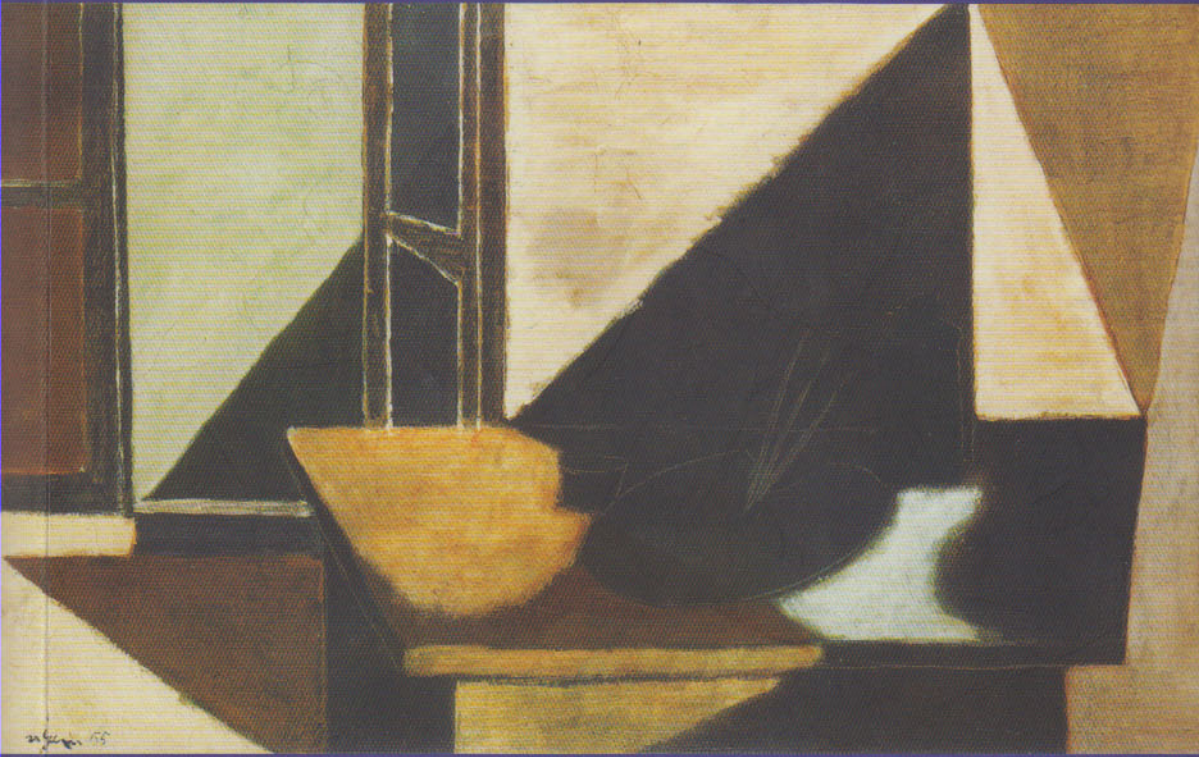


EDITED BY
Nermin Abadan-Unat
Gretty Mirdal

EMANCIPATION IN EXILE
PERSPECTIVES ON THE EMPOWERMENT
OF MIGRANT WOMEN



İSTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Will Islamism be Women's Rights Friendly? Compromises and Conflicts on Women's Rights Agenda in Turkey

SERPİL SANCAR

The point of departure for this book is to discuss the meaning and context of the concept, "emancipation", as one of the main targets of women's rights politics in the world. The concept was pointed out in Professor Nermin Abadan-Unat's article, "Implications of Migration on Emancipation and Pseudo-Emancipation of Turkish Women¹", about forty years ago as one of key concepts shedding light on the problem of gender equality in Turkey. Now, forty years later all writers of this book have joined to re-discuss the issues of "emancipation" of Turkish women which is still on the table; the concept still being of basic significance regarding gender equality and justice issues from Turkey.

My article will be covering "women's emancipation issues" from Turkey with reference to religious and feminist actors who claim rights in the name of women. Since Turkey is a crucial test-case for the relation between feminist/secular and religious women's political agenda we can go through the different meaning and differing political contextualization of "emancipation" issues made by feminist or Islamist women. From this point of view the fundamental question of this paper is whether a common political agenda designed by feminist and Islamist women which would be indicating evidence for a 'dialogical democracy' on women's "emancipation issues" is possible in a Muslim-majority country like Turkey, based on political pluralism. For do-

1 Nermin Abadan-Unat (Spring, 1977). Implications of migration on emancipation and pseudo-emancipation of Turkish women. *International Migration Review*, 11, 31-57.

ing this I will review a few selected women's rights (WR) campaigns from Turkey, providing data on emerging interactive relations between different WR actors including both feminists and Islamists which give birth to conflicting or converging claims on WR issues.

DIFFERING ORIGINS AND AFFILIATIONS OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS POLITICS IN TURKEY

If a brief analysis is needed on recent configurations of women's rights politics (WRP) and their political backgrounds, the context and reasoning of political conflict and dialogue between different WR actors on "common good for women" should be addressed. Through this lens, this paper will try to look at to the ongoing discussions between different WRPs and positions in which convergences, compromises and also conflicts occurred. By doing so I wish to shed light on the context and strategies of women's emancipation politics, which will be presented in the framework of a kind of pluralist dialogical democracy, emerging in an Islam-majority country with the participation of both religious and non-religious political actors.

When we look at to the existing women's rights movements in contemporary societies we can see different layers and constituent elements rooted in different historical backgrounds having survived to this day and others born contemporarily with different political devotions and affiliations. In this manner, contemporary WRP in Turkey has four main components each of which took shape in different historical and political contexts in the past and at the moment, is acting as confronting, compromising and collaborating political actors. We can categorize these different WRP groups as Modernist-nationalist (Kemalist), feminist, Islamist and ethnic rights based Kurdish groups (Sancar, 2011).

Modernist-Nationalist Women's Rights Perspective in Historical Context

Modernist-nationalist women's rights perspective is one of the political creators of the Turkish modernization period in which women's personal status rights were gradually developed. This period's early stage can be dated back to the beginning of 20th Century. During this period, personal rights related to monogamous marriage, divorce and custody rights for women were totally disconnected from religion and step by step became connected to equal civic rights perspective (Taşkıran, 1973).

When we consider legal reforms for women's rights of the Early Re-

public (dated to 1926) we see that they applied only civil rights, which were empowering women only within the family life but not in the social life and political institutions. The first Constitution (1924) of the Republic granted political rights only to men. Against this exclusion, WR organizations launched campaigns and petitions for suffrage (Zihnioğlu, 2003) but they were unsuccessful and women of the new Republic were not recognized as equal citizens to act as constituents of the new Constitution. Women acquired the right to vote later in 1934 and the first women nomination to the national parliamentary election was accepted as late as 1935; twelve years after the foundation of the Republic. This historical background has had a hindering effect on women's unequal political footing in political realms until recent times (Sancar, 2004; 2012).

The modernist-nationalist women's rights perspective was basically accounting for marriage based on registered consent, divorce on request, monogamy, women's custody right of kids, average age for marriage, right to educate for carrier jobs, etc, similar to other modernist WR's agenda. These rights were legislated as part of secularist reforms and this modernist mentality became the cradle of the WRP and remained unchanged until the late 90s. Due to the continuous rise of this perspective, modernist-secularist women organizations mainly concentrated on rights such as equal education for girls, women's integration to modern social life, to prevent any residual implementation of traditional patriarchal culture such as women's early marriage, honor crime, etc. This early modernist-nationalist women's rights perspective stayed as the basis for "gender equality" politics for a long time and has been considered as the basic conditions for women's emancipation (Arat, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Berktaş, 1998, 2002; Durakbaşa, 1998).

