

Veiling as Identity Politics:

The Case of Turkey

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This asteroid has been sighted only once by telescope, in 1909 by a Turkish astronomer, who had then made a formal demonstration of his discovery at an International Astronomical Congress. But no one had believed him on account of the way he was dressed... Fortunately for the reputation of asteroid B-612, a Turkish dictator ordered his people, on pain of death, to wear European clothes. The astronomer repeated his demonstration in 1920, wearing a very elegant suit. And this time everyone believed him. (Saint-Exupéry, 2000)

Pierre Bourdieu argues that one's position in society depends not only on the size of the economic capital one holds but also on the *cultural* and *social capital* one possesses. In every society, one's entry into the *field of power* is determined by the relative significance of the combination of one's capital in the *fields* one operates in, as well as the relative positions of the *fields* to each other (Bourdieu 1996). I argue that in Turkey, the field of power has traditionally been dominated by the "political field." From the omnipotent rule of the Ottoman monarchs to the representative democracy of the Republic of Turkey, a transfer of power from the rulers to the people has not occurred. In the absence of a bourgeois opposition, the power of the ruling elite could hardly be contested. This characteristic persisted from the 1920s until the 1980s. In case of major contestations of power, the military intervened and restored the status quo (as in the 1961, 1970 and 1980 interventions). The 1980s, which began with a military regime of 3 years, bore major contestations of the state's power in two major fronts, which to this day could not be contained: the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, which contested the secular pillars of the state, and the rise of ethnic consciousness (mainly Kurdish) which periled national unity and territorial integrity.

In this paper, I will focus on the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, specifically the issue of *veiling* (or *turban*), as a manifestation of the Islamic fundamentalist movement. I will attempt to show the symbolic meaning of women's liberation for the Turkish republican revolution, and argue that veiling occupied its place in public consciousness in the 1980s and 1990s precisely because of women's historical role as bearers of modernity in Turkey. In doing that, I will utilize Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *symbolic violence* and *cultural capital*. It is argued here that *symbolic violence* is exerted towards individuals in Turkey so that they conform to the secular, modern and nationalist norms of the Republican elite. A certain *habitus*, that is, a certain life-style and a set of bodily dispositions are privileged by the ruling elite. This certain *cultural capital*, which I will call "republican capital" is attained and sustained by the individual's socialization through family, education and media.

While the 1920s and '30s can be considered as the years for consolidation of a repressive ideology undermining the primacy of religion, and emphasizing nationalism, the 1980s and '90s will be taken up as a politically dynamic period when many minorities and contested identities became more visible and to some extent, legitimate. In that re-

spect, this paper concludes with two seemingly contradictory, nevertheless complementary arguments. On one hand, the Islamist movement is increasingly integrating itself into the mainstream culture and politics.¹ Thus, it should be considered as a movement in the field of power competing with the repressive state ideology for recognition and legitimacy, rather than a radical movement targeting the end of the secular regime. On the other hand, the alienation of the “republicans” from the Islamists and ethnic minorities is increasing. Turkey today is divided between those who advocate continuing adherence to the Kemalist principles at the expense of other identifications (religious, ethnic, feminist etc.), and those who have since the 1980s been breaking from where they were confined to in the periphery and increasingly seeking their place in the center while clinging to their religious, ethnic and sexual identities. The veil occupies a highly symbolic position representing the clash between the secular and Islamist camps. Even though this study does not merely study the veil, veiling offers a fruitful framework to discuss the above-mentioned developments.

Kandiyoti argues that “an adequate analysis of the position of women in Muslim societies must be grounded in a detailed examination of the political projects of contemporary states and of their historical transformations” (1991, 2). In that spirit, I would like to turn to an account of Turkish historical transformation since its inception. The modernization *project* in Turkey, as was *engineered* by the modernist founding elite, did not land upon a social vacuum, but had to come to terms with centuries of Ottoman legacy. Mardin argues that “the republic took over educational institutions and cultural practices (museums, painting and sculpture, secularism) from the West without realizing that these were just the tip of an iceberg of meanings, perceptions, and ontological positions” (1997: 65). I argue that most of the reforms of the Kemalist revolution were aimed at alteration of the mental and habitual structures of the population, accompanying a totalitarian institutional revolution. Bourdieu, in his discussion of the Kabyle society in Algeria in the face of colonial invasion similarly observes how pre-capitalist and capitalist systems require different habitus. “The economic system imported by colonization—the objectified heritage of another civilization, a legacy of accumulated experiences, techniques of payment, of marketing, methods of accountancy, calculation, and organization—has the necessity of a ‘cosmos’ (as Weber puts it) into which the workers find themselves cast and whose rules they must learn in order to survive” (Bourdieu 1976, 3). Thus, in any context where a total restructuring of the society is aimed for, a new “cosmos,” and agents with dispositions fit to operate in that cosmos, also need to be created. In Turkey, nationalism came to be a major tool for such reconstruction. It replaced religion, which was the principle of division and integration in Ottoman society.² A new “cosmos” was constructed to accommodate drastic changes such as secularization. The construction of Turkish nationalism will give us valuable insights into the formation of this special form of modern and secular *cultural capital*. Cultural capital in Turkey took the form of “state” or “republican” capital.

