

Working papers



**Community, Citizenship and Identity
in Turkey**

Feyzi Baban

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COMMUNITY, CITIZENSHIP AND IDENTITY IN TURKEY

INTRODUCTION

The nation-state's claim to unite a diverse group of people within the same community rests on the concept of universal citizenship. This provides not only the legal framework of who can be member of the community but also a social and political framework within which members of the community seek representation. Universal citizenship is the foundation of civic nationalism, where members of the community, irrespective of their backgrounds and identities, are subject to the same legal requirements provided they fulfill the obligations required for membership. One of the main promises of universal citizenship of civic republicanism is equal representation before the law which assumes that despite differences within the private realm, individuals are located in the public sphere as equals in terms of fulfilling their potentials and participating in their own affairs.

There are, of course, variations between modern societies and the way they organize their citizenship regimes. In countries such as Britain or the United States, where the liberal tradition has historically been dominant, the citizenship regime focuses on the primacy of the individual and diversity rather than the communitarian aspect of the republican tradition. (Isin and Wood 1999) The republican citizenship regime in Turkey, however, has not been hospitable to the idea of diversity and has usually adopted the position that diversity is detrimental to national unity and social cohesion. An almost obsessive emphasis on unity and cohesion, at the expense of diversity, has not just simply been a republican product. It was also the dominant principle of modernizing the heterodox and autonomous communities of the Ottoman society during the 19th century. These autonomous communities, with their separate jurisdictions and internal administrations, posed the greatest challenge to the idea of single political community organized around same rights and duties. In their subsequent efforts to introduce constitutionalism, the Ottoman modernizing elite aimed to create a single unified community but failed to recognize that the various communities of the empire desired separation from the empire. It is precisely because of this reason that the republican elite identified the heterodox nature of the empire as the principal cause of its disintegration and regarded Ottoman administrators as insufficiently radical to implement the conditions that were conducive to realizing a unified homogeneous community.

Notwithstanding the historical connections between the Ottoman Empire and France, the French style, Rousseauian citizenship regime, with its clear distinction between the public and the private, and its assumed role of the state as neutral, became a natural model for the citizenship regime in republican Turkey. The republican regime defined its political project as creating a modern national community and the citizenship regime became the central site through which such community is created. Within the

last decade, however, the republican political project has come under scrutiny by groups who claim that their values and aspirations have been excluded from the conditions of membership in the republican project. While Kurdish nationalism has expressed itself in a separatist movement, islamist groups have addressed the question of citizenship both in terms of political representation and cultural politics. The islamist challenge to universal citizenship has organized itself in two distinct areas. First, by seeking representation in the political realm, they have utilized the legal framework of citizenship and second, by raising group-identity demands in the public sphere, they have endeavored to expand the boundaries of universal citizenship. In both areas, islamist politics question and redraw the boundaries of citizenship in order to gain greater representation in the public sphere. Their demands constitute a radical challenge to republican citizenship, introducing private identities in the public sphere, and seeking representation in the public sphere based on the group identities, rather than on the accepted grounds of universal citizenship. Central to Islamist claims is the charge that universal citizenship's promise of equality masks the inherent inequalities of the private realm and fails to address their specific universe or life-world.

This paper argues that both projects, the republican citizenship regime and its critique by islamists define themselves in relation to the Ottoman tradition of community. That is to say that the modernizing elite adopted the Rousseauian notion of republican citizenship practices, not only in order to formulate a homogeneous national community united around a single common good, but also as a reaction to the heterodox communal structure of the Ottoman Empire. While trying to overcome the community based social structure and aiming to separate individuals from their traditional kinship, ethnic and religious ties by making them equal members of modern national society, the republican regime created another communitarian project in which multiplicity and pluralism were limited in order to realize a common good. Although islamists formulate their challenge as a response to the republican citizenship practices, their alternative is another communitarian project, entrenched in the Ottoman definition of community. As a response to the universal citizenship of the republican regime, islamists' alternative to this date is a community of independent and autonomous communities similar to those that existed in the Ottoman Empire. The paper further argues that both Republican citizenship, and the islamist challenge to it, have at their center a communitarian orientation of citizenship, which refuses to accept the fact that identity positions are always fluid and transferable. In this respect, both the republican and islamist interpretation of citizenship, aim to minimize the role of the democratic political process, through which identities are defined and group boundaries are redrawn.

