

New Muslim Pluralism and Secular Democracy in Turkey and the EU

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INTRODUCTION

In this essay, we aim to put forward and discuss two broad arguments. First, the questions of “new Muslim pluralism”— to be described shortly — in EU countries and Turkey are analytically and politically interrelated in important ways, and, viewing them as such may help to better address these questions. Second, in both cases, the better way to address this new pluralism seems to be social and political inclusion rooted in the merits of secular and pluralistic democracies with well-developed checks and balances. It is not social and political exclusion rooted in the twin preconceptions that Islam is essentially different from other religions and Islamism is a monolithic and unchanging ideology. Thus, both political institutions and social and political perceptions seem to matter greatly in addressing these questions democratically.

In many European countries and Turkey, a major current challenge is how to address the “new Muslim pluralism,” which consists of mostly Muslim immigrant communities in the former, and new or newly vitalized expressions of Islam in the latter, within the contours of democracy. ² European states developed and consolidated various models of secular democracies through painful historical processes that involved conflict and confrontation, negotiation and cooperation mainly among Christian and secular actors and institutions (Buttigieg and Kselman, eds, 2003; Warner 2000; Kalyvas 1996). They are now faced with the challenge of integrating new Muslim minorities and a new religious tradition, Islam, into their social and political systems. Both the difficulties of Muslim immigrant groups in adapting to European norms and institutions, and the xenophobic and authoritarian reactions within the state institutions and majority societies challenge the quality and stability of European democracies.

Modeled on European examples, the main institutions of Turkish democracy were built during the first half of the last century through authoritarian reforms that were aimed at rapid and secular modernization, and nation-building, led by a watchful, vanguard state. (Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1996; Ahmad 1993). These institutions were partially remolded and opened to the participation of autonomous religious actors after the transition to multiparty democracy in 1950. Nevertheless, tensions between secular and religious actors have been an underlying theme of Turkish politics and escalated to new dimensions in recent years. This happened with the emergence of newly vitalized and mobilized Islamic actors in such areas as politics, economics, and media, and, since 2002, the government by the Justice and Development Party (AKP). The AKP is a “Muslim-conservative” mass party with powerful roots in previous Islamist parties. During the AKP rule, Turkish democracy made major advances and started the EU accession process in 2005. But the accompanying religious-secular polarization, and the mutual suspicions and authoritarian tendencies it feeds among both types of religious and secular actors, reduce the quality of democracy and are among the factors hindering democratic consolidation.

Islamism can be defined broadly as a diverse and evolving set of ideologies transforming traditional Islam into programs that support Islam as a venue of social and political activism, as a code of ethics and way of life in the modern world, or both.³ Like other, non-Muslim religious actors, Islamist actors have to make adjustments in order to coexist and reconcile with secular democracies (Berger 2007; Filali-Ansary 2005; Buttigieg and Kselman 2003; Ayubi 1997). Simultaneously, democracies have to make adjustments both to facilitate Islamists’ own transformation and to allow new religious actors to equally enjoy the democratic principles of representation and freedom. Arguably, secular and democratic governments face a choice between two broad strategies vis-à-vis Islamic movements and communities: inclusion and encouragement versus exclusion and punishment. In practice, all democracies employ a combination of both strategies, but they may emphasize one or the other. The more people view Islamism as monolithic and fixed, the more they may be inclined to promote the strategy of exclusion and punishment. The more they view it as diverse and adaptable, the more they may be inclined to support inclusion and encouragement.

Against this background, the cases of the Turkish-Islamist *Milli Görüş* (National Outlook, henceforth MG) in Germany and Holland, and Turkey's AKP, which partly emerged from within Turkey's MG, are illuminating. All three cases point to the important and ongoing tensions between Islamist actors on one hand and democracy and secularism on the other hand. These tensions point to the importance of well-developed, flexible, and creative democratic institutions, for the maintenance of secular democracy in the face of these tensions. Nevertheless, as we will discuss below, on balance the comparison of the MG under the three different social-political and institutional environments suggests that Islamist actors have considerable capacity to adapt to the requirements of democracy, and, the strategy of inclusion and encouragement is overall a better strategy than the strategy of exclusion and punishment.

