Third World Quarterly, Vol 18, No 4, pp 743–766, 1997

The political economy of Islamic resurgence in Turkey: the rise of the Welfare Party in perspective

ZİYA ÖNIŞ

The rising electoral fortunes of the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi (RP)), a party that differentiates itself sharply from the 'orthodox' parties of the right or left of the political spectrum by campaigning explicitly on an Islamist platform, constitutes the most obvious or visible sign of Islamic resurgence in the Turkish context.[1] The turning-point in the evolution of RP into a major political movement came with the municipal government elections of March 1994 during which the party managed to capture the mayorships of the two key metropolitan areas of Istanbul and Ankara. This victory dramatically altered the previous image of the party in the public mind, namely as a marginal and parochial political force on the extreme right with a strong regional orientation. RP's rise to the status of a nationwide political movement, as opposed to a party confined mainly to its inner Anatolian roots, was consolidated further by the general elections of December 1995. The Welfare Party managed to increase its share of the national vote from 7.2% in 1987 to 21.4% in 1995 and it emerged as the leading political party in the country, although its share of the vote was not sufficient to grant it a mandate to form a government on an outright basis. Following a series of unsuccessful attempts to form a durable coalition government on the part of the established right of centre parties, the 'Motherland Party' (ANAP) and the 'True Path Party' (DYP) during the early months of 1996, a new coalition government was established between RP and DYP, in which RP emerged as the dominant partner. This development clearly constitutes a landmark in a country which is unique in the Muslim world in terms of the strength of its secularist traditions and its explicit pro-Western orientation. The emergence of RP as a major political force undoubtedly represents a paradoxical phenomenon for observers of the Turkish scene, a phenomenon which many interpret as a fundamental constitutional challenge to the secular foundations of the Republic, raising deep questions concerning the compatibility of a strong Islamic party with the process of consolidating liberal democracy.

Before embarking on an analysis of why RP has emerged as a major political force so recently in the context of the 1990s, two important qualifications ought to be made at the outset. The first is that the presence of an Islamic political party on the electoral scene in Turkey is not a novel phenomenon. In fact, the origins of the present day RP can be traced back to the 'National Order Party'

Ziya Öniş is at the Department of Economics, Boğaziçi University, 80815 Bebek, Istanbul, Turkey.

0143-6597/97/040743-24 $7.00

(Milli Nizam Partisi), officially founded in 1970, banned during the military coup of 1971, and subsequently reemerging under a different name, the 'National Salvation Party' (Milli Selamet Partisi (MSP)), during the 1970s. Both parties were under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan, whose resilience on the Turkish political scene is striking given that he is also the undisputed leader of the Welfare Party at the present juncture. MSP in fact made its mark on Turkish politics by participating in a number of coalition governments in the highly unstable political environment of the mid and late 1970s. Yet, in contrast to the current stature of RP, MSP was a small party with an essentially marginal and parochial electoral base.[2]

The second qualification that deserves emphasis is that, despite the emergence of RP as a nationwide mass political movement in recent years, its weight or influence in the Turkish setting should neither be underestimated nor overexaggerated. In spite of the fact that the party emerged as the leading party on the basis of the national vote, its superiority to other national parties on both the right and left of the political spectrum, and notably the edge that it has managed to establish relative to the two leading contenders on the right, DYP and ANAP, is only marginal.[3] More significantly, RP's current position should be placed in proper perspective in the sense that around 80% percent of the population in Turkey continues to vote in favour of parties, both right and left, which are predominantly secular and Western in their basic orientations. RP has a long way to go before it is able to obtain a majority vote in parliament that may provide a mandate, in principle, for putting its comprehensive economic, legal, political and cultural package into action. This brings us to the point that a major dichotomy is evident in the current position of RP in the context of democratic politics in Turkey today. The party has undoubtedly emerged as a major source of political power in recent years. Nonetheless, it represents a peripheral force compared with the position of the political parties of the established secular order, in the sense that any major or radical attempt by RP to transform society along Islamic lines will threaten the basic principles of the Republic's constitutional order and thus the very foundations of the regime and the liberal democratic order which, as many leading analysts, would agree is some distance away from being fully consolidated.[4]

The consequences of the Welfare Party's electoral success and a potentially strong RP presence for the future of the democratic regime in Turkey is an issue that deserves serious investigation in its own right. The primary focus in the present context, however, will be on the underlying causes of the party's rise to power. The central question to address, considering that political Islam has deep-seated historical roots in Turkey, is the rise of RP to the status of a major political force specifically in the context of the 1990s. A number of scholars has singled out the specific domestic origins of the process and those features that are unique to the Turkish Republic, with a strong focus on the position of the state in relation to the Islamic movement. These scholars have highlighted the tensions between the authoritarian secularism of the Republican elite at the 'centre' and the broad masses quite congenial to Islamic principles and values on the 'periphery', and the attempts to resolve these tensions following the transition to multiparty democracy in the post-1950 era.[5] While not

negating the importance of the uniquely historical features of the Turkish case, the present analysis draws attention more explicitly to the external dimension, and attempts to conceptualise the rise of political Islam in Turkey during the 1990s as a manifestation or a reflection of the far-reaching transformations that are occurring at the global level both in the economic and the cultural sphere. Particularly significant in this context are the pressures associated with the globalisation of the world economy and the process of neoliberal economic restructuring that is profoundly affecting societies in very different parts of the world. At the same time, we observe the profound and yet contradictory images transmitted by the process of cultural globalisation that also explains why parties with a strong religious or fundamentalist orientation paradoxically have a chance of electoral success in the current historical conjuncture.

Beyond the traditional left-right divide: the ascendance of identity politics in the post-cold war context and Islamic resurgence

The intense process of globalisation in the economic and cultural realms is undermining many of the established contours of political activity both in advanced industrialised countries and in the developing world. What appears to be under challenge is the nation-state as well as the classical organisation of politics within the familiar left versus right nexus. The nation-state and its security is threatened by the new international division of production and labour.[6] The logic of the global market place pays no attention to where a product is made. Similarly, the international financial revolution, a process facilitated by major improvements in communications and information technology, brings its own challenges to the sovereignty of the nation-state. The paradox of our era is that the nation state is progressively losing control over economic activity within its own national borders in an increasingly borderless world. The pressures are to relocate authority upwards either to supranational or international institutions such as the European Union or the World Trade Organization or to delegate authority downwards to local or municipal organisations. Yet, at the same time, the nation state continues to be the dominant political unit. For most people the nation-state is still the primary source of identity. Thus a paradox is emerging. People's expectations of what the state ought to deliver is increasing while the state's capacity to provide these much needed services is rapidly in decline. This phenomenon creates a crisis of governance and a loss of authority on the part of the state. The globalisation process in the economic sphere is creating major opportunities for expansion and individual enrichment. The process, however, is proceeding at an extremely uneven pace creating both winners and losers. The losers are naturally turning to the nation-state for protection, but the nation-state's ability to circumvent the negative repercussions of these massive economic changes and shield the 'excluded' from unfavourable consequences is becoming increasingly limited.

The decline of the nation-state and the decline of the left are essentially parallel phenomena. One can justifiably argue that the major blow to centre-left, social-democratic movements came from the collapse of the communist regimes,

leaving capitalism as the only viable economic system in existence. It would be misleading, however, to explain the decline of the left simply in these terms. What is more significant is that the globalisation process has steadily undermined the foundations of the post-war Keynesian consensus based on capital-labour cooperation at the national level supported by a large redistributive welfare state. In an environment where transnational corporations can relocate economic activity with great ease in different parts of the world, the capacity of the nation-state and domestic labour to bargain with transnational capital has become extremely limited. As yet, no parallel forces exist in terms of the transnationalisation of the nation-state and labour to counteract the power of capital at the global level. Clearly, these challenges have resulted in a steady erosion of social rights and a steady decline in the ability of the nation-state to provide welfare, a trend which is visible to varying degrees in all advanced industrialised countries.

