TRENDS OF FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE ISLAMICIST MOVEMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR WOMEN IN TURKEY

Doç. Dr. Nilüfer NARLI*

Introduction

Islamicist movements have gained impetus for the last two decades in the Muslim world. Moreover, Islamic organizations have become more visible and active in the West. Islamicist movements have mobilized not only many men but also a large number of women. Women's participation in these movements is visible particularly at the level of grass-roots politics. They exercise informal political influence. However, their participation in more institutionalized Islamic politics is very limited and they are under-represented in the leadership cadres of the Islamic parties and/or organizations. For example, the Welfare Party, which is the representative of Islamicism in Turkey has no female member of the parliament, but it has thousands of female voluntaries working zealously for election campaigns.

The aim of this paper is twofold: to examine the main socio-economic and cultural reasons for a larger female participation in the Turkish Islamicist movement; and to examine the forms of female participation in the movement in relation to the consequences of their participation for changes in their status and roles. Prior to discussing the participation of women in Islamicist movements in Turkey and in the Middle East, the paper first clarifies the concept of "radical Islamicism". It also describes the allies of the Islamicist movement in Turkey. Then, the paper examines the results of the female participation in the independence movements against the colonizers in the Middle East and Turkey or the changes in their roles and status in the post-independence years. Here the aim is to provide the reader with a comparative perspective on Muslim women's political behavior in various countries at different epochs.

(*) Marmara Üniversitesi Öğretim Üyesi.

Conceptual Definition of Islamicist: Radical vs. Moderate

Turkish Islamicists do not form a homogeneous block; nor they have settled disputes about basic doctrines and fundamentals of the political Islamic ideology and about issues concerning the type of regime in an ideal Islamic state to be established in Turkey. Likewise, Islamicists in the Muslim world have not yet unanimously defined the constitutional basis of an "Islamic state," nor have reached a consensus on the methods and strategies to be employed in establishing an Islamic state.

There are different types of Islamicists who are products of the historical conditions, countervailing political currents, and the complex interaction among political, ethnic, and religious sectarian groups in Turkey. There are various Islamicist *tarikats* (orders), *cemaats* (societies), and groups with diverse interests and political objectives. Some of them adhere to a pan-Islamic ideology, while others endorse an Islamic ideology blended with Turkish nationalism. Different types of Islamicists with associated differences in their political philosophy are portrayed below.

As conceptualized in the paper, the Islamicist is not only an ordinary pious Muslim who follows religious observances as part of religion and folk culture; he is against the idea of religion being limited to belief, prayer, ritual worship, and private consciousness. The Islamicist seeks greater Islamicization of the political and social system through revolutionary and evolutionary methods. Therefore, the Islamicist is very likely to consider the necessity of a gradual progress towards an ideal Islamic state and may be willing to undertake a role in the extensive Islamicization of social life and public policy. His attitude varies with the degree of his politicization and radicalism.

In order to define the indicators of radicalism, it is essential to differentiate between two major categories of Islamicists: neo-traditionalist moderate Islamicists and radical Islamicists[1]. A radical Islamicists is conceptualized as the person who aims to change the existing political system fundamentally, that is, replacing the secular constitution with an Islamic political order based on the Quran and Sunna. Likewise, the neotraditionalist moderate Islamicist is not only a pious Muslim who strictly

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(1)   These two major categories of Islamicists with their associated characteristics were developed on the basis of conceptual insights derived from Shepard's work on typology of modern Islamicist movements after modifying them in the light of impressionistic data obtained through in-depth interviews with Turkish Islamicists and *tarikat* disciples. See, William, E. SHEPARD. 1987. "Islam and Ideology: Towards a Typology." *International Journal of Middle East Studies.* 19: 307-336.

follows Islamic observances, but also a person who affirms that Islam can be total and valid for all aspects of public and private life. Therefore, he rejects the fundamental separation of religion and state. The neotraditionalist accepts the need for modern technology because of its functional value, therefore he is not a traditionalist in the sense of one who calls for a retreat to the past or one who prefers pastoral life. Yet neotraditionalists may utilize obscurantist tactics to slow down the modernization effort of a secularist government and oppose to the regime on the ground that it is not Islamic. With this rational, neo-traditionalists see positive value in local religious traditon and call for a revivification of it (e.g., returning to sexual segregation, head-covering, eradication of Western influence in cultural and social life). The moderate is not very different from a radical Islamicist as they both aim for an Islamic state. Nevertheless, the moderate accommodates to the existing secular regime and seems to be satisfied with the space and freedom provided for their political activities. On the contrary, the radical refuses to accommodate to the secular regime and its rules. The radicals have the following qualities: (i) The degree of Islamic totalism is higher for the radical Islamicist than for the moderate. The radical believes that Islam covers all aspects of life and that Islam is not only a religion, but also a total way of life offering guidance for social behavior and public legislation. The radical is against the separation of state and religion and believes that Islam is absolutely *din wa dawla* (both religion and state). Therefore, he claims that a secular regime is not legitimate. Here legitimacy is implied as the degree of acceptance which the political regime enjoys among the community. (ii) The radical Islamicist urges the establishment of an Islamic state in accordance with the Quran and Sunna. (iii) The radical Islamicist emphasizes on cultural authenticity and rejects westernization on the grounds that it is a kind of cultural imperialism tied to the economic nad political domination of the Islamic world by the West[2]. Therefore, the