In the following section, the paper will look at how republican citizenship excluded private identities from the public realm in order to realize dominant and homogeneous identities. Following this, the paper will look at the short-lived "medina document" debate to explore the islamist interpretation of citizenship,

CITIZENSHIP AND REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TURKEY

The idea of universal citizenship, that is of individuals having the same rights and responsibilities with respect to representation and participation in public life, is a direct outcome of modern community based on the rights of sovereign individuals. Modern national community struggled hard to establish itself against the persistence of religious, ethnic and various identities that were the basis of community in feudal world. (Smith 1988) and (Smith 1992) Contrary to the feudal notion of community, where membership was based on the hierarchy of groups, the modern notion of civic nationalism saw the sovereign individual as its legitimate agent around which membership in the community was organized. (Isin and Wood 1999)

Turkish modernity adopted this republican version of civic nationalism not only as the logical outcome of building a modern nation state, but as a historically specific response to the heterogeneous Ottoman system which was based on and organized around religious group rights. The modernizing elite in Turkey identified group-based membership as one of the biggest obstacles standing in the way of creating a socially integrated national community. Universal citizenship was important for creating a new self and society because it was the site of all that which was deemed to be new, modern and progressive. The republican elite considered the community defined by ethnic and religious loyalties as one of the biggest obstacles standing in the way of realizing a modern national *gesellschaft*. Mardin argues that the Kemalist elite saw the communitarian organization of the traditional Ottoman society as a serious obstacle to the creation of this autonomous subject. (Mardin 1992)¹ The *gemeinschaft* nature of the *mahalle*² system, with its strict Islamic moral value system at its center, did not provide a sphere of independent action for the individual. Putting the community before the individual, the communitarian *mahalle* system not only obstructed the autonomy of the individual but also eliminated any difference that was not in harmony with the values of community. In addition, the *mahalle* system, with its cell-like organization, created islands of communities within the city which were very much in tune with the general organization of Ottoman society as distinct and separated "*millets*". Generally the millet system and the organization of cities around the *mahalle* system was said to be responsible for the lack of civil society in late Ottoman society.

¹ The same article was also published in (Mardin 1981 : 191-219)

² Even though Mahalle in its technical description indicates an administrative system within a city, according to Mardin it is also a social space where the average Ottoman subject used to spend his/her life. Mahalle is a self contained space where residents receive their education, celebrate marriage and birth as well as where deaths are mourned. The center of the mahalle is a mosque where the imam acts not only as a religious leader but also a community organizer. For more see (Mardin 1992 : 73-74). That the defining characteristic of the mahalle system was a strong and strict application of its communal value system ensured individual compliance with these values. It was, for instance, common for mahalle residents to bust into the houses of single women when there was gossip involving a relationship with a man. In the Ottoman literature and traditional Ottoman theater, themes focusing on the structure of mahalle and the relationships in it occupy an important place.

This distinctive character of the Ottoman system kept the traditional societal organization intact and did not allow civil society to emerge as an autonomous social sphere.³

The republican modernizing elite knew that in order to create a modern nation state, they had to break with the *gemeinschaft* of the *mahalle* system and form an autonomous social space in which the modern subject would be the agent. Mardin argues that Atatürk was aware of the monotonous and uniform nature of the *mahalle* community and the obstacles it posed to the emergence of modern subject. He was determined to break with the communitarian system by introducing a series of reforms ranging from education to the control of religion. (Mardin 1992 : 76)⁴ Similarly Sarıbay points out that the modernizing elite, in order to create a sphere of individual autonomy, aimed to replace community with society, *gemeinschaft* with *gesellschaft*. For them, it was society, with its diversified division of labour and freedom from religious and communal constraints, and not the community, that would provide the basis for individual autonomy. (Saribay 1994 : 146-148) Furthermore, the public sphere of equally situated citizens eliminates the chaotic world of various groups and private identities who may have differing values that do not necessarily conform to those of the common good of the national community.

The relationship between national identity and universal citizenship has another important function in the case of Republican Turkey: citizenship facilitates social integration: Individuals are assumed to have one common goal to realize. Particularly in the Turkish republican experience, universal citizenship is the basis for social integration formulated by a Rousseauian General Will. The universal citizenship of the republican tradition replaces the individual wills of private individuals with the Rousseauian General Will of the entire body of citizens. (Baker 1992)

In this respect, citizenship in Turkey operated as a societal project through which modern national identity could be created. Because of this the properties of the universal citizenship were rationalism, progress, the modern nation, and secularism whereas those relegated to the private realm were ethnic identities, religion, and traditional social relations. (Sunar 1996) The citizenship regime in Turkey had the specific mission of representing a modern and rational society while the habits of traditional society were left to the private sphere. What is important to emphasize, however, is that the modern project did not seek to eradicate tradition from the heads of

³ For more on the development of civil society in late Ottoman society see (Mardin 1987 : 7-16) and (Saribay 1994)

