's imagination, with its limited mental capacity. Therefore, nation is a mental construct which lacks historical, ontological, material or social foundation.⁹¹ According to Bulaç, the rise of nationalism brought about the division of Muslim Ummah into different nations, each with the aim of forming their own nation state. From Bulaç's perspective, people cannot detach from one another merely due to the boundaries of nation states. They can only differ from each other with their respective world vision which determines their destiny in this world.⁹² Therefore, naturally he opposes the division of the Muslim world by boundaries of nation states, because there are many more elements that unite Muslims than the ones that divide them. Moreover, Bulaç argues that Muslims cannot live in line with Islamic values and ideals in modern nation states which take their legitimacy from Western modernity.⁹³

Thirdly, Bulaç indicates that modern nation state is devoid of any meaning and objective. It has a totalitarian character and has been operating as a mechanism through which man is ruled and controlled, and society is determined.⁹⁴ From Bulaç's point of view, nation state will be devoid of any meaning and objective, as long as it does not have a legitimate meaning and objective which takes its

⁸⁹ *ibid*, p. 8.

⁹⁰ Ali Bulaç, *İslam ve Demokrasi*, İz Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 1995, p. 156.

⁹¹ Bulaç, *Tarih, Toplum ve Gelenek*, p. 54.

⁹² Bulaç, *Ortadoğu'dan İslam Dünyasına*, p. 233.

⁹³ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, pp. 20-21 *passim*.

⁹⁴ Bulaç, *Din Devlet ve Demokrasi*, p. 17.

legitimacy from Islam. In other words, the state should be a mechanism that facilitates Ummah's march towards God. However, Bulaç holds that the modern nation state cannot have a meaning and objective beyond modernization. Therefore, once an Islamist nation state is formed, it will inevitably start to force people to comply with the life style determined by state elites and it does not recognize people's rights and freedoms.

Finally, according to Bulaç, a large majority of contemporary Islamists are unable to come up with an alternative to the modern world.⁹⁵ Therefore, they have been struggling for a modern nation state which will be built on basic premises of Islam. Bulaç also believes that as long as Muslims continue to see their salvation in Islamizing modern state, they will never manage to attain their ideal society, because modern nation state can only serve to the interests of its Western creators. Only a small group among Islamists has a radical attitude towards the modern world and its constituent parts. To Bulaç, this minority is the real hope of the Muslim world.

3.2.3.1 Bulaç's Ideal State

There are three main challengers of nation state in contemporary world: 1. The individual, who has been in search for a new identity. 2. Civil society, which has been claiming an independent sphere for itself. 3. Religion, which made a comeback to exact revenge from modernity for its forced separation from the areas defined as secular.⁹⁶ According to Bulaç, the emergence of these challenges against nation state can be seen as evidentiary of the declining strength of modern nation state, whereby man, civil society and religion are trying to regain their freedom from the state.⁹⁷

According to Bulaç, a state should only perform some classical functions, such as maintaining internal and external security, collecting taxes in order to provide

⁹⁵ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, p. 289.

⁹⁶ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, p. 167.

⁹⁷ *ibid*, p. 169.

common services, and determining foreign policy. That is, he is a proponent of a state with limited powers, responsible for creating a setting in which each citizen can live in line with the necessities of his world vision or religion. Hence, Bulaç argues that education, economy, trade, health, science, culture, art, sports and similar topics should be determined by community or civil society structures. Besides, according to him, this goal can be achieved by reconsidering and strengthening local administrations. Since the strengthening of the local administrations by keeping their prevailing form may lead to their emergence in the form of mini nation states, they should be reconsidered with a radical attitude.⁹⁸ In the ideal society foreseen by Bulaç, the state will perform the following functions⁹⁹:

- To establish social peace and political unity.
- To enable harmonious coexistence of different people.
- To defend and promote common values that have been recognized as ‘good’ by different groups in the society and to fight against the values that have been demonized.
- To prevent any kind of unjust behavior or breach of law in order to secure justice.
- To prevent the hegemony of one group over others, and to guarantee everybody’s freedom of consciousness and religion.
- To defend the country against external enemies.
- To pay effort for the maintenance and diffusion of common values those have been shared by different groups in the society.

In the contemporary era, there have been some changes regarding the nation state. Firstly, globalization increased interdependency and led to the emergence of

⁹⁸ Bulaç, *Din Devlet ve Demokrasi*, p. 133.

⁹⁹ *ibid*, pp. 134-135 *passim*.

concepts that is beyond nation state. Secondly, the demands of civil society and individual have made the minimization of the extent of the nation state necessary. Thirdly, decentralization tendencies make states more responsive to the demands of localities. Fourthly, regional integrations have made necessary the emergence of new forms of relations that transcend the nation state. Lastly, the inability of the nation state in finding a solution to enable a harmonious existence of differences is also a factor that has been reducing the power of nation state in the recent era.¹⁰⁰ Briefly, dual forces of globalization and regionalization have weakened nation states in the recent times, because they attacked the boundaries of the nation states heavily.¹⁰¹

It can be argued that the modern state with all its organs and institutions is a mechanism devised under the influence of modern forces with the aim of building a utopia in this world. Citizens of modern nation states are led to believe in that they will be closer to achieve the ideal of a utopia as they achieve a higher level of progress, technological development, economic growth, etc. After the end of communism and fall of the Soviet Bloc, the modern nation state entered into a new stage and will lose its traditional role in modernization.¹⁰² It is more probable that the state will continue to maintain its existence, but in a different form. According to Bulaç, the old nation state which paid great effort to modernization policies will be substituted with a new form of state, namely the corporation state, which is governed in line with the forces of globalization.¹⁰³

3.2.4 Science, Technology, Art

Western science, technology and art cannot be thought separately from Western world vision, belief or culture.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, this section will be devoted to the contribution of science, technology and art to modernization. The rise of

¹⁰⁰ Bulaç, *Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye*, p. 211.

¹⁰¹ Bulaç, *Ortadoğu'dan İslam Dünyasına*, p. 231.

¹⁰² Bulaç, *İslam ve Demokrasi*, p. 135.

¹⁰³ *ibid*, p. 142.

¹⁰⁴ Bulaç, *İslam Dünyasında Düşünce Sorunları*, p. 61.

positivism led to a process through which religion was substituted with the fundamentals of science in the West. Bulaç argues that this shows that Western societies are in a rebellion against the authority of God. Islam sees science as a means that supports man in his search for his creator and his attempt to comprehend the things created by his creator; and scientists as servants of God who know him and his revelation. As long as science goes on to satisfy its real mission in line with Islam, it deserves to advance and to be honored. Besides, science is a blessing of God to mankind to help them organize their mundane lives with ease, for more comfort.

Bulaç's attitude towards science is also manifest towards technology. According to him, technology has facilitated man's control over other men, thereby reducing man's freedom. His arguments related to global media are also an obvious indicator of his dislike of technology. Today there are numerous news centers that convey news to millions of people around the world. There is no doubt that these centers enjoy a great share in shaping people's opinion.¹⁰⁵ In other words, a small minority holds the monopoly over determining public opinion globally. Furthermore, Bulaç defines television as a means that operates to create a homogenous human race by ironing out all cultural and social differences.¹⁰⁶ Due to the fact that a vast majority of the programmes broadcasted on television are produced in the West, the West can easily utilize television to spread its culture globally. The Western culture is on display in many homes around the world thanks to television. Besides, books, newspapers, and journals have also transformed into political and ideological tools that are used to propagate Western culture. Bulaç further claims that none of the products of technology can bring humans closer to wisdom, and people can attain wisdom only by relying on Quran and Sunnah.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Bulaç, *İnsanın Özgürlük Arayışı*, pp. 59-60 passim.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, p. 65.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, p. 70.

Western social scientists not only reviewed their history with a progressive viewpoint, but they also reinterpreted the history of non-Westerners with their modern paradigms with the aim of creating a non-Western world in which Western policies are accepted as legitimate.¹⁰⁸ In other words, a new account of history was invented by Westerners through which some selected experiences of the non-Western societies were categorized as backward in comparison to Western experience. Therefore, millions of people who lived in the past and live in contemporary era were redefined by Westerners.¹⁰⁹ Besides, the West was defined in a way that will be the most civilized and developed of all times.¹¹⁰

According to Bulaç, social sciences, especially sociology and psychology, have societies and the individual as their object of study in order to facilitate Western control over them. In other words, the knowledge provided by social sciences has been serving Western interests by facilitating the establishment of Western dominance and control over non-Western parts of the world. Bulaç, in short, opposes any Muslim attempt at borrowing from Western sciences.¹¹¹ For example, philosophy aims to put an end to religion's monopoly on determining what is good or bad, or in Islamic terms halal or haram.¹¹² On the other hand, sociology is not a branch of science devoid of values, but it is a mechanism that was designed to create knowledge and methods for dissolving traditional social structures, and substitute them with homogenous, controllable, new and modern structures.¹¹³

Bulaç claims that modern science is destructive because it pursues reality with a view to acquiring more knowledge that will enhance modern man's ability to manipulate reality.¹¹⁴ Besides, the very nature of the scientific theory dictates that

¹⁰⁸ Bulaç, *Tarih, Toplum ve Gelenek*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, pp. 16-18 *passim*.

