Europe's Encounter with Islam: what Future?[*]

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1. French "Exceptionalism"?

I have not expected that European Union was going to enter in my area of interest when I have moved from Istanbul to Paris in the year 2001. It is not that European project did not matter to me until then. It did; in a similar way that it mattered to the majority of my friends and colleagues, Turkish and Kurdish intellectuals, both from secularist and religious backgrounds. At that time, our interest in Europe was mainly a Turkey-centered concern; derived from a widely shared expectation and desire that the European Union would provide a political and juridical framework to enlarge, and to enforce the institutionalization of democratic rights and freedoms in Turkey. Europe was standing, in the minds of many progressive intellectuals, for a fulfilled prophecy of secular democracy, as a stable and fix point of reference to promote the transformation of other societies. One

was not expecting Europe to be transformed and shaped with its encounter with the issues that were related with "Islam."

I was working on contemporary islam and its emerging force and visibility in public life and Turkey was my privileged terrain of observation. Turkey provided a site for studying Islamic movements in a politically pluralistic and a secularist context. The pluralism implied a field of competing forces, among political parties, social movements and "truth regimes." Islamism had to compete among these different set of ideas and powers. It was not appropriate therefore to speak of "islamization" in Turkey, as it is widely framed for other Muslim-majority countries, in the sense that Islamism was increasingly taking over political power and gaining influence in all spheres of life and imposing itself as a single truth regime.

The study of Islam in Turkey differed from other Muslim-majority countries that are under a Monarchic authoritarian rule. In some respects the place of Islam in Turkey, because of the secular legislation and a pluralistic political sphere revealed some similarities with the European contexts of pluralism. Islamic claims, and namely that of young female students to wear a headscarf in university classes, caused a long-term public confrontation with those who were holding to republican principles of secularism and feminism. When the French "headscarf debate" that has already started in the 1989, but took a new momentum and magnitude in spring 2003, I was struck by the parallelisms with the

Turkish one. The similarities between the two headscarf debates turned my attention therefore to the ways in which French Republican values of secularism and feminism were reshaped in relation to Islam and addressed against the claims for visibility of religion in the public sphere.

The Islamic headscarf debate was to be followed in France by an equally passionate and nation-wide debate on the Turkish presence in European Union and its consequences on the European values and identity. It is by means of these two debates that the presence of Islam (muslim migrants within Europe and muslims outside Europe) were brought into the forefront of public concern and carried into the arena of public awareness, meaning that it entered into the area of concern and debate for "all" citizens, and not remained solely in the hands of the decision-makers. The Islamic veiling and the Turkish candidacy have little in common, sociologically speaking. They follow different historical trajectories; the veiling issue is related with phenomenon of migration, the public schools, and gender equality. It is related with new forms of religious agency stemming from contemporary islamist movements. The Turkish membership on the other hand is an outcome of a long-term history of westernization of Turkey. It is an outcome of political determination as well as societal mobilization to conform and frame Turkish society and its future with that of European Union. The agency that underpins the Turkish membership is a secular democratic one. The scales of agencies are different; the Islamic veiling is a concern at a national level, the Turkish candidacy is debated at an intra-

national at the European scale. But there are also some bridges between the two; the Islamic veiling is debated in Turkey as well. The question of Islam is also addressed to Turkey, not only because it is a Muslim-majority country but also the government in power (AK party) is related with the islamist movements of the 1980s that were contesting the Western notions of democracy. These movements reveal the tensions between secular and religious orientations but also the ongoing debate and contestation over the definitions of space. The public schools and Europe are becoming "political spaces" to the extent that they become a battleground for the redefinition of the frontiers of inclusion and exclusion and for the contestation of established values. The question of space points to the understanding and creating of "commonness," whether it is instituted by the public schools or European Union. Creating a common space with those who are external to national and European culture becomes a question that the answer to which goes beyond the one that is provided by the framework of "integration." The intensity of the debate in the French public sphere illustrates the importance of the question, not only for "outsiders," Muslims, but also and foremost for Europeans. The ways that these two issues are anchored in public consciousness and become part of the French and/or European public debate that calls for a comparative attention.

To sum up, Islam makes it way in the public arena and public consciousness of European countries. Islam, until recently, not a major concern for those who are specialists of "European studies," at most a policy issue confined to poli-

tics of immigration, moves more and more into the center of research, public and political agendas. It is difficult today to engage a reflection upon politics of European countries or that of European Union, without reflecting upon its encounter with Islam.

