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Religious minorities in Turkey and the Democratization process

A Socio-historical approach

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Introduction

According to the commonly accepted nationalist paradigm, minorities are not a part of the unity aspired by the nation. In a way, they exist against the ‘will of the nation’ and their very existence is tolerated but not accepted by the majority. While the nineteenth-century nationalist dream of a “pure” nation seems to have resurfaced in the twenty-first century, this dream has become nearly impossible to achieve, in Europe, for at least three reasons. First, the progressive denationalization of governance has imposed the transfer of sovereignty to supranational political, cultural and economic structures. Second, access to transportation, although it exposes the huge and persistent gap of wealth between North and South, has empowered transnational communities. Third, there has been a shift towards micro, autonomous entities (e.g., regions, federate entities, Euro-regions), which has promoted the ongoing creation and reshaping of entities within the nation. Thus, the democratization process of a country, especially for Turkey, can be seen in its attitude towards minorities. The treatment of minorities became the measure of the democratization degree.

The vague concept of "democratization" is difficult to define. The process of political modernization as suggested by Lucian Pye proposes¹:

- 1) A general inclination towards equality which allows participation in politics and competition for government office;
- 2) The capacity of a political system to formulate policies and to have them carried out;
- 3) Differentiation and specialization of political functions, though not at the expense of their overall integration and
- 4) The secularization of the political process, separation of politics from religious aims and influence.

Under these considerations, the long way of democratization in Turkey appears like a liberalization process of Turkish political system from the ottoman societal rules. Briefly, it must be seen as an attempt to guarantee the supremacy of the politics over the society's will. The ottoman societal system being based on the religious and ethno-religious divisions (*Millet system*²) the settlement of new "politics" in the recently established Republic of Turkey is principally building a new "imagined community" called "nation" where the belonging will be "individual" and not collective. Thus, Turkish democratization process of almost one and a half century is not a *political process* (i.e. the authoritarian character of the regime is protected). but a societal one where the first aim is to erase differences throughout the society, especially religious ones. Paradoxically, this forced homogenization failed, created resistance powers and improved, by reaction, the democratization by the means of civil society. This chapter aims to analyze the Turkish nation state building and the place of minorities, the development of the pluralist democracy and minority policies and the role of minorities in the Turkish democracy during the globalized period.

Nation-state building process and minorities

¹ Pye Lucian, *Aspects of Political Development*, Boston 1966, p. 45.

² In the dynamic Ottoman *millet system*, society was divided according to religious affiliations. Muslims, despite the fact of different religious orders were categorized under the label of *Islam milleti*). This group was the dominant one in the society. Non Muslims (Zimmi, "Protected") had autonomy but also inferior position according to the Islamic law.

All political systems are built against / in opposition to the previous one. To be able to understand the place and the role of religious minorities in the democratisation process of Turkey, one must remind that the first aim of Kemalists in the beginning of the 20th century is not to build a democratic system but to create, from the ashes of the ottoman society, a nation, as homogeneous as possible. Thus, the Turkish state is not built by the Turkish nation but it is built TO construct a new nation. In addition, the political system of modern Turkey is not configured in the opposition of authoritarian monarchy versus democracy but of monarchy + imperialism versus authoritarian Republic. Consequently, the political system in Turkey, with all its components including “democracy” have always been a tool to keep and protect the question of nation. This question brings us to the nation building process in Turkey and consequently to the issue of “turkishness”

This period of building the nation-state takes less time than the nation-building itself. It witnesses the dismantling of a 500-year old empire, the founding of a new state in the form of a secular republic in which the ultimate power remains in the hands of the Turkish elite to be invented. This "tour de force" has been possible by forging an authoritarian bureaucrat's elite non-based on a powerful social group. The political dominance of the bureaucrats was kept intact and the pre-revolutionary distribution of power remained more or less the same. The only difference compared to the 19th century was the Turkish and civil secular character of the new leading class.

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the fierce War of Independence, and the collaboration of the Sultan/Caliph with the occupying forces lead, in an astonishingly speedy way, to total dissolution of all institutions belonging to the past. The ongoing ideological controversy during the decline of the empire between Islamism, Ottomanism and Turkism gave a synthesis of three, where the nation must be Turkish with an invisible belonging to Islam. The indivisibility of the nation was reasserted at each occasion.

