EUROPE UNVEILING: THE MUSLIM PRESENCE AND THE "MYTH" OF HEADSCARF IN EUROPE

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Özet

Fransa'da 80'lerin sonunda Müslüman öğrencilerin devlet okullarına başörtüsü ile gelmeleri üzerine ortaya çıkan tartışma 90'larda hız kazandı. Kamusal alanda dinsel sembollerin varlığı, diğer Avrupa ülkelerinde de kaygı uyandırdı. Fransa, Almanya ve İngiltere'de başörtüsü tartışmasının ortaya çıkışlarının izini süren bu tez, başörtüsünün bu ülkelerde bir sorun olarak kurgulandığını savunuyor. Avrupa'daki Müslümanların sayılarının artmasının ve bir tehdit olarak algılanan İslam'ın siyasallaşmasının, başörtüsünün bir sorun olarak kurgulanmasını sağlayan koşulları da belirlediğini tartışıyor. Roland Barthes'ın semiyolojik mit çözümlemesi kullanılan araştırmada, Avrupa'da tartışıldığı biçimiyle başörtüsünün bir sembol olmakla kalmayıp mitleştirildiği öne sürülüyor. Bu mit çözümlemesi de, başörtüsü mitinin Avrupa'daki Müslümanların varlığını doğallaştırırken, Avrupa'nın kendi din ve sömürge tarihinden kaçışına işaret ettiğini gösteriyor. Dolayısıyla, başörtüsü tartışması bir yandan dinsel özgürlüklerle, diğer yandan Avrupa'nın kendi tarihini uzaklaştırarak bir kimlik oluşturmasıyla ilgilidir.

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Abstract

The debate on Muslim girls' wearing headscarves to public schools has emerged in France in the late 80s and gained a momentum during the 90s. The presence of religious symbols in the public sphere has been evocative in other European countries as well. In tracing the emergences of the headscarf debate in France, Germany and England, this dissertation argues that the headscarf is constructed as a problem in these countries. It discusses the circumstances in which it was possible to construct headscarf as a problem are the growing Muslim presence in Europe and the concern of politicization of Islam which was construed as a threat. This study, by using the semiological myth analysis of Roland Barthes, proposes that the headscarf, as it is discussed in European countries, is not a symbol but rather that it is mythified. This myth analysis shows that the myth of headscarf naturalizes the Muslim presence in Europe, and in doing so it signifies the flight of Europe from its religious and colonial history. Hence the headscarf debate is on the one hand related with the religious freedoms, but on the other hand it is about the formation of a European identity through distancing its history.

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Introduction

In an era when we try to delineate the range of globalization through its economical and socio-cultural effects in our societies and investigate social transformations, we have to remind ourselves that change does not occur similarly with the same consequences everywhere, in every aspect of our lives. If one element of post-capitalist era of globalization is the dissemination of information, another element which has challenged the organization of societies is the outcome of the movement of people. The long twentieth century has witnessed the rise of nations which had established borders and barriers and homogenized populations. But it has also witnessed upheavals which has transformed or challenged these barriers, especially during the second half of the century. The European countries which have induced much movement in the world have become the destination for many people. While the newcomers tried to benefit as much as possible and pursue their living in their hosting countries, the cultural and legal changes they evoked in these host countries were shaped by mutual expectations and forms of recognitions. The legal status of newcomers, the limits of their participation in the public sphere, the cultural conflicts and their upheavals against the various forms of discrimination necessitated a critical investigation of immigrants' position in European countries. Although it is still a concern and source of much debate what the European integration will bring about to the function of nation-state, one of the major consequences of the European Union is to force the states to become more considerate in their integration policies and conflict resolutions.

The growing number of Muslim populations in the European countries and their claim to their cultural identities have led to the emergence of the veiling issue: a debate which coincided with the issues of integration of the Muslim people; of the religious identity of the European Union; the legislative core of the Union; the polarization effect of

September 11, 2001, in Europe which has augmented after the invasion of Iraq. The debate has emerged with regards to the public presence of headscarf in public education especially in France and Germany, and became the site of problems which propelled dilemmas in the face of the history of civil liberties and secularization in Europe.

The presence of Muslim people in European countries and their claim to their religious rights have reopened the debate of secularization, a process which was supposed to be fulfilled, and have provided an argument for the supporters of a radical interpretation of secularism. The ways the European countries manage the issue are important for various reasons. The issue might be considered as a test case in the face of the civil heritage of what has been gained by secularization in Europe: the emergence of the headscarf issue provides evidence for the apparently unresolved relations between state and society in terms of the question of where religion belongs to. The debate surfaces the age-long controversies; hence the issue acts as a touchstone for the European countries in the first hand. Moreover, the handling of the issue has a say to both Muslim societies outside Europe and the countries which have taken the European model of organization between the religious institutions and civil society. It is of vital importance for Turkey as well with a vast majority of Muslim citizens and the establishment of a secular constitution, who looks forward to being a member of the European Union.

As the analysis in this dissertation is limited to European countries, the way the headscarf was constructed as a problem in Turkey will be disregarded. This dissertation will neither investigate the case in Turkey nor make a comparative analysis between the issue in Turkey and Europe. On the other hand, the analysis will have a bearing on Turkey's case. Although at first sight the headscarf issue in Europe might seem to be a similar to the debates of secularism and liberties built around the presence of headscarf in Turkey, the contexts of problematization are different. In this respect, in

order to have a comprehensive approach to the problematization of veiling in Turkey, the tension between secularization and liberties would have to be grasped with a perspective of the peculiar history of reformations dating back the last periods of the Ottoman Empire.

In Turkey, the headscarf debate has emerged as a part of the political agenda in the 80s. Its emergence has been interpreted as a need to reconsider the dynamics of Kemalist modernization. The veil has become a politically overladen issue, and the debate growing around it polarized the society: the modernists considered headscarf as the surfacing of the Islamist movement which is critical of the Kemalist Reformation, seeing the act of veiling as a symbol of a will to retreat to a religious organization of the society; while the Islamists have often referred to civil rights and liberties of worshipping that have been partially secured by the constitution. This polarization of the society has drained any attempt to reconsider the issue with other terms than suggested. Hence, headscarf has been perceived either as a symbol of a threat to secular constitution, or a claim to a civil right in favor of the Islamists. The polarization of the debate compelled one to side either with secularist Kemalists who approve the exclusion of veiling women from universities or with Islamists.[1]

The tension that emerged around the veiling of students or public officials in European countries is related on one hand with the Muslim religion becoming more and more visible in the public sphere, and on the hand with the present perceptions of the position of religion in society in general. So the debate of headscarf (*l'affaire du foulard*) which is considered peculiar to France will not be examined as an exception. My intention is not to present and examine how different actors in the society

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[1] See Nilufer Gole *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, (1996) for a sociological analysis of veiling university students repositioning their religious identities after 80's in Turkey.

has taken up or reacted to the issue in France. Instead, the focus will be the circumstances and discourses which helped the problem of veiling to emerge in three countries. In Europe, the countries relevant to the analysis will be confined to three countries: Germany, France and Great Britain. These countries have no fewer than twelve million of Muslims out of about fifteen millions of Muslim people living in European countries. These countries have adopted different forms of integration policies towards the newcomers among which Muslims present a diversity of origin. Furthermore, these three countries represent the major Christian denominations in Europe except the Orthodox Church.

The reasons and motives why students and women wear headscarves will not be a concern in the present study, but not because such a concern is worthless. The change in the attitude of Muslim women in European countries towards veiling and the way they explain their act of veiling can be analyzed and would provide great insight about the experience of Islam in European countries. However, I would like to return to the instance before such an explanation was needed and trace the moments through which headscarf was constructed as a problem.

Many Muslim women believe that wearing a headscarf is a means to practice their religion: to discuss whether or not they are justified by the Koran or Hadiths is a dead-end discussion. Moreover, the fact that the veil was/is being used as a way to oppress women does not eliminate the indisputability of belief. However, those who are ready to see headscarf as a sign of oppression of women stigmatize the headscarf and ignore the economical and social means through which the patriarchal dominance continues, especially in Muslim dominated societies. I argue that they employ a myopic focus in explaining away the status of women in society with veiling. The oppression lies not in the object (headscarf) itself, but in the whole ideology by means of which its presence or absence acts upon

women. So, I propose that forced veiling, as well as forced unveiling are acts of violence.

> If the act of unveiling has a liberating potential, so does the act of veiling. It all depends on the context in which such an act is carried out or, more precisely, on how and where women see dominance. Difference should be defined neither by the dominant sex nor by the dominant culture. So when women decide to lift the veil, one can say that they do so in defiance of their men's oppressive right to their bodies. But when they decide to keep or put the veil once they took off, they might do so to reappropriate their space or to claim a new difference in defiance of genderless, hegemonic, centered standardization.[2]

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the tension re-created with the problem of headscarf in the light of religious freedoms and the discourses of secularism in Europe. The case of headscarf and different issues emerging with respect to and around veiling will be approached from the perspective of the relations between society, religion and the state which were supposed to have reached a balance in the 20th century in Europe. The crucial questions are: how does a dress code became so overladen? How did it begin to signify so diverse symbolic meanings? But before asking these, the foremost question is how in the first instance, did it become possible to question the presence of headscarf in schools and consider it as a matter to be resolved?

Instead of adopting an agent-based analysis of the debate, either of the Muslim women who wear headscarf or those who favor to delimit its presence for various reasons, I chose to employ the point of view of the

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[2] Minh-Ha, Trinh T. "Not You/Like You: Postcolonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference." *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*. Eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, c1997, 2002. p. 416.

headscarf itself, which gains and loses meanings. In assessing the social tensions in this debate, the semiological analysis of Roland Barthes is going to be used in order to analyze headscarf as a sign. The main objective is to analyze the dimensions through which a dress form as a cultural artifact can become to bear symbolic meanings.

The headscarf problem in European countries is on the one hand related with the integration of religious minorities and on the other hand with the Muslim immigrants who started to be considered as a social group in relation to the problem of Islam. The way the headscarf has been constructed as a problem is eventually related with how the Europeans perceive themselves, and with the question of European identity. The first chapter will present the first instances where the issue of headscarf became a public debate in Britain, France and Germany. Aside from academic studies which have investigated the issue in Europe, the main source of information on the emergence of this issue is the news sources accessed largely via internet. It will be discussed that although the solutions adopted in these countries are different, the construction and perception of headscarf in these countries were similar. In the second chapter, the analysis will move towards the circumstances which made possible to problematize headscarf in Europe. The growing fear of political Islam and the rise of the rhetoric of antagonism between "West" and "Muslim world" will be examined. In addition, the issue of Muslim presence in Europe will be analyzed as a recent attempt to define a European identity in which the Muslims are projected as the "other" of Europeans. The third chapter will return from the surrounding and underlining issues of headscarf to the headscarf itself and suggest that headscarf has not only become a symbol, but it has been constructed as a myth. This last chapter will propose a Barthean myth analysis of headscarf in order to show the dynamics through which headscarf as a form of cloth could come to signify many diverse

symbolic connotations. The myth analysis of headscarf makes possible to evaluate the discourses of secularism in relation to religious freedoms.

1 - The Emergence of the Headscarf Debate

A Brief Historical Background

From the end of 80s onwards, the Muslims in European countries have attained a dubious public attention through the scarves of Muslim students or teachers in schools. The question whether the Muslim girls (or teachers) should to be allowed to wear scarves at school evolved into a question of the symbolic significance of the Muslim headscarf. This growing debate has been taken from various perspectives and began to include the issues of integration of Muslims, politicization of Islam, ghettoization of Muslim populations, and the conformity of Islam with modernity. One approach is to interpret the headscarf debate as the surfacing part of a giant iceberg where the relevant problems connected to the Muslim presence in Europe are taken into consideration. However, such an approach would stigmatize the headscarf debate and would lead to dismiss the fact that in different European countries, the headscarf debate aroused in varying degrees and tensions, which were related to the previous attitudes developed with respect to minorities, immigration and secularization. The following account of the emergence of this debate aims to provide an insight on the similarities and diversities in the ways and in the terms through which the headscarf became a subject of a cultural and political debate in different European countries.

Britain

In Britain, in 1988, the governors of the Altrincham Grammar School in Manchester decided that headscarves were a hazard when worn in school laboratories or gyms and ordered they be banned in classes.[3] In

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[3] AlSayyad, Nezar. "Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: On the Discourses of Identity and Culture." *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*. Eds. Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castells. Berkeley: Lexington Books, 2002. p. 11.