As a consequence, Europe as a subject matter imposed itself to me, but by a gateway that was familiar to me. Rather then having left behind me Turkey and Islam, I was going to face and experience their presence in Europe. I had the feeling that rather than merely me making a move to France, France too has made a displacement, coming closer to the issues that were considered until then to be outside the Western boundaries, and confined to the "middle eastern" culture and geography. One has the habit of measuring for instance the Turkish *laicité* in the mirror of the French one, and reading the deficiencies and gaps with the original one. In the actual situation, one was tempted to observe the French headscarf debate in the mirror of the Turkish one. The didactic aspect of secularism (teaching how to be civilized citizens), its tendency towards authoritarianism and exclusionary politics (if necessary with the help of the military) were well known attributes of the Turkish *laicité*. But there was also the feminist alliance with secular republicanism, an intrinsic feature of Turkish secularism that was going to become also a salient feature of the French secularism in its encounter with Islam. The comparison between the two headscarf debates helped to understand the French one in new ways. One can say that from the Turkish perspective,

the French *laicité* ceases to be an "exception" and the French headscarf debate presents itself as a *déjà-vu*. (Methodologically speaking, such a reversal of the perspective has important consequences on the social scientific narration of modernity, derived from experiences of the West, supposed to be in "advance" both in terms of temporality and knowledge.)

But in return, it became more and more difficult to translate and communicate the possible meanings of the French debate to the Turkish public. My interlocutors, especially those who were secularist, liberal, feminist and pro-European have found at first, comfort and affinity in the secularist reaction of the French public to ban the headscarf from the public schools. They have interpreted this radical stance as a proof of attachment to similar notions of *laicité* and in addition as a sign of French-Turkish alliance. One finds the same celebration of the victory for Turkish secularists when the European Court of Human rights in Strasbourg decided (November 10, 2005) to support Turkey's ban on women wearing headscarves in universities.

The decision of the European court marked the end of a judicial battle that has started in 1988 when a Turkish student, named Leyla Şahin who was barred from attending Istanbul University medical school because of her headscarf, has brought her case to the European court.[1] The European court decided to uphold Turkey's ban, on the arguments that Turkey treats men and women equally and that its constitution mandates a secular society. Furthermore, it said that the notion of secularism in Turkey, which is seeking to join the

European Union, was consistent with the values underpinning the European Convention on Human Rights.

However the majority of those French intellectuals, feminists, politicians or simple citizens did not think in similar terms with the European Court. And those who were against the headscarf in the public schools of France were also against the Turkish membership in the European Union. Only for a minority among them Turkish secularism seemed to matter. This was difficult for Turks to understand. It was difficult for Europe-oriented democrats that a strong public opinion was emerging in France, mobilized around the nationalist, secularist and feminist values, and in counter distinction with migrants and Turks who were perceived as Muslim "others."

One of the arguments that one would often hear consisted of saying (and/or hoping) that French republicanism, criticized for its ethnic, race, and religious blindness, was an exception and could not be generalized to other European countries. Although French were fond of their republican and secularist values that they considered as "French exceptionalism" in the sense and they were willing to see Europe as France universalism written large, French republicanism was not only ill adopted to deal with a multi-cultural social reality but also to deal with new realities of Europe in a global context. The French referendum vote against the European Constitution (May 29, 2005) can be taken symptomatic of this inward-looking dynamics in place. Although there was no single reason that can stand for the rejection of the constitu-

tion, it translated nevertheless the fear and the resentment of the French against neo-liberal globalization, enlargement of Europe, Turkish question and muslim migrants; all reasons that made French citizens fear that their future, whether economic and political, was no longer in their hands, and being no longer, in their daily lives, *chez soi*. Dutch society, although not driven by Republican ideals felt alike. Three days later after the referendum vote in France, Dutch also rejected the European Constitution.

The two countries that have voted against the European constitution were the two countries where Islam was most debated publicly. In Netherlands, politics of multiculturalism have led, in the eyes of many, to cultural separation, and have failed to integrate muslim migrants into Dutch society. And following Theo Van Gogh's assassination by a Moroccan-origin immigrant, the Dutch public opinion expressed a stronger sense of commitment and need for defending the national values on the lines of Western culture and its sense of freedom.

The German legislative elections (September 2005) have illustrated as well the extent to which issues around Islam, immigration and Turkish membership were becoming agenda setting issues for internal politics. The leaders of the "Christian Democrat Movement" (Angela Merkel and Edmund Stoiber) have captured the public attention and sympathy by pronouncing their view overtly against the Turkish membership in EU. Similarly in France, politicians who were orienting their politics on issues of security and

taking a stand against Turkish membership (such as the actual minister of interior Nicolas Sarkozy, but also a marginal figure of nationalist right in the French political life, such as Phillipe de Villiers made himself a place by his political campaign with the maxim *non à la Turquie*) were gaining in popularity.