Similar pressures, perhaps in a more intense form, are occurring in developing countries and are helping to undermine the very foundations of the developmental state. The process of neoliberal economic restructuring which is taking place on a massive scale everywhere around the globe, including the ex-communist world, though at varying pace and intensity, implies a radical shift of emphasis away from the state towards the market-determined allocation of economic activity. Associated with this process, we observe rising unemployment and inequality and a corresponding erosion in social rights, including both a decline in the bargaining capacity of labour unions as well as a reduction in the degree of entitlement to key social services in the areas of education, health and social security. The process described is clearly more painful in a developing country context where per capita incomes are lower and the developmental state's ability to provide welfare and protection for the poor has traditionally been far more limited compared with the Western-style welfare state.

The structural pressures we have drawn attention to have pushed the social democratic parties both in the West and in the emerging societies at the periphery into a deep crisis. Social-democratic parties, traditionally identified with redistributive policies involving an improvement in the positions of the poor and the disadvantaged, have been left with little room to manoeuvre, at least in the material or the economic realm. Consequently, the economic policies of the social-democratic parties in government have become indistinguishable from those of the centre right parties. As a result, a major discrepancy has arisen between the expectations of the traditional clientele of social-democratic parties, namely labour, peasants, lower level bureaucrats and other materially deprived groups and the impact of social-democratic policies, which in many cases is no different from what a typical right of centre government would generate. The key conclusion to emerge from these observations is that the process of intense globalisation of the world economy has been associated with the aggravation of income and wealth disparities and the distribution of economic opportunities within the individual nation state. The increasing incapacity of the nation state, especially the failure of social-democratic movements within the individual nation-state to cater explicitly for the needs of the poor, the disadvantaged or the excluded, has created a vacuum in political space. This vacuum has provided a

gateway for the proliferation of political movements organised on the basis of extreme nationalism or religious fundamentalism. It is interesting and paradoxical that economic globalisation has produced forces which have helped not only to erode the political power as well as the organisational and interventionist capacity of the left, but also to fragment the right of the political spectrum into mutually incompatible political movements. These movements range from the parties of the liberal right, representing primarily the interests of the rising bourgeoisie, whose interests increasingly coincide with those of transnational capital, to parties organised along fundamentalist lines catering primarily for the disadvantaged or the excluded segments of society.

A key point to remember, however, is that globalisation is not confined to the economic space. In fact, an equally intense process of globalisation seems to be occurring in the cultural realm with two contradictory dimensions, one involving a homogenisation process across societies, the other working in the direction of greater fragmentation. At one level, we observe cultural forces or signals that have the effect of pulling societies together in terms of forming common tastes or values. These common elements include the increasing emphasis on individualism, material values and consumerism, forces that are progressively homogenising tastes, values or behavioural norms across highly diverse societies around the globe. Associated with this trend is the parallel tendency involving the transmission of liberal democracy and the discourse on citizenship and human rights. Very few societies, if any, are able to escape from these powerful cultural forces. It is also interesting and paradoxical, however, that the cultural impulses transmitted to many societies in the postmodern age are also producing a strong tendency towards cultural relativism. A striking trend associated with the 'postmodern condition' is the acceptance of diversity, the recognition of local and traditional cultures including religion, and the right for multiple perspectives or paths to modernity to co-exist as opposed to a single, unilinear conception of modernity associated with the West and the tradition of the Enlightenment. The cultural pluralism associated with the postmodern age also implies a radical shift in the direction of political activity away from the traditional left-right divide to issues surrounding individual identity. In retrospect, the process of globalisation occurring simultaneously in the economic and cultural spheres has been interacting and producing powerful impulses leading to the rise of identity politics as the primary form of political discourse or conflict in the current historical context. The massive transformations and dislocations in the economic sphere tend to generate profound crises of identity and a parallel search for greater certainty, control and protection on the part of threatened individuals and communities. Moreover, the pressures or impulses originating from the cultural sphere, associated with the dissemination of democratic values, acceptance of diversity and pluralism provide an extended public space for groups or communities to express their own identities and organise themselves around issues concerning individual or group identity. The nature of identity politics varies markedly from one society to another. The issues are as diverse as regional integration and loss of sovereignty, religion and secularism, linguistic and racial minority rights, and the environment. This is not to say that the traditional right–left nexus has totally disappeared. As long as major inequalities continue to exist within and between

individual nation-states we can safely predict that the classical left–right axis will remain intact. What is striking in the current context, however, is that the traditional left-right split has been considerably complicated by new cleavages based on expressions of identity. These cleavages range from religious fundamentalism versus secularism to national sovereignty versus membership of a wider transnational integration project, to the rights of a particular ethnic group versus the unity of the nation—state and uncompromising industrial growth versus environmental conservation. These are clearly issues which do not fit neatly into the traditional left versus right classification. These cleavages based on identity have, in fact, been superimposed on the traditional left-right nexus complicating, fragmenting and possibly destabilising political discourse in the post-cold war context.

The broad perspective that we have tried to elaborate so far helps us to appreciate the rise of political Islam as a potent force in the context of the 1990s. At one level, political Islam in a late industrialising society fills the void left by the decline of the orthodox or secular social democratic politics of the left. In other words, it emerges as a political movement expressing the grievances of the poor and the disadvantaged in both rural and urban areas in a social democratic guise. The appeal of political Islam as a viable alternative to secular social democracy arises not only from the strength of its moral argument in favour of equity but also from specific and concrete anti-poverty projects designed to improve the material conditions of the disadvantaged, albeit on a highly target-orientated, selective and visible basis. It would be extremely misleading, however, to characterise Islamic political movements as simply the political expression of the poorest and most marginalised strata, largely excluded from the benefits of the globalisation process. A number of observers of Islamic movements have drawn attention to the fact that a significant component of these movements are individuals based in urban areas, who are at the same time extremely well educated professionals or businessmen well versed in modern technology.[7] These are clearly people with a modernist orientation who are experiencing a rising status in society, and yet are not fully incorporated into an elite group. Stating it somewhat differently, they are part of a rising, potential or secondary elite who are trying to consolidate their position in society on the basis of a common Islamic identity.[8] It is important to acknowledge, therefore, that political Islam is a movement that binds together individuals at very different levels of the social strata as part of a broadly based political movement. The religious symbolism associated with political Islam provides the unifying bond that helps to engineer a cross-class alliance, bringing together individuals with markedly different status in society. What is common to both groups is that they are part of the 'excluded', but excluded in a very different sense of the term. The poor and the disadvantaged who form the principal electoral base of political Islam are excluded in the sense that they do not share in the benefits of growth in the age of globalisation. The professionals, the businessmen and the intellectuals whom we would classify as the rising 'Islamic bourgeoisie', are clearly benefiting from globalisation and modernity, yet also feel part of the excluded by not being part of the real elite in society. In this sense, political Islam as a protest movement and the ideology of the excluded constitutes a

challenge to both left and right-wing parties of the established secular political order.

Neoliberal restructuring in Turkey in the post-1980 era and the rise of the welfare party to power

The year 1980 marks in many ways a crucial turning point in Turkey's political economy. The shift from a state-dominated, heavily interventionist economic model towards neoliberalism and market-orientation, as part of a broader global trend, effectively dates back to the implementation of a major structural adjustment programme under the auspices of the World Bank and IMF in January 1980.[9] Our objective in the present context is certainly not to enter into the specific details of the neoliberal adjustment process; rather it is to highlight the linkages and mechanisms whereby the process of neoliberal restructuring in Turkey has contributed to the rise of the Welfare Party, a party campaigning explicitly on a radical Islamic platform. The linkage between the Turkish version of neoliberalism and the rise of the Welfare Party to political power during the 1990s has a number of different dimensions that deserve emphasis.

