This article examines how different groups of women, including feminists and Islamists, contributed to the process of democratization since the 1980s in Turkey. It is argued that as women sought their rights, they liberalized the polity. To the extent that liberalization protects democracies from degenerating into mere formalism, women expanded the parameters of "substantive" democracy. In the Turkish case where a strong state has traditionally stifled claims for individual civic rights, the process of liberalization women cultivated was particularly important for democratization.

This article aims to explore how women in Turkey contributed to the process of democratization since the 1980 military intervention in the country. Different women's groups, feminists, Islamists, and others expanded the parameters of democratic participation as they demanded substantive rather than formal democracy. Women's activism took place in the context of a representative democracy that was struggling to liberalize itself.

The critical relationship between democracy and liberalization has long been emphasized. Liberalization secures civil liberties and rights to individuals and groups and protects democracy from degen-
erating into mere formalism. In turn, minimum requirements of representative democracy such as suffrage, regular elections, and accountability to the constituents guarantee that those who govern do not manipulate or retract liberal rights (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 9). Within this close relationship between democracy and liberalization, women in Turkey contributed to the former by expanding the confines of the latter. Against a strong state that limited civic rights, they demanded the expansion of those rights with their diverse activism. The different agendas they articulated in the public realm expanded the scope of pluralism and consequently democracy in Turkey.

Even though it is a necessary if not sufficient condition of substantive democracy, liberalism and, by extension, individualism have long been criticized as an inadequate ideology for cultivating responsible citizenship and nurturing the "common good." Civic republicans forcefully argue the importance of going beyond particular individual interests in the public realm to realize the common good (Phillips 1991, 46–53). Preoccupation with individual interests obstructs the proclivity to construct a better world for the public at large.

Feminists have played their part in criticizing liberalism. Feminist criticisms of liberalism range widely including criticisms of contract theory, liberal moral theory, individual liberal thinkers, and liberal feminism. While some are concerned with the patriarchal foundations of liberal thought (Eisenstein 1981; Pateman 1988), others criticize the competitive pursuit of self-interest in the public realm that liberalism defends (Elshtain 1981, 298–53; Fox-Genovese 1991, 8). The latter argue that a collaborative participatory conception of politics is missing in liberal thought. Many feminists have long been dissatisfied with women's search for equality to men, a search based on universal liberal notions of equality of individuals; they urge that women's difference be recognized not on an individual but a collective basis, as a gender issue (Taylor 1994, 25–44).

In this article, I argue that these valuable criticisms need to be contextualized. We need to remind ourselves that they emerged in the historically specific Western contexts of liberal democracies and could be inadequate to respond to problems of women in sociopolitical contexts where liberalism could not flourish. Against a tradition of liberalism and liberal individualism, feminists who uphold women's collaborative, nurturing culture can criticize demands for individual (women's) equal rights as "destructive" of the "common good" and advocate various collectivist, collaborative goals. In a context where the individual has traditionally been subordinated to the demands of the collective, these criticisms might be irrelevant. A
demand for individual women's empowerment might be a necessary if not sufficient condition for other feminist goals of collaborative empowerment to be realized. Unless women gain the recognition they deserve as individuals, they might not have the means to articulate various visions of better lives or pursue a common good. Furthermore, women's demands for individual rights could be liberating for men as well who, along with women, have traditionally subordinated rights to the demands of the state: women could help undermine the tradition that legitimizes the subordination of rights to the interests of the state.

In the Turkish case, contrary to what some feminist critiques of liberalism argue for their own societies (Fox-Genovese 1991, 8), the balance between the individual and society has swung to the side of the society rather than the individual. Since the inception of the Turkish Republic in 1923, priority given to the "common good" as defined by the state elite stifled the claims of the individual. With due respect for the critiques of liberal individualism and proponents of the common good, we can remind ourselves that the search for the common good can be a means to legitimize authoritarianism in contexts where individuals have not gained the respect that a tradition of liberalism could bestow upon them. In Turkey, different women's groups that have claimed their rights against the state expanded the realm of substantive democratic participation and empowered individual women against a state that either ignored or subordinated them. Women's claims for their rights should be seen as active participation to redefine and cultivate a common good, one that is not necessarily drawn by the state elites in the context of an overbearing state tradition.