The analysis of the indivisible identification of turkishness cannot obviously be done without placing it in a more general context: the birth of Nations and consequently of Nation-States. The thesis of the modernity of the concept of nation is well known, Deutch³, Gellner⁴,

³ Deutch Karl W., *Nationalism and Social Communication*, New York, London, 1953.

⁴ Gellner Ernest, *Nations et nationalisme*, Paris : Payot, 1989.

Hobsbawn⁵ or Schnapper⁶, propose the concomitance of national construction and creation of political organizations. In both cases, one can easily talk about the 19th century as a century of nations. It is during the same century, especially during the second half that the Turkish nation has been started to be built, to be adapted to the political system.

The question of the definition of a nation brings forth the definition of a minority. Who are the individuals living surrounded by a nation and forming a distinct group? If, according to Emile Giraud, we consider that in order to form a nation it is necessary for the individuals to “have the same origin, to speak the same language, to have received the same moral and intellectual heritage, to have lived under the same laws and to have known the same joys and the same pains”⁷, what will we do about the individuals who do not share one or more of these criteria? We have to consider them as belonging to the “minorities”. Thus all the attempts to define this concept start from a negative definition, *i.e.* finding a definition of the nation, taking those who don’t tally there, and putting them in the category of minority. The minority is then inseparable from the majority. In this context of coercive Nation-states, where there is no nation, there are no minorities. Given that, in the empires, *a fortiori* in the Ottoman Empire, one cannot speak about a nation, considering that there were minorities, it would be nonsense.

The “problem” of minorities appeared in the 19th century with the emergence of the concept of Nation-State⁸. In international law, the first case of attribution of the title of “nation” to a distinct group within a Nation-State took place with the Congress of Vienna in 1815, when one recognized to the Polish the right of national representation and the right to establish their “national” institutions⁹. But it was necessary to wait another century to see the appearance of the term of “minority” when the United Kingdom addressed in 1914 a note to

⁵ Hobsbawn Eric, *Nations et nationalismes depuis 1789*, Paris : Gallimard, 1992.

⁶ Schnapper Dominique, *La communauté des citoyens*, Paris : Gallimard, 1994.

⁷ Giraud Émile, « Le Droit des nationalités. Sa valeur, son application » in *Revue Générale de Droit International Public*, (31), 1924, p. 18 quoted by Pierré-Caps Stéphane, *Nation et peuples dans les constitutions modernes*, Nancy : Presses Universitaires de Nancy, s. d., p.102.

⁸ Thonberry Patrick, *International law and the Rights of Minorities*, Oxford / Clarendon Press, 1991, p. 25 and *passim*.

⁹ Öktem Emre, « L'évolution historique de la question des minorités et le régime institué par le Traité de Lausanne au sujet des minorités en Turquie » in *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, 1996/1997, p. 62.

Greece about the protection of the Moslem minorities on its territory. Indeed, happy were the countries where the State and the Nation had emerged in a spontaneous and synchronic way¹⁰. If the State was preceded by the emergence of the nation, wars of independence took place and were often seen as rebellions by the dominating power. To conclude these wars of independence, the leaders needed to unify and the cement of this unification was nationalism.

Within the territories of the created State, distinct groups always remained; the founders of the State always considering them as *different*, as well as both the nation corresponding to this State and even the members of to these groups themselves.. Therefore, we encounter at the same time a matter of perception and of self-perception.

If the State was established before the nation, then this nation had to be built. In other words, it was necessary for the already founded State to correspond to a “pure” nation as homogeneous as possible. Again, the main ideology of this construction is nationalism. Then, for those which did not correspond to the definition of this pure nation, four alternatives can be applied:

- Eliminate them physically by the means of exterminations, expulsions, exiles and exchange of population
- Try to divide the group in order to create sub-groups, if possible antagonist for a better control
- Try to melt the group into the nation by imposing a dominant language, a dominant religion and/or a dominant culture, *i.e.* forced assimilation
- Accept the minority as it is and encourage it with a series of rights, in order to attach it definitively to the State (Multiculturalism)

The latter choice caused a series of agreements, treaties, legislations, fiddling, all composing the bases of the “regime of minorities” in international law.