The first important factor to highlight concerns the role of the military in the post-1980 context. The second half of the 1970s in Turkey was characterised by considerable economic and political instability. On the economic front, the major balance of payments crisis of the late 1970s represented the combined impact of the exhaustion of the dominant model of accumulation, the import-substitution model of development and external shocks in the form of oil price increases. On the political front, a succession of weak coalition governments further contributed to economic instability by postponing the adjustment process and were unable to check the proliferation of terrorism and urban violence, threatening the security and everyday existence of the average citizen. In this type of environment, it was not surprising that the military intervened for the third time in the postwar period, leading to the termination of democratic politics, albeit on a temporary basis. In retrospect, military rule in Turkey was short by Latin American standards. It lasted from September 1980 up to the elections of November 1983 that marked the return to parliamentary democracy, albeit in a restricted form. Yet the comparatively short period of military rule embodied some far-reaching consequences for the future course of the democratic regime. The objective of the military during what they considered to be a transitional period leading up to the re-establishment of democracy was to inject a substantial measure of stability into the political system. The basic idea was to eliminate any potential threats to the consolidation of the market-orientated reform process by accomplishing a series of measures designed to depoliticise the economy. The Constitution of 1982 was a landmark in this context. The new constitution, diametrically opposed to the liberal constitution of 1961, was designed to concentrate authority with the executive and limit the social rights previously granted concerning the activities of labour unions and interest associations in general. Within the broad contours of the new constitution, two specific pieces of action by the military have been particularly influential. Both measures were designed to introduce considerable elements of stability into the system and to

help depoliticize the market. Yet the outcome of the measures in subsequent years has proved paradoxical in the sense that attempts to impose stability and order in the short term have created the seeds of greater instability in the longer term.

The military in Turkey have always been one of the central institutions of the Republican elite and a traditional and uncompromising stronghold of secular and territorial nationalism. With the turbulent experience of the 1970s at the back of their minds, however, the military elite conceived Islam as a major instrument for promoting social and political stability. Consequently, they favoured legislation within the broad framework of what is known as the 'Turkish–Islamic synthesis', a mixture of nationalism and Islam, as a firm barrier against potential sources of instability. The key element in the strategy of the military was to weaken the political power of the left, which they regarded as the major source of potential conflict and disorder in the post-1980 context. Hence, rather surprisingly, Islam was employed by the military as an instrument for consolidating and institutionalising the post-1980 regime.[10] In concrete terms, the steps taken in this direction in Turkey involved the introduction of religious education in primary schools as well as an increase in the powers of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, the key state institution responsible for the administration of religious affairs in an otherwise secular state. This was done by increasing the financial resources available to it. The introduction of compulsory religious education clearly represented a retreat from the basic principles of militant secularism. Similarly, the financial resources allocated to the Directorate of Religious Affairs have resulted in a further proliferation of religious secondary schools, which have emerged as major centres of support for the Welfare Party in subsequent years.

The second major piece of action on the part of the military with significant longer-term repercussions concerns the closure of the major political parties of the pre-1980 political order and the bans imposed on their respective leaders. The key institutions of the pre-1980 regime, notably the right-of-centre 'Justice Party' (AP), the left-of-centre 'Republican People's Party', (CHP) and the MSP, the forerunner of the present day Welfare Party, were removed from the political scene. Similarly the major political figures associated with these parties and dominant personalities of the 1960s and the 1970s such as Demirel, Ecevit and Erbakan were banned from active participation in politics, at least for a decade. The intention underlying these measures was to make a new beginning with new political parties under a new set of leaders, hence marking a complete break with the past as a means of establishing a stable political order. According to the military elite, a major source of political instability in the past has been the extreme fragmentation of the party system, with the existence of a large number of parties on both the right and left of the political spectrum. Also engineered was a 10% national threshold as an electoral rule, designed to limit the participation of small and peripheral parties in the democratic process. What the military essentially wanted was a two-party system, with a right-of-centre party confronting a party mildly on the centre-left, under the direction of a strong executive, with political authority relocated from the parliament towards a strong presidency.

These new designs appear sensible at first sight from the perspective of

political stability as a major safeguard for radical market-orientated reforms, if not from the perspective of liberal democracy. In retrospect, however, the measures failed to achieve their original objectives. In fact, the reverse was the case in the sense that the measures contributed to the further fragmentation of the party system, a process that effectively started with the return of the key politicians of the old pre-1980 order to politics in the general elections of November 1987. Their return was made possible by the referendum of September 1987 which lifted the 10 year ban imposed by the military regime.

These key politicians, however, rather than returning to the new parties established under the auspices of the post-1980 regime, chose to contest in politics under parties formed by themselves individually and, hence, under their own direct control. In more concrete terms, Demirel, for example, returned to parliamentary politics not in the context of the Motherland Party, the key centre-right political party of the post-1983 era, but under the banner of the True Path Party. Similarly, Ecevit founded the Democratic Left Party (DSP) instead of joining the Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP), the principal successor to the Republican People's Party during the post-1983 era. Consequently, the previous institutional pattern was interrupted and dismantled in the sense that, in place of the two principal political parties at each end of the political spectrum, we observe the emergence of two separate parties on the centre right confronting two separate parties on the centre left, with both sets of parties claiming to be heirs to the old, established parties of the pre-1980 order. A close investigation suggests that apart from their leadership no major differences exist or have been detected between DYP and ANAP, on the one hand, and SHP and DSP, on the other, in terms of basic programme or ideological orientation. The weakening of the established parties in the process has provided an opportunity for fringe parties, including the extreme nationalists, to emerge as significant participants in the electoral contest. To the surprise of many, despite the 10% electoral threshold, the party system in Turkey starting with the municipal elections of March 1989, has displayed a high degree of instability and fragmentation. It is this fragmentation of the party system which provided a major avenue for the rise of the Welfare Party as a political force in the context of the mid-1990s.

Turning our attention to the economic plane, the neoliberal experiment in Turkey appears to have produced a mixed set of results. At one level, the experiment was quite successful. An average of 5%–6% real GNP growth per annum, if not outstanding, was high by international standards. The ability to shift from a highly inward-orientated economy to a significant exporter of manufactures was also quite striking. A rosy picture can thus be drawn highlighting economic dynamism, rising entrepreneurship and the growing power of private capital, as the economy became steadily integrated into international markets. Yet there was also a darker side to the profound economic transformation underlying the period. The process of neoliberal restructuring has intensified income and wealth disparities in the Turkish context. Turkey is classified as one of the 'emerging markets' in terms of the degree and depth of economic dynamism and expansion according to World Bank criteria, but at the same time it is a country with one of the least equal distributions of income, with the gini coefficient for 1994 estimated as 0.50.[11] The pattern of high income

inequality in Turkey has undoubtedly been exacerbated by the chronically high rates of inflation that have existed over the past two decades. A parallel phenomenon to rising inequality has been the mass exodus from rural, agricultural areas to the periphery of major metropolitan centres, with migrants emerging as a major element of support for the Islamic Welfare Party. We shall attempt to demonstrate, however, that RP has benefited both from the positive and negative aspects of neoliberal economic restructuring in the Turkish context.

As a final element, the changing position of the state within the newly instituted neoliberal order deserves serious consideration. Neoliberalism in Turkey, as in many other societies, did not signify a shift from a state-led model of development to an idealised free-market economy, with minimal state interventionism. In fact, in spite of significant liberalisation in key areas of economic activity such as the financial sector, international trade and capital movements and, to a lesser extent, privatisation of public economic enterprises, the state has managed to resume its role as a key actor in the economy as well as a key distributor of economic rents to the private sector. Substantial rents associated with public sector activity continued to characterise the various stages of the post-1980 regime, ranging from export subsidies during the early and mid-1980s to the high interest earnings associated with lending to the government (resulting from the government's strategy of heavy borrowing from the public) and the opportunities created by the sale of public enterprises in the context of the 1990s. Furthermore, the devolution of economic power from central authorities to local governments, a new trend associated with the 1980s, gave substantial powers to local governments to distribute rents in the form of new construction permits. Thus, allocation of public lands to private companies became another source of rent allocation in the new regime. While the state continued to be a major spender and allocator of rents in the neoliberal order, it was also subjected to major transformations, notably during the ANAP years of the 1980s. What we observe in the context of the mid-1980s is an increasing politicisation of the state and a corresponding weakening of the traditional bureaucracy as a key element of the centralised state.[12] The increasing politicisation of the state meant that direct contact with politicians became increasingly important for businessmen or private firms to achieve greater and preferential access to state resources. Associated with this process, there was a relaxed attitude towards disciplining economic crimes in a period associated with rising instances of bribery, corruption and embezzlement, of which the scandal involving 'fictitious exports' during the late 1980s was a major example. Similarly, widespread tax evasion and the growth of the underground economy were features regularly highlighted during that period. In retrospect, the neoliberal state in Turkey exhibits a dual face, a duality which is of some significance in the context of our subsequent analysis. At one level, it is a major player in the economic arena and a major allocator of economic rents. As a result, the private sector's dynamism continues to be heavily dependent not only on its own initiatives but also on its ability to achieve access to state resources and incentives. The retreat of the state from the economy is, therefore, a myth. At another level, however, associated with the politicisation of rent distribution is a loss of confidence and a decline in the moral authority of the state in Turkey. We hypothesise that a significant link

exists between the dual face of the state and the rise of the Welfare Party, a link that will become more explicit in the subsequent sections of this essay.