⁴ Mardin also argues that Atatürk was significantly different from his comrades in the sense that he paid more attention to the concept of "individual autonomy". He argues that, given that during his time fascism and communism were rising as totalitarian systems, he clearly stayed away from populist dictatorship. (Mardin 1992 : 18)

the people. Rather, the universal citizenship practices simply worked to confine tradition to the private realm.⁵

As noted earlier, the Turkish Republic based its legal framework on positive law, where all citizens are equal before the law, while establishing a modern bureaucracy to provide services to all citizens. The principle of populism proposed that no difference exist among citizens, refusing “preferential” treatment to any group, class, family or individual. The modern reforms were detailed enough to ensure the impartial public life where the state treats citizens as equals. Toprak defines the neutrality of the citizenship regime in Turkey as follows:

Turkey is among the few non-Western countries which was not colonized and which inherited a bureaucracy and an intellectual milieu already under the influence of universal legal forms. The reforms of the early republican period laid the foundations for a secular legal system which recognized gender equality, secular education, and a conception of public service, both within the bureaucracy and in the political arena, which did not rest on class differentiation, ethnic background or kinship ties. Thus, the political and the bureaucratic establishment never belonged to a specific ethnic group, family, clan or people of the same class. This is important for state-society relations. A conception of the public sphere which is value neutral in terms of ethnic or kinship ties and which rests on universal criteria does not exist in many parts of the developing world and perhaps explains the unique position of Turkey in the Middle Eastern context... (Toprak 1996 : 87)

Toprak's description of the citizenship regime in Turkey as unique in the Middle Eastern context is a correct assessment. Yet, the implementation of universal citizenship in Turkey is also different from Western experience. Contrary to Western citizenship practices, based on an exclusionary practices and long history of painful political struggle by marginalized groups like ethnic minorities or women for inclusion, Turkish citizenship was inclusionary from the beginning. In order to create a socially integrated national community out of heterogeneous groups of people, Turkish modernization included various ethnic and religious groups under the umbrella of universal citizenship. However accurate Toprak's account of the neutrality of Turkish citizenship, it fails to recognize the double problematic of the citizenship regime. This is that the very principle of universal citizenship is centered around a notion of the

⁵ Given the fact that secularism was one of the principles of modern citizenship that received special attention from the modernizing elite, because they firmly believed that society could not be modern if religion played a public role, religion was not banned on a personal level. Comparisons are usually made between the early days of the Turkish Republic's attitude towards religion and those of socialist countries. Unlike the socialist countries the modernizing elite in Turkey did not ban religious practice altogether but paid special attention to eliminate religion's role in public life. The best example of this attitude is probably the role of the state in religious education. With the 1924 law of unification of all education, religious education came under strict control of the state. For more on the relationship between the state and religion see (Saribay 1985) and (Tarhanli 1993).

common good. This depends on creating a homogeneous national identity, resulting in other forms of exclusionary practices which hinders the representation of particular groups and identities. Like Habermas, Toprak assumes that the neutrality of the public sphere is sufficient to ensure the existence of a democratic and inclusive political system. Like Habermas, Toprak also assumes that the differences and complexities of the private realm can be offset by the public sphere as long as its neutrality can be preserved. Behind this is the assumption that there is a clear separation between the public and private: individuals enter the public sphere without their private identities. The public sphere's neutrality is supposed to ensure inclusion and participation for all, irrespective of background and identity. The Turkish public sphere was probably far more sensitive about the principle of neutrality due to the fact that at the center of the modern reforms was the attempt to create an integrated and homogeneous nation state.

In stratified societies, as Fraser has argued, the institutional framework produces inequality among citizens and the idea of a single, neutral public does not address these existing inequalities. Furthermore, disadvantaged groups and identities do not have a real chance to participate in the public sphere no matter how neutral citizenship practices may be. Even in a multicultural society, the single, neutral public does not provide justice to all groups and identities within society because the framework of the public is defined by the culturally dominant group. (Fraser 1992) In sum, the institutional neutrality of the citizenship regime does not also automatically lead to economic and cultural neutrality. Power imbalances emerging from economic and cultural differences will exclude some groups from full participation such as the representation of their cultural identities and limit others from participating in it altogether. The neutrality of the citizenship regime, therefore, does not guarantee equal participation nor that people can engage in peaceful negotiation of differences.

