

The Turkish AK Party and its Leader

Criticism, opposition and dissent

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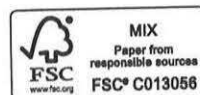
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3 Kemalist feminists in the era of the AK Party

Nil Mutluer

In June, I was speaking to some 400 women who had come together for the latest Women's Convention when I said "I believe this convention will reflect the spirit of *Gezi* in terms of liberties and women's equality." I had quite enjoyed saying it too. During the briefing session, a friend of mine from the *Başkent Kadın Platformu* (Capital City Women's Platform), whom I had worked with on a number of occasions, said, "You said the spirit of *Gezi* and you ruined the meeting with a nationalistic discourse." I responded, "Many things have been associated with the *Gezi* spirit or attitude, but nationalism is not one of them." She thought that I had declared my position right from the beginning. I tried to explain equality and freedom with the spirit of *Gezi*. It was to no avail. She repeated: "It was nationalistic enough for you to say *Gezi* spirit." That's when I fell silent. Because that's what you do.

Sema Kendirci,
Chairperson of the Turkish Women's Association, 2014¹

Silence...

Words, actions and concepts are restrained by the baggage of identities in modern politics. Nationalist, Kemalist, feminist, laicist, pro-coup, Islamist, *irticaci* (reactionary) are just some prominent ones in the list. The modern political sphere is saddled with such concepts associated with identities. These concepts find support within the power relations surrounding issues that shape politics and the society. Sometimes, they are used to define an identity group. At other times, they are slurs for a particular group. People identify themselves within the knowledge spheres, persons and institutions they feel allegiance to, and embrace some concepts while excluding others.² While experiences and concepts may be plural, insofar as they fail to be effective in the power and interest configurations of modern politics, much action goes unseen and many words are unheard.³

What is surprising to those who are familiar with the confined and closed socio-political context in Turkey is the disappointment of the Chairperson of the *Türk Kadınlar Birliği* (Turkish Women's Association) with being called "nationalistic"—more so when that Association is Turkey's first women's civil society organization founded in close alliance with the founding ideology of the

Republic. Kendirci says that the period between the 1910s and 1950s is a major influence on her thinking and that she admires the women who criticized the Republican policies from the feminist point of view of the era. Hence she does not describe herself as nationalistic, *Atatürkçü* or Kemalist.⁴ She is also critical of the official policy toward women adopted in the foundational years of the Republic. Yet, she emphasizes that, unlike her, many members of the association she heads would genuinely embrace these concepts. In her words, she is a feminist who advocates laicism, the rule of law and democracy.

The person Kendirci refers to in her quote is a member of the *Başkent Kadın Platformu* (Capital City Women's Platform), an organization that received wide attention particularly during the struggle against the ban on the headscarf. If a layperson were to define these two women with the above anecdote or by their institutional allegiances, they may label the former "Kemalist" and the latter "Islamist" at the first instance. However, this would be a stereotypical, oversimplifying and fairly inadequate approach. Both women are political activists and have worked side by side on women's rights issues such as Civil Code and Criminal Code reforms. While their sustainability and effectiveness may be open to debate, the two women's efforts to rebuild an inclusive political environment, and the steps they took toward each other in the process, are noteworthy. The lack of communication described in Kendirci's words may only be explained by an extraordinary occurrence like the *Gezi* protests, which causes people to question political and sociological norms.⁵

The ambiguous backdrop story of Kemalist "feminism"

What shapes the polarized political and cultural environment of today's socio-political space is how Turkish modernization, particularly laicism as one of its key tenets, is described and implemented. Laicism in Turkey, instead of being the political guarantee of the freedom of faith, has been the reference point for the continuation of the top-down nationalist state policies since the proclamation of the Republic. The culturally and nationally sacred values of the new nation state were "modern," "laic," "civilized" and "Turk," and the antagonists were "traditional," "Islamist" and "Kurdish." The top-down, hegemonic model of Turkish modernization spawned the "laic-Islamist" antagonism and caused the fundamental values of the society to be built around these two poles. The tenet of laicism was influential in the rearrangement of socio-cultural values as well as shaping political and judicial regulations.⁶ Therefore, when one speaks of laicism in Turkey, it is possible to refer both to a value system and an identity that becomes manifest in the symbols of those who identified themselves with that system. As such, laicism is accompanied by its historical and political references and experiences in the memories of the communities and individuals constituting the society.

In the "laic-Islamist" dilemma, women, with their attire, appearance, conduct, and association with the family and society have always been the symbols of dominant values. During the early days of the Republic, women were involved

in an active struggle for their rights. But when the struggle was appropriated by the state in the effort to build a new nation state, the position of women as independent actors was compromised. Kemalist men were not overly enthusiastic about having women actively involved in politics. The state appointed women to become “educated and trained” mothers who would raise future generations of Kemalists, and thus relegated them to the status of second-class citizens in the building of the nation state.⁷ This type of feminism, rather than regarding women as independent actors, positioned the liberated women who affirmed Kemalist principles in opposition to the other women who were yet to be liberated.⁸ Exclusion was based on religion, ethnicity and class. Men and women who did not adhere to the Kemalist values of the new Republic, in other words who were not urban dwellers, Westernized, middle-class were regarded as “others.” This symbolism reduced not only women, but also all other groups who resisted identifying themselves with the norms and values of the new Republic, such as certain Muslim communities, Kurds and Alevis, to second-class citizenship before Kemalist men. Minorities that were mentioned in the Lausanne Treaty (1923), for their part, had been cast as excluded others even before the declaration of the Republic.

Understood in this polarized context, Kemalist feminist is an ambiguous term.⁹ It is possible to call all those who associate themselves with the principles and reforms of Atatürk and follow the Kemalist ideology “Kemalists.” Yet it is difficult to regard Kemalists as a homogeneous group, even though Kemalism itself aimed at creating a monolithic society through its corporatist approach. The idiomatic use of Kemalist refers to the followers of the Kemalist ideology, but at present, in everyday life, it may also be used as a term referring to those who stand in opposition to the AK Party’s (Adalet Kalkınma Partisi, Justice and Development Party) policies in one or more issue areas. Also, it may be used as a shorthand reference to state-centric authoritarianism that is the hallmark of Kemalism. In short, the Kemalist–AK Party binary opposition is both conceptually and practically plural, as well as carrying different meanings depending on how the concept is perceived sociologically, which actors are using it and how.

“Feminist,” for its part, is a concept, that is almost entirely excluded from public discourses as the “other.” Regardless of the activity and history of the movement since the Ottoman era to the present day, feminism is associated with misandrogyny, and may be used as a “derogatory” term both by Kemalists and the AK Party supporters in a variety of settings. Sometimes, Islamist conservatives may use the term to refer to Kemalist women. Meanwhile, although Kemalist women and their organizations follow the principles and reforms of Atatürk, none of the institutions consider themselves feminist.¹⁰ There are different explanations of the theoretical and sociological association of feminism with Kemalists. Men and women intellectuals in the late Ottoman era, who would later play a part in the proclamation of the Republic, used the term feminism “for everyone who supports and makes demands for women.”¹¹ Until 1980s the words Kemalism and feminism were used as interchangeable terms. Even today, there are studies associating Kemalist feminists with state feminism and regard

them as the carriers of national objectives, just as there are works regarding all Kemalist women to be feminists because of the work they have done for women’s rights.¹²

Kemalist women and “their” feminist movement after 1980

Kemalist women who had been accustomed to be politically active for the principles and reforms of Atatürk without much of a challenge up until the military coup of 1980, faced a crisis of legitimacy when the state adopted a Turkish-Islamic synthesis¹³ as its dominant ideology. The organic power of Kemalism in state apparatuses was undermined by the purge of Kemalist bureaucrats during the Özal administrations.¹⁴ At the same time a second generation of feminists emerged as Kemalist’s secure position of representing the ideal Turkish women lost ground.¹⁵ Kemalist women argued that the political changes after 1980s were against national unity and laicism. At the same time, the privileges granted to their organizations as “organizations for public benefit” were eroding after the 1980s making them feel that the Kemalist nationalist principles and outlook were disintegrating in politics.¹⁶ The crisis was exacerbated once Islam-friendly politics became active; the Kurdish issue came under limelight with the Kurdish independence movement gaining pace; and finally when the AK Party, which according to many Kemalists represents political Islam, achieved electoral victory in 2002. All these developments caused a diversification among organized Kemalist women.

In this diversification, there emerged different positions among Kemalist women in the ways they relate to Kemalist and feminist politics. These positions range from conservative to reformist. This article is an attempt to give voice to the unheard elements of these women and to bring forth nuances in what otherwise is perceived as a homogeneity. To that end, it seeks to reflect the intersectionality of women who are members of a Kemalist institution or/and describe themselves as *Atatürkçü* or Kemalist, and also insist that they are feminists. It is a critical review of the ways in which Kemalist feminists respond to the policies of the AK Party in the last decade. It discusses the “sacred grounds” into which Kemalist nationalism and laicism on the one hand and the AK Party’s cultural essentialism and neoliberalism on the other seek to confine women. My purpose is to understand how women who identify themselves both with Kemalism and feminism as well as feminist women who work actively in Kemalist organizations relate and respond to one another as well as to the AK Party policies in everyday life.

In this context, a major issue the article addresses is how Kemalist women relate to the women’s movement and/or feminism when it comes to such issues as headscarf, militarism, family and women and nationalism.¹⁷ The relations that Kemalist feminists establish with the women’s movement and feminist discussions in Turkey also transform their relationship with Kemalism from a conservative to a more reformist attitude. Kemalist feminists, while holding fast to their common reference points such as laicism and republicanism, at the same time

seek to reinterpret Kemalism in and through declarations which they describe as keeping up with “what is contemporary.”

Since 1980 *coup d'état*, some Kemalist women have adopted the second generation feminists' arguments whom they had previously dismissed as irrelevant but which they now embrace as a useful tool in their struggle against political Islam. In this vein, Kemalist feminists with a more conservative attitude reformulated their objections against the AK Party policies with arguments drawn from contemporary women's rights discourse. They have embraced the gains of feminist politics in areas they consider to be essential such as universal suffrage, education, work, abortion and others, but they keep their distance from the sort of plurality advocated by the third-generation feminist and queer movements.

The Kemalist feminists who actively participated in the struggle to bring about gender equality amendments to the Constitution, the Civil and Criminal Codes, generally show a relatively more pluralistic and reformist attitude. Many of them had long since adopted the arguments of radical feminism. While criticizing the AK Party, this group also seeks to reform Kemalism and in some cases the Kemalists as well. Approaching Kemalism idealistically, they think that Kemalism has been distorted under authoritarianism before being fully comprehended. They do not reject the social, political and cultural demands of Muslims, Kurds and headscarved women right from the start. Regarding issues in women's rights, they are critical not just of the incumbent AK Party, but also of the opposition CHP, and they even approach critically the male-dominated politics and policies that shaped the initial years of the Republic. It must also be emphasized that socialism and social democracy complement feminism in the critical and reformist attitude of this group.