Religious nationalism and a cross-class alliance: what makes the Welfare Party distinct from the political parties of the established order?

The transformation of the Welfare Party from a marginal, parochial entity to a mass political movement constitutes a real paradox. To uncover the paradox we need to identify features of RP's programme, organisation and base of support that truly differentiate the party from the other political parties of the 'centre'. RP is an enigmatic entity in the sense that conventional terms such as 'right', 'left', 'conservative' or 'radical' fail to capture its broad message and are unable to provide a correct characterisation of where the party actually stands. Judged by its position on gender, involving a subordinate role for women at home and in society at large, it is a political movement on the extreme right. Yet, judged by its 'just economic order' (*adil ekonomik düzen*) rhetoric, with an emphasis on income distribution and the moral necessity of improving the material position of the poor, it is not fundamentally different from a typical social-democratic party on the left.[13] At the same time, it differs from a conventional social democratic party in the sense that it places major emphasis on free enterprise and private capital as the principal engine of growth, downgrading the role of the state in the process. The basic message is that private enterprise, commercial activity and the profit motive are perfectly consistent with the basic principles of Islam, as long as the gains generated are a product of legitimate and truly productive economic activity. A close reading of the party programmes and election manifestos of the Welfare Party would lead to the following characterisation of the party on a number of key issues, differentiating it from other political parties of the established order.

First, RP's perspective represents a paradoxical combination of 'tradition' and 'modernity'. The party is truly modernist in its uncompromising faith in the benefits of capital accumulation and economic growth facilitated by the acquisition and use of advanced technology. Its emphasis on the importance of scientific education and modern technology is certainly no less than the similar emphasis to be found in the context of other secular parties on the right or the left. What is surprising to an outside observer is the lack of emphasis on issues relating to conservation and environment, or the possible dangers of single-minded concentration on economic growth considering that 'balance', 'equilibrium' and 'moderation' are among the basic Islamic values. In contrast to its major emphasis, however, the party is truly 'traditionalist' in the cultural sphere on issues relating to gender for example.

Second, a recurring theme in the RP literature is an essentially Third Worldist perspective involving a relentless attack on the West, with a particular focus on Western values and Western imperialism. Parallel to the attack on the West itself is a critique labelling the established parties as 'imitators of the West', while portraying RP as the only party faithful to the country's own historical and cultural heritage.

Third, the economic model set out under the controversial just order rhetoric

is, in fact, consistent with the Third Worldist, anti-imperialist language frequently employed in RP's propaganda literature. The 'just order' model is portrayed as a third road, a mixed economy structure lying somewhere between the free market capitalism of the West and the state controlled socialism of the former Eastern Block. In the mixed economy model, private initiative constitutes the main engine of economic growth, yet the state also has an important role to play in terms of providing basic infrastructure and distributional assistance. The just order document also contains a number of specifically Islamic elements, notably a vibrant case for interest-free banking. In retrospect, what the architects of the just order rhetoric have in mind is a model of hyper-populism based on a morally justified cross-class compromise, designed to form a broad coalition of political support ranging from private business to the poorest segments of society. In a sense this is quite different from the position of the major right-of-centre political parties, which tend to place more emphasis on the individual and the market and less emphasis on social justice. It is also markedly different from the position of social-democratic parties on the left who place more emphasis on democracy, human rights and social justice and less emphasis on private entrepreneurship and initiative.

Fourth, the Welfare Party is heavily critical of the traditional conception of secularism, erected right from the very foundation and forming one of the central pillars of the Republic, wholeheartedly accepted by the major parties on the left and right. According to RP, the militant or authoritarian secularism associated with the Republic has limited the rights of individuals in a country with a predominantly Muslim population to practise their religion freely. The natural corollary of this perspective is that true secularisation requires true religious freedoms. An interesting contrast is evident in this context between RP and other established parties. The primary focus of social democratic politics is on social rights and entitlements as well as civil and human rights. The key focus of centre-right parties is on the rights and freedoms associated with property ownership and engaging in entrepreneurial activity. The principal concern of the Welfare Party, however, is on the right to practise one's religion freely. Hence RP aims to establish a truly 'secular' regime in which any restrictions concerning the free practice of Islam will no longer be tolerated.

Fifth, the foreign policy orientation of the Welfare Party also makes a strong contrast with other established parties of the political order. As part of its anti-Western orientation, RP's principal goal is to forge a closer union between Turkey and the rest of the Islamic world. Special emphasis is accorded to strengthening relations with countries of the Middle East, the emerging states of post-Soviet Central Asia and the highly dynamic second generation NICS of Southeast Asia, which include key countries with predominantly Islamic populations such as Malaysia and Indonesia. RP's foreign-policy stance reflects a curious mixture of nationalism and Islamic transnationalism. At one level, RP's approach is transnationalist in the sense that the emphasis is on the brotherhood of and cooperation among Islamic countries. Yet, at the same time, there is a strong nationalistic flavour to RP's foreign-policy approach. In terms of its economic potential and geopolitical position, Turkey is singled out as the natural candidate for the leadership of the Islamic world. The recovery of the Islamic

world from centuries of oblivion and its rise to a position of prominence in the global political economy goes hand in handwith the rise of Turkey to the status of a significant power, in the broader context of Islamic cooperation. It is no coincidence, therefore, that RP is extremely critical of and rejects any future union with Europe. In fact one of the electoral promises of RP, relegated to the background once elected, was to dismantle the Customs Union agreement signed in 1995, which came into effect from the beginning of 1996. There have been other groups in the country, notably on the social-democratic front, who have also been critical of the terms of the Customs Union agreement. RP's position, however, is diametrically opposed to the position of the secular, Western-orientated parties of the centre. For the Welfare Party, reversing the Customs Union agreement and loosening the ties with Europe was a matter of fundamental principle rather than simply an outcome of the debate concerning the terms of the specific agreement concluded. A vibrant criticism of the USA as an imperialist power in the region, as well as a relentless attack on Israel, constitute equally dominant themes in RP's foreign-policy rhetoric.

A close examination of RP's programmatic statements is important because ultimately one of the great achievements of the party under Erbakan's leadership concerned its ability to differentiate itself sharply from the established parties of the political order. At a time when, as part of global trends, the sharp divisions between centre-right and social-democratic parties have largely been blurred, appearing to the average citizen on the street as simply differences in individual leadership, RP could present itself to the electorate as a political movement with clear objectives and a consistent holistic mission, a strong moral flavour presented with missionary zeal. The unique position of the party on a number of key issues, and the radical departures of its programme from those of the orthodox parties, were successfully employed by the party's leadership as an electoral strategy. One of the striking features of the electoral campaign leading up to the general elections of December 1995 was Erbakan's refusal to participate in television debates among major party leaders, on the grounds that all these parties were imitators of the West and thus alien to the country's true culture and traditions. The theme 'RP versus the rest' highlighted the uncompromising attitude of the party leadership, vigorously distancing themselves from the centre in an attempt to attract support from the traditional constituencies of the established parties.

The Welfare Party's great organisational strength proved to be another feature that sharply distinguished the party from its competitors, influencing its electoral fortunes in a positive direction. Paradoxically, in an age where the visual media have established themselves as the dominant mode of communication, RP has placed major emphasis on grassroots organisations and face-to-face contact with the electorate. Enormous attention has been given to step by step mobilisation at the local level, with party militants or representatives diligently coming into contact and gradually building support by establishing close, personalised relationships with potential voters. Computers were employed with great effect to accumulate and process information on people likely to vote for the party. The huge financial resources at RP's disposal played an important role in this context. Material benefits were offered to potential voters—typically poor people on the

outskirts of major metropolitan areas—in the terms of food, shelter and jobs, as well as contributions to weddings and other social occasions. These organisational tactics provided strategic advantages to RP where other parties, notably the social democrats, were in organisational disarray, clearly neglecting issues relating to voter mobilisation at the grassroots level.