In this article, I shall refer to a range of feminist groups, mothers whose sons were lost under police custody, some Islamists, women organizing to defend secularism, and women organizing to promote women parliamentarians.5

The Context of the Democratic Experience

Turkish experience with liberal representative democracy began with the 1950 elections, when the ruling elite of the single-party era (1923–1950) devolved power to the opposition. Since then, there have been three military interventions lasting one to three years, in 1960, 1971, and 1980. Despite the interventions, representative democracy with its minimum requirements for regular elections, general suffrage, secret ballot, free competition of political parties, and accountability of the elected grew in a unique Muslim context.

The Turkish context of democracy was unique because of its pre-
dominantly Muslim culture with a strong state tradition (Heper 1985; Keyder 1987). Muslim heritage and culture nurtured and legitimized consensual rather than representative democracy. Representative democracy assumed an open interplay of potentially conflictual interests that would merely be mediated at the level of the state, whereas consensual democracy assumed an eventual erasure of potential conflict. The strong state, one that could tax its population and funnel it to the center, was a legacy of the Ottomans to the Turkish Republic. It was responsible for cultivating the concept of a transcendental, common good that would theoretically resolve all conflict at the level of the state.

Even though in 1923 the newly founded republican state explicitly aimed to sever all ties with the Ottoman past, especially its Muslim institutional and legal framework, the strong state tradition continued to exert its presence during the process of modernization. It was the state elites who decided for the people, at times despite the people, and defined the common good as Westernization and executed their decision with quite effective results (Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1997). With the legitimacy that the strong state tradition gave them, they could resort to authoritarian measures to undertake their Westernizing reforms (Tunçay 1981; Parla 1992). They could thus institutionalize the republic, replace the religious legal framework with a secular one that included the personal status code (and gave women equal rights to men in, for example, inheritance and divorce), and give suffrage to women.

Although the strong state with its unitary transcendental concept of the common good could implement its Westernizing reforms, the practice of democracy could not be autocratically experienced. Despite socioeconomic and cultural odds commonly associated with success stories of democracies, since 1950 Turkey has been set on the road to democratization (Waterbury 1997). Since the 1980 military intervention, there has been an onset of criticism levied against the autocratic tradition (Kasaba 1997). In this context, women moved to the political scene with demands for redefining their civic rights and participated in the process of democratization.

Feminists

Since the 1980s, different groups of feminists emerged and engaged in political activities ranging from demonstrations to giving petitions in search of their rights. They raised issues ranging from domestic violence to the amendment of the inegalitarian clauses of the Civil Code.6 Interestingly, the first group of women who identified themselves as feminists emerged on the political scene in the mid-
1980s when the shadow of the military intervention was still politically felt (Tekeli 1986; Sirman 1989; Arat 1994, 1997). These women began organizing in what could be termed consciousness-raising groups at a time when it was illegal to organize in any form. When they collected signatures for a petition that urged the government to implement the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, there were still bans on organized political activism. The left and the right had been crushed. Within the political vacuum that had been created by the military government, the feminist initiatives were deemed politically insignificant.

Looking at their activities of the last decade and a half, feminists were important because they ventured into the public arena in their own name to seek legitimacy for women’s individualistic claims. This might seem no novel act in the Western context, where feminists moved into the political realm to speak up with their own voices, which had been until then suppressed by men. However, in the Turkish context, it was not merely women’s voices that were new on the public scene, but also demands made for individual rights and individualism. With women’s demands for the extension of their rights, be it for protection against domestic violence or merely for self-expression, the concept of the common good defined by “the transcendental” state (Heper 1985) was challenged. The rhetoric that “women’s rights are given and protected by the state for the common good,” a taboo until then, was contested. When they sought their rights, feminists were seeking legitimacy for a new tradition of liberal individualism in a context where communalism, statism, and transcendental definition of the common good were the norms.

Similar to the feminists in the West, different groups of feminists in Turkey fought for different notions of male-female equality. The more radical groups who fought against domestic violence introduced notions of substantive equality by criticizing the existing legal framework pertaining to violence (Arin, 1996). They argued that violence toward women’s bodies should be treated under a separate section as “sexual assaults” within the criminal code. There should be no tolerance of violence toward women and judges should not be allowed to refer to extenuating circumstances such as traditions and local customs. These crimes should not depend on formal complaint; rather everyone should be required to report cases of domestic violence. In effect, like some feminists in the West, they were arguing for special measures to protect women so that substantive equality could be achieved.

