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‘Perpetual First Generation’: A Strategy for a New Minority – People Originating from Turkey in France

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To investigate the identity attributes of Turkish people living in France it is necessary to consider ‘Turkish identity’, determine the stage of their identity building, and understand the role religion plays in this quest for identity. Considering the complex structure of Ottoman society and the multiple and dynamic properties of loyalty criteria, it is difficult to ascertain the definition of ‘Turkishness’ even in Turkey. It is probably not necessary to explain that this is even more difficult for Turks who are in the minority.

Turkish ‘Identity’

The education system in Turkey requires that all students learn an acceptable definition of Turkish identity by heart through countless repetitions. Starting in primary school, Turkish students are given a ‘checklist’:¹ one language, one religion, one history, one ideal. The rigid implementation of these criteria of loyalty gives rise to a variety of problems, which constitute a common problem for all Turks, whether living in Turkey or abroad. One final remark: the Turks in Europe implement these criteria in a priority order from the most important to the least.

Turks in Europe cast aside the legal definition of ‘Turkishness’ and uphold its cultural (meaning national, therefore subjective) attributes. Amongst the primary reasons for this attitude is the fact that many of the five million people of Turkish origin living in Europe have been naturalised in the host country. Meanwhile, even the constitutional definition of Turkishness has been under debate in Turkey lately. (Article 66: ‘Any citizen of the state of Turkey is a Turk.’) Individuals who have been unable to adapt to the checklist mentioned above for any reason (for example, because they had different demands or were excluded by the majority) have caused the emergence of a new debate on supra-identities and sub-identities.²

The quest for identity by minorities is subject to setbacks: actions that are considered ‘anti-minority’ are being condemned with greater fervour and the transfer

of identity qualifications has become a matter of life and death. Groups who consider themselves minorities – or under threat – interpret the loyalty criteria mentioned above in complex, sometimes contradictory ways. On one hand, the group maintains some flexibility in the loyalty criteria to fill their ranks and prove their weight before the majority. For example, young generations who are not fluent in their mother tongues are tolerated and regarded as part of the minority. On the other hand, requirements to comply with the behaviours that represent the identity of the majority become stricter. Failure to remain within the strict codes of conduct leads to the exclusion of the individual. Some acts which are more easily accepted in the majority (such as marrying someone not belonging to the group) backfire in the case of minorities. Such ‘house rules’ of minorities apply to the people of Turkish origin living in France. With a population of almost 500,000, this group follows the discussions within Turkey very closely. Nevertheless, they create their identity not only by following the developments in Turkey, but also with the experience of being in the minority. The criteria, which evoke the sentiment of loyalty to an ever-restructuring group, cause the community to undergo continuous changes, and help it to evolve from an imagined community into a group that needs to be fought for if it is to survive.³ To achieve this, minorities naturally place great importance on loyalty criteria and the transfer of the collective memory.⁴

People of Turkish origin in France devise two types of strategy: the first is an approach where radical religious acts and inter-communal marriages are supported with an emphasis on the minority being ‘Turkish’ and on attempting to preserve this characteristic at all costs. The indivisible unity of the community is paramount. The second is an approach that – similar to the case in Turkey – springs from and is propagated through differences among classes and groups, and results in religious and ideological separations. The position of religion in these two strategies utilised by the Turkish people in France to protect their identities will be discussed later; first, there is a need to study processes of religious structuring and the relations between various modes of loyalties. Finally, the position of the Turkish community within the Muslim community in France and its key differences can be highlighted.

People of Turkey in France: Identity Strategies

Due to differences between the French and Turkish definitions of ‘nation’ and ‘citizenship’, it is not possible to determine the exact population of the ‘Turkish’ community in France. The French census system has only two main categories: French citizens and resident aliens. However, a subcategory lists ‘naturalised French citizens’ by their ethnicity. The Turkish system is a mix of the French (*jus soli*) and German (*jus sanguini*) systems, and apart from the non-Muslim minorities identified in the Treaty of Lausanne, ignores the legal presence of minorities. The Turkish census continues the Ottoman *millet* system in that it identifies minorities by their religious affiliation. Although the proclamation of the Republic meant that the Turkish state was restructured with the individual rather than the group at the forefront, the Ottoman reflex of ethnic-religious classification had been internalised by the people and the government.

Any citizen of Turkey may be a Turk according to the constitution, but the criteria for belonging in 'Turkishness' are relative from a cultural perspective.