The municipal elections of March 1994 were the turning point in the transformation of RP into a nationwide political force. In retrospect, RP appears to have capitalised on the weakness of the social-democratic left. This is clearly evident in the case of their success in the metropolitan centres of Ankara and Istanbul, where RP managed to replace, albeit by a small electoral margin, the social-democratic mayors who had been in office since 1989. Thus, in the context of the 1990s, there appears to be a close correspondence between the decline of social democracy as a major force in Turkish politics and the rise of RP as a radical alternative to traditional secular social democracy. The decline of the social-democratic left in Turkey is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon that deserves separate treatment. To some extent it is closely related to the global forces that we have already identified. Also important are the strong divisions in the social democratic movement itself, typified by the illogical division of the movement into two separate political parties as well as by the perennial leadership struggles within the individual parties themselves. In contrast to the tightly knit, hierarchical organisation and consistent vision of the Welfare Party, the social-democratic movement in Turkey has been increasingly characterised by fragmentation and the absence of a consistent, unifying vision. On a number of key issues of public policy, such as privatisation for example, the social-democratic parties were unable to present a coherent perspective. Internal tensions as well as an inability to present coherent solutions to key economic problems steadily downgraded the credibility of the social democratic alternative.[14]

Also significant was the single-minded concern of the main social-democratic party of the early 1990s, the Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) under ;dİnönü, with issues relating to democratisation, notably with respect to the advancement of civil and human rights. Although the emphasis on democratization was a highly respectable and commendable concern, it was associated at the some time with a relative lack of interest in economic or material issues of direct concern to the poor, who formed the main electoral bones of the party. In fact, during the course of the coalition government between DYP and SHP, there appeared to be a curious division of responsibility, with the right-of-centre DYP concerning itself with economic issues such as privatisation, while SHP was primarily preoccupied with democratisation and human rights abstracted from economic or material conditions. Furthermore, the concrete experience of government under social-democratic mayors in the key metropolitan centres of Istanbul and Ankara and allegations concerning inefficient, incompetent and corrupt administration strongly contradicted the image of 'clean government' that had formed the principal electoral message of the social democrats in 1989. The Welfare Party, with its emphasis on direct material benefits to the poor as opposed to abstract notions of democracy, as well as its promise of honest and competent government, managed to present itself to key segments of the

electorate as the natural alternative to the social democrats in crisis. Our diagnosis that RP's success was based to a large extent on the failure of social democracy in Turkey is confirmed by the electoral performance of the party in 1994 and 1995. While the party emerged as a nationwide movement during the mid-1990s, a strong regional bias continued to characterize its electoral success. The evidence suggests that RP has capitalised on support in major metropolitan centres such as Istanbul and Ankara as well as in the predominantly rural and poorer parts of the country in Inner, South East and Eastern Anatolia, areas where, under normal circumstances, one would expect the social democratic message to be dominant.[15]

One of the dramatic features of Turkish politics in the post-1989 era involved the fragmentation of the centre right and the divisions within the centre left that we have already drawn attention to. During the 1980s under the unique leadership of Turgut Özal, ANAP managed to form a broad-based coalition, claiming 45% of the vote in 1983 and 36% in 1987. ANAP's ideology represented an interesting mixture of economic liberalism with heavy doses of nationalism and religious conservatism, though not of a fundamentalist nature. It was Özal's personality and his unusual combination of a liberal Western orientation with a strong attachment to Islam, a connection confirmed by his link to the National Salvation Party in 1970, that held the 'liberal' and 'conservative' factions of ANAP together under one umbrella. However, following the withdrawal of Özal from active party politics in 1989 after his election to the presidency, his successor Mesut Yılmaz, essentially representing the liberal faction of ANAP, could not keep the conservative faction within the orbits of the party. In the 1990s therefore, we observe a much more homogenous ANAP in terms of ideological outlook and electoral base; however, it is clearly not in a position to replicate the performance of the previous decade. A detailed analysis of the reasons underlying the fragmentation of ANAP and the centre right in general is beyond our scope. The basic conclusion remains, however, that the fragmentation of both the right and left in Turkey has significantly helped to advance the electoral fortunes of the Welfare Party in the 1990s.

Business interests and Islamic resurgence: the significance of MÜSIAD

The conceptualisation of the Welfare Party as a party of the weak and disadvantaged is seriously incomplete in so far as it fails to take into account the significant rise of Islamic capital or the Islamic bourgeoisie in Turkey during the post-1980 neoliberal era. Islamic business, in turn, has constituted a major financial base for the Welfare Party. It is undoubtedly the case that, without the degree of financial resources available, the Welfare Party could not have found itself in a position to implement its unique organisational tactics, paving the way for the electoral success of the mid-1990s. During the 1970s small businessmen and shop keepers in the small or medium-sized Inner Anatolian towns had been an important constituency of the National Salvation Party, the predecessor of the Welfare Party. Hence a certain link between Islamic business interests and political party campaigning on explicitly Islamic grounds has been evident right

from the beginning in the late 1960s. It was during the 1980s, however, that we observe a profound take-off in the volume and depth of Islamic business activity, a process that clearly received a significant boost from the major inflows of Saudi capital arriving in the country to take advantage of the new opportunities provided by the liberal economic environment, notably in the financial sphere.[16] Similarly, the savings of the migrant working community in Germany have been flowing back to Turkey, contributing to the rise of Islamic business activity as well as providing an important source of financial support for the Welfare Party. The opportunities for profit provided by the shift to a market-orientated economy also encouraged Islamic brotherhood organisations or networks (*tarikat*) to engage in investment activity on a substantial scale. By the 1990s Islamic networks had grown significantly in strength, establishing themselves as major actors on the economic scene. A qualification is called for at this point in the sense that there is no one-to-one correspondence between Islamic brotherhoods and the Welfare Party. There exist well known examples of Islamic brotherhoods, whose conception of Islam differs significantly from that of the Welfare Party and whose followers are therefore encouraged to vote for other parties, notably on the right-of-centre of the political spectrum.[17] This qualification, however, does not contradict the basic observation that there exists a significant link between a substantial majority of Islamic businesses, strengthened considerably in the market-orientated environment of the 1980s and the rise of the Welfare Party. In other words, RP constitutes the political expression of these rising business interests.

It would be instructive to draw attention in this context to the principal association of Islamic business interests in Turkey, namely the Independent Association of Industrialists and Businessmen (MÜSIAD). An examination of MÜSIAD is illuminating in terms of illustrating the depth and extent of the surge in Islamic business activity in Turkey. The formation of the business association is a very recent development. The organisation was founded in 1990 by a group of young businessmen with an average age of 33. Over a period of a few years membership of the organisation has grown steadily to around 3000 individual companies. The numbers are expected to rise to 5000 by the year 2000. In fact the organisation has established itself as the largest voluntary business association in the country. The key voluntary business association in Turkey that represents the interests of large conglomerates, the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TÜSIAD) has a membership of around 400.

MÜSIAD members include some very large companies, of which the most striking case is Kombassan located in Konya, the traditional stronghold of Islamic business and the Welfare Party. Kombassan is itself an interesting case in the sense that it constitutes a network firm representing the combined capital of more than 30 000 shareholders, many of whom are migrant workers in Germany. With the exception of some large companies, however, it is fair to say that the majority of MÜSIAD members are medium-sized firms. Another striking characteristic involves the spread of geographic location. In contrast to TÜSIAD members who are located in Istanbul and the surrounding Marmara region, MÜSIAD membership is distributed all over the country. An examination of MÜSIAD membership suggests that the largest membership is to be found in some

of the major metropolitan centres such as Istanbul, Bursa and Izmir, as well as in the key traditional Inner Anatolian strongholds such as Konya and Kayseri.[18] MÜSIAD members also include, however, firms from smaller Anatolian towns that have been identified as significant success stories by the media, resulting in the label the 'Anatolian tigers'.[19] The towns in question include Denizli, Kahramanmaraş, Çorum, Gaziantep and Şanhurfa. The characteristic of these towns is that a number of relatively small or medium-sized firms located in these centres have managed to establish themselves as significant exporters of manufactures to the world market, while at the same receiving little or no subsidy from the state for this purpose. It would be wrong to claim that the whole of the booming small or medium-sized business activity in Turkey is represented under the umbrella of MÜSIAD, however. Indeed, a large component of successful small or medium-sized business communities do not have an explicit Islamic orientation and would normally vote for the established, secular parties of the centre. Nonetheless, this observation does not invalidate the point that a certain key element of successful business activity in small or medium-sized firms does have an Islamic orientation and is affiliated with MÜSIAD.