Other feminists prioritized the dictates of formal equality. Women who preferred to call themselves Kemalist feminists initiated a peti-
tion campaign to have the Civil Code amended. The Civil Code still contains articles that help promote a patriarchal order. The husband is recognized as the head of the family, responsible for choosing the place of family residence and providing for the family (Art. 152). He is expected to be the guardian of the wife (Art. 153) and represent the family union (Art. 154). The campaign that was launched under the initiative of the Kemalist feminists duly received support from the more radical feminists, including those who founded the Women’s Library and Information Center and the Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation in Istanbul. Since 1991, when the petition was presented to the head of Parliament, amendment of the Civil Code has been on the agenda of the State Ministry for Women’s Affairs and Social Services and the Directorate General on the Status and Problems of Women. The Minister of Women’s Affairs of the Welfare and True Path Party coalition government (who was at the time a member of True Path Party) allegedly resigned because the parliamentarians of the religious Welfare Party were blocking the amendment of the code in the Parliamentary Committee.

Mothers

Not all women who expanded the parameters of democratic participation and challenged the transcendental conception of the common good in defense of individual civil rights called themselves feminists. Beginning on 27 May 1995, relatives, mostly mothers of those who “disappeared” in police custody, congregated in a central district of Istanbul, Galatasaray, every Saturday. The protest act had its precedents in Latin American countries such as Argentine and Chile. As one of the participants put it, “Since human rights violations in the world resembled human rights violations in Turkey, methods of fighting them would be similar” (Mater 1996, 4). These women, who constituted an amorphous group, were urging the state to find more than three hundred lost sons or relatives. The relatives had mostly been involved in some type of opposition or protest activity against the state themselves. They had been taken to police custody and had not returned. The security department in a written explanation argued that the so-called lost relatives were in jail and some others were acting as militants of the PKK in Southeast Anatolia (Ilgaz 1998, 6). In their regular weekly gatherings, the mothers or relatives of the lost would sit down silently, read a press briefing, display pictures of their lost sons or husbands, and silently disperse.

The “Saturday mothers,” as they came to be known, did not merely adapt the methods of human rights protesters from other parts of the world, but also of feminists. Even though they did not
have any links to other women's organizations, they exemplified feminist modes of protest. A participant observed that they realized that:

[The modes of action that feminist struggle taught women, namely bringing out the commonalities, was effective not merely in feminist struggle but in other realms as well. And the experiences and the gains of feminist women and the experiences and gains of other women who do not call themselves feminists but who, with their life styles and attitudes to life, believe in collaboration and cooperation and the importance of reaching shared goals came together to allow them to accomplish important things in other realms (Karakuş 1996, 4).]

The feminist journal *Pazartesi* draws attention to what they observe as women's mark on the Saturday gatherings:

[Women do not generate tension as they organize their sit-ins; they do not engage in arguments which hurt one another. At one level they are very loose; nothing is named, they come together only on the base of acquaintance and voluntary action, at another level, very disciplined; everyone does what they assume to do. Before the stressful Saturdays, they tell one another where they left their children, how their life will be complicated if they are taken to police custody and even their fears but they show up every Saturday (Koçali 1996, 2).]

According to this description, what is shared with feminist modes of organizing is the willingness to collaborate, share the dilemmas of maternal responsibilities, and have the courage to admit fear. In the public consciousness, these attributes are those of mothers, and the women who protest their lost ones are called Saturday mothers whether they are mothers, wives, sisters, or others. While the maternal role gives legitimacy to this radical act (what mothers do cannot be wrong), the act itself revolutionizes the traditional maternal role (mothers no more belong to the house, but to the streets) as has been argued long ago (Kaplan 1982).

The Saturday mothers, with their persistent silent protests, kept the issue of the lost citizens on the public agenda. The press gave due attention to their cause. They received international recognition. Amnesty International and the International Human Rights Association took their cause to international platforms. The European Parliament gave the Carl von Ossietzky medal to the Saturday mothers in 1996 (*Yeni Yüzyıl* 1996, 2). Domestically, the government lent a symbolic ear by making the Department of Security General Directorate send a mobile van, "Mobile Center to Search for Lost People"
to Galatasaray with officers to register the alleged lost relatives (Pezek, 1997). None of the Saturday mothers registered with the center, arguing that it was only a show by the government.