As stated above, first the discourses developed by Kemalist feminists in response to the AK Party's policies regarding issue areas of the headscarf, militarism, family, gender, sexuality and nationalism will be analyzed. Second, the plurality of conservative and reformist positions reflected in the Kemalist feminist discourse will be identified. To that end, the manuscript will use in-depth interviews carried out with thirteen women living in Ankara, İstanbul and İzmir as well as carrying out textual analyses of written materials, documents and declarations.

“Reformist” and “conservative” Kemalist feminists on the headscarf–turban: the flimsy boundaries of laicism

The debate around the headscarf–turban dominates and deeply influences the public/political space in Turkey and reflects a mode of class conflict. This conflict is about what type of woman will be included in the public sphere and hence who will be empowered and whose values will become dominant in the political space of the Turkish Republic. Since laicist values were regarded as primary in the early Republican era, those who affirmed different values were excluded as the others who, in Elias's terms, needed to be “tamed and civilized.”¹⁸ The relationship with the “other” in the modern nationalist world is directly correlated

with fear. Those who are regarded as belonging to “us” are symbolized through attire, appearance and conduct, and the ones who do not conform to these norms are regarded as symbols of threat and uncertainty that contribute to suspicion and fear because they cannot be delimited and defined through science.

Although the Republic symbolized the lifestyle norms and conduct of the civilized through the representation of women, all restrictions on attire were imposed by men.¹⁹ Until the 1980s, covered women were regarded as lower class, and were not taken seriously, let alone being viewed as a political threat in the public sphere. After the 1971 coup, the Kemalists in the state bureaucracy began to thin out—a process which accelerated in the aftermath of the 1980 coup. At around the same time, political Islam gained impetus and headscarved women began to take active part in Islamic political parties. They also started to attend universities, all of which caused them to be visible in the public sphere. Beginning with 1984, headscarved students were banned from schools in general and higher education institutions in particular, and already registered female university students were pressured into uncovering their heads in the so-called ideological “persuasion rooms.” Persuasion rooms highlighted the fact that the “headscarf–turban” became the symbolic issue in the conflict between the laic Kemalists and Islamic groups. While the Islamists called what they wore on their head “headscarves,” the Kemalists claimed that the headscarf was the traditional attire of Anatolian women and used instead the term “turban” to distinguish it as the political symbol of anti-Kemalist, Islamic reaction.

When the repressive policies of the state singled out covered women as the symbol of anti-Kemalist reaction, Kemalist women who had been indoctrinated with the fear that laicism could be wrenched from their hands at any moment went to the opposite extreme. In their words, they felt that there was an existential “fear” and a “perception of threat” to the values of the laic Republican regime and hence to their accustomed style of life.²⁰ Former CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Republican People's Party) deputy Gaye Erbatur says that the 1980s policies of exclusion divided women's groups who could otherwise very well cooperate on women's rights issues. She argues that “one's freedom of wearing a headscarf became a threat to the other's freedom of not wearing one.”²¹

Kemalist feminists do not have a unified explanation for the source of this fear or an agreed upon proposal as to how it can be alleviated. On the question of laicism and the headscarf as on other questions, it is possible to delineate two vaguely defined positions among Kemalist feminists: conservative or reformist. Regarding the issue of headscarves, Conservatives embrace the Kemalist understanding of laicism and the image of the modern women attached to it without questioning. The reformists, in contrast, seek to rethink Kemalism under the guidance of Western democratic values, and argue that the freedom to wear religious attire in all spheres of life can be achieved only through the internalization of a liberal understanding of laicism by all segments of the society.

Those closer to the conservative attitude consider the appearance of covered women in the public sphere after 1980 as a matter of pure political strategy on

the part of the Islamists. They ask: "since such demands were not present in the early years of the Republic, why do we hear them now?"²² They do not however consider the possibility that these demands have always been there, yet were not heard precisely because of the exclusionary policies of the state—the very policies which precluded Kemalist women from establishing egalitarian relations with those "other" women. Now that the other women and their political demands have become visible even to them, they fear that their urban, middle-class lifestyle is under an existential threat.

Despite the perceived threat by the conservatives, there is now a general tendency among Kemalist feminists to recognize headscarved women's right to public existence. They do however distinguish between those who receive public services like education, justice, health care and so on, and those who provide them.²³ The former, they say, can wear a headscarf as a matter of individual choice, yet the latter should not, for as public service providers they represent the state. While more or less all Kemalist feminists share this position, it is for different reasons. For the conservatives, the state is and should remain Kemalist. The reformists, however, think that if laicism were properly understood and practiced by all citizens, then it would not be a problem even for public service providers to dress as they like. Since, however, they think this is not the case, they find the ban of headscarf for public service providers to be a reasonable restriction on individual freedom.

The debate on religious attire resonates with another debate on how laicism should be understood and religion should be approached. Conservative Kemalist feminists take the early Republican era as an important reference point. They claim that far from denying religion, the Kemalist understanding of laicism embraced and furthered its true meaning.²⁴ Some tell anecdotes about how people used to gather in their homes to read the Qu'ran, or how they learned Arabic at an early age to study the Qu'ran, or retell the stories of their mothers who willingly changed their religious attire with a modern one, yet remained as believers.²⁵ Since they do not allow for any incompatibility between Kemalist understanding of laicism and religion, they think that young women would choose to wear a headscarf only under coercion from their families. Thus, they "tolerate" the wearing of a headscarf only because it gives them a leeway "to leave the home and receive education." In other words, they position religious attire somewhere between a political symbol and coercion, and they approach the issue from an instrumental point of view. In doing so they fail to consider the possibility that it can be a matter of faith and uncoerced choice. Their dilemma is to choose between positioning headscarved women either as political objects or as a repressed group. They do not even consider the possibility that headscarved women could be making an autonomous public claim for equal citizenship.

Kemalist feminists who take this position on the headscarf issue do not problematize the way laicism is implemented in Turkey. Although there are some who believe that the repression of covered women has some negative consequences, they see the political demands of headscarved women not as one of

individual liberty, but as a political leverage that the AK Party uses to further its anti-laicist agenda. They see laicism as the guarantee of a modern lifestyle, and find the bans on religious attire or other restriction of religious practice to be reasonable.²⁶ Kemalists tend to define laicism in general terms, as "the separation of government and religious affairs." Yet conservative Kemalist feminists do not refrain from advocating government-imposed restrictions on religious practice in general, and the headscarf in particular. Some of them justify such restrictions with what they refer to as "scientific arguments": "Professional outfits are not compatible with religious attire."²⁷ Others argue, that if judges or teachers wear a headscarf, it would "compromise their neutrality and objectivity." They also complain, that when working on common women's right projects, headscarved women tend to lose their "objectivity" and instead of focusing on problems common to all women, seek to assert their particular identity.

Kemalist feminists who adopt a more reformist approach, by contrast, not only criticize the policies of exclusion of the 1980s, but they also problematize the Kemalist understanding of laicism, which they argue is prone to create inequalities between citizens. They find the government imposed restrictions on faith problematic and advocate the adoption of a more inclusive and pluralistic understanding of laicism. They think that the headscarf issue can very well be solved by formulating it as a matter of civil liberties; yet they also emphasize that the current social, cultural and political conditions in Turkey are not yet ripe enough to embrace a fully liberal understanding of laicism. They admit that there are some Kemalists who ostracize headscarved women and threaten to stay out of any joint project to which headscarved women are invited as participants. In such cases, they make a point of siding with the headscarved women. That said, Kemalist feminists, be they conservative or reformists, have two main concerns regarding the headscarf issue. First, they think that the AK Party as well as the other political parties use it as an instrument to further their male-dominant policies. The AK Party in particular uses it to assert the moderate Islamic identity it seeks to create. Second, they think that since the liberal understanding of laicism has not been established yet, its meaning changes according to whoever is in power; thus the implications and meanings attributed to the headscarf changes continuously.

In fact, not only the reformists, but all Kemalist Feminists agree, that the headscarf issue is used as an instrument of male-dominant politics. Some of them point out the paradox that although the current the AK Party government owes its success, to a large extent, to the activities of headscarved women, they are treated rather unfairly by the AK Party's male politicians.²⁸ What distinguishes reformist Kemalist feminists from the conservatives is that they do not take issue with Islam per se, but with the instrumentalized version of Islam, as used by those in power.²⁹ This is related to the criticism they direct against the Kemalist understanding of laicism. They argue that freedom of thought and conscience must be unconditionally guaranteed for all citizens and not just for practicing Muslims. They also advocate democracy and democratization, which they

think would only be possible with the establishment of true laicism. The way in which laicism is understood and practiced in Turkey, they say, leads to the exclusion of some from the public political sphere. And it is not only the religious people who suffer from exclusion. LGBTI individuals, to give an example, are also excluded.

Reformist Kemalist Feminists are also critical of what they call the “ideological predisposition of the judicial system.” Şenal Sarihan, lawyer and the founding president of the *Cumhuriyet Kadınları Derneği* (the Society of the Women of the Republic) says: “I worry about which court will hear my case, and I am ashamed to do so.”³⁰ Sarihan adds, that discrimination is not limited to political cases, it has spread to criminal cases as well. This lack of confidence in the judicial system adds to the Kemalist feminists’ sense of insecurity.

Their advocacy of a more liberal and pluralistic understanding of laicism notwithstanding, it is because of this sense of insecurity, that reformist Kemalist feminists still object to public service providers wearing a headscarf. They think that thanks to the present form of male-dominant cultural conservatism within the society, wearing religious attire has turned into a complex political problem that cannot be solved simply by referring to individual rights and liberties. They further think that the problem of religious attire is usually formulated not as a general problem of promoting the civil freedoms of all, but as a particular problem of furthering the political freedoms of the Islamicists. They point out that when it comes to joint projects of human rights advocacy, the representatives of political Islam cannot even stand the presence of, let alone cooperate with LGBTI individuals.³¹ They therefore ask of them, “whether the freedoms they demand for themselves, will apply to homosexuals as well.”³²

This self-serving and selective advocacy of freedom on the part of the Islamicists, combined with the discriminatory practices observed in the judicial system, lead the reformist Kemalist feminists to believe that the authoritarian and patriarchal mentality for which the Kemalist regime has been accused in the past, has not changed in the present, and that the appointment of headscarved women as public servants would therefore simply generate a new form of symbolic repression of all women in Turkey, including the headscarved. They know that even if the actors change, what remains the same in Turkish politics is the anti-democratic mentality. They find the revanchist approaches of the Islamicists, such as the motto “others have done it, why shouldn’t we” highly disturbing. Former Prime Minister Erdoğan’s exclusionary and in some cases even degrading declarations on women-related subjects is a further factor exacerbating their uneasiness.³³

This analysis suggests that the radical democratic demand to transform the authoritarian and unitary mentality that has marked Turkish politics since the inception of the Republic, into a more pluralistic and liberal direction, has made inroads, at least to certain extent, also among Kemalist feminists. With the notable exception of those who identify themselves with the radical nationalist (*ulusalci*) position, most Kemalist feminists accept, as a matter of fact, the existence of headscarved women as equal actors in the public sphere. However, even those who resist recognizing headscarved women as equal actors, admit that

“everything cannot be as we wish” and that democracy requires them to endure certain things.³⁴ Whether this acceptance is the result of the pressures of global politics, or of the confrontation with the AK Party who effectively challenged the decades long hegemony of the Kemalist ideology, the fact remains that “democracy” is now a term included in the conceptual vocabulary of the Kemalist feminists.