A central question to ask at this stage is what exactly MÜSIAD's position is on outstanding issues of public policy and how it differs from the views of its rival organisation, TÜSIAD, an association with a secular, Western orientation and the representative of big business in Turkey. On the basis of a cursory examination, one may argue that MÜSIAD's annual reports on the Turkish economy and reports based on specialised research into various key areas of economic policy have the flavour of the serious TÜSIAD reports, unlike the election propaganda of the Welfare Party, notably the 'just order' document. Nonetheless, a close examination reveals a number of features that distinguishes MÜSIAD's position sharply from TÜSIAD's approach in the economic and non-economic spheres. By similar logic, a close correspondence may be identified between MÜSIAD's position and the perspective of the Welfare Party on a number of key issues of economic and foreign policy.[20]

The promotion of small and medium-sized firms and the mobilisation of public resources and the financial system for this purpose constitutes one of the recurring themes in the MÜSIAD perspective. The emphasis on small and medium-sized firms, however, is not unique to MÜSIAD since a number of other organisations exist in Turkey, both public and private, who also seek to promote small and medium-sized establishments. What is unique to MÜSIAD, however, in line with the position of the Welfare Party, is a strong rejection of the Customs Union with Europe and a corresponding emphasis on the need to reorient the country's economic relationship and foreign policy stance away from the West towards a closer union with the Islamic world. A number of the association's research publications investigate the potential benefits to be derived from closer cooperation between Turkey and other Islamic countries. As part of its grand strategy involving a closer union with the Islamic world, the organisation has also formulated concrete projects for economic union among Islamic countries. One of these steps concerns the much publicised project called the 'Cotton Union'. The project covers four main Islamic countries—Turkey, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan—and visualises a combined strategy of expansion

to augment international competitiveness in cotton textiles and related fields in the four countries concerned.[21]

It is striking that both MÜSIAD and the Welfare Party have been heavily influenced by the successful models of East Asian capitalism. Looking towards the East for a broad model of development, the hierarchic, semi-authoritarian models of capitalism in East Asia and Southeast Asia, with a strong communitarian element, appear more congenial from an Islamic perspective compared to Western models of capitalism and their associated emphasis on individualism, secularism and liberal democracy. These broad observations might be used to highlight the key differences between the underlying perspectives of TÜSIAD and MÜSIAD. First, the former is Western-orientated, securalist and a strong supporter of economic and political union with Europe as a basis for both economic prosperity and the consolidation of liberal democracy in Turkey. The latter is more Eastern-orientated, heavily influenced by the successful cases of East and Southeast Asian capitalism and finding close affinities between the communitarian traditions of Islam and the communitarian features of the Asian models. Second, there appears to be a striking difference in the approach of the two organisations to the question of 'democracy' itself, although the issue requires serious separate investigation. TÜSIAD as an organization seems to have placed much more emphasis in recent years on expanding the rights and freedoms of the individual.[22] At the same time, however, it tends to place less emphasis on social rights and income distribution as major public policy issues. MÜSIAD, in contrast, tends to downgrade and de-emphasise issues relating to freedoms associated with liberal democracy, which it labels as a specifically Western phenomenon. Hence, discussions of individual rights and civil liberties do not figure in MÜSIAD reports, while there are frequent references to social rights and the importance of achieving social justice, more so than those to be found in the TÜSIAD literature.

With the discussion of Islamic business and the growth of MÜSIAD as a key association of Islamic business in the background, we may return to our principal theme and venture the following hypothesis. The transformation of the Welfare Party from a marginal force to a significant political movement is a parallel phenomenon to and a reflection of the growing power of Islamic business in the Turkish economy and society in the context of the 1990s. More specifically, the rise of the Welfare Party reflects, in part, the growing aspirations of the rising Islamic bourgeoisie to consolidate their positions in society, to achieve elite status also and, in purely economic terms, to obtain a greater share of public resources, both at the central and local levels, in competition with other segments of private business in Turkey. Considering the importance of the state as a key allocator of rents in major areas of the economy, it is not surprising that businessmen with an Islamic orientation are cooperating with activities being organised at both the associational level (MÜSIAD) and the political level (the Welfare Party) to obtain a large share of the public pie. Recent press reports on MÜSIAD's entry as a collective unit into major privatisation deals as well as on the benefits that seem to have accrued to Islamic capital from the deals established as a result of its close contact with RP mayors in Istanbul and Ankara appear to lend support to our hypothesis.

Earlier on, we highlighted the unique organisational tactics that distinguished the Welfare Party from its principal competitors. The parallel at the level of Islamic business appears to be the network firm. It is clear that the Islamic bond is proving to be the key element in the intense cooperation among a multitude of small or medium-sized economic units to achieve the type of competitiveness and access to public resources that would certainly not be feasible in the absence of such cooperation. In fact, MÜSIAD itself is operating like a consortium or network firm, as is evident in the organisation's recent interest in privatisation offers. What is also clear from this discussion is that any consideration concerning the rise of the Welfare Party as simply a temporary or transient phenomenon has to take into account the growing strength and dynamism, and the cooperative element embodied in Islamic capital that form the economic and financial backbone of the party.

The welfare party and democratic consolidation in turkey: the challenges and dilemmas ahead

With the Welfare Party installed as the dominant partner in a coalition government, the key question in everybody's mind is whether a strong RP presence in government is compatible with the consolidation of the liberal democratic order in Turkey. To many foreign observers, looking at the Turkish experience in a comparative perspective and taking account of some of the more radical and militant versions of political Islam in the Middle East and North Africa, RP appears to be a mild and democratic variant of political Islam.[23] There is no doubt that the Turkish version of political Islam has been strongly influenced and conditioned by the country's democratic political culture, since, in spite of certain ruptures and limitations multiparty democracy has been a major characteristic of Turkey during the postwar period. There is also no doubt about RP's strong faith in the peaceful mechanisms of parliamentary democracy as a means of gaining access to power and putting its wide—ranging programme into effective action. It would be fair to say that any violent attempt to gain power would be rejected except perhaps by a very small minority. The major problem posed by the presence of RP for the liberal democratic order, however, arises from the fact that political Islam, by definition, has an encompassing vision of society covering all aspects of daily existence, ranging from dress to education, moral conduct and the position of women in society. What is common to the majority of the leadership and the rank and file of the movement is that they would like to move forward, albeit gradually and in a peaceful manner, to an idealised form of a Muslim society. Although it is not stated explicitly, what many supporters of RP have in mind is ultimately the establishment of *Sharia*, the Islamic Law, with its all-encompassing vision of society.

The Islamic movement in Turkey and elsewhere has benefited from the postmodern democratisation wave during the 1990s, involving the transmission of values conducive to liberal democracy, namely the importance of a strong and pluralistic society, as well as a cultural relativism that recognised the right of 'others' to co-exist. These influences were conducive to the emergence of Islamic movements on the political scene alongside other, secular groups or

movements. In other words, the postmodern wave has opened up public space for Islamic movements to flourish, a space that was not previously available, at least not on a comparable scale. The crucial point to emphasise, however, is that, while the environment of postmodernity is consistent with political Islam, the holistic, all-encompassing vision of political Islam is not equally compatible with the postmodern message of a pluralistic society.[24]

Turning our attention back to the Turkish context, a fundamental challenge is posed by the presence of a powerful RP for the future of the liberal political order. If our view concerning the encompassing, totalistic vision of political Islam is correct, then that vision comes into direct conflict with the fundamental principles of secularism and Western orientation that have been the hallmark of the Republic for a period of over 70 years. Any attempt by the RP to legislate its idealised vision of Islam into action will run up against a major wall of opposition from the vast majority of the population, as well as from the established bastions of the Republican constitutional order, including the majority of the parliament, the judiciary and, most important of all, the military. Although it has unintentionally contributed to the rise of political Islam in Turkey, the military constitutes a major barrier towards its further advancement in the current conjuncture. In fact, at the time of writing this essay, some of the strongest reactions to the proposed RP legislation in the cultural realm have originated from the military itself.