By the summer of 1996, government officials began drawing attention to mothers who gathered in the graveyards beside the graves of their sons who had died in the war against the Kurds in southeast Turkey. These mothers were called Friday mothers, and an attempt was made to draw attention to the plight of these mothers whose sons had died for the country. It was as if an attempt was made to shame the Saturday mothers into respect in awe of the grief of the mothers of the martyrs. Public visibility of the Friday mothers did not last long.

By 6 September 1998, the Saturday mothers had gathered for the 173rd week, making their protest the longest and most sustained one in Turkish civil life. On the last three Saturdays, the security forces intervened in the protest, and took some of the protesters under police custody. To the surprise of many, they argued that the site of demonstration was inappropriate and the protest itself thus illegal, an argument which had been ignored for the past 170 weeks. While more research needs to be done on the Saturday mothers (about who they are, if the composition of the group changed over time, if others including PKK members infiltrated their ranks as the police claim they did), it is true that the security forces began changing their accommodating attitude toward them.

Even though the lost relatives were not found, and the Saturday mothers began to be harassed by the police, they posed a revolutionary challenge to traditional maternal roles. As these women came out of their private niches to make a very personal/individual claim against the state, they expanded the realm in which mothers could claim their rights and duties. In the process, they redefined the political culture to make it recognize civil rights beyond its transcendental, common-good discourse and make the state responsible to its citizens.

Islamist Women

Islamist women participated in politics in mass numbers. These were women who used Islam as an explicit political ideology that helped them define themselves publicly rather than merely privately. Since the mid-1980s, they participated in politics, most visibly by covering their heads as they claimed that Islam dictated and engaging in various public activities in defense of their right to cover their heads.

Head covering has a unique meaning in the Turkish political con-
text (Göle 1991; Ilyasoglu 1994; Saktanber 1994). Secularism in Turkey has meant not merely separation of religion and state, but also state control over religion through various institutions of the state (Sunar and Toprak 1983). The statist ideology—which represents the best interests of the people despite the people—aimed to confine religion to the private realm. Covering the hair has been prohibited in public office or educational institutions, because according to official ideology, shared by many in and outside the state, it stands for and propagates a religious ideology perceived to be inimical to the secular foundations of the republic. Till after the mid-1980s, there have been only a few instances of women covering their hair in public office and universities. Hence, covering the head where the majority is uncovered becomes an act of protest against the state and its dominant ideology that requires courage.

Even though attending universities with covered heads, under these circumstances, is an act of protest in itself, Islamist women have done more. They have worked in the religious Welfare Party ranks in large numbers as militants to mobilize other women and have formed various associations and public platforms to activate Islamist ranks for political purposes. Women have not assumed decision-making positions in the party hierarchy; however, no party in the history of the republic had recruited as many female activists or members as the Welfare Party. Women’s membership in the party reached up to 40 percent of all members in places such as Istanbul. Unlike any other party before, the Welfare Party had consciously decided to actively recruit women members, and it formed women’s commissions. In the party ranks, women were educated through crash courses on effective speaking and techniques of convincing interpersonal communication, before they began working at neighborhood level. Prior to the local elections of March 1994, the Welfare Party Women’s Commission of Istanbul worked with eighteen thousand women to mobilize other women. In one month, they would meet with two hundred thousand women face to face (Tura 1995, 4). When the Welfare Party candidates won the elections and became mayors of Istanbul and Ankara municipalities, women’s vote for the party was widely acknowledged, if not properly rewarded. Welfare Party women’s activism continued during and after the 1995 general elections as well. After the 1995 elections, the Ankara Women’s Commission of the party registered 65,000 women members in February 1996 alone (Ergu 1996, 2).