REPUBLICAN REVOLUTION AND THE ADOPTION OF “REPUBLICAN *HABITUS*”

According to Bourdieu, *cultural capital* and *social capital* complement *economic capital* in defining one’s social position. Bourdieu argues that individuals do not start life as equals; we are, by virtue of being born into a certain family with a certain *habitus* (with certain levels of social, cultural and economic capital), predisposed to being advantaged or disadvantaged in our trajectory. In that sense, what often seem to be natural aptitudes are capacities that individuals gain growing up, so that a child speaks with a rich vocabulary (or with the dominant, and thus, no accent) if her parents speak with a rich vocabulary (or no accent), which corresponds to high *cultural capital*. Social networks one has access to constitute one’s *social capital*. Knowing someone powerful almost guarantees a young person access into the circle of power. The dominant, in turn, make it seem natural that the best schools (and later, the best jobs) are filled with people from the dominant class. The system, by claiming to choose by merit, rather than nobility, hides the role of cultural and social capital. Symbolic violence is exerted by those in power over those who do not recognize it as power. Those who possess “symbolic capital,” which disguises itself as no capital at all, exert “symbolic violence,” a violence not recognized as such. “Symbolic violence is the violence which extorts submission, which is not perceived as such, based on ‘collective expectations’ or socially inculcated beliefs” (Bourdieu 1998, 103).

“No power can be satisfied with existing just as power, that is as brute force, entirely devoid of justification—in a word, arbitrary—and it must thus justify its existence, as well as the form it takes, or at least ensure that the arbitrary

1. I would like to acknowledge here that the term “Islamist” is problematic. There are various groups with “Islamist” characteristics in Turkey, which differ from each other considerably. For the purposes of this paper, I am using the term “Islamist” to refer to those who publicly display high religious capital, and are in critique of the republican values.

2. The *millet* system, the predominant social structure in the Ottoman Empire, was characterized by a strictly religious segregation, rather than an ethnic one.

nature of its foundation will be misrecognized and thus that it will be recognized as legitimate” (Bourdieu 1996, 265). The field of power is defined by what kind of *capital* (or what combination of capital) is of greatest importance and those who have the highest combination occupy the highest positions. Islam, or what can be “religious capital” has been delegitimized by the republican elite in Turkey. Instead, “republican capital,” a combination of nationalist and secular beliefs and a Western life-style, was deemed as legitimate and ensured power to those who held it.

During the first years of the formation of the Turkish Republic, to deal with the challenge of controlling a multi-ethnic population made up of Kurds, Circassians, Laz, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Albanians, Arabs and many more, a monolithic nationalism was invented whereby “Turk” was established as an overarching identity open to anybody who wanted to claim it (Bozdogan and Kasaba 1997). In contrast to the Ottoman period, now it was nationalism, and not religion, which guaranteed allegiance to the political authority. The roots of the “Turkish nation” were “discovered,” and a proud nationalist history began to be inculcated into the minds of the citizens (Heyd 1954). The replacement of the Arabic script with a Latin script facilitated a break with the past, and alienated the upcoming generations from centuries of Ottoman history, and Islamic culture (Weiker 1981). All the while, a carefully constructed history curriculum taught children to be proud of their pre-Ottoman, pre-Islamic Turkic past.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic, sought complete break with the Islamic past and adoption of the modern, secular values of the Western civilization. “The Turkish model of secularism introduced radical institutional changes at the executive and legislative levels, such as the abolition of the Sultanate and the Caliphate in 1924; the abolition of the Ministry of Pious Foundations, religious courts and religious titles; the adoption of a secular civil code of law from Switzerland in 1926; and the declaration that the Turkish republic was a ‘secular state’ by a constitutional amendment in 1937” (Gole, 1997b: 49).