(2)   In an interview with a number of Islamicist students, they claim that Western science and technology are an extension of Western imperialism and that Muslims have to establish their own technology. These Islamicists criticize modern industry and technology on the grounds that technology has alienated man from religion and made him a slave of the marketplace: in their view, the modern man's ultimate desire is to consume more and have a prosperous life. They however believe that the aim of a Muslim should be *felah* (salvation) rather than comfort and prosperity. The Islamicist intellectuals have discussed and criticized modern industry and technology. See, Ali BULAÇ. 1983. *Islam Dünyasında Düşünce Sorunları*. Istanbul; İsmet ÖZEL, 1984. Üç Mesele: Teknik, Medeniyet, Yabancılaşma. ("Three Issues; Technique, Civilization, and Alienation"). Istanbul; and Ersin GÜRDOĞAN, 1985. *Teknolojinin Ötesi: Kaybolan Boyut ve Bozulan Denge*. Istanbul.

radical claims that we should reject not only the Western culture but also the development based on economic planning and transfer of western capital, and at utmost extremism even its technology and know-how as well. Despite such an anti-western political discourse, radical Islamicists benefit the most from the Western technology. They utilize computers, audiovisual systems, and other types of electronic vehicles. As the radical Islamicist seeks an alternative to Western dominance[3], he calls on Muslims to rediscover an Islamic heritage on which to reconstruct a new outlook and socio-economic order. The radical Islamicists asserts that returning to Islamic roots will do better for both the economic development and the salvation of Muslims. (iv) The anti-western attitude is manifested in the ideas concerning international politics. The radical Islamicist gives priority to an alliance with the Muslim countries and urges Turkey's disengagement from its political, military (and perhaps economic) ties with the West. The radical Islamicist claims that Turkey's entry into the EU is not acceptable since Turkey's Muslim heritage and cultural roots are fundamentally different from those shared by all other members of the European Union. The radical Islamicist urges a return to the pristine purity of the 7th century Islam. Therefore, (v) the radical emphasizes the purification of Islam from the un-ıslamic local practices[4] (for example, visiting tombs of a saint to make a wish) and returning to the pristine Islam of the Prophet Mohammed and other early Muslims[5]. (vi) Realizing the ideals of the Era of Felicity (*Asr-i Saadet*) of the Prophet and the four Righteous Caliphs by establishing a truly Islamic society is the utopia of a radical Islamicist. The radical Islamicists are, however, aware of the fact that *Asr-i Saadet* cannot be realized here and now without adaptation; yet they claim that the Era of Felicity could be revived under novel conditions. (vii) The radical Islamicist claims that Islam is not a closed, static, conservative faith. The radical regards Islam as open, dynamic and abreast of the times[6]. Therefore, the radical Islamicist can be modern and flexible withoud

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(3)   Bruno ETIENNE indicates that radical Islamicism proposes a messianic, revolutionary, and universal alternative in opposition to the hegemony of the West. Bruno ETIENNE. 1987. *L'islamisme radical.* Paris: Hacette.

(4)   See, SHEPARD (1987) for the radical Islamicists' insistence on the elimination of the un-Islamic superstitions.

(5)   The radical Islamicist students (interviewed) emphasized the necessity of returning to the Quran and the experiences of the Medina society of the golden age of the Prophet. See, Nilüfer NARLI. 1995. *Radical Islamicist Movement, Politics,* and *University Students: A Case of Turkey.* An unpublished report submitted to the Ford Foundation.

(6)   KHOMEINI, MAWDUDI, and BULAC (in Turkey) emphasize the idea of progress in Islam and freedom *ijtihad.* See, Ruh Allah KHOMEINI. 1981. *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini.* Translated and Edited by Hamid Algar. Berkeley: Mizan Press; Ali BULAÇ, "Kültürümüzün karakteri" ("The character of our culture") *Zaman* (13 May, 1987); and Shepard's comment on Mawdudi. (SHEPARD 1987: 316).

deviating from the fundamental teachings of the Quran. He accepts and affirms the need for *ijtihad* (the exercise of independent judgment, whether on a specific case or on a rule of law where the Quran and Hadith do not give explicit directions). He thinks that *ijtihad* is necessary for being adapted to changing conditions. Nevertheless, *ijtihad* does not mean copying the West; *ijtihad* must be carried out without deviating from an authentic Islamic way. Moreover, radicals claim that *ijtihad* can be exercised by any Muslim and it is not under the monopoly of the ulema. (viii) The radical Islamicist asserts the distinctiveness of Islam and, therefore he objects to those who wish to identify Islam with various political ideologies like liberal democracy, communism, or authoritarian regimes[7]. (ix) The radical Islamicist emphasizes on the revolutionary character of the pristine Islam of the Prophet Mohammed[8]. Therefore, the radical Islamicist rejects being passive in the face of de-Islamization, discards reconciling the existing secular constitutional public life with partial Islamization and opposes to compromising with the state-supported Islam and the official ulema. (x) Therefore, the radical Islamicist confronts the official Islam of the state when he believes that the regime is not truly Islamic. For example, many Islamist perceive the regime in Turkey as anti-Islamic as the Constitution proclaims that Turkey is a secular country. (xi) Though there are variations in strategies (i.e., a gradual bottom-up Islamization by focusing on individuals, top-down Islamization by capturing the strategic bureaucratic posts and leadership positions, and revolutionary action including armed struggle), the radical Islamicist is more oriented towards revolutionary action. This does not mean that all radicals are militant. The distinguishing character of a militant radical Islamicist is his readiness for and justification of the use of arms and political violence to establish an Islamic state.