The cultural, not to mention economic, differences that existed in Turkish society thus rendered meaningless any institutional neutrality in the citizenship regime. The principles of a state-controlled secularism, nationalism and rationalism framed the boundaries of membership in such a way that its citizens could only be equal, and the operation of the citizenship regime could only be value neutral, within the boundaries of these principles. In the case of state-controlled secularism, where secularism was not only a principle of the regime but also part of the regulative aspect of everyday life, the issue of dress, such as women's dress or male hats, became an important source of exclusion. (Gole 1996) Similarly, where national identity constitutes the basis of citizenship, the existence of other particular groups in the public realm could turn into a crisis. Like any other nation state, Turkey contained, and still contains, different cultural and ethnic groups. By assuming that there was a single public sphere whose authorized identity was the national one, the modern project eliminated the possibility that other groups would participate in the public with their own identity. Citizens could be part of the public only if they left their particular identities in the private realm. This strictly crafted and controlled public sphere, which ensured the unity of the people and the state, not only operated as a strictly communitarian project, but it was also based on

the exclusion of the other(s) whose values and aspirations were not in harmony with the general will of the modern project.

COMMUNITY AND CITIZENSHIP

The key defining characteristic of the post-1980 political landscape in Turkey was the multiplication of identity positions and their struggle for inclusion in the public sphere. Kurdish nationalism and political Islam have presented the most important challenges to the boundaries of universal citizenship, and its homogeneous representation of national identity. By drawing attention to the exclusionary nature of the national identity, Kurdish nationalism poses a serious challenge to its privileged position of Turkish identity. Political Islam represents another challenge to secular citizenship and unlike Kurdish nationalists, however, Islamists were able to establish themselves in the public sphere as political actors and to question the fundamental aspects of citizenship and national identity. (Sakallioglu 1996) Islamists have consistently attacked the equation of modernity with secularism and Westernization. The growing urban Islamist population, who have considerable economic power and an intellectual background, demand that a religious life style be included in the public sphere. Islamists have been particularly successful in organizing themselves in civil society. (Toprak 1996 : 106-22) The Islamic bourgeoisie, with very efficient and active business organizations, and the Islamist intellectuals, with their vibrant publishing community, have been extremely crucial in opening up space in the public sphere. ⁶

Central to both Islamist and Kurdish challenges to the citizenship is the attempt to question the conditions of membership in the national community. Universal citizenship in Turkey rests on the exclusion of group identities from the public sphere, privileging national identity as the only legitimate identity. It, therefore, functions as a basis for social integration, or as I argued earlier, fulfils the role of realizing the aims of the modernization process. In this way, citizenship is not just simply a set of legal codes, defining the boundaries of membership in the national community, but also a set of cultural practices, representing modern national identity. Ethnic and religious concerns reveal universal citizenship's limits in that having the same legal status does not necessarily satisfy the demands of groups and identities who have specific claims of representation. The tension in the Turkish case runs particularly high as citizenship has a specific mission of realizing and representing the premises of the modern regime.

However, similar tensions exist in other nation-states where universal citizenship constitutes the basis of membership to the community. In late modern democratic societies there is now a strong demand to extend universal citizenship rights to include groups rights. Groups who have historically been marginalized, or whose life-world does not conform with that of the dominant national discourse, demand specific rights to protect their own belief system. They therefore seek representation in the public

⁶ For the case of Islamists intellectuals see (Toprak 1993) and (Gole 2000)

sphere, rejecting the idea of a single common good as articulated by national discourse. The communitarian critique highlights the fact that universal citizenship is not sensitive to the value systems of particular groups. Communitarians argue that while citizens may be equal under the law, this does not mean that particular groups will have a chance to create their own space in the public sphere.⁷ Furthermore, communitarians criticize the modern belief that the "good life" is an ideal shared by all members of a national community. (Benhabib 1992 : 78-79) Realizing a multiplicity of "good lives" requires recognizing the autonomy of collective identities in the public sphere.⁸ The reasoning behind groups' need for recognition in the public is twofold: a) skepticism towards the principle of equality and b) acknowledging the situatedness of identity. Communitarians are, in general, skeptical of the modern belief that citizens are located equally in the public sphere when in fact they are able to express their particular definition of "good life" in the public sphere. For this reason, communitarians point to the necessity of acknowledging the autonomy of communities and of recognizing their definition of the good life as legitimate. Rather than promoting a common definition of the good life, communitarians argue that the public sphere should acknowledge a particular definition of the good life and implement the necessary normative and institutional frameworks to protect those particular goods.