“Being ready for duty”: the everyday manifestations of militarism

Militarism is an indispensable part of the daily life in Turkey.³⁵ It exalts the *raison d’être* of the army and ensures the continuity of the Kemalist regime and its understanding of laicism. As such, it is a vital component of the socialization processes through which Turkish citizens internalize gender hierarchy and the gendered division of labor built in the nation state. Under this division of labor, “the ideal Turkish woman” is assigned the dual tasks of symbolizing modernity and transmitting the modernist values of the Kemalist Republic to future generations.³⁶ The Kemalist ideology does not expect women to assume any direct political responsibility in public affairs, yet in this militarist division of labor, it symbolizes them as citizens charged with the task of protecting and providing for the survival of laicism and the laic Republic.³⁷

With the rise of the identity politics in the 1980s and 1990s, Kemalism has evolved into a vocal political identity, and Kemalists positioned themselves as the defenders of laicism and the laic Republic.³⁸ In this process, the meaning of “political Islam” in the Kemalist consciousness, came to be associated with fear: the fear of a possible return to “sharia,” and a perception that laicism and the modern life style is under an existential threat. The Kemalist ideology attributes supreme importance to the Turkish Armed Forces and this institution, in turn, regards Atatürk as its eternal commander-in-chief and views itself as the supreme guardian of Kemalism.³⁹ Therefore, Kemalist feminists, particularly those closer to the conservative position, do not find anything wrong in teaming up with the army in defense of laicism. The conservatives see the army almost as a natural extension of the civilian domain. Thus they willingly embraced the Army’s campaigns against the so-called “reactionary movements” and supported it by organizing and/or participating in mass protests.

Both during the “post-modern coup” of February 28, 1997, and during the run-up to the presidential elections in 2007, Kemalist civil society organizations in general, and Kemalist women’s organizations in particular, held a series of rallies and demonstrations aimed at “protecting laicism and the laic Republic.” Both instances coincided with the rise of a public controversy in which the dominant, that is to say, Kemalist understanding of laicism was challenged. During that period two headscarved women became the symbols of the issue around which the controversy revolved: In 1999 it was Merve Kavakçı who campaigned as a headscarved woman and was elected as a deputy. In 2007 it was the Presidential Candidate Abdullah Gül’s wife Hayrünnisa Gül, who was

about to become the first headscarved First Lady in the history of Turkish Republic. Although Kemalist feminists differed in their responses to this situation, being caught up in the laic–Islamist controversy, they felt compelled to present a unified front against what they thought was the embodiment of the much-feared political Islam, namely the AK Party. Yet, despite the fact that they all participated in the so-called “Republican Rallies,” Kemalist feminists differ in the ways they interpret these events.

Non-Kemalists in general and political Islamicists in particular, identify the Republican Rallies with a military interventionist political position. Some Kemalist feminists who were active in the organization of the rallies admit that there was indeed a visible and audible militarist symbolism involved in the rallies, but they emphasize the fact that this was not the original idea. The identification of the Republican Rallies with military interventionism, they think, stems from an older coincidence. Ten years prior to the Republican Rallies, Kemalist women’s associations organized a “March against Shaira.” The march took place on February 15, 1997 and the “post-modern coup” of February 28, came soon afterwards. It was because of the lingering suspicions raised by this coincidence, they say, that Kemalist women are still perceived to be pro-military intervention. Yet, Kemalist feminists stress, beyond that unfortunate coincidence, that the two events had nothing to do with one another. In fact, Emel Denizaslani, who otherwise believes that the 1997 intervention was necessary and supports its aims, says that in the male-dominated public space of Turkish politics, “politicians never listen to women anyways.”⁴⁰

One of the factors that motivated the organization of the “March Against Sharia” in 1997, long before the AK Party came to power, was a public statement by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then mayor of Istanbul, to the effect that “democracy is not an end, but only a means.” Fearing “the end” Erdoğan had in mind was sharia, the organizers of the march chose to symbolize it with the picture of a woman in *çarşaf*.⁴¹ Seventeen years later, some Kemalist feminists criticize this choice of a symbol and note that headscarved women too participated in the march. According to them the sharia that they feared without knowing what it exactly was, was in any case, not their headscarved comrades.

What we meant by sharia there, was not my covered friend standing by my side. It was a grotesque, dangerous thing. You know those evil, fearsome, perilous things that exist but are invisible? It was an unidentified thing. But not the woman beside me.⁴²

Under the influence of this intoxicating fear, the more conservative of the Kemalist feminists think that in cases where the security of the state is at stake, military interventions can be seen as reasonable measures. Reformists, by contrast, are critical of the authoritarian and relatively discriminatory policies of the state, and do not approve of full-blown military coups under any condition. When it comes to public warnings issued by military commanders, however, their views differ. Some object to any form of military intervention in politics,

including such warnings. Some, however, fail to see any difference between such warnings and the public declarations of other, non-military actors or civil society organizations.

The Republican Rallies of 2007 were one of the most important cases which occasioned Kemalist feminists to reconsider their relations with the military. The rallies and the public debate they initiated were shaped around the slogan “neither sharia, nor a military coup, a fully independent Turkey” and almost all the Kemalist feminists interviewed refer to the slogan affirmatively. Yet the meanings attributed to this slogan differ along the conservative–reformist axis.

The protection of the Republican regime is of special significance to Kemalist feminists with a conservative approach, because for them, the continuity of the regime also means the continuity of the resources and liberties with which they carry out their political activities.⁴³ Starting with the changing international relations and rise of identity claims in the 1990s, the nationalist fear politics of “internal and external threats” gained more weight than ever since the foundation of the Republic. This discourse creates the illusion of a fragile context and extraordinary circumstances, and provides a fear-based justification for calling the military to duty when needed. Although there is nothing in the wording of the main slogan of the Republican Rallies that can be read as an invitation to military intervention, the comments of Necla Arat, one of the key figures of the rallies, reproduces the prohibitive and exclusionary understanding of laicism:

As one of the most staunch defenders of the Kemalist ideology, the Turkish Armed Forces is being tarnished by negative propaganda inside and outside. Members of the European Parliament never miss an opportunity to discredit our army. Voices raised in the EU and United States wish that the foundations on which the Republic is based are opened to discussion. For instance, they want us to replace the principle of laicism in the Constitution with “freedom of faith” to establish a religious–political affair based on religious communities, or a political structure that is predominantly religious.⁴⁴

At this point the nuance represented by Türkan Saylan is of particular political significance. Saylan was one of the speakers in the first rally and she was the first person to coin the slogan: “neither coup nor sharia.”⁴⁵ She was however not allowed to speak in the subsequent rallies. It is true that Saylan founded *Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği* (Society for the Support of Modern Life) to struggle against the rise of political Islam and to protect the “modern” or “laic” lifestyle against the threat it poses. It is also true that she did not extend the democratic courtesy she advocated throughout her life to the headscarved women. Yet, she was highly critical of those who used Kemalism as an excuse to further their authoritarian agendas. In her own particular way, she sought to advocate a pluralistic framework based on universal human rights and it was because of this perspective, that the closed circle of nationalist Kemalists prevented her from speaking in subsequent rallies. Although her idea of democracy was rather limited by her positivist modern worldview and she was rather intolerant when it

came to questions of freedom of faith, she respected humanism and human diversity, and she was a staunch critic of ethnic discrimination and racism.

Among Kemalist feminists closer to the conservative position, there are some who seek to explain away why Saylan was prevented from speaking in the rallies, with technical reasons. They also find her emphasis on "neither coup nor sharia" redundant, because they think that the "military intervenes whenever it thinks it is necessary anyway." However there are also Kemalist feminists who are highly critical of the radical nationalists who objected Saylan's taking the podium at the İzmir rally and ostracized her because of the anti-militarist position she took. They are also critical of the way in which the rallies have been subsequently transformed into show cases for militarist symbolism.

Some Kemalist feminists criticize the militarist symbolism of the rallies, and object to military interventions in politics, but at the same time they praise the foundational role that the military played in the establishment of the Republic. They see the transformation of the military from a "guardian" to a "governing" power as a major problem, but at the same time they evoke the spirit of *Kuvay-i Milliye* (the national forces which won the so-called "independence war" under the chief commander Mustafa Kemal) and the myth of "combatant mothers" to express their gratitude to the army which founded the Republic.⁴⁶ Some even refer to the militarist myth that "every Turk is born a soldier" to argue that "the army is nothing but the nation itself" and to interpret what they call "the foundational principles of the Republic," in this framework. This, they do, to emphasize that these principles are usually misconstrued in public political debates.

Another criticism voiced by the reformist Kemalist feminists is the incompatibility between the goal of societal democratization on the one hand, and the military symbolism that came to mark the rallies with the transformation of the organization, on the other. Kemalist feminists closer to the reformist position think that a public confrontation and democratic competition with the proponents of political Islam is both inevitable and necessary. Not all of them find the symbolic weight of the military necessarily problematic, yet they nonetheless find the military symbolism of the rallies as exclusionary. At this point the imagined social unity reproduces itself in the reformists' vision, but instead of disregarding the existence of the "other," it admits that the "other" exists:

There are people in this country who think otherwise. Our purpose should be to lead the entire society towards the same objective. When someone, somewhere says "I exist," the attitude should not be that of "I threaten you" but that of "I exist, please pay attention to me." When you utter words that offend some people, you sow enmities. This should not be the objective. We are members of the civil society organizations. The purpose of civil society organizations should be to create solutions that bring happiness, welfare and advancement to the entire society.⁴⁷

Kemalist feminists and the AK Party's politics of family and women

"Make at least three babies so that our young population does not decrease."⁴⁸

These words by former Prime Minister Erdoğan are the keystone in the gender policies of the AK Party administration, and the criticism directed against it. Ruth Miller discusses the policies imposed upon reproduction by rulers, arguing that the uterus represents "the state of exception" because that is how societal values that create the modern citizen are kept under control.⁴⁹ Constructing a society based on family and population policies is neither new nor specific to Turkey. The family is one of the main instruments used in the processes in which modern nation states are built, and the sexuality of the woman that represents the family reflects the values and hierarchy of the society.⁵⁰ Both Kemalists and representatives of political Islam use the appearance of women in the public sphere and their role in the family to symbolize their respective visions of what a "decent" society should look like.⁵¹ Their respective mentalities are best reflected in the ongoing debate on the interrelated questions of reproduction and the public presence of women.