January 1990, the matter was discussed among the sixteen governors of the school who decided that the students would be allowed to wear dark blue scarves conforming to school colors, whereas the ban would continue in the labs and gyms. Instead of banning the students from wearing all types of headscarves as done in France in 2004, in Britain, the headscarves were perceived as an expression of religious commitment, yet the discussions continued with respect to the types of scarves and the possible hazards when worn in gym classes. Since the schools were setting their own uniform policies, the schools' governing bodies were setting the line between the acceptable and unacceptable forms of scarves in terms of either being hazardous, or more generally of creating a division among pupils. For example, in 2002, a student of Denbigh high school in Luton, Shabina Begum was sent back home when she came to school with jilbab (a long gown covering all body except hands and face) instead of her usual and accepted shalwar kameez (trousers and tunic). The school governors argued that adopting the jilbab would create a division between the students where the majority of them were Muslims, fearing that students wearing jilbab might be regarded as better Muslims.[4] After forced to change her school and losing her case in high court, the Appeal Court judges ruled in March 2005 that although the school had the right to set a school uniform policy, it had acted against the student's right to express her religion by expelling her, a right recognized by English law.[5] This ruling might be interpreted as having implications for the schools to review their uniform policies in order to

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[4] "Jilbab ruling for Muslim pupils 'would be divisive'" *The Guardian* 28 May 2004. 11 May 2005. <http://education.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,493460-110908,00.html>.

[5] "Schoolgirl wins Muslim gown case." *BBCNews* March 2, 2005. 12 May 2005. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/england/beds/bucks/herts/4310545.stm>.

Aslam, Dilpazier. "Schoolgirl tells Guardian of her battle to wear Islamic dresses." *The Guardian* 3 March 2005. 11 May 2005 <http://education.co.uk/faithschools/story/0,13882,1429172,00.html>.

respect cultural and religious diversities, and it accords with the general multiculturalist tendency in Britain where the public officers such as Metropolitan police officers or court officers can cover their heads.

France

It is in France that the students' wearing headscarves in public schools created the most vigorous and long controversies over the individual rights and secularism. As the debate became public, many different views and arguments have been and still being voiced. In 1989, the principal of a high school in Creil, a suburb of Paris, expelled three girls from school for wearing Islamic headscarves in class. The girls were two Moroccan sisters, 14 year-old Leila and 13 year-old Fatima Achaboun, and Tunisian 14 year-old Samira Aaeedani.[6] Through demonstrations and the interest of the media, the event attained public attention. Lionel Jospin, the France Education Minister at the time, decided that the girls should be 'persuaded' to remove their veils in class, but if they refuse to do so, they should still be allowed to attend the class.[7] He argued that the contrary would be a form of religious discrimination. When this decision has been rejected both by some of the teachers union and by the members of the Socialist Party to which Jospin was a member, and Prime Minister Michel Rocard referred the matter to the Council of State for a decision. The state council decreed that the head teacher had overstepped his rights and the girls were re-schooled.[8] The ruling allowed each school to settle the issue as it saw fit. However, in 1992, the Council of State overturned its original ruling. The wearing of

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[6] AlSayyad, Nezar. "Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: On the Discourses of Identity and Culture." *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*. Eds. Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castells. Berkeley: Lexington Books, 2002. p. 12.

[7] Ibid.

[8] "Schools' bid for headscarf ban widens French divide." *The Observer* 15 June 2003. 23 April 2005. <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/islam/story/0,1442,977747,00.html>

headscarves further increased in popularity: although in 1989, only ten children were registered as wearing headscarf to school, by 1994 this number had risen to two thousands.[9] The French government declared on September 10 1994 that "it would ban the wearing of headscarves in public schools, since the practice violated the tradition of secular education in France."[10] In a published interview, Education Minister Francois Bayrou said that he was going to deliver instructions to principals of all public schools to enforce a ban immediately. He said that his instructions would be clear: "We will continue to accept discreet religious signs, as has always been the case. But we cannot accept ostentatious signs that divide our youth."[11]

The wearing of headscarves was opposed as a sign of religious assertiveness, creating a division between the Muslims and non-Muslims in public schools, and therefore not conforming to the secular tradition of education. By 1994, popular opinion polls showed that 86 percent of the French population was opposed to the wearing of scarves in schools.[12] Whereas some regarded Muslim headscarves as a symbol of oppression of women, others were more concerned with the religious affinity, and regarded this rising urge of school girls to wear scarves as a political statement in sympathy with the Islamic fundamentalist movement, which was then challenging Algeria's military-backed government.[13] The latter was also related with the fear that politicization of Islamic groups would obstruct the integration of about five million Muslims, which is the greatest number in European countries.

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[9] Ibid.

[10] AlSayyad, Nezar. "Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: On the Discourses of Identity and Culture."

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

As the schools, in accordance to the Bayrou directive, began to prevent students who refused to remove their scarves from attending the classes, demonstrations and student strikes were done for supporting the students and families opposing the directive. Some criticized the ban as discriminatory, because it still allowed for religious symbols such as crucifixes and Stars of David to be carried by students. Some argued that the ban would not encourage integration, but on the contrary, would lead the Muslim girls out of the education system. The French Constitutional Council ruled in October 1996 that even the Education Ministry had banned "ostentatious religious signs", schools may not suspend pupils who don scarves if no overt religious proselytizing is involved.[14]

Fifteen years after the Creil affair, on 10 February 2004, the French parliamentarians voted for introducing legislation formally barring students from wearing "ostentatious" religious symbols in public schools. While 494 parliamentarians voted in favor of the ban, 36 parliamentarians from the Green and Communist parties opposed the legislation, which they said discriminated against Muslims.[15] The ban passed by the National Assembly in March and went into effect in September, and did only affect the public schools. The main passage of the bill says: "In primary and secondary state schools, wearing signs and clothes that conspicuously display the pupil's religious affiliation is forbidden."[16] In an opinion survey made in late

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[14] "Rejecting their ancestors the Gauls." *The Economist* 16 November 1996. 28 February 2005
<http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&an=9611198063>

[15] "French Parliament votes for Headscarf ban in schools." *Deutsche Welle* 10 February 2004. 11 May 2005. <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,1564,1111321,00.html>.

[16] Heneghan, Tom. "Last-Minute Doubts as French Debate Veils in School." *Reuters* 3 February 2004. 29 Mart 2005. Accessed through the SikhNetwork.

January 2004 by newspaper *Liberation*, 58 per cent of the respondents said that a law banning religious signs was "applicable" in France.[17]

Amid all the controversies and with the support of the majority of French society, the public schools began to refuse girls who insist to wear their headscarves to attend the classes as the new school year began in September 2004. The Muslim girls who did not take off their scarves did not have much option in France: among the few schools they can attend is the only approved Muslim high school in France as of 2004 (near Lille) Lycee Averroes, and there are private Catholic schools which accept girls with Muslim headscarves. The Muslim organizations began to develop projects in order to canvass money and support the education of expelled girls either through correspondence courses or opening private schools.[18] According to the Education Ministry's inspector general, Hanifa Cherifi, who was appointed in 1994 to mediate between teaching bodies and students wearing headscarves and their families, only 48 students had been expelled from schools while almost six hundred had agreed to uncover their head. However, the activists of the Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF) which runs a telephone hotline to advice schoolgirls counted at least 806 "victims of law" who either dropped out or pressured to uncover their hair.[19]

As the ban of "conspicuous signs of religious affinity" is still a matter of controversy in France, from different feminist groups to human

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<http://www.sikhnet.com/Sikhnet/news.nsf/0/B80518ADEA3E927D87256E2F0068A1C5?openDocument>.

[17] Taber, Kimberly Conniff. "Isolation Awaits French Girls in Headscarves." *Women's E-News* 5 March 2004. 13 July 2004. <http://www.feminist.com/news/vaw12.html>.

[18] Heneghan, Tom. "French veil ban prompts Muslims to open separate schools." *Daily Times* 31 March 2005. 12 May 2005. <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_31-3-2005_pg4_11>.

[19] Ibid.

rights organizations and Muslim organizations, the consequences of the ban either on the students or on the integration of the Muslim population are also the matters which are continuing to be discussed.

Germany

In other European countries, the Muslims wearing headscarves in schools did not attain as much public controversy as in France, not to a degree to be considered as such a matter of threat to the separation between the state and religion. While Denmark and Greece allow students and teachers to wear headscarves in schools, in the Netherlands it can be banned only if schools are able to cite security risks, and in Belgium the decision is largely left to individual schools where a few have imposed a ban.[20]

In Germany, however, the issue has been primarily about the teachers. A German of Afghan origin, Fereshta Ludin's legal demands to become a teacher has lasted more than five years. In 1998, the board of education in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg rejected Ludin's application to become a teacher on the grounds that her headscarf was a symbol of the Islamic faith.[21] Ludin from the city of Stuttgart has appealed first to the municipal, and then to the state courts, which cases she all lost. In 2002, the German Federal Administrative Court in Berlin ruled that teachers at public school must refrain from openly displaying religious symbols in class, since they are representatives of the state. The judges overruled Ludin's private religious rights in favor of that of students' right to secular education; citing the so-called "negative freedom of religion" act, which states that students must not be confronted with religious symbols

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[20] "To ban or not to ban." *The Economist* 25 October 2003. 15 May 2005. Academic Search Premier
<http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&an=11203886>.

[21] "Court says headscarf is religious symbol." *Deutsche Welle* 10 October 2002. 12 May 2005. <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,1564,587759,00.html>.

against their own will.[22] In September 2003, the Federal Constitutional Court, the highest court in Germany, overturned this ruling, stating that Stuttgart school authorities were wrong to bar Ludin from a teaching job because she insisted on wearing her headscarf in the classroom.[23] This ruling, however, was not based on the idea that a teacher's wearing headscarf in class was constitutionally sound. Although the highest court ruled in favor of Ludin, this has been because, the court argued; there was no legal ban in place in the state of Baden-Württemberg which supports the decision of the school governors. The court further stated that if the German states did not want to employ teachers wearing a headscarf, then they would first need to create unambiguous laws that expressly ban religious symbols in the classroom.[24] This ruling and the justification sparkled a controversy in Germany, where the states' education ministers began to issue statements saying they plan to enact legislation forbidding state officers, including teachers, to wear headscarves. In such a statement, the Education Minister of Hessen, Karin Wolff of the Christian Democratic Union party said: "Our constitution is based on a Christian-occidental tradition and portrays a value system, which the teachers have to follow."[25] Like the Education Minister of Baden-Wüttemberg, she declared that the state parliament would begin to draw up legislation to ban headscarves in the classroom. So, the ruling of the German Federal Constitutional Court in Ludin's case was far from being decisive, on the contrary it initiated a controversy on the need to create a legal basis for banning Muslim teachers from wearing headscarves. While

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[22] Ibid.

[23] "High court rules headscarves okay for teachers." *Deutsche Welle* 24 September 2003. 12 May 2005. <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,978043,00.html>.

[24] Ibid.

[25] "German States Move to Enact Headscarf Bans." *Deutsche Welle* 25 September 2003. 21 September 2004. <http://www.dw-world.de/english/0,1594,1432_A_978888,00.html>.

the initiations of the states were also protested, there was a continuing discussion as to the limits of what would be perceived as "religious symbols" that would violate the neutrality of the state.

The state government of Baden-Würtemberg enacted a law forbidding headscarves in schools in April 2004, and this has terminated Ludin's demand to be a teacher while continuing to wear her headscarf, in this state. After Baden-Würtemberg, Bavaria, Hesse, Saarland and Lower Saxony, the Berlin city-state became the sixth state to enact similar legislation banning religious symbols in 2004.[26] The municipal lawmakers of Berlin adopted a legislation which forbids city employees, including school teachers, police officers, court officers, and other civil servants to wear Muslim headscarves, Christian crosses, Jewish skullcaps, and Sikh turbans.[27] However, as the high courts decide on the constitutionality of these legislations, the debate whether these legislations aim only the Muslim teachers wearing headscarves, or whether a common ground for limiting religious symbols would be find, seems to last for some time. In October 2004, for example, the Federal Administrative Court ruled that the law that has passed in state Baden-Würtemberg was unfair because it only applied to Muslim women yet permitted Christian symbols. It was stated that "exceptions for certain forms of religiously motivated clothing was out of question", and hence the legislation would affect the nuns working in the public schools as well.[28] In supporting the state legislation, the author of the legislation, law professor Ferdinand Kirchhof told the magazine *Der Spiegel* that nuns' habits were considered to be "professional uniforms" in the

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[26] "Berlin city bans headscarves." *Expatica*, News source: dpa. 31 March 2004. 12 May 2005.
<http://www.expatica.com/source/site_article.asp?subchannel_id=26&story_id=6177>.