Immigrants are subject to a redundant count by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Turkey due to the obscure definition of 'Turkishness'. The Ministry includes Turkish nationals living in France and the French of Turkish origin (regardless of whether dual nationality was obtained afterwards) in the Turkish nation. The fact that France does not legally recognise dual nationality but does so in practice, further complicates the issue.

There are three distinct types of Turkish populations in France: 'French of Turkish origin', 'alien Turkish nationals' and 'ethnic Turks'. This is why a census of the 'Turkish population' or 'French population of Turkish origin' yields different results depending on the procedure used. A census based on the legal definition of groups may be different from another based on ethnic, identity or cultural classifications. French and Turkish statistics are widely different, and this sometimes sparks discussions which are far from objective (such as the xenophobic and/or nationalistic discourses of the extreme rightists in Turkey and Europe).

The French population of Turkish origin consists of Turkish-born immigrants who were naturalised by legal procedures, and persons born in Turkey from a parent who is a French national. Upon closer scrutiny, the statuses of its members are:

- Turkish-born citizens of Turkey who reside in France and have gained French citizenship by way of naturalisation, marriage or for having a parent who is a French citizen;
- Children of Turkish parents who, being born in France, either gained French citizenship at birth or applied for naturalisation (persons born before the Pasqua Act gained citizenship automatically, and those born after the Act can apply for naturalisation);
- Levantines, Armenians, Jews and other citizens of Turkey who are not ethnic Turks may be naturalised in France or regain their French citizenship (there is at least one French Prime Minister and several French deputies who have gone through this process).

Among the Turkish people in France are a small number of refugees (Turkish citizens who sought and gained asylum) and stateless (political dissidents or military service objectors who were expelled from citizenship by the government of Turkey). These individuals are considered citizens of Turkey or without citizenship until their French citizenship is granted.

Who are the Turks in France?

Perpetual First Generation Strategy

In the case of minorities, particularly the Turks, religious loyalty is considered the guarantee and proof of national loyalty. The transfer of national identity, and consequently that of religious identity, is directly correlated with the transfer of the collective memory to new generations.

The transfer of collective memory for the purposes of ensuring unity and integrity rests on three identity pillars: the longing for and loyalty to 'the Motherland' (Turkey in general, the hometown or village in particular); transfer of the Turkish language to the younger generation despite French being the official language; and the continuation of customs and traditions believed to be rooted in religion. The reason the community is so fervently attached to these three topics is their desire that the Turkish children born in France could share the same sentiment of 'Turkishness' with them. Various methods are employed by the community to transfer these three elements to new generations. The leading method has to be the perpetual first generation strategy. What is meant by this is the marriage of young French people of Turkish descent to Turkish brides and grooms who preferably live in Turkey, and even more preferably are brought to France for marriage from the region of the French family's hometown. In other words, young French people of Turkish origin rarely marry people who are of French or other nationalities, and seldom marry other members of the Franco-Turkish community. As a result, a second or third generation of ethnic Turks has not arisen in France. From a statistical point of view, one of the parents (usually the mother) of all Turkish (and Kurdish) children born in France is a new arrival in France. The 'fresh blood' spouses are received as representatives of genuine 'Turkishness' (particularly in terms of language and religion) who will help to correct the degeneration in the 'Turkishness' of ethnic Turks who have lived in France for too long.

The loyalty to Turkey of the ethnic Turks in France is also shown by how they call Turkey the 'Motherland'. The pillars of identity building in the community are language (Turkish and/or Kurdish) and religion (Sunni or Alevi). But the two pillars need a hinterland. The hinterland is primarily Turkey, but expands to concentric circles of the immigrant's own home villages, towns and provinces. The ties with their country are both physical and mental. Physical ties are the result of frequent travel to Turkey, whether for business, school or leisure, following the developments in Turkey via newspapers, television and other media, and contact with the country by phone or the internet. These three methods of contact have developed significantly in the last two to three decades: flights and trips between the two countries are frequent and fares are low; the number of national and local television stations has boomed and these stations may be received abroad; the internet provides a means to communicate at minimal cost whilst phone tariffs are also going down. All of these enable the ethnic Turks in France to keep in contact with Turkey. Interaction with Turkey is now ubiquitous.