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 23.

¹¹¹ Bulaç, "*İnsanın Özgürlük Arayışı*", p. 20.

¹¹² Bulaç, *İslam Düşüncesinde Din Felsefe Vahiy-Akıl İlişkisi*, p. 56.

¹¹³ Bulaç, *Tarih, Toplum ve Gelenek*, p. 26.

¹¹⁴ Bulaç, *Nuh'un Gemisine Binmek*, pp. 15-16, *passim*.

there is hardly any certainty in the findings of modern science, as new theories constantly disprove or replace the old ones. Therefore, contemporary theories can retain their factually valid status only until substantially challenged by a new theory. Postmodernism in this sense might lead to ethical and ontological dilemmas because individuals now have the capacity and tendency to determine their own version of truth from a collection of possibly conflicting theories with equal value; whereas in Islam, man has no capacity to attain wisdom by using his intellectual capacity, but is obliged to accept and adopt the wisdom communicated to him by God through his prophets.

Muslim world should inevitably develop an alternative concept of science, similar to those achieved in the past. This should come across as natural, as in principle, every culture produces its own science. The inability of modern man to think any version of science other than Western science stems from the hegemonic expansion of the modern culture and philosophy.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, any attempt at proving compatibility between Islam and modern sciences, values and developments is shown to be futile, and nothing but acceptance of the superiority thereof and a clear expression of their acceptance as necessary targets that should be achieved by Muslim societies.¹¹⁶ In summary, Muslims are need to develop their own science which derives its validity from the wisdom entrenched in it.

Bulaç also comments on the universities which can be thought as the home of Western sciences. According to Bulaç, universities are not places in which unbiased knowledge is produced. Instead, universities are places in which studies are made in order to legitimize the modern paradigms which were defined before. Put more bluntly, it is modernism that is being produced in universities, and universities contribute to the sustenance of the modern system.¹¹⁷ For example, Bulaç argues that the vast majority of the studies made in Turkish universities are not sufficient to form an insight on the realities of Turkey, because they have a

¹¹⁵ Bulaç, *Bilgi Neyi Bilmektir?*, p. 153.

¹¹⁶ Bulaç, *Çağdaş Kavramlar ve Düzenler*, p. 12.

¹¹⁷ Ali Bulaç, *Din ve Modernizm*, Endülüs Yayınları: İstanbul, 1991, p. 100.

tendency to evaluate the developments and issues concerning Turkey from a Western or modernist point of view.

Another theme in Bulaç's rhetoric is modern arts. He opines that art is another element that attempted to take the place of religion in the world. Art should serve to reveal the mystery about the ultimate destiny of mankind, creation, life, death, eternity, etc. In addition, he claims that an artist who does not believe in monotheism cannot help man find the meaning of his existence.¹¹⁸

To conclude, the creators of modernity has also developed some means to ensure the sustainability of modernity project This chapter mainly elaborated on such means due to Ali Bulaç's focus over them while he has been problematizing modernity. Many of these means have a neutral appearance, and owing to their covert bias for modernity, they can easily be spread to the Muslim world. Bulaç discussed these means with the aim of showing the real objective behind the operation of these modern means. In the section below, Ali Bulaç's approach to Turkey's modernization experience will be analyzed.

3.3 Turkish Modernization

Lewis argues that Turkish people should find a workable balance between Islam and modernism in order to follow their fathers' path to freedom and their grandfathers' path to God at the same time.¹¹⁹ This is a fairly accurate observation that correctly notes that Turkey has been suffering from a duality for a long time. Turkey is seen as a Western country from the East; but an Eastern and Muslim country in the eyes of the Westerners.¹²⁰ Rainer Hermann defines Turkey as a unique country, as it holds both Eastern and Western identities simultaneously, without being accepted in neither.¹²¹ One can claim that this unique situation

¹¹⁸ Bulaç, *İnsanın Özgürlük Arayışı*, p.36-38.

¹¹⁹ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Oxford University Press: London, 1968, p. 424.

¹²⁰ Bulaç, *Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye*, p. 157.

¹²¹ Hermann, op. cit., p.265.

defines the history of Turkey, and is sometimes even painful due to not knowing which identity to side with. This is why Turkey has never succeeded to be modernized in the full sense of the term, although it has been pursuing modernizing policies officially since 1839.

The onset of Turkish modernization is not the establishment of the Republic. It can be dated back to the Ottoman era, when the Ottomans made extensive reforms by taking the West as a model and with the aim of putting an end to their decline in the face of the Western powers. Bulaç states that,

The last 200 years of Turkey can also be branded as a history of Westernization. Once the late Ottomans realized the decline of their state vis-à-vis the rising power of Westerners, they embarked on adopting “Western” ways that were presumed to have made the West “advanced and powerful”. Turkish reform process started with the Westernization of the army, then of the administration, and finally focused on the daily lives.¹²²

From the beginning, Turkish modernization process has had three fundamental aspects: 1. It started off as a state choice and imposed by the state, 2. It was defined as Westernization, 3. It was experienced as a process at the expense of the role of religion in Turkish society, due to its extreme positivism and laicism.¹²³ To Bulaç, all these three aspects of Turkish modernization is problematic. But, one can argue that as a Muslim intellectual he attaches more importance over the third item that has also the capacity of influencing the others. That is, when the religion lost its previous privileged role in Turkish society as the primary force people relied on to arrange their lives; there will be an environment conducive to others. According to Bulaç, not only the method of Turkish modernization was wrong, but also it had a flawed foundation from the beginning. This is perpetrated by the fact that the fundamental issue of the Ottomans who were defeated by the West many times was not military, but mental. According to him, if Ottomans managed to renew their administrative and societal structures on their own in accordance

¹²² Dağı, “The Justice and Development Party”, p. 22.

¹²³ Bulaç, *Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye*, p. 142.

with the changing conditions of the era on the basis of Islam, the situation would be different for Muslim world now.¹²⁴

With the introduction of reforms which aimed to bring the Ottoman state in line with the Western model, the gap between society and the state widened and they deeply alienated, owing largely to the fact that modernization has been experienced in Turkey as a choice of elites and it has never been fully embraced by society. That is, ordinary members of Turkish society have never had an ideal of modernization, and therefore they have never demanded modernizing reforms. The alienation between state and society widened with the introduction of Kemalist reforms.¹²⁵

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, new elites of Turkey adopted a more radical path to modernization in comparison to their Ottoman counterparts, and they launched a modernization project which aimed to transform Turkey completely in order to make it similar to other Western countries.¹²⁶ Kemalists tried to break down all the ties with the Ottoman or Islamic past. To achieve this, the Caliphate was abolished; the Arabic script was replaced by Latin alphabet; a secular education system was introduced; religious institutions were brought under state control.¹²⁷ However, as mentioned by Rabasa and Larabee, Islam continued to have a strong influence in the countryside which is largely beyond state control despite effective ban on the activities of religious orders.¹²⁸ That is, Kemalist reforms weren't experienced in the same manner by all members of the Turkish society. A vast majority of the society, especially those who were living in rural areas were left unaffected from the interventions of Kemalist central

¹²⁴ Bulaç, *İslam Dünyasında Toplumsal Değişme*, p. 68.

¹²⁵ Bulaç, *Bütün Eserleri 2: İslam'dan Korkmalı Mıyız? Fanatizm-Fundamentalizm-Islamofobia*, p. 75.

¹²⁶ Necdet Subaşı, "Müslüman Modernleşmesi ve Türkiye Örneği", in *Türk Bilim Adamlarının Bakış Açısından İslam ve Modernite* edited by Gönül Pultar, 2007, p. 66.