It is doubtful therefore to see these developments on the one hand in continuity with Republican tradition, on the other as uniquely French. Rather we can advance the idea that the claim of Universalism underpinning French Republicanism is in decline and politics of nationalism gain grounds, as in other European countries, in the face of encountering Islam.

The discourse of integration, whether it is immigrant integration to host countries or Turkish integration to Europe, does not help to frame the two-way relation in this process. The discourse of integration calls for politics that would facilitate assimilation of the newcomers to the host culture and conform to the national order. But there is no place for understanding the two-way change that is already underway shaping both Muslims and Europeans, and reducing the differences between these two categories. It is those social groups and generations that are in Europe, without hope for return, distanced from the national origins of their parents, shaped by new life-experiences, European languages, public schools and suburban districts of the European cities that claim for their public visibility. Those who are transformed by these experiences claim both for their difference and citizenship and signal the end of the problematic of *migra-*

tion. And the second and third generation young migrants do not identify themselves with their "migrant origins." The French formula *issue de l'immigration* is felt as a stigma to the extent that they are determined by their parent's condition. In that respect, Islamic identity, that some of them appropriates voluntarily, marks the distance from their national origins and expresses the wish to escape from the stigmatizations that their parents were expressing but also transmitting; such as the Algerian colonial past or Turkish first generation illiterate "guest worker."

The headscarf of young muslims exemplify the ways in which religious difference is carried into the European publics, and ceases thereby to be confined to muslim-majority nation-states, or to the "Middle Eastern" region. But in the European contexts the veiling signals a change in the sociological profiles of the migrant. The first generation of the "immigrant worker" represented the single male figure defined by the factory work and a temporary immigration. The second generation was perceived through the figure of the *beurre*, and named according to age and in relation to Arabic culture, "young male Arab." Rather than in the factory, it was in the streets that one could have visualized the second generation migrant youth with street manifestations against racism (*ne touche pas a mon pote*, "don't touch my friend" campaigns visualized with the emblem of Fatima's hand), but also being in the streets meaning without education and job opportunities. Whereas the *veil*, meant to efface the "feminity," bring migrant girls under public attention. The veil

symbolizes both the feminization and the islamization of the migrant population. The school becomes the battleground for the religious contestation, but thereby reveals the presence of migrant girls and their greater level of integration to education, compared to the previous generations. The headscarf of the young girls differs from that of the traditional woman image of the first generation, of their mothers, mostly illiterate, home and husband dependant and not educated. The daughters speak the language, whether it is French or German, they had access to public education but also to the grammar of self display and communication in public. If the traditional headscarf of the first generation muslims does not create a controversy, because it is out of public sight, and does not claim to take a seat in the schools, circulate in the urban life and participate to public sphere. Veiled girls are therefore much more integrated, and familiar with the culture and grammar of communication of the European societies. The Islam they appropriate is not a national one, but a de-nationalized one. Islam becomes a way for them of escaping the original nationalities that have little in common with their actual existences. They are re-territorialized and europeanized, but they come into public existence by turning their differences (small differences) into a public visibility, performed in everyday life by religious signs, and rituals.

The discourse on migration was based on the idea of "de-territorialization" of muslim migrants, their uprootedness, and therefore their greater exposure to alienation, cri-

me, drugs or all sorts of radicalisms, including terrorism. But it is rather the process of "re-territorialization" of the second generation that engenders conflict and confrontation. Following these lines of thought, one can ask whether French suburban youth riots can spread to other European contexts of migration, to Germany for instance. If we are inclined to answer in negative, it is not because Turks in Germany are more integrated to German society than Arabs to the French one. The ties between Germans and Turks are less forceful; there is no colonial heritage that binds them through memory but also through the language and the education system prior to waves of immigration. In other words Algerians are French in ways that Turks are not German. And furthermore Turks are not expected, neither desired to become German. The German notion of citizenship, based on the notion of blood, does not claim for the assimilation of the other, but coupled with politics of "indifference" or "cultural avoidance."