It is more difficult to grasp the emotional or mental ties with Turkey. These ties are probably correlated to two approaches:

- First, ethnic Turks in France are more interested in Turkish politics than they are in French internal affairs. In fact, they pay close attention to the political environment in Turkey, and want the political context in Turkey either to change or remain as it is; much like their compatriots in Turkey. From this perspective, the change in the discourse of French Turks

regarding the accession of Turkey in the EU is noteworthy. Although they desire Turkey and France to be members of the same union for emotional and practical reasons, they too have begun to voice the anti-French and anti-European discourse recently on the rise in Turkey. Meanwhile, none of the Turkish associations or organisations in France have attempted to block Turkey's accession to the EU. They desire the membership of Turkey for two somewhat irrational reasons: one is the desire for the Turkish state to attain a better future and position. Second is their hope that the accession of Turkey will legitimise their presence in France and improve their image in the eyes of the French public. This attitude points out that the people of Turkish origin have evolved into a 'diaspora' as defined by Kim Butler. According to Butler, members of the diaspora continue to be interested in the politics of the root nation. The interest is not necessarily in the way of support. On the contrary, a section of the diaspora may even side with the opposition. However, it is interest that matters; not its direction.⁵

- These irrational ties may be explained by Benedict Anderson's imagined communities theory. In other words, the Turks in France associate themselves with the other individuals comprising their community (even if they do not know all of them personally) and strongly applaud the success and victory of other Turks in a setting of competition with the majority, brought about by being in the minority.

Until recently Turkey, the motherland, had irrational ties with the Turks in Europe. For years, every administration tried to prevent European Turks from acquiring citizenship of the countries they were living, and even born, in. They feared that by acquiring a different nationality, European Turks would detach from 'Turkishness' and Turkey. Legal attachment to the motherland seemed more important than emotional and identical loyalty. This was partly influenced by Germany's denial of dual-citizenship status. It should be remembered that the nationalist mind-set considers national identity to be one and singular. As Max Weber suggests, nationalism is a system of one belief over all, and just as a person may be loyal to only one religion among monotheistic faiths, so must an individual choose to be loyal to only one nation. Multiple national loyalty is severely condemned. Nevertheless, a recent radical change occurred in Turkey's approach to the issue: since the late 1990s, but particularly after 2002, European Turks are expected to acquire the citizenship of their country of residence. This will give them a voice in the national and local politics of their respective countries, and allow them to lobby in favour of Turkey.

The emigration of Turks to Western Europe starting with the 1960s did help to expand the concept of external Turks. With the settlement of migrant workers from the mid-1970s onwards, a group of immigrants, scorned by the elite yet cherished for their accumulation and capital transfer, emerged as the backbone of 'external Turks'. After 20 years of neglect, this group was framed within the 'omnipresent fatherly State' in the wake of the 1980 *junta*. One purpose of this framing was to prevent them

from 'taking the wrong path'. The wrong path, of course, was paved with leftist movements and dissenting religious organisations.

The real danger was assimilation, 'forgetting' Turkishness and losing loyalty to Turkey. So while this group was exposed to Turkish propaganda by print, media and imams and teachers commissioned from Turkey, they were prevented from entering into any kind of multiple loyalty. As a knee-jerk reaction by nation-states whose strength is dubious, the perpetual first generation strategy was imposed upon generations born in Europe. The objective was to ensure that ethnic Turks born in Europe were at least as loyal to the country as those who came from Turkey, and the strategy was adopted and implemented by European Turks. The rejection of multiple loyalty applied to the change in legal affiliation – acquiring citizenship of the country of residence.

For decades, administrations in Turkey considered change in citizenship or an additional citizenship dangerous. Turks who acquired the citizenship of their country of residence would make compromises from Turkishness, and their loyalty would weaken. So they were expected to remain only Turkish. This policy has however changed since the 2000s. The relief brought by globalisation led Turkish officials to believe that European Turks were no longer under threat of assimilation, to decide that these communities would lobby for European relations, and to encourage them to acquire the citizenship of their countries of residence. Nevertheless, these groups are still viewed as social mechanisms that are at the disposal of the Republic of Turkey.

From another angle, these people are being called upon as soldiers: 10 years ago, their duty required them to be Turkish citizens; now, they are instructed to become French or German citizens. Wealth accumulation by migrant workers is still seen as a remedy for economic distress; the sentimental discourse around homesickness, loyalty and the motherland is still maintained – to the extent of sheer emotional exploitation as seen in the most recent Paris rally. The idea is that migrant workers are the soldiers (envoys) of Turkey: all of these make it clear that the motherland's view of the migrant communities has not changed radically.

The improvement and expansion of communication technologies removes the threat of assimilation that came with the changes to French or German citizenship. Although multiple legal affiliation has become acceptable, this is not the case in cultural loyalties. Multiple cultural loyalties are still viewed as dangerous and even treasonous.