Minorities in the Turkish Republic

After these theoretical thoughts, we can concentrate more specifically on the Turkish case in the turning of the 20th century. We are within the political and legal framework of an empire, but not a colonial one in the sense of the Western European Empires, where the colonial possessions are remote and have more or less preserved their cultural and ethnic characteristics. In the 18th and even the 19th century, the centre of gravity of the Ottoman

¹⁰ *Idem*, p. 60.

Empire was around the Aegean Sea. On the three borders and at the middle of this sea (islands, especially Crete), the population was religiously mixed but the way of life, let's say the culture, was shared. The Muslims of Crete for example, were speaking the same language, listening to the same music, eating the same local foods, etc.

Thus the modernization of the Turkish politics is / must be first a homogenization based on the religious belonging (Neither belief nor practice) and not on cultural level. After the Armenian massacres and exiles in 1915, the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey decided in January 1923 is exceptional in its "compulsory" nature. The convention of exchange has legitimated a *de facto* situation since 1920: the mass escape of the Greek Orthodox populations from Western Asia Minor. But by including in this exchange, groups such as the Turkish-speaking Christians of Cappadocia or the Greek-speaking Moslems of Crete, the two countries showed clearly their understanding of "unmixing of populations"¹¹ : Turkish Nation will be modern, with a westernized *visibility* but... Muslim.

The Turkish nation-building process of the first two decades of the 20th century was not complete. (There is no complete "homogenization process"!) Thus, the so much desired homogenisation could not be carried out. In 1923, apart from the Turkish Sunni Muslims, four groups remain as obstacles to the building of this "modern" homogeneous nation.

- There are some Muslim populations ethnically non-Turks as Bosnians, Laz, Circassians or Greek Muslims who came in Anatolia during the 19th century or after the compulsory exchange. These groups have been the main object of the linguistic and national assimilation policies during the first decades of the Republic. These policies have succeeded to make from them "more Turks than Turks"

- Alevi supported the nation building process besides the Sunni character of the new nation, mainly because Kemalists were trying to establish a "secular" system where Sunnis would be under the State control

- Kurds, ethnically different, religiously belonging to Sunni Islam in majority with some Alevi. They are the main group which resisted to the assimilation.

¹¹ The expression belongs to Dr. Nansen., Aktar Ayhan, « Türk Yunan nüfus Mübadelesinin ilk yılı » in Pekin Müfide (ed)., *yeniden Kurulan Yasamlar : 1923 Türk-Yunan Zorunlu Nüfus Mübadelesi*, İstanbul, Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2005, p. 61.

This ethnic and violent resistance may show that the first criterion of the Turkishness, i.e. belonging to Islam, has its limits.

- Finally, despite the ethno-religious “cleansing” of the first two decades of the 20th century, marginal non-Muslim groups were remaining, especially in Istanbul but also in Thrace region (rural Jews) and in south-eastern Anatolia.

The presence of the non-Muslims Turkish citizens in the margins of the Turkish nation was institutionalized by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923¹². The main group is formed by the Greeks of Istanbul remained as *établis* (established) having the citizenship of Turkey. During the Lausanne negotiations in 1923, at the beginning of the discussions, the Turkish delegation opposed the maintenance of a Greek population in Turkey¹³ seen as a main obstacle to the homogenization of the population. In his memories, Ismet Pacha recalls how he had to yield to the insistence of Vénizélos and George Curzon on the question of this maintenance, which goes together with the maintenance of the Patriarchate¹⁴. Indeed it was the real question. What could have been the importance, for Greece and partly for the Western powers, of the maintenance of a Greek community in Turkey, and, more so, the maintenance of the Patriarchate?¹⁵. For the Turks, the starting point of the negotiations was to exempt the Moslems of Western Thrace from the exchange, but to integrate the Greeks of Istanbul and especially the Patriarchate. Finally, compromise solution, both communities remained in a *reciprocal way*¹⁶ -and the word is important.

Thus the Greeks of Istanbul, at least those who had lived there since 1918, had the right to be *établis*¹⁷ forming a material justification of the maintenance of the Patriarchate.

