"Ethnicization of Islam" and Headscarved Dutch-Turkish Students' Identity Politics in the Netherlands: The Case of Amsterdam

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ABSTRACT

Since the mid-2000s, the complex relationship between migration and religion (Islam) at the axis of identity politics in Western Europe has received an increasing academic attention. This article, based on the first-hand data gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 headscarf-wearing Dutch students of Turkish origins in Amsterdam, aims to explore the quest for the recognition of new Muslim woman identity with the headscarf in the Dutch context in the aftermath of 9/11 and the murder of the film director Theo van Gogh in 2004 by disassociating Islam and Turkish culture and themselves as "conscious and active believers" from traditional first-generation Turkish women. The contention is that in the process of ethnicization of Islam in the Netherlands, the headscarf is the main statement through which newly emerging identity politics of the headscarved Muslim Dutch students of Turkish origin in Amsterdam is expressed.

Keywords: Headscarf, Islam, Identity, The Netherlands, Muslim Migrants

"İslamın Etnikleşmesi" ve Başörtülü Türk-kökenli Hollandalı Öğrencilerin Kimlik Politikası: Amsterdam Örneği

ÖZET

Kimlik politikası ekseninde göç ve İslam arasındaki karmaşık ilişki, özellikle 2000'li yılların ortasından itibaren artarak ilgi çeken akademik bir mesele olmuştur. Amsterdam'da başörtülü Türk kökenli Hollandalı öğrencilerle derinlemesine mülakatlara dayanan bu makalenin amacı, 11 Eylül 2001 olayı ve yönetmen Theo Van Gogh'un 2004'te öldürülmesi sonrasında Hollanda'da, başörtüsü üzerinden İslam'ın kültürel bir olgu olarak yaşanmasına karşı çıkarak "bilinçli ve aktif" özneler olduğunu savunmalarıyla birinci nesil Müslüman kadınlardan kendilerini ayrıştırmayı hedefleyen yeni Müslüman kadın kimliğinin tanınması için sergilenen talebi ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmada, Avrupa'da "İslamın etnikleşmesiyle", Amsterdam'daki Türk-Müslüman diaspora örneğinde, Müslüman kadınların kimlik politikalarını başörtüsü üzerinden dillendirdikleri iddia edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Başörtüsü, İslam, Kimlik, Hollanda, Müslüman Göçmenler

> *And in the postcolonial era, the immigration of Muslims into Europe as guest-workers, residents, and citizens has posed new challenges and possibilities of identity formation. Muslims, the citizens of Europe's various nation-states and Europe itself now have the opportunity to rethink their identities and mold new ones.[1]*

Introduction

Since the mid- 2000s, the complex relationship between migration and religion (Islam) at the axis of identity politics in Western Europe has received an increasing academic attention.[2] This can be attributed to the confrontation between Western and Islamic culture due to continuing stay of first-generation immigrants who were regarded as temporary labour force and the rising claims of Muslims in Europe, particularly European-born ones, to be treated as citizens.[3] In fact this confrontation concerning Muslim residents in Western European countries can be explained by the newly emerging identity politics in relation to Islam's becoming a globalized religion less linked to culture.[4] Whereas the first-generation Muslim immigrants defined their identities in "religio-national terms", the second and third-generation constructed their identities in "exclusively religious terms"; they no longer defined themselves as Turkish or Moroccan Muslims but as Muslims.[5] According to Oliver Roy, Islam's losing its ties with territory (being deterritorialized) has resulted in the questioning of what Muslim identity refers to in this new context. Referring to Yunas Samad who claims that there have been processes of identity constructions based on the "new ethnicities" emerging from marginalization in the Western European countries where integration policies have failed[6], Bassam Tibi calls this change as the "ethnicization of Islam in Muslim diaspora" in parallel to re-ethnicization of European people.[7] At this point, there emerges a quest for Muslim identity politics because they no

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1   Nezar AlSayyad, "Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: On the Discourses of Identity and Culture", Nezar AlSayyad and M. Castells (eds.), *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam. Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*. Lanham, Lexington Books, 2002, p.19.

2   Bassam Tibi, "Muslim Migrants in Europe: Between Euro-Islam and Ghettoization", N. AlSayyad and M. Castells (eds.), *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam. Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*. Lanham, Lexington Books, 2002, p.32; Jocelyne Cesari, "Muslim Identities in Europe: the snare of exceptionalism", Aziz Al-Azmeh and Effie Fokas (eds.), *Islam in Europe. Diversity, Identity and Influence*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007; Yunas Samad, "Diasporas, Identity and Belonging in the Global City", Gerry Boucher and Annette Gristed (eds.), *Transnationalism in the Global City*, Deusto Digital, 2012, p.13-26; Fiona Adamson, "Engaging or Contesting the Liberal State? 'Muslim' as a Politicised Identity Category in Europe", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 37, No.6, 2011, p.899-915.

3   AlSayyad, "Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam", p.9.

4   Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam: the Search for a New Ummah*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004.

5   Bhikhu Parekh, *European Liberalism and the Muslim Question*, Amsterdam University Press, Leiden, 2008, p.6. See also Adamson, "Engaging or Contesting the Liberal State?", p.902.

6   Yunas Samad, "Ethnicization of Religion", Yunas Samad and Kasturi Sen (eds.), *Islam in the European Union*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2007, p.164-166.