What I am arguing here is that if we can speak of French "exceptionalism," it stems paradoxically not from the distance between French and Muslims, but on the contrary because that the distance is much more abridged in France than in other European countries. The French Republicanism addresses a very high promise of integration, even that of assimilation that turns today into its contrary. Migrants and Muslims challenge the very places and vectors of integration and social mixing; the public schools, urban habitation and public life. The public school is the pillar of the

formation of a citizenship in the Republican French sense; it is in the school that individuals are taught to get distanced from their local attachments, class origins, regional accents, ethnic differences and religious convictions in order to embrace a universal knowledge and become French citizens. Apart from the schools, the urban life also contributes to the making and learning of the bonds of civility, necessary for the politics of cite. And the "laic" conception of the public sphere is thought to provide "neutrality," where in entrance particularistic identities, whether religious or ethnic should be left behind, so that a conversation among equals (but one is not equally naked or stripped of ones differences) can take place. The presence of muslims in public schools, in urban life and in the public debate carry the undesired difference into those spaces that are not only blind to difference, but also put them out of sight (as in the case of suburbans), prohibit them under law (as in the case of the headscarf) or label them as the "other," the "foreigner" (as in the case of the riots). It is not the universalist claim, but rather the equation between "Universal" and "French" that creates a problem today. It is the ways that Western self-presentation still holds to the hegemony over definitions of the "universal." As Norbert Elias pointed the French culture, among other European cultures was the one that contributed most to a Universal (French and Western) understanding of Civilization as opposed to the German notion of *Kultur*. It is also in France that this equation is most noticeably challenged in the present time, where the encounter between Islam and

Europe are displayed in the most dramatic way. The debates triggered by the Turkish candidacy to European Union exemplifies the ongoing and unresolved encounter between the two, revealing the importance of the stakes that surpass the Turkish question and touches the European future.

2. "Identifying" Europe is "Othering" Turkey?

It was a widely shared feeling for Turks that Turkey in joining European Union was to accomplish, somewhat naturally, the long historical course of Westernization process that has started in the late 19th century. The European ideals have already shaped Ottoman reformist intellectuals, "young ottomans" and *jeunes turcs*, formed by the influence of the French positivist thought and Jacobin tradition prior to the Republican era. The foundation of the Turkish nation State under the leadership of Atatürk in 1923 can be read as a culmination of this process, but a radical step, almost as a civilisational shift, as a way of turning away from the heritage of the Ottoman Empire to embrace a "new life" and a new nationhood that will make part of "civilized nations."

However from the point of view of European nations, the Turkish integration with the European Union, although a process that was welcomed by European politicians in the past, and started with the economic "Ankara agreement" in 1963, did not seem to be that natural from the prism of the present-day politics. Turkish candidacy became the most controversial issue, since the meeting of the European Council in Copenhagen (12 December 2002) to decide the

calendar for opening negotiations with Turkey. The debate started in France where unlike Germany, the Turkish immigrant population is not a major issue. It is the words of Giscard d'Estaing, the ancient president of the French Republic and the president of the Convention on the Future of Europe, that have initiated the debate on the entry of Turkey in bringing the argument of "difference" on the public agenda and saying that "Turkey is not a European country, its capital is not in Europe" and it makes part of those countries that make part of "another culture, another way of life" and its integration will mark "the end of Europe." His arguments made their way in the public opinion, found echo among politicians, intellectuals and journalists, independent of their prior political views and differing convictions on other subjects. Turkish issue ended up reshuffling political alliances and creating a new consensus among those who were until then in opposing camps and blurred the very deep divide among the left and the right in France. The number of articles published in the newspapers, the panels on television, the public spokespersons, and the books on turkey witnessed the intensity and the longevity (still on the agenda) of the debate that was carried into different spheres of public life, opening up a new market for publication and communication, but also for making politics. The boundaries of the public incessantly expanded from the mass media discussions, newspaper articles, and social scientific conferences to every day life conversations taking place in market places, at dinner tables, and among neighbours or strangers.

The arguments against the Turkish membership in the European Union did not remain the same. The Turkish agenda of the 1970's were mainly determined by the violation of human rights, the repression of the Kurdish nationalism, the influence of the military power in Turkish political life, the Cyprus discord with the Greece and the official denial of Armenian genocide. But the controversy, although including some of those questions into the debate, was not triggered in relation to those questions that can be considered making part of the "Turkish problem file." On the contrary, the debate started when the Turkish file was getting thinner, that is when Turkey has started, as observers would put it, "to do her homework," that is to resolve some of the problems in her file and hence become eligible for European membership. When Turkey started to get closer to European criteria of democracy that the arguments against Turkish membership were to become articulated, and expressed in offensive not to say aggressive tones, to the surprise of the Turkish pro-European democrat publics.