¹² A former Turkish diplomat who reflects perfectly the official vision of the presence of non-Moslem minorities in Turkey, qualifies the presence of these minorities and the rights granted as “debts”, Akşin Aptülahat, *Atatürk'ün Dış Politika ilkeleri ve diplomasisi*, Ankara : Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991, p. 134.

¹³ Meray Seha, *Lozan Barış Konferansı*, Ankara : Siyasal bilgiler Fakültesi Yayını, 1973, Tome 1, p. 121.

¹⁴ İnönü İsmet, *Hatıralar*, Ankara : Bilgi, 1987, Tome 2, p. 130-132.

¹⁵ Arı Kemal, *Büyük Mübadele. Türkiye'ye Zorunlu Göç*, İstanbul : Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995, p. 17.

¹⁶ Akgönül Samim (ed), *Reciprocity : Greek and Turkish minorities. Law, religion and politics*, İstanbul : Press of Bilgi Universty, 2006.

¹⁷ On the debates concerning the qualification of *établis*, see, Ari Kemal, *op.cit.*, p. 18, Gönülbol Mehmet, Sar Cem, *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası*, Ankara : Ankara üniversitesi Siyasal Bilimler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1982, p. 56-57, Erim Nihat, « Milletlerarası Daimi Adalet Divanı ve Türkiye, Etabli Meselesi » in *Ankara üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2 (1), 1944, p. 62-73.

Upon the insistence of Western powers, the Turkish delegation had accepted to maintain it as long as it would remain a purely religious institution. For the Patriarchate, in order to deal with the internal religious affairs in Turkey, it needed a consistent Orthodox community. Besides the Greeks of Istanbul, two other communities were exempted from exchange. The small Orthodox community of the two islands situated at the entry of the strait of Dardanelles, Imvros and Ténédos, also obtained this right under more confused circumstances. The problem is the fact that other non-Muslim groups such as Armenians and Jews have also been subjects of coercive policies in the framework of this “reciprocity” besides their lack of links with Greece.

Under these circumstances, the “democratisation” of Turkey of 1930’s was seen dangerous by the founders of the Republic because of three main reasons. A democratic opening could reinforce:

- Muslim believers who were supporting the Sultan because he was the Khalife,
- Kurds who have supported the national struggle expecting an autonomy but after 1925 this claim will be crushed violently,
- Non-Muslim minorities considered as potential traitors

Thus, all these three groups have been under pressure of the Turkish bureaucratic and military elite to remove them from the power. Therefore, non Muslim groups are sociologically in a “double minority position”. A minority does not emerge *sui generis*. Two simultaneous processes have to take place in order for a group to be qualified as a minority. The first is a quantitative process. A group is either diminished through massacres, exiles, population exchanges, etc., or the group flees from a country due to economic and political conditions as well as ethnic persecution, finding itself as a minority in the host country. The second is a qualitative process¹⁸. The majority, *i.e.*, the group that considers itself as the legitimate ruler of a territory, marginalizes non-dominant groups. The majority constantly expects proof of the loyalty of the minority such that the minority is put in the position of

¹⁸ The distinction between quantitative and qualitative processes was elaborated by Serge Moscovici who, following Max Weber, introduced a concept of domination as the essential element to qualify a group as minority. Moscovici Serge, *Psychologie des minorités actives*, Paris: PUF, 1976. The terms, ‘minoriation’ and ‘minorization, are frequently used in French sociology. For a theorization of this dual process, refer to Blanchet Philippe, “Essai de théorisation d’un processus complexe” in Huck Dominique, Blanchet Philippe (ed.), *Minorations, minorisations, minorités: études exploratoires*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005, p. 17-47.

constantly having to prove its belonging to the nation without ever having that belonging affirmed.¹⁹ A minority comes into existence with the combination of these two processes, as was the case in Turkey. As a matter of fact, in nation-states, multiculturalism is regarded as potentially destabilizing. Thus, exclusion of the minority becomes a vital component of the majority's own existence. In this respect, the Other which emerged within the context of the nineteenth-century continues to have implications for the twenty-first century. Groups such as the non-Muslims of Turkey who feel threatened as groups, stick all the more to their characteristics, thus creating an "inflation of identity". This identity inflation is necessary to keep and reinforce the feeling of otherness. Because the Turkish nations need this otherness in order to be able to be defined and to remain, as much as the groups in minority position, in a kind of jealousy of membership, they use the same otherness to avoid disintegration, agitating the spectrum of a supposed acculturation. We are thus in an identity spiral in which the nationalist paradigm, like the monotheist religions, refuses dual membership. In this vision of the world, one cannot be at the same time non-Muslim and Turkish at the same time in spite of an undeniable undeniably common way of life and common "culture".