Our cases involve two consolidated western democracies with different policies toward immigrant communities (Germany and Netherlands), and one majority Muslim developing democracy. Islam, which is a minority religion in Europe, is the majority religion in Turkey, with 99.8 percent of the population being *nominally* Muslim. Therefore, unlike in Europe, some form of Islamism theoretically has the potential to become a hegemonic ideology in Turkey. This implies that the integration of Islamic actors in general, and of Islamist actors in particular, into secular democracy may require some additional conditions in Turkey, compared to EU countries. For example, stronger legal-institutional measures may be necessary to protect secular and non-Muslim rights and freedoms, in addition to string checks and balances between secular and Islamic political actors. Nevertheless, there are important lessons that Turkey and EU countries can draw from each other. This is because the challenges that new religious pluralism poses to both cases often regards the integration of Islamic (or Islamist) actors such as the MG, not the integration of Muslim individuals *per se*.

Furthermore, what happens in Turkey and the EU in regard to religious pluralism are interrelated in political and psychological senses. Europe's ability to integrate its Muslims into secular democracies "as Muslims," based on social and political pluralism, would make it easier for Europeans to imagine and accept Turkey as an equal EU member. Simultaneously, it would help to overcome the secular-religious divide in Turkish politics by creating a more inclusive

example of “modernization and Europeanization.” Turkey’s EU prospects constitute a crucial factor driving its democratization. (Among others, Müftüler Baç 2005).

In turn, Turkey’s ability to consolidate its secular democracy, which among other things requires it to overcome its secular-religious divide, would facilitate its EU accession. Simultaneously, Turkey’s democratic consolidation and EU membership would boost Europe’s relations with Muslims in both Europe and the rest of the world by breaking the mutually reinforcing preconceptions that “Muslims cannot embrace democracy” and “Europeans cannot accept Muslims as their equals.”

ISLAM, EUROPEANIZATION AND SECULAR DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY

Turkish secularism is a product of a modernization project that was simultaneously a continuation and a critique of Ottoman modernization (Tunaya 2007; Mardin 2005, 145-165; Bozdoğan and Kasaba, Eds. 1996; Ahmad 1993; Berkes 1998; Shaw 1977). Religion was the key factor shaping how the Ottoman state related to its subjects and how the multi-confessional Ottoman society was organized. Alongside ideologies such as constitutional monarchism, Turkish nationalism, and, to a lesser extent, liberal cosmopolitanism, Turkish Islamism emerged in response to the empire’s long decay. The Sultan also embraced it as an instrument to depersonalize state authority and to boost the state’s legitimacy and profile among its Muslim subjects, and among Muslims worldwide. This happened especially after *Ottomanism* failed to become popular among the empire’s Christian peoples and largely became associated with Muslim Ottomans (Karpas 2001).

But the Ottoman state was not a theocracy. The state controlled religion as much as religion controlled the state, and Ottomans made major attempts to become a modern and secularizing European state from the early 19th century on. For example, they built secular schools parallel to religious schools, codified the Shari’a in an attempt to modernize it, and adopted the French commercial code while maintaining the fundamentals of the Shari’a system. On one hand, the republican reforms that laid the foundations of modern Turkey continued these reforms and built on Ottoman institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Foundations. On the

other hand, they were based on the conviction that Ottoman modernization was partial and unsuccessful, and were aimed at preventing the return of the Ottoman ancien régime.

Thus, a series of reforms during the 1920s and 1930s overhauled the traditional religious institutions such as Islamic schools, orders, and charities. These were replaced with either secular ones, such as secular schools, or pro-secular ones tightly regulated by the state. An example of the latter is the colossal Directorate of Religious Affairs, which, among other things, supervises all the mosques in the country. Other reforms such as the legal equality of men and women followed. In the eyes of the reformers, the main motivation of these reforms was to catch up with European states through secular modernization on social-cultural and legal, as well as political and economic, spheres.⁴

These authoritarian reforms were implemented relatively peacefully thanks to Kemal Atatürk's charismatic leadership and the strong legitimacy the republican regime enjoyed after its leadership in the War of Liberation (1919-1922). But the liberal wing of the Kemalists, the Islamists, and the traditional-religious elites never consented fully to these reforms (Zürcher 2005; Küçükcan 2003). Their largely passive opposition during the early decades translated into support for center-right and religious-nationalist parties after the transition to multiparty democracy in 1950, and into support for new Islamist parties after the 1960s.