The Welfare Party upholds a religious ideology that primarily promotes traditional roles for women. Even though the party does not advocate keeping women in their homes, it emphasizes the importance of women’s primary responsibilities as mothers and wives. The
women who have worked for the party, however, do not all share the same priorities. Among the party activists are some whose language is surprisingly familiar to feminists. Many of the leading cadres in women's commissions are those educated in secular educational institutions of the republic, some of them supporters of the Republican People's Party, which founded the republic and implemented the secularizing reforms (Sevindi 1996, 6). Sibel Eraslan, who has been the head of the Istanbul Welfare Party Women's Commission for many years, is an example. A graduate of the Istanbul Law Faculty, Eraslan calls herself a “feminist with faith” (Tura 1995, 2). During her university years, she was influenced by her readings of Islamic literature and her friends who had attended religious high schools. She decided to cover her head. In her struggle to promote her faith among women, she is equally concerned that women become individuals (Eraslan 1996). She argues that her fight has been to make women who are silent speak up. When she approaches women, she is concerned to teach them to “recognize their own power” and that there is “no deity over ‘them’ but God” (Tura 1995, 5). The implication of this reminder is that they can be liberated from the patriarchal authority of their husbands, even though the patriarchal authority of God remains to be obeyed.

Similarly, Zeynep Sen, who is also a lawyer and who leads the Islamic women's platform in Ankara, insists that she wants to help women become individuals before all else, even though her group primarily engages in social work geared to promote communal welfare. Unlike Eraslan, she does not want to identify herself as a feminist. The women's platform she leads consists of eight foundations and seven “initiative groups.” They are mostly concerned to organize help for Muslims in need around the world, such as those in Bosnia and Chechenia. It has been possible to organize the platform within the framework of a United Nations Development Program project to promote women's participation in continuing development, which is carried out by the Directorate General, on the status and problems of women in Turkey. After declaring feminism to be the struggle of women in the West who have been left alone and exploited and who struggles between excess and discrimination without guidance and resources, she states that the most important problem of women in Turkey is their lack of individualism. Sen's response reverberates with feminist undertones.

Even though Zeynep Sen denies any feminist identification, some groups of feminists gave support to Islamist women in their struggle
to cover their heads in public institutions. The feminist journal \textit{Pazartesi}, which was produced mostly by a group of radical feminists, invited Islamist women to voice their opinions in its pages periodically. When the feminist constituency of the journal complained that they did not want to be subjected to the propagation of Islamist ideas, the journal defended itself with reference to its democratic and feminist ideals. \textit{Pazartesi} declared itself in solidarity with the critical Kemalist\textsuperscript{12} stance of the Islamist women and argued that the sexism of Islam and the Welfare Party need to be exposed, instead of persecution of women who cover themselves (Savran and Tura 1996, 10–11). Both groups were critical of the way interests of the populace were defined by the ruling elite, especially when this definition involved serious restrictions on self-expression. They were thus both fighting for a different political culture in which women defined their own interests themselves. The feminists were concerned that the Islamist attempt to alleviate the predicament of women as individuals was severely circumscribed by the dictates of God. Dictates of God were defined differently at different times according to the dictates of temporal political authority to subordinate women. Feminists argued that they would not be able to convince Islamist women, unless these women could first explain what they believed in.

Women’s Groups in Defense of Secularism

Some feminist women thought that they could have dialogue with at least some Islamist women. Others thought to the contrary. Women who identified themselves as Kemalist feminists began to organize in the late 1980s and argued that they were mobilized in response to what they perceived as the Islamist threat. They argued that Islam restricted women’s rights: it allowed polygamy, unilateral divorce by men, unequal share of inheritance for women, and the like. They were afraid that the advent of Islam would delegitimize, if not replace, the secular legal basis of the republic including the Civil Code. They organized to defend this secular republican framework. The Association for the Promotion of Contemporary Life (Çagdas Yasami Destekleme Derneği) was founded to promote secularism as conceived by the founding fathers. Other women’s professional or social service organizations were activated in response to rising Islamist activism.