This otherness has a double effect in the nation-making process and therefore in the reinforcement of the feeling of membership or non-membership. When the Turks think about the "Greek" or the "Armenian" they see the *Other*, the different one, threatening the existence of the very existence of the Turkish nation itself. However, even if this otherness is necessary for sincere (or instrumentalist) nationalists of both groups, it becomes problematic when it is used for the minorities. When speaking of an enemy, one speaks of a distant person, therefore it is impossible to verify its supposed difference. In the case of minorities assimilated to the otherness of enemy, the entire set of characteristics lent to the group is verifiable in everyday life. This situation led to a reaction of marginalisation on behalf of the dominating group. The majority is in constant demand of fusion of the members of the minorities but when those people "leave their group" to approach, in a *visible* way, the majority (by the abandonment of the religious practices, by the use of the language of the majority, mixed marriages, ideological attitudes conform with that of the majority, etc), this same majority takes refuge behind the most rigid aspects of its identity. Fearing the dilution of the group, they, thus, create an otherness of proximity, even stronger than the far otherness. The individuals or groups in such a situation are thus doubly marginalized, by the majority group because the

¹⁹ Rabinowitz, Dan, "The Palestinian Citizens of Israel, the Concept of Trapped Minority and the Discourse of Transnationalism in Anthropology" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 24 no. 1, 2001, p. 64-85.

public opinion doubts their sincerity and prefers them to belong to the different group, but also by the minority because, betraying their original identity, they threaten the existence of the group.

Minority policies in the democratization process: exclusion from the *national* life

Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, minority policies have formed a double movement, seemingly contradictory but quite common in the majority and minority relations in other contexts as well. This double movement can be summarized in few words: dominant majority demand constantly evidences of loyalty from the minority, but the very same majority never accept or consider these pledges sufficient.

This double movement is embodied in one hand in sociological and political marginalization and permanent exclusion from the idea of "Turkishness" On the other hand, by a policy of assimilation especially towards other Muslims ethnically non-Turks. The aim of these minority policies is to turkify all Muslims and to make invisible all non-Muslims.

In this dialectic between exclusion and assimilation, tensions have arisen whenever there is a societal crisis in Turkey, during bilateral disputes with the country where the minority is close (Greece, Armenia, Israel), or in an international situation generally difficult (Cold War, European integration process, etc.) Sometimes these tensions became repressive policies. This applies to the period of the Second World War, when Turkey was not part of the War but suffered from the economic and political influences coming from the belligerents. During these five years, harassment policies such as taxes on capital or unarmed military service were applied to "visible" minorities.

Similarly, during the 1950s and 1960s with the deterioration of Greek-Turkish relations in the context of the Cyprus dispute, a whole series of events marked the history of non-Muslims of Turkey, especially Greeks, as the events of 6 / 7 September 1955 and the expulsion of Greek nationals in 1964²⁰.

On the other hand, the situation of minorities gets better in times of bilateral or international *détente*, which shows that they are considered and treated as if they were external to the Turkish nation, although Turkish nationals. The frequent use of the concept of "içerdeki Yabancılar" *i.e.* internal foreigners is due to that precise vision.

²⁰ For a detailed analysis of these two events see Akgönül Samim, « Chypre et les minorités gréco-turques : chronique d'une prise d'otage » in *Gremmo-Monde arabe contemporain. Cahiers de recherches*, 29 « *Recherches en cours sur le problème chypriote* », 2001, p. 37-51.

New political claims

In the ongoing construction of the Turkish nation and its reflections on minorities, the 1990s bring an upheaval. This radical turnover is due

- to the complete restructuring of the regional situation,
- to (re)awakenings of particular identities in Turkey as well as in the Balkans and the Middle East
- Finally to the democratization of Turkey which allowed the expression of identity claims in a more open and stronger manner.