Thus, Turkish secular democracy has a major aspect shaped by the secular state's security concerns vis-à-vis religious actors autonomous of state supervision in general and Islamist political actors in particular. For example, the Turkish Constitution specifically prohibits the intervention of "sacred religious feelings with state affairs and politics" and the use of any rights and liberties "for dismantling the democratic and secular republic."⁵ Accordingly, since 1946, eight political parties were shut down with the charge of anti-secularism. At the same time, certain religious expressions deemed to have political symbolism are restricted in public, although the Constitution grants freedom of religion that is in general respected, and the government actively supports, and regulates, Sunni-Muslim religious activities (Among others, US Department of State 2007). The most salient and controversial one of these restrictions is the ban on Islamic headscarves in schools and government offices (Kalaycıoğlu 2005).

Nevertheless, the Turkish political system allowed a considerable amount of inclusion for Islamic actors. Through their involvement in center-right parties and political clientelism, they obtained both representation and benefits such as a steady increase in the religious *imam-hatip* schools (Bozan 2007).⁶ Beginning with the 1980s when the Turkish society opened up to the rest of the world through political and economic liberalization, religious actors became vibrant in a wide range of areas from export-oriented businesses and business and labor associations to banks, human rights organizations, and publishing houses (European Stability Initiative 2005; Esposito and Yavuz, Eds. 2003; Yavuz 2003; Buğra 2002; Ziya and Türem 2001; Mehmet 1990).

Furthermore, the system allowed considerable participation for Islamist political parties, through what may be called “conditional and promising participation.” Participation was conditional because they faced sanctions (by the judiciary and military) whenever they crossed secularist redlines. It was promising because they were able to participate in democratic politics, freely contest elections, and come to power in local or national governments. Hence, although Islamist parties were periodically shut down by the courts or military interventions, the five Islamist parties founded after 1971 participated in democratic politics for an average of about 6.5 years before closure. Two of them ruled the country in coalition governments, and they gained significant experience in local governments especially during the 1990s. Thus, Islamist parties had significant incentives to adapt to secular democracy so that they could rally in freely contested elections, come to power, and distribute social and economic benefits to their constituencies while in government. These incentives contrast with those in other Muslim countries such as Egypt and Algeria where Islamists are disallowed either to freely contest elections or to govern if they win elections.

As a result of these incentives, Turkish Islamic social and political actors have been diversifying and adapting to liberal economics and democracy for a long time (Yavuz 2003; Öniş 1997). Their last and most impressive product has been the AKP, which was founded in 2001 by reformist Islamists who broke away from the Islamist Virtue Party. The AKP calls itself “conservative democratic” and has a drastically more liberal-democratic and pro-west discourse and practice than its predecessors. Until 2007, except for a few examples such as an unsuccessful attempt in 2004 to criminalize adultery, the party shunned any conspicuously religious policy in

government.⁷ It has also secured major legal-political reforms that made Turkey a more pluralistic and democratic country according to most accounts (Dağı 2006). However, the AKP government also led to significant polarization between secular and religious actors. This polarization resulted from both the indirect effects of the AKP's image as an Islamic Party, and the party's actual and perceived policies that increased the visibility of Islamic actors and expressions in areas such as education and public recruitment and procurement (Toprak et al 2008; Somer 2007; Çarkoğlu and Toprak 2006). In 2007, the party's successful election of one of its leading figures to the presidency led to major political fissures including an online ultimatum by the military and a legal case by the chief public prosecutor to shut down the party. The Constitutional Court declined to shut down the party in 2008, although it issued a warning that the party was involved in anti-secular activities. At the same time, the government displayed increasingly "illiberal" tendencies after its landslide electoral victory in the summer of 2007.⁸ Soon after the elections, the AKP made a much needed attempt to reform the Constitution, which failed mainly because it only included legislation to lift the restrictions on Islamic headscarves. In 2007 and 2008, the government was also criticized for losing steam in passing EU-led legal-political reforms.

However, the flaws of the political party system and the weaknesses of the pro-secular parties may have as much to blame for the AKP's liberal-democratic deficits as the party's Islamist roots. Under a more effective political party system where secular and religious parties effectively check and balance each other on a platform of EU-led reforms, the AKP may further adopt liberal democracy in order to maintain its constituency. Absent "effective and constructive" opposition, the AKP's hegemonic tendencies gain strength (Öniş 2009; Somer 2007). Simultaneously, Islam's being the majority religion in Turkey implies that effective constitutional provisions are needed in order to protect secular and non-Muslim freedoms from social and political pressures.