Not only were institutions changing. In 1925, the Western calendar and time were adopted. Atatürk started a “secular and modernist crusade” which touched minute details of everyday life and aimed a complete alteration of citizens’ *habitus*. Such reforms included the adoption of the Latin alphabet in 1928. As Benedict Anderson points out, “to heighten Turkish-Turkey’s national consciousness at the expense of any wider Islamic identification, Atatürk imposed compulsory Romanization” (Andersen 1999, 45). Most notably, in terms of physical properties, the Western style hat was introduced together with an overall revolution in dress. Atatürk’s famous speech in Kastamonu in 1925, where he personally introduced the hat, emphasizes that the civilized people of Turkey must show the extent of their modernity in their dress, which can only be a “secular” kind of dress. Thus, he introduces the Western style pants, vests, jackets, shoes and hats as the only ones acceptable for a “civilized” Turk (Kili 2001).

The most significant target of the reforms was the younger generation via women. With the adoption of the Swiss civil code in 1926, the family was established as a modern institution with the wife (at the least on paper) enjoying the same privileges as the husband. The civil code abolished the men’s right to marry up to four wives (according to Shari’a) and established monogamous marriage. It also leveled women’s and men’s rights with regards to divorce and inheritance. Gole notes that whereas each revolution imagines an “ideal man,” the Turkish revolution imagined an “ideal woman,” “new women figures in their social roles, public visibility, and Western appearances and ways of life” (Gole 1997a, 66). The educated woman would also fulfill the role of motherhood better, raising healthier generations of Turks. “They were expected to contribute to the process of modernization not by becoming elite women professionals but by being housewives à la West, bringing ‘order,’ ‘discipline,’ and ‘rationality’ to homemaking in the private realm. Girls’ institutes founded under the Ministry of Education in 1928 and ‘evening girls art schools’ (Aksam Kiz Sanat Okullari) that were later instituted served this purpose. They channeled women to the task of ‘modernization’ at home by applying the methods of Taylorism to housekeeping in Turkey” (Arat 1997, 100). The law on unification of education in 1924 gave girls and boys equal rights to education. Finally, in 1934, women were given the right to vote and run for office. However, the symbolic place of the woman as the bastion of modernity in a sense barred her from becoming truly liberated and active in women’s movements. As Kandiyoti notes, political authorities in the Middle East have typically banned women from forming independent women’s organizations. She further argues that the interest that the male elite had in women’s rights in Muslim countries was confined in “a broader agenda about ‘progress’ and the compatibility between Islam and modernity” (1991, 3).

Kandiyoti defines the modern family as a “new regulatory discourse” (1997, 114). She notes that the private sphere began to be arranged according to the modern (western) styles and rules. By the 1950s, the Ottoman style extended family living was rapidly being replaced by nuclear family apartment living.¹ The juxtaposition of *alafranga* (European) living with *alaturka* (à la Turca) dispositions (a subject salient in post-Tanzimat Turkish novel) began to

1. See Bozdogan (2001) for an excellent study of architecture in the Turkish Republic.

shape habits of clothing, furnishing, in short, consuming.¹ Kandiyoti also notes that this “differentiation of tastes, fashions and leisure” was “in conjunction with changing patterns of stratification” (1997, 120). “Different constructions of what it means to be modern have come to inform not only the most intimate aspects of life but also subtle codes of class and status” (*ibid.*). Continued allegiance to religion and tradition caused one to be excluded from the center, which took charge of the distribution of wealth.

It should be noted here that the elite in charge of modernization was centered in major cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. Rural areas continued to be ruled through the intermediation of *local notables*, that is, the land-owning few, and religious leaders. The RPP had a tacit agreement with the local power holders, so that as long as they were allowed to perpetuate their economic stronghold over their clientele, they supported the RPP rule. The civil servant, assigned to the countryside as an agent of civilization, constituted the official hand of the state. The schoolteacher and the doctor were the two main representatives of the central administration and carried dispositions resembling the elite of the urban center. With increasing urban migration in the 1970s, a great number of formerly rural actors began to seek their niche in the urban capitalist system. Their habitus remained traditional and religious. The political dynamism of the 1980s was also due to a “civilizational clash” between urban dwellers and migrants, who continued to uphold their regional and kinship ties and expressed their discontent with the urban living conditions (where they lived in squatter towns) by clinging to religion.

In his autobiographical work *Istanbul* (2003), novelist Orhan Pamuk describes his elite family’s attitude towards religion in the Nisantasi home where he grew up. “I used to sense, at least theoretically, that God did not only concern himself with the poor in the building, but with everybody, however we were fortunate enough not to need him (Pamuk 2003, 169, translation mine). “... In those days..., I would conclude that we were *efendi* (master), not because we were property owners, but because we were *modernized, westernized*. This would cause me to scorn those who were not as westernized as we were, although they were equally rich” (Pamuk 2003, 174, translation mine). This account manifests how religion and social position were connected in Pamuk’s mind growing up—a common elite disposition—relating economic and religious capital inversely to each other.