[27] Ibid.

[28] "Court: Headscarf ban applies to nuns." *Deutsche Welle* 10 October 2004. 12 May 2005. <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,1564,1355371,00.html>.

Roman Catholic Black Forest region of the state, and thus exempt from religious symbols law.[29]

These brief trajectories all tell stories of different tensions and vulnerabilities in regard to religious experiences and the relations with the minority populations in Europe. The previous experiences of colonialism and immigration, the diversity of populations, the discourses of integration together influence the terms of the controversies around the wearing of headscarf. Arrival at a point of discussing whether to ban or not to ban headscarves, and questioning which type of scarves these legislations would ban does not substantiate a sound ground for making sense of these controversies. Furthermore, this formulation forces one to make a choice, for or against the wearing of headscarves. The possible answers to the question whether to ban or not to ban, and to the relevant questions that can be derived from it, such as whether wearing headscarf is an indication of a suppressive religious experience, whether wearing headscarf is only a religious obligation or a political statement, they all postulate preestablished terms, simplifying the controversy to a matter of choice. I propose that in order to analyze the terms through which the various answers are being justified, we need to look at how the wearing of headscarf came to be constructed as a problem. In this way, I unbind myself from the presumed obligation of providing a premature solution disguised as an answer to this question. Instead of taking this question into consideration, I rather intend to problematize the question and the debate.

The Construction of Headscarf as a Problem

As it would be misleading to take the headscarf debate as symbolizing the various cultural and political tensions about the Muslim populations in European countries, it would be similarly misleading to separate this debate and making it an object of independent analysis without

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[29] Ibid.

considering the relevant tensions. In Britain, for instance, the Salman Rushdie affair had created more overweighing tensions than the headscarf debate. When British Muslims petitioned their government to ban Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* in 1988, they discovered that the existing blasphemy law was confined to Christianity and did not prohibit insults to the prophet Muhammad and their demand was rejected.[30] The demonstrations and protests of the Muslims created a controversy on the limits and the tolerance of free speech, a controversy which turned into an international event with the *fatwa* (a religious decree) of Ayatollah Khomeini, the then Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, through which he condemned Salman Rushdie to death and called for his execution for insulting Islam in *Satanic Verses*. Especially but not exclusively in Britain, the Rushdie affair came to signify the doubts on Islam's compatibility with Western liberalism while, in effect, it was a part of the larger questioning of a society that many Muslims believed did not seem to live up religiously and politically to its own standards.[31]

The construction of headscarf as a problem points not to the various solutions adopted or discussed in European countries, but to the emergence of the possibility of questioning the headscarf. In other words, in order to contextualize the associations of and responses to headscarf in European countries, we need to ask why, in the first place, it has emerged as a problem. So, what are the dynamics that made possible a principal to expel students for coming to school wearing headscarves, well, in the first place to make it a matter of decision, or a board of education to reject an application

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[30] van der Veer, Peter. "The Moral State: Religion, Nation, and Empire in Victorian Britain and British India." *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia.* Eds. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999. p. 15.

[31] Esposito, John L. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. pp. 249-51.

for being a teacher? What are the tensions that made such events a matter of popular controversy? What are the discourses that made possible to formulate the wearing of headscarf as a problem? And, how does a form of dress come to arouse so much symbolic meanings and threat?

As well as the attitudes adopted toward the headscarf issue varies from one country to another, the problematizations of the wearing of headscarf manifest differences. However, in asking these questions, my aim is not to make sense of the debate, not to strip it in order to analyze its constituent disputes, not to deconstruct, but to show that it is an outcome of growing sensibilities and anxieties. Instead of taking for granted the emergence of the debate in Europe as a result of growing number of Muslims and their demands, I would like to remind that headscarf was a form of clothing before it became to bear various symbolic meanings. So, considering all various types of headscarves, including the attires, veils and hijabs as forms of clothing, like any other ordinary part of clothing; like suits, Saris, Jewish caps or pants which might have regional, cultural and religious connotations, it demands a process though which a clothing which has existed in Europe began to symbolize a religious affinity, in uniformity. Not only headscarf began to be considered generally as a homogeneous type of dressing, it came to be exclusively identified with the religious practice of Islam. So, it would not appear natural from this perspective that a form of clothing can be interpreted as threatening the secularity, and the neutrality of a state. In other words, it would have been absurd for a person living in late nineteenth century's liberalizing France, for example, to imagine opposing a conservative form of dress, which was common in many parts of the religious rural hinterlands.[32]

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[32] AlSayyad, Nezar. "Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: On the Discourses of Identity and Culture." *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*. Eds. Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castells. Berkeley: Lexington Books, 2002. p. 15.

Of course every type of clothing has cultural and sometimes political connotations in different societies, in specific historical contexts. In suggesting to focus on the problematic[33] of the debate methodologically, I do not intend to simplify or neglect the present connotations of headscarf or veil. Nor do I imply that headscarf has not been ab/used as a political statement by both parties; those who are against it or who support it. On the contrary, my intention is to develop a distanced point of view to this debate in order to contextualize it, which together with the Rushdie affair has made public the topic and the problem of Muslim presence in Europe. It is the moment when wearing of headscarf could be constructed as a problem that it could become a statement. In its various forms the headscarf has for so many years came to bear various political significations in societies where the Muslims are in majority, especially in Turkey, Algeria, Iran; where the removal of it at a time meant a convincing step towards modernization, whereas the assertion of which came to state resistance and emancipation under imperialist threat or colonialist rule, for instance.

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[33] See, for a conception of "problematic, or problematization" the interview "Polemics, Politics and Problemizations" with Michel Foucault in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*. Paul Rabinow, ed. London: Penguin, 1991, (1984).

2 – "The Muslim Presence in Europe"

At a time when the headscarf began to be problematized in European countries, as this problem came to be regarded together with various tensions from integration to tolerance of free speech, a new area of sociological inquiry began to take shape. From the previous studies of social conflicts between immigrants and host societies, focusing on racism and identity politics, a new area began to confine itself to Muslim populations and the relevant issues of their integration, to the ways they form communities and to the interaction between Muslim communities and host societies. For a clue on the emergence of this area, it would suffice to have a look at the headings of conferences and the subsequent publications reaching a pace in the past fifteen years on this subject in the universities in Europe and USA. The previous approaches and the terminology of the studies examining the conditions and struggles of immigrants after de-colonization were considered insufficient to account for the conflicts between Muslim populations and host societies in European countries. And hence the title "the Muslim presence in Europe" came to group these issues on a new ground, the issues which the terms like "guestworkers" or "ex-colonizeds" fall short to account for.

Although the study of Muslims and Islam within Europe during the 60's and 70's was primarily concentrating on the analysis of migration, after the 80's it was pursued in diverse contextual analysis, emphasizing the cultural dimension. On the one hand, the evolution of the study of Islam and Muslims in Europe was the consequence of local and global political changes, such as the growing demands of Muslims in Western Europe, the Iranian Revolution, the politicization of Islam in the Arab world. But on the other hand, this growing interest also coincides with the increasing critique

of social sciences within the Western academia, with the tendency to deconstruct social science paradigms through the advent of the cultural.[34]

The title "The Muslim presence in Europe" came to signify the Muslim populations in European countries as a group, whose relations with their host societies could be assessed in comparison, and thus forming a new field of inquiry. The previous studies on the dynamics of how immigrants cope with their new environments, on the obstacles and possible solutions to their integration were in general undertaken by studies which focus on the tensions growing around the Muslim populations. As European countries grew multiethnic more than ever, regardless of their cultural and religious differences the Muslims in Europe were observed as one of the biggest and most agitated group. Accordingly, the headscarf debate belongs to a background of tensions emerging as the growing numbers of Muslim populations through acquiring residency or citizenship have become permanent and visible. This background is underlined with the question of Islam's becoming a grave source of concern in Europe, awaking old fears and hostilities against Islam on a new scheme.

The Negative Perceptions of Islam

"The Muslim presence in Europe" signifies the turmoil echoing back in Europe of the growing tensions and fears of the resurgence of Islam, as called "the politicization of Islam" in the Middle Eastern and Asian countries. This turmoil in Europe is generated by the demands of Muslim populations to participate equally in their societies while retaining their

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[34] Zemni, Sami. "Islam, European Identity and the Limits of Multiculturalism." *Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: the Position of Islam in the European Union*. Eds., W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld. Sterling, Va.: Peeters, c2002. p. 164-5.

Zemni provides here a brief history of the academic compartmentalization in arguing that the advent of Islamism coincides with the cultural turn within the social sciences and that the traditional orientalist images were recreated within these sciences.

cultural and religious identities. On the other side, it reflects the revitalization of the sentiments against Islam now feared to invade Europe from inside. This turmoil was furnished in Europe with occurrences such as the Rushdie affair in Britain and the headscarf affair in France and more recently flared after September 11, 2001, the terrorist attack to the World Trade Center in New York, and the bombings in Madrid and London. However, drastic international developments, such as the Iranian Revolution, the Gulf Wars, the electoral success of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria in 1991, which was followed by civil war, the revolution in Afghanistan, all incited this turmoil to a very significant degree. Hence it is proposed here that the designation of "Muslims in Europe" coincides with the growing debate of "Islamic fundamentalism" which founded a base to the prevailing rhetoric of antagonism between "Western World" and "Islamic World" to which Muslims in Europe supposedly belong to.

In spite of the diversity of the centuries-long interactions, the present perceptions of Islam in Europe has pertained the ancient stereotypical images and sentiments dating back to Arab conquests, the Crusades and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Similarly, for many Muslims and Arabs in the Middle Eastern and Asian countries, the legacy of Western colonialism and imperialism not only resides in the memories, but together with the recent US interventions, provides an easy scapegoat for the regional failures and discomforts, as they see a Western threat which is not only political or economical, but also cultural.[35] Addressing to age-old fears and taking shelter in monolithic stereotypes in times of conflict, opting for populist slogans demonizing the other is definitely not confined to any society or religion. The rhetoric of Christian-Islam rivalry has produced

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[35] Esposito, John L. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. p. 217.

dogmatic perceptions of one another when accented with mutual ignorance and stereotyping.

The perception of Islam in Europe, from the statements of politicians and experts to the presentations in the media, is dominated by the negative images which foster the view of Islam as a threat.[36] This negative perception is infected with tendencies of falsely grounding the agitated political relations between the countries of the West and the Middle East simplistically on a difference of religion, and sometimes on a difference of civilization. Hence the economical and political conflicts are explained solely in terms of religion, or civilization, in which case "West" means the legacy of modern and secular democracy. On the other hand, when it comes to the "Muslim World", the prevalent inclination is to reduce the diverse religious practices of different peoples to a monolithical, abstract and static conception of Islam. From this point of view, it appears as though the religious experiences and doctrines of Islam are fixed and similar everywhere around the world where Muslims are living. This monolithical and fixed conception of Islam is symptomatic of the rhetoric of antagonism between Western and Muslim worlds, in which the analyses are based on Western-centered points of reference. In fact, such comparative approaches between these two invented worlds "are prone to comparing a *religion* (Islam) with a *region* (or *society*) (the west)."[37] Another grave tendency is to confuse Islam with the political movements and organizations which either

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[36] For an analysis of media presentations of Islam in Western countries, see Said, Edward W. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.

[37] Shadid, Wasif and Sjoerd van Koningsveld. "The Negative Image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Causes and Solutions." *Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: the Position of Islam in the European Union*. Eds., W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld. Sterling, Va.: Peeters, c2002. p. 176, referring to Jochen Hippler et al, eds. *The Next Threat. Western Perceptions of Islam*. London: Pluto Press, 1995.

draw their strength from or legitimize their actions through Islamic doctrines. Here again, especially in the last thirty years, the political events in countries where the Muslims are in majority, the emerging Islamic parties and organizations, and the growing tendency of political leaders to appeal to religious sentiments of their people are all conceived as the signs of politicization of Islam. Furthermore, the electoral successes of Islamic parties in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Gaza, Turkey and Kuwait have provided major examples.