Is there a sharp demarcation line between the neo-traditionalist moderate and the radical Islamicist? The answer is no. The moderate could be more radical depending on social, economic, and political conditions surrounding him. He could also change in the opposite direction in that he

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(7) In depth interviews with Islamicist activist students revealed the emphasis they place on the authenticity and distinctiveness of Islam. They are labeled as activist because they organize conferences and publish a journal of seminars and gatherings organized by the Islamicist societies. Interviews were conducted in 1992-1993. See, NARLI (1995). Also see, SHEPARD (1987) for the Islamists' emphasis on the distinctiveness of Islam.

(8) Revolutionary Islamist Khomeini always underlined the revolutionary character of Islam. See, KHOMEİNİ (1981).

would moderate his Islamicist political outlook and accommodate to the secular system, and finally coming to terms with a secular modern system while keeping his piety.

Political Movements and Mobilization of women in the Middle East

The political mobilization of women and nationalist movements are strongly associated. Altought women are more active at the grassroot level and a few of them are in leadership cadres in various political movements, their active participation in such movements has often led to progressive changes in their social position. In the West the participation of women in a revolution, an insurrection, or independence movement paved the way for the emancipation of Western women in the long run - that is obtaining equality with men in the private domain and public sphere[9]. The end of the eighteenth century was marked by a series of ruptures in Europe. Revolution followed revolution and brought changes in the ideas and practices regulating gender relations. For example, the French Revolution opened a whole new stage in the history of women, even though their participation was limited and women were not admitted to full membership in revolutionary organizations, such as the National Guards[10]. They had not been granted equal right with men soon after the revolution and the Declaration of the Human Rights. Nevertheless, their participation in the revolution and the revolutionary ideas of freedom and human rights brought greater equality between the sexes with political modernization and economic development.

In the Middle East, Africa, and Asia the fate of the women's movement and women's social status have been colesly connected to the general course of national and class struggles. Nationalist movements triggered by patriotic and Islamic sentiments motivated many women to fight against the colonizers in the Muslim countries (see below). Their participation in independence struggles against the colonial powers often mobilized women and paved the way for reforms which ameliorated the status of women in the

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(9)   Dominique GODINEAU, 1993. "Daughters of Liberty and Revolutionary Citizens" in *A History Of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, Vol. IV. Geneieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot, eds., Cambridge: The Beknap Press of Harvard University Press: 15-33.

(10)   *Ibid.*, p. 18.

family and society. Studies (Fluehr-Lobban, 1980; 1993)[11] on the role Arab
women in nationalist and national liberation movements show that women
involved in such struggles and movements in various forms: participation in
protests (e.g., the March of the Veiled Women as a part of the first wave of
Egyptian demonstrations demanding independence from England in 1919,
Malay women's participation in the marches of protest against the British
colonialism in the early 1950s); becoming a militia (e.g., Algerian women
carrying bombs in the French Quarters during the independence war against
the French, and the Palestinian women who carried arms and provisions to
the fihters during the 1936 armed revolt against the British and joined the
fighting forces during the 1948 war); serving as intelligence agents (e.g.,
Yemeni women during the national liberation struggle against British
colonization which gained independence for Southern Yemen in 1967); and
mobilizing people for the independence struggles with their writings and
speeches (e.g., the feminist and nationalist writer Halide Edip Adivar of
Turkey and Beshira Ben Mrad, Mabrouka Gashi, Khadija Babh of
Tunisia)[12]. Participation in such activities provided women with an
opportunity to leave the traditional confines of home, and mobilized them to
take part in public affairs, which in turn, often led to a feminist agenda that
associated emancipation with national liberation in post-independence
period. Revolutionary Muslim leaders (like Atatürk of Turkey, Bourgiba of
Tunisia, Nasir of Egypt) liberated women by instituting a number of reforms
which made suffrage universal, insured equal pay for equal works, equalized
educational and professional opportunities in law for women (Egypt and
Algeria), abolished forced marriage and the forced obedience of wife
(Yemen) and, even abolished poligyny and insured equality among spouses
(Tunisia and Turkey).

Why Do Many Women Participate in the Islamicist Movement in Turkey?