In order to create the new bourgeois society, Turkish modernization emphasized that men and women were equal. Women were positioned as equal, so that the future generations of the society could be raised by "enlightened" mothers.⁵² This equality positioned women as active, "educated and capable" citizens in all aspects of social life⁵³ but at the same, it desexualized and controlled them through a corporatist and nationalist code of ethics.⁵⁴

Instead of criticizing this republican design right from the start, Kemalist feminists closer to the conservative position choose to focus on the fact that women have been granted equality only with the proclamation of the Republic. Thanks to the increase in the activities of the women's movement in the 1980s, some of them have indeed developed a basic awareness of the problems in the area of women's rights, but it is only with the AK Party's coming to power, that they started to call themselves "feminists." Reformists by contrast were in closer contact with the second-wave feminist activities of the 1980s and therefore they are critical not only of the way in which women were positioned in the early Republican era, but also of the present-day CHP approaches to issues of equal citizenship, sexuality and family. We must note that Kemalist feminists who are closer to the reformist approach in gender, sexuality and family issues may range from conservative to reformist in their approaches to other issues such as religious attire, attitude toward the military and ethnic pluralism. In other words, women who take a more conservative position in other issue areas may take a more reformist position in this issue area, or vice versa.

One issue that all Kemalist feminists from the conservative to the reformist have a consensus on is the restructuring of what previously was the Ministry of State for Women and Family as the Ministry of Family and Social Services by

the AK Party administration.⁵⁵ They all agree that with this change the role of the woman both in the family and in the society is reduced to that of a caregiver. This feminist critique of the AK Party's family-centered approach to women is common to all Kemalist feminists. However the ways in which they interpret the history of the evolution of family policies since the early Republican era show considerable differences along the conservative–reformist axis.

Conservatives argue that the AK Party's family policies resonate with the policies adopted since the 1950s by successive right-wing governments. One important source that they base their criticism on is Firdevs (Helvacıoğlu) Gümüšoğlu's work *Gender in Text Books 1928–2013*.⁵⁶ They argue, that the textbooks still reflected the gender-equal, laic, populist and pro-enlightenment discourse of Atatürk and his friends until after the mid-1940s, but starting with the 1950s, this discourse has changed. They justify this argument, by referring either directly to the above-mentioned book, or only to the foreword written by Necla Arat to its first edition. This group does not, however, question the male-dominated construction of the family and the society in the early Republican era.

Kemalist feminists closer to the reformist position also refer to Gümüšoğlu's book to criticize the sexist and conservative policies implemented after the 1950s. However, they trace the sources of their criticism to an earlier time, namely to the women's movement in the late Ottoman era.⁵⁷ They argue that it was this movement that influenced the foundational era of the Republic, and emphasize that it was CHP of those early years, that put off the demands of women. They also emphasize that the legal description of the "man" "as the leader of the household" positioned women as second-class citizens. It must be noted that the women in this group supported or worked actively for the changes in the Civil and Criminal Codes in 2002. The amendment to the Civil Code instituted gender equality in the family, and the amendment to the Criminal Code eliminated the reduction in the sentences in the honor-killings of women.⁵⁸

The AK Party's approach to gender policy since 2006 is most visibly manifested in such issue areas as violence against women, reproduction and social policy. On the one hand important steps were taken to fight violence against women, on the other, however, the AK Party adopted a political economy discourse that confines women to the "heterosexual" family and developed its social policies in this framework. Reproduction and sexuality are important issues in regulating the values of the society. In the AK Party administration, "desexualized" Kemalist women's policies⁵⁹ were replaced with "sexualized" policies, or to be more specific with policies that regulates the sexuality of women, by restricting it to reproductive purposes. Particularly social and reproduction policies associate the public presence of women with the family. While neoliberal social policies regulated the women by reducing them to the status of a "care-giver mother," a deeply conservative discourse on such women-related issues as abortion sought to legitimize the bans on women's sexuality and her role in the family. While women were instructed to have three children,⁶⁰ marriage became a prerequisite for fertility treatments. Although abortion is not banned yet, news

of physicians who refuse to perform abortions, and the resulting discussions restrict women to a life centered on reproduction and the family.

Kemalist feminists criticize the AK Party policies on different levels. All of them are positive about the adoption of the "violence against women" law, and the efforts of the former Minister of Family and Social Policy, particularly in the first administration. However, they are unhappy about the fact that Minister Fatma Şahin backed former Prime Minister Erdoğan in the anti-abortion debate. Although they support the law, they complain about the patriarchal nature of the protective mechanism it describes, the failure of the courts to implement its full force, and the statistical rise in the number of murdered women.

Conservative Kemalists use the blanket term of "*irtica*" (reactionary Islamic activism) to express their displeasure with such developments. This expression seems to reflect a pre-conditioned and unthoughtful reaction, rather than a carefully thought out criticism, for these policies fell well within the range of what is already expected of the AK Party given its culturally conservative ideological position. Reformists, by contrast, view the issue as part of a whole. First, they argue that since the anti-violence law privileges married, heterosexual women, single women, lesbians and transgender individuals are not fully protected. They also argue that by deriving women's rights from religious sources in general and from what is believed to be "women's creational characteristics," in particular, the law reflects the male-dominated mentality of its framers and as such it restricts women's sphere of action. Furthermore, since the recent reforms in the educational system now make it possible for families to homeschool their children, they feel that girls will be isolated from mainstream socialization processes. The reformists also follow and cooperate with the women's movement in general in its actions against violence against women.

Sexuality and division of labor within the family are issues that Kemalist feminists closer to the reformist position have been questioning since the 1980s, long before the AK Party started to formulate and implement its women's policies. They are critical of the fact that, despite the modern egalitarian discourse, the chastity of a woman is still a taboo, even in secular and modern circles.⁶¹ They believe that the AK Party's discourse and policies on women are deliberately formulated to polarize the laic–Islamist opposition. According to them, this allows the AK Party to keep the tensions between the value systems of the different segments of the society visible and polarized at all times. Thus for example, they argue, the AK Party sought to discredit the Gezi protests, by letting the pro-government mass media channels broadcast deliberately exaggerated stories about how headscarved women have been "victimized" by the protesters. They also draw attention to the question that Prime Minister Erdoğan publicly asked soon after the Gezi protests: "Who knows what boys and girls are doing in the same apartment?" The fact that CHP's Chairman Kılıçdaroğlu adopted this discourse as well is also mentioned as a particular disappointment by the reformist Kemalist feminists.⁶²

Should the existence of different sexual orientations be publicly accepted and recognized? Since Islamic circles already started to discuss this issue among

themselves, Kemalist feminist feel that they ought to embrace it right from the start. Yet once again there are some differences in how they approach this issue. Beyond some general, affirmative comments, those closer to the conservative position do not have much to say about the subject. The reformists however are well conversant about the demands of the LGBTI community and are even self-critical of their own failures in combating homophobia.

The linkage that former Prime Minister Erdoğan concocted between the Roboski killings and the abortion issue is the final point which Kemalist feminists, particularly those who adopt a reformist attitude not only on gender issues but also on questions of ethnic pluralism, find worth mentioning. Thirty-four ethnic Kurds were killed by aerial bombardment while conducting cross-border trade in the vicinity of Roboski and the government did not provide a satisfactory explanation for these mass killings by the military forces. Just as the attitude of the government was under public scrutiny, former Prime Minister Erdoğan declared that “every abortion is a Uludere,”⁶³ meaning that a single abortion is no less a disaster than the killing of thirty-four innocent Kurds. Reformists believe that with this statement Erdoğan adds insult to injury and introduces ethnic discrimination into an issue that was sexist to begin with.

This linkage between abortion and the killing of thirty-four innocent Kurds implies, that the AK Party government in general and the Prime Minister Erdoğan in particular assign themselves the exclusive authority to make life-and-death decisions. Reformist Kemalist feminists criticize both the sexual and ethnic elements of discrimination played out on the boundary between life and death in the sacred womb (in the case of abortion) or on the sacred soil of the homeland (in the case of the Kurds). For conservatives, however, ethnic differences exist in a different manner. To understand why, we need to turn to their views on nationalism.

Kemalist feminists and “the others”: nation and nationalism

In Turkey, laicism is intertwined both with nationalism, that is, with what is considered to be worth identifying with the nation, and also with what can be excluded from the definition of the nation as the unworthy others. The excluded “other” groups, such as the Greeks, Armenians and Jews were defined in ethnic terms—they were all non-Turkish—but somewhat paradoxically this classification also coincided with religious differences: the others were all “Christians” whereas the mainstream of the nation consisted mostly of Sunni Muslims. Obviously there also were Muslim/other belief groups, who were not Sunni, such as the Alevis, but the republican commitment to laicism allowed their religious differences from the Sunni mainstream to be disregarded, and the republican state assimilated them into the ethnic-based definition of the “Turkish” nation. There also were Sunni groups who were ethnically not Turkish; most notably the majority of the Kurds fell in this category. The republican state first considered them to be a part of the Sunni mainstream and as such sought to assimilate them into the “Turkish nation,” and when the Kurds resisted against assimilation by

asserting their different ethnic identities, they were reclassified as “others” along with other ethno-religious groups.⁶⁴

During the foundational years of the Republic, women’s struggle for freedom ran parallel to what was termed the national struggle for independence. Women supported the nationalist struggle, by criticizing the imperialistic tenets involved in their own intellectual sources of inspiration, namely the political thought and practice of the West in general and Western feminism in particular. As Şirin Tekeli shows, their criticism drew its strength from the self-sufficient and strong Muslim women’s identity they created.⁶⁵ The men of the era supported them and even became carriers of women’s struggle themselves. This was because women’s position fit very well to their understanding of laicism, which, in their formulation, was not fundamentally incompatible with Islam, as well to their notions of Westernization and nationalism.⁶⁶

Today, the relationship of Kemalist feminists with the “others” on the margins of nationalism is shaped around how they view the historical and current issues regarding Armenians and Kurds. Many prefer to use the term “*ulusalcılık*,” which is Turkish and has a secular connotation, rather than “*milliyetçilik*”—a term that has the same denotation, but is associated with the unity of the Muslims (*ümmetçilik*) due to being Arabic in origin. Conservative Kemalist feminists embrace the term “*ulusalcılık*” while reformists have their qualms about this concept as well.