Ideological background of the nationalist-modernist women rights perspective was mainly based on "complementarities of the sexes" and "equal values of gendered roles" which actually referred to the gendered norms and ideological symbols of that time instead of "gender equality" per se. In this manner, this perspective was providing women the rights, which would relegate them to the position of participants of the new modern public as mainly founders of new middle class families (Akşit, 2005). While women, as "modern Turkish women representing the nationalist/anti-colonial ideological symbols, liked being honored as members of the Turkish nation they were also being assigned some specific feminine roles such as being the educated mothers of "the Nation" as show-cases of modern public life. This may be labeled as

the construction of a modern nation in a feminine way (Sancar, 2012). Nationalist-modernist women were assuming that these feminine roles did not belong to the private realm but were public roles originating from their citizenship responsibilities (Saktanber, 2001; Kandiyoti, 1997). These public responsibilities found their expression in the nurturing of new generations, designing new modern houses, dressing like modern women, educating the people of the new Turkish Nation, etc. Thanks to these responsibilities, women were called as creators of part of the new modern public but not as domestic servers. This was a new and active position for women but it did not really equate them with their male partners and, at the same time it could not prevent women from being used as simple instruments for cultural symbols of the new "Nation". This was quite similar to the case indicated and analyzed by Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) and Jayawardena (1986) as features specific to non-liberal and post-colonial geographies within which feminine roles mainly drew lines between western (colonialist) styles of living and native cultures.

Formation and Maturing of Feminist Women's Rights Politics

The feminist movement had the opportunity to come into scene and flourish during 1980s after the 12 September 1980 *coup d'état* which gave the military regime limitless power as a result of which it brutally wiped out all dissident political organizations. During this period of political silence, feminist organizations were grounded in a political context where no democratic political actors were corresponding to them since all other kinds of freedom and human rights organizations were already being crashed by the military regime. Between 1985-1995, the political conditions for a feminist "dialogical politics" aiming to discuss an updated WR agenda was not really available. Despite the disadvantages of this political climate, feminist groups gained ground and became political actors of engendering a political society.

When we analyze the ideological and political orientation of these groups, we see that they consisted of women from middle class, well-educated, critical about male-domination, leaning on neo-left and liberal political contexts. In terms of agenda setting, they were instructed to give priority to the politics of "personal is political".² During 1990s these feminist groups

2 "Personal is political" is a frequently heard as feminist rallying cry, originated from the feminist movement of late 1960s and 1970s. Many second-wave feminists used the phrase, "the personal is political" as referring to masculinist division between personal lives excluded from political realm which is mainly feminine areas.

became interactive as a political movement and created an anti-patriarchal agenda despite shortage of support coming from other political actors of freedom politics, neo-leftists, liberals, civil rights and peace movements (Tekeli, 1989, 1998, 1990; Bora & Günal, 2002; Arat, 1994). Instead, the feminist movement gained ground in the face of oppositions from neo-conservatives, Islamist and neo-liberals. This made feminist organizations, in some cases vulnerable, but they became strong enough to stay autonomous, and hold their ground for bargaining in the name of women's rights (Sancar, 2009, 2011).

At the end of the 1990's a feminist agenda for WRP became visible more or less and already started to be acted upon. Main items on the agenda were for legal reforms aiming to eliminate different kinds of gender discrimination and male dominations. Autonomous feminist organizations and connected WR activists were organizing campaigns against the cases in which women were victims of male violence, legal discrimination in front of the courts. Exclusion of women from political parties and trade unions or masculinist asymmetries in the labor market and professional carriers were also targets of these campaigns. Critics indicated that gendered praxis was prevalent in society, in state agencies, in legislation, in public policy implementations, in political institutions, in media, etc (AMARGI, 2005; Çaha, 2010; Sayan, 2011; Kerestecioglu, 2004; Apak, 2004; Simeland & Cindoğlu, 1999).

During the 2000s, feminist actors were faced with other kinds of rights based politics, such as the ones formed by women's organizations advocating Kurdish ethnic identity and Islamic conservatism which had come into the political scene concurrent with post-Soviet and neo-conservative movements. Then, the feminist WR agenda came to be re-shaped according to the claims and critics of these new WR actors. At the end of the decade, the political stage was acquainted more with collaborative WR agenda, which was in the process of being re-designed by the contesting or collaborating claims of different women's rights actors. These claims were focused on gendered inequalities, discriminations, marginalizations and exclusions of female groups based on class, ethnicity and religious beliefs. Women who belonged to lower classes, ethnic minorities, and religious communities were addressed by these discussions as victims of gender specific repression or exclusion. The new definitions of women's rights issues have been described according to their own ideological and political concerns and affiliations and so claiming

new specific solutions to their own concerns.

During this period of the 2000s, the concept of “emancipation” as a term speaking for repressed women was re-placed with that of “women’s rights” which had been translated from the trans-national feminist *jargon* to the native political language becoming more neutral and inclusive in the process. This language-turn also shows us the beginning of a new era in which the WR actors had become eager to use amore reconciliatory language and find collaborative entry points to lay the groundwork for dialogue and interactive politics. Through the following pages I will indicate some of the features of these occurrences and examples from their claims.

Rise of Kurdish Feminism

The Kurdish ethnic freedom movement was an end product of the military period of 1990s in which Kurds were faced with the brutal assimilationist politics of the old fashioned nation-state of Turkey. This repressive condition gave birth to an armed resistance movement launched against the state, championing the rights of Kurds, asking for the recognition of their ethnic differences and demanding a re-structuralization of the state towards being multi-ethnic. Also in the new Constitution Kurds would be referred as one of the ethnic co-founders of the Nation. Since then, the Kurdish ethnic movement has been fighting against the alleged homogeneity of the Turkish nation, which depends on the one-nation one-language model- which is obviously Turkish- and demanding multi-ethnic grounds for politics.

This political atmosphere gave way to the development of quite strong women’s organizations in areas where the majority of the population was Kurdish. Under these circumstances two different kinds of women’s organizations came into existence. Firstly, some Kurdish feminist organizations followed the path of other nation-wide feminist organizations in the 1990s. They were particularly active on the issues of violence against women. What was characteristic of them was their autonomous position against Kurdish ethnic-based freedom movement and political parties, and also the armed-guerillas of PKK and the Kurdish party elected to the Parliament (Çağlayan, 2007; Kutluata, 2003).

In a short period, they founded huge and effective organizations (such as KAMER and VAKAD)³ and established a well-running network provid-

3 For one of early succesful autonomous Kurdish feminist organizations see: <http://www.kamer.org.tr>; <http://www.vakad.org.tr>

ing protection for women who were faced with male violence. They organized counseling and information centers, shelters for women, strategies and policies for cooperation with local and state authorities. Their model of networking became "good cases to copy" for the other WR policies nation-wide.

Turkish Feminist organizations, which were formerly founded in the western parts of the country and the newly established Kurdish feminist organizations of the East became connected very soon and have generally acted together since the end of the 1990s. In time, activities of autonomous Kurdish women's rights organizations and their quick integration to nation-wide feminist politics had a reflexive effect on the Kurdish ethnic identity movement. These developments paved the way for affiliated WR organizations to be as much synchronized with the Kurdish ethnic politics as possible, yet the organizations still kept fighting for women's rights issues in general. They were founded as women's centers affiliated with the local municipalities governed by the Kurdist political party (DTP) elected by the majority of the Kurdish population in the Eastern and Southeastern part of the country. Although their priority was ethnic recognition politics, those women's organizations were very quick aligning themselves with the rest of feminist organizations (Taşdemir, 2007). Thus, these two kinds of Kurdish WRP have different political configurations and affiliations but they can be said to have a generally similar understanding of women's rights issues

In time, the Kurdish ethnic politicians were elected to the Parliament and they went beyond the limits of a traditional ethnic party politics. They became the champion of women's quota in local and national elections with a percentage of 40. In addition, they adopted a leadership rotation system between sexes in party branches and co-executive mechanism that allows the two sexes to work together on the boards of party branches and be actively involved in administrative positions and within the parliamentary group. The *Women's Forum*, which they founded as a part of the party organization gathered women from different parts of the society to talk about women's issues and expand the bases for female political participation. Moreover, they elected many women as MP's from the most under-developed constituency/cities of Eastern Turkey. They became a political party represented in the Parliament with the highest number of female MPs (Mojob, 1997, 2005; Gökalp, 2010; Yüksel, 2006; Sema, 1998). This development triggered other parties in the Parliament to enhance the female MPs rate by nominating more female candidates to electoral short lists.

It should be addressed that between feminist politics and Kurdish ethnic politics, there has been a huge reciprocal influence during the last decade. In the meantime, feminists have learned much about how to make self-criticism as members of the dominant ethnicity and to act against to the ethnic assimilation politics of the Turkish state. On the other hand, Kurds paved the way to a new gender sensitive ethnic politics prompting women's rights issues and gender equality in the remote and socially isolated areas of the Kurdish geography (Sancar, 2008, 2011).