In their article on the negative image of Islam and Muslims in the West, W. Shadid and S. van Koningsveld categorize this attitude under five models: 1) of changing power relationship; 2) of the clash of civilizations; 3) of political Islam; 4) of oversimplified information; and 5) of increased Muslim immigration to the Western World.[38] However, I propose that these models are most of the time overlapping. Aside from the general tendency to conceive Islam as a threat, those who advocate that there would be a clash of civilizations tend to refer to the changing power relationship, for example, and those who point to the growing number of Muslim immigrants in Europe (and in the West) generally warn against the political Islam. It is a fact that Muslim immigrants in European countries reached a considerable number after the 80's, but the process through which they began to be considered as representative or an extension of the "Muslim World" is the crucial point. On the other hand, the political parties and organizations which base their views on Islamic doctrines began to find popular support and widened their activities in countries where Muslims are in majority. But how this myth of Islamic threat is generated from the relationship between the Western and Middle Eastern countries needs to be analyzed. Hence,

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[38] Shadid, Wasif and Sjoerd van Koningsveld. "The Negative Image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Causes and Solutions." *Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: the Position of Islam in the European Union*. Eds., W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld. Sterling, Va.: Peeters, c2002.

instead of making a projection on these models separately, in order to understand the dynamics of political Islam and the claim of Islamic threat, the following section will try to sketch out the political events in the Middle East which inaugurated an interest in Islam and Muslims in the West.

The Political Islam and the Rhetoric of Antagonistic Worlds

Especially recent extremist activities executed by radical Islamists in the Western countries endorsed supporters of the views that in the post-cold war era a new clash in the world would not be at the level of nation-states, but between civilizations of the West and East (Islam and Chinese)[39]; and that Muslims are in rage against the West[40]. These views support the general idea or sentiment that Islam is a threat, not only politically or culturally, but now demographically in Europe as well. However, failing to separate the violent and non-violent movements, and addressing to a general "rise of Islamic fundamentalism," these general presentations of Islam and Islamic movements as threats present a myopic focus. They fall short of taking into account the conditions under which various Islamic movements emerged. Moreover, they provide a monolithic perception of these movements, occasionally leading to identify religiously oriented movements with fundamentalism and fundamentalism with terrorism.[41] The term "fundamentalism" which is exclusively identified with Islamic movements, is dubious in its use. Although it is derived from early twentieth century American evangelicalism, it is taken as an analytic term, interpreted as a

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[39] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations." *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 Summer 1993.

[40] Lewis, Bernard. "Roots of Muslim Rage." *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990, Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations." *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 Summer 1993.

[41] Esposito, John L. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. pp. 218-22, 226-8.

social force directed against modernity.[42] In attributing the emergence of Islamic political movements mainly to Islam as a religion, these ethno-centrist views completely neglect the influence of the social, economic, political and cultural conditions in the region.[43] Furthermore, those who support the idea that the new clash would be between civilizations rather than economical blocks of nation-states are adopting an essentialistic conception of civilization –dividing the world into the west and the rest and reducing the dimensions of the conflicts to supposed intrinsic qualities of these two asserted civilizational poles.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the experiences and reformations have shaped the societies in the Middle East and Asia, their relations with the world, their struggles against imperialism, the formations of new countries and the successive reformations. Although each of these countries has its own peculiar history of modernization and reformation in its struggle for political and economical independence, the transformation of the place of religion in each society has also shaped its peculiar history. The term "Islamic revivalism" signifies the resurgence of Muslim politics in both personal and public life as a reflexive reply to the experiences of crisis and failure, having its origins in late sixties and early seventies. Various events have drawn the attention to a phenomenon called "politicization of Islam" when "Islam reemerged as a potent global force in Muslim politics

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[42] van der Veer, Peter and Hartmut Lehman. "Introduction." *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia.* Eds. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999. p. 3.

[43] Shadid, Wasif and Sjoerd van Koningsveld. "The Negative Image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Causes and Solutions." *Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: the Position of Islam in the European Union*. Eds., W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld. Sterling, Va.: Peeters, c2002. p. 183.

during the 1970s and 1980s."[44] During the seventies, the heads of states and opposition movements in the Middle East appealed to Islam to enhance their legitimacy while Islamic organizations and institutions proliferated. Some drastic events, such as the Egyptian-Israeli war, the Arab oil embargo of 1973, the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 all evidenced the power of resurgence of Islam threatening Western interests.[45] Especially the Iranian Revolution and the transformation of the Revolution to an Islamic Republic had a tremendous effect. Apart from the statements of the ruling ayatollahs expressing their willingness to export the revolution, the revolution influencing many Islamic activists throughout the world as an example of a modern Islamic revolution had changed the regional politics and the perceptions towards Islamic movements as well. The Iranian Revolution had a shocking effect not only on Western countries but also on the regional politics, both internationally and intranationally. USA was considering the Shah governed state as its most stable ally in the region. The Shii minority communities in Sunni dominated states like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan aggressively asserted their identity and rights by expressing at most times outrageously their discontent with ruling regimes.[46] The furious unrest in the region caused by the development of Shii militant organizations and the upheaval of Sunni activists are all direct impacts of the revolution. The eight year long Iran-Iraq war, which started when Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, inflamed the relations between Iran and other states. Iran was not only suspected of exporting the revolution, but more directly of the bombings of Western embassies, car bomb attacks and taking of hostages. During this period, the governmental use of Islamic doctrines by political leaders in the Middle East and Asia had also played a great role in the perception of Islam

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[44] Esposito, John L. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. p. 9.

[45] Ibid. p. 15.

[46] Ibid. p. 18.

in the West: Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, Sudan's Gaafar Muhammad
Nimeiri, Egypt's Anwar Sadat, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, Pakistan's Zia
ul-Haq, Bangladesh's Muhammad Ershad, Malaysia's Muhammad
Mahathir.[47]

In societies where the majority is Muslims[48], the scale of Islamic
revivalism has changed magnitude in the nineties through a new class of
modern-educated and Islamically oriented elites who work alongside with
their secular counterparts.[49] A new generation of Islamically oriented
political leaders have not only appeared in Muslim countries, but Islamically
oriented political parties gained considerable strength in secular states as
well. A new transformation of society began to take place; religiously
oriented non-governmental organizations which extend to education,
investment and social services emerged. Hence the term "Islamic
revivalism" does not refer exclusively to the actions of the extremist Islamic
organizations or to political leaders appealing to the religious sentiments of
the population, but rather to a multifaceted socioreligious movement which
functions in virtually every country where Muslims are in majority, and
transnationally.[50]

However, the negative perception of Islam in the West does not
depend on some critical analysis of the regional politics or of new
sociological movements, but it was shaped by drastic occurrences. When
The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) had swept municipal and later national

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[47] Ibid. p. 10.

[48] I prefer not to use "Middle Eastern" or "Muslim" to address these countries.
The countries where the Muslims are in majority extend from North Africa to far East Asia
geographically, and next, to call these countries "Muslim" conforms to the rhetoric of
antagonism, suggesting a simplistic unifying essence.

[49] Ibid. p. 21.

[50] Esposito, John L. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* New York: Oxford
University Press, 1995. p. 21.

parliamentary elections in Algeria, it created tidal shocks in the governments in the region creating a dreadful anxiety and it astonished experts and policymakers who expected least of a Francophone country to opt for a political party which proposes an Islamic solution. In 1990, Algeria had its first municipal elections since independence, out of which the FIS won the control of 55 percent of the municipal councils and two thirds of the regional assemblies in contrast to the governing party of the National Liberation Front (FLN) who won only 32 percent of the municipal and 29 percent of the regional elections.[51] In December next year, Algeria held the first multiparty parliamentary elections in its thirty-year history. The FIS had overwhelmingly ensured its place in the first round, in the course of democratic parliamentary system. While the Islamists celebrated the outcome of the parliamentary election as a vindication of the representative nature of their movements, the opponents accused the FIS for using the democratic process simply to come to power in order to impose an Islamic system of government.[52] The following military coup to prevent the FIS from coming to government led Algeria to a severe civil war, exemplifying for many rulers in the region the most unimaginable breakdown of parliamentary system if and when they let loose the ropes.

Another such drastic incident was the Gulf War of 1991, in which Iraq invaded Kuwait. Contrary to the Iraq-Iran war, Saddam Hussein failed to gather regional support, but divided the Arab world despite his fruitless attempts to mobilize populist Muslim opinion, against his previous appearance of an un-Islamic, secular leader. "Like the Ayatollah Khomeini, Saddam appealed to Islam to enhance his image as the champion of the Palestinians, of the poor and oppressed, and the liberator of the holy places, as well as to legitimize his call for a holy war against Western (especially

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[51] Ibid. p. 181.

[52] Ibid. p. 184.

U.S.) occupation of Arab lands and control of Arab oil."[53] As Khomeini threatened to export revolution, Saddam's call for waging a holy war against the Western "Crusaders" ratified the fears of a militant Islam raging war against the West.

Alongside these unexpected and drastic events, media images of Qaddafi, Khomeini and Saddam as the archaic despots and of the atrocities of the extremist groups all reinforced the perception of Islam as intolerant; to democracy, liberties, pluralism, and modernity. Furthermore, the experiences of parliamentary democracy in the Middle Eastern countries evidenced the conflicts between military backed authoritarian governments and parties or groups who demand political liberalization and social reform. During the eighties and nineties, the Islamic political parties proved that they could appeal to the demand of change and reform when permitted. The autocratic rulers and governments suppressed the Islamic movements and obstructed their political participation, opting for stability to democracy, using the fear of "Muslim fundamentalism" as an excuse. "The claim that both Arab culture and Islam are antidemocratic and the fear that Islamists will use the electoral process to seize power have been used to rationalize lack of enthusiasm or support for political liberalization in the Middle East."[54] The political instability in the region, the governments' efforts to suppress the opposition, especially using the "threat of Islamic radicalism" at the stake of suppressing the demands of political liberalization have supported the view that Islam is not compatible with democracy.

The view that Islam is not compatible with democracy has been asserted by various actors for different reasons. There are Muslims and leaders of Islamic movements who are against democracy and parliamentary system of government, who either conceive democracy as a part of Western

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[53] Ibid. p. 253.

[54] Ibid. p. 241.

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influence or as totally incompatible with Islam. And there are others who suggest that Muslims should generate their own forms of political participation from within the doctrines of Islam. On the other hand, for the leaders in the West, democracy in the Middle East means "more independent and less predictable nations which might make Western access to oil less secure."[55] The view that Islam is inherently antidemocratic inevitably supports the presentation of Islam as a threat, which eventually is used to support the rhetoric of West-Muslim Worlds' rivalry.

The monolithical representations of the relations between societies of different religions, the view that Islam is a threat, and that it is not compatible with democracy are avowed in conforming the polarization which is suggested to replace the cold war polarization. On the other hand, however, the construction of a polarization between the West and Islam had not emerged from one direction only, it was voiced to conceal the interests of those who voiced it; Khomeini and Saddam Hussein made plenty use of this rhetoric, so did the political leaders of the Western countries.

Given the residual conflicts and confrontations between the Western countries and the countries where Muslims are in majority, and given the significant presence and growth of the Muslim communities in the European countries, the perception of Islam as a threat is now observed as a domestic threat. It is feared that fundamentalism would spread to the Muslim communities in Europe, especially stimulated by the rise of "politicization of Islam" in Algeria and Turkey, without taking into consideration the specific histories of these countries, and without a sound distinction between Islam and fundamentalism or between violent and nonviolent activism. The West European countries, especially Britain, France and Germany had experienced waves of immigrants from their ex-colonies and from East

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[55] Esposito, John L. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. p. 241.