Deniz Kandiyoti (1997) offers an account of alienation. Her anecdote manifests how she as a child felt “foreign” towards the crowds of picnickers on hot summer weekends on the island near Istanbul where she used to spend summers with her family. According to her account, a single item suggested to her young eyes the alienation she felt: pajamas worn by migrant men in the public sphere. “A new form of leisure was on display involving open-air, mixed-sex, family entertainment, denoting rhythms of work and rest unknown in the rural areas from which most of these new urbanites came” (Kandiyoti 1997, 119). A mob of families with their pots and pans filled with *dolma* (stuffed grape leaves) and *kofte* (meatballs),² carpets, loud children, and ball games signified a certain “backwardness,” a different, “other” life-style to “modern” families who had revolutionized their life-style in every aspect: Everything from eating habits (not with hands or on the floor), to entertainment styles (men and women together), from dress codes (rejection of the veil, beard and mustache, as was formalized by the “hat revolution”), to hygiene (Western style bathrooms, use of consumer goods in cleaning), from etiquette (adoption of Western table manners), to address (using *Bey* and *Bayan*—Mr., Ms., Mrs.- instead of the kinship implying *baci* “sister,” *teyze* “aunt,” *amca* “uncle” etc.) were carefully reformed. A similar contrast is diagnosed by Ozyegin (2001) between those “upstairs” and those “downstairs” in urban apartment living. The upper-class residents tend to stigmatize the doorkeeper’s family, who usually live in the basement or first floor of modern apartment buildings in Istanbul. “Doorkeepers embody the contact point of modern and modernizing populations, situated as rural ‘outsiders within’ the modern urban domestic sphere” (Ozyegin 2001, 7).

The religious/secular divide, however, is not necessarily parallel to poor/rich. I argue here that owners of economic capital integrated themselves into the center and received a slice of the economic cake more easily if they conformed to the principles the republic was built on. In that sense, the rate in which they increased their economic capital depended on the size of their republican (cultural and social) capital. Vehbi Koc’s life story from small town entrepreneur to Fortune 500 conglomerate, for example, contains a strong subplot of relentless Kemalism. The transformation of the 1990s is significant in the sense that it made the “Islamist” entrepreneur more visible, acceptable and successful.

1. See for example, *Kiralik Konak* by Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu; *Felatun Bey ile Rakm Efendi* by Ahmet Mithat Efendi; *Araba Sevdası* by Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem; and *Spsevdi* by Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpnar.

2. Items stigmatized because they are greasy foods not suitable for consumption in a picnic. Turkish comedy (both theater and film) is filled with caricatures of the big family, freshly migrated from rural Turkey, naïve, loud and crass. My own family chose their place of weekend stroll carefully also. Instead of the crowded Belgrade forests, a picnic area for the squatter town family, we would go to the lesser known gardens of newly renovated Ottoman Palaces such as *Hidiv Kasr* for a quiet, more *civilized* weekend outing.

In the “field of power” up to the 1980s, more important than *economic capital* was one’s *cultural* and *social capital*. For example, a civil servant, despite his/her weak economic position, would enjoy a high status in society. They would receive a “high credit line” with the neighborhood grocer, even though they usually had difficulty paying the balance at the end of the month. In post-Ozal Turkey, this property of the field of power is rapidly changing. One’s status is increasingly measured by one’s economic capital and economic capital only. On the other hand, the alienation between the secular and Islamist segment is also growing. A young person displaying religious characteristics is not likely to be recruited into an establishment known as “secular.” The secular segment of the society considers such a situation as an invasion of their fort by the feared “other.”¹ One’s political inclination also determines one’s decision to consume certain products, while abstaining from others. For example, *Ulker* or *Ihlas* products have long been boycotted by secularists since they were publicly known to be establishments associated with Islamist capital.

Until recently, social scientists, whose origins were in republican elite families did not realize how the republican reforms left vast rural areas untouched. “Paradoxically, rural women of eastern Anatolia may have been even further marginalized by the secular reforms because their access to institutions of the modern state was mediated through men, whose own access was in turn dependent upon the intercession of more powerful men such as tribal leaders, landlords, and leaders of religious sects. Thus, women’s encounters with modern or secular structures merely bound them even more tightly to local power holders rather than defining them as equal citizens of the state” (Kandiyoti 1997, 125).