As noted earlier, cultural loyalty was built on two pillars: language and religion. When in the minority, teaching the language to new generations becomes particularly difficult. Naturally, the language of the majority immediately becomes the dominant language in a social environment. Furthermore, France insists on fluency in French as a prerequisite to integration in the country, and this has come to be accepted by the majority as well as the minority, who initially resisted the idea. Fluency in French is the most important measure of good integration. As a result, lack of fluency in Turkish no longer poses a threat to loyalty to 'Turkishness'.

Meanwhile, religious loyalty, being based on the sacred and therefore immune to intervention, gained great importance and took priority. In a contradictory way, this

type of loyalty became an indispensable and paramount element of 'Turkishness', for both Sunni and Alevi Turks in France. However, filling the gap left by language with religion gave rise to a number of issues in the French case: the French system is constructed on the principle of laicism and Turkish immigrants have diverse cultural and social backgrounds.

Legitimacy and Market Strategies

Official Islam/Dissident Islam

The aversion of Turkish associations to unite under one roof is due to the presence of a dissenting Islamic movement that is in conflict with the official Islam in Turkey. An in-depth analysis of the division reveals that the rift is not as wide or severe as it seems or is commonly believed to be.

Dissident Islamic movements opposed to the official Islam have existed throughout the Ottoman Empire and were carried over to the Republic of Turkey. Both movements, eager to dictate and control religious thoughts and practices, considered those who reject whatever is imposed as subversive elements threatening unity and security, and branded them as heretics. Dissenting Islamic movements resisted annihilation when the Jacobin Kemalist regime saw them as a threat against the newly-founded secular regime, and their resistance brought them strength. People of the Anatolian Islamic culture, followers of heterodox faiths and practices in various congregations and even some Sufis were devastated when their religious orders, lodges or holy tombs where they congregated were banned and closed. However, contrary to the wishes of the state, the banning of religious orders did not diminish their importance, particularly in rural areas. They continued their existence in hiding. The state began to rein in the religion with the Office of Religious Affairs established in lieu of the abolished Caliphate. Religious orders that fell outside the planned official religious project were classified as dissident Islam, even though some were not even remotely tied to politics. These orders remained hidden until the 1950s, when the Democrat Party came to power with the votes of the rural population, and then began to take part in politics as conservative Islam was then viewed favourably. The orders joined a variety of political movements until the mid-1960s, but 'political Islam' was not yet developed. The foundation of political Islam is the relatively liberal environment created in the wake of the military coup of 1960. Millî Görüş completed its association in the 1970s and became one of the leading political parties in Turkey. To eliminate any previous misconceptions, it must be noted that the 'dissidence' of this party is first and foremost political, and not tied to religion. To the contrary, Millî Görüş holds the belief that Islam already has a very special place in the private and social lives of the people or Turkey; it is only missing in the political arena. The purpose is not to discuss religion and draw a roadmap; it is to introduce religion in the world of politics. In this political environment, Millî Görüş managed to stay away from radical Islamic movements despite incorporating smaller fundamental groups. As explained above, despite the fact that the armed forces and other groups of the society did not acknowledge its legitimacy, the Millî Görüş movement became an

indispensable part of politics, or the 'system', starting with the 1970s. Kemalist circles were unable to prevent the political parties stemming from the Millî Görüş movement from entering coalitions and finally becoming the ruling party in 2002. Although the Justice and Development Party argues that it is separate from the movement, the leaders of the party are all from the Millî Görüş movement, and their constituency is composed of voters loyal to the same movement.

For these reasons, it is difficult to differentiate between official Islam and dissident Islam. In the European case, such a difference has lost its *raison d'être*.

Considering Islam as a system of belief that shapes all aspects (personal and social) of an individual's life, dissident Islam may be said to be composed of individuals who desire a greater weight of religion in social life. From this perspective, it becomes easier to understand why the people of Turkish origin in Europe place so much importance on religion. First and foremost, their inadequacy in the other loyalty measures of 'Turkishness' causes religion to gain more importance within these communities. The prioritisation of religion is a phenomenon that is observable in all minority groups, and even constitutes one of the minority theories in sociology today: minorities value religion more than their compatriots who are in the majority in another country; or, non-religious practices are accepted with more ease if the community in question is in the majority.

There are two further advantages to being a supporter of the widespread Millî Görüş movement in Europe. Siding with this movement is not limited to supporting an ideology that plays a significant part in Turkish domestic politics. As the importance of Millî Görüş rises in Turkey, the proponents of the party in France become even more legitimate and gain a surer foothold within the Muslim community. In other words, members of Millî Görüş organisations in France are not there because they are interested in Turkish domestic politics; they are there to rise to a better social status in France.