As the centennial of the Armenian genocide approaches, the differences between reformist and conservative Kemalists’ approaches to this issue have also become manifest. Conservative Kemalist feminists choose to neglect, or even disregard, the presence of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. However, this is less a reaction against the AK Party administration where the taboo word “genocide” is gaining currency and more an existential rejection, the roots of which goes back to the proclamation of the Republic. They dismiss the Wealth Tax, imposed in 1942 against minorities to create a national bourgeoisie, and the pogrom of September 6 and 7, 1955, which was directed at the minorities living in Istanbul’s Pera district, by uttering statements like “Turks were always the working class; the minorities had most of the capital.”⁶⁷ Such approaches reeks of ethnic discrimination. The attempt at capital accumulation by transferring wealth from ethno-religious minorities to the Sunni Turkish bourgeois class identified with *the* nation, is viewed as a legitimate move. Moreover, this attitude does not specifically target the “minorities” alone: Conservative Kemalists, regard not only the ethno-religious minorities, but also the rural Anatolian people as “others.” For example, discussing the current power structure, they utter sentences like “the haughtiness of the hegemonic powers that be is rooted in Anatolia.”⁶⁸ While not all reformists call the events of 1915 a “genocide,” they emphasize that the truth must be openly discussed, and that “it is impossible to take steps without confronting the truth.”⁶⁹

For all Kemalist feminists, Hrant Dink is of special significance. When the Armenian issue is discussed, almost all of them are critical of the assassination of Dink. Conservatives assert that he was not properly understood, while reformists

may claim that the state is connected with the murder and criticize the injustice regarding the criminal lawsuit. The reformists also argue that Dink had a language which was open to dialogue, and that this prevented nationalists (*ulusalci*) from rejecting the issue altogether.

The attitude that associates nationalism with religion the most visibly is the hierarchical placement of Armenians and Kurds with respect to their allegiance to Turkey. For example, when discussing the right to education in one's mother language and the status of Armenian and Greek schools, a conservative Kemalist feminist associates Turkish Armenians with Armenia:

They are not a generation that was steeped in the system, whether coming from Armenia or otherwise ... But are we going to consider Kurds minorities? Will we separate Turkish soil from Turkish rock?⁷⁰

Centuries of Armenian presence in Anatolia is ignored in the Republican memories of conservative Kemalist feminists, which are shaped by nationalism infused with laicism. On the other hand, Kurdish demand for freedom to speak, learn and be educated in their mother language is perceived as an attempt at dividing *the nation*. The Kurdish issue becomes more layered and complex because their common religion prevents Kurds from being readily cast out as "others."

I believe in the indivisible unity of the nation. I think we must live through all good things together, but I consider education in the mother language the first step towards separation, much like the former Yugoslavian experience.⁷¹

Starting in the 1990s, the involvement of Kurdish activists in the women's movement caused Kemalist women to encounter Kurds. This resulted in a division between Kemalist feminists with respect to reproducing nationalism in a new language, and accepting Kurds as Kurds albeit with some reluctance.

For the conservative Kemalist feminists, the easiest path is to blame the Kurds and tell them how *they* caused the division. Today, Kemalist feminists do not call Kurds "murderers" or "terrorists" directly, which is a remnant of the "otherness" caused by the mainstream politics and media in the 1990s.⁷² There are some who argue that the actions on the day were necessary insofar as national interests were at stake, but years spent in the pluralism of women's movement has compelled Kemalist feminists to adopt a different language when formulating their discourse. Although some consider the peace process initiated by the AK Party administration as "the meddling of the foreign powers," they mostly defend the peace process and the elimination of discrimination. Since, however, in their politicized mindset the AK Party represents the absolute other from which nothing but an "existential threat" can emanate, and since the peace process was initiated by the AK Party, they cannot bring themselves to support it directly and unequivocally. It is therefore not surprising that even when they refer to the peace process affirmatively they qualify it with a big "but," and the reasoning that follows disregards the presence of the Kurdish identity and their

political demands. This attitude blankets the ordeals and demands of women in sameness.

The most obvious example of this, is on the issue of violence. The first example that comes to the minds of Kemalist feminists is the Women's Assembly in İzmir in 2005, where Kurdish women demanded that a separate workshop be held for what was experienced in the war.⁷³ Kemalist feminists reject the violence perpetrated by the state and the sufferings of Kurdish women due to the war. They argue that the claims of state-perpetrated violence prevent them from meeting on common demands, and that Kurdish women do this on purpose. The following is a statement by a conservative Kemalist feminist:

The subject was the violence perpetrated by the Turkish state on Kurdish women. We do not accept this. If there has been violence, we were all subjected to it. This is not something specific to the Kurds. They imply that the state has done it deliberately. We cannot accept that the state has done such a thing. When the issue goes off in a tangent, things we want to say about the assembly are compromised.⁷⁴

When asked about whether turning a blind eye to the war is some sort of discrimination, she explains that she does not discriminate against Kurds:

We definitely do not discriminate against women in the Southeast. We may all have Kurdish ancestors. We are not perturbed by this. Introducing such discrimination among women is not at all nice. It divides us and bothers us. It prevents us from uniting for a common cause. Of course we want peace at home and peace in the world. We believe that a time of peace will be great and bring much benefit to women. We know and understand the issues of the women there. We want them to understand us in return.⁷⁵

The willingness of conservative Kemalist feminists to hear the different experiences of Kurdish women is shaped and limited by the attitude of the traditional state discourse rather than the governments'. Although their thoughts about peace may indicate some change from the past to the present, their approach is shaped by the knowledge provided by the state and their relationship with the "other." For Kemalist feminists, especially for conservatives, the AK Party has generally been considered as the representative of political Islam, so as the other. Therefore, even before the Kurdish peace process, the AK Party's nationalist approach, which shares many common aspects with Kemalism, are not mentioned by Kemalist feminists. After the AK Party initiated the peace process, conservative Kemalist feminists found themselves in a double bind. On the one hand, they feel that they have no choice but to support it with an anti-Kurdish discourse, and on the other hand they try to distance themselves from the AK Party by questioning party's policies without a significant reason. Being aware of this inadequate justification, they turn their attention to Kurdish women as main objects of criticism.

Conservative Kemalist feminists complain about not being heard, yet they are deaf to the experiences and opinions of “other” women, because they do not consider Kurdish and Muslim women as their equals. They reject the conditions of war told by Kurdish women, the inadequacy of the infrastructure in Eastern and south-eastern Turkey, and state policies in the region. Meanwhile, they position themselves as superior to Kurdish women, considering them to be members of the “other,” lower ethnicity and class. Some of them seem to think, that it is up to them to save the Kurdish women, if necessary. In short, conservative Kemalist feminists still reproduce in their relations with the Kurds in the women’s movement the hierarchies of the nationalistic discourse, but at least they do not anymore disregard the existence of Kurds. In this sense, the denial policy of the state in the 1980s is no longer observed. When speaking of their own experiences, they position Kurdish women not as actors but as political objects. They believe they have exclusive right to knowledge and understanding about the issue.

Kemalist feminists with a reformist attitude may still be cautious on the Kurdish issue due to the self-censure imposed by Kemalist nationalism, but they are critical of the assimilation and war policies of the state against the Kurds nevertheless. When criticizing the state, they also argue that the Kurdish nationalist discourse may prevent hearing what the other side has to say from the start. This approach is mostly shared by those who define themselves as socialist or social democrat, and they believe that the 1980 coup and the subsequent hegemony of neoliberal approaches are to blame for the rise of the nationalist attitude that prevents dialogue. In this respect, on the one hand they support the peace process and give credit to the AK Party as the initiator of the process, yet on the other hand, they problematize the relationship established between the state and the political Islamist groups in the post 1980s period. Particularly reformist Kemalist feminist take the issue with the so-called “September 12 trials,” that is, the trials of the top ranking members of the military junta of the 1980 coup. They claim that the Islamists deliberately refrain from prosecuting all the responsible officers, torturers and civil groups involved in the coup. The reformist Kemalists, most of whom have themselves been direct or indirect victims of torture, believe that the Islamists simply stage a show trial of the leaders of the coup, to hush up the other perpetrators and state officials involved. In this context they use the word “Islamists” as a generic term denoting both the AK Party and other politically active Islamic groups.

Reformist Kemalist feminists discuss how, in the aftermath of the 1980 coup, benign words like “*örgüt*” (organization) were wholly associated with the Kurds and branded as “criminal,” and talk about the arguments that arose when they were attempting to use such words in their respective institutions. They are also critical of the assimilation policies of the state, namely such as the Diyarbakır Penitentiary experience, forced migration of the Kurds in the 1990s, the establishment of the “village marshals” system and people who went missing.⁷⁶

The Reformists admit the fact that the peace process was initiated by the AK Party and they welcome the ceasefire between the PKK and the Turkish military

as a significant development which has brought the decades long bloodshed to an end. Thus, they support the peace process and believe that it should continue under ceasefire conditions. They are, however, critical of the conduct of the parties in the process. They specifically emphasize that the parties need to listen to each other. They complain that some Kurdish politicians employ a language that is prejudicial, while saying that the way others speak may be an opportunity to help the nationalists understand the issue. For instance, a Kemalist feminist speaking about the attitude of BDP (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, Peace and Democracy Party) Deputy Pervin Buldan, who was the only Kurdish speaker in a meeting attended by Kemalists, was a good example:

It was a meeting on Turkish politics. Women from all parties were explaining their views. All other women spoke and were applauded. The final speaker was Pervin Buldan. There was grumbling among the audience when she took the floor. Buldan did not mind these and proceeded to speak calmly about what she had gone through as a human being and shared her experiences as a woman. The unhappy crowd became silent first. When she was done, they all applauded. Attitude and language are important. In terms of politics, I am closer to some of the Kurdish politicians I know than I am to Buldan, but they can be really harsh when on the podium. I am confident they can speak the language of dialogue. It is important that more people do so.⁷⁷

Reformist women also complain that people on opposing sides do not hear each other, but theirs is less a criticism of the other side, and more a sense of unhappiness with the mutual exclusion of the sides. This applies not only to Kurds, but also to headscarved women and all other identities. As Kendirci said:

One, we were unfair in listening to them. Two, we were unfair in recognizing them. Three, we did not make any effort.⁷⁸

Among Kemalist feminists who associate with the foundational approach of the Republic to varying degrees, the “other” religious and ethnic groups travel on a rigid line between existence and non-existence. This does not mean that they are unaware of or reject the presence of Kurds or the believers of other religions like the Armenians or Greeks. However, the difference with which they relate to these groups does mean that laicism or nationalism have different meanings. In other words, the meaning of laicism and nationalism differ among Kemalist feminists ranging from the conservative to the reformist, which sheds light on how they associate with the fundamental elements of the Republic.