Only over half a century has elapsed since the Turkish women stepped
out of the harem and casting of veil marked the beginning of gradual
emancipation of women, already some of their successors are clamoring to
go back to a segregated world and reviving the cult of veiling. With the

(11) Carolyn FLUEHR-LOBBAN, 1980. "The Political Mobilization of Women in the Arab
      world", in *Women in the Contemporary Muslim World,* J. Smith (ed.), Bucknell
      University Press. pp. 235-252. Carolyn FLUEHR-LOBAN, 1993. "Towards a Theory
      of Arab-Muslim Women as Activist in Secular and Religious Movements". *Arab
      Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 15 (2): 87-106.
(12) For the examples given above see, Caroyn FLUEHR-LOBBAN (1980; 1993).

increased socio-geographical mobility in the last three decades many women have moved to urban centers from a rural or provincial traditional social setting where seclusion sanctions prevented women from having formal education in the recent past, referring to the period of 1930s-1960s). In the course of gaining social mobility through education and occupation, a visible minority of university students have donned the veil, and they have been calling for a return to "pure" Islam of the *Asr-i Saadet* (the Era of Felicity). While many of them are coming from religiously conservative families who covered the head like their mothers, a large number of them have taken up the *turban*[13] for the first time in their life after attending the university as a result of undergoing an Islamic political socialization on the campus. University campuses have often become a fertile soil for radical political movements and political socialization. In the late 1960s and 1970s it was the radical leftist movement and the ultra-nationalism that drew larger support from amongst the students. From the early 1980s onwards it is radical Islamicism that has many followers amongst the university students.

The Turkish Islamicist Movement

The Islamicist movement is an outlet to express political dissatisfaction with the existing order within which the masses on the periphery have long had a disadvantaged economic and political position vis-à-vis the elite in the center. It articulates anti-regime sentiments of various social groups and classes whose political dissatisfaction has increased with the sharpened cleavages characterizing the Turkish system. At least five types can be noted: (1) center-periphery conflict, (2) class cleavages, (3) regional cleavages, (4) church-lay (secularist- Islamicist) cleavages, and (5) sectarian celavages (i.e., *Sunnis* vs. *Alevis*). These divisions have not been resolved; they continue to exist, and have even deepened. The conflict between the center -comprising the military officers, senior bureaucrats, notables, and the industrialist created by the early etatist policies- and the periphery is the legacy of the Ottoman period. The Ottoman society was divided into two categories: the sultan, military, and the ulema at the center, and the subjects (*reaya*) comprising a large proportion of peasants on the periphery. The Ottoman central authority was suspicious of the peripheral elements and, thus never permitted their independent organization and input. There was

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(13) The word *turban* refers to any type of enveloping head-covering; this head-covering is usually a voluminous head-scarf, but it may also be something akin to a nun's wimple. For the cultural meaning of *turban* and head covering in Turkish social context see, Nilufer NARLI. 1996. "The Turban: The Symbol of Radicalism, Islamic Identity, Piety, or Modesty". *Islam et Laicite: Approaches globes et regionales..* Paris: L'Harmattan.

always a huge social and cultural distance between the imperial centre and the Anatolian periphery. Despite the introduction of the equality of all citizens regardless of ethnicity, religion, region, the gap between the center and periphery was not narrowed in the first three decades of the Republic. Conversely, the center geared policies towards keeping this gap. Social mobility and political participation of the periphery were large blocked. The periphery gained social mobility with urbanization that began in the 1950s. Yet migration from the rural to urban areas where commerce and industry were developing transfered the rural poverty into urban poverty. In metropoloses large slums emerged, where people suffered from substandart housing conditions and lack of infrastructure. Now they constitute the new periphery whose members are often economically disadvantaged, culturally disintegrated, and politically isolated. Their social rage has fostered extreme political tendencies since the beginning of 1970s. In the 1970s the revolutionary left articulated their political discontent and anti-regime sentiments of the disadvantaged social classes and radical intellectuals. In the 1980s. and 1990s, Islamicism has become a movement of protest. The conflict caused by regional economic imblances and the sectarian antogonism between the *Sunnis* and *Alevis* (a heterodoxical sect more oriented toward Shiite) have further complicated the political tension. Moreover, corruption allegations have aggravated the social rage and the urge for a political protest. As a result various social groups who need a movement of protest joined the Islamicists.

The socio-economic background, political aims, and interests of the allies of the movement are diverse: the large university student population, most of whom originated from provincial low and middle social classes who have to compete with those from the established urban middle and upper-middle classes; educationally and professionally unqualified young city lumpen whose number has increased with the rural-urban migrations and unemployment; some members of the newly urban workers and subproletaria; state-employed petty-bourgeois who have been proletarianization as they lost social status and economic power with the widened gap between the rich and poor; bourgeoisie fractions including the relatively privileged new middle and upper classes, the rich merchants, businessmen and industrialist, who sprang from humble *esnaf* (referring to petty-traders and shop-keepers) origin, and some rural agrarian capitalists; radical intellectuals searching for an anti-regime movement of protest; former ultra-nationalist (*ülkücüs*) originated from conservative Sunni provincial towns in Central and East Anatolia, who turned to religion and Islamicism after the military coup in 1980 with the realization that the

nationalist movement failed and that they shared many common cultural qualities and political interests with the Islamicists; and a sizable percent of religiously conservative Sunni Kurds who think that pan-Islamic ideology promoting an Islamic order could bring a solution to the regional/ethnic conflict; and a few *Alevi* Kurds who think that the leftists and the social democrats failed to produce a solution to the ethnic issues, and they have turned to the Islamicist movement (since 1993) as they see it to be an instrument of pressuring the state and gaining bargaining power[14]. All these allies of the Islamicist movement share incompatible interests of weakening the state apparatus (e.g., some of the Kurds, intellectuals with strong antiregime sentiments, and radical students) or gaining a larger share of influence within it (e.g., bourgeois fractions, marginal urban classes, ultra-nationalists).