In a study attempting to characterise the Welfare Party, a well known Turkish journalist, Ruşen Çakir, employs the label 'neither sharia nor democracy'.[25] This characterisation suggests that RP is not fully democratic measured by the standards of liberal democracy, but is also in part significantly different in its vision of Islam as compared with the Iranian or Saudi Arabian versions of Islamic fundamentalism, for example. This characterisation may be valid insofar as both the party leadership and party militants recognise that radical change in the directions that political Islam favours, even by peaceful and parliamentary methods, will face huge opposition in a country which is unique in the Islamic world in terms of the depth of its secularism and Western orientation. With the common vision of an idealised Islamic society in the background, what distinguishes RP sharply from its counterparts in the Middle East is a realisation of the limits of what it can achieve in the environment in which it is operating.

In another influential study, *The Failure of Political Islam*, French analyst Olivier Roy argues that political Islam is likely to degenerate into either a small, parochial, militant political movement or a Western-type right-of-centre party similar to the Christian Democratic parties to be found in many European countries.[26] In immediate terms, both of these possibilities seem to be remote in Turkey. In fact an interesting feature of the Turkish case before the 1990s was the existence of parties that dominated government and whose basic orientation was quite close to European style Christian democracy. Examples include the Democrat Party led by Menderes in the 1950s, the Justice Party led by Demirel in the 1960s and 1970s and the Motherland Party under Özal's leadership during the 1980s. One of the underlying features of the right-of-centre political parties was that they used Islam as a major political weapon as a means of building support and broad electoral coalitions against the more overtly secular social

democratic parties of the left, notably the Republican People's Party. Nonetheless, these powerful right-of-centre parties managed to combine Islam as a tool of political mobilisation with a broadly secular perspective. It is obvious, therefore, that RP is of a different vintage and departs radically in its basic perspective from the established centre-right parties; it is unlikely to change its basic course in the foreseeable future.

A fragile equilibrium appears to exist in the Turkish context. Considering its strong base of political support, from both marginalised groups in poverty as well as rising business interests, RP is unlikely to fade overnight. At the same time, there exists an inherent tension confronting the leadership of the party. Any concrete and radical steps in the direction of putting into action key elements of the Islamic programme, notably in the cultural sphere, are likely to generate retaliation and a constitutional crisis, jeopardising the future of the liberal order and the future of the party itself. Yet another tension facing the party arises from the fact that one of the underlying reasons for RP's success concerned its ability to differentiate itself sharply from its competitors. A party that distanced itself so much from the rest and promised a radical project of restructuring cannot simply behave like everybody else when in government. Total pragmatism or inaction is likely to undermine future political support for the party. So RP appears to be sitting on a knife-edge equilibrium. Any attempt to institute radical change is likely to elicit severe resistance, while a policy of complete inaction is likely to undermine political support, both of which are clearly detrimental from the point of view of the party's future growth prospects.

Concluding observations

Economic globalisation is a highly uneven phenomenon that generates both winners and losers in the process. What the present analysis has attempted to establish is that the mechanisms of economic globalisation and the associated process of neoliberal restructuring have been instrumental in the rise of the pro-Islamic Welfare Party to a position of prominence in the mid-1990s. Furthermore, the cultural impulses associated with globalisation have also prepared the way for the rise of political Islam in the Turkish context. A striking feature of the Turkish experience, from a comparative perspective, is that the Welfare Party emerged as a cross-class coalition, incorporating into its orbit the poor and marginalised strata—the obvious losers of the neoliberal restructuring process—as well as certain segments of the rising business interest, a group clearly emerging as a beneficiary of the globalisation process. In fact the Welfare Party as the political expression of rising Islamic capital reflects the cooperative attempts of these groups to obtain a large share of the benefits associated with globalisation. At a more specific level, a multitude of factors has been responsible for the rise of the Welfare Party to the status of a mass political movement. Such factors include fragmentation of the existing party system, a highly uneven distribution of income and a decline in the redistributive capacity and moral authority of the state. External factors were also relevant. The massive inflows of Saudi capital into the country as well as the sizable inflows of remittances from migrant workers in Europe contributed to the process of Islamic re-

surgence. Although not sufficiently emphasised in the present context, the disappointments associated with Turkey's failure to obtain full- membership of the EU as well as the much publicised European indifference to atrocities against Muslims during the Bosnian War have also influenced public sentiment in the country and may have helped to swing the pendulum somewhat in the direction of the Islamic camp. On a positive note, the rise of RP to a position of prominence in Turkish politics has helped to draw public attention to two major issues, namely the right to practise religion freely as part of the broader menu of civil, social and human rights as well as the need to diversify Turkey's external relations away from a single-minded concern with Europe to greater and closer contact with other regions of the world with common cultural bonds.

For the social democrats, the main lesson to be drawn is that, in the current domestic and global context, it is not possible to win elections simply as a class party of the poor and disadvantaged. What the social democrats need to decipher from the RP success is that they have to construct a broader coalition that includes segments of the small and medium-scale businesses which are on the increase. They need to develop a policy agenda that caters for the interests of both the poor and small-medium scale business in a consistent fashion. Social democrats as well as other parties also have lessons to learn from the organisational tactics of the Welfare Party and they also have to come to terms with Islam as an important social and cultural force. Finally, at a more general level, a key lesson that emerges from the Turkish experience is that identity politics cannot be divorced from its broader economic context. More specifically, the Turkish case illuminates the difficulties of consolidating liberal democracy fully in an environment where income and wealth is highly unevenly distributed.

Serious questions must be raised, however, concerning the democratic credentials of the Welfare Party. While there is no doubting RP's respect for parliamentary democracy as a means of gaining and exercising power, its underlying vision is essentially a majoritarian conception of democracy with limited respect for minority rights or the rights of 'others'. In that respect, its vision of identity politics is authoritarian in the sense that a society consisting of a predominantly Muslim population is divided into two conflicting camps, namely 'us against them' or 'true believers versus non-believers'. A sharp distinction is called for in this context between cultural Islam and political Islam. Cultural Islam, as an important component of the country's cultural heritage, may prove to be a unifying force in the democratic process in Turkey. Political Islam, in contrast, is likely to constitute a divisive influence and, therefore, an important source of instability in the context of the democratic regime.

Notes

Paper prepared for presentation at the BRISMES International Conference on Middle Eastern Studies held at St Catherine's College, University of Oxford, 6–9 July 1997. The paper was completed in May 1997 shortly before the collapse of the coalition government, with the Islamist Welfare Party as the dominant element, in June 1997 after one year of office

[1] The unexpected rise of the Welfare Party has generated a large literature in recent years. For a small sample, see Sencer Ayata, 'Patronage, party, and state: the politicization of Islam in Turkey', *Middle East Journal*, 50 (1), 1996, pp 40–57; Sabri Sayari, 'Turkey's Islamist challenge', *Middle East Quarterly*, 3 (3) 1996, pp 35–43; Jenny B White, 'Islam and democracy: the Turkish experience', *Current History*, 94 (588), 1995, pp 7–12; white 'Pragmatists or ideologues? Turkey's Welfare Party in power', *Current History*, 96 (606), 1997, pp 25–30; and David Shankland, 'The demise of the Republican Turkey's social contract', *Government and Opposition*, 31 (3), 1996, pp 30–32.