7   Tibi argues that the existence of a ghetto Islam such as *banlieues* in France or *Parallelgesellschaften* in Germany points to the ethnicization of Islam in Europe. Bassam Tibi, "Ethnicity of

longer feel affiliated to the culture of their ethnic origin. "Globalized ummah"[8] becomes an ethnicized community on which constructed identity rests.[9] A complimentary shift is in Islam's position from a private and ethnic matter to evolving into an identity which is publicly performed especially through the bodily practices.[10]

One such recent and very hotly debated identity issue in the Western European context is the headscarf affair where headscarved Muslim women demand recognition of their "new Muslim identity" in the process of the "ethnicization of Islam". After the ban in France in 2004, debates on the headscarf have prevailed in varying tones from Turkey to France, from Austria to Germany, from the Netherlands to the United Kingdom.[11] While some countries like France and Turkey applied prohibitive legislation, the Netherlands appropriated accommodating rules regarding the headscarf.[12] As S. Rosenberger and B. Sauer argue, the use of gendered frame referring to gender equality is the common feature of most of the concerning debates.[13] Here a "victimization frame" which considers the headscarf against gender equality and is based on an image of Muslim woman with a headscarf as the passive and oppressed subject who is in need of liberation prevailed.[14] Indeed, the headscarf has multiple meanings in different settings and the contention of this article is that, in the process of ethnicization of Islam in the Netherlands, the headscarf stands as the symbol of the newly emerging identity politics of the headscarved Muslim Dutch students of Turkish origin in Amsterdam.

In this article, based on the first-hand data gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 headscarf-wearing Dutch students of Turkish origins in Amsterdam, the goal is to explore the newly emerging identity politics with the headscarf

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Fear? IslamicMigration and the Ethnicization of Islam in Europe", *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 10, No.1, 2010, p.127.

8   Roy, "Globalized Islam".

9   Tibi, "Ethnicity of Fear?", p.131.

10 Nilüfer Göle, "Islamic Visibilities and Public Sphere", Nilüfer Göle and L. Ammann (eds.) *Islam in Public Turkey, Iran, and Europe*, İstanbul, İstanbul Bilgi University Press, 2006, p.7; Tijl Sunier, "Constructing Islam: Places of Worship and the Politics of Space in the Netherlands", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol.13, No.3, 2005, p.324.

11 For discussions on the headscarf in Europe, see Eirini Avramopolou, Gül Çorbacıoğlu and Maria Eleonora Sanna, "Thinking Through Secularism. Debates on the Muslim Veil in Europe", S. Rosenberger and B. Sauer (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Gender. Framing and Regulating the Veil*, London and New York, Routledge, 2012, p.37-54.

12 Leila Hadj-Abdou *et.al.*, "The Limits of Populism. Accommodative Headscarf policies in Austria, Denmark and Netherlands", S. Rosenberger and B. Sauer (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Gender. Framing and Regulating the Veil*, London and New York, Routledge, 2012, p.132; Doutje Lettinga and Sawitri Saharso, "The Political Debates on the Veil in France and the Netherlands: Reflecting National Integration Models?", *Comparative European Politics*, Vol.10, No.3, 2012, p.333.

13 Sieglinde Rosenberger and Birgit Sauer, "Framing and Regulating the Veil: An Introduction", S. Rosenberger and B. Sauer (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Gender. Framing and Regulating the Veil*, London and New York, Routledge, 2012, p.2.

14 Rikke Andreassen and Doutje Lettinga, "Gender and Gender Inequality in European National Narratives", S. Rosenberger and B. Sauer (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Gender. Framing and Regulating the Veil*, London and New York, Routledge, 2012, p.32.

in the Dutch setting in the aftermath of 9/11 and "war on terror by disassociating Islam from Turkish culture and themselves as "conscious and active believers" from traditional first-generation Turkish women. Although Netherlands appropriates an accommodative approach toward the headscarf, it constitutes an interesting case to understand the rise of identity claims by the headscarved Dutch students of Turkish origins in such a "tolerant" yet tensioned European country particularly after the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004 by a Dutch-Moroccan Islamic fundamentalist, Mohammed Bouyeri. It is argued that in the case of Turkish Muslim diaspora in Amsterdam, Muslim women's identity politics has been pursued by the headscarf in the process of "ethnicization of Islam". In this article I employ the term "ethnicization of Islam" to denote the process in which "truly practised Islam's" has become the determining ethnic marker in identity formation of headscarved Dutch students of Turkish origin through relegating Turkish culture blended with traditional practise of Islam by the first-generation.

The following part of the article will provide a short background to understand the mentioned shifts in the identity claims of Muslims living in the Netherlands and Islam's ethnicization in that context. Then, after introducing the research on which the article is based on, findings of the research concerning the construction of new Muslim woman identity through the headscarf will be explored. It is hoped that this article will help to have a different perspective towards the complex issue of gendered Muslim identity in the Western European context by projecting on how the headscarf is employed in a highly Muslim populated European country, the Netherlands.[15] By doing so, this article will contribute to international relations discipline a) by pointing to the effects of migration and diaspora politics on global governance at the axis of the role of religion –here Islam- and gender – here Muslim women- in identity formation,[16] and b) by providing a case study for the discussions in the newly emerging issue of national and/or transnational identity and identity politics in international relations theory.[17]

> It may be surprising that at the turn of the millennium, the scarf –an unintended symbol of Islam – can elicit such strong reactions within nations at the far eastern and western sides of the European continent.[18]

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15 Following France with 10 percent of its population consisting of Muslims, the Netherlands has the second-highest percentage of Muslim population in Europe with about one million Muslim people out of a total population of 16.7 million in July 2012 (www.cbs.nl, April 17, 2013). It should be noted that these statistics are not concrete because they are not based on religious self-identification. Rather these figures are drawn on the basis of statistics of country of origin. Approximately, 73 % of all Muslims in the Netherlands have origins either in Turkey (392,923) or in Morocco (362,954) (www.cbs.nl, *Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics*, July 2012).