MILLI GÖRÜŞ IN GERMANY AND THE NETHERLANDS

European democracies' responses to the challenges posed by new Muslim pluralism display considerable variation. For example, while the Netherlands has adopted a relatively inclusive approach towards its Muslim immigrants in general and Islamic movements in

particular, in comparison, Germany has developed socially and politically exclusionary policies.⁹ Different approaches have resulted in different outcomes in terms of integration and adoption of Muslim immigrant groups and Islamic actors to European norms and institutions. A comparison of the MG in Germany and the Netherlands help to illustrate this variation.

Milli Görüş is the name of an ideological current that initially materialized in Turkey as a political party with an Islamist agenda. In 1969, Necmettin Erbakan, the founder of the movement and its ideological inspiration, formed the *Milli Nizam Partisi* (National Order Party).

Starting from the 1970s the movement spread across the Turkish immigrant communities in Western Europe. Its European headquarters are in Cologne, Germany, but the organization has several regional organizations in other European countries, all having different agendas, institutional structures and rhetoric. The Dutch MG has not only an internal structure that is reliant on democratic procedures, but has a political discourse that is couched in the language of democratic principles. It encourages its members to get involved into the Dutch society socially and politically. Canan Uyar, the chairperson of North Holland MG Association's Women's Federation, states that they organize events to inform their members about the candidates and the political process during Dutch elections and try to raise awareness about the importance of political participation. The organization cooperates with local Dutch authorities on developing programs that are designed to enhance immigrants' integration and involvement into the Dutch society. Many of their activities and projects are funded by the Dutch government and they are in constant contact with Dutch authorities. The organization holds regular meetings with ministries including the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Social Affairs and provides the Dutch authorities feedback on issues pertaining to the Muslim community.¹⁰

Despite its laic nature, the Dutch state has encouraged the existence of different ideological/religious networks by incorporating them into the public order. By allocating state subsidies through the pillars according to the proportionality principle, distributing public money for educational, social and cultural purposes, the Dutch state has made these ideologically/religiously based organizations a salient feature of the welfare state in the 20th century. With "pillarization," a pluralistic organization of society where functional

differentiation was superimposed by world view differences became the hallmark of the Dutch society (Groenendijk et al 1998, 288).

The Dutch “pillarization system” gives religious groups the rights to be subsidized by the government and to establish their own infrastructure on the basis of their ideologies. The Dutch constitution guarantees freedom of religion and education as well as the subsidizing of private schools founded on religious bases (Shadid 1991).

In its Note of Minorities of 1983, the Dutch Government devotes serious effort to create a society in which the members of the minority and religious groups living in Holland will have equal opportunities and full chances of developing. Its policies aim to create the conditions required for emancipation and participation in society and prevent the discrimination of these groups. The Government acknowledges that it is important to take into consideration the cultural, including the religious, background of minority groups in order to construct a “multicultural society.” Its policy implies an equal respect for the religious beliefs of various groups, including the Muslims. The Dutch Government stresses that “Religion fulfills a function in developing and enforcing the self-respect and hence the emancipation of many members of ethnic groups” (Shadid 1991, 90).

Such conceptualization of religion provides an opening of a democratic space for religion in public sphere which seems to have transformed the MG’s approach toward Dutch society, democracy and secularism. Accordingly, 80 percent of the MG members surveyed in Netherlands agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “democracies might have problems but they are the best system of government”.¹¹ Responses to other questions, and interviews, suggest that democracy is seen as an opportunity to live an Islamic life, not a threat to it. While Islam still constitutes the most important aspect of their identity, they do not consider it to be an obstacle to embrace Western norms of democracy. They consider it the only viable way to have their voices heard in the Dutch context. They utilize the opportunities that democracy provides to them. They vote, establish their own Islamic organizations such as schools, receive public funding, and are visible in Dutch public space.