The strong regional and class characteristic of the republican revolution sometimes cut across the gender division. Kandiyoti mentions Oncu’s study on the surprisingly high number of professional women in the first generation of the Republic. She argues that upper-middle class women were recruited into highly prestigious professional occupations since “recruiting women may have been less threatening than admitting upwardly mobile men from humbler origins” (Oncu as cited in Kandiyoti 1997, 125). Thus, whereas higher class urban women enjoyed the benefits of the republican revolution, rural and lower class women remained disadvantaged. Power was thus contained within the ranks of those who displayed the right dispositions: allegiance to modern and secular values.²

VEILING AS IDENTITY POLITICS, OR SECULARIZATION REVERSED

As argued above, women had a symbolic role in the period of full-scale modernization and secularization of the 1920s and 30s. In the post-1983 era, women’s veiling similarly occupied the center of the reappropriation of Islam. Islam became increasingly visible in the atmosphere of liberalization and privatization of the Ozal era (1983-1991). It was again women who became the symbols of the Islamization of politics, a reversal of the modernist project.

“Contemporary actors of Islamism have access to modern education, to urban life, and to politics and public visibility but refuse assimilation to the values of secularism and modernist elites” (Gole, 1997a: 70). Thus, again, the alteration of a way of life becomes the issue. “Islamic faith and the Islamic way of life become a reference point for the ideologization of seemingly simple social practices” such as female students wearing the *turban* at the university, the permission for prayer spaces in public buildings, the construction of yet another mosque at the center of Istanbul, the segregation of the sexes in the public transportation system, censorship on erotic art, and discouragement of alcohol consumption in restaurants (Gole 1997b, 53). “All these issues demonstrate the way Islamists have politicized social and cultural practices in order to criticize the ‘secular way of life’” (*ibid.*).

Gole approaches the issue of *turban* as the manifestation of active participation of veiled women in the public sphere and their *voluntary* reappropriation of an Islamic identity (Gole, 1997b, 56-57). The new veiling phenomenon, according to her, should not be equated with the docile, submissive, passive prototype of traditional Islamic veiling, but must be viewed as an instrument of identity politics. “On the contrary, young, urban, educated groups of Islamist girls are politically active and publicly visible” (*ibid.*). In my critique of Gole’s reliance on veiled university women in her analysis, I hold that veiled women have been doubly excluded from the realm of power.³ First, as Islamists they have been excluded because they did not correspond to the Kemalist ideal. Second, they have been excluded as women. As the Merve Kavakci incident suggests, a woman’s veiled appearance in the parliament could not be tolerated while men with potentially more radical fundamentalist ideas and agendas occupy seats in the Turkish grand assembly room.⁴

1. “Icimize sızıyorlar!” “They are sneaking into our quarters!” is a common expression used to denote reaction to the Islamists. The enemy, by practicing *takiye* (dissimulation) is believed to always aim to deceive one to bring about an Islamic revolution.

2. Bourdieu gives a similar example of higher education teachers in France, who, when faced with increasing student numbers, reserved the highest positions to those who corresponded “as closely as possible to the old principles of recruitment” (2000, 146).

The Islamists in the 1980s and 90s claim “authenticity.” They set themselves apart from the westernized elite and bourgeoisie. According to some, the 1990s were when the “real Turkey” “with all the complexities and diversity of its civil society and cultural identities” became visible again after 70 years of repression (Aksoy and Robins 1997, 1942). While agreeing with Aksoy and Robins that the 1990s saw a great transformation, I would like to, with Navaro-Yashin, problematize the notion of “real Turkey.”

Kandiyoti (1997) coins the term “neo-Orientalism” to warn against a practice of assuming certain characteristics as “authentically Turkish.” In an attempt to distance herself from a practice of “neo-Orientalism,” Navaro-Yashin submits that “the concept of Westernization, like notions of a major historical rupture with modernity, is based on the assumption, by default, that an essentially separate ‘culture’ existed prior to the development or the shift” (2002, 10). In the 1980s and 1990s, while the Islamists claimed authenticity, the secularists were also quick to realize that by referring to the accounts of pre-Ottoman, pre-Islamic Turkic traditions and customs (which for example stresses gender equality in contrast to Islamic violence to women and which the founding fathers repeatedly played on in 1920s and 1930s), they could claim that their life-style was native to Turkey. “The foundational years of the republic, the 1920s and 1930s, were an important period for debating the question ‘What’s Turkey’s culture?’ So too were the 1990s, with the success of the Islamist Welfare Party in securing an electoral majority in Turkey’s version of democracy” (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 21). In the 1920s and 1930s, as certain dispositions came to be viewed as authentically Turkish, some were pushed under the rug as foreign and therefore, intolerable. Allegiance to an ethnic group and excessive religiosity were established as alien and unacceptable, whereas pride in being Turkish, aspiration for European (and later, American) ways of life, and belief in the pillars of the republican revolution were expected from every citizen. Hence, the “internal other” of the Turkish secularists were the religious and the ethnic (and therefore, cultural). The naturalization of the modern and secular way of life was accompanied by the other-ization of different lifestyles. Such as “white” denotes the natural and therefore, nothing in particular in racial societies, “there was a tendency among secularists to view their lives as supra- or extra-cultural” (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 216). Displaying religiosity outside of certain religious holidays was a stigmatized behavior, which also characterized one’s social position.