European countries. The issues of integration, problems of racism and xenophobia are not new. "However, the presence of significant Muslim minority populations puts strains on the social fabric of European societies like France, where Islam is the second largest religion, Germany, and Great Britain, where it is in third place. Anti-Arab/Muslim sentiment in Western Europe is part of a growing combination of Islamophobia and xenophobia. Muslim communities and indigenous groups have clashed over questions of continued immigration, citizenship and the accommodation of Muslim belief and practice."[56]

The Formation of European Identity

In contextualizing the emergence of the headscarf debate in France, and some years before that, the Rushdie affair in Britain, one witnesses how the growing debates came to circulate overwhelmingly around cultural terms rather than referring to economic and social factors relevant to the integration of religious minorities. In addressing to the upheaval of Maghribi Muslims in France, their social and economic circumscription is one of the least mentioned elements in a country where Muslim religion "is the religion of the poor."[57] Whereas in Britain, the anti-discrimination laws legislated to relieve racism fail to recognize discriminatory acts based on religious affinities of Muslims. The Asian Muslims here are among the most underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.[58] In European countries,

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[56] Ibid. p. 234.

[57] Badiou, Alain. "Derrière la Loi foulardière, la peur." *Le Monde* 22 February 2004. 12 June 2005. The English translation by Norman Madarasz, accessed through *Islam Online* 15 March 2004. 10 June 2005.
<http://www.islamonline.net/English/in_depth/hijab/2004-03/article_04.shtml>.

[58] Modood, Tariq. "The Place of Muslims in British Secular Multiculturalism." *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*. Eds. Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castells. Berkeley: Lexington Books, 2002. p. 114.

Muslim minorities and their demands began to be assessed through the supposed antagonism between modernity and Islam: where the headscarf is considered as a threat to the secular tradition of education in France, the demand of Muslim groups in Britain to ban the publication of *Satanic Verses* has been regarded as an intolerance to the freedom of speech. In both cases, the origin of conflict was considered as an incompatibility of Islamic doctrines with the values of modernity; secularization, freedom of speech, and tolerance. In these two incidences, not only the right-wing and the conservatives, but the liberals, socialists and *laics* have voiced their concerns. Hence the emergence of the title "Muslim presence in Europe" coincides with the attention drawn to Islam, which came to be phrased as "the problem of Islam in Europe".

Now there is a sense in which "the presence of Muslims in Europe", with "the problem of Islam", is in a significant way a matter of how Europeans perceive themselves, or, in other words, how European identity is conceived. In most simple terms, the question of how religious minorities in Europe can adapt to their societies turns into the question of what would be the feature of Europe if and when they adapt, and more importantly, to what are they expected to adapt? Some social scientists studying the Muslim minorities in Europe suggest that "a European recognition of the permanence of the Muslim presence comes a challenge to European self-understanding."[59] But the question is: What is the European self-understanding? Is there such an attainable European self-understanding, or rather, is it continually being constructed? Furthermore, the perception of such a challenge is inevitably related to how the Muslim presence in Europe is recognized. The previous section sketched the dynamics through which the recognition of Muslim presence in Europe has been conditioned by the negative perceptions of Islam in Europe. This section, however, will try to

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[59] Nielsen, Jørgen S. *Muslims in Western Europe*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992, c1995. p. 169.

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discuss how this recognition is related to the growing concern of European identity. In this respect, it is proposed that the problem of Muslim presence is an integral part of the formation of a European identity.[60]

According to Talal Asad, the site of the discourse of identity in Europe is suppressed fear:

> "The idea of European identity, I say, is not merely a matter of how legal rights and obligations can be reformulated. Nor is it simply a matter of how a more inclusive name can be made to claim loyalties that are attached to national or local ones. It concerns exclusions and the desire that those excluded recognize what is included in the name one has chosen for oneself. The discourse of European identity is a symptom of anxieties about non-Europeans."[61]

The issue of "European identity" began to be posed as a problem during the sixties, together with a recent attention drawn to "identity."[62] In fact, the idea of "identity" as something depending on other's recognition of self, rather than signifying "sameness" is quite recent and the preoccupation with this idea in social sciences dates from after the Second World War.[63] This new sense of "identity" defines itself on the differences drawn from a

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[60] Cf. Asad, Talal. "Muslims and European Identity: Can Europe Represent Islam?" *The Idea of Europe: from Antiquity to the European Union*. Ed. Anthony Pagden. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Passerini, Luisa. "From the Ironies of Identity to the Identities of Irony." *The Idea of Europe: from Antiquity to the European Union*. Ed. Anthony Pagden. Washington, DC : Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 193.

[63] Asad, Talal. "Muslims and European Identity: Can Europe Represent Islam?" *The Idea of Europe: from Antiquity to the European Union*. Ed. Anthony Pagden. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 211.

constructed "other", *difference* here understood as the opposite of *sameness*. But in order to be recognized, there must be an "other"; in other words, the recognition of an "other" is an integral part of constructing an identity through difference.

In identity formation, it might be claimed that Muslims are the "other" of Europeans; the difference from whom the identity of Europe is defined negatively. It seems plausible to suggest that as culturally the most distinctive and presumably as the most difficult of the immigrant populations to be absorbed, the Muslims in Europe "have become the new "other" of Europe, replacing the Jews of an earlier era, and the communists of more recent times."[64] Furthermore, it is also possible to historicize the influence of Muslims in the formation of Europe: "Europe was made by the encounter with and resistance to other religions –specifically the Muslim religion. It was largely in response to the Muslim threat –from Mongols and Tatars in the north, Arabs and Turks in the south– that Europe drew together."[65]

If one fails to recognize the irony in suggesting that the Muslims are the new "other" of Europeans, one would fail to recognize the ironies in the assertions of identities constructed on "a constructed other". It would, then, lead to considering the Jews as the natural alien and Muslim immigrants now as the natural other, discarding how the dynamics of othering were/are conducted. In other words, if one takes this statement literally, one would mock the brutal history in which Jews were eliminated, and more recently, the tragedies in the Bosnia and Kosova wars. Hence, against such a line of thinking, I suggest that there are two traps in which one can be caught when

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[64] Kumar, Krishan. "The Nation-State, the European Union, and Transnational Identities." *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*. Eds. Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castells. Berkeley: Lexington Books, 2002. p. 54

[65] Ibid. p. 55.

proposing that Muslim immigrants are the new "other" of Europeans. The first one is to stabilize the "other" in its essentiality, which would lead to essentialize the "self" as well. The second is to historicize the antagonism of "self" and "other".

In regards to the first trap, the practice and aspects of Islam are not acknowledged in their own right, but approached negatively, defined with a *lack* in relation to European civilizational attributions. Hence, "Islam" lacks tolerance, freedom of expression, democracy, respect for the individual; it is de-essentialized in order to be re-essentialized as an alter realm of antagonism. As in the procedure in which the headscarf loses its historical and cultural meaning and came to signify a hostile and alien "Muslimism", the Muslim immigrants in Europe are re-essentialized in their hostility to European civilizational values as the new "other" within. Although the Muslim populations in European countries display very diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, their most significant commonality appears to be religion. But here again, from the Pakistanis in Britain to Algerians in France, to Turks in Germany, these people display very different experiences and understandings of Islam.

Historicizing this kind of antagonism, on the other hand, would inevitably lead to abrupt anachronisms: it was the Muslims against whom the Europeans joined forces during Crusades, or when defending the Habsburg Empire. However, these enterprises were not "European", instead, they were Christian. While the antagonism between Europe and Islam ("Muslim World") is historicized, it should be noted that the essential values that designate a European civilization are recognized as ahistorical concepts.

The search for identity yields to constructing new histories: a historical narrative of "European (or Western) civilization," with common experiences of Christianity, Enlightenment and industrialization, with shared values of democracy, tolerance and human rights. This narrative

positions its distinctive character by claiming "universality": a claim which has served as an instrument in reconstructing the world through colonialism continues to serve as a criterion to define the "otherness" of the other. A narrative, in which the medieval Spain and wars of religion between the Christian sects are omitted; a narrative which becomes a mere myth. When a discourse of identity is founded on ahistoricized essentialities, the perception of a European identity would base itself on one side of civilizational antagonism. Moreover, failing to acknowledge the irony in the suggestion that the Muslims are the new Jews of Europe would place one in the rhetoric of antagonistic worlds: the European world (West) and the Muslim world. Rather, the recent quest and questioning of a European identity should be considered in relation with the post-war circumstances, resonating with the problems faced in the process of European integration. It should be noted that although the debate of a European identity has recently augmented in relation to the enlargement discussions of European Union, this debate has connotations and implications well beyond the turbulences on the constitutional and expansional quest of the EU.

It was during the traumatic years after 1945 when the idea of "Europe" was refurbished as a substitute for the national identifications which caused so many wounds, and "Europe" had to be reinvented in order to be outstripped from the connotations of the new world order defended by Nazis and Fascist Right during the interwar decades and during the war.[66] During the construction of a united Europe in the post-war era, the uneasiness about the specificity of a European culture and identity increased in time, yet it was much less problematic until the sixties.[67]

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[66] Judt, Tony. "The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe." *Daedalus*, 121, 4. Fall 1992. p. 97.

[67] Passerini, Luisa. "From the Ironies of Identity to the Identities of Irony." *The Idea of Europe: from Antiquity to the European Union*. Ed. Anthony Pagden. Washington,

The collapse of the Soviet system and the formation of new countries had acute consequences for defining the boundaries of an integrating Europe, both geographically and culturally. Likewise, the candidacy of Turkey to EU more recently evoked and continues to raise questions in regard to the identity of Europe, the discursive site where "Islam" is constructed as Europe's other. The projections about the eastern border cannot be considered solely as geographical or symbolic concerns. Hence, as Russia draws the east border, are Poland and Hungary well-founded in their claim to be in Central Europe? Or, leaving aside various obstacles and discussions with respect to the candidacy of Turkey, how would Europeans feel to be neighboring with Iran and Iraq, if or when Turkey becomes a member state? The symbolic implications about the borders of EU is presenting themselves in the discussions of exclusions and distancing which in turn defines a European identity. Hence, it is plausible to claim that in their positioning to belong to Central Europe, Poles, Czechs and Hungarians are distancing themselves from a socialist history.[68] Then, it is an easy step to argue that Russia has never belonged to European civilization; meaning, Russia does not share the same values and assets deriving from a shared history, which make up the European civilization. The formation of identity through exclusions needs differences as basis and the borders serve as fault lines for these differences.

DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 193.

[68] Asad, Talal. "Muslims and European Identity: Can Europe Represent Islam?" *The Idea of Europe: from Antiquity to the European Union*. Ed. Anthony Pagden. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 219.

On borders and identity construction see also, Meinhof, Ulrike H. "Migrating Borders: An Introduction to European Identity Construction in Process." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Vol. 29, No. 5: 781–796 September 2003.

It might be suggested that, in fact, there is no single (and fixed) "Europe", in the sense that the European identity is imagined in reflection to more than one "other". The post-war years mainly witnessed a temporal and self-reflexive othering when Europe was distancing itself from its own past; whereas after the nineties, the geographical and cultural otherings took precedence.[69] Hence the imagery "other" of Europe harbors its continental past, and its colonial past; the East; the "Muslim World"; the rest of the West; the United States; Communism; Russia; eastern Europe, etc.

In the formation of a European identity through difference, the Europeans acquire their identities in as much and to the extent that they partake of the set of values and properties. Hence, not all Europeans are "European" to the same degree; the Russians are on the margins, for example, and "Bosnian Muslims may be *in* Europe but are not *of* it."[70] Talal Asad, in claiming that the problem of understanding Islam in Europe is primarily a matter of how "Europe" is conceptualized by Europeans, argues that Muslims are present in Europe and yet absent from it.[71] Not only Muslims are external to the essence of Europe, from the civilization essence of European identity, but Islam is excluded from the historical narrative and representations of Europe. Hence in order to *become* European, the Muslims in European countries have to divest themselves from their previous affinities and traditions and adopt the values which make up the European civilization. This expectation from immigrants to adapt in order to integrate

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[69] Diez, Thomas. "Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No.2, July 2004.

[70] Asad, Talal. "Muslims and European Identity: Can Europe Represent Islam?" *The Idea of Europe: from Antiquity to the European Union*. Ed. Anthony Pagden. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 213.

[71] Ibid. p. 209.

to their host societies finds its terminology in the policies of integration which seeks a guarantee for the loyalty of immigrants. However, what is at work in this expectation is the universal claim of European civilization, which is its identification with modernity and progress. Integration becomes a process through which immigrants have to prove their loyalty via their sameness, to a degree which might in the end bypass differences in physical appearances.