One of the new arguments concerned the question of European territory. Turkey did not make part of European geography, let alone history, and threatened in the eyes of many, the unity of Europe in geographical terms, representing an unlimited enlargement of frontiers. "Why not Morocco, and why not Russia" were among the widely used arguments to denote the "absurdity" of Turkish membership. Including Turkey would have meant expanding the European borders towards the East, and becoming neighbours with those unwanted, risk-countries. Another line of

argument concerned more economic factors, and basically the impoverishment of Europe by the already recent new comers to Europe. Turkey appeared as a burden that Europe would not be capable of including into its system (both economic but also political wise, Turkish members in the European parliament were scared to outweigh in numbers) without a high cost. Above all, Turkey was not a small country, and bringing more than 50 million "Muslims" into Europe would make a difference.

The debate on Turkish membership became a concern for all, when it started to become a concern for definitions of European frontiers, values and future. Turkey became a catalyst, but also the "other" for self-definition of what was to be defined as a European. In that sense "othering" Turkey became a way of "identifying" Europe. The need for an *altérité* to define European identity was integrated into political discourse of those sceptical of the Turkish membership in Europe. Turkey entering to Europe would mean, as a Dutch commissioner for the European Union (Frits Bolkestein) argued prior to entry talks with Turkey, forgetting the date of 1683, when the siege of Vienna was lifted and the Ottoman army was defeated. (One legend is that the *croissant* was invented in Vienna to celebrate the defeat of the Turkish siege of the city, as a reference to the crescent on the Turkish flags.) Hence the memory of the past entered into the present-day cleavages and controversies. The objection of Austria, until the very last minute, to the opening of negotiations with Turkey (October 3, 2005) had something to do with the past mem-

ories. (Austria agreed to remove her objections under the condition that Croatia also began membership talks.)

The opening of talks with Turkey is an important date, but does bring to an end neither the public debate nor the process of integration that will take decades. One should notice an important shift that has occurred in European politics and transferred the power of decision makers to that of opinion makers. The issues related with the European Union were mainly in the hands of Eurocrates and resolved in Brussels moved to national publics and became part of a societal debate. The idea of popular sovereignty that is extended and juxtaposed from nation-State politics to European Union illustrates this shift. The idea of a democratic Europe came to mean building Europe from below and foremost the necessity of consulting people, and therefore a consensus on the need for referendums, whether to vote for European constitution or for Turkish membership. The idea of referendum on Turkey, as one could expect, is mostly defended by opponents to Turkish candidacy, counting on the popular vote for its rejection in ten years time.

3. The Working of the European Perspective in Turkey

Ten years time seems sufficiently long to Turks to transform in the meantime their societies accordingly. In ten years time, according to some Turkish democrat intellectuals, Turkey will achieve the level of democratic stability and the rejection of Turkey by referendums in the European

countries will not matter that much and have a drastic effect. In a way, the optimists would think that the presence of European perspective would have fulfilled its role. Such an argument might sound as a wishful thinking or as a way of de-dramatizing the European anti-Turkish attitudes, but it illustrates also the confidence of Turkish intellectuals on the dynamics of the European perspective in Turkey, already at work.

The European perspective forced Turkey to introduce a reformation of the republican definitions of citizenship in order to be in harmony with democratic and pluralistic definitions of ethnical, political, religious and individual rights. Turkish republicanism as the nation-state ideology has been founded on two pillars: secularism and nationalism, referred as Kemalism (the name of the founding father of the Republic, M. Kemal Ataturk). But these principles also were coupled with monoculture definitions of society, giving rise to anti-democratic interpretations of these principles, namely authoritative secularism and assimilative nationalism. The working of the European project in Turkey meant the dismantling of the authoritarian and assimilative nature of Republicanism.

I'll select four concrete examples to illustrate the ways in which the Turkish society is overcoming, the authoritarian tendencies, breaking down taboo subjects and getting into a similar wavelength, not without inner tension and confrontation, with European democracies.

1. The first tension inbred into Turkish political system is between authoritarian secularism and democracy. We can

speak of a vicious circle, that can be seen in many other
muslim countries that were engaged with values of secula-
rism and modernity, but at the expense of democratic plura-
listic politics. Secular reforms were implemented in the
1920s mainly by means of single-party authoritarian rules.
An opening of a democratic space usually profits to those
who were excluded and namely to muslim groups searching
for public recognition and political representation. To pro-
tect the secular State and the principles of the Republic, the
military power does not mind putting democracy into brac-
kets. (Algerian parliamentary elections in 1992 is a dramatic
example of such a dilemma; The Islamic Salvation Front
[FIS] had the electoral victory, but the army dissolved the
parliament and cancelled the elections in order to prevent
Muslim fundamentalists having access to power.) The Tur-
kish army stands to be the guardian of the secular Republic
and therefore the military power occupies a central position
in the political life. For democratization, there is a need to
create a consensual "secularism," and not an exclusionary,
authoritarian one. This is possible only if there is a democra-
tic space, shared both by religious and secular; the first giv-
ing up the absolutism of the religious truth-regime, and the
latter giving up its claims of hegemony over the society. The
party of Justice and Development, the Ak party, who had is-
lamic roots gained November 2002 general elections by de-
mocratic means and came to power in Turkey. We can speak
of a building-up of a democratic consensus between secular
and religious publics, through an interactive process that