16 For the relationship between religion, identity and global governance, see Patrick James (ed.), *Religion, Identity, and Global Governance: Ideas, Evidence and Practice*, University of Toronto, Toronto, 2011.

17 For the issue of identity in international relations see Patricia M. Goff and Kevin C. Dunn, *Identity and Global Politics. Empirical and Theoretical Elaborations*, New York, Palgrave, 2004; Mathias Albert, David Jacobson, Yoseph Lapid (eds). *Identities, Border, Orders. Rethinking International Relations Theory*, University of Minesota Press, London, 2001.

18 AlSayyad, "Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam", p.9.

The Setting

W. A. Shadid mentions three periods to understand the public and political discourses on migration and Islam in the Netherlands. These are the period of negligence (1960s-1970s), the period of awareness and ethnicization of Islam (1980s-1990s), and the period of stigmatization and exclusion (1990s-2000s).[19] The recruitment of labour migrants in the 1960s started after the Second World War to fulfil the needs of labour market in a period of social and economic restructuring. Until the mid-1970s immigration was conceived temporary in nature and migrants or "guest-workers" were thought in relation to their national origin as Turks, Moroccans, or Tunisians. At that time, Islam was considered as the "cultural baggage" of immigrant labourers and it was not paid so much attention.[20] Over time, with family reunification and family formation, migrants began to take up permanent residence and the increasing number of resident migrant people pointed to the significance of the Muslim presence in the West and forced policy-makers to take them account.[21]

Following the realization that migrants were becoming permanent residents, the period of growing awareness and ethnicization of Islam started from the beginning of the 1980s in the Netherlands. The aim was to integrate immigrants into Dutch society on a group-basis which did not threaten the preservation of immigrants' own identities. This immigration and integration policy called a multicultural model was designed to grant basic rights to immigrants to live according to their own cultural backgrounds. Hereafter, immigrants are no longer considered within the economic category but within the cultural category.[22] In the 1980s, the ethnic backgrounds such as Moroccans or Turks began to be associated with Islam. The Muslim identity was based on "being immigrant and being outsider" and a specific image of Islam (passive, anti-modern, articulated with rural habits) dominated public discourse as an explanatory factor in terms of economic and social problems they had. [23]

In the 1990s, particularly due to the rise of right-wing political movement under the leadership of Frits Bolkestein, leader of the liberal *VVD* (People's Party for Freedom

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19 W. A. Shadid, "Public Debates over Islam and the Awareness of Muslim Identity in the Netherlands", *European Education*, Vol. 38, No.2, 2006, p. 12.

20 Tijl Sunier and M. Van Kuijeren, "Islam in the Netherlands", Y. Haddad (ed.) *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.144.

21 See F. J. Buijs and J. Rath, J., *Muslims in Europe: The State of Research*, report prepared for the Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 2002; Jocelyne Cesari, "Muslim Minorities in Europe: The Silent Revolution", John Esposito and F. Burgart (eds). *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in the Middle East and in Europe*, Piscataway, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 2003; Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, and I. Qurqmaz, "Muslims in the West: A Select Bibliography", *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, Vol.11, No.1, 2000; J. S. Nielsen, *Towards a European Islam*, London, Macmillan, 1999.

22 Han Entzinger, "The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism: The Case of the Netherlands", C. Joppke and E. Morawska (eds.), *Towards Assimilation and Citizenship: Immigrants in Liberal Nation-states*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003; Sunier and Van Kuijeren, "Islam in the Netherlands", p.147-8.

23 Sunier, "Constructing Islam", p.322-3.

and Democracy), the multiculturalist policy began to be questioned. Bolkestein believed that the policy of the 1980s, aiming at "integration with conservation of the immigrants' own cultural identity', undermined the achievements of Western culture because "most immigrants are Muslims and Islam is hostile to central liberal values such as separation of church and state and freedom of expression".[24] In 2000, Paul Scheffer, a publicist linked to the Labour Party, also argued that multiculturalism in the Netherlands turned into a "multicultural drama" due to the problematic integration of migrants.[25] His critique of the multiculturalist society and Dutch policies facilitated the existing discussions on immigration and integration.[26] The attacks of 9/11 on New York and Washington D.C. and the murder of populist politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002 added to these critiques and led to a reconsideration of the policies regarding immigration and integration.[27] The subsequent murder of Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh by an Islamic fundamentalist in Amsterdam in November 2004 signified a turning point, "a national disaster" in the Netherlands.[28] Like Fortuyn, Van Gogh warned that Islam poses a serious challenge to Dutch society's freedoms. In addition to his attitude of "despising" Islam, the controversial film *Submission*, written by Ayaan Hirsi Ali[29] and directed by Van Gogh, provocatively depicting the oppression of Muslim women in Islam, is believed to be the reason for his murder. All these events triggered questions regarding multiculturalism and religious tolerance in the Netherlands, and caused widespread fear and anger towards Muslim migrants, and aggression against Islam in the Dutch context.[30]

From that time onwards, the cultural background of migrants from Muslim coun-

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24 Baukje Prins, *Voorbij de onschuld: Het debat over de multiculturele samenleving*, Amsterdam, Van Gennep, 2000, p.21 in Karin Van Nieuwkerk, "Veils and Wooden Clogs Don't Go Together", *Ethnos*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 2004, p.232.

25 Scheffer criticized the indifferent attitude of the government towards the fate of immigrants and suggested a thorough integration of the immigrants into Dutch society by forcing them to learn Dutch language and history. Paul Scheffer, "Het Multiculturele Drama", *NRC Handelsblad* 29 January 2000.

26 In 2004, a Dutch Parliamentary report declared that the Netherlands' 30-year experiment in trying to create a tolerant, multicultural society had failed and led to ethnic ghettos. (*NRC Handelsblad*, 19 January 2004 in Avcı, "Comparing Integration", p.67). See also Virgine Mamadouh, "After Van Gogh: The Geopolitics of the Tsunami Relief Effort in the Netherlands", *Geopolitics*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2008, p.220.