Nationalising Religion: An Attitude Unique to Nation-States

Important changes have occurred in the attitude of the French state towards laicism and the perception of the French people of secularism recently. Manifest both in discourse and in legislation, these changes are connected to the presence of Muslims in France and their quest for legitimacy. This situation has both a direct and an indirect connection to the Muslims in France. The first is a structural connection. Four to five million Muslims may have acquired French citizenship, but have not achieved legitimacy in the eyes of the French society yet. These 'new' French want their presence to be accepted, both individually and as a religious community with special rights. The quest for legitimacy causes tension in French society from various perspectives. On the one hand, the French government has been trying, for more than 15 years, to establish an authority that will represent the Muslims of France in an attempt to create a French Islam. On the other hand, the public is not in favour of such an authority, with the idea that it will create separate communities in society.

Speaking of the contextual reasons for the change in the French system of laicism, the dark image of Islam in Western societies after the 1990s, particularly in the

aftermath of 9/11, must be investigated. Spreading fear as a symbol of threat, and even leading to Muslims being viewed as enemies, this new image had repercussions throughout French society. Although the French are not too keen on the 'clash of civilisations', a large number of people want the Muslims in France to undergo the laic system of adapting to society, effectively bringing religion under state control. As part of the same approach, French society wants imams to be raised in French culture and to address their congregations in French in order to keep abreast of religious thought taking root on French soil. From this perspective, it can be argued that the French system of secularism, having clearly separated the state from the church in its time, is now seeking to overcome issues brought by Muslims – a new element in society. Similar to Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s, the idea that the state should keep religion under strict control is gaining acceptance.

This is a process of localising Islam in France. After the oppression of the foreign and heretic French Protestantism, the nationalisation of French Catholicism with the law of 1905, and the absorption of Judaism, which had been accused of dual loyalty for many years, now is the time to nationalise and localise Islam. The objective is to replace Islam in France with a uniquely French Islam. The hottest debate surrounds the imams, and the leading issue on the agenda today is the education and training of imams who will work in France. There are three groups of imams working in French mosques. One group consists of imams sent from Muslim countries. This is the group that is the least accepted by the French society. Imams who serve the people of Turkish origin in France are appointed by DİTİB, or in other words the Office of Religious Affairs, which reports – and has reported – directly to the Prime Minister since 1983. These imams work within Turkish organisations in France and their wages are paid by the government of Turkey through the 'social affairs attaches' working in consulates. It is not difficult to understand why these organisations request imams from Turkey: on the one hand, they are received as representatives of true 'Turkishness' that the ethnic Turks in France have lost over time, while their affiliation with the state of Turkey serves to confirm their allegiance to the official religion of Turkey. All this and more is available for free. These organisations are far from being rich, so not having to pay the wages of the imam comes as a great relief. In fact, the finances of some organisations are so precarious that they choose to assign their properties to the Office of Religious Affairs to ensure that imams are sent on a regular basis and building maintenance is paid for by the Office.

Despite the negative reaction by the public, French authorities do not object to the imams sent from Turkey because they are under the supervision of the Turkish state, and present less of a threat than local imams who are not controlled by any country. As long as there is no institution to provide education to local imams in France, it is important that foreign imams are under the supervision of the country they come from. If the country is secular like Turkey, this procedure becomes even more important. The foremost criticism of imams is that they do not speak French. Taking this criticism into consideration, the Office of Religious Affairs started a new procedure in 2005: about a hundred young individuals are chosen from the countries of

immigration (France, Germany, the Netherlands, etc), travel to Ankara to receive religious education, and are sent back to their countries. In this respect, it must also be mentioned that the Office of Religious Affairs is not disturbed by imams being educated in Europe. The Office of Religious Affairs supports education abroad on one condition: contributing to the education so that the Office can continue to keep imams serving in Turkish mosques under its supervision.

As minorities, all religions take on two contradicting aspects. On the one hand, they resist changes that would have been readily adopted had they been in the majority, while trying to adapt to the country, if begrudgingly, on the other. This contradiction can be observed in the Turkish community in France. Meanwhile, because religious loyalty refers to national loyalty, individuals adopt a religious attitude in an attempt to prove their loyalty to the community and nation to which they belong.⁶ This stance seeks to promote rational explanations for religious behaviours (such as claiming that pork is bad for health), and argues that religion has a very important place within the community because it constitutes a critical element of everyday life. By becoming an institution, the community manifests its existence in the eyes of the majority, and reaffirms the fact that it will continue to exist throughout time and place. As an example, while the Turkish community had kept its distance from the Muslims Council of France and the local councils in the beginning, it has since become a part of these organisations for strategic purposes.