In time, both kinds of Kurdish women's organizations, autonomous and Kurdish ethnic feminists, became part of the nation-wide networks, single issue platforms and WR's agenda, but they cannot be said to have cooperated much with each other since their political positions related with the justification of armed resistance politics of PKK was found controversial by the mainstream organizations. In this process some Turkish feminist organizations moderated between two different kinds of Kurdish women's organizations from time to time ensuring them separately to participate in WR's platforms. Today, without the participation of these two different types of Kurdish WR's organizations no WR agenda can be fulfilled successfully.

However, this does not mean that there are no problems between Turkish and Kurdish feminists. The cooperated steps for WRP were successful for the elimination of the rural, tribal, kinship and family based patriarchy and especially for the fight against violence faced by women. But the common political steps aimed to disapprove the armed conflict continuing between the state army and PKK guerillas could not gain ground. Unfortunately a political converging on an anti-militarist feminist agenda could not be much successful. Several efforts including the campaign for "zero tolerance against violence in society" and petitions calling for signature for political ceasefire couldn't gain enough support from either side. This divergent perspective still stays as one of the hottest issues on Turkey's current political agenda hindering a total collaboration in the way of WRPs.

Islamist Women's Organizations and the New Emergence of Muslim Women as Public Figures

Islam's acquisition of a paramount cultural and political significance has recently been observed in Islamic countries including Turkey. New Islamist perspectives are exuding and widening towards new segments of the society with increasingly more religiously affiliated people in the public sphere. As a con-

sequence of this Islamic flourishing it is also observable that more and more Islamic women are becoming visible in the public sphere as part of most political or civic activities (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006; Saktanber, 2004). For definition I can classify these Islamist women's activities in the context of Turkey's political society as follows:

1. Women groups of traditional religious sects (*tarikats*) affiliated with old style orthodox Islam which still has the capability to mobilize women easily after male-headed politics of religious creeds.
2. Women's organizations of new style moderate Islam grounded by the network of socio-religious civil society or non-profit organizations, such as Islamic foundations or women's organizations doing charity work (Yılmaz, 2014; Arat, 1999, 2005; Akman, 2008).
3. Women with militant Islamist or fundamentalist tendencies (Jihadist), members of fanatic Islamist political groups such as Hizbullah, Hamas, etc.
4. An autonomous and small but effective Islamist women's organization defined by a kind of Islamist WR agenda grounded through few platforms, such as *Başkent Kadın Platformu*⁴ or AKDER.⁵

These newly emerging Islamist women's activisms of all types paved the way for new styles of Muslim women's appearance in public. Their new voices and discourses are unavoidably raising questions, such as: whether male dominated religious presence is going under a kind of metamorphosis towards more gender equality?

I suggest that there are some indicators addressing a new kind of engendering religious practices as follows:

- Muslim women are signifying religious rituals in a new manner, attributing new meanings to their own female religious practices and acknowledging a new interpretation of Qur'an from women's perspectives (Tuksal, 2011, 2006). As a consequence of these practices the meaning of religious patriarchal symbols, like veiling, is being allegedly converted.
- Islamist women's presence in national media is increasing and a

⁴ <http://www.baskentkadin.org/>

⁵ <http://www.ak-der.org>

new Islamist women-centered language is becoming more prevalent. Thus, a kind of Islamic WR discourse using quasi-feminist concepts like gender justice or gender sensitive policies, male domination, violations of women's rights, elimination of violence against women is more visible than ever.

- Islamist women's participation in the decision making processes of political institutions and political parties are more justified and "NGO'isation" of Islamist women's political activities is gaining more public appearance.
- Some Islamist women's associations are increasingly active for equal partnership with the transnational women's movement running after building a common WR agenda and are more noteworthy than before. In addition, their capability of networking for the sake of Muslim women's empowerment is more possible and even powerful.

Can we Talk about an Emancipatory Islamic Women's Rights Politics?

In Turkey during the last decade, Islamist women's organizations became more visible in the public sphere and came closer to the political power center, by the victory of AKP who won the elections three times with an overwhelming majority of votes, as a pro-Islamist party. Concurrently, converging trajectories between Islamism and feminism were observed. Some academics called these women Islamic feminists and their perspectives as Islamic feminism. Since the emergence of the term in the 1990s it has become a widely discussed phenomenon. These arguments include different controversies, i.e. ideological references to Qur'an to justify equal rights for women, labeling of female religious practices as emancipatory and positions for those who seek to resist male domination practiced in the name of religion in women's lives.

Islamic feminism' as a term emerged in the 1990s and was defined "as a way of thinking that is feminist in its aspirations and demands, Islamic in its language and sources of legitimacy".⁶ It basically focuses on the premise that "redefining Islam claims to undermine Islamist patriarchal distortions and at

6 See Ziba Mir-Hosseini's work: 'Feminist voices in Islam: promise and potential', Open Democracy, 19 November 2012; 'Decoding the "DNA of Patriarchy" in Muslim Family Laws', Open Democracy, 21 May 2012; 'Islam and Feminism: Whose Islam? Whose Feminism? Contestation: Dialogue on Women's Empowerment, 2010, Issue 1, Islam and Feminism; 'Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism'. Critical Inquiry 32 (summer 2006), pp 629-45.

the same time rejects Orientalist stereotypes of Islam as uncivilized and backward”.

There are changing orientations for Islamic feminism. Some see Islamic feminism as having originated from an interpretation of the Qur'an by questioning Hadith and Sharia. Some others use mainly the methodologies of *ijtihad* (independent investigation of religious sources) and *tafsir* (interpretation of the Qur'an). The majority of Islamic feminist scholars focus on *tafsir* in order to reveal the egalitarian message of the Qur'an.⁷ Badran⁸ understands Islamic feminism as transcending and destroying the old polarities between the “East” and the “West” through basic affirmations of gender equality and social justice.

In general, Islamist feminists have been criticized for not being clear enough to demand universal formal equality. For the scholars seeing Islam and feminism as compatible, the emergence of gender inequality and women's oppression in the Islamic legal tradition is linked with the cultural past of early Muslim societies and the pro-patriarchal interpretations of various Qur'anic passages done by several jurists. Barlas criticized the assertion that claims Islam to be oppressive. She considers it as a possibility for sexual equality and women's rights to exist within the framework of Qur'an and argues that Qur'an is an anti-patriarchal text because it does not valorize men's creation over women. She defines the male-dominant social and religious configurations of religion as the reasons for gender inequality in Islam.

According to Badran (2005, 2007, 2009), if feminism is defined as an awareness of the constraints put on women due to gender, a struggle with these limitations and efforts to practice a more equitable gender system should be the case; and being a feminist and being a Muslim need not contradict each other.

7 For some examples of prominent Islamist writings see Wadud, Amina (2006) *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*. Oxford: One world. and (1999) *Qur'an and Woman*. Oxford University Press and (2006) “Aisha's Legacy: The Struggle for Women's Rights within Islam”. In Kamrava, Mehran (ed.) *The New Voices of Islam. Reforming Politics and Modernity - A Reader*, I.B. Tauris; 201–204.; Barlas, Asma (2002) ‘Believing Women’ in Islam: Un-reading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press; Mahmood, Saba (2005) *The Politics of Piety. The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton University Press; Sadiqi, Fatima (2006) *The Impact of Islamization on Moroccan Feminisms*. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture&Society*, 32.1, 32-40.

8 Bedran, Margat (2009). *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences*, England: Oxford Press; (2007). *Feminism Beyond East and West: New Gender Talk and Practice in Global Islam*, New Delhi: Global Media Publication; (2005) *Between Secular and Islamic Feminism/s. Reflections on the Middle East and Beyond*. *Journal of Middle East Womens's studies (JMEWS)*, 1:1, 6-28.

These scholars of compatibility between Islam and feminism are drawing attention to the complexities, pluralities, and historical specificities of different cultures that contextualize Islamic patriarchy and Islamist feminism struggling against it. It is suggested that non-conformity of Islam and feminism can be overcome by the emerging feminist voices in Islam.

The tendency of attributing a determinative role to Islam should be criticized for being ahistorical and for its monolithic conception of Islamic ideology and practice, and the lack of class perspectives in the debate on gender. As Kandiyoti argued (1997), women in the Middle Eastern societies should be studied not in terms of an undifferentiated 'Islam' or Islamic culture but rather through the differing political projects of nation-states, with their distinct histories, relationships to colonialism and the West, class politics, ideological uses of an Islamic idiom, and struggles over the role of Islamic law in state legal apparatuses. In this context, the sociological emphasis on the necessity for considering country-specific context may offer a different way to approach the question of compatibility by looking at how women in a particular context navigate the tensions between Islam and feminism.