27 Although Fortuyn was murdered by Volkert van der Graaf, an animal rights activist, his death created tension because, as the leader of the *Leefbaar Nederland* and *the Lijst* Pim Fortuyn, he was known for his anti-Islam and anti-immigration views. He described Islam as 'a backward culture' that threatens Dutch values and called for immigration to be halted. Pim Fortuyn, *De Volksrant*, February 9, 2002. See also Gamze Avcı, "Comparing Integration Policies and Outcomes: Turks in the Netherlands and Germany", *Turkish Studies*, Vol.7, No.1, 2006, p.72.

28 Mamadouh, "After Van Gogh", p.221.

29 A Somalian refugee who is a former member of Dutch Parliament. She was very involved in and critical about Muslim women's position in Islam.

30 Following the 9/11 attacks, an increase in negative sentiments towards Muslims, and harassment of them, was reported by the Dutch Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, which documented a total of 80 incidents by the end of 2001. Most of these were verbal abuse and hostile treatment, both of which appeared to particularly affect Muslim women wearing headscarves, who were the most significant target (EUMC Annual Report, 2006).

tries was thought to create problems for the integration of Dutch society and some stereotypes of Muslims were developed. Shadid calls this period as one of stigmatization and exclusion because the reference of "we" versus "they" began to be frequently employed by the politicians and in the media.[31] Dutch discourse on immigrants viewed Islam as the main source of the clash between "Dutch culture" and "the Other and a real threat against Dutch society. This otherization has been carried out particularly via issues related to gender. In his book *Moslim in de Polder*, Bolkestein wrote: "It is obvious that Muslim migrants carry with them the prejudices that are common in their countries of origin, such as the subordination of women. They will have to adapt themselves to the emancipating Dutch society".[32] Thus, Van Nieuwkerk asserts that, "the image of Muslim woman without the rights" is prevalent in Dutch perceptions of Islam, in contrast to which Dutch society is portrayed as "the liberal, free and emancipated one that secures equal rights for women and homosexuals".[33] In their work Roggeband and Verloo reveals that emancipation policies have been ethnicized and minority and integration policies have been gendered because the focus has shifted from the emancipation of the Dutch women to *allochthonous*[34] women and integration of the migrants was specified into the Muslim women.[35] As Sunier states, there has been a shift concerning the identity of Muslim immigrants in that from the late 1990s and 2000s the boundaries between the Dutch and Muslims have been regarded as impermeable. He, at the same time, underlies that Muslims also become much more militant and self-conscious about these issues.[36] Thus, Dutch discourse on immigrants shifted from integration to assimilation in the Netherlands in the 2000s, and the view that Islam is the main source of conflict between "the Dutch culture" and "the Other", and that Dutch cultural norms and values should be promoted, gained prevalence. In fact this is the context in which the ethnicization of Islam and reethnicization of Dutch identity reinforcing each other has been taking place.

Headscarf affairs in the Dutch context began in January 1985 in the town of Alphen aan de Rhijn, where the city council decided to ban headscarves which, they argued, impede Muslim girls' integration into their school environment.[37] Wearing a headscarf is permitted in public schools in the Netherlands.[38] Until the 2000s, there were such

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31 Shadid, "Public Debates over Islam", p.16.

32 Frits Bolkestein, *Moslim in de Polder*, Amsterdam, Uitgeverij Contact, 1997.

33 Van Nieuwkerk, "Veils and Wooden Clogs", p. 240.

34 *Allochthonous* refers to "foreign descent" in the Dutch context and the category "*allochthonous* women" is used to stand for the Moroccon and Turkish migrant women.

35 Conny Roggeband and Mieke Verloo, "Dutch Women are Liberated, Migrant Women are a Problem: The Evolution of Policy Frames on Gender and Migration in the Netherlands, 1995-2005", *Social Policy and Administration*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2007, p.286.

36 Sunier, "Constructing Islam", p. 324.

37 Sunier and Van Kuijeren, "Islam in the Netherlands", p.152.

38 However, due to pillarization policy which segments Dutch society along confessional lines to keep differences between religious groups in peace, private confessional schools have the right to prohibit expressions of religious conviction if they are regarded as contrary to the religious identity of those institutions. For example, in December 1993, a group of five Protestant schools in Amsterdam, with a total of 700 Muslim children, prohibited students from wearing headscarves to preserve the school's Christian identity.

small discussions in public schools due to the refusal of the female students who are requested to remove their headscarves with pins during physical education and swimming lessons for safety reasons. These controversies then became subject of national discussion are solved by compromise: either the girls are allowed to wear headscarves during these lessons or girls wear tight caps without pins.[39]

However since the 2000s, veiling and the headscarf have been widely discussed.[40] As Moors argues, despite the very small number of women with face-veil (0,002 % of the population), starting from 2003, "face-veiling has turned from a non-issue into a hyperbolic threat to the nation-state."[41] In 2003, three universities (Leiden, Utrecht, and the Free University) enacted a ban on face-veil in the classroom.[42] Discussions around veiling increased when the anti-Islam Dutch politician Geert Wilders proposed banning the burqa or face-veil from public spaces in the Netherlands in December 2005. Supporting this proposal, the Dutch Parliament tried to find an enactment to prohibit the use of face-veil in public in 2006. One such attempt was put forward by Rita Verdonk, Minister for Foreigners' Affairs and Integration. She searched for a legal background to prohibit the face-veil in public. Although there was a poposal by the minority government of *VVD* and *CDA* (Christian Democratic Appeal- a party standing between individualism and statism) to introduce a ban on face-veil in 2012 which has not been finalized yet. Despite conflicts in the schools and unfortunate incidents where headscarf-wearing girls were rejected for traineeships if they insisted on covering their heads[43], any ban on the headscarf is not foreseen in a very near future in the Netherlands. Still exploring the headscarf worn by the Dutch students of Turkish origin is significant in a highly tensioned Dutch setting to reflect upon the identity claims of Muslim women in Amsterdam.