The Dutch MG members do not consider Western notions of democracy and Islam as mutually exclusive. They see themselves as subjects with the power to initiate changes and have an impact on the Dutch society. Their ability to participate in the decision-making processes feeds a trust towards the democratic process.¹²

In comparison to Netherlands, Germany has adopted more exclusive policies in regards to immigration. According to the 1977 Naturalization Guidelines of Germany, naturalisation applicants, except for the nationals of formerly German territories in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, had to give up their prior nationality. The combination of the 1913 Citizenship Law and the naturalisation guidelines of 1977 meant that naturalisation was considered an exception, not the normal practice (Takle 2007) Although some changes were introduced to the naturalization process with the Foreigner Law of 1990, dual nationality is still not granted to adults (Marshall 2000, 142). Thus, German policies limited representation of Islam in public sphere through policies such as not granting immigrants the right to dual citizenship, and not granting Islam the legal status that would be necessary for Islam to be taught at public schools and for Islamic organizations to have access to public funding,. Building on the economic, social and political marginalization of the Muslim community, the German MG has developed into an anti-systemic force and become a government identified “extremist Islamist group.”¹³

The survey results reveal the anti-democratic stance of the MG in Germany. 49 percent of the German MG members surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that democracies may have problems but it is better than any other form of government. 45 percent of them said that having a democratic political system was a fairly or very bad way of governing, 75 percent mentioned that democracies were not good at maintaining order.

The Dutch case that allows Islamic actors to play a more legitimate role in the making of society and politics with an Islamist identity seems to initiate a process of learning and tie them to the democratic structure both institutionally and perceptually. In turn, Germany’s relative exclusion of Islam from the public space seems to lead to the MG’s formulating an alternative public space whereby Islamism becomes a tool to resist the “injustices” of the democratic system and challenge the norms and values of Western society.

IMMIGRATION, TURKEY'S EU ACCESSION, AND THE POLITICS OF RELIGION AND SECULARISM

On its surface, Turkey's "demographic window" until 2025 should be an asset for its EU membership prospects, as long as Turkey keeps turning its young population into skilled labor through adequate educational policies.¹⁴ It could revitalize Europe's economy by complementing its ageing population and dwindling labor force. Similarly, Turkey's Muslim identity should be an asset for the EU as it could boost the EU's image and influence in the rest of the world, as long as Turkey remains a secular democracy. In fact, however, Turkey's Muslim identity and the fear of Muslim-Turkish immigration on behalf of EU populations constitute barriers to Turkey's membership. This reveals how questions of secularism, Islam and immigration have tied a domestic policy issue—integration of Muslim immigrants—to a foreign policy issue, Turkey's EU membership.

The secularization of the European states can be seen as a response to the confessional wars of early modernity in Europe. In order to achieve peace and order, the state had to assume a neutral, as well as an often dominant, stand (Habermas, 2008). Thus, secularism- the separation of church and religion- began to be conceptualized not only as a requirement of modernization and the accompanying rationalization but also as a requirement for the security of the state and society.

The European integration process has sped up the process of secularization among Western European societies. Many studies have found that an increasing majority of the European population has ceased to participate in traditional religious practices, indicating an increasing individualization of religion (Martin 1978; Davie 2000; Greeley 2003; Casanova 2004; Inglehart and Norris 2005). This trend coincides with the strong, pro-secular current prevalent among European elites and occurs at a time when the EU is dealing with determining its external boundaries, defining its internal cultural identity, and integrating the Muslim immigrants (Casanova, 2004). It is also occurring at a time period when the Turkish society is becoming more religious, at least in terms of self-definitions (Çarkoğlu and Toprak 2006; Toprak et al. 2008). This should not pose a barrier to Turkish membership, however, insofar as Turkey

remains a Muslim yet secular democracy, and the EU is a club of shared values such as secularism and democracy, rather than a club of cultural-religious identity.

The question is more complicated, however. Increasing claims of immigrant religious groups in European public space feed anxieties that lead many Europeans to call for the privatization of religion as a main tenet of a modern secular society's self definition, exactly when Turkey's AKP calls for a moderation of Turkish secularism to allow more public visibility for religion. Recognizing a legitimate public role for collective religious mobilization has become a problematical issue for the EU. Muslim organizations' claiming a place in European public space poses a threat to European identity not only because of their "otherness as a non-European religion but because of their religiousness itself as the other of European secularity"(Casanova, 2004). Within this context, Islam becomes the alternative of Western secularity. September 11, 2001 attacks and the following events exacerbated the fear of Muslim presence in the EU, whereby immigration came to be treated synonymously with Islam (Casanova, 2004). Islam has become the new security threat, feeding a "politics of exclusion" and the construction of "hard borders" that turn the EU into a "gated community" (Lavenex 2005, 123; Van Houtum and Pijpers 2007, 291-309).

