

Turkish Migrants' Reactions to the Europeanization of Turkey in Germany

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to highlight the cornerstones of the reflections of Europeanization of Turkey on the interrelationship between the issues of migration, integration and Islam in Germany from the early 1990s until the end of the first decade of the 2000s.

Keywords: EUization, Europeanization, Modernization, Migrants, AKP (Justice and Development Party)

1. Introduction

This study focuses on Islamisation of migrant practices from a different angle having framed Islamisation within a modernization perspective. Such an analysis contributed to understanding Europeanization/EUization of Turkey since it is an imagined thelos of Turkish modernization since the early 19th century onwards having been re-constructed in time.

The results of the study reveals that despite the fact that almost all research on Europeanization of Turkey agree on a consensus that EUization/Europeanization of Turkey is a value shared by the elite, the “ideology” of Europeanization has been re-constructed in line with the modernization of Islam in Turkey. Thus, Europeanization becomes the common ground of the Kemalist elite and the conservative newcomers, and it determines the basic terms of the rivalry between the two. While Europeanization represents and reinforces democratic participation of the periphery, it also represents universal values as human rights. Europeanization replaces the old patterns of top-down modernization and constitutes the fundamentals of democratization in the country. Therefore, poles are being re-defined; as Islam is modernized and this process is reinforced by of makes use of Europeanization, Kemalism has to change some of its fundamentals according to the new ideals of Europeanization.

2. Origins of Europeanization in Turkey

The concept of Europeanization has always been a construct, an imagination since the very beginning of the struggles for modernization in Turkey. As a matter of fact, the concept itself is a construct even for the European nations since it connotes values which transcend borders. Therefore, in order to understand reflections or consequences of the ideal of Europeanization one must focus on the specificities of the modernization path drawn, and make a contextual reading of the historicity of the concept of Europeanization since it is a very useful/functional tool to constitute some reference points.

With the decline of the Ottoman Empire everybody began to seek for the reason why the state was declining. At the beginning the cause of the decline was thought as the result of the military inferiority of the empire compared to the West; but, through the late Mahmud II. period (1808-1839) the ambassadors in the Ottoman Empire noticed another characteristic of the West. In the West the kings who wanted to establish nation states had understood the necessity of guaranteeing the property rights of the people, and become aware of the benefits of spreading education to the public (Mardin, 1994). Being inspired by the new developments in the West *Tanzimat* Edict was announced in 1839, and there began changes in almost all spheres of life. The Western culture of everyday life entered into the Ottoman Empire; clothing, household items, use of money, style of houses, relationships between people became “European” (Mardin, 1994). Not only Muslims but also non-Muslim communities in this period began to establish secular institutions of education in order to know the modern world (Ortaylı, 2001).

The nineteenth century Ottoman Empire can be evaluated in a theoretical framework of a process of becoming a modern nation state. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire needed first with the Tanzimat a new identity of Ottomanism, and later on acquired other identities with varying ideological elements. Moreover all those identities were to be realized through educating the populace. This process of producing “ideal typical” citizenship requires controlling and educating the populace beginning from the early ages.

On the other hand, any attempt to analyze social, economic, or political history of the 19th century Ottoman Empire cannot be valid or meaningful without making reference to worldwide developments which caused not only a rapid economic growth in the West but also changed the balance of power since the late 18th century on. Use of steam engine in manufacturing was the beginning of a new era which meant huge economic growth and, naturally, growing military power of Europe. There began an intense trade between especially Britain and the rest of the world while increasing global integration of the world. This challenge of the West caused the Ottomans be aware of both the presence and power of Europe. Awareness of the weakness in both military and economic realms forced the Ottomans, beginning with Selim III, imitate “modernization” path drawn by the West. Therefore attempts of reformation started.

The aim of the reforms, if we follow Hourani’s argument (1966), was to establish a uniform and centralized administration, linked directly with each citizen, and working in accordance with its own rational principles of justice, applied equally to all. Apart from the issues of equality or justice the argument that all reforms in the 19th century were directed towards centralization is shared by all scholars in the field. The intent of the sultans such as Selim III and Mahmud II was to save the country against continuous threat of war with European powers and Russia. Therefore the aim was, according to Zürcher (2004), to build a modern army and strengthen the central state. Building new army cost money, and money had to be generated by more efficient taxation, which in turn could only be achieved through a modern and efficient central and provincial bureaucracy.