For Turkey we have to ask whether any kind of Islamist feminism appeared in the public. In terms of women's problems, religious and Muslim women express the headscarf ban, violence against women, poverty, employment problems as the most important problems of women in Turkey (Aktaş, 2004; Benli, 2010; Meriç, 200; Özkan, 200; Ramazanoğlu, 2004; Şişman, 2005, 2006, 2009). The interesting point here is that most of the women's problems stated by the religious and Muslim women may coincide with the ones asserted by the secular women (Keysan, 2010).

Within this context let me point out two different presences of Islamist women's politics within Islamist women's organizations. Women's organizations, which constitute the majority of women's religious activities are giving their entire support for Islamist patriarchy and can easily be mobilized after male actors who make the decisions about political priorities. Therefore, these groups should be treated differently from Islamist feminist women's activism. Somehow these two categories have a close connection because they share the same religious sites and languages. Despite some clear conflict between them, the social, ideological and political effects are from the first to the second. Prominent and popular Islamist WR activists have strong effects on young pious generations as role models, despite their close ideas to feminist perspectives (Bulut, 2001; Ramazanoğlu, 2000).

Stages of Islamist Women's Movement in Turkey

Islamist women first came into the political scene in Turkey as a part of fundamentalist political Islam and speeded up with reactionary politics of 1980s. During this early period, Islamist women's political language developed via the critics of secular, modernist authoritarian, Kemalist state but not against the critics of patriarchy within Islam. They challenged the Kemalist definition of the "modern woman" and patterns for participation in public life as a secular "female". Islamist male politicians placed the veiled women's public visibility at the heart of their political agenda as "symbols of Islamic civilization". They considered veiled women's role as "path breaking" and as an effective instrument for legitimizing their political projects.

Thus, this early period was characterized by Islamist women's public appearance as veiled and in strictly dressed in Islamic codes. They were claiming their rights for education and participating in public services as teachers, lawyers of academics, etc. while still wearing the veil. This activism resulted in deep political conflicts between secular and Islamist political actors and spread towards state agencies, among civil actors and political parties and administrative authorities, even to supreme courts.

In time, Islamist women's political activism aimed to replace the old-fashioned" secular representation model in the public sphere with a new Islamist one. During this early stage Islamist woman's headscarf politics was constitutive against the "secularity of the public". The second stage of Islamist women's activism initiated by the headscarf ban politics of governments and Supreme courts' verdicts in 1997-8 (Turam, 2007; Türkmen, 2007; Arat, 2005; Saktanber, 2002). This stage was fueled by military intervention in politics in February 28, 1997. This military intervention fueled the stage and generated a turning point for Islamist women's political activities. All kinds of Islamist women's organizations and groups stepped forward and launched mass protests against the headscarf ban on university campuses. At that time Islamist male protesters were at the front line on streets and veiled women were behind them and seemed only as supporters to male activists.

At that moment the veiled women's role was to act as the symbol of Islamist politics but gradually male actors fell behind and veiled women activists became gradually more active. In fact, the headscarf politics has always stayed entangled with Islamist politics. Male-dominated Islamist parties like former RP (Prosperity Party) and the current AKP gave a top political priori-

ty to the issue but only to use it as an instrument of bargaining with secular political actors.

After 2002, when AKP won the governmental elections, veiled women moved to platforms of resistance ranging from public demonstrations, hunger strike, to letter writing campaigns demanding democracy for veiling (Yılmaz, 2013; Saktanber & Çorbacıoğlu, 2008). This had constituted extraordinary experience for Islamist women. The more they demanded freedom for headscarf, the more authority the Islamist party accumulated to control the state's power. This development paved the way for a new kind of Islamist women's political perspective in time.

Pro-Islamist AKP never situated itself in line with the verdicts of headscarf ban of supreme courts. Conflict between AKP and supreme courts on the cases of headscarf ban became a reason of conflict between Islamist and secular state elite and institutions. Recently headscarf ban has become irrelevant since different provisions let veiled women enter university campuses as students or academics, be employed in public services and be present in the parliament as MPs. At the moment, despite the women's remarkable presence in Islamic public sites strict gender segregation and subordination of women still continue within Islamist organizations and institutions becoming even more strict and visible.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND AGENCY OF FEMALE ISLAMIST ACTIVISTS

The differing female activists come up with claims of recognition or freedom for their different voices, identity issues, worldviews, etc, generate wide spectrum for women's movement all over the world. We may call them different kinds of WR activism organized as autonomous groups, associations, networks, and platforms united around a specific political agenda aiming to solve different kinds of women's problems or protect their human rights. As a critical vantage point I wish to refer to "the feminist agency" problematic. Regarding feminist agency problematic, feminist scholars had been asking a question: Can we talk about the female agency of Islamist women activists who are asking for specific rights for Muslim women? If they are claiming a kind of WR for their own, such as headscarf freedom, can we talk about their feminist agency? If this is possible, how did this Islamist women's agency happen? And how did their political activism come true despite the dominating patriarchal baggage of Islamism?

Feminist agency, as a problematic posed by liberal feminists, necessitates an anti-patriarchal consciousness if downgrading male domination is targeted. This is defined as a pre-condition for claiming anti-patriarchal actions and being labeled as “feminist” or WR activist. This female subject should be clearly acting against male domination for the sake of women’s emancipation. This definition of feminism suggests that women’s active and rational resistance against the dominant masculine norms and patriarchal institutions are necessary to become subjects of change. What is suggested here is that only the anti-patriarchal consciousness can lead to transformative feminist actions against male domination.

In the recent years different critiques on these suggestions have stemmed from different approaches and schools of women’s studies. On one side, non-liberal feminist scholars like Nancy Chodorow, Carole Gilligan, Seyla Benhabib, Iris Marion Young etc. tried to put forward a non-liberal critic of the feminist subject”.⁹ Some other non-western feminists went with these critics and tried to open a door to understand the non-western women who are acting differently. For instance Suad Joseph in her famous “*Intimate Selving*”¹⁰ did a pioneering example of these studies.

Path-breaking contribution came from Judith Butler¹¹ who gave a specific character to these discussions of agency. She suggests that only the engendering feminine performance can create emancipation for women. Since then, Butler’s definition for emancipatory agency has been mostly referred as basis for this kind of analysis.

On the other hand, pious women’s scholar of Islam, like Amina Wedud¹² who are talking from within Islam, interpreting Islamic sacred text, basically the Qur’an, suggest its consisting in basic gender equality in terms of sacred words and meanings. They think that gender equality and WR per-

9 Chodorow, Nancy, *Reproduction of Mothering* University of California Press, 1978; Gilligan, Carol, *In a Different Voice; Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* Harvard University Press, 1982; Benhabib, Seyla, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethic*, (Routledge, 1992; Young, I. M., *Justice and the Politics of difference*, Princeton University Press, 1990; Friedman, Marily, *Autonomy and social Relationship: Rethinking Feminist Critique*, Oxford University Press, 2003; Nedelsky, Jenifer, “Reconciving Autonomy”, *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, 1(1):7-36 (1989).

10 Suad Joseph, 1999, Ed. *Intimate Selving in Arab Families: Gender, Self, and Identity in Arab Families* (Gender, Culture, and Politics in the Middle East), Syracuse University Press.

11 Butler 1990, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge; 1993, *Bodies That Matter*, Routledge.

12 For Wadud (1999) and (2006) see footnote 7.

spective were already imbedded into Qur'an, which had been undermined in centuries by despotic and patriarchal religious authorities. They suggest Muslim feminist agency acting against male domination is possible if the anti-patriarchal content of Qur'an is followed.

Saba Mahmood¹³ followed these critical approaches from both a post-structuralist and a post-colonialist perspective. Like Chodorow, Gilligan and Benhabib and finally Butler, Mahmood criticized the universal, rational, individual hypothesis of liberal female agency. She tried to understand and give an explanation for more bodily, feminine, emotional, non-rational, inter-subjective practices of pious Islamist women. Her well-known book "Piety Politics" is representative of another way of criticism coming from a group of Muslim feminist scholars who have been educated mainly in western academia and have elaborated a critique of western liberal feminism.