Throughout the Cold War period, political and ideological confrontation of the two blocks could somehow hide other types of otherness. The temporary loss of ideological rivalry contributed to the creation of new otherness or reactivation of old ones reinforcing ethnic and especially religious enmities. The Yugoslavian war crisis, the Caucasian conflicts are some of the examples.

These new cleavages had multiple consequences in the Turkish nation-building process and in the idea of Turkishness at two levels: ethnic and religious groups.

At the ethnicity level, belonging to the turkishness has taken a new sense from the 1990s, when the Turkic groups which were inaccessible for decades became suddenly tangible. Thus, not only the Turkish/Muslim minorities of the Balkans and the Caucasus have been fully integrate in the imagined "Turkish world", but the Turkic republics of Central Asia have also attracted the attention of policymakers and entrepreneurs in Turkey. Quickly, the horizon of Turkishness was became spectacularly expanded with the concept of "*Diş Türkler*," *i.e.* "external Turks". This ethnicization of the national membership had inevitably an important consequence within Turkey: the exclusion of non-Turkish ethnic groups, especially the Kurds, who had started a rediscovery of their ethnic identity since the second half of the 1980s. The tension between Kurds and Turks that turned into an armed struggle has intensified with this ethnicization of the turkishness. Nevertheless, the significance of the "minority" status was and is so pejorative in the Turkish context that the Kurds never claimed such status. The most radical fought for autonomy, while others claimed the title of "co-founder people."

Another cleavage appeared during the same period between Sunnis and Alevis. The Alevism is the second largest religion of the country, estimated to have 12 to 15 million followers. The external perception is not completely identical to the internal perception

insofar a great number of Alevis in Turkey consider themselves Muslims. Thus, like other current and religious persuasions in Turkey, it would be wrong to regard the Alevis as monolithic in both practical and doctrinal terms. Indeed Alevism refers to mutated heterogeneous belief systems as well as disparate practices that vary across groups and time²¹.

Since 1990's, the Alevis in Turkey have been in a process of legitimating vis-à-vis the overall Turkish society and vis-à-vis the government. Indeed, having been despised by the Sunni Ottoman rule, Alevis have been able to enjoy the secularist Kemalist Turkey since the power attempted to relegate the religion to the private sphere. Thus, the Alevi vote was often Kemalist and secular. Since the revival of religious identities in Turkey, starting with the Sunni identity from the 1980s, Alevi identity has also begun taking a more confessional meaning. These two confessional affiliations identity creates tensions between Alevis and Sunnis but also between the Alevis and the State. These tensions provide sometimes physical violence as it was the case in 1993 in Sivas where, Sunnis attacked and killed Alevis met in en Hotel for a cultural festival.

Alevis are now divided about the strategy to follow in a process of public and official recognition of Alevism in a more democratic Turkey. Especially in the process of European integration with a relatively greater religious freedom, a number of Alevi NGO's claim this recognition at least at three levels:

- The possibility of no longer being treated as Sunnis during the compulsory religious instruction at schools. A breakthrough occurred in this area since, at least in the speeches of politicians, such courses are no longer confined to the Sunni-Hanafism but include some history of Ali as well. By contrast Alevi students are still not exempt from these courses.

- The ability to write "Alevi" on the 'religion' box of identity cards. There is also a recent development on this topic. Since a decree published in the Official Gazette of October 23, 2006, it is now possible to leave this blank or change the word "Islam".

- And finally, and this is the most important, a number of Alevis are demanding state subsidies from the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which reports directly to Prime Minister and which funds all Sunni On the other hand, other Alevi leaders refuse public funding, considered as equivalent to state control.

²¹ Zarccone Thierry, *La Turquie moderne et l'islam*, Paris : Flammarion, 2004, p. 297.

Non-Muslims: fewer but audible

Concerning the non-Muslims, in the same process of democratization and the development of liberal views in the public opinion, a number of cyclical changes were observed during the last two decades. Discussions on non-Muslims, who could betray Turkey, still exist of course. But this debate is sometimes modulated by another, more concrete, more realistic and sometimes even more humanistic.