transformed both parties. In that respect, what Jurgen Habermas (in his talk on "Religion in the Public Sphere" in New School, November 2005) described as a cognitive precondition for a religious-secular dialogue, is engaged in Turkey. And furthermore, rather than a mere discursive debate and a dialogue between two supposedly fix identities between the religious and the secular, the interaction transforms and opens up a new intermediate spaces for self-definition and democracy.

In spite of the ongoing cleavages and conflicts, between hard-line islamists and secularist establishment, one has to witness that Turkish society experienced, especially during the last two decades, a "fall of the wall" that have separated and divided two Turkey's; one composed of educated urban and west-looking secularist upper and middle classes (labeled in the conversations as "white turks") and the other faith-driven lower middle classes ("black turks" Ismet Ozel, a well known poet, has considered muslims in Turkey as "Turkey's blacks") originating from Anatolian towns. The course of upward social mobility changed the life-trajectories of many of those belonging to the latter group (turned them into "grey" meaning partially whitened) who have had access to high education in the 1960s with emigration to urban cities, profited from new market opportunities that expanded in the 1980s and invested in the avenues of political power since the electoral victory of the Party of Justice and Development. The thinning of the wall between two faces of Turkey brought different publics and cultural codes in close

contact and interaction, albeit with intense conflict, yet transforming the mutual conceptions of muslim and secular publics and limiting the claims of hegemony of the latter. During the last two decades, the frontiers between the two publics became more porous and lead spokespersons of muslim, leftist, liberal movements to engage in public debates, to participate in round-tables, but also to cross the borders and address themselves to each others public. Well known public intellectuals from the leftist movement started to write in conservative religious or radical islamic newspapers (in "Zaman" or in "Yeni Safak"), while those from islamic movement turn their attention to secular publics and media (as in the case of Ahmet Hakan, the popular anchorman of the Islamic local television, who became a columnist in the secular mainstream daily *Hürriyet*). Such success-driven trans-public crossings were unthinkable in the 1980s; it helped to establish bridges of dialogue between divided publics, and created a new mental space for thinking and linking two faces of Turkey, secular and muslim in a more interactive way, that generates transformation and not mere hybridism.

The democratic sphere gained a momentum to the extent that the polarization between the secularist and islamist publics was played down, leading to an intermediary space of debate and representation. The European perspective reinforced the democratic momentum and created a new political agenda of reform. The mobilization of human rights movements in civil society, the formation of a public opi-

nion in favor of these reforms and the determination of the government and the political classes, all culminated in a series of reforms that were passed by the parliamentary vote during the course of 2002-2003 in order to harmonize the Turkish legal system with what is called to be the Copenhagen criteria.

2. One major example is the abolition of death penalty; a widely shared societal value in Europe, in counter-distinction with the American society. The Turkish Parliament voted in favor of the abolishment of death penalty (August 2, 2002), a first in a Muslim country. The repercussions it had for Turkey was far more than expressing the desire to embrace European values or just to please Europeans, as cynical observers would think. The project of abolishment of capital penalty deepened the political divide and confrontation with extreme-right nationalists because it came to be related with a more fundamental problem that is the Kurdish question. At the time the death penalty was discussed the leader of the Kurdish movement was in prison under death sentence. The death penalty would not have gained the prominence that it has had, it not been for the fact that it was related with the Kurdish issue and concerned the fate of jailed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan, responsible for terrorist acts. But it had. In spite of the nationalist's objections, the law passed in the parliament with the help of increasing public voices of those who argued in favor of the abolishment of the capital punishment, including the sentence passed on Ocalan and for the recog-

nition of Kurdish rights in Turkey. It meant to be a victory of
reformists against nationalists. The Turkish skeptics dis-
missed these reforms that they have considered on "paper"
and as "cosmetic," that is superficial.