The Research

The aim of the research, undertaken in Amsterdam in 2006, is to investigate the headscarf issue in the Netherlands in order to explore the viewpoints of Dutch students of Turkish origin about what wearing headscarves signifies for them, to capture the reasons why they cover their heads, and how they experience dressing in this way, and religious activity in the Dutch context, particularly after the events of 9/11 and the murder of Van Gogh.

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39 Sunier and Van Kuijeren, "Islam in the Netherlands", p.151.

40 For discussions on burqa or face-veil, see Linda Herrera and Annelies Moors, "Banning Face-Veiling", *ISIM Newsletter*, No.13, 2003, p.16-7; Annelies Moors, "'Burka' in the Parliament and on the Catwalk", *ISIM Review*, No.19, 2007, p.5. For discussions on the headscarf, see Doutje Lettinga, "Rethinking National Constellations of Citizenship: Situating the Headscarf Controversy in the Netherlands", Sharam Algasi, Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Halleh Ghorashi (eds.) *Paradoxes of Cltural Recognition*, Surrey, Ashgate, 2009, p.248-250.

41 Annelies Moors, "The Dutch and the face-veil: The Politics of Discomfort", *Social Anthropology*, Vol.17, No.4, 2009, p.406. For a detailed analysis of face-veil debate in the Netherlands between 2000 and 2008, see Moors, "The Dutch and the face-veil", p.396-408.

42 Moors, "The Dutch and the face-veil", p.397.

43 Shadid and Van Koningsveld, "Muslim Dress in Europe", p.51.

Within the limits of this study, I will focus on findings concerning the quest of Dutch students of Turkish origin living in Amsterdam in terms of recognition of their identity claims as active headscarved Muslim diaspora women in the Netherlands.

The research employed a qualitative research method, based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 headscarf-wearing Dutch students of Turkish origins in Amsterdam because such open-ended type of data is believed to better represent the entire context from the participants' perspectives and experiences.[44] The reason for selecting Amsterdam as the research location is that it is one of three cities in the Netherlands with a high migrant population from Turkey.[45]

A participant had to meet four criteria in order to be eligible to participate in the research. Firstly, she has to be a student who covers her head. In the research, I use the headscarf referring to an article of cloth worn by Muslim women over the head in various ways because I did not want to restrict the research by homogenizing the way this religious activity is performed and preferred to include different ways of covering the head and clothing. Students were chosen as the focus of the research because school and university are the most important areas of self-definition and recognition and spaces of individual progress and social mobility. Relatedly, as a public space, schools act "as the stage where Islamic subjectivity is performed and communicated".[46] Secondly, her age should be between 14 and 24. The ages of interviewees ranged from 14 to 24 because it is believed that it is hard to get covered girls under the age of 14 to express their views with regard to their experience of being covered.[47] Thirdly, she has been living in Amsterdam for more than six years because she can compare the context in Amsterdam before and after 9/11 and the murder of Van Gogh. Fourthly, she has to have origins in Turkey. I did not make a distinction between Turks and Kurds, and it is enough for me to include a young covered woman into my research if she perceived herself as a Turk.

Two sampling designs were employed together to access the interviewees. First of all, I used quota sampling according to which the sample is selected "from a location convenient to the researcher and whenever a person with the visible relevant characteristic is seen, that person is asked to participate in the study".[48] Therefore after founding out the schools to which Dutch students of Turkish origin mostly attend, I wandered around those schools and when I saw a headscarf-wearing and Turkish-speaking student, I asked whether she could participate into the research I was undertaking. Most were recruited in the canteens and cafeterias of educational institutions like Islamic college of

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44 R. Unger and M. Crawford, *Women and Gender: A Feminist Psychology*. Philadelphia, PA, Temple University Press, 1992, p.14.

45 According to Central Bureau of Statistics in Netherlands, there were 37,360 inhabitants of Turkish origin in Amsterdam in 2004. See www.cbs.nl.

46 Göle, "Islamic Visibilities and Public Sphere", p. 26.

47 Out of 30 respondents, 19 of them were born in the Netherlands, two of them came to this country at age before 1, four of them at ages between 2 and 4, and five of them at ages between 9 and 10.

48 R. Kumar, *Research Methodology*, London, Sage, 1999, p.161.

Amsterdam, *ROC ASA*, *Hogeschool van Amsterdam* (HvA), the University of Amsterdam (UvA), and the Free University (*Vrije Universiteit*).[49] In addition to this, I used snowball sampling method. I requested from these young women interviewed to help me in accessing headscarf-wearing Dutch students with Turkish origins. Through this network, I also found interviewees for the research. Since what is significant for identity politics is the experience of the subject(s), achieving a representative sample is not the aim of this study. Therefore the research findings should be considered as tentative and limited to the specific group of people involved in this study. The originality of this research lies in its particular examination of the headscarf issue in the Dutch context in terms of how it is employed to construct "a new Muslim girl/women identity" with an interpretative phenomenological framework with the focus on the analysis of the specific participants' experiences and accounts.

All the interviews were held by the author in Turkish and all of them were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.[50] The informed consent of the interviewees was obtained to record the interviews and quota them in academic studies. To protect the privacy of the interviewees, only the first names of them are mentioned in this article.