Conclusion

Although more than 50 years have passed since the first emigration of Turks to France, terms such as 'French Turks' or 'half French-half Turk' are still problematic today. The obstacles to overcome have structural and contextual elements. In Turkey, as well as in France, 'multiculturalism' is asserted on the surface. The truth, however, is different: both states are founded on national unity above all. In other words, both states, drawing on their experience of nation-building, prefer that their citizens belong to one and only one nation. National loyalty and the resulting notion of nationalism sharply rejects the idea of multiple loyalties. Therefore, the French are unable to associate the immigrant communities with their idea of a Nation, even when they have acquired French citizenship or even were born in France. There is a great difference between Turks and North Africans at this point. The struggle of the North Africans was to be accepted as 'French' and to gain legitimacy as French, whereas people from Turkey fight to have their Turkish or Kurdish presence in France recognised and made legitimate. Between 2006 and 2008, I had the opportunity to ask a number of questions to 200 Turkish students taking their baccalaureate exams. A large majority of them were born in France (98%) and were French citizens (91%). Furthermore, 22% had a parent who was born in France. Despite this, none of them answered the question 'Where are you from?' with the name of the city they were born or living in. Without a single exception, all answered with the province in Turkey where their parents or at least the head of family (in most cases, the paternal grandfather) came from. This did not change even if those individuals had

no familial or physical ties to these provinces, had never even been there, and had a poor command of Turkish. Based on these responses, we can confidently claim that neither the majority nor the Turkish minority have internalised the concept of multiple loyalties. This serves to prove that having dual citizenship is not an indication of feeling emotional ties to both nations.

Such structural data should be accompanied by a contextual explanation on the 'perpetual first generation' strategy. The intentional or unintentional practice of this strategy (marriage of people born and raised in France to spouses born and raised in Turkey) enables the Turks in France and across Europe to remain in close ties with Turkey, the Turkish language, and the religion. Generations born in France do lose their command of Turkish, but this shortcoming is compensated for by religion, customs, loyalty to the 'motherland' and the cultural assimilation of parents who had recently emigrated from Turkey. In other words, multiple loyalty is experienced but not expressed, and is even rejected.

Minority theory may explain the situation: all minorities create rules for socialising that prevent their members from becoming individuals. Even if a member of the minority gains the freedom to define himself as an individual, he will continue to be perceived and treated as a member of a minority by the majority and the minority alike. Weber's theory of methodological individualism cannot be used for minorities where the unity and integrity of the identity is paramount. But the antithesis, Durkheim's holism, is inadequate as far as the socialising system is considered. Among theories that will answer this paradigm is the methodological complex individualism conceptualised by Jean Pierre Dupuy.⁷ This appears to be the best way to break the rigid barriers of the individual/minority/majority triangle. I believe that it is not entirely adequate to focus solely on multiple loyalties⁸ in a situation where the minority is still not legitimate in the eyes of the majority and is seen as an outside element. To religious minorities that are yet to become legitimate in society, the demand of the majority for them to adapt their religious customs and practices to the new context in which they settle may be regarded as oppression: by submitting to the demand, they may withdraw from their culture. Religion – or religious practices – like all other aspects of a cultural whole, even if it is not accepted by the members of the minority for the purpose of preserving their uniqueness, is expected to adapt to the new circumstances and surroundings. It cannot be denied that the religious attitudes and overall approach of the people of Turkey in France changed as a result of this interaction. On the other hand, because the same group is also in danger of alienation from their cultures and assimilation, these developments win the favour of neither the Turkish society nor the minority itself. Returning to Turkey, the people in France are confronted with changes in their behaviour as if it was a crime. The worst insult to Turks coming from France is to tell them they have become French. Owing to the phenomenon of interaction, a member of this community very naturally brings together and uses religious symbols that belong to the Turks in Turkey with those belonging to the majority in France. Collective behaviour is shaping the behaviour of the individual, and individual discourses are creating the collective behaviour.⁹

About the Author

Samim Akgönül is a historian and political scientist. His fields of research are: religious minorities, especially in Turkey and in the Balkans, new ethnic minorities in Europe, contemporary Turkish history and the Turkish language.

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