For conservative Kemalist feminists the AK Party is the representative of the Islamic values positioned as the binary opposites of the secular values of the Republic. Regarding the Kurdish issue, the fact that it was the AK Party who initiated the peace process, put the conservatives in a double bind. On the one hand, even if they regard Kurds as the ethnic “others” and as such as an

existential threat to the Kemalist republic, they feel that it would be politically damaging to them to be seen as favoring an armed conflict in which thousands of people (and particularly Turkish soldiers) have died. So they feel they cannot not support the peace process. Yet on the other hand, they cannot bring themselves to voice an explicit support for the peace process precisely because it was the AK Party who initiated it. What is interesting to note in their discourse is, however, that it reflects a recognition of both Muslim and Kurdish identities. Their encounter with the AK Party forced the conservatives to accept and admit the political existence of both groups, which they had denied altogether before the 1990s. Reformist Kemalist feminists, for their part, approve of the peace process which the AK Party initiated. Yet they express skepticism about the inclusiveness of these policies as discussed above.

Epilogue: a different thinking for Kemalist feminists, but how?

The encounter of Kemalist feminists with the AK Party provides an opportunity for seeing nuances between them. The issues where these nuances emerge are the ones related to showing the disposition toward and relations of Kemalist feminists with religious attire, everyday militarism, family, reproductive policies, nation and “the others.” Throughout the chapter, I tried to deal with women who associate themselves both with Kemalism and feminism not as a homogeneous group, but as a community of heterogeneous affiliations and relationships.

The encounter with the AK Party was a turning point for Kemalist women. Kemalist feminists now occupy a range of thought from conservative to reformist depending on how they interpret the principles and reforms of Atatürk, and how they relate to them. For those who embrace the conservative approach, their fundamental reference point for sexism, relationship with religious people, laicism, the nation and nationalism is the principles and reforms of Atatürk. Their idealized representatives are Atatürk and his friends. Although both radical secular feminists and Islamists became more active in the 1980s, these two groups did not confront each other in Turkey, contrary to what commonly happened in the Middle East.⁷⁹ In the 1980s, the women’s movement, which was dominated by radical feminism, was critical of Kemalism, and argued that Kemalist reforms made women the symbol of nationalism rather than liberating them. During that time, many of the conservative Kemalist feminists of today did not adopt feminism and found the women’s movement to be marginal. While Yeşim Arat argues that Kemalist women transformed into Kemalist feminists against the Islamists in the 1980s and founded the *Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği* (Society for the Support of Modern Life),⁸⁰ these were not directly feminist initiatives, but the efforts of women who represented the Republic for “laicism and modernity.” Since these women believed that they represented the Republic, they saw it as their exclusive duty to advocate women’s rights. Their fundamental issue was to deal with political Islam, reactionary movements and religion, all of which they perceived as the “others” of Kemalism.

Conservative Kemalist feminists felt their “worst fears come true” when the AK Party, who for them represents political Islam, came to power.⁸¹ This led them, at the very least, to look at the liberal references nearby. Areas of struggle changed during this encounter. In reaction to the AK Party, they embraced the arguments of first- and second-generation feminists in the women’s movement of Turkey in the post-1980s with regard to equal citizenship, family, violence and sexuality—arguments that they used to criticize and were criticized about. However, they have completely missed the plurality argument of the politics of difference that emerged with the third-generation feminists. Just as the Western, nationalist and liberal values were reproduced in the early Republican era without opposing local Islamic values, women today became symbols against the AK Party, along the lines of the local Kemalist attitude with values that are Western and nationalistic at the same time. That said, it must be emphasized that “the woman” that conservative Kemalist feminists have in mind is a mirror image of themselves and does not show any of the characteristics of the heterogeneity of class, ethnicity and religion in Turkey.

Kemalist feminists with a reformist attitude encompass new ideas and people, although continuing to hold the reforms and principles of Atatürk in high regard. They believe, however, that these principles must be rethought and even reformed in a manner that is compatible with the times. They underscore the necessity of a transformation in mentality for a more liberal understanding of laicism. For example, they have no problems with headscarved women receiving education and working in the private sector; however, they are cautious when it comes to working in the public service. They also argue that the tenet of populism is not implemented properly or given adequate consideration, and that the political system must be shaped in accordance with the needs of the people. In this respect, coming to terms with what has been experienced in the Kurdish issue, catering for local needs and ensuring that the peace process goes beyond a mere ceasefire are important to them.

Most of the reformist minded Kemalist feminists have started to position themselves as feminists long before the encounter with the AK Party. Some have worked with “others” such as headscarved women or Kurds in the various activities of the women’s movement. When the AK Party came to power, reformist Kemalist feminists found the opportunity to convey their messages to their conservative counterparts with more dedication. With regard to the differences embraced by these third-generation feminists, they criticize the conservative attitude of their counterparts.

To sum up, the encounter with the AK Party is a crucial factor that introduced diversity into the Kemalist feminist group. The relationships between the conservative and the reformist groups are dynamic. The new political environment that emerged as a result of the release of the Ergenekon⁸² suspects, after the field study of this paper was completed, signifies that new relationships and associations are about to take place. Further studies may shed light on how these associations will be shaped.

For further studies, one should note down the tension between conservative/nationalist (*ulusalci*) and reformist sides not only among Kemalist feminists but

also Kemalists in general. After the release of the Ergenekon suspects, the tension between the conservative nationalist (*ulusalçı*) and reformist sides of Kemalists became visible. As a matter of fact, in our interview with Şenal Sarihan, the ex-Chair of *Cumhuriyet Kadınları Derneği* (Republican Women's Association), she had already given hints of such a tension. Sarihan had criticized the AK Party's adoption of a softer language about the Ergenekon suspects after the corruption scandal of December 17 had broken out. She had emphasized that it was unfair that in the Ergenekon trials a number of unrelated people were prosecuted along with names known by their affiliation with the deep state. And yet she had also voiced her concern, that in an attempt to cover up the corruption allegations against the AK Party, it was quite possible for all the Ergenekon suspects to be acquitted without merit.⁸³

What Sarihan had then foretold, did indeed happen. By what can plausibly be called a miscarriage of justice, all the Ergenekon suspects were acquitted, including the innocent victims as well as the conspirators of the so-called "deep state," and the conservative Kemalist position resumed its prominence in the Civil Society associations. It was in this context that during the 2014 general assembly meeting of the *Cumhuriyet Kadınları Derneği* (Republican Women's Association), the ex-CHP member of parliament Canan Aritman—who was known for her hardline ultra-nationalist stance and for releasing a photo of hers holding a gun to the press—displaced Şenal Sarihan as the president of the association. A similar tension was observed in the general assembly of Kader (*Kadın Adayları Destekleme Derneği*, the Association for Supporting Women as Candidates) during that period. With the votes of women who were registered as members at the very last moment by the nationalist group, the nationalist (*ulusalçı*) group managed to take the reins.

Although the release of the Ergenekon suspects resulted in heightening the activities of the conservative wing in *Atatürkçü* and Kemalist civil society organizations, the CHP, the founding party of the Republic, was observed to adopt a more reformist language. Particularly in its campaign for June 7, 2015 elections, the CHP not only advocated populist economic reform proposals to reach the more disadvantaged groups in the society, but it also adopted a more inclusive and democratic language embracing cultural and ethnic differences within the society and took a more pro-peace stance on the Kurdish issue. And despite the fact that Şenal Sarihan was displaced as the president in the civil society organization in which she was active, she was elected as a CHP member of the Parliament.

To sum up, in the aftermaths of the March 2014 local, August 2014 presidential, and June 2015 general elections, the reformist approach that I observed to be existing among the Kemalist feminists during my field research has gradually—and no doubt with the help of the political conjuncture—gained more visibility and prominence in the language that the CHP, the founding party of the republic, adopted.

Notes

- 1 Interview with Sema Kendirci on January 11, 2014 in Ankara.
- 2 Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Nil Mutluer, "Kimlik, Kültür ve Politikaları Üzerine Düşünmek" ["Thinking on Identity, Culture and Their Politics"], in Cem Erciyes (ed.), *Yeni Toplum Yeni Siyaset: Kürselleşme Çağında Yeni Sosyal Demokrat Yaklaşımlar [New Society, New Politics: New Social Democrat Perspectives at the Era of Globalization]* (İstanbul: Kalkedon, SODEV Publications, 2012), pp. 261–75.
- 3 Jenkins, *Social Identity*; Mutluer, "Thinking on Identity, Culture and Their Politics."
- 4 I use the terms "*Atatürkçü*" and "Kemalist" interchangeably. *Atatürkçü* is a concept which started to be used after the 1980 *coup d'état*. I refer to everyone who adopts one or more of the principles and reforms of Atatürk, or explicitly identify themselves with the Kemalist ideology as Kemalists. I do not see Kemalists as a homogeneous group because, they are not. For an in-depth discussion, cf. Ahmet İnel (ed.), *Kemalizm* (İstanbul: İletişim Publications, 2009 [2001]).
- 5 Instances of spontaneous social disruption like the Gezi protests, are difficult to grasp by non-participants and the words and actions of those who are in positions of power can easily become major reference points in developing responses to them. During the Gezi protests, the AK Party claimed that it was an attempted coup, and drew parallels between Gezi and earlier instances of attempted and/or real coups, particularly that of February 28, 1997 which had a severe impact on Muslims. The protesters' banging pots and pans at night was a further reminder of those strenuous days. Having been outcast by the ruling institutions of the Republic since its foundation and not having access to unbiased news sources (the mainstream media has been anything but unbiased in its reporting of the Gezi protests), Muslims found the AK Party's interpretation of events persuasive. Thus in the public/political discourses of the post-Gezi era, the words "attempted coup" functioned as a dialogue-stopper, and as soon as it was spoken, people who identified themselves with being Muslim stopped listening to the words of the others; they went into denial and closed themselves off. This was because the words "attempted coup" reminded them of the Kemalist Army, the staunch protectors of Atatürk's principles and reforms. For a thoughtful discussion of the public/political dynamics of the Gezi protests, see Murat Özbak, *Gezi Ruhü ve Politik Teori [The Spirit of Gezi and Political Theory]* (İstanbul: Kolektif, 2013).
- 6 Hakan Mertcan, *Bitmeyen Kavga Laiklik: Türkiye'de Din-Devlet-Diyamet [Never Ending Struggle: Religion-State-Diyamet in Turkey]* (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2013 [2012]).
- 7 Deniz Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler, Bacular, Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler [Odaliques, Sisters, Citizens: Identities and Social Transformations]* (İstanbul: Metis, 1997); Yeşim Arat, "Türkiye'de Modernleşme Projesi ve Kadınlar" ["Modernization Project in Turkey and Women"] in S. Bozdoğan and R. Kasaba (eds), *Türkiye'de Modernleşme ve Ulusal Kimlik [Modernization in Turkey and National Identity]* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), pp. 82–98; Fatmagül Berktaş, "Cumhuriyetin 75 Yıllık Serüvenine Kadınlar Açısından Bakmak" ["The 75 Years Adventure of The Republic From Women's Perspective"] in *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler/Bilanço 98 [Men and Women in 75 Years]* (İstanbul: İş Bankası and Tarih Vakfı, 1998), pp. 1–11; Yaprak Zihnioglu, *Yaprak Zihnioglu, Kadınsız İnkılap [Revolution without Women]* (İstanbul: Metis, 2003); Nil Mutluer (ed.), *Cinsiyet Halleri: Türkiye'de Toplumsal Cinsiyetin Kesişim Sınırları [The States of Gender: The Intersectional Borders of Gender in Turkey]* (İstanbul: Varlık, 2008); Serpil Sancar, *Türk Modernleşmesinin Cinsiyeti [The Gender of Turkish Modernization]* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014).
- 8 Feminists like Şirin Tekeli calls the state's nationalist support of women rights in the early Republican era "state feminism" and they are critical both of the founders of the