The interview schedule started with demographic questions such as age, legal marital status, and educational level. They were followed by questions about how these girls construe the headscarf. The next set of questions are about the relationship between the headscarf and the identity issue.

The data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which is an appropriate means of analysis for this exploratory study examining the relationship between the Muslim headscarf and identity construction of Muslim women because it allows the researcher to explore participants' experiences. Firstly, I read each transcript thoroughly a number of times in order to become as familiar as possible with the participants' accounts. I found important themes and categorized them under themes which has relevance with the identity issue. These themes are the headscarf as the visible symbol of identity politics of Muslim women in Amsterdam, the headscarf as the vehicle for identity construction in the process of ethnicization of Islam in Amsterdam.

Findings

The Headscarf As an Instrument of Identity Politics of Muslim Women in Amsterdam

The participants mainly regard the headscarf as a symbol that forms and represents their identities as Muslims. Nearly all of them claimed that the headscarf is their primary

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49 According to the Dutch education system, there is primary, secondary, vocational, and university education. The Islamic College of Amsterdam is a secondary school; ROC ASA is an intermediate vocational training school; HvA is a higher professional tertiary education school which has close ties with the UvA, and the UvA and Free University are research-oriented academic educational institutions.

50 The quotations in this study are all my own translations from Turkish into English.

identity, which covers both their Turkish and Dutch identities. One of them stated: "The headscarf symbolizes me; it is my (Muslim) identity. All of my other identities such as my Turkish identity, Dutch identity, my being a student or the daughter of my family are under this embracing Muslim identity".[51] By emphasizing their Muslim identity with the headscarf as its visible symbol, in Schmidt's wording, "Islam is used to transcend aspects of identity that could otherwise be problematic", here cultural heritage of the country of their origin.[52] In that regard, it is noteworthy that 28 of the interviewees stated that they saw no connection between their status as second or third-generation Turkish immigrant and their religiosity. They claimed that their identification with Islam and their cultural descent has no relation. As Schmidt also points out, here the countries of their origin become a "counter argument in which it is claimed that their parents practice Islam in ways blurred with culture".[53] Moreover, as stated in the quotation above, their Muslim identity transcends their Turkishness. This can be explained by what Yunas Samad called as "the ethnicization of religion", according to which whereas identification with the country of origin has become less significant, identification with religion as a dominant cultural marker has increased.[54] This is very important because as Samad emphasizes, these third-generation migrants have raised citizenship claims on this term.[55] Nuhoğlu Soysal also stresses that claims-making in Europe have been "less and less nationally delimited citizenship projects".[56]

Some of the interviewees conceived the headscarf as a statement about their identities, because they claimed that anyone who sees woman covering her head will recognize that she is a Muslim and has good moral character. This can be explained by Schmidt's argument that one common factor of Islamic identity formation among young Muslims in Western European countries is their formulation of "genuine Islamic practice" as "behaving morally and ethically correct".[57] Two of the interviewees underlined that the headscarf is utmost important for them particularly in the Dutch context due to its being a symbol that reveals what kind of belief they appropriate.[58] Tuba said "After I wear the headscarf, I walk in the streets with more self-trust and confidence since I begin to express my identity better than before".[59] By doing so, as Göle argues, they become "overtly identifiable as Muslims and publicly assertive".[60]

Most of the interviewees stated that they are filled with dignity and self-esteem with headscarves. This is significant because when these girls were asked about the reli-

51 Reyhan, Amsterdam, 3 February 2006, personal interview.
52 Garbi Schmidt, "Islamic identity formation among young Muslims: the case of Denmark, Sweden, and the United States", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 2004, Vol. 24, No. 4, p.38.
53 Ibid.
54 Samad, "Ethnicization of Religion", p. 164.
55 Samad, "Diasporas, Identity", p. 20.
56 Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal, "Citizenship and Identity: Living in Diasporas in Post-war Europe?", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2000, p. 12.
57 Schmidt, "Islamic identity formation", p. 39.
58 Tuba, Amsterdam, 19 February 2006; Banu, Amsterdam, 23 February 2006.
59 Tuba, Amsterdam, 19 February 2006.
60 Göle, "Islamic Visibilities", p. 18.

gious observance of daily pray and fast, all of them replied that they absolutely fast but they could not achieve to fully practice the daily pray which they considered among the five main obligations of Islam. At the same time, although they all believed that female covering is obligatory for Muslim women, it is noteworthy that most of the interviewees stated that the Islamic covering is not the first and foremost requirement of Islam. One of the interviewees stated:

> There are a lot of uncovered religiously devoted Muslim women, as well as non-committed Muslim women who wear headscarves due to external pressures. Still, wearing headscarf is of the utmost importance for us because it is the essential outer sign that revealed our religious identities.[61]

As Göle contends, "veiling is both a personal and collective expression of Islamic religiosity. It is personally carried as a sign, but also imagined as a source of collective empowerment and horizontal bonding among those who distinguish themselves".[62] Thus they turn "a symbol of backwardness, ignorance, and subservience for Muslim women" into "a symbol of distinction and prestige".[63] In doing so, the headscarf becomes the key symbolic outer sign to point to these girls' recognition of their Muslim women identity. Identity is the product of multiple and competing discourses, which construct unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented senses of the Self and Other.[64]

The Headscarf as the Vehicle for Identity Construction in the Process of Ethnicization of Islam in Amsterdam: "Others" of the Headscarved Dutch Students of Turkish Origin

Tabboni states that neither identity nor difference can be defined autonomously without reference to the "Other" as its opposite,[65] because as Goff and Dunn highlights, identity is relational.[66] It can be argued that the quest for the recognition of new Muslim woman identity in the Dutch context is communicated through the employment of the headscarf by trying to break with traditional roles attributed to Muslim women in general and definitions of Muslim woman identity as passive and submissive subjects by creating their "Others". These are; (i) the Moroccan girls and women who are the members of the second majority Muslim diaspora in the Netherlands, the Moroccans; (ii) the Dutch-Turkish young women who cover their heads "unconsciously" and "improperly", and (iii) the illiterate and unconscious first-generation Turkish Muslim women. Here they base their claims on "truly" and "consciously" practiced Islam by the help of which headscarved Dutch students of Turkish origin negotiate their Muslim identity to participate as active subjects in the public sphere and demand equal education and employment rights with their headscarves.