¹²⁷ Angel Rabasa & F. Stephen Larabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*, Rand: Pittsburgh, 2008, p. 33.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

administration. Therefore, as it was indicated by Rabasa, what is modern and secular coexisted with what is traditional and religious in Turkey. While the dominant elites were from the former, the vast majority of population belonged to the latter.¹²⁹

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak groups Muslims' attitudes towards modernity in Turkey under four categories: First group of Muslims are those who have been trying to escape modernity by adopting a radical and rejectionist attitude towards it. He argues that there may be three reasons behind such an attitude: 1. Since modernity has a Western origin, these people closely associate modernity with imperialism. 2. The elites who promoted modernity in the Muslim domains adopted a negative attitude towards religion, and especially Islam, by putting strict limitations on its existence in every field of human life, except private life. 3. In direct connection with the second reason, they believe that modernity can pose harm on their religious beliefs. The second group of Muslims is those who see modernity as a force operating to make them similar to the West. The third group is composed of the ones who have a high level of knowledge both about Islam and the West. They try to solve the tension between Islam and modernity by keeping the gist of Islam. Ocak labels them as modernists who have a strong dislike of being identified as modern. It can be argued that Ali Bulaç is one of the leading members of this third group. The last group includes Muslims who argue that Islam lost its true nature and was filled with superstitions after the end of the period of the Prophet and Four Caliphs.¹³⁰ Briefly, an important segment of Turkish society sees Turkish modernization process as a project aims to transition from a society in which religion has influence over every aspect of life into one in which religion is only

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "İslami Bilimler ve Modernleşme Sorunu", in *Türk Bilim Adamlarının Bakış Açısından İslam ve Modernite* edited by Gönül Pultar, *Remzi Kitapevi*: İstanbul, 2007, pp. 39-41 *passim*.

influential in the private sphere, effectuated with the division of life into two spheres as secular and religious.¹³¹

Those who were discontent with the Turkish modernization project made their return to the Turkish political life in 1950s with the introduction of the multi-party rule in Turkey. "... Atatürk sought to remove all aspects of religion from political power, bringing Islam under direct control of the state and supporting Western practices that, he hoped, would replace the traditional Muslim processes, methods, attitudes, beliefs, life styles and even appearances."¹³² Yet, Islam has never lost its privileged role in Turkish society and the power of Islam has grown significantly in time. Rabasa argues that,

The Menderes era thus had several important results. First, it expanded the process of democratization and opened up the political arena to religious and ethnic groups that had previously been marginalized or excluded from politics. Second, it provided political space for religious groups to resurface and begin to organize politically.¹³³

After the military coup of 1980, Turkish modernization process entered a new era. Since, Islam was to a certain extent integrated to the process as an internal force by the coup leaders representing the founding elites of the Turkish Republic. To put it differently, Islam was promoted by military elites in order to utilize the unifying potentials of Islam as the religion of the majority of Turkish citizens. Besides, in the liberal environment created by the Özal government, different beliefs and religions found a suitable ground to operate freely in the society. Lastly, thanks to widespread migration to the urban centers, religion once again found the opportunity to gain influence in an urban context.¹³⁴

Briefly, three reasons can be identified as the points defended by the ones who discuss modernization in Turkey as a problem. Firstly, to them, Turkey embraced

¹³¹ Subaşı, op. cit., p. 69.

¹³² Philip W. Sutton & Stephen Vertigens, "The Established and Challenging Outsiders: Resurgent Islam in Secular Turkey", *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol.3, No.1, Summer 2002, p. 70.

¹³³ Rabasa & Larabee, op. cit., pp. 36-37 passim.

¹³⁴ Rabasa & Larabee, op. cit., pp. 38-39 passim.

modernization as a project or choice of the elite and it has been experienced as a process promoted and kept by the state apparatus which has been aiming to transform both individuals and the society. In other words, Turkish people did not choose to be modern with their own free will. Instead, they were forced to accept to live under modern conditions. Secondly, the elites have misunderstood modernity, and so they incorrectly defined modernity as Westernization. Lastly, the modernity project has been implemented in Turkey as a necessary and irreligious path. It is worth reminding that these three reasons are not exclusive to Turkey. They can be applicable in all non-Western contexts which have similar modernization experiences as Turkey. According to Bulaç, modernity is an evolving process that has been operating for a certain period. It is inevitable for the individuals who live in a world under the influence of modernity to stay indifferent to modern conditions. However, modernity need not necessarily be promoted with oppressive and obligatory modernization policies. That is, everybody should be free to live modernity as they wish.¹³⁵

Uncertain belonging of Turkey also had its reflections on the societal formation. Turkey is a divided society and there are social groups in Turkey who have been outspokenly pushing for an economic, social and political change that is compatible with Islam especially after the 1950s. This is one of the primary reasons behind the ongoing conflict within Turkish society for years. The objective of the ones who believe in the political, social and cultural project of Islam in Turkey is to have a chance for living their Muslim identity without any limitation and to be integrated with the international community with this identity.¹³⁶

3.4 Bulaç's Alternative

Modernity emerged with a promise of a utopia in this world. Yet, to Bulaç, it has not delivered its promises so far, and by so doing it turned the world into hell.

¹³⁵ Bulaç, *Din Devlet ve Demokrasi*, p. 168.

¹³⁶ Bulaç, *Ortadoğu'dan İslam Dünyasına*, pp. 70-71 passim.

Regional wars, ethnic conflicts, totalitarian regimes, widespread psychological problems and mental illnesses, violence and terror, the dissolution of the families, atomization of societies, rise of drug and alcohol addiction, sexual deviations, etc. are harmful byproducts of modernity.¹³⁷ This is identified by Bulaç as the crisis of modernity. First time in the history of mankind, man came face to face with a universal crisis due to modernity, because modernity managed to spread its crisis to every part of the world. Bulaç tries to come up with a solution that will contribute to man's struggle to deal with this universal crisis of modernity. To Bulaç, what Muslims should do is to find the wisdom they lost once again in order to escape from the universal crisis of modernity.¹³⁸ In his writings, he tries to encourage Muslims to find the wisdom they lost to enable the salvation of humankind and he also argues that as people become more aware of defects of the modern Western model, their search for an alternative will intensify.¹³⁹

In the contemporary world, Muslims are mentally torn between tradition and modernity; they do not know which one will be the guiding force of their lives. From the 19th century onwards, Muslims were forced by their states to participate in a process of modernization. All political, economic, social, administrative and legal institutions developed by Muslim societies throughout history were destroyed. In order to better convey the extent of the transformation experienced by Muslims, Bulaç comments that Muslims moved from one galaxy into another. In the end, this process gave rise to an identity crisis in the Muslim world.¹⁴⁰

There is one question of vital importance: what should be the attitude of Muslims towards the modern world? According to Bulaç, Muslims should transcend the modern world with a new or different lifestyle or thought paradigm through which the sacred will be realized on earth. In this statement of Bulaç, one word has great importance: "transcend", because it will determine the nature of the action that

¹³⁷ *ibid*, pp. 308-309 *passim*.

¹³⁸ Bulaç, *Kutsala, Tarihe ve Hayata Dönüş*, p. 171.

¹³⁹ Bulaç, *Gündemdeki Konular*, p. 57.

¹⁴⁰ Bulaç, *Tarih, Toplum ve Gelenek*, p. 266.

will be taken by Muslims. He also defines this word: “transcend” means the ability of getting out of the closed system of modernity by using the transformative power of faith to reach what is transcendental.¹⁴¹ Despite the definition made by Bulaç, it may be argued that the word still keeps its ambiguity due to the fact that it was defined tautologically. However, one can argue that he advocates a new system against the misdoings of modernity. Essentially, any alternative to modernity should be built on a basis that is reverent to the authority of God, universe, nature, history of mankind, society and man.¹⁴² This shows that Bulaç pushes for a different world design that will replace the modern world.¹⁴³

Capitalism, fascism and communism are among the different systems that have been prominent in our age. They are three different projects generated in the West to organize the world in three different alternative ways. Therefore, they are byproducts of some historical experience specific to the West. Furthermore, they are not divine systems, but man-made.¹⁴⁴ Hence, they cannot be a real solution for the non-Western world or the Muslim world. In other words, none of these Western oriented social systems can solve the existential, spiritual and cosmological mysteries of mankind. Moreover, these social systems are far from being final and complete; they are prone to falsification. In addition, they cannot answer all the questions in people’s minds, since they do not cover all aspects of life. All social systems, except Islam, are products of special historical conditions, and they do not trace their origin to a divine source.

While Western systems are symbolizing what is historical, Islam is symbolizing the ideal. In other words, as a divinely given system that recognizes the unity of the God, only Islam can meet all the needs and desires of mankind, since Islam is not a mundane order that came into existence at some point of historical

¹⁴¹ Bulaç, *Kutsala, Tarihe ve Hayata Dönüş*, p.10.

¹⁴² Bulaç, *Nuh’un Gemisine Binmek*, p. 44.