During the summer of 1996, a coalition government was formed between the religious Welfare Party and the True Path Party led by Tansu Çiller, in which the former was the bigger partner. When the Welfare Party began to make provocative gestures regarding the propagation of religious culture (such as allowing the Kemalist re-
forms to be ridiculed by groups that publicly hail radical Islamic groups such as Hamas, promising to build a mosque in the central Istanbul square which has been a shrine of the secular republicans, etc.), women's groups were particularly agitated. On 15 February 1997, under the initiative of Çağdas Hukukçular Derneği (Association of Contemporary Legal Professionals), a large rally was organized in defense of secularism and in protest of fundamentalism. The rally was named Women's Walk Against the Shariat [Islamic law]. About fifteen thousand people walked in this rally, which was supported by fifty-one nongovernmental organizations, the major opposition party of the time, the Motherland party, and the social democratic Republican People's Party (Gedik and Kılıç 1997, 6). Women used slogans such as “No to Shariat,” “Protest fundamentalism like a woman,” “We are women, we are strong, we are against the Shariat.” They also protested Tansu Çiller, who had been the first woman prime minister of Turkey, before the coalition government was formed, both because she collaborated with the religious party and also because of her illicit undertakings and misleading promises. “Tansu where are you? Are you not a woman?,” “You are not at all one of us,” “Tansu to Iran with the mollahs,” “[Tansu] is the proof that no one dies because of lies” were the slogans they used (Güngör 1997, 6). On 3 March 1997, about three weeks after the demonstration against Shariat, meetings and protest rallies were organized in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir to commemorate the 73rd anniversary of the Law for the Unification of Education (Tevhid-i Tedrisat) which had been a serious blow to religious education when the republic was founded. The 8 March celebrations which followed were colored with slogans against the religious party and in defense of republican secularism (Milliyet 1997).

KADER: Women in Support of Women’s Parliamentary Representation

The women’s groups discussed in this paper organized as interest groups of different forms which aimed to shape politics by exerting pressure on politicians or influencing the public opinion at large to alleviate the problems women had. Unlike these, a group of women organized around an association named KADER to promote women into the parliament. Since the foundation of the republic the number of women in the parliament had never been more than 4.5 percent of its membership. The percentage dropped to 2.5 after the advent of the multiparty era. In the last election, which took place in December 1995, only thirteen women were elected as representatives to the parliament. KADER—which in Turkish literally means destiny—
was founded to reshape women's "destiny in politics." The acronym stands for Association to Support and Educate Women Candidates. According to its charter, the explicit aim of the association founded on 4 March 1997 is to promote the numbers and percentages of women in elected public office, allow the female electorate to benefit from the rights of equal representation, and empower democracy (KADER Tüzük [charter], Art. 2). The association aims to support only those women who accept its conditions. These conditions include that the women KADER agrees to support be sensitive to problems women have because they are women, believe in women's solidarity, believe in the elimination of discrimination against women and support the amendment of the Civil Code accordingly, and believe in secularism as well as democracy. Even though how these conditions can be enforced is open to question, they do reveal the recognition that women's election to public office has a distinctive normative meaning beyond the election of women who have been socialized to behave like men.

The members of KADER do not all identify themselves as feminists. The association does not define itself as a feminist organization. However, its founders and its chair are publicly recognized feminists who have been active as such since the early 1980s. Among its members are feminist professionals, including journalists, bureaucrats, professors, and public relations experts. Apart from its charter, KADER issued a list of basic principles that reflect the lessons of feminist experience the founding members shared. Whatever its realism, there are provisions against disintegration of the group due to internal personal conflict, which has been a menace to previous feminist organizing in the country. Care is taken to keep KADER as a decentralized, democratic organization with autonomous committees loosely tied to an amorphous center.

With its organic links to the media through its founding members, KADER has received wide press attention and favorable coverage. Yet the organization has not been fully endorsed by radical feminists, who pose various criticisms including the well-known ones on the appropriateness of the attempt to work through the traditional institutions of politics (Tura and Düzkan 1997, 2–5). Despite serious efforts of the KADER members to reach as many women's groups and leaders as they could, others (such as those who call themselves Kemalist feminists) have criticized the institution for being sectarian and exclusionary.

KADER's explicit goal is to have at least 55 women in the parliament, that is, 10 percent of the total representatives in the first elections. While the group may not realize this goal in the short term, KADER is an important channel for women who want to take part
in politics through the parliament. Its activists are organizing to generate funds, carry out research activities on women’s electoral eligibility, educate women candidates, improve relations with the media, and raise public consciousness on the issue.