Three main non-Muslim communities (Greeks, Armenians and Jews) are, again, at the centre of more or less controversial public debates. But compared to the 1950's or 1960's, one can see a plurality of views rarely observed before and especially with the direct participation of stakeholders *i.e.* members of the minorities themselves.

Above all, the common problem of these three minorities is the properties of religious foundations. These foundations form the pillars of minority institutions from religious as well as symbolic and financial perspective. They were harassed throughout the 1970's and 1980's and even 1990's. They have been banned from the acquisition of new properties, including through the donation, and other properties that had been acquired since 1936 have been expropriated by citing a statement made by that date. The legal changes of the last decade have brought a number of flexibilities. But the problem remains that the non-Muslim pious foundation are still classified in a separate category from other Muslim foundations, and therefore are subject to special treatment. On this point, we witness conflicting dynamics that complicate the development. On the one hand, the fact that pressure from the European Union focuses on this issue irritates nationalist circles who see the evidence that the "West" tries to disintegrate the unity of the Turkish Republic. In this speech, they drew the attention to similarities with the period of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire which, relying on non-Muslim groups, the Western powers are considered to have destroyed the Empire. But then the minorities themselves are no longer silent, defend their rights in public space and are heard, particularly by Democrats and liberal left. This dynamic inevitably creates tension.

The specific situation of each of the three groups can be summarized as follows:

The small Greek Orthodox minority (over 100 000 in 1923, nearly 5,000 in 2010), have problems in two distinct categories.

Firstly, there are concrete problems related to the everyday life such as the issue of minority schools, textbooks or personal property of Greek citizens' expelled in 1964. Almost all of these problems are due to the negative and restrictive interpretation of the principle of

reciprocity established by Article 45 of the Treaty of Lausanne. This article, interpreted as the reciprocity of the two minorities means actually "mutual obligations" of two states towards their own nationals, *i.e.* the reciprocity is NOT between the two minorities, but between the two States in giving the usual citizenship rights to their nationals including minority members.

On the other hand, there is a complex situation about the status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, remained in Istanbul in 1923, considered a local church by the Turkish authorities. Nevertheless, it plays an undeniable role in international and ecumenical level. The Turkish public opinion as well as the State think that this internationalization is harmful to the "national interests".

In the same context, since 1971 the Greek Orthodox in Turkey has no longer a theological school to educate religious ministers necessary for religious practice. The reopening of the Halki Theological School (an island near Istanbul) is the subject of intense debate in both the Turkish public opinion and in Turkey's relations with the West (EU and United States of America). In 2011, despite many promises, the Halki theological school is still closed.

The Armenian minority in Turkey suffers from a complex international environment. This minority of approximately 50 000 members, mostly living in Istanbul, carries the memory of the massacres of 1915, qualified at the state-level as genocide by some Western countries. At every Turkish-European crisis due to this qualification, the minority feels trapped because they are shown as targets especially in the mainstream media but also by the Turkish political leaders. For the Turkish public opinion, there is no difference between Armenians of Turkey (Turkish citizens), of Armenia, and of Diaspora.

Otherwise, nonexistent relations between Turkey and Armenia complicate links between the Armenians of Turkey and the Armenians of Armenia. The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia also continues to poison relations. But, through a newspaper appearing in Turkish minority, *Agos*, and its figurehead, Hrant Dink, the Turkish mainstream public opinion has been informed of the existential and practical problems of this minority. Many Turkish intellectuals rallied to the cause of this minority, through the dynamism created by *Agos*. During 2000's, Hrant Dink became one of the most followed and prominent intellectual figures of contemporary Turkey, until his assassination in January 2007. This murder, followed by a spectacular funeral can be seen as an electroshock for the Turkish public opinion. As of that murder, thanks to the Dink's courageous position, Armenians of

Turkey can express themselves more openly. Specific demands are concentrated on the election of a New Armenian Patriarch, on the status of Armenian foundations but more generally against the bad image of Armenians in the country which creates a hate speech in the media.