¹⁴³ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁴ Bulaç, *İslamın Anlaşılması Üzerine*, p. 58.

development.¹⁴⁵ In addition, only Islam, which is the last message of the God to humankind and also the sum of all messages sent to humankind previously through different prophets, is flawless. Therefore, man can only have a better life in the world if he believes in the guidance of Islam. Man-made Western systems have all the defects that man has. Besides, modern Western systems cannot be a remedy for the illness of mankind, because they have been approaching to it from a wrong perspective. Therefore, the aforementioned systems' diagnosis and remedy were incorrect.¹⁴⁶

At this point, one can ask why it is Islam as a religion that can lead man to the happiness. Islam has two important advantages in comparison to other religions in order to be a basis of a new system: firstly, it has an undistorted holy book; secondly, it has a Shariah that is capable of keeping its principles alive.¹⁴⁷ Every new prophet had a Shariah, which built on the Shariah of previous prophets. In this sense, Bulaç defines Islam as ed-Din, the religion which is the heir of all the Shariah that came before it, i.e. the final form of Sharia.¹⁴⁸

Every religion is a radical doctrine. That is to say, religions have always emerged with the aim of changing the social environment prevailing in the era they emerged. The central point of Islam is that it is the last message of God to humanity. It was sent for all times and places, and it cannot be reduced to a doctrine for a certain time or period in the history. Yet, it is inevitable for Islam to remain unchanged if it is to have a say in the modern world. Therefore, one can conclude that Ali Bulaç is not only radical in his stance towards the modern world, but also towards Islam. Furthermore, he invites Muslims to be critical of Islam to understand and change it in a way responsive to the needs of the contemporary society to fulfill its historical mission as ed-Din.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, p. 224.

¹⁴⁶ Bulaç, *Nuh'un Gemisine Binmek*, p. 114.

¹⁴⁷ Bulaç, *Kutsala, Tarihe ve Hayata Dönüş*, p. 134.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid*, p.118.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*, p. 121.

From Bulaç's perspective, modernity is important because it led Muslims to question themselves.¹⁵⁰ That is to say, modernity contributed much to the emergence of an incentive for Muslims to make necessary changes in Islam to make it compatible with contemporary demands. Muslims should reinterpret conditions of the contemporary era with the guidance of Quran and Sunnah, because they are obliged to alter themselves and rearrange their societies in line with the unchangeable essence and principles of Islam.¹⁵¹ Muslims should question the false idols and basic fallacies of our times under the guidance of the message sent to Muslims through Islamic revelation.

Bulaç argues that the ideal society he has been advocating can be only achieved with a bottom-up approach. Therefore, the most important thing is the Islamization of Muslim consciousness. Once the Islamization of Muslim way of thinking is completed, Muslims will start demanding the ideal society of Islam by their own will and endeavor to establish it by their own initiatives. Once a person starts to think and believe as a Muslim, he will inevitably demand to organize his life in line with the directives of Islam.¹⁵² That is to say, building economic, social or political systems based on Islam cannot bring a shift towards Islam, as long as they are not supported by Islamically oriented thinking. Therefore, a society can only change if it desires to do so. It cannot change through outside interventions and pressure, as is the case of modernity. Besides, nobody has the right to impose on a society the direction of change it will experience. Briefly, Bulaç is a proponent of a social change that stems from the internal dynamics of a society, rather than an external imposition.

The history is an ebb and flow between pure wisdom and degenerated wisdom.¹⁵³ Therefore, Bulaç divides human history into three phases in terms of the nature of the wisdom: first, the period of pure wisdom, it was the first thousand years of the

¹⁵⁰ *ibid*, pp.128-129 *passim*.

¹⁵¹ Bulaç, *İslamın Anlaşılması Üzerine*, pp. 78-79 *passim*.

¹⁵² *ibid*, pp. 91-92 *passim*.

¹⁵³ Bulaç, *İslam Düşüncesinde Din Felsefe Vahiy-Akıl İlişkisi*, p. 76.

man's existence in the world and ended with the Noah's Flood. In this period, mankind lived as a single Ummah in line with the directives of pure wisdom. After the Noah's Flood, the second period, the period of degenerated wisdom, started, and ended with the arrival of Prophet Mohammed. In this long period, the Ummah was divided into many subgroups with new and numerous religions, sects, philosophical movements and systems, etc. The last phase of human history is named by Bulaç as the period of reviving wisdom. In this period, pure wisdom was resurrected with Quran and Sunnah to never be lost again.¹⁵⁴ However, there may be deviations from pure wisdom; and modernity is one of those challenges against pure wisdom.

“What is lacking in the Islamic world today is a thorough examination and careful criticism of all that is happening in the modern world. Without such a criticism nothing serious can ever be done in confronting the West.”¹⁵⁵ Bulaç is for a universal radical shift which will be realized in two phases. In the beginning, man will escape from the dominance of the man-made Western modernity. After the dissolution of the Western systems, there will be no obstacle in the way of man who will regain the capacity to establish a new system which derives its legitimacy from pure wisdom and is based on the revelation of God or Islam.

To conclude, Bulaç didn't provide any detail regarding the ideal system he promoted. In other words, he is concentrated more over the establishment of this ideal system, but he is silent about how the life of people will be in this ideal society. He is just claiming that people will be free and happy, but one cannot understand what will make people free and happy by reading Bulaç. Moreover, he is very vague on how and when such a system will be established. He only states that a shift to a new system will occur, only when there is a radical change in terms of man's consciousness that will make man conducive to such a radical

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*, pp. 72-80 *passim*.

¹⁵⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Western World and Its Challenges to Islam*, *The Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. XVII, Nos. 1&2, January-June 1973, p. 4.

shift, since it is impossible for man to resume life despite God.¹⁵⁶ This vagueness serves to reduce his credibility and is one of the most important weaknesses especially in terms of applicability of his ideas. That is, it will be difficult for Bulaç to persuade people to involve in a struggle without informing them about the concrete results of their efforts.

3.5 Bulaç and Post-Modernity

Post-modernity is a rising trend in contemporary world. With post-modernity all the ideas that have been conflicting with one another acquired legitimacy, since it created a world in which multiplicity of truth was accepted. Besides, in such a world, all the attempts at finding the truth lost their meaning. However, there are also those who believe that post-modernity as a factor ensured the enrichment of man's knowledge. Besides, many see post-modernity as the most powerful challenge to modernity.¹⁵⁷

Despite the parallelism between Bulaç's ideas and post-modernism in terms of their attitudes toward modernity, especially in terms of their shared anti-modernism, Bulaç does not have an affirmative approach towards post-modernity which created a world in which people believe in the multiplicity of truth. People in the modern world, by contrast, believe in the oneness of truth.

To Bulaç, post-modernity is pushing for the recognition of the multiplicity of wisdom. Therefore, post-modernism, as a model very similar to the polytheism of the old ages, has also great potential for creating a new crisis rather than putting an end to the crisis stemming from modernity. That is to say, what post-modernity offers is not a real plurality, but a chaos of plurality.¹⁵⁸ This is caused by the fact that post-modernity divided truth into parts and made every part equally valid.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, p. 172.

¹⁵⁷ Nuray Mert, *İslam ve Demokrasi: Bir Kurt Masalı*, İz Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 1998, p. 172.

¹⁵⁸ Bulaç, *Kutsala, Tarihe ve Hayata Dönüş*, p. 147.

¹⁵⁹ Bulaç, *Bütün Eserleri 2: İslam'dan Korkmalı Mıyız? Fanatizm Fundamentalizm-İslamofobia*, p. 118.

In addition, modernity continues to be influential in many parts of the world. This is also an indicator of the limited success of the post-modern ideology. For Bulaç, Muslim societies are in a process of belated modernity. That is, they are still struggling to become involved in modernity.¹⁶⁰

In a post-modern setting, positivism lost its privileged position and validity it had in the modern world. Yet, the demise of positivism cannot be interpreted as the rise of religion; as relative took the place of positivism, and has become popular. Religion found an opportunity to position itself in the relativist world as one of possible claims to truth, along with many other competitors.¹⁶¹

In conclusion of this chapter on modernity, one can argue that Bulaç rejects modernity and its products, and he is trying to show that Islam is the only real alternative through which people can find salvation. He mostly criticizes the evolutionary, progressive, rational, positivist, secular, individualistic, and materialistic nature of modernity with an added emphasis on the effects of modernity over individuals and society. According to Bulaç, Islam as the last and undistorted message of God is the last hope for humanity that can spearhead a paradigm shift which will set people free from the chains of the modern world.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Bulaç, *Kutsala, Tarihe ve Hayata Dönüş*, p. 122.

¹⁶¹ Mert, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

¹⁶² Bulaç, *Kutsala, Tarihe ve Hayata Dönüş*, p.236.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. ALİ BULAÇ ON DEMOCRACY

In this chapter, the concept of democracy will be elaborated with the guidance of Ali Bulaç's opinions. In the last decades, the power of modernism in shaping the relations between Muslim and Western worlds faded and the relative importance of democracy increased. Therefore, elaborating on Ali Bulaç's conceptualization of democracy will also provide us with invaluable insight on the current status of Muslim-West relations.