These feminist scholars try to develop a non-western feminist perspective considering Muslim women's religious actions have something transformative. Some others like Ziba Mir-Hosseini¹⁴ can be categorized as scholars of Islamic women's actions with reference to "agency capability". They point out a kind of converging between feminism and Islamic women's agency. Mahmood studied this issue displaying examples from Egyptian pious Muslim women's mosque movement. Mir-Hosseini did a similar study with data on political practices of Moroccan Islamist women. They asked a basic question: If some Islamist female activists perform political activities stepping back from Islamist patriarchy, can we talk about an Islamist feminist agency in complete contrast to the liberal feminist's definition? All these feminist scholars' suggested that to retreat male domination, "a priori" conscious female subject is not necessary but only to act on behalf of women's presence, claims and needs. Consequences of these feminine actions bring transformation inevitably.

These approaches have received critiques from other feminist scholars of Muslim societies. For example Valentine Moghadam (2002, 2007, 2009) wrote that "what is there as transformative in Islamist women's action (with reference to Cairo's mosque movement called as *Kafaya* movement) as feminist is not clear". Also some other feminist scholars represent more critical and pessimistic views about any coming convergence between feminism and Islamism, like Leila Ahmet (2012).

13 For Mahmood (2005) see footnote 7.

14 For Ziba Mir-Hosseini see footnote 6.

I am not going to thoroughly discuss all these feminist theoretical and epistemological discussion. What I want to accomplish here is to display some data concerning the actions of Islamist and feminist WR actors who grounded campaigns in the name of their own WR perspectives.

On Women's Rights Campaigns

My approach is focused on the political actions of Islamist and feminist WR organizations, having converging or diverging praxis regarding women's rights issues. I analyzed their activism and their actions according to the different level. At first ideological level was definitive since WR actors have different ideological references justifying their political discourses, basically figured as religious or non-religious, individualist or communitarian, etc. These ideological references show us the possibilities of diverging attitudes between liberal, feminist understanding of gender equality or Islamists' understanding of complementarities of sexes.

Secondly, "the language level" should be taken into consideration as, terminologies, concepts, wordings, etc, used in conversation over women's rights. My research is asking whether different WR's languages are converging over time. Is this kind of convergence possible only in cases of common practices experienced as dialogical process? Are there any examples of different women's rights languages translated into each other? Has a kind of meaning and discourse transformations occurred through these actions? Has this convergence happened by dialogical processes of common practices? Thirdly, strategies lunched during campaigns needed to be reviewed, such as "dialogue, meeting and discussion on common ground", "to converge on a single issue agenda", "acting together" or "conflict and diversity". Fourthly, tool used as strategies by the WR actors during campaigns defined as "resistance against and controversial critics", "staying away and keeping silent", "coalition building" and "language transformation".

Campaigns for Analyses Chosen campaigns for analysis were as follows:

- Claiming reform for Personal Status Law and Criminal Law (1995-2005);
- Following policy design for elimination violence against women (2005- ongoing);
- Opposition to headscarf ban policy (1997-2011);

- Support for “No veil, no vote” campaign (during the general election of 2011);
- Opposition to the draft amendment on abortion regulation (May-June 2012).¹⁵

Campaign I: Legal Reforms for Women’s Rights (1995-2002) and Engendering Public Policies

Women’s rights activists who were in fact affiliated to different ideological camps used to be loyal to their political centers rather than a common women’s rights politics since they came into being after military coup of 1980s. Their consideration to each other as a potential political ally went back to the mid of 1990s. Since those days they time to time came together on WR platforms. First steps were during the time of Turkey’s efforts for EU accession and IV. World Women Congress in Beijing that were providing CEDAW norms translated and integrated to the Turkey’s national laws and regulations (Kardam, 2005). This process ran at the background gave raise acceptable conditions for cooperative actions for new politics of WR and the international community was pushing Turkey for further gender equality reforms.

This new era of politics for WR had a history not going back so far. It started with the signing CEDAW in 1987 and with the foundation of the national mechanism for women’s rights, General Directorate of Women’s Status, affiliated to the new Ministry of Women and Family Affairs in 1990 (at that time the name was Ministry of Women and Family Affairs) invited different WR organizations to participate to policy making process. This process was mostly guided by feminist and secular-modernists WR organizations and governing parties were a coalition between social democrats and conservative rights (Kardam, 2011; Kardam & Acuner, 2003).

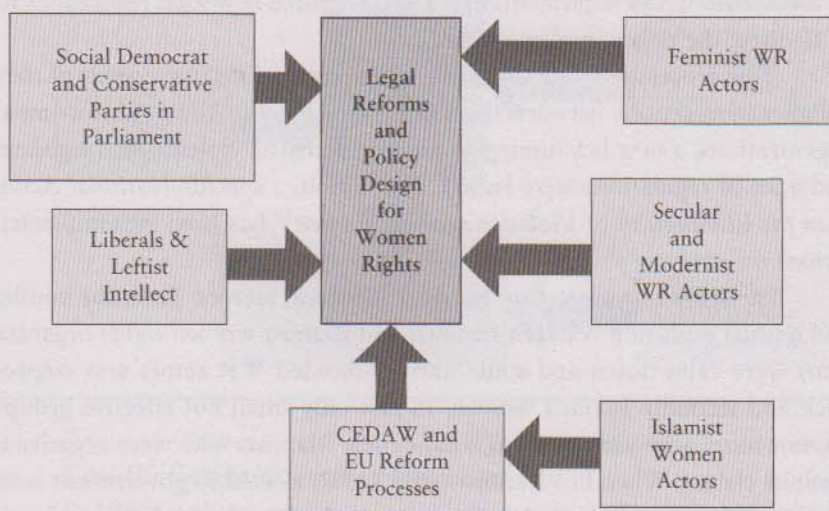
These efforts resulted with entire gender equality reforms legislated through re-writing Personal Status Law, Penal Code and enact a specific law (Law for Family Protection) to prevent violence against women (Gönüllü, 2005). This process of dialog paved the way for WR actors to face each other and discuss on issues and to voice their specific perspectives and require-

15 During these campaigns effective actors on WR issues were mainly Pro-Islamist ruling party (AKP); Secular political actors (political parties, trade unions, business associations, etc); Intellectuals (Islamist+ liberal+ leftist); state agencies and bureaucratic institutions (YÖK, etc); supreme courts like Constitutional Court and State Council; international actors (EU, etc).

ments. This was the first convergence between WR actors that were ideologically conflicting thus far (Uçan Süpürge, 2004).

When these activities were happening during 1995-2002 WR actors learned much about uniting on a common base to reach their shared goals. One of such Platforms was *TCK Platform* (Platform for Criminal Code of Turkey) (Aldemir, 2007; Yılmaz, 2006). You may see positionalities of different actors during the Reform Period of 1995- 2002 from Shape 1. As you see from the figures great consensus was reached due to the collaboration succeeded between WR organizations and government and other effective political actors of that time.

SHAPE I
WR Actor's Positionalities during Legal Reform (1990-2002)



Case II: Campaign for Protecting Women Against Violence (2002- ongoing)

From the beginning of 2000s, after legal reforms were completed, new WR organizations came into the stage which was founded to prompt legal reforms. These times WR platforms were running for a new public policy design aiming to prevent violation against women. Platforms' accusation on ongoing public policy was about the inefficiency of its tools such as shelters and

financial supports. Their critics were about the law which is responsible for the mechanism targets protecting women against violence. They said the law had not enough effective mechanisms for policy implementations and for monitoring the outputs.

WR platforms aimed to follow up violation cases one by one, in society, in courts or during the police investigation process. In the short period they become as *Networks of Women's Shelters* (Kadın Sığınakları Kurultayı)¹⁶ was including more than hundred specific women's associations and groups running for protection women against violence and founding new shelters for violated women.

At these platforms WR actors of modernists, feminists and some Islamists came side by side. The Ministry of Family Affairs directly worked together with these platform members, picked up their demands through policy formulations and implementation and configured new legal regulations for to re-direct the policy implementation.

This process evolved towards for new regulations. As a result of these collaborative actions between the Ministry of Family Affairs and women's organizations, a new law aiming to prevent domestic violence was legislated and a lot of regulations were issued. In addition, a specific *National Action Plan for Elimination of Violence against Women*¹⁷ has been into implementation.