The communitarian critique proposes a new mode of societal organization in which the identities of the private realm are not only situated in the public life, but their autonomy is granted so that they can protect their own interpretation of what the good life means. To put it differently, by criticizing the equality principle and emphasizing the situatedness of identities in the public sphere, the communitarian critique refuses the primacy of a single common good and aims to restore the condition of plurality not always accommodated within universal citizenship. The communitarian version of citizenship, however, sharply contrasts with nation state's principles that base rights and duties of citizens on the individual rather than group. While attempting to remedy the inequalities in the public sphere, the communitarian critique leads to an equally difficult issue of who decides the boundaries and who defines the common good in each group. More important, universal citizenship and its communitarian critique have a common intersection point as they both inadvertently run the risk of restricting identity negotiation. While universal citizenship attempts to unite society around a single concept of the common good by ignoring specific conditions and expectations of different groups and identities, the communitarian alternative would box individuals into identity positions and would only represent citizens within the boundaries of their community and not by their individuality. Yet, the tension in the universal citizenship regime is a real one and various groups and identities demand their specific value systems to be recognized and protected. This tension is nothing but a growing

⁷ For an outline of the communitarian argument (Mulhall and Swift 1996). For more on the communitarian argument see (MacIntyre 1984). Also Charles Taylor. (Taylor and Gutmann 1992)

⁸ Taylor, for instance, argues that in the case that there is danger to the survival of a particular community, it is justifiable to grant special rights that would allow the community to ensure its survival. (Taylor and Gutmann 1992)

contention about how the question of difference and plurality is addressed in late modern societies and at its center lies the demand that private identities and value systems of different groups are in fact public matters. The demand for group arises from the argument that true equality in the public sphere depends on the protection of their value systems. The argument is that the way to restore equality to the citizenship regime is to protect identities and groups who have historically been marginalized and denied to represent themselves in their own right.

MEDINA DOCUMENT: AN ISLAMIST ALTERNATIVE TO UNIVERSAL CITIZENSHIP

Islamists in Turkey consistently focus on the fact that their value system and group choices are not always in harmony with the values of the modern regime on which citizenship is based. Apart from the legal framework, they also express disagreement with the representation of modern national identity and their exclusion from it in the public sphere. Islamist demands on citizenship do not simply focus on the legal framework, but also on life style choices and their representation in the public sphere. In other words, Islamists claim that they cannot articulate their group specific value system in the public sphere and that they are excluded from the representation of national identity. Islamist demands and their critique of universal citizenship usually give rise to suspicion in the secular camp. Secularists claim that islamist demands are simply an attempt to divert the secular regime and base citizenship on religious practices instead. Furthermore, the islamist demands are also contentious as the direct relationship between modernization and universal citizenship leaves religious codes and symbols out of the public domain. The debate therefore is not just simply limited to the islamist threat to transform citizenship along religious principles, but also whether it is possible to accommodate the religious life style in the public sphere. It is because of this that the appearance of religious symbols in the public sphere sparks fierce debate. Headscarved women in universities, public buildings and in the parliament; the growing influence of islamic capital; religious orders; street names and mosques in places that are representative of the republican regime are all areas of political struggle by which the islamists attempt to broaden the boundaries of the public sphere and exercise their citizenship rights.

As the islamists' politics gained significant power during the first half of the nineties, the clash between secular and islamist life styles became particularly visible in big metropolitan centers where a secular life style is the established norm. The growing islamist presence in the public sphere, and demands for recognition of associated values, constituted a direct challenge to modern national identity. (Toprak and Birtok 1993) In the 1994 municipal elections, the victory of the islamist Welfare party further polarized the issue as it enabled islamists to gain access to public institutions and to promote an islamic presence in the public sphere. The growing presence of an islamist life style in metropolitan centers politicized the debate about the nature of national

community, its boundaries, who is included and excluded as well as the rules of membership and the possibility of changing those rules. In a way, the islamists' demands for recognition in the public sphere, and the debate over whether the modern public sphere should accommodate religious codes and life style choices, is really a debate about the conditions of living together and of membership in the community. The question is one of how to accommodate differences without necessarily imposing them on groups and identities who do not share the specific value systems of groups seeking recognition in the public sphere.

As I mentioned earlier the secular camp is particularly suspicious about the sincerity of the islamist position in allowing different value systems to co-exist that are not part of the islamic one. The widespread argument is that islamists use the democratic process to further their causes and, at the right moment, they will eliminate the freedom of other groups and identities who do not share their value system. In order to counter this suspicion, islamists intellectuals proposed a short-lived alternative citizenship project, drawing on the Medina document as a social contract between various groups of different beliefs. The islamist proposal of the Medina document is partly influenced by the Ottoman social organization of the Millet system and was mainly based on the document that defined the rules of relationship between muslim and non-muslim communities during the time of prophet Muhammad.

A geographical entity that stretched from Africa to Europe, the Ottoman Empire had a heterogeneous, multi-religious and multi-ethnic population which made dealing with difference and particularity an important issue. In terms of the way in which it dealt with particularity, Ottoman universality was radically different from the universalism of the modern nation state. Rather than creating a unified single community, the Ottoman "millet system" ensured the existence of community rights and organizations of the non-Muslim groups in the empire.⁹

The Ottoman administration divided the population into two major groups or millets: Muslim and non-Muslim. Every non-Muslim group or sect was an autonomous millet with its own leader representing it. The leader of each millet was the mediator between his community and the administration. In addition, every millet had complete autonomy in religious matters as well as in the regulation of everyday life from education, marriage, health, communication and social security. The millets of the Ottoman Empire were subjected only to the penal code of the administration. Thereafter, they had complete autonomy guaranteed by declarations. The organizational structure of the millet system not only gave autonomy to the major religious communities but it also permitted the autonomy of sects and other groups.