Thus, modernization of Turkey is not a phenomenon originated by the foundation of Turkish Republic, but dates back to the beginning of the 19th century Ottoman Empire. Europeanization continued to be the reference of modernization in Atatürk’s Turkey as a modern nation state. What Europe connoted was the “contemporary civilization”; therefore, in order to be modern the only path to follow had already been drawn by the West/Europe.

3. Europeanization vs. Islamism

Islamism as an ideology was born in Turkey as a reaction to secularization, and it has challenged the ideal of Europeanization on the grounds that the later meant cutting the ties with Islam. Thus, the so-called consensus on Europeanization in Turkey is a recent phenomenon.

So-called consensus on Europeanization became possible in line with changing connotations of the concept. Implying first the contemporary civilization and thus a top-down civilizing process, the concept has become the symbol of democratization, freedom of speech, and free market, and thus reversed the taken for granted categories of top-down relations with society.

Reconciliation of Islamism and Europeanization is a product of the climate in the late 1990s when Turkey was under a constant pressure of a “post-modern *coup-d’état*” as the army was warning and threatening the Islamic political party at almost every occasion. So the only way to challenge the military status quo was to take side more on democratization and human rights for all. From that time onwards both EUization gained impetus and the context of Europeanization changed both transforming the ideology of Islamism and the very connotations of the ideal of Europe.

As a matter of fact, the phenomenon of modernization of Islam has always been an on-going gradual process since the very beginning of the Republic, but rapid urbanization in the 1950’s and introduction of the neo-liberal policies in the 1980’s meant appearance of Islam in the city and the conservative periphery’s touch of the capital, respectively. All these developments set the steps for the transformation of Islamic practices in Turkey. Urban life and capital brought about higher education, participation and changing consumption habits for Islamists. So, this was a reverse modernization process compared to the Jacobin modernization project of the Republic.

As Islam appeared more in the city the military and bureaucratic elite tried to take measures for protecting the modernization project of the Republic.

Paradoxically enough, both status quo and the conservative new-comers were in a harsh conflict with each other, but still holding somehow the same ideal of Europeanization. So, Europeanization corresponded to an imagined field, but the reality has always been the fact that any endeavor for modernization had to refer to this construct.

4. Migrants' Role in/ Stance towards Europeanization

Migrants especially in Germany had always a triggering effect on the organization and transformation of Islamism in Turkey on the contrary to the idea that they are passive agents of a ghetto. Their transnational bonds and networks were not only based on a kind of "hometown nostalgia", but on a capital accumulation in the periphery of Turkey, which later would contribute to the formation of a conservative bourgeoisie. Therefore, in order to understand the trans-formation of modernization project in Turkey one must also focus on the critical cornerstones of Turkish migrants' history in Europe. The following part of the study will try to analyze three significant periods that helped shape migrant practices in Germany, namely, early 1990's, 2000 and 2007.

4.1. Early 1990's

Early 1990's were the beginning of a new era both in Germany and the world. If it meant re-unification for Germany, it was unification of the world. Roughly speaking, the unified world was a more "civil" and "democratic" one shaped by neo-liberalism which is evolved by post-social democratic components.

The emerging climate immediately influenced the migrants. The 1990's became a crucial turn for migrants in Germany. It was the time that proved migrants' position in Germany as "locals" and not *gastarbeiters* anymore. It is pretty sure that migrants in Germany began to believe that they would not return to the country of origin anymore in the 1980's with the second generation migrants' participation in the decision making within community, but what the 1990's showed was the new types of organizations that both reflect the *zeitgeist* and root-formation for a certain future in Germany.

There had of course been hometown organizations and mosque associations in the form of NGO's before, but the 1990's transformed the very nature of these organizations. They were now part of a civil, democratic and participative structure. There emerged many NGO's from various ideological backgrounds, and they were gathered under some umbrella organizations.

Another dominant theme of the time is Islamic organizations. This was the time in Germany when the very nature of Islamic organizations changed. The wave of civilization and democratization somehow transformed the very organization of Islamic practices, as well. Islamic groups –mainly different sects or interpretations within Islam– began to organize themselves as NGO's. Sociologically speaking, this was the sign of a raising conscious for the soul of *gessellschaft*.

Turkey was passing through the same transformation. Old-fashioned and marginalized, almost ghetto structures of Islam were "modernizing" their very organization in the form of NGO's. They did not necessarily become NGO's, but the discourse on the very nature of these organizations was based on the idea that these groups were sociologically like NGO's.

Equivalents of these structures in Germany were formally re-organized as NGO's. The columnists were of course trying to understand these newly emerging structures, but theirs was of course not shaped in a modernization framework.