Navaro-Yashin (2002) recounts the public anxiety resulting from the municipal elections created in the aftermath of election day, 27 May 1994, when the Welfare Party emerged as a victor in Istanbul and a majority of other cities. “The public imaginary about Islam that I untangle here, in studying the secular middle class of Istanbul, might seem to resonate with versions of Orientalist constructions of Islam, especially as articulated in contemporary Western media” (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 27). This Orientalist anxiety was mainly concerned with the continuation of secular public life in Istanbul. The most important debates in the media, as well as among the secularists were over whether or not the new occupants of city hall would continue to allow alcohol consumption in restaurants and bars, or, if they would try to confine women’s appearance in public within conservative parameters. The urban secular elite feared the continuation of its life-style, which resembled that of its European and American counterparts. The most interesting aspect was the eventuality of such anxiety. Now that the Islamists have their own government, they are still believed to be secretly plotting the end of the secular regime and it is strongly argued by some secular intellectuals that the proclamation of Shari’a is only a matter of time.

However, instead of pursuing radical politics, Islamists are today integrating themselves into a religious-consumerist culture. Today, the Islamist way of life and Islamic dispositions have gained a certain amount of legitimacy. They are catered to in “Islamist” hotels (see Bilici 2000), find representation in their own (as well as mainstream) media channels, enjoy shopping in veil stores, while keeping abreast of fashion waves through veil fashion shows (see Navaro-Yashin 2002). The republican elite continues its attempts to assert sole legitimacy, and the struggle in the field of power persists.

Through Ozal’s privatization and liberalization policies in the 1980s, Turkish economy quickly abandoned its import-substituting endeavors, and consequently, the opening up of Turkey to free market economy brought with it an upsurge of *consumerism* (Keyder 1997). The market for political identities also showed strong consumerist properties.

3. This is, I believe, manifested by a curious section in Gole’s ‘Forbidden Modern.’ A contradictory observation Gole makes in her own focus group reveals the fact that men are without a doubt makers of the veiled women’s discourse. During their discussion about how veiled women reconcile working outside the home with an Islamic lifestyle, women cannot find the “correct” answer. A man in the focus group, who happens to work for an Islamist magazine, gives the answer, which Gole notes as having changed the whole course of the discussion: He argues that women’s work outside the home is justified since this helps Islamists to spread the religious ideology to more people (Gole 1991).

4. Merve Kavakci, a popularly elected member of parliament was protested and ultimately banned from entering the parliament, and thus, was de facto banned from exercising the right of representing her constituency in the parliament on the grounds that she wore an Islamic veil and refused to remove it due to her religious convictions (also see Ozyurek 2000).

A market for “Islamist goods” came into being (Navaro-Yashin 2002). Ozal’s close ties with businessmen and his invitation to all kinds of capital, including Anatolian small businesses, who had so far been marginalized, played a great role in the process of consolidation of liberal market economy. “Following the economic and political liberalization process in the 1980s and 1990s, the new Anatolian middle class and business elites started to exert their influence in the political and economic landscape, challenging the concentration of economic interests at the center” (Kosebalaban 2004, 9). In contrast to the Welfare Party’s rhetoric, which condemned the capitalist mode of production, the rule of AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi- Justice and Development Party*) under Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s leadership is predominantly globalist. “With the rise of AKP to power, Islamists began to assert themselves as counterparts of Christian Democrats in a Muslim setting” (Kosebalaban 2004, 6). Their current pro-European Union stance, although at times met with suspicion and anxiety on the part of secularists, also manifests their will to integrate with the West. Islamists are today increasingly incorporating themselves into the center, while asserting their own values, life-styles and aspirations. Consumerism began to constitute the over-arching value in Turkish society. As Navaro-Yashin writes, “a *habitus* of consumption is thus part of the everyday life not only of Turkey’s secularists, but also, to a determining extent, that of Islamists” (2002, 112, emphasis mine).¹

The dynamism of the privately owned media contributed greatly to the rise of ethnic, religious, and sexual self-reflexivity, as well as the promotion of consumption. The monopoly of the Turkish Radio Television (TRT) had been established by law. Although independent from the state by law, TRT had always represented the voice of the state (Sahin and Aksoy 1993; Sahin 1974). TRT was the only television channel from 1968 until 1990 in Turkey. In contrast, from 1990 until 1998, 16 national, 15 regional, and 230 local television channels have been launched. In the same period, 36 national, 108 regional and hundreds of local radio stations began broadcasting (Sahin 1999, 13).