Women's Participation in the Islamicist Movement

Young females from various socio-economic backgrounds referred to above have joined the Islamicist movement and taken up the new type of head-covering - *turban* that is a symbol of taking part in the Islamicist movement. Turkish women's involvement in the Islamicist movement takes many forms. Many actively march and demonstrate in the street, and some collect and disseminate news or distribute leaflets. If it is necessary, they are ready to take part in clandestine activities and go underground as members of a guerilla movement in so far it is seen as *jihad*[15]. Moreover, they mobilize people by their effective education and propaganda activities. Fund rising is another form of involvement. For example, a leading woman organizes tea parties and invites all the sisters to donate jewelry or money for the oppressed Muslims from all over the world. That money can also be used for the needs of a political party[16]. There are other ways of supporting

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(14)   *Alevis* tend to vote for center-of-left parties and they are committed to secularism. Nevertheless, in the 1994 local elections in a few Alevi populated areas (e.g., Basaran ward of Sultanbeyli district in Istanbul, Halilcavus village of Hinis, Erzurum) *Alevis* overwhelmingly voted for the Welfare Party,

(15)   The term *"jihad"* is often translated as holy war as it is associated with the Crusades. The Quaranic concept of jihad should be understood in terms of the two dimensions of struggle: at the internal level, it means struggle for being a good Muslim through purification and strengthening the self and one's faith; at the external level, it refers to a struggle for one's faith and for Islam. If one is left no means but war for such struggle, one may resort to war.

(16)   According to press reports the money collected by Islamic organizations and groups for various humanitarian reasons is used by the Welfare Party, as exemplified by the case of Mr. Mercümek. He was accused of misusing the money collected from Turkish migrant workers in Germany as an aid for Bosnian Muslims during the war in Bosna

the movement such as contributing to the "Islamicist industry" by working in the manufacturing and marketing of the "proper Islamic garments" (*tesettüre uygun giyim*). Their active contribution to the movement is not solely confined to the activities listed above. Social interchanges among women such as, gathering to gossip and exchange news often take on a political coloration, particularly during the election campaigns: housewives get together and decipher the speeches of Islamicists including the supporters of the Welfare Party. Women utilize neighborhood and kin networks for various political aims and interests. The Welfare Party owns much to its female voluntaries who have mobilized a larger number women by moving from one house to another. They convinced many people to vote for the party during several election campaigns. Their contribution played a significant role in the progressive increase of the Welfare Party's votes and its electoral victory in the 27 March (1994) local elections, and in 1995 December general elections when the Welfare Party obtained 21.3 percent of the total votes. Most recently, in June 2, 1996 local by-elections it obtained 33 percent of the total votes.

Here the crucial question is if by undertaking such activities Turkish female Islamicists are following their Iranian sisters who proudly put on the chador in the late 1970s, fought against the Westernized shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, and played a decisive role in bringing to power Ayatollah Khomeini. In Iran many women, even non-religious, nontraditional, and highly educated women, took up the veil as a symbol of solidarity and opposition to the Shah. At rallies and demonstrations, chadors were extended to the unveiled women, who felt obliged to show their solidarity with the majority. Nevertheless, their activism and support for the revolution worsened their position rather than improving (see below).

Why do an increasing number of Turkish women support the Islamicist movement despite the fact that the involvement of Muslim women in the Islamicist movements in Iran, Algeria, and Sudan brought anti-women rules and applications (see below)? In order to answer this question, the socio-economic, political, cultural, and psychological factors behind the Islamicist movement all must be considered in the analysis of women's situation.

Gerzegovina. According to allegations made by freiburg Prosecutor Fluck, the money collected from the Turkish migrant workers in Germany as aid for Bosnians, was "laundered by being transferred into the bank account held in Turkey by Mr. Mercilmek who is known as the RP's (the Welfare Party) cashier". The prosecutor said that the RP used the money in question to finance its election campaign. See, "Almanya'daki Refah Holdingi" ("The Welfare Holding in Germany") in *Hürriyet* (August 21, 1994).