This simplified approach of integration, however, is not any other than assimilation. The view that school girls (or teachers) can be forced to withdraw their headscarves so that they can adapt to a secular form of education is residual of the rhetoric of assimilation, relying on a naïve belief that by divesting off her headscarf one can divest her Muslimism. And why should she? If one believes that (and many do) wearing a headscarf is a means to practice one's religious faith on a daily life basis, to ban this practice is to deny one's right to religious freedom. Obviously, here, the discussions whether such a belief is valid or not, whether it is self-conscious or enforced are discarded for the sake of clarity to argue that what is at stake here is beyond the personal inclinations and reasons. The visibility of religious signs has been a matter of dispute in the history of secularization in Europe, and the Muslim signs are recently coming to the scene and negotiate with the established solutions. The recognition and tolerance of the religious rights of denominations other than the majority have a long history in Europe. But here, in the case of headscarf, what is important is that the Muslim school girls in France are forced to be self-aware of their headscarves because of the debates and finally with the ban. The growing number of girls who come up to school with headscarves after the Creil affair in France is a good indication for this.

3 – The Myth of Headscarf and Secularism

The prima facie answer to the question how wearing of headscarf was constructed as a problem and attained such significance is the growth of the number of Muslim people in European countries. This dress code have become visible and come to be identified with Muslim populations. One can add to that, that the politicization of Islam in countries where Muslims are in majority as well as in European countries has aggravated a cultural polarization in European societies. It can be stated that through headscarves, the Muslim populations, especially Muslim women and their religious experiences have become visible in Western Europe. However, all these do not explain why and how a dress could be considered as a symbol: of radicalization; of oppression of women; of a repressive form of religious practice; of a threat to secularism; of Muslim communitarianism; of religious assertion; or of an assertion of identity. The number of Muslim immigrants or the differences between the practices of Islam and Christianity fall short of accounting for the tensions in this controversy.

A Mythological Reading of Headscarf

In order to show the dynamics of how headscarf was constructed as a problem, I suggest reading it as a myth. The reading of headscarf as a myth, as constructed in European countries, would both reveal the way how such symbolic connotations could be derived from a dress and in being mythified, how the speech of headscarf could become ambiguous. In being mythified, the scarf becomes so ambiguous that it is no more possible to take it only as a dress nor only as a symbol of a religious or cultural history. It becomes impossible just to suggest that it is an ordinary type of dressing without arousing other suggestions, nor is it possible to grant its symbolic value on its own. And furthermore, considering it only as a symbol is what makes the whole debate an *impasse*. Trying to provide an explanation to an

ambiguity would either conceal it or reduce it to one thing: trying to give an explanation to an ambiguity is an absurd attempt.

It is possible to suggest that through headscarves, the Muslim women in European societies are stigmatized; the visibility of headscarf is a means to stigmatize them.[72] Or it can be discussed that the Muslim headscarf is used to stereotype Muslim people. However, I rather argue that if headscarf was simply a means of a stereotypical presentation of Muslim people, it would not be possible to derive so many symbolic meanings from it. Stereotypes are the least ambiguous speeches. Instead of being a stigmatized symbol, the following analysis will try to prove that the headscarf is functioning as a myth.

Roland Barthes develops his reading of myth through uniting the formal analysis of semiology with an analysis of present ideology. And in his theory of mythology, myth is not a concept or idea but a message. As is also evident from his collected writings in *Mythologies*, according to Barthes, everything can be a myth, provided that it is conveyed by a discourse. Moreover myth can not be defined by its object or material.[73] In this debate, headscarf as it is regarded in Europe, can be read as a Barthean myth: as a second-order sign, where its meaning as a clothing which is contained in a religious and cultural history is lost; and its form, is wholly absorbed by its concept "Muslimism".[74]

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[72] For an analysis of headscarf as a stigmatized symbol see Nilufer Gole, "The Voluntary Adoption of Islamic Stigma Symbols." *Social Research*, Fall 2003, Vol. 70, Issue 3, pp. 809-828.

[73] Barthes, Roland. "Myth Today." *Mythologies*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.

[74] Ibid. pp. 109-11.

1. Signifier	2. Signified	
3. Sign *I. SIGNIFIER* (*meaning* as the final term of the linguistic system, *form* as the first term on myth plane)		*II. SIGNIFIED* **(concept)**
III. SIGN **(signification)**		

Although a person's suit signifies the status or position of its carrier in the society, headscarf has become a myth, it has been mythified. Following Barthes' analysis of myth, in the first order, as a sign, the headscarf is a cloth worn, signifying a cultural or religious history depending on the type of cloth and its style, just like any other clothing. However, in the second order which is the order of myth, this meaning presents the form (*head-scarf-worn*) which outdistances the meaning. The meaning which contained a whole system of values, a history, a geography, a morality is put at a distance by the form. The meaning loses its value, but keeps its life, from which the form of the myth will draw its nourishment.[75] In myth, there is a continuous alternation of meaning and the form: they are never present at the same place. Because of this continuous play of form and meaning, the signifier of the myth is ambiguous. And in accordance with Barthes' different possible ways of reading myth, when the focus is made on the empty signifier of the myth (form), headscarf becomes a *symbol* of Muslimism[76]; the concept fills the form of the myth without any ambiguity. Hence the headscarf is read as a symbol of Muslimism, but since it is fixed in the form (of headscarf), the religious and cultural connotations will evaporate. However, in a second option, when reading it like a mythologist

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[75] Ibid. p. 118.

[76] The word "Muslimism" is used instead of "Islam" deliberately, in order to connote inventedness of the concept of the myth, in accordance with Barthes' usage of fabricated words for the terms of the myth.

and when focused on the full signifier (meaning), headscarf becomes an *alibi* of Muslimism; the signification of the myth is undone, the form and the meaning are distinguished. In this reading, the symbolic load of the myth is cancelled; the ambiguity is reduced/concealed through an explanation. And finally, when focused on the mythical signifier as a whole, there is an ambiguous signification: headscarf becomes the very *presence* of Muslimism. This last reading is of the myth reader who responds to the dynamics of the myth.

This suggested analysis of scarf in Europe as a myth makes possible to show why the scarf is not like any other form of dress anymore and also why taking it as a symbol is only one way of reading the headscarf. In order to respond fully to the ambiguity in this mythical speech, we need to advance the reading through taking into account the motivation of this myth and then bring together with what is said before about the debate being constructed as a problem. Barthes proposes that "in order to gauge the political load of an object and the mythical hollow that espouses it, one must never look at things from the point of the signification, but from that of the signifier, of the thing which has been robbed: and within the signifier, from the point of the language-object, that is of the meaning."[77] In other words, instead of undoing the signification of the myth as can be done by a mythologist, we should rather focus on what happens to the meaning of headscarf. In the continuous play of meaning and form, the form does not suppress the meaning, but it impoverishes it, puts it at a distance. And the history which drains out of the form is wholly absorbed by the concept (Muslimism). The concept is determined, both historically and intentionally; it is the motivation which causes the myth to be uttered. Hence the relation which unites the concept of the myth to its meaning is a relation of

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[77] Barthes, Roland. "Myth Today." *Mythologies*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1972. p. 145.

deformation; the meaning is distorted by the concept. Through the concept, it is a whole new history which is implanted in the myth, and the knowledge contained in a mythical concept is confused, made of yielding, shapeless associations; hence, the mythical concept is *appropriated*.[78] However, the motivation is never "natural": myth is speech stolen and restored. What is restored (Muslimism) is no longer quite that which is stolen (the history of scarf). The history of headscarf is distorted by *Muslimism*. Though the myth is read as a factual system, it is a semiological system.

If myth naturalizes the concept through transforming history into nature, what is it that the mythical speech of headscarf naturalizes? Or, here, what does it mean when we say that Muslimism is being naturalized? What is the history that is drained out of the form and what is the new history which is implanted by the concept *Muslimism*? The history of headscarf as a type of regional dress, belonging to a geography, belonging to a tradition of dressing oneself; a history in which it is generally not easy to distinguish the regional and the religious traditions is robbed as the form fixes it. Of course, it is not *a* geography, *a* tradition, *a* religion: through being fixed this richness becomes a tamed richness. Although the form is fixed, the concept is never fixed, nor abstract. It is filled with a situation, through which it reconstitutes a chain of causes and effects, motives and intentions. Surely, there are infinite numbers of signifiers of Muslimism. And here, the concept *Muslimism* has a formless and unstable unity due to the function, the functional unity of the myth. And the function of the myth is not to hide, nor to make disappear: the function of the myth is to distort.[79] Myth functions through transforming history into nature: what causes mythical speech to be

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[78] Ibid. p. 119.

[79] Ibid. p. 121.

uttered is perfectly explicit, but it is immediately frozen into something natural, it is not read as a motive, but as a reason.[80]

Following Barthes' advice that "the best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an *artificial myth*,"[81] the best way is perhaps to try to create a new third chain, since it is not possible to defeat the myth from inside. It is not possible to defeat the myth form inside, because all one can do is to dismantle the signification, like a mythologist. But then, it is not possible to address the motivation of the myth when the form and meaning are distinguished. In other words, one would either trap in one possible readings of myth or would cancel the mythical signification. In the mythical speech of headscarf, what is got rid of is certainly not Muslimism: headscarf becomes the very fact of Muslimism. Hence, it is the drainage of richness of the geographical and religious history of scarf. However, what is draining out is also the religious history of Europe. The signifier Muslimism signifies in this third chain Europe's flight from its own religious experience and also the experience of colonialism. When the meaning of headscarf is captured by *Muslimism*, the history of scarf belonging to monasteries and the villages becomes inflected, it evaporates. In the myth of headscarf, what is naturalized is the present state of relations between religion and society, the past experiences of endured violence and struggles to establish individual freedoms are distorted and frozen. In this way, Europeans' own religious history is robbed. Moreover, what is robbed is the history of Muslims' presence in European countries: not only the Muslims' presences in Europe is restored anew, but more importantly, the history of Muslims living in European countries and of the way they found themselves in this old continent are robbed. This

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[80] Ibid. p. 129.

[81] Barthes, Roland. "Myth Today." *Mythologies*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1972. p. 135.

myth signifies the presence of Muslims in Europe as a new and sudden occurrence, and the Muslim religious experience as something alien.

The reader might have objections to this myth arguing that while making a reading of headscarf, there are many meanings (historical, religious, and cultural) of headscarf and every person might have a particular experience in wearing it. So the meanings of headscarf are not singular, nor fixed. It might be pointed out that in every instance of wearing scarf, under different circumstances, the signification of the myth would change. But, it is just the fixation of these meanings is what makes possible the problematization of headscarf. So, the myth of headscarf naturalizes Muslimism as an alien form of religious assertiveness which then might be constructed as a problem.

Theft of History

As proposed by the reading of headscarf as a myth, it is argued that the headscarf as having been mythified in Europe signifies Europe's flight from its own religious experience and the experience of colonialism as well. Surely Muslimism has potentially an infinite number of signifiers; the myth of headscarf should not be taken as the sole signifier of Muslimism, as it is mythified in Europe. In the second chapter it has been discussed that Muslimism has been constructed as an alien and hostile religion, not only belonging to immigrants in Europe, but to the people in the Balkans as well. It has been thus argued that through the rhetoric of historicized antagonism between Muslimism and European civilization, Islam has been omitted from the history of Europe, and as such, and in being omitted it is an integral part of the formation of European identity. In the next section, on the other hand, the discourse of secularism will be evaluated and it will be proposed that it is through secularism that the concept of Muslimism is naturalized. The aim of this section is to show the relation between the myth of headscarf and the

Europe's flight from its own religious and colonial history. Hence, we will be dealing with the third chain of the myth hereafter.

If myth is speech-stolen, a theft of history, it is proposed that the myth of headscarf as it is mytified in European countries; it is the theft of the religious and colonial history of Europe. As mentioned in Europe's distancing itself from its own past, the theft of colonial history is significant in the making of Europe identity, the past confrontations both on the continent[82] and in the colonies. But the myth also naturalizes Muslimism in the sense that Muslim presence in Europe is presented as a new and sudden occurrence without a history. The numerous recent studies on the immigrant profiles and issues of integration do not contradict the signification of the myth. On the contrary, as discussed in Chapter 2, as the problems of the immigrants' integration began to be considered in relation with the "problem of Islam," primarily on the basis of cultural terms, the emergence of a new area of interest in "Muslim presence in Europe" coincides with the motivation of the myth of headscarf. This delineation of related issues around Muslimism in Europe eventually provides the ground on which the myth of headscarf becomes enunciable. Hence, instead of suggesting that the myth of headscarf alienates or estranges Muslimism, it is proposed here that it naturalizes Muslimism as a new presence, as peculiar to Europe[83]; not completely native, nor completely alien, in Europe but not *of* it.