And what was incredible was how many voices there were, and how they wanted to talk about all manner of things and issues that had been repressed by the official culture. Official ‘untouchables’—Kurdish leaders, Alevis, religious leaders, veiled women, radical feminists, transvestites, homosexuals, even former secret service agents—paraded through current affairs and talk shows. Films that were banned or heavily censored in previous years were broadcast uncut. Taboo subjects were tackled in uncensored debates and discussion programmes. What had been repressed for a long time came rushing back to the surface of the culture. The new media were instrumental in bringing to consciousness the defining tensions of Turkish society, questions of ethnic origin, religion, language, and group aspirations.” (Aksoy and Robins 1997, 1949)

Islamists are not the only group asserting recognition and legitimacy. Kurdish and Alevi identities, homosexuals, transvestites and feminists have similarly become much more visible in the 1990s. Yavuz (2003) argues that the Kurds, as well as the Alevis are establishing new kinds of ethnic and religious nationalisms and demanding recognition of their cultural rights through the media. Broadcasts of MED-TV from Berlin via satellite to Turkey continue despite Turkish governments’ repeated complaints. Yavuz observes three goals in MED-TV programming: “entertainment (articulating a distinct national culture and addressing a collective memory), education (teaching Kirmanji Kurdish and promulgating the antiquity of Kurdish nationhood), and information (providing news and political debates to promote ethno-linguistic political consciousness” (2003, 193). It is clear that a wave of Kurdish nation-building is underway.

The collective memory of Turks is also rapidly being altered today. Cinar (2001) studies the celebration in 1996 of Istanbul’s conquest by Mehmet II, the Conqueror on May 29, 1453. An event not commemorated by the secular elite because of the allegiance it invokes to Ottoman rule, has been for the first time celebrated by the Islamist municipal leaders in 1996 to the protest of the secularists. Cinar argues that “these Islamist performances of history serve to construct an alternative national identity which is Ottoman and Islamic, evoking a civilization centered in the city of Istanbul, as opposed to the secular, modern Turkish Republic centered in the capital city of Ankara” (2001, 365). Ozyurek (2001) also points out numerous publications of autobiographical memoirs in the last few years, the opening of Ottoman language courses, the proliferation of old “*alaturka*” furniture in antique shops and the increasing number of people who buy and display them with pride in their homes, next to their grandparents’ pictures that they had recently taken out of a dusty chest. An increasing interest in one’s ethnic history forces the younger generations to think self-reflexively about their identities as originally Circassian, Kurd, Georgian, Albanian etc.²

A front where a critical discourse has successfully been devised is the feminist front. While Kemalist women con-

1. The prime-minister has himself been noted to have said to a German journalist in response to a question mentioning his own daughter’s education abroad because of her insistence to wear the veil: “... in addition my daughter finds the headscarf chic. She also wears it for stylish reasons” (Keese, 2005).

tinued to uphold the rhetoric which asserted that the Kemalist revolution had “liberated” women and women owed everything to it, Turkish feminism, also born in the 1980s, began to point out the limits of the revolution. “When private lives and interpersonal relationships were questioned, hierarchies and controls that had been ignored now surfaced. Sexual liberties and freedoms, once taboo, became articulated issues” (Arat 1997, 105). The civil code of 1926 was finally criticized as unegalitarian.¹ The Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation, among others, not only provided battered women with a place to stay, but also gave them the hope that it was *possible* to leave their homes and husbands if abuse became unbearable. Arat (1997) notes that the feminist movement did not feel deeply threatened by the Islamist revival of the 1980s. Arat cites Sirin Tekeli, a feminist and a well-known political scientist as saying “while I do not share your thoughts and beliefs and try to persuade other people that what you argue is not correct, I respect your turban and in fact condemn those who pressure you to take it off. What about you? Do you accept me as I am?” (Tekeli, as cited in Arat 1997, 107-108). On the other hand, Kemalist women’s rights activists continue to derive their power from the secular state. “In an unmistakable sign of their distinctive discourse, one in which they—the educated elite—know the good of the other, they comment on ‘their’ innocent people being deceived by reactionary Islamists” (Arat 1997, 109).