3. The third crucial moment I want to highlight is when
the Turkish parliamentary voted (on March 1, 2003) denied
the United States its request to attack Iraq from Turkish soil.
Such a rupture of alliance with the American politics in the
Iraq war was unexpected and meant to be a turning-point in
the Turkish-American relations. There was no majority
vote, and the outcome of the parliamentary vote represented
the divide that many Turkish citizens felt inside themselves;
they have thought this war to be an unjust one, but they fea-
red to harm the alliance with the United-States. Besides the
anti-war manifestations were in the same wave length with
European peace movements. They were movements mobili-
zed in favor of peace rather than around arguments of reli-
gious fraternity. Turkey long term ally of the United States
and candidate for membership in European Union found
herself in the divide between the two, at the fracture betwe-
en the two West, appeared during the Iraq war. The Europe-
an powers did not read the Turkish refusal of alliance with
the American politics as a sign of sharing "European peace
sensibility" or maturation of democracy. The Arab intellec-
tuals did; Turkey gained respectability in their eyes to the
extent that it articulated a decision autonomous from the
American politics and foremost it relied on its public opi-
nion and parliamentary power to say no to American poli-

tics; difficult they have thought would it be for many Arab countries and their rulers to counter the American requests by a parliamentary vote. Europeans however missed the democratic aspect of the decision. They have suspected Turkey to have a hidden agenda to invade the North of Iraq, and control the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish State and power. My point here is not to judge the plausibility of such arguments, although retrospectively speaking appears to be untrue, but to point out to the deficiency of European politics to hear and support the emerging democratic voices and thereby dismiss the very impact of European values of democracy.

4. The fourth and last topic that I select to highlight the stakes of democracy in Turkey concerns the Armenian question that represents still a major taboo for Turkish nationalism. The official view of the past is based on the suppression and the denial of the 1915 genocide that created a sort of forced short-memory and diffused amnesia of the past for the generations of the Republic. Therefore there are two aspects of the problem. One question is remembering the past and the second is developing and expressing points of view that are independent of the official one. The choice of words to label the events, whether it is deportation, ethnic cleansing, massacres or genocide is becoming a battle ground for the public debate that begins to start, albeit under the nationalist pressure and juridical intimidation. The debate is initiated by few Turkish intellectuals, historians, including that of the Armenian community who challenged the ideological version of

the events, defying the taboos of Turkish nationalism and exploring new ways of relating to emotional trauma of Armenians and developing a new narrative on the historical past. In that respect, the Istanbul conference signaled a new period. The conference brought together Turkish historians who wanted to pursue a free discussion on the Armenian past of Turkey, in spite of pressures and postponement, were at last held at Bilgi University in September 2005. It marked a collective effort to break away from the official discourse and to confront the Turkish nationalism with its own past.

Alongside these historically constructed points of view that challenge the established ideology, there are also voices and images that bring forth the past memory, and engage a process of remembering. I think of the postal-cards exhibition in Istanbul illustrating the lives of Armenians all over Turkey prior to events. The autobiographical book written by a woman human rights lawyer, Fethiye Çetin, "My Grandmother" (*anneannem*) and published in Istanbul in 2004, is another breakthrough in the public consciousness. She tells the story of her discovery of her grandmother as Armenian. The writer following her grandmother's life, gives an account of the past events, breaks the silence on the subject, but also brings for many other people, the possibility of remembering and discovering their Armenian ascendance.

The presence of European perspective in Turkey works against the identity knots as it dismantles national myths. It is not a linear, peaceful and once for all settled process, it is an ongoing process and battle. In the eyes of many hard-

liner nationalists and secularists (*laïcards*), European project in forcing Turkey in the direction of democratization and demilitarization, endangers the stability of the country, opening up a gate for escalating demands of Kurdish nationalists, religious fundamentalists and the claims of Armenian Diasporas.

I am trying not to argue therefore for a problem-free society but on the contrary illustrate, by means of concrete but significant cases, the ways in which Turkish society names the problems it faces, tries to bring into public awareness those subjects that were kept out of sight, repressed or forgotten and frames them politically. The crimes of honor follow the same political pattern; that is it is by the help of feminist organizations that the issue is brought into public attention, calling for new legislation. It is rather the "way" of politicizing the issues, carrying them from silenced arenas (silenced whether by shame, or repression) and giving them plurality of voice and visibility in the public sphere that I describe the existence of a democratic pattern.

In France, a debate on the legitimacy of the Turkish membership, as I have argued, started the moment Turkey accomplished to a great extent the requirements, getting closer to standards set by European Union. Once again one should note that it is the proximity, the encounter between the two which is the source of conflict, and controversy. Turkish membership triggered an anxiety of loss and a desire for boundary maintenance. The question of geographic frontiers, civilisational belongings, religious differences,

past memories all themes entered into the debate as a constellation of insurmountable differences and set a new agenda. Europe, until then an affair left in the hands of Eurocrates, made its way to a public societal debate, re-composing the political and intellectual arena independent of left-right, secular-religious, liberal-republican, feminist-conservative divisions. Identifying Europe meant "other-ing" Turkey. Throughout these debates, Europe is cons-tructed as an identity defined by shared history, common cultural values rather than as a project for the future. It is in contexts outside the core countries of Europe (for instance in Spain, Portugal and Greece) that Europe appears as a pro-ject and has the power of induction of democratization. In Turkey where Europeanness is not part of a "natural" histor-ical legacy, it is appropriated voluntarily as a political pro-ject, as a perspective, promising a democratic frame for rethinking commonness and difference.