⁹ First it needs to be noted that Millet (Nation) had a different connotation in the Ottoman case. It did not designate the nations as we understand them in the modern sense but religious communities. Eryilmaz points out that "millet" in its Arabic meaning refers to a group of people who accept a certain belief system and to the Ottoman administration that was based on the communities of belief. (Eryilmaz 1994) Only after the emergence of modern nationalism does the word millet also designate nations based on culture, language and ethnicity.

This system of autonomous communities guaranteed the existence, and relative equality, of different groups, ethnicities and religions within the same administrative unit without subjecting them to a single unitary core.¹⁰ The Ottoman Millet system reflected the plurality of the population by recognizing the autonomous organization of different belief systems and was a clear indication of the fact that Ottomans did not pursue an active assimilation and subjugation policy like other major world empires such as the British Empire. (Eryilmaz 1994)

The Ottoman Millet System, to a large degree, was influenced by the Islamic Zimmi Legal Code which could be traced to the Medina Document. The Medina document was a legal document or a contract acknowledging the autonomy of other religious communities and defining the boundaries between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. (Koktas 1994 : 59) After migrating from Mecca to Medina in 622 in order to flee from prosecution, the Prophet Mohammed established a political community in Medina with his followers. In the process of establishing an Islamic community the Prophet signed an agreement with non-Muslims in Medina which was later called the Medina Document. In the Medina document, non-Muslim communities were given the right to organize a legal system emerging from their own beliefs. (Algul 1994 : 64) While different groups had their autonomy in deciding their legal framework according to their belief, in the case of intercommunity conflict, they were supposed to seek the arbitration of the Prophet. The historical significance of the Medina document comes from the fact that it stands as a contractual agreement between Muslim and non-Muslim communities of Medina, recognizing each community's autonomy. According to Islamists, the fact that the Prophet decided to make a social contract with other communities signifies that it is possible to have a pluralist society in Islam. In other words Islamists read the Medina document as a societal project, allowing for plurality and tolerance within a society that is governed by Islamic rules.

Islamist intellectuals, particularly Ali Bulac, introduced the Medina Document in the early 1990s as a Muslim project of "living together". Bulac criticizes the unitary nation-state model for assimilating differences into a single value system and subjugating them to the power of the majority. (Bulac 1994 : 5) He argues that the nation state with a single executive, the judiciary and legislative system, has a homogenizing function, hindering the manifestation of difference in public and putting minorities at a disadvantage. After pointing out the fragmentation of nation states within the globalization process, Bulac indicates the need to propose new forms of "living together" which would enable greater plurality than exists in the arrangements of nation state. (Bulac 1994 : 8) Unless there are alternatives to the homogenizing forms of nation states that are crumbling as a result of the globalization process, it would be impossible to stop conflicts from emerging from the coexistence of different religious and ethnic groups. For Bulac, the only way to enable different belief systems to manifest themselves freely would be to abandon the single judicial system and adopt a

¹⁰ For more on the Ottoman Millet system see (Eryilmaz 1992) and (Canatan 1994)

system consisting of multiple judicial systems permitting each community to live according to its belief system. (Bulac 1994 : 13)

It is argued that a political system based on the Medina document would not pose any obstacles for organizing different religious, philosophical and ideological positions as Islam rejects any imposition of having to accept a certain religious belief. (Bulac 1994 : 13) Pointing to the *Bakara* verse in the Quran, which rejects the imposition of religious belief, Bulac suggests that different groups, including secular and atheist elements as well as other ideologies, can form their life spaces. As long as they do not wage "war" on Muslims, members of other beliefs should pursue their life style according to their value system.