While Islamists are integrating themselves into mainstream culture, on the other hand, the struggle over power and legitimacy is acquiring an almost “racist” character. Veiling is an urban phenomenon, which may, among other things, be explained by an attempt to cope with cut-throat modern city living. In the 80s and 90s, the co-habitation of educated city-dwellers with modern and secular dispositions and the new urbanites has not been without conflict. The secular press is today filled with what can be called racist rhetoric such as this:

My racist feelings are reinforced in Istanbul. I feel like placing a certain kind of folk on top of a giant shovel and purge them out of the city. Lately, the idea of this huge exile has been replaced by a more modest madness since that certain crowd has grown considerably. It cannot be contained. Therefore, I now dream of saving one neighborhood. Beyoglu and its surroundings for example. I say that they shall give us this neighborhood and we shall surround it with new Istanbul fortresses and never let that kind of folk among us... Friends who have been dispersed and have been hiding in tight corners not to meet that folk would come too, we would be so good, so happy among ourselves! (Kirikkanat as cited in Bali 2002, 138-139, emphases and translation mine)

Kandiyoti notes how “Islam has been a consistent vehicle for popular classes to express their alienation from ‘Westernized’ elites. It marks the great cultural divide between the beneficiaries and casualties of the changing socio-economic order, of comprador and upper-caste bureaucratic interests versus the traditional middle-classes” (1991, 8). The struggle over political identities in Turkey since 1980s has been triggered by the anxiety of the urban, modern and secular elite over their continuing monopoly in the field of power, and the upwardly mobile Islamist segment’s aspiration for a share in that field. As Gole (2002) points out, the new Islamist actors tend to originate from recently urban backgrounds and establish their Islamist discourse within the institutions of modern education. The secular elite feels that its pillars of modernity, such as universities and the military establishment, are being threatened by an invasion of the Islamic students. Veiled students’ entry into universities gained such symbolic significance because of this struggle for monopoly over legitimacy.

As a result of increasing alienation between the secular/urban and Islamist/migrant segments of the population, a rapid suburbanization is being observed in Istanbul (Bozdogan 1997). Those who can afford to are moving outside the city, into suburbs, and gated communities that leave the unwanted masses outside. In most of these *sites*, the contrast between life inside and what remains outside is striking. While demands for recognition and freedom are being voiced ever more loudly, a dialogue between the contested identities and Kemalist dispositions is absent. In a recent discussion between columnists of the secular press, explanations have been offered for the surprising and unexplained rise of Hitler’s “*Mein Kampf*” in bestseller lists: “Ozdog makes a horrendous guess... He establishes a parallel between Germany in the 1920s and contemporary Turkey. He writes that while the military is believed to have defeated the PKK, there is a sense that the terrorist organization’s demands are being fulfilled” (Dundar 2005).²

2.Navaro-Yashin (2002) notes that such identifications can be selective. Whereas asserting oneself as a Circassian would be easier, Kurdish origins may be expressed to a lesser degree. Circassians have historically been well integrated into the mainstream culture and politics (see Ilknur 2003). Kurds, on the other hand, are associated with the PKK violence, as well as the current demands for cultural recognition.

1.As a result, some articles, such as article 152/1 which established the husband as the head of the family were changed. On January 1, 2002, the new civil code, prepared according to the principle of gender equality went into effect.

CONCLUSION

Andreas Huyssen (1986) uses the term *inner imperialism*, to refer to questions of racial and ethnic minorities and gender issues, as they relate to a particular society, that is, a nation-state. *Outer imperialism*, on the other hand, refers to the logic of modernization, that is, the belief that the Western culture is the only true and righteous civilization, and therefore, that all societies should conform to its ideals. I have argued here that the ruling elite in Turkey, in its attempt to “catch up with the West,” and reclaim the imperial grandeur it once had, has imperialized its own people. In the process, the backwardness, poverty and traditionalism of the mass population shamed the elite. As Bourdieu shows, “each taste feels itself to be natural—and so it almost is, being a habitus—which amounts to rejecting others as unnatural and therefore vicious” (1984, 56). Thus, the disgust the elite feels towards the masses is part and parcel of a “republican taste” they acquired through elite education and privileged access to production and consumption of cultural goods. In the last two decades, the gap between the elite and the disadvantaged seemed to have widened and narrowed at the same time. While on the one hand, ethnic and religious claims for recognition began to be more visible and public, on the other hand, the alienation has almost reached parameters of racism. What is today called “white Turks” continue to claim monopoly over the political and cultural structure. They continue to exercise symbolic violence over those who “do not know what is good for them,” such as the veiled women. It is necessary to accept that veiled women and Kurdish speaking people are not the enemy trying to eliminate modern Turkey, but part of the society who are in competition in the field of power.

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2. The author is referring to the harmonization laws passed by the 57th, 58th and 59th governments. Harmonization Law 6, which went into effect on July 19, 2003 includes the amendment “state-owned and private radio and television channels will be able to broadcast in languages and dialects used traditionally in the daily life of Turkish citizens,” which brings an end to the highly repressive ban on broadcast and publishing in languages other than Turkish and thus allows the use of Kurdish in the public sphere. The harmonization laws have been passed with the explicit aim of “bringing Turkish laws in line with European standards,” so that Turkey’s entry into the European Union can remain on the agenda.

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