- Republic who grant women their inborn rights as if they were “privileges” and of Kemalist women who feel gratitude to the Kemalist men for recognizing their rights. Having the same criticism in mind, Ömer Çaha argues that “state feminism” is a misnomer for the early Republican women’s policies, because the aim of these policies was less the emancipation of women, than the limiting of women’s position in the nationalist project. Şirin Tekeli, “Türkiye’de Feminist İdeolojinin Anlamı ve Sınırları Üzerine” [“On The Meanings and Limits of Feminist Ideology in Turkey”] in *Kadınlar İçin için Yazular 1977–1987 [Writings for Women 1977–1987]* (İstanbul: Alan Yayınları, 1998), pp. 307–34; Şirin Tekeli, “Birinci ve İkinci Dalga Feminist Hareketlerin Karşılaştırmalı İncelenmesi Üzerine Bir Deneme” [“A Comparative Analysis of First and Second Wave Feminist Movements in Turkey”] in *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler/Bilanço 98 [Men and Women in 75 Years]* (İstanbul: İş Bankası and Tarih Vakfı, 1998), pp. 337–46; Ömer Çaha, *Sivil Kadın: Türkiye’de Kadın ve Sivil Toplum [Civil Women: Women and Civil Society in Turkey]* (Ankara: Savaş Publications, 2000). For further discussion, also see Arat, “Türkiye’de Modernleşme Projesi ve Kadınlar” [“Modernization Project in Turkey and Women”]; Nermin Abadan Unat “Söylemden Protestoya: Türkiye’de Kadın Hareketlerinin Dönüşümü” [“From Discourse to Protest: The Transformation of Women’s Movement in Turkey”] in *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler/Bilanço 98 [Men and Women in 75 Years]* (İstanbul: İş Bankası and Tarih Vakfı, 1998), pp. 323–36.
- 9 Yeşim Arat uses the phrase “Kemalist feminist” interchangeably with the phrase “egalitarian feminist.” In Arat’s usage both phrases refer to Kemalist women of the Republican era who call themselves feminists. For a detailed discussion, see Arat, “Türkiye’de Modernleşme Projesi ve Kadınlar” [“Modernization Project in Turkey and Women”]; Abadan Unat, “Söylemden Protestoya” [“From Discourse to Protest”].
- 10 Selin Çağatay, “From ‘Daughters of the Republic’ to Contentious Citizens: Kemalist Women’s Activism in Historical Perspective,” in Alexia Bumbaris, Veronika Helfert, Jessica Richter, Brigitte Semanek and Karolina Sigmund (eds), *Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte un/diszipliniert? Aktuelle Forschung (Studien zur Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte; 11)* (Innsbruck et al.: StudienVerla, forthcoming 2016).
- 11 Aynur Demirdirek, *Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayat Hakkı Arayışının Bir Hikayesi [A Story of Ottoman Women’s Quest for the Right to Life]* (Ankara: Ayizi Kitap, 2011 [1993]), p. 69.
- 12 Necla Arat, *Feminizmin ABC’si [ABC of Feminism]* (İstanbul: Say, 2010); Arat, “Modernization Project in Turkey and Women”; Ayşe Durakbaşa “Cumhuriyet Döneminde Modern Kadın ve Erkek Kimliklerinin Oluşumu: Kemalist Kadın Kimliği ve ‘Münevver Erkekler’” [“The Construction of Women and Men Identities in the Republican Era: Kemalist Women Identity and ‘Enlightened Men’”] in *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler/Bilanço 98 [Men and Women in 75 Years]* (İstanbul: İş Bankası and Tarih Vakfı, 1998), pp. 29–50; Ayşe Saktanber, “Kemalist Kadın Hakları Söylemi” [“Kemalist Women’s Right Discourse”], in A. İnel (ed.), *Kemalizm, Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce 2 [Kemalizm, Political Thought in Modern Turkey 2]* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), pp. 323–33.
- 13 Turkish-Islamic synthesis is the mixture of Sunni Islam with Turkish nationalism and Westernist elements. It was first formulated by right wing Intellectual Hearts (*Aydınlar Ocağı*) during 1970s, and it left its imprint on state policies after the 1980 coup d’état. The budget of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) and the number of mosques were increased, Qur’an courses were opened, compulsory religion courses on Sunni Islam in the state schools were introduced, religious bureaucrats and the *İmam Hatip* (religious schools) graduates became more active in state bureaucracy after the 1980 coup. For further discussion, see Taha Parla, “Dinci Milliyetçilik” [“Religious Nationalism”] in *Yeni Gündem*, Mayıs 19, 1986, pp. 40–41; Tanıl Bora and Kemal Can, *Devlet, Ocak, Dergâh: 12 Eylül’den 1990’lara Ülkücü Hareket [State, Ocak, Dergâh: Nationalist Movement from September 12 to*

- 1990s]* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991); Banu Eligür, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- 14 Necmi Erdoğan, “Neo-Kemalizm, Organik Bunalım ve Hegemonya” [“Neo-Kemalism, Organic Crisis and Hegemony”], in Ahmet İnel (ed.), *Kemalizm: Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce 2 [Kemalizm: Political Thought in Modern Turkey 2]* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), pp. 584–91; Halis Çetin, *Modernleşme ve Türkiye’de Modernleşme Krizleri [Modernization Crisis in Turkey]* (Ankara: Siyasal Kitapevi, 2003).
- 15 The difference between waves or generations of feminists may be summarized as follows: The first-generation feminists, starting in the nineteenth century, fought for women’s equality in voting, education and property rights. In the 1950s, the second generation worked to build a system that would respond to the needs of women in sexuality, social roles and relationships instead of a male-centered order. They criticized the domination of reproduction policies and sexuality on women. They enabled issues like birth control and abortion to be made into laws. The third generation of feminists was critical of how the previous generations disregarded differences among women, and stressed the need to fight against discrimination based on ethnicity, sexual orientation and class. One important theory that is relevant to the women’s movement and feminist literature in Turkey and around the world, one that has become a part of activist movements is the queer theory. According to the queer theory, since gender and sexual orientation are defined with reference to what is considered “normal” within power relations, these boundaries are not as clear and solid as those defined by the people involved in gender identity. For further discussion in the case of Turkey, see Tekeli, “Birinci ve İkinci Dalga Feminist Hareketlerin Karşılaştırmalı İncelenmesi Üzerine Bir Deneme” [“A Comparative Analysis of First and Second Wave Feminist Movements in Turkey”]; Arat, “Türkiye’de Modernleşme Projesi ve Kadınlar” [“Modernization Project in Turkey and Women”].
- 16 Çağatay, “From ‘Daughters of the Republic’ to Contentious Citizens: Kemalist Women’s Activism in Historical Perspective.”
- 17 I distinguish between the women’s movement and feminism because even though women’s movement seems to be the more comprehensive term, in practice the indeterminacy of that group’s ideas and actions has confined it to a discourse of women’s identity and victimhood. See Aksu Bora, “Feminizm: Sınırlar ve İhlal İmkânı” [“Feminism: Borders and the Possibility of Transgression”], in *Birikim* (İstanbul: İletişim, Issue: 184–185, Ağustos–Eylül 2004).
- 18 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2000 [1978]).
- 19 Durakbaşa, “Cumhuriyet Döneminde Modern Kadın ve Erkek Kimliklerinin Oluşumu: Kemalist Kadın Kimliği ve ‘Münevver Erkekler’” [“The Construction of Women and Men Identities in the Republican Era: Kemalist Women Identity and ‘Enlightened Men’”].
- 20 Interviews with C. and I. on January 11–12, 2014 in Ankara, with D. on January 20, 2014 in İstanbul and with G., H. and L. on January 23, 2014 in İzmir.
- 21 Interview with Gaye Erbatır on February 12, 2014 in İstanbul.
- 22 Interviews with H. on January 23, 2014 in İzmir. Interviewee D. has the same idea (January 20, 2014 in İstanbul).
- 23 Interview with B. on January 11, 2014 in Ankara.
- 24 Interviews with C. on January 11, 2014 in Ankara and with D. on January 20, 2014 in İstanbul.
- 25 Interviews with C. on January 11, 2014 in Ankara and with D. on January 20, 2014 in İstanbul.
- 26 Interviews with G., H. and L. on January 23, 2014 in İzmir.
- 27 Interviews with B. and C. on January 11, 2014 in Ankara and with G. and L. on January 23, 2014 in İzmir.
- 28 Interviews with C. and J. on January 11–12, 2014 in Ankara and with D. on January 20, 2014 in İstanbul and with G. and H. on January 23, 2014 in İzmir.