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61 Betül, Amsterdam, 17 April 2006.
62 Göle, "Islamic Visibilities", p. 18.
63 Ibid.
64 Kevin Dunn, *Imagining the Congo. International Relations of Identity*. Palgrave MacMillan, Gordonsville, VA, 2003, p. 10.
65 Tabboni, "Difference in Public Space".
66 Goff and Dunn, "Identity and Global Politics", p. 4.

The first "Other" of the headscarf-wearing Dutch students of Turkish origin in the research is the Moroccan girls/women who constitute the second majority Muslim women category in the Dutch context. It is very evident that nearly all of the interviewees tried to distinguish themselves from the Moroccans. Moroccans portrayed as defining others in a context where Muslims and Islam are perceived as threats. They argued that they were feeling very uncomfortable with the Dutch people's perception of Muslims as "terrorists" after 9/11. All the interviewees emphasized that they were acquitted when the murderer of Theo van Gogh was a Dutch man with Moroccan origins. Tuba claimed: "The reason why the burqa ban has been discussed in the Netherlands is the Moroccans. They constitute a threat for the Netherlands but this threat is generalized to all Muslims including us."[67] One of the interviewees, Hatice, highlighted their difference with the following words:

> People can differentiate us (Turkish ones) from the Moroccans by the different ways of wearing headscarves. They cover their heads by wearing a tight cap which is usually colorful inside and then putting a black veil on it. They cover their heads so tightly that the shape of their ears can be easily seen.[68]

Their second "Other" is the Dutch students of Turkish-origin who veil unconsciously and "improperly". All of the interviewees, even the ones who did not wear the headscarf in a "proper way", defined the proper veiling as covering the hair low to the forehead, coming under the chin to conceal the neck, and falling down over the chest and back. They also stressed that veiling includes wearing not tight clothes that manifest the shape of body. At this point, some of the interviewees stated their discontent with those Dutch-Turkish girls who wear headscarves by covering only their hair and leaving their necks and ears uncovered. For example Banu said:

> Recently there have been Turkish girls who wear the headscarf improperly by leaving their neck and ears uncovered in Amsterdam. We are very angry with them because these unconscious young women misinterpret this religious obligation. Wearing a headscarf does not mean to cover only the hair. Additionally, they become so beautiful and attractive by covering their heads in such a style, wearing tight clothes in a fashionable way, and having heavily make-up with a focus on eyes which is contrary to the logic of this religious obligation. [69]

Another interviewee, Hülya, stressed her resentment to these young women by saying: "Because these girls become more attractive by wearing the headscarf in such a style, I believe they do it for fashion and I feel they are abusing that piece of cloth which represents my Muslim identity and is as important as my honor".[70] Hanım expressed the reason for their unrest with these "improperly veiling" young Turkish women as follows:

> You can ask why we are so angry with these young women who veil improperly. According to me it is a threat for us because those Dutch people who have prejudice against veiled Muslim women have been voicing their preference for this type of veiling which, according to them, seems more modern and suits to European values.[71]

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67 Tülin, Amsterdam, 8 February 2006.
68 Hatice, Amsterdam, 5 March 2006.
69 Banu, Amsterdam, 7 March 2006.
70   Hülya, Amsterdam, 3 Apirl 2006.
71 Hanım, Amsterdam, 11 March 2006.

Tuba who veils "improperly" confirms that they are perceived "more acceptable covered girls" by saying:

> When I wore the headscarf first, I had a very big veil and a long coat. I felt very old with them and then began to cover my hair in this way. I had very positive feedbacks from the Dutch in the street who told me that this is the acceptable form of veiling for them.[72]

In the case of Amsterdam, although most of the interviewees do not accept such kind of wearing a headscarf as "the proper way of exercising this religious obligation", it seems to negotiate Muslim women identity with the European one which evokes "Euro-Islam"[73], a form of Islam compatible with European values of secularism and individual rights, raised by Bassam Tibi as a solution against the confrontation between Muslim migrants and host countries' residents.

Their third Other is the illiterate and unconscious first-generation Turkish Muslim women who the interviewees argue wear the headscarf for traditional/cultural reasons and mostly practice this religious activity unconsciously and improperly. Canan stated:

> My mother and other women in my family wore the headscarf as a traditional requirement. That is why they did not pay attention to how to cover their hair. They generally left their hair incompletely covered. But I wear the headscarf for religious reasons and I know why and how to cover my hair. It constitutes my personality and identity. Without the headscarf, I feel naked. [74]

The interviewees all complained about the way Dutch people perceive them as "veiled girls". They contended that they are attributed traditional roles as headscarved Muslim women such as sitting at home and doing the housework, and being subject to violence from their fathers and/or brothers. Based on his fieldwork in Denmark, Sweden, and the United States, Schmidt also states that parents were portrayed as defining others in a context where Muslims and Islam are perceived as threats.[75] They argued that the Dutch wrongly regard them as passive subjects who cannot make their own decisions. They explained that this is the reason why the prevalent discourse is based on the argument that Muslim women wear headscarves just because their fathers or brothers force them to do so. One of the interviewees stated:

> Why are they so interested in my headscarf and liberation but they do not see uneducated women who are oppressed and forced to cover their heads? The headscarf is my freedom about my personal choice. Nobody can intervene to this choice. We who go to schools are conscious people and do not need anybody to liberate us. I am so conscious about my religion that if my husband wants from me to take my headscarf off, I will either resist or divorce from him.[76]

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72 Tuba, Amsterdam, 24 March 2006.
73 Tibi, "Muslim Migrants in Europe".
74 Canan, Amsterdam, 22 March 2006.
75 Schmidt, "Islamic identity formation", p. 38.
76 Huriye, Amsterdam, 25 March 2006.