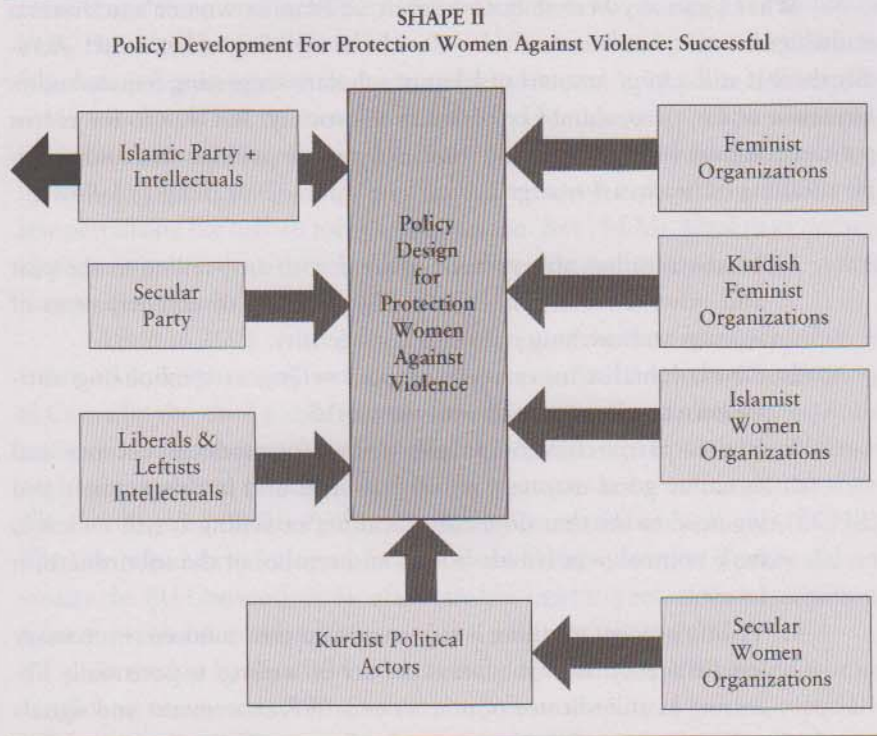
Earnestly this came true because of several factors. First, the conflict and mutual exclusion between feminist and Islamist women rights organizations were calm down and some narrow-minded WR actors was stepped back and secondly Islamist women- in fact only small but effective groups- became more autonomous from fanatic male Islamists who were negative to feminist claims. When Pro-Islamist party (AKP) elected to government some Islamist WR organizations claimed to be involved to the feminist platforms. Some Islamist women's groups played a bridging role between WR agenda and Islamist political actors that were governmental party, Islamist intellectuals, religious media columnists, etc.

Results were an update Law for protection of women against violence, new more effective circulars, in-service trainings for police, health care providers, lawyers, etc. During these argumentations public opinion has become

16 For politics against male violence see <http://www.siginaksizbirdunya.org>

17 For Action Plan see: http://www.kadininstatusu.gov.tr/upload/kadininstatusu.gov.tr/mce/eski_site/Pdf/kyais-uep-eng.pdf

more sensitive against the each cases of male violence. Again a great consensus was reached despite some resistance from Islamist governmental party and intellectuals. These positionalities can be seen on shape II.



Case III: Campaign Against Headscarf Ban

In 1980s veiling came to stage as a trans-national political issue of Islamism. Since those days it is suggested that the meaning of veiling is changing in the meantime due to the Islamist women's claims. Thus at the beginning of 21st century Islamist women's dressing is carrying more than one clear meaning since it possessed different historical, ideological and political layers. At the moment veiling issue put forward same questions to be replied: Does women's clothing has any innate meaning inimical to or advantageous for women's own interests, or reflects a historically specific symbolism of women's status? Did meaning of veil changed since those first appeared in public in 1980s, as consequences of Islamist women's claiming freedom for

it? Did headscarf dispute introduce a new epistemology of religion that the female bodies should count? Did headscarf gain different meanings apart from the one that is indicating obedient female bodies to be descent and modest according to the rules of Islam?

What I can say here that as a result of Islamist women's activism a multi-signification has occurred related with the meaning of headscarf. Actually there is still a huge amount of Islamist scholars suggesting female bodies as reason of sin, *fitne*, should be veiled in the society. But due to the recent political Islamist women's struggle some new meanings came true and multiple meaning of headscarf emerged. I can sum up these meaning as follows:

1. Modernism has always been equated with anti-veiling in the past and now. Unveiling is still the signification of emancipation of women and catching up western modernity.
2. Post-colonialist movements support veiling as symbolizing anti-western sentiments in all over the world.
3. Islamic patriarchal compulsory veiling for modesty, decency and feminine good manners is still powerful and in this manner and we need to see that dominant meaning of veiling is still indicates male control over female bodies and symbol of the subordination to men.
4. Veiling's recent meaning is representing a post-modern reactionary female agency. In this context the act of 'veiling' is potentially liberating as an indicator of non-western WR movements and signals a distinct cultural experience and resistance. This voluntary veiling is somehow indicating women's agency.

History of headscarf ban in Turkey: In the history of Turkey no government has ever enacted a law to officially ban wearing headscarf or veiling in public. But widespread misperception is that there is a legal ban in some context of public spaces, for public servants and for women MP's in Parliament, etc.

The headscarf ban issue first appeared in front of the public in 1966-7 academic year and student from the Faculty of Theology at Ankara University warned not to wear headscarf in the class. During 1980 military coup headscarf ban spread throughout the country as an implementation of military regime. It became more critical after the military intervention of Febru-

ary 28, 1997, so-called post-modern military intervention, *coup d'état*. *National Security Council* passed a decree prohibiting headscarf veiling in all public sites, including universities and public institutions.

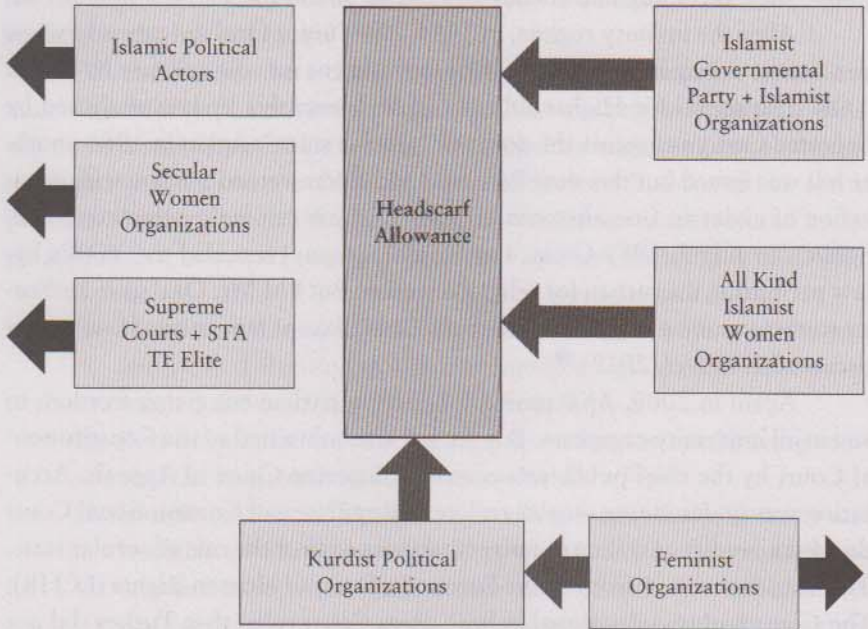
After the military regime, in 1984, PM Turgut Özal did amend by-law permitting veiling in universities. This amendment was disciplinary by-law of YOK (Institution for Higher Education) and soon this by-law abolished by Supreme Court as against the norm of "secular state". Again in 1988 another bill was issued but this time President Mr. Evren vetoed the law with accusation of violating Constitutional article: "No law can make references to religion". In July 7, 1989 Council of State (Danıştay) repealed the YOK's by-law permitting the turban for religious reason. But PM Mr. Özal gave authority to private universities to regulate the issue. Except few universities, veiling became free (Elver, 2012).¹⁸

Again in 2008, AKP passed a bill from parliament giving freedom to veil in all university campuses. But the bill was submitted to the Constitutional Court by the chief public prosecutor of Supreme Court of Appeals. Accusation was undermining secular regime of Republic and Constitutional Court decided a verdict as veiling in universities was against the rule of secular state. The last stage was in front of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The Court had two decisions. In both cases Court ruled that Turkey did not violate the EU Convention. Secular state has right to protect their institutions against anti-secular attempts.