Conclusion

Political participation of different groups of women has expanded the parameters of democratic life in the country since the 1980s. If democracy means self-rule, then those women who had not been politically active but who nevertheless searched to expand their rights and liberties enriched their own, radically different, experiences of self-rule at the same time as they contributed to the democratic life of the polity at large. Their contribution to the polity was significant not necessarily because of their impact on policies and formal political institutions, but rather because their activism challenged the prevailing understanding of tutelary democracy at the level of discourse. As women expanded the parameters of Turkish political debate with their different agendas, they expanded the realm of civil rights and women’s rights. Women’s political activism, whether they were Islamists or feminists, offered an alternative understanding of democracy in which civil rights and liberties are just as important as formal requirements of democracy.

In the Turkish context, this meant a challenge to the statist, transcendental understanding of state society relations and an affirmation of an interest-oriented liberal ideology. Feminists, Islamists, Saturday mothers, Secularists, and the KADER group all share a Kemalist heritage which has stood for and legitimized the statist, solidarist understanding of democracy where the ruling elite that rules for the people at times does so despite the people. Even though the women’s groups share a further common denominator in revolt against this heritage, each has been exposed to different ideologies, at times radically opposed to one another. Islamists, who aim to abide by God’s will seemingly have little in common with the feminists, who are concerned to have women declare their own predicaments. Nor do they share common ground with the secularists, who declare the Islamist women to be at best victims of an obscurantist ideology and usually the enemy against whom they must organize. What is common to these women who pursue their allegedly conflicting interests is their individual fight for substantive male-female equality where women can define and seek their rights as they, rather than the state or the society, deem appropriate. Despite their different ideologies, the different groups of women discussed have each
been influenced by the feminist concern for women's ultimate right to articulate the problems women have because they are women.

Feminist and Islamist challenges exposed authoritarian tendencies of Kemalist ideology, which has left its "top-down reformist" imprint on the polity. Against the Kemalist prescriptions of what is good for them, these women have articulated their own definitions. Saturday mothers, Secularists, and the KADER group showed that within the parameters of Kemalism, which formally prescribes to universal human rights, much needs to be done to realize its formal dictates substantively. As these groups shared a common public space and even influenced one another in pursuit of individual interests, they learned to accommodate their, at times, conflicting perspectives. This process expanded the scope of pluralism within a liberal framework, the necessary if not sufficient condition of a liberal democracy.

NOTES

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1. Liberalization, in this context, refers to political liberalization.
2. I restrict my discussion to women's demands for rights and exclude a discussion of "achievements" and "tangible results." There were various "achievements" including the establishment of a Ministry of State responsible for women's affairs and the opening of shelters to protect women against domestic violence; however, in this paper, I want to focus on the relationship between women's demands for rights and political liberalism as a precondition for democracy.
3. For a well-rounded bibliography of feminist critiques of liberalism, see Dietz 1992.
4. Feminist critiques diverge from civic republican ones to the extent that the former insist on the political nature of the private and the political importance of women's values nurtured in the private realm.
5. I have not included the activities of Kurdish women, as they have not had direct influence on the contemporary political forums of gender and democracy.
6. The particular articles of the Civil Code proposed to be amended are discussed on page 375.
7. Kemalist feminists, who at times call themselves egalitarian feminists, defend the reforms undertaken by the Kemalist founding fathers and argue
that they need to be better implemented to promote equal rights to women in the public realm.

8. The religious Welfare Party is not inclined to change laws that will undermine women's primary duties as wives and mothers and their secondary status in relation to their husbands.

9. The True Path Party is a center right conservative party. In 1993, the party elected Tansu Çiller as its leader who then became the first woman prime minister of Turkey (on Çiller and women's political participation, see Arat 1998).

10. A comparison of the Turkish case with others is beyond the scope of this article; however, a superficial glance at the experiences of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo suggests that they were better organized, had more impact, and were more cruelly treated by the state in Argentina; see, Agosin 1987; Bouvard 1994. For a review of books on motherhood and feminist politics, see Brush 1996.

11. PKK is the Turkish acronym for the Kurdish Workers' Party, which seeks independence for the predominantly Kurdish part of Turkey. The group's leader was recently arrested and charged with the killings of civilians and soldiers.

12. Kemalist in this case refers to the top-down reformism and "for the people, at times despite the people" attitude adopted by the founding fathers under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal.

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