Cold War, which based on the rivalry between the Americans and Soviets that were the two superpowers of the post World War II period and represented two different world visions, did not give any opportunity for other world visions within nation states to be expressed freely. These two world visions can also be considered as two different paths to modernity and development. However, it was a world hostile to deviances. The states were destined to follow either the Soviet or American model that involved democracy as one of its major constituents. With the end of Cold War, the pressure of superpowers on their satellites waned. In this setting, local world visions began to establish themselves all around the world and turbulent regions emerged on a global scale, e.g. the Balkans, and Caucasus. In this context, the West came up with a package composed of Western forms of democracy, human rights and free market economy with the aim of putting an end to the worldwide crisis of the modern nation state.¹⁶³ That is, in the contemporary world, constitutive parts of modernity including democracy have gained importance, and they became powerful enough even to declare their independence from modernity.

Throughout the Cold War, the West stayed indifferent to the use of oppression, force and violence by Western-oriented elites of Muslim countries in order to eradicate their society's resistance to modernization. Therefore, many of the military dictatorships in the Muslim world were tolerated by the Western powers,

¹⁶³ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, pp. 11-13 passim.

as long as they were pursuing policies that were compatible with the Western system and interests.¹⁶⁴ That is, as long as the society continues to adhere to forms of culture, world vision, social relations and traditions promoted by the West, the ideal of democracy was expendable throughout the Cold War.

There has been a radical change in the Western attitude towards Muslim countries since the end of Cold War. The West have been putting pressure on Muslim countries to ensure their democratization, as since the end of Cold War, the West is trying to form a new world order based on human rights, democracy and liberal economy.¹⁶⁵ According to Bulaç, there are two reasons behind such a support: Firstly, the West is anxious about the rise of anti-Westernism in non-Western countries, as a direct result of the oppressive policies of authoritarian regimes supported by the West in these countries. Secondly, non-Western countries have a large amount of debt to the Western countries and the West believes that these countries can only pay their debts if they are ruled by democratic regimes.¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, the West pays no effort for the democratization of religious monarchies in the Middle East. This policy of the West will prevail, as long as these countries continue to follow policies that are compatible with Western interests and continue to sell their petroleum sources to the West from a lower price.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, according to Ali Bulaç, the West is not sincere as a universal defender and promoter of democracy, as it is has not always adhered to democracy and democratic ideals. In order to support his argument, he widely references the case of Algeria in which the West kept its silence when free and fair elections which ended with the victory of Islamist opposition was cancelled and all elements of Islamist opposition attacked and destroyed violently in 1991.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Bulaç, *Gündemdeki Konular*, p.16.

¹⁶⁵ Bulaç, *Nuh'un Gemisine Binmek*, pp. 37-38.

¹⁶⁶ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, pp. 76-77.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 80.

¹⁶⁸ Bulaç, *İslam ve Demokrasi*, p. 17.

The policies to diffuse democracy in the Muslim world are creating a reaction among the Muslims, because colonization and modernization policies promoted by the West are still keeping their legacy in the minds of many Muslims. Therefore, Western push for democratization in the Muslim world is creating a sense of déjà vu. As a result of this, many Muslims are inclined to see human rights, democratization and the IMF as the latest devices promoted by the West in order to establish a new world order which will serve solely the Western interests.¹⁶⁹

Democracy can mean different things for different people in different times. That is, democracy does not have a stable and eternal definition which was made for a time. Ali Bulaç says that when democracy is accepted as a world view or a philosophy, it turns into a religion. Therefore, he is against all kinds of definitions which see democracy as a world view and as a counterpart of religion. For example, both in ancient Greece and in the aftermath of Middle Ages, democracy emerged in the West as a political philosophy that is against religion and as a process through which God, church, religion, and cooperation were substituted respectively by man, laic institutions, reason and competition.¹⁷⁰ According to Bulaç, democracy cannot have a universally valid and acceptable form. Consequently, he is not content with the Western attempt to spread its own democracy definition globally. Bulaç argues that every society should have a right to generate its own form of democracy that is compatible with its own social and historical experiences. In the following sections of this chapter, some aspects of Bulaç's view on democracy will be examined.

4.1 The Issue of Freedom & Human Rights

The great majority of mankind is living under control of a small minority like social puppets. A small minority maintains its control over the rest by means of

¹⁶⁹ Fuller & Lesser, op. cit., p. 38.

¹⁷⁰ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, p. 87.

various oppression methods and tools.¹⁷¹ In other words, a large majority of mankind is living without their fundamental rights and freedoms. Besides, in modern democracies, man presumes that he is capable of influencing state apparatus by democratic mechanisms such as political parties, parliament, etc. In fact, man can only make a choice among alternatives in a limited number.¹⁷² All of these lead Bulaç to conclude that there is a question of freedom in the modern world, since man is assuming he is living freely in the absence of real freedom.

In the late 1980s, Bulaç defined the problem of freedom as one of the biggest problems that man faces on the eve of the 21st century. Man needs to declare its independence from modern ideologies, state and technology to be free. Islam is in a process of reawakening and it is a candidate for helping man in its struggle for independence against the oppressive side of modern world.¹⁷³ That is to say, Islam, for him, is a means for challenging and breaking out of the chains of modern world to reach freedom. If Islam is ready to play such a role in the 21st century, the West is right to see Islam as a threat directed against its system or its existence.

The entirety of nature surrenders itself to the command of God unconditionally. However, man is free to determine whether he will surrender or not to the commands of God. This makes man unique among God's creations, and, at the same time, it encumbers man with a unique and grave responsibility.¹⁷⁴ To put it differently, man will be judged on the basis of his actions and choices in Islam which are the products of his free will.¹⁷⁵ According to Ali Bulaç, the fundamental principle in Islam is to let everybody be entitled to their own belief after informing them about the message of God. The West, contrary to God's message,

¹⁷¹ Bulaç, *Tarih, Toplum ve Gelenek*, p. 207.

¹⁷² Bulaç, *Din Devlet ve Demokrasi*, p. 115.

¹⁷³ Bulaç, *Gündemdeki Konular*, p. 40.

¹⁷⁴ Javaid Saeed, *Islam and Modernization: A Comparative Analysis of Pakistan, Egypt, and Turkey*, Praeger Publishers: Westport, 1994, p. 56.

¹⁷⁵ Bulaç, *Çağdaş Kavramlar ve Düzenler*, p. 227.

is forcing people all around the world to adopt its own world vision without recognizing their freedom to make their independent choice. In Islam, being a servant of God is not an obstacle to being free. On the contrary, such a belief prevents him from being a servant of any other being.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, modernity which led man to revolt against God could have never been able to honor and deliver its promise of freedom.

Bulaç accepts the existence of freedom of choice in democratic systems, especially in determining who will rule. Yet, he argues that even in consolidated democracies, only a small percentage of the population, precisely 2-3 percent, deals with politics actively. Besides, if different organizations, interest groups, media or influential lobbies operating in a society reach a consensus on a certain political party, they can easily affect the behaviors of 15-20 percent of the voters, which is sufficient for that party to form a government in a democratic setting. In short, one cannot argue for the existence of real pluralism in contemporary democracies. Therefore, even consolidated democracies in the world now cannot go further than being systems based on the rule of majority.¹⁷⁷

Bulaç's notion of human rights takes its roots from Islamic law. The rights of man can be grouped under two categories, as the innate rights of the man and the rights man acquired afterwards.¹⁷⁸ Man has inalienable and natural rights. These are rights given equally to all by God. Neither man can give up these rights, nor does the state have the right to limit them. Islamic law aims to protect those rights given to man by God. Bulaç rejects the existence of a necessary link between democracy and human rights, since, according to him, it is an artificial link. To put it differently, in the eyes of Bulaç, democracy and human rights are two different concepts and they can exist independently from each other.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Bulaç, *Din Devlet ve Demokrasi*, p. 111.

¹⁷⁷ Bulaç, *Çağdaş Kavramlar ve Düzenler*, pp. 32-33 passim.

¹⁷⁸ Bulaç, *Din Devlet ve Demokrasi*, p. 205.

¹⁷⁹ Fatma Bostan Ünsal & Ertan Özensel, "Ali Bulaç", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık* edited by Ahmet İnel and Murat Belge, *İletişim Yayınları*: İstanbul, 2001, p. 751.