The prospect of Turkish accession intensifies this controversy over the European identity, "Europe's geopolitical place in the global world," Muslim immigration, and the politics of religion within Europe (Baban and Keyman 2008). By bringing up the long-term dilemmas over the questions of what it means to be "secular" (both in Turkey and Europe) and how religion should relate to European public life, Turkish candidacy "destabilizes the European secular social imaginary" (Hurd 2006, 402). Critics of Turkey's membership tend to oppose Muslim immigration also, because of Islam's allegedly inassimilable nature (Yükleyen 2009).

Polls suggest that a majority of the European population opposes Turkey's accession on cultural and religious grounds (Hurd 2006, 401). As a reader's letter to the Economist indicated, many believe that the question of Turkey's belonging in Europe cannot be resolved through Turkish reforms since Turks are seen as having "an incompatible and primitive culture serving as a Trojan horse for the rest of Islam's impoverished masses."¹⁵ The internal political discourse in the EU illustrates the parallelism between the discourses against Muslim immigrants and

Turkey's EU accession. Nicolas Sarkozy and Phillipe de Villiers have captured the French public's sympathy by orienting their politics on opposing immigration and Turkish membership. (Göle 2008, 3). In 2002, former French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing stated that Turkey was "not a European country" and that admitting Turkey into the Union would mean "the end of Europe".¹⁶ Former West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt followed a similar line by stating that Turkey should not be accepted due to its unsuitable civilization (Hurd 2006, 406) In 2004, the EU's internal market commissioner Frits Bolkestein opposed Turkish accession by arguing that if Bernard Lewis is right that Europe would be Islamic by the end of this century, "the liberation of Vienna in 1683 would have been in vain."¹⁷

Scholarly debates echo these discussions. Some scholars view Turkey's predominantly Muslim population as a threat to Europe's cohesion by arguing that Islam is especially "resistant to secularization" for example because of Prophet Mohammed's fusion of military and spiritual authority. (Gellner 2000; Lewis 1988; Pipes 1995; Schiffauer 1997; Hawthorne 2004). Others retort that Europe, Islam and secularism should not be treated as "semantically closed universes... cut off from dialogues with other cultures" (Habermas 2008); that there might be multiple understandings of Islam, Europe, and secularism (Taylor 2004; Taylor 1998); and warn against the "fallacy of unique founding conditions," which is the fallacious assumption that only Western Christianity has the necessary cultural traits to produce democracy and secularism (Stepan 2000).

The debate on the place of God in the text of the European Constitution, the accompanying debate on "what it means to be European," and the varieties of religio-linguistic groupings in Europe—Orthodox-Slav, Protestant-Germanic, and Catholic-Anglo-Saxon—reveal that there is no consensus on a cultural definition of Europe. An empirical analysis of different models of secularism in Europe and elsewhere, and the diverse legacies of such European experiences as France under De Gaulle, Spain under Franco, Greece under the Junta regimes, and Eastern Europe under communism, reveal that the state-religion relation also displays significant diversity and flexibility in Europe (Fox 2006).

Similarly, Islam is not monolithic in terms of its relationship to politics and public life (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Voll 1982). There are Islamist groups that have to differing

degrees internalized democracy as a legitimate system of government, and made it a central component of their political discourse, such as the Tunisian Ennahda Party, the moderate Algerian Movement for Society and Peace, or the Moroccan Jamiat al-Adl wal-Ihsan (Cavatorta 2006). European The Islamic movements in Europe also display vast diversity (Yükleyen 2009).