To sum, Turkish candidacy reveals the difference be-tween Europe perceived as a project in distinction with Eu-rope as an identity. For the European countries there is no difference but continuity between the two: European Union is the European identity written large. Secondly Islamic presence in Europe reveals the tensions between Universal-ism of Europe and Judaeo-Christian legacy. The European claims for universalism and its limits are tested and defied by Turkish membership as well as by muslim migrants within Europe.

4. Europe as a Novel Experience?

Islam becomes an agenda-setting issue both for different national politics and countries of Europe, and for the European Union itself. Obviously, the intersections between Europe and islam is not a new phenomena; there is a deep rooted, long and connected history of exchanges, wars, colonization and waves of immigration that have profoundly shaped in different periods, the relations between muslims and Europeans; including their traumas. But yet, there is something novel in the contemporary mode of encounter between the two, including the ways the old memories, come out in the present day discourses.

In the present day, there is a two-way interactive relation between Islam and Europe and it is the proximity between the two that engenders conflict. Neither Islam nor Europe presents itself as a homogeneous entity. But rather on stressing the inner differences, I emphasized the processes of interaction through which both are transformed. It is the problematic zones of contact between the two that I wanted to bring to attention. The frontiers are considered to be both zones of contact and separation between different neighbor populations. But precisely because the European experience means the weakening or effacement of these frontiers that the process can be understood as "interpenetrations" (the title of my book in French) between Muslims and Europeans. However this does not imply a peaceful and non-violent process. The asymmetry of desires underpins the encounter between the two and fuels the emotions; pas-

sion, fear, irrationality, anger, and hate become the ingredients of the debate and the conflict.

Although the Islamic headscarf, Turkish membership or more recently suburban riots in France are radically different in scale, encompassing national, European and local scales, originating from different historical trajectories, colonization and westernization and present different political problems, yet each carry the issues that were until then considered to be external and foreign to the Western site, into the center of their public agendas. Muslims make their entry into European public agenda in different ways; whether they claim for their religiosity (as in the case of the headscarf movement), for European membership (as in the case of Turkish candidacy) or for their citizenship (as in the case of suburban youth). By means of religious signs or secular riots, muslim migrants make their way into the center of public attention. It is by performing their differences that they become "visible" and disturbing to the public eye. They "force" their entry into spaces that were reserved to European "white" citizens. Muslims in Europe imply the breakdown of boundaries that used to maintain the civilizational, national or urban divide.

The novelty of the experience originates from the very location of this encounter:

   a) Europe is the place where the conversation and the
      confrontation take place in proximity of each other,
      and in the present time. The comfort of geographical
      distance is lost. In that respect, the "old" Europe is

becoming a site of novel experience where we can no longer speak of two distinct and separate civilizations in time and in space.

b) Neither can it be traced solely at the political level of decision-makers, governments and nation-states. It becomes a public affair, meaning a concern for all. But the publicity refers also to an emerging problem, a process that carries ideas, opinions from the private, interior, personal to an outspoken, shared, circulated public idea. In that sense, we can speak of a growing public awareness of Islamic presence in Europe.

c) The encounter between Europe and Islam is a two way relation that transforms both sides, both European and muslim self-presentations.

d) The project of European Union brings and reinforces a transnational aspect of connectivity.

e) And last but not least, the naming of self and the other becomes a crucial and decisive matter that will define the outcome of this process. The ways in which Europe and Islam will connect to each other, create hyphenated identities or on the contrary dress boundaries of separation, will be decisive for the future of "European Islam," "French-Muslims" or "Euro-Turks."

Note

1. The European Court of Human Rights was set up in Strasbourg in 1959 to deal with alleged violations of the 1950 European Conven-

tion on Human Rights. Recognition of the right of individual application was, however, optional and it could therefore be exercised only against those States which had accepted it. Turkey ratified the right for individual applications from Turkish citizens to the European Commission of Human Rights in 1987; the compulsory judicial power of the European Court of Human Rights was recognized in 1989. Turkey ranks first amongst countries with the highest numbers of applications to the Court.