For Islamist intellectuals, the Medina document is not simply an utopian ideal but an actual historical experience that created a contractual relationship between different religious communities of Medina between the years of 622 and 632. (Bulac 1994 : 12) The Ottoman Millet system, organized around the autonomy of religious communities, shows similarities with the contractual relationship based on the Medina Document. Yet, the Islamists stress a fundamental difference between the Medina document and the Ottoman Millet system. In the Ottoman Millet system a hierarchy existed between religious communities. The Muslim community was the "sovereign nation" (*millet-i hakime*) and non-Muslim communities were "subjected nations" (*millet-i mahkume*), in contrast, in the Medina document, no such hierarchical division existed, with each community awarded equal status. Islamists point out that, unlike the Ottoman Millet system based on the sovereignty of the Muslim community, the Medina document proposes a project of living together based on equal participation. (Canatan 1994, : 106) The normative framework of the Medina document, the islamists argue, provides a "realistic" alternative, enabling a pluralistic civil-society-based societal project to be realized. The idea of multiple judicial systems in the Medina Contract was in fact picked up by the Islamist Welfare Party. Its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, made multiple-judicial systems part of Welfare Party's election campaign, arguing that unlike the stereotypical image of Islamic parties, the Welfare party is seeking a pluralistic society in which different communities can live according the their value systems.

The Medina Document as an alternative citizenship contract is, borrowing from Piscatori and Eickelman, an attempt to revoke and reinvent a historical tradition in order to respond the challenges of the present day. (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996 : 30) The islamists' imagination of the Medina document does not just simply represent an attempt to go back in history, but to reorganize the present by reinventing the past. Given the fact that all nation states justify their existence by inventing traditions and rewriting the past in order to create "imagined" cohesiveness, the Medina Document constitutes a similar attempt by Islamist to provide an alternative societal project to the one proposed by the modern nation state. The Medina Document, first of all, attempts to "transcend modernity and its political forms" to form a new societal contract that would not conflict with Islam. (Bulac 1994 : 14) Yet, while attempting to transcend

modernity and its political forms, islamist politics, at least on an intellectual level, addresses an inherently modern concern: plurality and its manifestation in civil society. Islamist intellectuals present the Medina document as proof that Islam is actually capable of accommodating a pluralist society since the document clearly states that the relationship between different beliefs is not hierarchical but based on equality. (Akcem 1992 : 14) Moreover, it is argued that the Medina Document gives priority to civil society over the state because the communities, themselves decide what is good and bad for the community. (Celik 1994 : 27) The cultural, judicial and religious autonomy of different communities require activities like legislative, culture, science, art economy, health and education to be left to civil society and that the state not have any say over these areas of societal life. (Abdiimamoglu 1994 : 43) and (Bulac 1992 : 110) In the contractual Medina model proposed, the function of the state is to serve citizens and protect different values and life styles of communities forming society. (Dilipak 1992 : 20)

Similar to the communitarian alternative to universal citizenship, the Medina Document proposes a vision of membership to a community that is radically opposed to the civic republican tradition of the modern nation state. In the Medina-based project, the agents of the public sphere are autonomous communities, not individual citizens. This is reflected in the advocacy of multiple judicial systems based on the value systems of those communities. The societal project, based on the Medina document, therefore, does not envision a single citizenship regime but multiple citizenships, organized around autonomous communities with their own legal framework. As one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the modern regime is the single public sphere with universal citizenship and unified legal framework, the Islamists' alternative proposes to address the question of plurality outside the framework of the modern regime. Again similar to the communitarian critique, the islamist demand for multiple citizenship regimes based on the autonomy of communities has two motives. First, since people wishing to live by an islamic value system do not have the opportunity to fulfill their desires under a single common-good oriented citizenship, they need a special framework that would accommodate their life style choices; and if other communities do not wish to be part of the islamic framework, then they should be free to organize themselves as they desire. Only in this way, according to the islamist alternative, can the condition of plurality be realized within the boundaries of the nation state.

Even though the Medina document project, by insisting on inclusion of groups rights into the citizenship regime, exhibits a communitarian orientation, it also differs from it in one important area: the Medina Document does not simply challenge the universal citizenship regime by requiring group specific rights within it, but goes further and calls for the elimination of the universal citizenship regime and its replacement with segregated, group-based membership. In other words, the Medina Document as a societal project does not call for an accommodation of Islamic values within the existing citizenship regime, but aims to establish separate jurisdictions available to groups who share any given value system.

CONCLUSION: IDENTITY, NEGOTIATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Apart from a brief time period when the Islamist Welfare Party attempted to use the Medina Document to argue for multiple judicial systems, the whole debate mostly remained an intellectual exercise. Yet, the Medina Document's significance is not so much whether it had a real chance to become a societal alternative, but is its attempt to discuss how to accommodate the demands and choices of different groups and identities within nation states. In countries such as France or Turkey, where the civic republican tradition constitutes the basis of citizenship regime, various groups and identities claim that their specific life style choices are excluded from the public sphere, and therefore, that they do not have full citizenship rights. The headscarf issue in French public schools and Turkish universities are examples of such claims. In a secular public sphere, islamists argue that they cannot exercise their rights as citizens since life style choices exclude them from certain places and activities. Their argument points to the fact that the neutral public sphere in which disembodied equal citizens exercise their membership rights is an illusion not only because citizens take part in the public sphere with their private and group identities but also because those identities and associated values may be in direct confrontation in the universal citizenship regime.