[2] On the origins and performance of the National Salvation Party (MSP), the forerunner of RP in the pre-1980 paper, see Ilkay Sunar & Binnaz Toprak, 'Islam in politics: the case of Turkey', *Government and Opposition*, 18 (4) 1983, pp 421–441. From a comparative perspective, see Hootan Shambayat, 'The rentier state, interest groups and the paradox of autonomy: state and business in Turkey and Iran', *Comparative Politics*, 26 (3), 1994, pp 307–332.

[3] The distribution of the national vote at the general elections of 1995 was as follows: Welfare Party, (RP), 21.4%; True Path Party (DYP), 19.2%; Motherland Party (ANAP), 19.7%; Democratic Left Party (DSP), 14.6% and the Republican People's Party (CHP, the successor to the Social Democratic Populist Party), 10.7%. What is also striking in the context of the 1995 elections is that the two fringe parties, the extreme nationalists, the National Action Party (MHP) and the ethnic separatists, HADEP, also obtained a significant share of the national vote. MHP's share was 8.2%, while HADEP's share was 6.1%. Neither of these two parties could be represented in parliament because of their failure to pass the 10% national electoral threshold. Nonetheless, their electoral success was significant in terms of undermining the power base of the centre parties, clearly facilitating the rise of the Welfare Party in the process. For detailed information on individual political parties in Turkey, see Metin Heper & Jacob M Landau (eds), *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey*, London: IB Tauris, 1991.

[4] On the challenges confronting the process of democratic consolidation in Turkey, see Ergun Özbudun, 'Turkey: how far from consolidation?', *Journal of Democracy*, 7 (3), 1996, pp 123–138.

[5] The centre-periphery paradigm was originally developed by Şerif Mardin. As an example of this approach to the study of Islam in Turkish politics, see his 'Religion and politics in modern Turkey' in James Piscatori (ed), *Islam in the Political Process*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp 138–159. For a recent analysis that attempts to locate the post-1980 experience in a centre—periphery framework, see Ümit Cizre-Sakallioğlu, 'Parameters and strategies of Islam—state interaction in Republican Turkey', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18, 1996, pp 231–251.

[6] On the impact of globalisation and the rise of identity politics, see in particular Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996; Paul Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty first Century*, London: Fontana, 1993; Vincent Cable, *The World's New Fissures: Identities in Crisis*, London: Demos, 1994; and Paul Hirst & Grahame Thompson, 'Globalization and the future of the nation state', *Economy and Society*, 24 (3), 1995, pp 408–442.

[7] For a comparative Middle Eastern perspective emphasising Islam as an urban movement reflecting the modernist aspirations of rising groups in society, see Sami Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State*, London: IB Tauris, 1993.

[8] Our discussion of the secondary elites has been influenced by Faruk Birtek & Binnaz Toprak, 'The conflictual agendas of neoliberal reconstruction and the rise of Islamic politics in Turkey', *Praxis International*, 13 (2), 1993, pp 192–212.

[9] On the broad political economy of Turkey during the post-1980 era, see Ziya Öniş & Steven B Webb, 'Turkey: democratization and adjustment from above', in Stephan Haggard & Steven B Webb (eds) *Voting for Reform: Democracy, Political Liberalization and Economic Adjustment* pp 128–184 New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. See also the collection of essays in Atila Eralp, Muharrem Tümay & Birol Yeşilada (ed), *The Political and Socioeconomic Transformation of Turkey*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993.

[10] For a detailed analysis of the role of the military in the post-1980 context, see Huri Türsan, 'Ersatz democracy: Turkey in the 1990s', in Richard Gillespie (ed), *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 2, pp 215–230, London: Pinter, 1996.

[11] The evidence on relative income inequality is based on the 1994 national survey whose outcome was disclosed by the State Institute of Statistics in 1996.

[12] On the changing role of the state in Turkey during the post-1980 era, see Korkut Boratav, 'İktisat Tarihi, 1981–1994' in Sina Akşin (ed) *Türkiye Tarihi, Cilt 5, Bugünkü Türkiye*, pp 159–210, Istanbul: Cem Yayinevi, 1995.

[13] Our discussions concerning the programmatic statements of RP are based on election manifestos and documents setting out the controversial 'just economic order'. The key documents are the following: *20 Ekim 1991 Genel Seçimi Refah Partisi Seçim Beyannamesi*, Ankara, 1991; *Adil Ekonomik Düzen: 21 Soru 21 Cevap*, Ankara, 1991; and *Refah Partisi 14 Aralik 1995 Seçimleri Seçim Beyannamesi* Ankara, 1995.

[14] The decline of the social democrats should be placed in perspective in the sense that the combined vote of the two principal social democratic parties exceeded the share of RP in the general elections of 1995. What is significant, however, is the pronounced decline of the social democrats compared with the pre-1980

period, when they could obtain around 40% of the national vote and even more in the context of the mid-1970s.

[15] For a detailed analysis of the electoral performance of the principal political parties on a region by region basis and illustrating the regional dimension in the fragmentation of the national vote, see Ali Çarkoğlu, '24 Aralik 1995 Seçimlerinde Bölgeselleşme, Oynaklık, Parçalanma ve Temsil Adaleti', 25, *Görüş* 1996 pp 50–54. For a study which emphasises the strong regional as well as the rural connection underlying support for the Welfare Party, see Hasan Kirmanoğlu, 'Refah Partisinin Yükselişinin Ekonomi Politiği', mimeo, Faculty of Economics, University of Istanbul, 1996.

[16] In the public image, the Saudi presence in the Turkish economy that originated in the mid-1980s has been associated with the formation of financial institutions based on the principles of interest-free banking. For evidence on Saudi capital, see Birol Yeşilada, 'Islam, dollars and politics: the political economy of Saudi capital in Turkey', paper delivered to the annual MESA Conference in Toronto, Canada, 15–18 November 1989.

[17] An example of such a brotherhood that is much publicised is the religious community founded by Fethullah Gülen, a disciple of Said Nursi, the Nur sect.

[18] Data on the distribution of MÜSIAD membership reveals the following pattern. In October 1996 MÜSIAD had a total membership of 2567. The largest congregations of members included Istanbul (786), Bursa (246), İzmir (205), Konya (184), Kayseri (175), Ankara (169) and Kocaeli (107). Of these only Konya and Kayseri are the traditional RP strongholds in the Inner Anatolian region. The rest are major metropolitan centres. It is also interesting that the emerging towns associated with successful industrialisation in recent years, namely Çorum, Kahramanmaraş, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep and Denizli have a combined membership of 256, which is also significant. Thanks are due to Dr Ömer Bolat, the General Secretary of MÜSIAD, for granting me an interview and making the information on the association's membership available.

[19] The success story of 'Anatolian tigers' in the rising small towns of Inner and Southeast Anatolia have been highlighted in a series of articles that appeared in the Turkish daily, *Milliyet*, during July 1996.

[20] For an exposition of MÜSIAD's basic perspective, see the annual reports on the Turkish economy which start in 1994. See also the report, *Economic Cooperation Among Islamic Countries*, Istanbul. Another useful study in terms of illuminating the basic MÜSIAD perspective, is a book by the president of the Association, Erol Yarar, *21. Yüzyila Girerken Dünyaya Yeni Bir Bakiş*, Istanbul: MÜSIAD, 1996.

[21] See the key report, *Pamuk Birliği*, Istanbul: MÜSIAD, 1996.

[22] See a recent, much publicised and controversial report by TÜSIAD, *Türkiye'de Demokratik Perspektifler*, Istanbul: TÜSIAD, 1997.

[23] For an interpretation along these lines, see Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 'The other side of the moon: from Taliban to Erbakan', *Civil Society*, 5 (59), 1996, p 4.

[24] On the relationship between Islam and postmodernity, see Akbar S Ahmed and Hastings Donnan (eds), *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity*, London: Routledge, 1994. For a useful exploration of the complex and uneasy relationship between Islam and postmodernity with special reference to the Turkish context, see Ali Yaşar Sarıbay, *Postmodernite, Sivil Toplum ve Islam*, Istanbul: İletişim Yayinlari, 1995.

[25] See Ruşen Çakir, *Ne Şeriat Ne Demokrasi*, Istanbul: Metis Yayinlari, 1994; and Cakır, *Ayet ve Slogan*, Istanbul: Metis Yayinlari, 1990.

[26] See Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.