In the last national elections launched at June 13, 2011 veiled women candidates were not included to the short-lists of political parties, especially by the governmental party. At the moment a balanced situation or consensus has reached between parts. Veiling in universities, in Parliament for women MPs and for public employees is free. This seems a kind of ceasefire created until the next stage. During this period countless Islamist organizations and groups arranged protests, petitions, public sitting in front of the universities and parliament, etc. Feminist organizations were mainly stay in silent and did not stand contrast to Islamist women's protests except small secularist (Kemalist) groups (Aldıkaçtı, 2005). Since those days veiling with different styles of headscarf became a part of fashion for young Islamist generation.

18 For Constitutional Court's verdicts and other regulations see Vural, Hasan Saim, 2014, *Türkiye'de Din Özgürlüğüne İlişkin Anayasal Güvence*, Seçkin Yayıncılık.

SHAPE III
Headscarf Allowance/Ban: Partly Successful



Case IV: “No Veil, No Vote” Campaign

“No Veil, No Vote” Campaign launched before the general election of 2011 by prominent Islamist WR intellectuals and activists. Pioneers were Islamist journalist and writers like Hilal Kaplan, Nihal Bengisu Karaca, Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal.¹⁹ Campaign got supports from some feminist organizations like KADER (Foundations to Support Women Candidates but from other feminist organizations gave a low-profile prominence to this campaign. Some mainstreaming media showed interest to the Campaign, like NTV and CNN.²⁰

For the conduct of the Campaign Islamist women organized a platform call for supports of others. But they got a reaction from Islamist male intellectuals, politicians and also from some Islamist women’s organizations. Only a dozen of veiled women spontaneously dared to declare themselves as a candidate to the short list of the governing political party (AKP). One of

19 <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/128808-kadinlar-artik-kararli-basortulu-aday-yoksa-oy-da-yok>

20 <http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=207940922565669>

them was Fatma Bostan Ünsal, a veiled Islamist activist, one of the founding members of AKP. She was the chair of *Capital City Women's Platform* in the past, which is one of the well-known autonomous and active Islamist WR organizations. Formerly she had declared her opinion at AKP's executive forum and claimed that: "Do recruit some veiled women as candidates to short lists at the national election. Otherwise I will declare myself independently as candidate in the name of veiled women". Ünsal added: "There is no legal obstacle for veiled women to be MP in the Parliament. We have supports from society but not politicians. They have not enough courageous to face with and solve this problem. 65 percent of Turkish adult women are veiled that means 15 million women have no right to be represented in the parliament. This case is against the Constitution, rule of CEDAW and ECHR (European Court for Human Rights)".²¹

Shortly after the declaration of the Campaign, Ali Bulaç, one of the well-respected Islamist writer and journalist wrote a column in to a newspaper, *Zaman*, and made undeserved critic about women of the Campaign. He accused women running for this campaign as follows:²² "Women who are asking for veiled MP in Parliament are going to set up against AKP. Because their attempt will be used as a reason to close AKP, by Supreme Court, with the accusation of being disregardful to secularity of state". He complained about women who used veiling issue as separate from religious obligation but as a personal and private preference. He said: "They were talking about veiling as a women's rights issue like feminists did. In this situation to come forward as a veiled candidate for national election can only serve to the party as a traitor or spy would".

This critic made campaign women angry. Nihal Bengisu Karaca soon wrote in her newspaper column against Ali Bulaç's accusation as "This is Islamist orientalism". She wrote: "How Ali Bulaç dare to judge Islamist women's religious fidelity and blame them as a spy of "white power" and being in subservitude to feminism. This is a "cold war language" and to fear of losing control over women. According to Ali Bulaç, Muslim women have to wash clothes in the house but shouldn't do commercial or professional businesses. We have no right to criticize Islamist but only you have it. You worth Muslim women only to follow you, give credit to you and serve to male power.

21 <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/128805-akpnin-basortulu-milletvekili-aday-adaylari-anlatiyor>.

22 "Başörtülü aday yoksa oy da yok!" kavgası", 03 April 2011, Sunday - 21:35 Haber Merkezi / Timetürk

You place women inside kitchen, bath and 3 bedroom house. You are a religious conservative man but very friendly with unveiled women and avoiding to come together with veiled women in time. You are critical about “western civilization” and, at the same time, become against veiled women when they raise their voice for their rights with the accusation of feminism”.²³ On the other hand some media news appeared during these discussions within that some unknown young veiled women accused veiled women who were steering the campaign as cheating others.²⁴ PM Mr. Erdoğan did only an open speech and said that “we will have more women candidate for election”. But not mention about veiling issue and vice president of AKP, Mr. Hüseyin Çelik declared that “this issue is not on our agenda”.

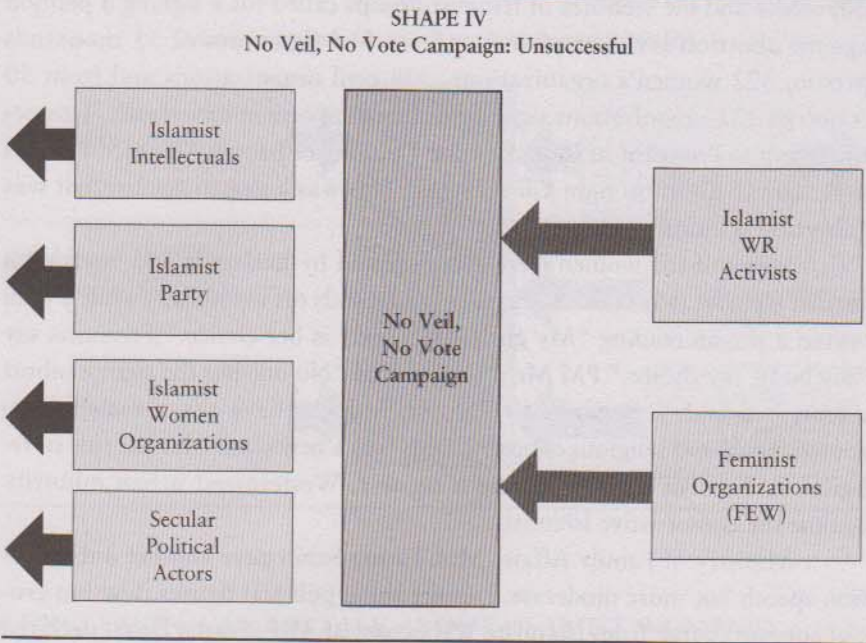
At the end, 2011 national election resulted without any veiled candidate recruited to the short lists and been elected. This case has been interpreted as an indicator of a new converging between pro-Islamist governmental party (AKP) and secular politicians and some secular state elite. Some scholars of Turkish Islamist movement suggested this as a clear signal of falling apart of old friends those were Islamist men and women of 1990s’ movement. But this was in fact a political tactic by AKP aimed not to act in accordance with autonomous Islamist women activists who were claiming disconnected steps from governmental party. At the same time it was a clear indicator of different mentalities and perspectives ongoing between Islamist WR activists and rest of other Islamist women’s organizations which could be easily mobilized after mainstream Islamist politics targeted to take the state power under their control.

Seemingly apart from this campaign, very recently, governmental party-AKP let few female MP’s of AKP to wear headscarf in the Parliament²⁵ and thus this issue had an end. But it seems not happened as result of Islamists women’s campaign but by the provision of AKP leadership and political will. So we may not deem this step as a success of Islamist WR activists’ agency despite their clear struggle for this purpose. It was allegedly part of AKP’s political tactics that made by a good timing to legitimate headscarf in the Parliament.

23 “Bazı kadınların seçilme hakkı”, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalYazar&ArticleID=1043996&Yazar=PINAR-OGUNC&CategoryID=41>

24 “Milli Görüş Forum’da haber: Muhafazakar kanat kadınları dahil olmuyorlar: Biri bizi kandırıyor!, karşıt görüşlü kadınlar” <http://www.milligorusforum.biz/mgforum-gundemi/50698-biri-bizi-kandiriyor-basortusu-yoksa-oyda-yok.html>

25 <http://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/basortulu-milletvekilleri-tbmmde-106542.html>



Case V: Campaign Against Abortion Law Amendment

Abortion in Turkey is legal since 1983 until the 10th week after the conception, although that can be extended to the 20th week if the pregnancy threatens the woman’s mental and/or physical health, or if the conception occurred through rape.

Not long ago, members of the government discussed limiting, if not banning, legal abortion rights in Turkey. PM Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called abortion as “murder,” and his government was working on legislation to ban the operation after 4 weeks from conception, except in emergencies. Against this governmental attack to ban the abortion rights several demonstrations took place all over the country. In each of them thousands of demonstrators organized large protest against amendment. Women gathered at the squares of the cities carried posters that read “my body, my choice” and shouted anti-government slogans during June-August of 2012.