The issue of a neutral public sphere upon universal citizenship is based is particularly problematic in Turkey. Here the public sphere, rather than being neutral, reflects a certain interpretation of modernity and functions as an integral part of national discourse. This close relationship between public sphere and national discourse unavoidably influences citizenship in that groups whose values conflict with those of the national discourse are usually excluded from the public sphere. This is why, despite the claim to neutrality, the universal citizenship regime in Turkey has a communitarian orientation: the site of citizenship practices are reserved for national identity, easily becoming hostile to differences that fall outside of it.

Ironically, the islamist proposal of the Medina document, despite its claim to accommodate difference and plurality, results in another communitarian project. The contractual Medina model of citizenship abandons the idea of a single citizenship regime, yet it envisions a society with multiple judicial systems that are separate from one another in a single territory. As the core of society in the Medina document is based on communities (*umma*), the separation of these communities according to their belief systems begs the question of who defines the boundaries of these communities, who makes the decisions about membership, and more importantly how the relationship between different communities is organized in the absence of a common framework. During the time of the original Medina Document, the Prophet was the arbiter between different communities. It is not clear if the state would take the same kind of role in a society based on the principles of the Medina document.

As I argued in the earlier sections of the paper, the debate around citizenship in Turkey only becomes meaningful with reference to Ottoman history. This is particularly visible in the state's response to kurdish and islamist claims seeking greater representation in the public sphere. These demands are usually rejected on two grounds; first, representation of ethnic and religious identities would result in the dismantling the unity of the nation. Second, the secular establishment usually argues that ethnic and religious identities are entitled to have same rights and obligations as other citizens, and demands arising from their specific cultural claims belong to the private realm not the public sphere.

When looking at the underlying principles of the civic republican tradition and the islamist alternative, we see that both approaches deny the dialogical and mobile character of identities and groups. As Taylor argues, one of the fundamental aspects of identity formation is its dialogical character. (Taylor and Gutmann 1992 : 32) Identity signifies difference and because of this we do not form our identities in isolation from others but in relation and through dialogue with them. This process of individual and group identification is a political one as it sometimes indicates a struggle for identification. (Taylor and Gutmann 1992 : 33) This political and dialogical aspect of identity formation is also the guarantee that no single group nor individual has a frozen identity; instead there is constant change and mobility within and between identities.

This is why Habermas' insistence on a disembedded public sphere where universal citizenship operates, is an illusion. (Habermas 1989) Instead, the public sphere is a site where claims are constantly made, shaping and redefining identities. While the civic republican tradition may hinder the process of renegotiating identities by insisting on a single common good, around which citizenship practices are defined, the islamist alternative also denies the interchange and crisscrossings between different identity positions by segregating groups and locking them into separate legal jurisdictions. Since society is based on communities and their value systems, an individual's identity can only be defined in relation to the community of which he/she is a member. The rigid separation of communities rules out the possibility of the shifting of identities, locking identities instead within their respective communities. The priority of the community ignores individual identity and the separation of communities according to their value systems prevents the possibility of identities being remade through interaction with others.

Citizenship does not constitute unchanging and static practice but its history in modern times manifests a great deal of struggle by which various groups and identities have sought recognition and inclusion. (Isin and Wood 1999) The current debates around citizenship point out another phase in this process of not only redrawing the boundaries of membership to a national community but also how those members use their citizenship rights. Citizenship debates reflect a desire to broaden plurality and accommodate the life-world of various groups and identities that exist in nation states. In this respect, citizenship practices should not simply be seen as legal practices that

define the condition of membership but also as active political struggles that broaden membership boundaries as well as allowing different groups and identities to articulate their differences. (Isin and Wood 1999) Citizenship debates in the Turkish context demonstrate that universal citizenship is not flexible enough to enable the representation of different identities in the public sphere. However, any alternative that suggests the reorganization of membership strictly on communitarian principles also contains the danger of both segregating differences but also potentially freezing meaning of identities by denying the political negotiation between them. Overcoming this obstacle requires, as suggested by Fuat Keyman, a radical democratization process in which issues of identity/difference cease to be a matter for the private realm but become part of citizenship practices. (Keyman 1998 : 37) Both universal citizenship and the communitarian alternative of the Medina document lack a framework within which political struggle and negotiation can take place. Rethinking citizenship practices within the context of radical democracy requires a framework that enables the recognition of contradictions as part of the formation of identities. (Keyman 1998 : 38) Only here will claims for recognition cease to be a threat to the existing citizenship regime but become practices that further democratize it.

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