The claim that the myth of headscarf through naturalizing Muslimism robes the colonial history of European countries does not in any

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[82] Judt, Tony. "The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe." *Daedalus*, 121, 4. Fall 1992.

[83] Cf. Tibi, Bassam. "Muslim Migrants in Europe: Between Euro-Islam and Ghettoization." *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*. Eds. Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castells. Berkeley: Lexington Books, 2002. 31-52.

way entail that there is a singular trajectory of colonial experience of these countries. Taking into account the fact that the colonial histories of these countries, France, Britain or Netherlands, for example, differ in character; it is not surprising that after de-colonization, they differ in their demeanor towards their ex-colonies and the policies developed in integrating or naturalizing their subjects in the homeland. Their colonial experiences fabricated their post-colonial attitudes. The character of various tensions around the immigrant groups after the 80's, and the differences in the emergences of the headscarf debate are good indicators. So, the present multiculturalism of Britain has derived its tenets from the previous experiences and attitudes developed during colonial period while France, on the other hand, has retained its republican *mission civilisatrice*, in relation to its immigrants in the homeland. Yet, instead of trying to show the various conducts of colonialism in the past and making a projection of continuities with the recent policies of integration, it would be more appropriate to adhere here to the crucial point of the argumentation: whether the immigrant Muslims in Europe are ex-colonizeds or guest-workers, the stories of their coming to Europe are distorted; the peculiar identities are fixed in Muslimism as the form of headscarf has become fixed. Or, in other words, the manifest visibility of Muslimism blurs immigrants' stories.

The flight from colonial past might be intelligible; thanks to Benedict Anderson it is not implausible anymore to state that every nation has founded itself on an imagined community.[84] Surely, this imaginary construction acts upon memory; on forgetting, on replacements and reconstructions. What is hard to discern in the myth of headscarf is the drainage of Europe's own religious history. When the headscarf as a form of clothing is fixed in such a way that it came to signify *Muslimism*, the

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[84] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London, New York: Verso, 1991.

meaning of scarf belonging to monasteries, religious education and rural life evaporates. Not only the religious and regional meanings of headscarf which has various stories are fixed in the form, but in this third chain, this fixation signifies a distortion of Christian past as well. As mentioned before, this type of fixation has not been pursued only in Europe: the headscarf has been mythified under various circumstances in Turkey, Algeria and Iran as well. It either came to signify anti-imperialism, or anti-colonialism, or an assertion of religious identity by rejecting modernization; the concepts which in each case were filled with different and peculiar situations. In this case, however, it is neither a simple negligence of Europeans in recognizing various types of Islamic scarves nor is it simply Islamic scarf's regional and religious connotational differences. The headscarf is not mythified because there is a failure in reading its diverse connotations. It is an intentional attitude rather than a failure to conceive different meanings and styles of headscarves. The situation which fills the concept of Muslimism in Europe is motivated with secularism. This motive is so explicit that it seems futile to mention it. But in stating that secularism is not a reason but a motive, I claim that the myth of headscarf functions in such a way that secularism appears natural, whereas it is historical.

Secularism and Religious Freedoms

What is the point of reminding that secularism is not natural but historical, and more importantly ideological? How is the myth of headscarf connected with secularism as a political doctrine? It is useful to remind that whereas in France the scarves of Muslim students were regarded as in conflict with the secularity of the public education, in Germany the debate was primarily about securing the neutrality of teachers and public officers. In France, the debate evolved around the threatening presence of Muslim girls' scarves in the public schools, as interjecting a religious sign into the secular public space. In Germany, on the other hand, the concern was primarily securing the neutrality of the state through the public officers and

teachers: a teacher should not impose any kind of faith, in any way, by his/her appearance. In Britain, however, the general tendency was to recognize Muslim headscarf as an affirmation of religious freedom and the main concern was avoiding it to become a communitarian sign of belonging to a group. Hence, the general attitudes toward plurality, different approaches to secularism in these countries have shaped the terms of the debates. In France, the wearing of headscarf was prohibited in public schools, some states in Germany restricted teachers and public officers from wearing headscarves, while in Britain, where public officers are able to wear scarves, only some schools made restrictions in certain classes, like gym, where the wearing was regarded as hazardous to health. Yet, the myth of headscarf is not about how its use was restricted. The myth of headscarf is about how the wearing-of-head-scarf has come to signify *Muslimism* in European countries. This section will try to discuss through reassessing the discourse of secularism that secularism is one of the major motives of the myth of headscarf. It will be consequently argued that the function of this myth is to distort the religious history of Europe while the tensions about the Muslim presence reveal the age-long controversies which were believed to be resolved.

If we think of the relations between the state, society and religion in general, secularism is the normative doctrine, inevitably related with the doctrines of modernity. Secularism is a political and governmental doctrine which has its origins in nineteenth-century liberal society.[85] Hence secularism has to be distinguished from secularization; the latter defined as the historical process through which first came the dissociation of church

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[85] Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003. p. 24.

and the state, and later the separation of religion from society.[86] It should also be noted that the major movements which stimulated the dissociation of religion from society such as republicanism, nationalism, individualism and liberalism had been influential in European societies to a varying extent. The process of secularization in these societies does not display a singular path, which is finished or fulfilled everywhere. Furthermore, secularization was not ideally devised in advance, but was rather the outcome of the evolution of power struggles between trends and traditions such as the regalist tradition, catholic intransigentism, and liberal thinking.[87]

When we approach secularization as a historical process through which the secular has emerged and found its own expression in a view of society, and moreover, when we define secularism as the worldview in which the relation between the society, religion and the state has become a normative model, we then need to define religion as well. This need presupposes awareness that throughout secularization, religion had to be defined and more conveniently "invented".[88] In the *ancien régime* when citizenship was not separated from denomination, the conducts of life were dominated by religion which was the supreme source of truth. Hence, the present concept of "religion" is a modern concept that has evolved together with the modern concept of the secular. The latest reinvention of religion has evolved around the debates on the "resurgence of religions" and primarily but not exclusively on recent Islamic movements.

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[86] Rémond, René. *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*. Trans. Antonia Nevill. Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999. p. 127.

[87] Ibid. p. 78.

[88] See, for a collection of papers discussing the invention of religion in different societies: Derek Peterson and Darren Walhof, eds. *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History*. Rutgers University Press, 2002.

This recent concern for revival of religionism has focused on the potence of the political movements deriving their doctrines from religion in order to reform their societies, especially in those societies where the Muslims are in majority. Furthermore, in societies where secularization is thought to be fulfilled, in Western countries like USA and Britain, the present place of religion has been assessed in terms of religiosity and new forms of salvation movements. However, the debate of secularization thesis, that is, whether through modernity the societies are becoming more and more secular or the religious retains its force of change in diverse and subtle forms, fail to refer to religion as a whole. The identification of secularism with modernity has led to a degraded conception of religion as something that is polluting the society, something which should be circumscribed in a private space. "It is a fundamental assumption of the discourse of modernity that religion in modern societies loses its social creativity and forced to choose between a sterile conservation of its premodern characteristics and a self-effacing assimilation to the secularized world."[89] In evaluating the present stance of religion in western or non-western societies, religion is appraised through the marks of religiosity, for example, through church attendance or participation in religious practices, or through belief in an outworldly order. However, the place of religion should not be taken solely as the religious adherence of people; it should not be equated with faith. We should distinguish religion from spiritual movements in order to avoid reducing religion to a search for spirituality, or to a doctrine on transcendence.[90] As well as providing a way to salvation and an approach to

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[89] van der Veer, Peter and Hartmut Lehman. "Introduction." *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*. Eds. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999. p. 10.

[90] For different approaches to address the present hollow as the religious lose dominance in modern societies, see: Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*. Trans. Oscar Burge. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University

moral codes, religion should also be evaluated in the stable communities it produced and the institutions it has organized. We need a neutral stance to appreciate the religions historically, not only as dividing or undermining, but as uniting and promoting the populations as well.

So, it is argued here that throughout the history of secularization in Western societies, especially in Western Europe, not only the secular has come to define a space and time, but the circumstances which made possible for the secular to emerge has also defined our present conception of religion. So the relation between the secular and the religious as epistemic concepts is not of a break, nor of a mere continuity. The secular is neither continuous with the religious (the secular is not the latest phase of a sacred origin); nor, is it its opposite.[91] Hence, for example, the institution of civil registry which was the first initiative towards secularization[92] did replace the validity of religious records; but, in the sense that it changed the notion of individual existence in society, it should not be considered as continuous with the previous religious registry. The secular institutions whose secularity we tend to take for granted today definitely did not appear out of the blue, but they should not be regarded as the continuation of religious institutions stripped off their religiousness, either.

The difficulty about secularism, as a doctrine on the relation between the individual as the locus of conscience and society, is that "it is closely

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Press, 1997 and, Luc Ferry *Man Made God: The Meaning of Life*. Trans. David Pellauer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

[91] Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003. p. 25.

[92] Rémond, René. *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*. Trans. Antonia Nevill. Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999. p. 44.

connected with the rise of a system of capitalist nation-states."[93] "It is an enactment by which a *political medium* (representation of citizenship) redefines and transcends particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender, and religion."[94] The identification of secularism with modernity finds its counterpart in the discourses of secularism which has served to the idea of "modernity" to become hegemonic as a political goal. Nation-state as the sign of modernity[95] is founded on an imagined community of individual citizens whose relation with the state is secured from interruptions of *irrational* systems of beliefs and faiths. This is why the history of secularization coincides with the history of individualism: the privatization of morality and reason. The discourses of modernity, using dichotomies such as "private" and "public", "political" and "personal", "individual" and "social" have conceptualized a universal category of "religion", just like "nation"; both of whose universality are located in the history of Western expansion.[96] Hence religion is a modern conception which has become a universal concept through the discourses of modernity.[97]

So modernity's answer to the age-long question of where religion should belong is secularism. The answer is the private sphere, the

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[93] Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003. p. 7.

[94] Ibid. p. 5.

[95] van der Veer, Peter and Hartmut Lehman. "Introduction." *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia.* Eds. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999. p. 6.

[96] Ibid. p. 4.

[97] See Asad, Talal. "Religion, Nation-State, Secularism." *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia.* Eds. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999.

individual's conscience and the personal, rather than the political and the public. Is it possible to think of societies that escape these categories? It might perhaps be possible to surpass their antagonism through considering these categories as intertwining rather than opposing categories, until they are replaced or become obsolete. So, the "private" and "public", in necessitating each other, do not exclude one another. Instead, they can be thought of as overlapping under specific circumstances, under various social "anomalies." Similarly, the "personal" and the "political" do not exclude one another: the areas where they overlap are sources of tension and change. These ruptures provide locations from where it is possible to posit new questions.

One such rupture is between "individual" and "communal" with respect to religious freedoms. Although the modern state, through acknowledging freedom of conscience, confines the matters of faith and religious commitment to the private, the religious experience of an individual is recognized via the community one adheres to. So the religious practices, which include the participation in a community, are delineated by the modern state as the freedom of worship. The most rigorous confinement of religion to the private has been attained by the Law of Separation in 1905, in France. This law brought about a strict separation between the state and religious institutions, asserted a refusal to recognize the existence of any religious existence and reduced religious experience to something strictly individual and purely private.[98] The Law of Separation proclaimed that henceforward the Republic neither recognized nor subsidized or paid ministers' salaries for any cult whatsoever. Moreover, France unilaterally annulled the treaty drawn up a century earlier with papacy, thus saving any clerical interference and securing individual liberty. However, although the

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[98] Rémond, René. *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*. Trans. Antonia Nevill. Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999. pp. 187-190.

legislation asserted the idea of religion only as a private affair through its first article, the Republic guaranteed the freedom of forms of worship and hence recognized in a sense religion's social aspect.[99] But the application of this article has evolved in time.