The process of modernization and economic development has been advantageous to the elite women, referring to the upper and uppermiddle class women. The modern segment of the middle class women (clerical workers, state employed petite bourgeoisie, service sector workers, etc.) have benefited from modernization to a certain extent, but many of them have experienced proletarianization for the last decade due to the decline in real wages and deterioration in the distribution of income. On the other hand, it has created setbacks for the traditional segment of the middle class - the *tuccar* (merchant) bourgeoisie, *esnaf,* and the petite bourgeoisie. The *esnaf* and those who sprang from this origin perceive the cultural and economic changes as jeopardizing their very existence. The conservative provincial merchants and newly urban middle classes, who need a synthesis between Islam and modernity have been major allies of the Islamicist movement since 1970s. They have often voted for the Welfare Party as it has been seen to be the only political party preaching Islamic morality. With the deterioration in economic conditions, the Islamicist movement has gained a larger support from among the marginal urban classes and urban poor living in slums. The post-1980 economic development based on a market economy resulted in a sharp deterioration in the income distribution and, hence in the conditions of the lives of women at lower social echelons, intensifying their exploitation and degraded their status. The effects of economic deterioration, the high rate of inflation, and high unemployment (almost 15-20 percent)[17] also hit the middle class women. These socio-economic problems foster the belief that the state fails to provide social justice. Corruption and political scandals create an idea that "might is right" and that marginal social classes are oppressed. This in turn, justifies the idea that the present secular regime is illegitimate and that Muslims need a new political order based on the Quran. Our survey[18] shows that many Islamicist students support th movement out of a belief that social justice could be re-structured in an Islamic system which ensures not only the freedom of man from servitude to other men ("*kula kul olmaktan kurtulmak*"), but also safeguards the freedomof religious expression. In their opinion, the present system restricts religious freedom, and it is un-Islamic; it is also tyrannical as it has reduced the Muslim to the status of *mostazafeen* (the oppressed and weakened).

(17) For the high rate of unemployment see, Toker DERELI. 1992 (a). "Turkey" in *European Labour Unions.* John Campbell, ed., Connecticut: Greenwood Pell West Board. pp. 463-480; and Toker DERELI. 1992 (b) "Problems of the Turkish Industrial System", paper presented at *the First International Congress of the Turkish Industrial Relations Associations,* held at Dedeman Hotel, Istanbul. November 12-13, 1992.

(18) NARLI (1995).

With this rationale many women have joined the movement. Women's support for the Islamicist cause is not only motivated by economic frustration and political discontent, but by the fact that while a number of literate, highly educated, and wage-earning women in urban centers increased, no fundamental process of change have taken place in the status and social relations of the majority of Turkish women. With urbanization and migration from villages and towns to metropolitan centers, there is no genuine change in values and ways of lives, but there is a tendency to reproduce traditional social relationships, values, attitudes, and behavior patterns, including gender roles and family arrangements. Many marginal women of the metropolis feel that they have been encapsulated in their traditional male-dominated world in the social ghetto they live. The younger generation of women who are the first generation in the city are caught up in two conflicting and competing value systems - the traditional one reinforcing their families and the religious standards of public morality, and the more modern one aligning them with a Westernized imported culture. Many of them think that the emancipation of women based on the Western model does not work for Muslims; on the contrary, it brutalizes women because it exploits their bodies to sell modern merchandise and false dreams while it appears to promise liberation from traditional shackles. They are against slavish imitation of European fashions, preoccupation with self-presentation, and in short, commercialization of women which created an "alien" model of womenhood. As an alternative, Islamic models of womanhood are reintroduced by the daughter of the Prophet Mohammad, has become the personification of virtue, piety, and obedience; and Aisha, the wife of the Prophet has become the symbol of outspoken aggressive women. These role models provide women, especially, those of rural and provincial origin with an identity and a much-needed defense mechanism. They inspire them to defend the restoration of Islamic values and preach other women to fight for organizing the public and private life on the basis of an Islamic model - which is seen to be the only solution to socio-economic and moral problems that have been weakening the country.

New role models of Islamicists are appealing for many women because Islamicists emphasize that a good Muslim woman reserves all types of satisfaction, sexual, emotional, and material. Women are often told that liberation of women means working outside the home, double exploitation of women, and loneliness. On the other hand, being a mother and wife is the biggest reward for a Muslim woman who is the queen of her house, whose husband has to provide her with economic means, satisfy her in many ways, and treat her kindly. It seems that Islamicists ask their women to be happy in

a "feminine world," yet they may leave this world whenever their help is needed to mobilize Muslims for an Islamicist struggle.

Their female counterparts received this appeal by taking up the *turban* that symbolizes an adherence to a cause for the restoration of an Islamic identity and establishing an Islamic political order. By donning the *turban*, they show solidarity with those who oppose to the existing regime, which is seen to be a "corrupt state" and "illegitimate" order where there is no social justice (according to the majority of the Islamicists.interviewed). They also often express their opposition and resistance against the "decadent Western culture" and its imperialistic expansion into the Muslim land[19]. By covering themselves Muslim women give a message to their men who fell threatened to see the increased visibility of women in the public domain that traditionally belongs to men: "we are not emancipated western women, but Muslim women in *jihad*, who struggle for the integrity of the Islamic way of life."