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO THE “ISLAM vs EUROPE” DEBATE

There are two possible interpretations of the debates over religion in the preamble of the EU Constitution, the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, the *hijab* dispute in France and the anti-headscarf law in 2004, 3/11 terrorist attacks in Madrid, the Muslim immigrant riots in French suburbs in 2005 and the cartoon crisis in 2006. They may be interpreted as signs of why religion should be kept in the private sphere and why Islam and Turkey should be kept outside Europe. Alternatively, they can be seen as problems caused by the inadequate political-institutional models of integrating Muslims into European democracies “as Muslims,” not necessarily at the expense of their religious-cultural identity. From this point of view, the Muslim immigrant claims in European public space and Turkey’s EU candidacy challenge the prevailing notions of what it means to be “secular” in the sense of public representation of religion. Accordingly, the negotiations for Turkey’s membership need to take place within a framework of integrating Muslim immigrants into European societies, the consolidation Turkish secular democracy, and the EU’s inclusion of a predominantly Muslim country.

Different ways of addressing the “new Muslim pluralism” in both Turkey and the EU is closely related with different conceptualizations of secularism and democracy on one hand, and secular and religious (Islamic) actors on the other hand. An inclusionary and accommodating approach is rooted in the merits of pluralistic democracy and an understanding of Islamic and secular actors and institutions as diverse and changing. An exclusionary approach, on the other hand, is built on an essentialist understanding of Islamic and secular actors and institutions that treats them as fixed, and monolithic.

Essentializing Europe, Islam and secularism leads to overlooking the diversity within each cultural/political formation and the assumption of an inherent incompatibility between them.¹⁸ In fact, they are all sites of confrontation as well as sites of negotiation and cooperation.

A system that is able to open up “a democratic space, shared both by religious and secular, the first giving up the absolutism of the religious truth-regime and the latter giving up its claims to hegemony over the society” has the potential to produce an Islam that embraces democratic norms (Göle 2005, 3). This does not mean that either religion or secularism is infinitely flexible, but that they can change and develop new self-definitions in response to dialogue and social, political, and economic incentives that encourage coexistence within pluralistic democracy.

Two conceptualizations encumber the successful integration of new religious pluralism into secular democracies. The first is absolutist and moralist versions of religious ideologies that place an exclusive claim to truth and reject the voluntarism principle in religious belonging (Berger 2007). The second is an understanding of secularism that is exclusively shaped by a positivist vision of society, and by the perception that autonomous religious actors—such as the unregulated church and new religions such as Islam in Western Europe, and the Sufi religious orders and educated yet openly religious women in Turkey—always pose a threat to this vision.

In turn, a society based on “twin tolerations” – “that is, the minimal boundaries of freedom of action that must somehow be crafted for political institutions vis-à-vis religious authorities, and for religious individuals and groups vis-à-vis political institutions”- may have much more capacity to produce a peaceful reconciliation among Islamism, secularism and democracy (Stepan 2000, 37). It should be noted, however, that the emergence of twin tolerations is subject to the resolution of problems of trust between religious and secular actors, which in turn require credible commitments and effective checks and balances in the political system (Somer, 2007).

Turkish politics can be seen as having long been the site of contestation between two visions of secularism that are exemplified by the above statements. For example, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, former President of Turkey, stated: “Secularism prevents politicization of religion. It is a life style. A secular individual separates his religious beliefs from his life as a citizen. Practices in regards to religion should remain within the inner world of the individual. His/her life as a citizen is about the outside world.”¹⁹ By comparison, rightist politicians such as Suleyman Demirel and Turgut Özal have described secularism as a characteristic of the state, not of individuals, and believed that religion has implications beyond individual’s conscience.²⁰

The AKP's coming to power reintroduced the debate on the role of religion in public space with more focus on the relationship between democracy and secularism. The AKP and its popular support symbolize the transformation of the social imaginary in Turkey, which creates an anxiety of identity loss among the secular establishment. Simultaneously, the weakness of pro-secular political parties creates vacuum that religious moralists may be able fill and a sense of insecurity among the secular segments of society. While the EU has been struggling with the question of what it means to be a "secular" Europe, Turkey faces the question of what it means to be a "secular" Muslim majority country.

The frictions between secular and "un-secular politics" politics on one hand and between different visions of secularism on the other hand will continue to shape European and Turkish politics for a long time to come. The cases we discussed here are far from being sufficient to enable us to predict whether these frictions will increase or decrease in the future, and whether they will strengthen or weaken secular, pluralistic democracy in Europe and Turkey. This is not an easy process. Cultural difference breeds threat perceptions and defensive reactions on both religious and secular sides.