In modern democracies, man has a freedom of religion and consciousness, but is not free to live in accordance with his own religious belief. That is, man can only be religious in his private domain, and so this leads to a division between the soul of man and his social life. Bulaç defines this as a paradox of modern societies.¹⁸⁰ According to Bulaç, freedom to choose one's religion does not have a meaning unless such person has a right to worship and live in accordance with the principles (law or Shariah) of his religion, since, in Islam, religion, worship and law are indivisible. Therefore, man cannot have freedom of religion and consciousness, as long as he is deprived of the freedom of law. In a real democratic society, the number of recognized systems of law should be equal to the number of religions believed by members of such society.¹⁸¹

Islam influenced the political, cultural and economic life in the societies it was introduced, but it has never operated at the expense of local identities and cultures. As a direct result of this, Muslims, in every country they conquered and ruled, showed a great respect for protecting the rights of non-Muslims. The rights of all non-Muslims were guaranteed and they were given the freedom to determine the direction of their lives, as long as they paid a certain amount of tax.¹⁸² On the other hand, Western culture has been operating at the expense of the local cultures and identities in every place it infiltrated. Similarly, modernity was built on a paradigm which sees no need for any other culture due to the clear superiority of modernity over others.¹⁸³

In modern societies, there are also problems regarding the rights of women. Modernism, especially with the rise of capitalism, reduced women into sexual objects and exploited her to increase consumption. In other words, woman has been seen in the West both as a means for production and as a commercial good which can be exploited to gain more profit. The way the woman image is used in

¹⁸⁰ Bulaç, *Din Devlet ve Demokrasi*, p. 99.

¹⁸¹ Bulaç, *Çağdaş Kavramlar ve Düzenler*, p. 227.

¹⁸² *ibid*, p. 197.

¹⁸³ Bulaç, *Din ve Modernizm*, p. 22.

cinema or advertisement is an example of this situation. Therefore, according to Bulaç, women also experience a deep sorrow stemming from the absence of freedom in the modern world. On the other hand, modernism argues that it is a system that dignifies women by recognizing her freedom and rights.¹⁸⁴ Yet, according to Bulaç, burdens of women in the modern world are more than she can carry. On one hand, women are obliged to participate in the social and economic life; and on the other hand, they have to keep their role as a wife and mother. Under this heavy burden, women are getting exhausted both spiritually and physically.¹⁸⁵

4.2 Islam and Democracy

Islam as a religion cannot be reduced to democracy. Thus, any attempt to compare Islam with democracy is futile. That is, Islam may have some democratic tenets, but it is more than what democracy is.¹⁸⁶ This chapter also has no intention to make a comparison between Islam and democracy; it only aims to examine their relationship. To Bulaç, as a technique of politics, democracy can be compared with totalitarianism, monarchy, dictatorships, etc., as these are the alternatives of democracy. But, Islam and democracy cannot be alternatives to each other and democracy serves Islam as long as it keeps its silence in defining the ultimate objectives of governance.¹⁸⁷

According to Bulaç, Islam has important principles that should be noticed in designating what is political. That is to say, Islam only defines some general principles to be used as guidance in organizing political life rather than providing an open and concrete model of governance. Islam left the duty of defining what is

¹⁸⁴ Bulaç, *İnsanın Özgürlük Arayışı*, p. 88.

¹⁸⁵ Bulaç, *Çağdaş Kavramlar ve Düzenler*, p. 215.

¹⁸⁶ Bulaç, *Din Devlet ve Demokrasi*, p. 9.

¹⁸⁷ Çoşkun, *op. cit.*, p. 64-65 *passim*.

political to man through jurisprudence. Therefore, it is man who is responsible for forming a just system of governance in line with the directives of Islam.¹⁸⁸

According to Islam, a system of governance should bear three inevitable principles. These can be enumerated as: election (seçim), consultation (şura) and obedience (biat). Bulaç defines these terms: *Election* means that the ruler will be selected and assume his duty as a result of a process through which the will of those who are ruled is materialized. Periodic elections give those who are ruled an opportunity to change a ruler with whom he is not content. *Consultation* means that every decision will be taken with the participation of the ruled. The parliament can be thought as a mechanism for consultation in contemporary world. Bulaç also adds that the general framework provided by Islam with these three principles does not conflict with democracy and he identifies every regime that complies with these three principles as Islamic.¹⁸⁹ Lastly, *Obedience* means that the relation between the ruler and the ruled will be determined by an agreement, which is a document based on a consensus among different elements which carry a conflict potential, but are necessary to coexist. In contemporary world, constitutions can be thought as the counterpart of this agreement. Bulaç also claims that Islam provides a general framework for a political system that is more democratic in comparison to contemporary democracies, especially in terms of representation and pluralism.¹⁹⁰

God made people aware of his message through revelation. Prophets not only conveyed the message of the God to the people, but they also showed people how to live in line with the general principles defined by God. Yet, as contextual changes happen, people may feel a need for reinterpretation of God's message. This reinterpretation process is labeled as jurisprudence. In the absence of prophets sent by God, Islamic intellectuals (müçtehit) who have the knowledge of Quran and Sunnah will guide people to understand the general principles of Islam

¹⁸⁸ ibid, p. 73-74 passim.

¹⁸⁹ ibid, p. 75-79 passim.

¹⁹⁰ Bulaç, *Çağdaş Kavramlar ve Düzenler*", p.225.

in accordance with the needs of contemporary era. By this means, religion can protect its status in every epoch.

Islam is not a close, static and conservative religion. On the contrary, it is open, dynamic and expansionist. Therefore, it cannot stay within its own boundaries. It desires to meet with different cultures, to influence them and to be influenced by them by discovering the wisdom integrated in them. This is why Muslims, from the beginning, got in contact with Indian, Egyptian, Persian and Greek cultures.¹⁹¹ In other words, Islam has never had an interventionist or assimilative approach towards other cultures. It has never aimed to establish domination over them.

According to Islamic law, everybody has the right to interpret Quran and Sunnah, and to derive principles from them that will guide his life. Neither a state, nor a person can force man to live in line with values he does not share. But, in modern democracies, only a minority composed of the selected persons has the right to determine rules and regulations that will be binding on society. Besides, they are also not free to enact laws and regulations without any boundaries; since there are higher laws and regulations that determine the boundaries of their activities, such as constitutions. Moreover, in modern democracies, people are obliged to recognize government's right to rule for a certain period of time. To put it differently, people should bear with a government, even if they are not content. That means people should wait until the next elections in order to show their resentment towards the government.¹⁹² Moreover, if democracy is a humanist system based on human reason, it cannot be a political system promoted by Islam.¹⁹³ That is to say, in Islam, man is not entitled to design a system solely by using his reason.

Bulaç is longing for a system that will take its power from the guidance of Islam and that will transcend current democracy. Democracy should turn into an active process in which Islam must also be involved. That is, Muslims can make

¹⁹¹ Bulaç, *Gündemdeki Konular*, p. 44-45 passim.

¹⁹² Bulaç, *İslam ve Demokrasi*, pp. 36-37 passim.

¹⁹³ *ibid*, p. 23.

contributions to enrich democracy. Besides, he also claims that Muslims are obliged to develop their own democracy which takes its reference from Islam.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, in such a system, the multiplicity of religions and Shariahs will be recognized and people from different religions and Shariahs will have equal rights to ensure harmonious coexistence of differences. On the basis of these statements, one can argue that it is not clear whether Bulaç advocates a system that will take the place of democracy, or the revision of democracy to make it conducive to pluralism. In the next section, the Medina Document will be dealt with in order to understand Bulaç's ideal political system better.

4.2.1 Medina Document

When Prophet Mohammed and Muslims immigrated to Medina, there was a chaos stemming from the tension and conflicts between and within different groups who lived in Medina together: Muslims, Jews and unbelieving Arabs; and there was not any central authority that reigned over these groups. In addition, absence of unity among different groups in Medina was also making the city an easy prey for outside enemies. Medina Document was signed after a process of negotiations made among representatives of different groups living in Medina under the leadership of Prophet Mohammed in order to put an end to the chaotic environment of Medina.¹⁹⁵

The short information regarding Medina Document was provided because Bulaç's ideal political system takes its inspiration from it. Some basic premises of his ideal system are as follows: 1. Individuals will be free to choose their religion or world view they belong to, which is very decisive in terms of determining their social bloc. 2. The ones who make their choices on the behalf of the same religion or world vision form a social bloc. 3. Every social bloc defines the norms that will be dominant in its social life and declares them publically to make others aware of

¹⁹⁴ Çoşkun, op. cit., p.97.