Islamic States and Women

Leading Islamicist intellectuals and ideologues have not reached a consensus on the model of an ideal Islamic state. For some Muslims, Iran; Sudan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia are examples of an Islamic state. On the other hand, some Muslims disagree with this idea and claim that an ideal Islamic state has not been founded yet in the contemporary Muslim world. For them there was only one true Islamic state that was founded during the time of the Prophet Mohammed.

When we examine the situation of women in Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, and recently in the *Taleban*-controlled Afganistan we see sharp conflict between the Quranic ethics and the practices. Although the Quran emphasizes that righteousness is identical in the case of man or woman, and it affirms, clearly and consistently, women's equality with men and their fundamental right to actualize the human potential that they share equally with men[20], we

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(19) My survey which included 500 Islamicist university students revealed that one of the major reasons for supporting the ıslamicist movement is the belief that the existing regime is illegitimate as it is based on a secular constitution, and that it is corrupt and in the state of decline. The cure is a return to Islam and restoration of Islamic values and identity. See, NARLI (1995).

(20) According to a Muslim feminist theologian Riffat Hassan, the Quran gives full equality between men and women. See Riffat HASSAN. 1995. "The Rise of Conservatism in its Various Forms: Strategies. Paper read at the NGO *Forum on Women, Beijing 1995.* (September 4 1995). Also see, Riffat HASSAN. 1991. "The Issue of Woman-Man Equality in the Islamic Tradition." Women's and Men's Liberation. Leonad Grop, Riffat Hassan, and Hain Gordon. New York: Greenwood Press. pp. 66-81.

observe unequal treatment of women in Iran, Sudan, Pakistan, and Afganistan. A cruel and unfair treatment given to Algerian women by the FIS (The Islamic Front) militants shows that not only women's human dignity but their right to life has been violated in Algeria.

In these countries women have actively contributed to the Islamicist movements before and after the establishment of Islamic regimes. The reward was facing the pressure of anti-women laws that have been promulgated under the cover of "Islamization". For example, the enactment of the "*Hadud* Ordinance" (1979) according to which women's testimony was declared to be inadmissible in '*Hadd* crimes, including the crime of rape, was accompanied by a wave of violence toward women and a deluge of anti-women literature which swept across the country in Pakistan. As Hassan observed, "many women in Pakistan were jolted out of their 'dogmatic slumber' by the 'Islamization' of the legal system which through the promulgation of laws such as the *Hadud* Ordinance and the Law of Evidence (1984) as well as the threat of other discriminatory legislation (such as the Law of *Qisas* and *Diyat* or 'bloodmoney') reduced their status systematically, virtually mathematically, to less than that of men"[21]. In Iran and Sudan the forces of religious conservatism also cut women down to one-half or less of men. Soon after the Revolution (1979) Iran's clerical leaders rescinded the Shah's Family Protection Law of 1975 that restricted polygyny and men's unilateral right to divorce and to child custody. In rewriting the constitution, the revolutionary leaders stressed the importance of motherhood and domesticity. With this rationale, they closed day-care centers and family planning clinics, banned abortion and all types of contraceptives (however they have encouraged family planning since early 1990s). Sexual segregation was instated at the universities, and women were banned from entering certain fields of study, such as law, agriculture, geology, archaeology, and mining engineering. All the lady judges who had been already practicing asked to resign in 1979. Thus the support of veiled Iranian women for the Islamic revolution placed them in an unequal position with regard to only educational and professional opportunities but also marriage, divorce and child custody in Iran[22]. The hard-liner ulema oppose the recent attempts of the moderates, led by the president Rafsanjani, to improve the status of women in Iran and to increase their participation in labor force. Nevertheless, there is a large number of women in labour force

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(21) HASSAN (1995: 7).

(22) For the changes in the status of Iranian women after the Revolution and the attempts of
      the moderate ulema to improve their status, see Nesta RAMAZANI, 1993. "Women in
      Iran: the Revolutionary Ebb and Flow", *The Middle East Journal.* Vol. 47 (3): 408-428.

and a number of female parliamentarians. On the other hand, female reaction to anti-women legislation is coming from a number of Iranian women organized in a rather clandestine group, called Muslim Sisters. They have initiated a movement against the imposition of veil and other oppressive measures in Iran. The Muslim Sisters are calling their sisters to support the gospel of women's liberation and to challenge the narrow interpretation of Islam. For them casting out the forced veil symbolizes liberation of women from oppressive treatment and from being held in secondary position.

In the Islamic regimes of Iran, Sudan, Pakistan, and Afganistan where the prime minister Gulbettin Hikmetyar introduced had austere Islamic rules making veiling compulsory in July 1996 and later in late September the *Taleban* leaders introduced much more rigid "Islamic" rules banning women's work outside the home, the result of female contribution to the Islamicist movements and/or Islamization was a number of laws introduced to keep women in their place, which means secondary, subordinate, and inferior to men.

Where Will Turkish Islamicist Women Go?