While the states evolved from confessional states, in which the principle of unity was religion, to secular nation-states, the states adopted a neutral approach to society in terms of religious commitments. "The nation appropriated the church's concept of unity and secularized it."[100] One trajectory through which it is possible to trace the states' becoming neutral is the legal recognition of denominations other than the national one. Under the sacral state where the state has a religion, tolerance of other denominations occurred with leaving the dissenters not to conform to the regulations of the official church, and generally through restricting certain rights secured to the subjects of the dominant denomination. The Protestant Reformation, the French Revolution, the spread of liberal thinking all influenced the dissociation of the political and religion. The recognition of other denominations and religions was crucial in establishing nations' relation with their subjects of different denominations and religions as equal citizens. Due to liberal thinking, the freedom of conscience was based on the distinction between private sphere where religious beliefs belonged, and the public area where religion would have no base.[101] Yet, the freedom of conscience which is an individual right to hold convictions different from the official one, does not necessitate freedom of worship: i.e. the freedom of religious minorities to celebrate their faith communally. Whereas the individual became the holder of faith, the communal rights to religious practices became a matter of much controversy and unrest. "Depending on

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[99] Ibid. p. 149.

[100] Ibid. p. 122.

[101] Ibid. p. 79.

the country, liberty and equality between the cults were ensured either by extending to other confessions the conditions and benefits previously reserved for the only recognized religion [England], or through the state's neutrality [Germany], or by the withdrawal of all recognition and the severing of all connections between state and religion [France]."[102]

If secularism is the answer to the religious question, it should be noted that the examples of European countries offer varying answers to where religion belongs. Acknowledging the rights of different denominations and religions in regard to the forms of worship did not necessitate the radical separation of the state and the religious institutions as exemplified by France. With the liberal tradition of contrasting "civil" with the confessional or religious, since 1872, any mention of religious adherence has been removed from administrative documents in France. From that day onwards no question relating to religious matters appeared on census forms, and this is why there is no official record providing accurate statistics on the religious diversity in France. [103] The number of followers of different religions and denominations is estimated largely upon opinion polls in France. Britain provides a different example in terms of the relation between state and religious institutions. Although Britain has marginalized religion to a private matter for individuals and is therefore a secular society, the Church of England is the National Church and the queen is the head of this state church. The bishops, who are appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the prime minister, are present in the House of Lords.[104]

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[102] Ibid. p. 60.

[103] Rémond, René. *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*. Trans. Antonia Nevill. Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999. p. 137.

[104] van der Veer, Peter. "The Moral State: Religion, Nation, and Empire in Victorian Britain and British India." *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*. Eds. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999. p. 16.

Since 1978 the choice has been made from a list of applicants drawn up by the church authorities.[105] Germany, on the other hand, through its post-war legislation, recognized the diversity of churches and combined them officially with the life of the nation. Such recognition is profoundly employed in Netherlands due to the system known as "pillarization" which structures civil society around communities of believers that have been set up as equal partners.[106] Influenced by the same principle of neutrality toward religious plurality, Germany legislated the ecclesiastical tax (*Kirchensteuer*) through which the state funds the churches on behalf of the individuals, on the basis of income unless the individuals declare on the contrary.[107]

Although whether a state has a religion or not, fails to be a common mark of secularity, the neutrality of the state still depends on its equal relationship with different cults. The Rushdie affair in England made evident that even in a country with long tradition of tolerance and liberalism where plurality of religious beliefs and practices are recognized as an advantage, claim of blasphemy against the prophet Muhammad or Koran was not recognized by the existing laws. The present blasphemy law was confined to Christianity. The difficulties of European countries to conduct a relationship with the Muslim communities have been addressed since such conflicts became a part of public debate. Unlike other denominations and religions which were tolerated and later came to be recognized by the states, the Muslim populations did not have religious organizations to represent them and negotiate with the state for better participation and acknowledgement. Moreover, a singular source of authority to decide on the

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[105] Rémond, René. *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*. Trans. Antonia Nevill. Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999. p. 163.

[106] Ibid. p. 193.

[107] Ibid. p. 141.

religious issues is absent for the Muslim people in Europe. They either refer to the religious authorities in their country of origin or their representative in their host countries, if it ever exists. In order to solve this problem of representation and lack of an organization to negotiate with, countries like England and France initiated the formations of Islamic organizations. In Germany, a branch of Turkish religious governmental office (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı) is present since 1984, providing services and education for the largely Turkish originated Muslims. The Muslim Council of Britain was founded in 1997 as an umbrella organization in Britain. In France, the French Council of the Muslim Faith was set up as a private organization by the Minister of the Interior Nicholas Sarkozy in 2003. The association has no legal standing but it is *de facto* representative of French Muslims before the national government.

The neutrality of the state in relation to religion, its recognition of plurality of forms of beliefs on equal footing necessitated solving various problems such as the financing of religious orders, the legal status of confessional institutions such as schools and hospitals, the content and obligation of religious education in public schools, just to mention a few. In this respect, whether the Muslim organizations would evolve to a status able to fulfill what are expected of them both by their followers and the governments, depends on various factors. On the one hand, since there was no hierarchical religious organization in Islam for Muslims in Europe until recently, there is the difficulty of representing the diversity of Islamic faith. The Muslim people in European countries present great differences in their understanding of Islamic faith and practices; whether they will be represented or would like to be represented by these organizations remain to be a question which will be answered in time. On the other hand, if they retain their character of being initiated or founded by the governments, they may not acquire an independent status and would become largely the

spokesperson of the state to Muslim populations, rather than the other way round.

Apart from the neutrality of the state and recognition of plurality of religious communities, the religious question is also largely about the individual and the social; the secularization of the society, political and civil alike. The religion is not only made up of institutions and orders, but to a great extent it is the source of moral values and codes. In this respect, the secularization of the individual conduct continued in the twentieth century, especially during the 60s when a demand for individual autonomy was expressed profoundly. This was a movement demanding the dissociation of moral values venerated by religions and those of civil society in order to liberate personal conduct from the judgments of religious institutions, as well as from states. The legislations on moral issues were conforming to the religious teachings until the 60s. The penal code was modeled on the moral code: what religion defined as a sin was legally a crime or a misdemeanor.[108] Owing to the movement of 60s, the legislations on divorce, adultery, abortion, contraception and homosexuality were reformed in order to diverge from the moral codes of the religious teachings. However, the separation of the moral codes and legal codes does not entail that religion ceased to be a source of morality in personal conducts. Nevertheless, it definitely withdrew from the area of legislation from where it intervened with private and governed individual conduct.

The presence of Muslim people in European countries and their demands to retain their cultural and religious identities creates a tension in the societies. As the religious practices of Muslim people become more visible, they bring forth the questions about the place of religion in modern and secular societies, the questions which were thought to have been solved.

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[108] Rémond, René. *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*. Trans. Antonia Nevill. Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999. pp. 198-200.

The debate on the presence of Muslim scarf in public schools evolved to include issues about the presence of other religious signs like crucifixes or the clothes of teachers from religious orders. On the one hand, the extent to which European countries would acknowledge the religious rights of Muslim people depends upon Muslim communities' and organizations' ability to formulate and justify their demands in the terminology of modern liberal state. In doing this, they would surely and are already upsetting the conventions. On the other hand, the different trajectories of secularization and religious freedoms define and limit the countries' present attitudes toward extending the rights of other cults to Islam.

The analysis of the myth of headscarf in European countries not only reveals the intention to naturalize the presence of Islam in Europe, but also surfaces the age-long conflicts about the place of religion in today's society. The myth of headscarf boomerangs in the face of a European identity which founds itself through distancing from its religious and colonial history. Furthermore, this analysis provides the ways to suggest that the present state of relations between religion, state and society was a *modus vivendi*; not a resolution, nor an outcome of a natural and logical argumentation.

Conclusion

Against all the comments and speeches of our politicians which we witness through the channels of communication everyday, it is curious how a manner of clothing oneself or an act of torching cars can become a political statement. The public space has never been an open space providing each and everyone an equal reach. It is mostly a demanded space where the limits of being able to speak up are the limits of being able to be heard. But is it possible to hear the statements which come up in unusual forms or do we (others) construct and construe these acts into statements, so that we can reply, react, analyze or dismiss them? Or rather, are not the manners in which these acts enter into the public space related with how they are considered as statements?

A decade and more after veiling had been interpreted as a political statement in support of the Islamic movement in Algeria, the recent riot in France failed to be considered as a statement at all. The unrest which incited at the end of October 2005 in the banlieues of French cities shouts to be heard. In the worst social turmoil the country has ever seen since the unrest of 1968, thousands of vehicles have been set alight in nearly 300 towns, over 1,500 people have been arrested in the first two weeks. The arson attacks which targeted the schools and kindergartens as well seem to be diminished substantially after a month. The incident which triggered the rioting is the death of two teenagers on October 27th, who apparently believing themselves to be pursued by the police, were electrocuted in an electricity substation in the suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois. The hard line policing policy and the affronting language of Nicholas Sarkozy, the Minister of Interior, have been criticized to be provocative. The reasons of such a violent incident need to be sought out. But the attempts to explain the situation are inevitably confined in our vocabulary. The question whether any explanation or analysis of this incident is not at once violence on the

rioting youngsters' acts is a legitimate question if we acknowledge the political dimensions of hearing and making hearable.

So, who are these young people rioting and what do they say? They are definitely not immigrants. They are mostly French citizens although they are being referred to as the second or third generation of immigrants largely of North African origin. But unlike the multiculturalism which favors hyphenated identities across and beyond the channel, it is discriminatory to address someone with his/her origin in France. In a country where integration policies are founded on Republican ideals, the suggestion of affirmative action or mention of plurality is considered as derogatory. Yet the term "minority" is problematic as well, not only in France: the concept of "minority" conflicts with the notion of equality substantiated with citizenship. While citizenship proclaims a mathematical and logical equality, the notion of minority suggests a qualitative dimension, not necessarily related with numbers.[109] The French republican system of leveling all identities to a neutral notion of citizenship does not supply any space to name diversities, or when it does that, it does so to criticize differences. On the other hand, the multicultural approach of England seems to provide a vocabulary to define differences from the dominant society. The British approach of recognition when compared to the French style of integration seems to work better in involving the children of minorities to the society. Yet addressing the term "minorities" at once introduces and justifies the division between the dominant and the liminal segments of society. Recognition through celebrating cultural differences risks or deepens segregation.

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[109] Asad, Talal. "Muslims and European Identity: Can Europe Represent Islam?" *The Idea of Europe: from Antiquity to the European Union*. Ed. Anthony Pagden. Washington, DC : Woodrow Wilson Center Press ; Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2002. pp. 221-2.

It could have been easy to analyze the revolt in France if it had expressed itself along communal, ethnic or religious lines. However the riots were neither communal, nor ethnic; the riots were not organized by leaders and they did not transform into a political project.[110] Unlike the previous ethnic and religious stigmatizations, this recent turmoil calls upon acknowledging the economical dimensions of the predicaments of integration. It is not possible to call these rioting young and angry people as "Arabs" or "Muslims" anymore. Yet, it is not simply "the poor against the rich" either. The difficulties faced at the first moment of describing the rioters summarize the violence of language. The act of defining another person's identity and his/her act of demonstrating his/her presence is violent.

It has been argued in this dissertation that the speech of headscarf is a mythified speech as it occurred in Europe. The myth of headscarf speaks of the turmoil in European countries expressing the growing anxieties about the presence of Islam which is feared to invade Europe from inside, through the Muslim populations. Yet, the myth of headscarf, in an overt and profound manner, also speaks of the formation of a European identity through quieting a vehement past. The myth of headscarf functions to naturalize the Muslim presence and a secular way of living. The cultural and religious meanings of headscarf are diminished and the ways the Muslim populations arrived in European countries are obscured.

The myth of headscarf is also about the ways through which an artifact begins to enunciate something. It is also about the ideological hollow between what is being said and what is being heard. The measures taken in response to riots in France, especially the reactivation of the law about the state of emergency which was legislated during the Algerian war

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[110] Iveković, Rada. "French Suburbia 2005: the return of the political unrecognised." *Lettre International*, Berlin, No: 71, Winter 2005-06.

in 1955 and which had never been applied to metropolitan France, demonstrate that what is expressed in this revolt is not being heard. It would be unwise not to predict that in case of a negligence to recognize the target of this rage, a new turmoil would shout more fiercely upon a triggering incident. These people torched the boundaries which made them invisible, unheard, not present. This riot is a manifestation that the colony is now in France: France will either continue to colonize these people through closure and refusal, or will choose to decolonize herself through facing her own colonial past.

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