During June of 2012 protest marching spread over the country. A quick and efficient campaign was launched²⁶ and moderated by internet, so-

²⁶ <http://kurtajyasaklanamaz.com/>

cial media and the websites of feminist groups called for a signing a petition against abortion law amendment and reached signatures of 55 thousands person, 372 women's organizations, 308 civil organizations and from 50 countries 221 organizations signed for their supports in two weeks. This petition sent to President of state, PM and Ministry of Family Affairs.²⁷ Petition says "ban to abortion right kill women". This was a slogan against that was "abortion is murder".

Many of the women were accompanied by husbands and boyfriends carried a poster that read "State, take your hands off my body," while a man waved a slogan reading "My girlfriend's body is her choice." Feminists say "my body, my choice." PM Mr. Erdogan said "No one has the right to abort a fetus in a body". Remarks by PM Mr. Erdogan have also revealed deep-rooted moral and religious concerns. This was a new clash over the role of religion in Turkish society putting a secular, Westernized urban minority against the conservative Islamists.

Ministry of Family Affairs Mrs. Fatma Sahin gave another anti-abortion speech but more moderate. Despite these political figures, few but crucial supports came from Islamists WR actors of AKP. Fatma Ünsal declared her opinion was against to the amendment because of this decision should be left to women. And she talked as critical about the process of law amendment that was not on party agenda and never discussed before to come in front of the public. This is not placed in any of party programs and campaign decision.²⁸

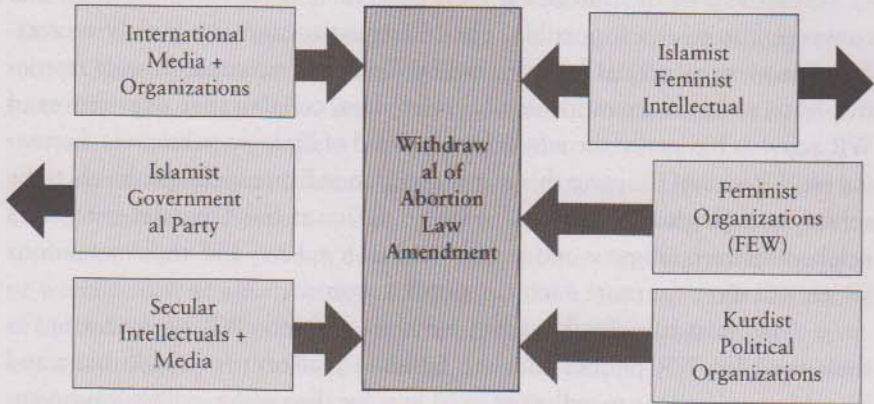
Governmental attack on abortion rights had a great attention from foreign media and reached critical interpretation from mainstreaming newspapers like *Independent*, *Christian Post*, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, etc.²⁹ Following public outcry and criticism from both domestic and international media, the Turkish government seems to have gone silent on the abortion issue and, at the end, governmental office stepped back and delayed the law amendment.

27 <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/139069-kadinlar-kurtaj-icin-orta-yolun-sartlarini-acikladi>. For protest movements see: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Vt579R6RhoM; <http://saynoabortionban.com/>

28 "Kürtaj yasasına karşıyım" -Fatma Bostan Ünsal- 09.06.2012, *Taraf*

29 01 June 2012, <http://www.turknorthamerica.com/>

SHAPE V
Campaign Against Abortion Law Amendment: Successful



CONCLUSION: CAN WE TALK ABOUT ISLAMIST WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION BY FEMINIST AGENCY?

What I see through the data, at ideological level divergent preferences still continue between feminist and Islamist WR actors but women's issues became one of the basic references in terms of rhetoric and sometime as discourse (Sancar, 2008, 2009). Most of the Islamist WR actors are referring genuinely to "sacred creation narrative" that is "complementarities of sexes" which conclude in sexual and asymmetrical division of labor in domestic and social life. And they are not referring enough to male domination and gender equality in public life.

At the level of WR language some newly appeared converging wordings and conceptions are observable. Within campaigns ended with successful collaboration, it was the fact that between prominent feminist and Islamist actors' interaction took place and they were playing as locomotive and mediator between different WR agenda. Islamist feminists and feminist theologians translate these WR wordings to religious languages but not mot. By the agency of this links Islamist WR activist carry this agenda to pious women to act upon. This translation is also paving way from Islamist to feminist language which can be observable in their more respecting language to religious creeds. Mutual resonance is clear when the consensus is reached

especially on legal reform issues and policy design but not much on rights of female body as individual human being.

At the level of strategies what is observable is the collaboration when converging strategies is possible. The collaborative steps are mainly successful when women's equal status in the family was concerned. Despite restrictive features of divergent ideological references, collaborative experiences of WR activists has paved the way for a new kind of dialogic politics via discussing on WR issues. I suggest this fact is going to indicate social problems to be solves by dialogical discussions concluding in, at least, partial consensus reached between religious and secular actors on policies and implementations which will serve for more emancipation for women.

The most transferable thing between different WR organizations is tools used for WR politics that are building platform for single issue and launching campaigns to call women to join for discussion, collaboration coalition building. During the campaigns it is observable that the mediating actors between conflicting and contrasting WR actors were crucial. Behind the successful results these crucial moderation were re-writing the women's claims. For example feminist groups moderated between feminist Kurdish and ethnic Kurdish organizations, and Islamist feminists moderated between feminist and Islamist religious women's organizations. These two types of moderations have played crucial roles during dialogs, translations and signing for petitions, etc.

Considering outputs of campaigns, it is clear that only the legal reform content was shared by different actors in the past and recently. The entire consensus was only reached on designing an effective policy for preventing violence against women in family life. The feminist and Islamist women's approaches to head covering were reflections of a larger division between individualistic or communitarian preference. Feminists promote women's freedom to choose and develop individual identity. Still many of feminist groups think that head covering is part of an Islamist ideology that symbolizes men's domination over women. Many of them state that they are against head covering even if they support a woman's right to choose what they wear. Covering the head should be a woman's free choice, but it cannot be considered as one of women's rights. It is clearly observable that some Islamists women who have a gender sensitive lens have modified their views towards more inclusion of feminist claims. All kinds of Islamist women activists agree together with feminists that women are oppressed by men. But most of them em-

phasize that women should not embrace a “feminist type of model” to reach a solution. Solutions should be constructed from within Islamist ideology. Like many Islamist women in other Muslim countries, Islamist women in Turkey see individual independent identity as a disturbance of collective harmony. Their solution incorporates individualistic feminist ideas into a communal Islamic way of life. Emphasis on community over individualism is most obvious in the orthodox women’s views that we observed.

As a conclusion additional emphasis is necessary on the divergence between feminist and Islamist WR agenda. Conflict between these agendas come true when WR politics deal with body politics and reproductive rights of women such as abortion right (Aldıkaçtı, 2008; Turam, 2008). This kind of individual and personal sexual rights claimed by the majority of WR activists couldn’t have any reflections on Islamist WR actors. Especially when the sexual rights of non-married women, and in the case of the right to be protected against male interests, or conflicting with communitarian *habitus* like privacy of virginity, give birth out of marriage, homosexual rights are very controversial and very often come under discussion. Islamist feminist actors are very keen on sacrificing female bodies for communitarian/religious reason and they are mainly justifying the religious norms for adultery, virginity requirement, anti-abortion, women’s asymmetrical and unequal family responsibilities, etc. In fact, all these gendered norms are not specific only to conservative and fanatic Muslims but also to all other modern conservatives such as Republicans of USA or Christian Democrats of Western Europe. But this case will not help Islamist WR activists to become women’s emancipation friendly. They are conservative and considering their communitarian role crucial and at the same time they put this belief to the background for women’s rights perspective and when this become controversial with women’s individual rights and body politics of emancipation they turn to communitarian values and consider feminist creeds as against women. On the other hand it is clear that feminist and Islamist WR actors are not becoming more collaborating with each other. The reality is not much about “approaching interdependent trajectories” but the changes and shifting boundaries between feminism and Islamism. The reality is continuously changing boundaries between WR actors especially between Islamist and feminist political claims. What is changing may be towards feminization of religious women and more sensitive feminist movement to other feminine identities.

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