¹⁹⁵ Ali Bulaç, "Medina Vesikası ve Yeni Bir Toplum Projesi: Tarihsel ve Sosyal Çevre" in Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık edited by Ahmet İnsel and Murat Belge, *İletişim Yayınları*: İstanbul, 2001, p. 505.

them. 4. Every group that chooses its religion and Shariah is named as a social bloc and there must be a consistency between Shariah and daily life of each social bloc. 5. There must be an agreement among different social blocs in order to organize activities that are of common interest for each group, such as internal and external security. In the ideal societal model promoted by Bulaç, there is a limited state which provides services that are necessary for all members of society.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, we can say that there is a parallelism between modern liberal thought and Islamic societal project of Ali Bulaç in terms of their attitudes toward the state. 6. The agreement that will organize the relations between different social groups should be a product of discussions that are open to participation of each social bloc. 7. Mutual relations and exchanges will work on the basis of mutual trust, understanding and interest. 8. Every social bloc will pay a tax for common needs. 9. There will be a higher judiciary authority in order to solve the disputes between people from different social blocs or people of different Sharihs. 10. Every social bloc can make similar agreements with different social blocs, but these agreements cannot be against Medina Document and cannot be threatening for any of the parties of the Medina Document.¹⁹⁷

According to Medina Document, the sides that participated in the formation of political society, regardless of whether they are Muslim or not, shall have a religious and juridical autonomy. Political society comes into existence when the parties reach an agreement on a consensus basis and with their own free will.¹⁹⁸ In addition, the parties of such a political society will be free to live in accordance with their own religious and juridical norms as long as they keep their obedience to shared and common rules of that political society.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Levent Tezcan, "İslamcılık ve Toplumun Kurgusu" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık* edited by Ahmet İnel and Murat Belge, *İletişim Yayınları*: İstanbul, 2001, p. 518.

¹⁹⁷ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, pp. 156-159 passim.

¹⁹⁸ Bulaç, *İslam ve Demokrasi*, p. 163.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid*, p. 164.

Bulaç criticizes those, who concentrate on experiences stemming from the misgovernments in the history of Islam and contemporary Islamic governments which deviate from the real essence of Islam, have a tendency to equate Islam with oppression and intolerance, rather than perceiving it as a system that has a rooted and comprehensive notion of human rights.²⁰⁰ He argues that Islam cannot be refuted on the basis of such cases because only the governments or rulers who deviated from Islam are responsible for them.²⁰¹ Besides, there are also cases like the Medina Document in the history of Islam that can guide people even today in the formation of a new political system.

Bulaç argues that absence of cultural and social pluralism in contemporary democracies in line with political pluralism is the most significant deficit which makes the harmonious togetherness of different identities more difficult.²⁰² He believes that his model, which will be built on Medina Document, can help democracies in dealing with their deficits in terms of cultural and social pluralism. This is also why his project based on the plurality of law in a heterogeneous society caught attention of many people in the West which want to save their democracies from the crisis.²⁰³ To Bulaç, as long as political pluralism is not supported by religious and juridical pluralism, it will be impossible to enable the harmonious togetherness of different identities and world visions.²⁰⁴ Therefore, Bulaç pushes for a system in which the rights of 1 against 99 will be defended and even minorities composed of one person will have the right to live on the basis of a Shariah derives from their own belief.²⁰⁵

Bulaç argues that Islam as a religion is conducive to develop a social model based on freedom and pluralism to ensure the cordial existence of different groups with

²⁰⁰ Bulaç, *Bir Aydın Sapması*, p.34.

²⁰¹ *ibid*, p. 136.

²⁰² Çoşkun, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

²⁰³ *ibid*, p. 99.

²⁰⁴ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, p. 169.

²⁰⁵ *ibid*, p. 161.

different systems of law in the same society.²⁰⁶ What makes Western democracy powerful is the fact that it creates a supportive discourse which makes man believes that he is living in a pluralist and free society. Thus, in the contemporary world, man is not aware of his captivity.²⁰⁷

4.3 Democracy in Turkey

Western-oriented elites of Muslim countries have always been defenders of freedom and human rights. Yet, what they understood from democracy and freedom is to escape from all the obstacles, while they are fighting against their society and history. In addition, this situation worsened as the cooperation between elites and Western colonial powers intensified.²⁰⁸

State's intervention in the domain of religion in Turkey has made politicization of religion necessary. For example, in Western democracies, there are Christian democratic political parties which desire to make politics in line with Christian values.²⁰⁹ In Turkey, it is impossible for a political party to keep itself as a legitimate player of political life with an objective of reorganizing political life in line with the directives of Islam. Bulaç argues for a democracy in Turkey, people can participate in political life by keeping their religious identities, regardless of their religion, as their reference.²¹⁰

Muslim countries mostly started to experience democratization as a result of conjectural necessities. As a result of demand and activities of some outside factors or forces, like Turkey's wish for participating in the Western Camp in the aftermath of World War II; the democratization process of Muslim countries started.²¹¹ Bulaç is completely against the launch of democracy in Muslim

²⁰⁶ Bulaç, "Dinlerin Meydan Okuyuşu: Entegrizm ve Fundamentalizm", p. 18.

²⁰⁷ Bulaç, *İnsanın Özgürlük Arayışı*, p. 46.

²⁰⁸ Bulaç, *İslam Dünyasında Düşünce Sorunları*, p. 102.

²⁰⁹ Çoşkun, op. cit., p.90.

²¹⁰ ibid, pp.92-94 passim.

²¹¹ Ali Bulaç, *Modernizm, İrtica ve Sivilleşme, İz Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 1995, p. 93.*

countries in that manner, because he argues that Muslim countries should decide whether to democratize by their own choice.

With Tanzimat, ulema class who was the representative of Ottoman public in state administration lost its privileged position.²¹² Until the introduction of democracy with a transition to multi-party rule in the second half of 1940s, Turkish public was devoid of any channel through which they can participate in ruling of their countries. After 1950s, the pressures on Muslims in Turkey loosened as the level of democracy in Turkey increased. In such a setting, oppressed Muslim groups found a chance to express themselves. Besides, the policies pursued by Democratic Party who wanted to widen its voting base also contributed this process.²¹³ In this period, the azan turned into Arabic, Quranic schools started to operate freely, Imam-Hatip Schools and Higher Islamic Institutes in which Islamic sciences taught were established. These new opportunities and institutions increased Muslim's integration to the state.²¹⁴

From the establishment of Republic, there is a close relationship between laicism and democracy in Turkey. To put it differently, laicism is seen as a prerequisite for democracy in Turkey. Yet, democracy can be sacrificed in the name of defending laicism.²¹⁵ It is clearer that Bulaç is uneasy from the necessary linkage between democracy and laicism in Turkish case. To him, democracy can flourish in a country in the absence of laicism. He says that laicism is the biggest obstacles for Turkey's full transition to democracy. Since, as a result of the necessary linkage between laicism and democracy in Turkish case, many people, especially Muslims, have reservations about democracy. To put it differently, the relation between laicism and democracy should be redefined for the consolidation of democracy in Turkey.²¹⁶ Furthermore, "Bulaç argues that the impetus of Kemalist

²¹² Bulaç, *Bir Aydın Sapması*, p. 24.

²¹³ Bulaç, *İslamın Anlaşılması Üzerine*, p. 30.

²¹⁴ Bulaç, *İslam Dünyasında Düşünce Sorunları*, p. 72.

²¹⁵ Bulaç, *Modern Ulus Devlet*, p. 73.

²¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 75.

culture in Turkey to create a uniform citizen in a uniform society, leaving no room for pluralism. For him, the state, including the Turkish state, is not sacrosanct, as it is for many Kemalists- it is simply an organization. It is not the state that should organize the social communal life of its citizens, but the citizens themselves.”²¹⁷ Therefore, to Bulaç, modern nation state is one of the obstacles behind the emergence of plural societies all around the world.

On the one hand, Muslims imported democracy from the West; on the other hand they desired to be democratic not for the sake of their belief in democracy as a political system, but for being labeled as a Western and modern society. However, Muslims could have never internalized and understood democracy fully.²¹⁸ Mert also argues that democracy cannot fully entrench in a country without any social struggle especially waged by the social segments that fight in the name of getting their rights.²¹⁹ To her, absence of any social struggle in the name of democracy is also a weakness of democracy in Turkey. Besides, in 1980s, with a reference to Turkey’s application to the EEC (EU) in order to be a full member, Bulaç says that Turkey will be obliged to make great reforms in order to improve itself in the field of human rights. Even he sees the EEC as the only motivation behind Turkey’s affirmative steps in this field. What Turks need to do is to generate a democracy culture in Turkey by making freedoms an indivisible part of their own culture and defending them in all circumstances.²²⁰

According to Bulaç, there is not any threat directed against the republican nature of Turkey, but there are many threats to Turkey’s democratic nature. In order to support his position, he says that republic has continued to exist in Turkey without any interruption from 1923, but democratic life was interrupted and suspended

²¹⁷ Hermann, op. cit., p.272.

²¹⁸ Mert, op. cit., p. 36.

²¹⁹ *ibid*, p. 53.

²²⁰ Bulaç, *Gündemdeki Konular*, p.84.

many times in Turkey.²²¹ Besides, democracy will not be fully entrenched in Turkey until the emergence of a democracy culture mentioned above.