But our discussion and cases suggest that Islam is flexible like other monotheistic religions in its ability to adapt. The Islamist rooted AKP's coming to power by democratic means in Turkey, and the democratic reforms it has undertaken so far, are an outcome of the processes of interaction made possible by democratic openings as well as by bitter lessons learned from a lack of full democracy and the rule of law. Similarly, the Dutch MG's relatively democratic outlook by comparison to the German MG's radical and anti-democratic outlook illustrates the partially dynamic nature of religious identity, and the ability of Islamist movements to learn, adopt and transform.

The case studies here support the perspective that every religion is "multivocal," containing both democratic and non-democratic elements (Stepan 2000). Our exaggerated perceptions of difference stem from a "culturalist" understanding of Muslim, Turkish, and European values and identities as fixed and all-powerful. Such an understanding is counterproductive from the point of view of European ideals of democracy and coexistence within diversity. At the end, the tools of democratic competition, inclusion, deliberation, and

persuasion within the rule of law, which are inherent in European ideals of democracy, offer the best tools to integrate Muslims into European democracies. They also offer the best tools available to resolve the secular-religious divide challenging Turkey's democratic consolidation. Inclusion-encouragement is overall a better strategy than exclusion-punishment. Our cases inform this key insight.

Turkey's consolidation of a European style democracy in a majority-Muslim context would create an influential, positive example that would break deep-seated western prejudices about Muslims, modernity, and democracy. It would also encourage Muslims in Europe and elsewhere to more decisively develop democratic norms, movements, and institutions. Most Europeans and Turks may not think so, but there are important insights they can take from each other in regard to how Muslims will relate to secular democracies, and vice versa.

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² For the term "new religious pluralism, see Banchoff, Ed. 2007.

³ For related definitions, see Mandeville 2007; Schwedler 2006, 8-11; Karpas 2001; Esposito and Tamimi, Eds. 2000; Esposito 1999; Apter, Ed 1964)

⁴ This aim was formulated as "muassırlaşma" or "çağdaşlaşma" in Turkish.

⁵ The 1982 Constitution of Turkey, revised in 2001, the Preamble and Article 14.

⁶ Among others, Bozan, İrfan. *Devlet ile Toplum Arasında, Bir Okul: İmam Hatip Liseleri. Bir Kurum: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Between State and Society, A School: İmam Hatip Schools. An Institution: Directorate of Religious Affairs). (İstanbul: TESEV Yayınları, 2007).

⁷ Under Turkey's secular laws, adultery is a subject of the civil code and a possible cause of divorce. Under the AKP proposal, criminal prosecution would have been possible upon the complaint of a spouse. See also Fareed Zakaria, "How Not to Win Muslim Allies," *Newsweek*, September 27, 2004.

⁸ Among others, see Tülin Daloğlu, *The Washington Times*, March 4, 2009.

⁹ The argument in this section draws on ethnographic research conducted by Gönül Tol in Germany and the Netherlands between the years of 2004 and 2007. The data here come from surveys and testimonies of Milli Görüş members. A total of 118 and 132 surveys were collected, and 10 and 17 elite interviews were conducted, in the Netherlands and Germany in respective order. More in-depth insights were also gained through participant observation and long face-to-face interviews. For a more detailed account, see Tol, Gönül. "What Type of Islamism for Europe? Islamism in Germany and the Netherlands," *Insight Turkey*, 11(1), 2009, pp. 133-149; Tol, Gönül. "The

Rise of Islamism Among Turkish Immigrants in Germany and the Netherlands,” unpublished dissertation, Florida International University, 2008

¹⁰ Phone interview with Canan Uyar, February 6, 2008.

¹¹ See supranote 9.

¹² Interview with a Milli Gorus imam, June 23rd, 2007, Utrecht.

¹³ Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution. 2005. Report prepared by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior.

¹⁴ Icduygu Tusiad, others.

¹⁵ Karl Kettler, Letter to the Editor, *The Economist*, December 21, 2002, 12.

¹⁶ Interview with Le Monde, 8 November 2002.

¹⁷ *The Guardian*, September 8, 2004.

¹⁸ For an insightful essay on the “retrospective extrapolation” that often underlies these preconceptions, see Kalyvas 2003.

¹⁹ *Radikal*, September 21, 2004.

²⁰ *Sabah*, June 14, 2004.

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