In the early twentieth century Muslim women participated in the transformation of a social order as part of a party seeking national liberation, and persuaded the male leaders to liberate women by instituting a number of reforms, which made suffrage universal, insured equal pay for equal works, equalized educational and professional opportunities in law for women, as see above. Nevertheless, in the late twentieth century female activism has been directed to another cause. Muslim women have been participating in movements, which aim to transform already secularized or semi-secularized political orders into a state of Islam where female seclusion and a new legislation discriminating women in the family and public life are more likely to be introduced. Are they aware of such a likely discrimination?

The surveyed data collected through closed and open-ended questions showed that Turkish female Islamicists are aware of a likely, gender discrimination in an Islamic state to-be-built; but they are ready to accept some measures of discrimination despite the fact that one of the important questions of the human rights issue is the rights of women. The data showed that out of 500 Islamicist students interviewed 40.4 percent of the respondents supported the idea that "women must have the right to vote and the right to stand for election", and 18.4 percent believed that such rights exist in an Islamic state. Conversely, 25.8 percent did not endorse providing women with the right to vote nor the right to stand for elections. A few

(2.2%) thought that women had the right to vote but did not have the right to stand for elections. Meanwhile, a significant proportion (11.8 %) of the respondents, many of whom were females, refused to answer a question on the issue of women's rights; this was seen to be an "un-Islamic issue". Some even exclaimed that there was no problem of women's rights in Islam, and that the question of women as a controversial topic has been introduced by the 'decadent Western feminists'. Along with accepting political discrimination, some even approve of the practice of polygyny as a right of men since, in their understanding, it is written in the Quran. Moreover, they believe that the biological difference between the sexes justifies division of labor based on gender discrimination. For example, menstruating women are conceived to be psychologically weak and incapable of making firm and fair decisions. Therefore, in their opinion women do not suit to positions of authority and judiciary.

The Islamicist movement, which seeks to transform the political order does not incorporate the question of women's oppression, but raises the question of family and women's role as a mother and wife. In the past the Welfare Party opposed the establishment of a separate ministry dealing with women's issues and acused the architect of that idea of ignoring the significance of family[23]. For the Islamicist the most important item on the agenda is the salvation of Muslim, which means a struggle for establishing an Islamic states. With this rationale, some Islamicist women in Turkey and the Middle East think that raising the issue of gender equality may split the movement and jeopardize the cause. Nor, they are looking for replacing the Islamicist movement with an autonomous Muslim women's movement. For them the most important target is to defend the cause until their men reaches the final objective of establishing an Islamic state. Until that they are willing to pull back and support their men by assuming rather secondary roles and positions. This explains why female supporters of the Welfare Party did not show a strong reaction to the party when it did not list any female candidates to contest for 1995 general elections.

Nevertheless, a number of women living under Islamic regimes and others contributing to the Islamicists movements have begun to realize that religion is being used as an instrument of oppression rather than as a means of liberation. With this realization they have been engaged in developing the discipline of feminist theology in the context of Islam[24]. While some Muslim women support such scholarly examination of the theological assumptions

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(23) See *Türkiye* (February 15, 1992). Osman Bengi's article "Aileye Son Darbe" ("The Final Disaster for the Family").

which underline the negative ideas and attitudes regarding women, others see such endeavor as a betrayal.

How will these discussions and developments will affect Turkish Muslim women? Is it very likely to see Turkish women approving antiwomen laws in the name of Islam? I think Turkish women have come a long way since the beginning of *Tanzimat* (reforms) Period that began in 1839 and paved the way for the introduction of Western secular education[25] and modernization in many aspects of life. Despite the opposition of the former professional men of religion and *tarikat* sheiks, Atatürk reforms were largely supported by the people, since they had faith in the great leader Mustafa Kemal who liberated Turkey from the Allied forces that occupied Turkey after the First World War. The target of secular reforms was modernization of the country and modernization was synonymous with westernization. Turks who were the sword of Islam against the West made a deliberate choice for westernization. For two centuries Turkish women have been struggling for equal rights in a country where democratization and Westernization were the deliberate preferences of people rather than being imposed by colonial powers as happened in many Muslim countries ruled by Britain and France in the early 20th century.

Now the time has come for women to advance in education, to obtain and occupy strategically important jobs, to influence decision-making process. The consciousness of large numbers of women, from various social groups and classes, has been raised irreversibly to the necessity of improving their status in Turkish society. Islamicist forces, if in power, are not likely to force women to go to a segregated world and confine their lives to domestic domain. Women have already organized to defend their gained rights and to bring greater gender equality. Several women NGOs, informally organized women groups, and those who commit themselves to a secular democratic Turkey have initiated a movement to encounter likely anti-secular and anti-democratic attempts from the Islamicists.

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(24) Prof. Dr. Riffat Hassan of Pakistan is one of the examples of Muslim feminists in the discipline of feminist theology. See above.

(25) Traditional Islamic medrese education and many Islamic customary practices regulating social life were predominant during the *Tanzimat* period. After that, with the Atatürk reforms the entire legal system including personal status, family, and inheritance law was secularized during the first decades of the infant republic. The *medrese* education (Islamic education) was abolished and the education system was established on secular principles with *Tevhidi Tedrisat* (unity of Education) Act of 1924. In 1926 a new civil code, adapted from the Swiss code, was passed in replacement of th Sharia rules.