Consequently, it is certainly difficult to reach an exact conclusion about Bulaç's attitude towards democracy in comparison to his attitude towards modernity. However, one can argue that he is not against democracy, but he is against the form it has taken in the West and West's worldwide imposition of its way of democracy as the only viable form of democracy. To put it differently, he is not against democracy, but he deems its Western or modern form problematic. Moreover, Bulaç is also against the manipulative use of democracy by Westerners in order to establish a world order favorable to them.

Democracy may be a desirable and advanced form of governance in comparison to its rivals, such as oligarchy, monarchy or aristocracy. It is just one of the political systems developed by man and it is the most advanced form developed until now. But, it is not perfect. It has many defects. Therefore, it is better to see democracy as a process which has not been completed yet. Consequently, man cannot put an end to his search for the ideal type of political system. Yet, the West is at fault by approaching democracy as the final and best form of political system man can achieve. According to Bulaç, democracy is better than its rivals, but it is worse in comparison to any system which will be established on the basis of the Medina Document.²²² Briefly, Bulaç argues that democracy should be enriched by taking the system established on the basis of Medina Document or Islam in general in order to wage a political system grounding on the last revelation of God sent for all times and all people.

²²¹ Bulaç, *Din Devlet Demokrasi*, p. 26.

²²² Bulaç, *İslam ve Demokrasi*, p. 70.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSION

In the Muslim world, there are those who get the knowledge of the tradition without any knowledge about the modern; on the one hand, there are also those who know well the modern and are ignorant of the tradition. A new type of Muslim intellectual appeared in Turkey of 1980s, who appraises the knowledge of both modern and traditional. Ali Bulaç is one of the prominent members of this group. This may clarify that why he is strong in his criticisms of both modern and traditional. Throughout this thesis, the ideas of Ali Bulaç were elaborated within the general framework of the West-Muslim relations in order to determine his contribution to the Western Question of Muslim. This part will be devoted to the findings of this analysis.

It should be reminded that two different people can deal with the same issue and can end up with two diverse results under the influence of their distinct cultures, experiences, pasts, etc. The same is true in terms of people's approach to the modernity and democracy. From Bulaç's point of view, Muslims are needed to look at them with a totally Muslim paradigm and once they achieve this, they will understand that neither modernity nor democracy as they are defined by the West is convenient for their own society. That is, due to the historical and cultural differences between Western and Muslim societies, Muslim societies cannot follow the same development path as Western societies. That is, Muslims cannot solve Western Question by means they imported from the West. For this reason, to Bulaç, Muslim societies are in need of a development path that is harmonious with their own history and culture.²²³ Shortly, to Bulaç, as long as Muslims continue to make sense of the world under the dominance of Western outlooks, they cannot come up with a solution that will lead them real happiness. Moreover, it is better to emphasize that Bulaç does not have an intrinsic hatred for the Western civilizations, but he has not been content with the influences of the West

²²³ Bulaç, *İslam Dünyasında Düşünce Sorunları*, p. 98.

over the Muslim societies. That is, the Western type of modernity was turned into a problem for Ali Bulaç, when it attempted to make itself as the universally valid form of modernity.

In fact, Bulaç doesn't have any concern for making a contribution to the Western Question of Muslim societies. His aim is to contribute to the process through which all the barriers that prevent Muslims from leading a life compatible with the principles of Islam will be removed. That is, Bulaç has been producing his works with the aim of contributing to a necessary mental paradigm shift in Muslim mind in order to motivate them to work for establishing an ideal society of Islam in which every aspect of life organized in line with Islamic principles. There are many people who found Bulaç's ideal Muslim society project, which encompasses all the Muslims around world, utopian. By taking into account prevailing disunity in the Muslim world, one can conclude that they are reasonable in their criticism.

To Bulaç, once Muslims achieve to establish ideal society he promoted, they will also form an advance civilization which will be superior to all the other civilizations, including the West. Therefore, it can be concluded that Western Question of Muslim societies will be solved automatically, when Muslims rearrange their lives in accordance with Islam. As it happens, it will be the West who will be the anxious about the superior civilization of Muslims or Muslim Question. That is, a shift of power will be in the relation between Muslim and Western worlds.

Colonialism, modernism and democracy can be seen as successive and different stages of a project conducted to ensure the transformation of non-Western world in a way compatible with Western interests. Besides, it is now clearer than ever that the superiority of the West will not be eternal. It will be challenged by others. If one pays attention on the fact that greatest tensions in contemporary world is between Western and Muslim worlds, he can understand that Muslims are one of the strongest candidates for putting end to the ascendancy of the West. As a Muslim intellectual who motivates Muslim to search for an alternative system

which will take its legitimacy Islam and replace modern Western system, Bulaç has been contributing to the solution of Western Question indirectly.

To achieve this objective, Bulaç is calling for a new and dynamic Islam that is responsive to needs of era and able to provide guidance for future. Muslims should make sense of the world by taking Islam as its main reference point. In other words, Muslims should consider everything, ranging from their daily lives to international relations, with an Islamic point of view. However, Bulaç is not clear about the possible ways for achieving this objective

Conditions and problems specific to every epoch make a differentiation inevitable in implementing the main principles of Islam in different epochs. Yet, Bulaç claims that a Muslim who knows to approach to the issues from an Islamic perspective can manage easily to establish a harmony between principles of Islam and prevailing conditions and problems of his time and society. As mentioned before, Bulaç has been paying effort to lead Muslims to handle the issues with a real Islamic perspective as a Muslim intellectual. To put it differently, Bulaç as a Muslim believes in Islam's alternative cultural and social model and as an intellectual pays effort to enable the realization of this project.

The majority of the Turkish Islamists adopted favorable attitudes toward the West in the last decades. The main motivation that led to such a shift in Islamist positioning toward the West was the fact that they realized that the rights of Muslims in political, economic and social life in Turkey can be taken under guarantee and exercised fully only in a setting based on the values promoted by the West. One can argue that Bulaç also influenced from this transformation by looking at the reducing radicalism in its criticism of the West and modernity. For example, in one of his recent works, he says that modernity is a real part of the contemporary world and Muslims cannot lead a life with a rejection of modernity. Instead, they must struggle to make modernity an inner part of their reality.²²⁴ That is, he is talking about making modern world transcendental, rather than

²²⁴ Ali Bulaç, "What Should Be Done: How to Change?", *Today's Zaman*, 4 July 2008

transcending it. In short, it is clear that Bulaç has not anymore see the West and Islam as alternative of each other. Instead, to Bulaç, Islam and the West can achieve to coexist peacefully and be legitimacy basis for two different versions of modernity. This change in Bulaç views strengthens the arguments of the people who see Bulaç as a Muslim intellectual who operates in the area of freedom emerged thanks to postmodernity.

The recent positioning of Bulaç against modern world is more comprehensible, by taking into account of the fact that as a person who lives in the modern world and under modern conditions, it has been impossible for Ali Bulaç to stay uninfluenced by modernity. Therefore, it is better to claim that Bulaç is also modern within the limits of his definition of modernity derived from his experiences, belief, culture, education... etc. However, this change can also be strategic in order to form necessary setting for worldwide dialogue in order to achieve his ideal Muslim society project globally. Besides, the solutions developed so far by the Muslims within the framework of Western Question were based on one of two alternatives, clash or harmony. Yet, Bulaç has tried to demonstrate that there may be third alternative which is transcending the modern world or making modern world transcendental.

Bulaç argues that Muslims should arrange every aspect of their lives in line with the main framework derived from the revelation of the God.²²⁵ This is why he has been frequently elaborating on the issue of modernity and democratization in his works. The real objective of Bulaç is to show that modernity and democracy are Western constructs and they have not taken their legitimacy from Islam. Therefore, they are not the roads that will enable wholesale happiness of humanity. Additionally, when the West imposed them on Muslim societies, they turned into inevitable parts of Western Question of Muslim societies.

To conclude, it is possible to understand Muslim-West relations through identifying different periods on the basis of the change in relative power of the

²²⁵ Ali Bulaç, *Bütün Eserleri 5: Göçün ve Kentin İktidarı*, Çıra Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 2010, pp. 444-445 passim.

parties. That is, the relations between Muslim and the West show a cyclical tendency. Subsequent to a change in power balance between parties, the relative roles of the parties in this complex relation also changes. While the superior turns into a question in the eyes of the other, the inferior enters into a process in which a proper answer against the question posed by the other party will be developed. For two centuries, it was the West which has been putting on the agenda of Muslim societies and Muslims have been searching for a way that will put an end to their inferior status in the relations with the West. Yet, it is difficult to say that Muslims have produced a single and proper response to the Western Question. As said before, Bulaç's efforts may help Muslims in their search for a way to handle Western Question appropriately. Once Muslims manage to launch their own alternative effectively in the face of the West, a new period in West-Muslim relations will start and, then, it is probable that Westerners will start to pay effort to deal with Muslim Question.

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