Turkish Jews, mostly descendants of the Sephardic Jewish community expelled from Spain in the 15th century, form a small minority of approximately 30 000 members. However, this minority, especially its elites, show, through the newspaper *Salom*, a very close position to official Turkish view, at least, until the recent clash between Turkey and Israel. Since this clash, related to the Palestinian issue, we have been witnessing a change in two directions. On the one hand, the Turkish public opinion supports more and more openly the Palestinian cause which is expressed also by the political power. This new configuration liberates an anti-Semitic discourse without complex. On the other hand, several voices from the minority challenge the usual vision of a minority happy and grateful to Turkey. Some Turkish-Jewish circles claim the re-writing of the History facing the historical realities of the treatment of Jewish community especially during the 1930's and 1940's but also suffering from anti-Semitic discourse in the mainstream media.

Therefore, during the democratization process, for the three minorities, at the discursive level, we can see three kinds of transformations:

- Minorities now appear as actors in the deep change of society that Turkey experiences.
- Turkish public opinion has varied attitudes towards non-Muslim minorities from racist hostility to indifference or solidarity, which wasn't the case until 1990's.
- And finally public policies take tentative steps towards these minorities, partly under European pressure.

Conclusion

The transformation of Turkish society and changes in perceptions and self-perceptions show that the Turkish democratization is taking a new step. This period is characterized by a tension between blurred identifications. These identification currents can be described as exclusivist: supporters of a rigid definition of Turkishness often based on language, religion,

Turkish culture, attachment to the Central Asian and ottomans origins, or inclusivist on the contrary, leaving the ethnic meaning of Turkishness, with a national identity based on the territory that can encompass all ethno-religious components, such as the Kurds and the Alevi but also non-Muslim minorities²².

Since 1999, the third phase of Europeanization of Turkey (the first one was in 1920's, the second one was in the 1950's) brings new perspectives to the Turkish identity as well as to the Turkish political system. In the ottoman system, an individual was belonging first to his/her *Millet* and then to the ottomanity, at least until the Tanzimat period. In the Turkish Republic belonging to Turkishness became compulsory, to have direct links with the state. The European view is more focused on the individual than on the state. Thus, this Europeanization is susceptible to create a new definition of turkishness, related more to the individual will to participate in the democratic and public life of the country than to the ethno-religious belonging.

4 phases of democratization in Turkey and identity issues

	Ottoman Empire	1920's Foundation of a Nation State	1950's Participation in the western structures (NATO, Council of Europe)	2000's Integration process to the European Union
Political system	Semi-feudal Empire	Monist nation-state / single party	Monist Nation-State / Political plurality	Pluralist Democratic State
Status of the individual	Subject / Protected	Compulsory belonging to the turkishness (ethno- religious cleansing and assimilation)	Compulsory citizenship to the Turkish State	Voluntary citizenship to a European candidate / member State
Status of the community	Muslim Millet (dominant "nation") / non-Muslim Millets (Dominated / protected "Nations")	Turkish Nation (Homogeneous, Secular and coercive)	Turkish Nation (Homogeneous, Secular and coercive)	Voluntary multi- belonging into many groups (political, ethnic, religious, professional, gender, ideological...)
Identity	Religious (Collective)	Ethno-religious (Collective)	Ethnic, religious and political (Collective)	Individual

In contrast, a new situation undermines this phase of democratization to ease tensions and create a new national unity that respects the particularities of each component. During the 1970s, the main cleavages that created violent tensions were political and ideological. It is this climate of violence that led Turkey to be trapped in destabilizing military regime of the 1980s,

²² See Oran Baskın, *Türkiye'de azınlıklar, Kavramlar, Teori, Lozan, İç mevzuat, İçtihat, Uygulama*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2005, p. 131 and *passim*.

established after the coup of September 12, 1980. The second half of 1980 and the first half of the 1990s depoliticized masses and tensions have turned into ethnic conflicts especially with the Kurdish question. This racialization of social relations continues, but gradually replaced by a new divide, religious this time. From the mid-1990s, the interpretation” of all economic or social problems became increasingly religiously oriented. This new vision has created a growing opposition between groups, not between Muslims and non-Muslims, or between believers and nonbelievers, but between the defenders of an increased role of religion in political orientations and socialization on the one hand and on the other hand, those who want to confine religion in the private space like in Western secularized societies, by coercive policies if necessary. It is this new phase of identity between individualization and social communitarisation that the Turkish democratization must pass through.

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