- 29 Muslim women have the same criticism. See Merve Kavakçı, "Kadınlar başörtülü diye milletvekili olamaz mı?" ["Can't women be MP as they are headscarved?"]. *Akit*, April 2, 2011; "Kavakçı Ak Parti'yi eleştirdi" ["Kavakçı criticized AK Party"]. *Milliyet*, April 28, 2011, at: www.milliyet.com.tr/kavakci-ak-parti-yi-elestirdi/siyaset/haberdetay/29.04.2011/1383814/default.htm
- 30 Interview with Şenal Sarıhan on January 11, 2014 in Ankara.
- 31 Here we must remember the significance of LGBTI individuals for Muslims. Most Muslims refrain from discussing this issue for religious reasons. Meanwhile, a small, Muslim democrat community supports LGBTI individuals' right to live and personal rights.
- 32 Interview A. on January 11, 2014 in Ankara and with G. on January 23, 2014 in İzmir.
- 33 Another debate that resonates with the question on whether public servants may wear headscarves when on duty, is whether deputies may wear a headscarf during parliamentary sessions. It has already been argued, that with the rise of moderate Islamicist movement, the headscarf has become the symbolic issue in the political polarization between laic and Islamic identities, and as such it has remained unresolved. This is evident in the manifest inability of the laic and Islamic groups to establish dialogical relations with one another. Thus, Muslim women, on the one hand, remonstrate that, except a handful of women's organizations, the women's movement stopped pursuing the headscarf issue once the AK Party came into power (Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, "Kadın Örgütlerinin İnkâr Politikası" ["The Denial Policy of Women's Institution"]. *Serbestiyet*, December 28, 2013, at: <http://serbestiyet.com/kadin-orgutlerinin-inkar-politikasi/>). Some Kemalist feminists who supported covered women in the 1990s, on the other hand, cannot understand how Muslim women came to forget the support they received from them (interviews with A. on January 10, 2014 in Ankara and with E. on February 12, 2014 in Istanbul).
- 34 Interview with D. on January 20, 2014 in Istanbul.
- 35 For a thoughtful discussion of militarism in Turkish politics, see Ümit Cizre, "Egemen İdeoloji ve Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri: Kavramsal ve İlişkisel Bir Analiz" ["Hegemonic Ideology and Turkish Armed Forces: A Contextual and Relational Analysis"], in Ahmet İnsel (ed.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 2 Kemalizm, Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce 2: Kemalizm [Political Thought in Modern Turkey 2: Kemalism]* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları 2001), pp. 156–79; Ayşe Gül Altınay, *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Education and Gender in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave, 2004).
- 36 Saktanber, "Kemalist Kadın Hakları Söylemi" ["Kemalist Women's Right Discourse"]; Altınay, *Myth of the Military-Nation*.
- 37 Altınay, *Myth of the Military-Nation*.
- 38 Since the Republican era Kemalism has always been a political identity, yet after the 1980s Kemalists started to define and construct their political identity explicitly in opposition to what they perceived as "other" political identities from which they perceived a real existential threat. Islamic and Kurdish identities, in particular, have emerged as vocal and challenging political actors in the landscape of Turkish politics and have served as the "constitutive outside" of the Kemalist identity in the aftermath of the 1980 coup. Gökçe Zeybek Kabakçı, "Neo-Kemalist Bir Hareket: Cumhuriyet Mitingleri" ["A Neo-Kemalist Act: Republican Miting"]. *İletişim: Journal of Selçuk Communication* 7, Issue 1 (2011): 96–112; Cizre, "Egemen İdeoloji ve Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri: Kavramsal ve İlişkisel Bir Analiz" ["Hegemonic Ideology and Turkish Armed Forces: A Contextual and Relational Analysis"].
- 39 Ahmet İnsel, *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 2 Kemalizm, Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce 2: Kemalizm [Political Thought in Modern Turkey 2: Kemalism]* (İstanbul: İletişim Publication 2001).
- 40 Interview with Emel Denizaslani on January 23, 2014 in İzmir.

- 41 The religious attire that fully covers a woman's body.
- 42 Interview with A. on January 10, 2014 in Ankara.
- 43 Çağatay, "From 'Daughters of the Republic' to Contentious Citizens: Kemalist Women's Activism in Historical Perspective."
- 44 Necla Arat, *Geldikleri Gibi Giderler [They will Go as They Come]* (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Publications, 2009), p. 176.
- 45 Baskın Oran, "Askerler ve Apoletsiz Askerler" ["Soldiers and Soldiers Without Strap"]. *Radikal*, Nisan 29, 2012, at: www.radikal.com.tr/radikal2/askerler_ve_apoletsiz_askerler-108653; Tanıl Bora, "Türkan Saylan: Bir İstisna" ["Türkan Saylan: An Exception"], *Birikim* 242 (Haziran 2009).
- 46 Çağatay, "From 'Daughters of the Republic' to Contentious Citizens: Kemalist Women's Activism in Historical Perspective."
- 47 Interview with D. on January 20, 2014 in Istanbul.
- 48 "Erdoğan: En az 3 çocuk yapın" ["Erdoğan: Make at Least Three Babies"], *Yeni Şafak*, March 7, 2008, at: <http://yenisafak.com.tr/politika-haber/erdogan-en-az-3-cocuk-yapin-07.03.2008-104290>
- 49 Ruth Miller, *The Limits of Bodily Integrity: Abortion, Adultery, and Rape Legislation in Comparative Perspective* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).
- 50 Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1997); Tamar Mayer, *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Setting The Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).
- 51 Nilüfer Göle, *Modern Mahrem [Modern Private Sphere]* (İstanbul: Metis Publications, 1991); Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler [Odaliques, Sisters, Citizens: Identities and Social Transformations]*; Berktaş, "Cumhuriyetin 75 Yıllık Serüvenine Kadınlar Açısından Bakmak" ["The 75 Years Adventure of The Republic From Women's Perspective"]; Durakbaşa "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Modern Kadın ve Erkek Kimliklerinin Oluşumu: Kemalist Kadın Kimliği ve 'Münevver Erkekler'" ["The Construction of Women and Men Identities in the Republican Era: Kemalist Women Identity and 'Enlightened Men'"]; Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *İstanbul Haneleri: Evlilik, Aile, Doğurganlık 1880–1940 [Istanbul Households, Marriage, Family, Reproduction 1880–1940]* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1998); Çaha, *Sivil Kadın: Türkiye'de Kadın ve Sivil Toplum [Civil Women: Women and Civil Society in Turkey]*.
- 52 Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler [Odaliques, Sisters, Citizens: Identities and Social Transformations]*, p. 97; Durakbaşa "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Modern Kadın ve Erkek Kimliklerinin Oluşumu: Kemalist Kadın Kimliği ve 'Münevver Erkekler'" ["The Construction of Women and Men Identities in the Republican Era: Kemalist Women Identity and 'Enlightened Men'"]; Saktanber, "Kemalist Kadın Hakları Söylemi" ["Kemalist Women's Right Discourse"].
- 53 Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları [The Essentials of Pan-Turkizm]* (İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz Publications 2013 [1923]); Çaha, *Sivil Kadın: Türkiye'de Kadın ve Sivil Toplum [Civil Women: Women and Civil Society in Turkey]*.
- 54 Deniz Kandiyoti, "Ataerki Örgütleri, Türk Toplumunda Erkek Egemenliğinin Çözümlemesine Yönelik Notlar" ["Patriarchal Networks, Notes on Analysis of Male Dominance in the Turkish Society"], *Kadın Bakış Açısından 1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın [Women in the 1980's Turkey from Women's Perspective]* ed. Şirin Tekeli (İstanbul: İletişim, 1990), pp. 327–40.
- 55 In 2011, Ministry Responsible from Women and Family was discontinued and Family and Social Services Ministry was founded instead.
- 56 Firdevs Gümtüşoğlu, *Ders Kitaplarında Toplumsal Cinsiyet 1928–2013 [Gender in Text Books 1928–2013]* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2013).
- 57 For a thoughtful discussion on the late Ottoman and early Republican era women's movement see also Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi [Ottoman Women's*

- Movement*] (İstanbul: Metis Women Studies Series, 1996); Fatmagül Berktaş, "Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Feminizm" ["Feminism From Ottoman to Republic"], *Tarihin Cinsiyeti [Gender of the History]* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları 2006 [2000]), pp. 88–111.
- 58 In recent years feminist movement started to call "honor killings" "woman's murder."
- 59 Kandiyoti, "Ataerkil Örtüntüler, Türk Toplumunda Erkek Egemenliğin Çözümlemesine Yönelik Notlar" ["Patriarchal Networks, Notes on Analysis of Male Dominance in the Turkish Society"].
- 60 "Erdoğan: En az 3 çocuk yapın" ["Erdoğan: Make at Least Three Babies"], *Yeni Şafak*, March 7, 2008, at: <http://yenisafak.com.tr/politika-haber/erdogan-en-az-3-cocuk-yapin-07.03.2008-104290>
- 61 Interview with C. on January 11, 2014 in Ankara, with K. on February 8, 2014 and with G. and M. on January 22–23, 2014 in İzmir.
- 62 Former Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement, at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fc6GuLnUXdI (accessed July 3, 2014); CHP Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's statement, at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vNTAnmDnXI (accessed July 3, 2014).
- 63 Uludere is the name given to Roboski by the state when many of the cities, villages, towns and neighborhoods' names were changed to Turkish as a result of state's Turkification policies in the early Republican era. As Kurds prefer to call the name of the town Roboski, I use this name. Former Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement, at: www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25352590/ (accessed September 15, 2014).
- 64 See Tanıl Bora, *Milliyetçilik [Nationalism]* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), specifically Etienne Copeaux "Türk Milliyetçiliği: Sözcükler, Tarih, İşaretler" ["Turkish Nationalism: Words, History, Signs"], pp. 44–52.
- 65 Tekeli, "Birinci ve İkinci Dalga Feminist Hareketlerin Karşılaştırmalı İncelenmesi Üzerine Bir Deneme" ["A Comparative Analysis of First and Second Wave Feminist Movements in Turkey"].
- 66 Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler [Odaliques, Sisters, Citizens: Identities and Social Transformations]*; Çaha, *Sivil Kadın: Türkiye'de Kadın ve Sivil Toplum [Civil Women: Women and Civil Society in Turkey]*.
- 67 Interview with D. on January 20, 2014 in İstanbul.
- 68 Interviews with C. on January 11, 2014 in Ankara, D. on January 20, 2014 in İstanbul and M. on January 22, 2014 in İzmir.
- 69 One of the examples of this discourse can be found in the speeches of Türkan Saylan, the founder of *Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği [Society for the Support of Modern Life]*; Tanıl Bora, "Türkan Saylan: Bir İstisna" ["Türkan Saylan: An Exception"].
- 70 Interview with C. on January 11, 2014 in Ankara.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Nil Mutluer, "Tactics in Between: Gendered Citizenship and Everyday Life of Internally Displaced Men in Tarlabası, İstanbul," (PhD thesis, Central European University, 2012), at: www.etd.ceu.hu/2012/gphmun01.pdf
- 73 "8. Kadın Kongresi Diyarbakır'da" ["8th Women's Congress will be in Diyarbakır"], *bianet*, May 13, 2005, at: www.bianet.org/bianet/medya/67289-8-kadin-siginaklari-kurultayi-diyarbakirda
- 74 Interview with H. on January 23, 2014 in İzmir.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Interviews with A. and B. on January 10–11, 2014 in Ankara, and with E. on February 12, 2014 in İstanbul.
- 77 Interview with E. on February 12, 2014 in İstanbul.
- 78 Interview with Sema Kendirci on January 10, 2014 in Ankara.
- 79 Arat, "Türkiye'de Modernleşme Projesi ve Kadınlar" ["Modernization Project in Turkey and Women"].

80 Ibid.

81 Interview with B. on January 11, 2014 in Ankara.

82 Ergenekon is an extra-legal ultra-nationalist Gladio-type organization closely associated with what is sometimes called the "deep state." The so-called Ergenekon trials are a group of trials in which hundreds of military officers, journalists and opposition lawmakers were accused of being members of this organization and of plotting a coup against the legitimate government of the Republic of Turkey.

83 Interview with Şenal Sarıhan on January 11, 2014.

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