Therefore, structures of the periphery both in Turkey and Germany, which had always been forced to be "civilized", were now trying to be the "civil" actors of the new era.

4.2. 2000

Beginning of the first decade of the 2000's crowned the recently emerged civil structures with a new frame of citizenship. This period symbolizes two crucial turning points: first is the confirmation of migrants as citizens holding rights, and second is a disappointment of Turkey, the two reinforcing and intertwined with each other.

Up until the 2000's Islamist and conservative migrants had been thinking of investing in Turkey. Some firms with an Islamic label from Turkey some of whom would be a part of the new conservative bourgeoisie in Turkey had collected great amounts of capital of the migrants with a promise of great profits without getting involved in the interest return which is forbidden by Islam.

Almost all the coverage of the newspapers of the period focuses on how the migrants were swindled by Turkish Islamist firms in this period. This was the time when the migrants lost their hope for Turkey, and concentrated on their investments and problems in Germany.

Having been quite sure about their certain future in Germany, the migrants began to notice their social problems. Having left their romantic and nostalgic ties with Turkey behind, they immensely focused on their real life in Germany full of disappointments and problems.

This period opened the door for another imagination. They were now “German-Turks” and “European Muslims”. Perhaps this was the first serious step for *integration*. This would later be narrowly analyzed within a “European Islam” theoretical framework, but this was nothing more than the modernization of Islam among Euro-Turks. Any endeavor to homogenize the Islamic practices among migrants would fail since modernization of Islam also meant acceptance and co-existence of multiple interpretations of Islam. What made them seem to be homogenous was the very organization of them and their relationships with the governmental bodies. They began to use similar channels of communication and problem-solving.

Acting as civil agents, Islamic migrant organizations began to take responsibility in many aspects of everyday life. They triggered progress especially in women’s participation. At first sight, it would be pretty obvious that secular parts of migrant population appear to be more open and equal in terms of women’s place in society, but one must not ignore the role of Islamic organizations in encouraging participation for women who had been imprisoned in their traditional hearths. Despite the fact that these women began to participate in activities only within Islamic circles they also created public life areas within these circles.

4.3. 2007

What shaped this period were two important developments, first in Germany and second in Turkey. These were widespread results of the Immigration Law in Germany and second election victory of AKP in Turkey. 2007 was perhaps one of the strongest cornerstones for migrants in Germany because the new Immigration Act started to show its effects on society. Although they were critical of the new Act they now found themselves in the new society shaped by the effects of the Act. They were immensely involved in varying social projects and they became both service deliverers and users in a “multi-cultural” society. They had accession to both federal and municipal funds to both find solutions for their problems and get organized in a society where their status as citizens of the country was confirmed.

They were sharing and participating in the ideals of the new Europe. For the first time in history they were more eager and enthusiastic about the tendency of Europeanization. They even began to view themselves as the locomotive of Turkey’s accession to EU because they had one step further than the people of Turkey in terms of “how to act as Europeans”. This period is characterized via self-confidence of the migrants in Germany in terms of Europeanization. A quick look at the discussions in various social media in this period would apparently show that there began “cultural” criticism of the migrants against Turkey. Having left behind their “twilight” position characterized by a complex of inferiority against Turkey, the migrants somehow began to re-define Europeanization in the line of a more participative attitude. That is to say, they would now not be just the passive objects of it, but they could also give contribution to the idea of Europe(anization) itself. This re-constructed Europeanization apparently signifies a multiple modernities approach.

Another important development of the period, second election victory of the Erdoğan Government in Turkey, dominated all intellectual spheres of the migrants. Everybody was trying to understand the AKP phenomenon because it became the source of all political positions getting vague. The party was an Islamic one, but it at the same time included many post-social democratic ingredients, and it became a motivating power for the revival of EUization in Turkey. Now all political positions among the migrants were re-shaped according to AKP. The party perhaps re-united migrants and Turkey in an abstract level where the interests of the two met in order to re-define and contribute to Europeanization.

5. Conclusion

In order to understand the migrant practices in Germany there are some indispensable points to refer. Apart from the legal changes and/or challenges that Germany passed through one must carefully look at the sociological transformations of being a migrant. And perhaps one of the most important of these is the migrants' interpretation of Islam since it shapes every single moment of life.

Physical proximity to Europe has been a very strong motivator of change for the migrants and it accelerated the internalization of European values more easily. Thus, a multiple modernities approach will help us understand the changing nature of Europeanization of Turkey since understanding modernization of Turkey requires the transformation of Islamic practices in the country.

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