The quotations above reveal that the interviewed headscarved women do not want to be generalized under the category of "traditional Muslim woman". Consciousness in performing the religious act of wearing the headscarf is an important factor of Muslim women identity that is boldly stressed by the interviewees. In this study the findings reveal that, as Brown argues, this new sense of consciousness empowers these girls by making them more aware of their Muslim identity and reflecting upon that identity in claims-making.[77] Meyra's following words support this finding:

> In the Netherlands they have been increasingly discussing the Muslim woman and why they wear headscarves. But what they ignore is that we are different from our mothers who generally wear headscarves just because of their Turkish cultural habits. For example, although my mother was covered, she had a photograph without a headscarf when she was 28. In that regard, when they were brought up, they were told to pay attention to what is regarded as shameful in Turkish culture but not to what is forbidden by religion. For example if I did not wear a headscarf, my mother would react just because she associated the headscarf with honor. But if my daughter will not wear a headscarf, I will ask her why she does not want to do so and tell her why it is required to cover her head in Islam. We, the daughters of the first generation, are different. I am a conscious Muslim woman who wears the headscarf for religious reasons. I know what my rights are and I am ready to fight for them.[78]

In that regard, they demand their difference from the first-generation Muslim women in terms of their identity, needs and rights to be recognized. Their quest is to develop an inclusive gendered citizenship which provides them the necessary space and policies for their self-realization as Muslim agents by actively participating in the public sphere with their headscarves, having equal education and employment opportunities not only in legal terms but also in practice. Dila told:

> We loudly tell that we are free and we do not need to be liberated. What we request is to exercise our religious obligations freely and at the same time demand to be equal citizens who have the opportunity to have education and participate in the labor market without discrimination after being graduated. Most of my headscarved friends have experienced difficulties even in finding places to intern.[79]

Based on the quotations above, as Nuhoğlu Soysal argues, it can be claimed that the headscarved interviewees' claims to realize their individual rights and foster their participation in the public sphere through their (particular) Muslim identity are justified by universalistic discourse of human rights and postnational citizenship. [80]

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77 Katherine Brown, "Realising Muslim Women's Rights: The Role of Islamic Identity among British Muslim Women", *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 29, 2006, p. 420.

78 Meyra, Amsterdam, 16 March 2006.

79 Dila, Amsterdam, 5 April 2006.

80 Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal, "Changing Parameters of Citizenship and Claims-Making:

Concluding Remarks

Since the beginning of the 2000s, particularly due to the effect of the incidents of 9/11 in the Western European countries, the complicated outcomes of the complex relationship between migration and religion have been intensely dealt with. In the mid-2000s, it has become evident that it is no longer possible to evaluate this complex relationship by giving reference to the issue as "migration" and subjects of the issue as "migrants". Unlike the first-generation migrants, the second and third-generation Muslims living in the Western European countries raise citizenship demands and attempt to base their demands on the recognition of their Islamic identity.[81] They no longer want to be affiliated with the country of their origins. Their Islamic identity has been appropriated as the main identity marker.

This research study revealed that in this process of "ethnicization" of Islam, the headscarf in the Dutch context should be taken seriously to understand the identity claims of the second and third generation headscarved Dutch students of Turkish origin living in Amsterdam. The findings point to the conscious and bold message of the participants of the research that the way they appropriated and the meaning they attributed to the Islamic headscarf are different from the traditional headscarved first-generation Muslim women with Turkish origins. With the headscarf as their foremost identity marker, their quest is to be recognized as conscious Muslim women who are aware of their rights and who do not pose threat to the society they are living in. They do so by disassociating themselves from the headscarved first generation illiterate Turkish women whose bond with the country of their origins are tight, headscarved Moroccan women who are regarded as "threats" to the Dutch society, and the "improperly" veiled Dutch students of Turkish origin who do not consciously wear the headscarf and serve to the interests of those who try to impose a "European Islam" to cope with the integration "problem" of Muslims in the Western European countries. Thus, although there is not a current ban on the headscarf in the Netherlands, it is significant to reveal the viewpoints of the headscarved Dutch students of Turkish origin living in Amsterdam to highlight their newly emerging identity politics in Amsterdam. By doing so, the expected contribution of this article is to shed a small light on the studies in the discipline of international relations and politics at the nexus of globalization, migration, and identity politics in terms of developing an understanding of how to deal with difference in a highly interconnected and supra- and de-territorialized global world where the taken-for-granted relationship between nationally and ethnically defined identities, "sharply territorially drawn lines of borders, and territorial structure of modern interstate system"[82] has been questioned.

Organized Islam in European Public Spheres", *Theory and Society*, Vol.26, No. 4, 1997, p. 521.

81 For such a case, see Mairead Enright, "Girl Interrupted: Citizenship and the Irish Hijab Debate", *Social Legal Studies*, Vol.20, No.4, 2011, p.463-480.

82 Chris Brown, "Borders and Identity in International Political Theory", Albert, Mathias, David Jacobson, Yoseph Lapid (eds). *Identities, Border, Orders. Rethinking International Relations Theory*, University of Minesota Press, London, 2001, p.117-136.

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