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Dynamics of Ethnic Conflicts in Turkey from the Perspective of Problems

ABSTRACT

In the second half of the twenties of the last century in the Republic of Turkey is a modernization of all structures on the basis of standardization. As a matter of principle Turkish nationalism was under the influence of the French and German nationalism.

R.H. Abdulatipov defines that ethno-political conflict as a clash of differences and contradictions of interests, attitudes, especially in perception, interpretation and participation in socio-economic and political processes; their reflection in the field of ethno-national relations, use differences in this area to solve political problems.

In Turkey, there are many ethnic groups and among them the most numerous are the Kurds. Ethno-political Kurdish rebellion has begun in the last century and was directed against the centralized State. Other countries provoked Kurdish issue as an ethno-political conflict, so the Turkish authorities believe that the Kurdish issue is an economic and social problem that can be solved with the help of reforms. Ethno-political conflict between Kurds and Turks continued during the Cold War. And at this time, radical nationalism became friendly with state nationalism on the basis of the struggle of communism and the Soviet Union after the collapse of the two movements separated again. The main requirement was to create Kurdish autonomy. Famous Turkish historian Kemal Karpat argues that the ethnic extant problems in Turkey in consequence of Turkish nationalism in the multicultural society. Other ethno-political conflict in Turkey is related to religion. Speaking of ethno-political conflicts, it should be noted that their base might lie on conflicts between religious sects of Islam. In particular, one of the conflicts is to confront Sunni and Alevi. Sunni is a recognized state religion in Turkey. That is why, from the perspective of Sunni, Alevi religion does not conform to Islam.

Key words: *Kurdish question, ethno-nationalism, Alevi question, social identity, GDRA, universalization.*

Kurdish Question

There is a growing tendency to analyze Kurdish nationalism as a «natural» effect. It is necessary to remind the policymakers that nationalism, whether Turkish or Kurdish, is always based on «identity entrepreneurs» and forms a political context. The main difference between the Turkish and Kurdish nationalism is the existence of the state. The modernization of the national-state, which is based on the Turkish nation and nationalism, is emphasizes civil aspect of the nation. Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, Iraq and Iran is developed, in response to the modernization of the nation-state, it constantly emphasizes their ethnic «difference», sometimes even causing racism historicize itself. According to Anthony Smith, «ethnicity», the collective name, common myth of descent, a common history and culture, to a certain territory, and a sense of solidarity, is indispensable for the formation of the nation (Smith, 1998, p 127). Kurdish «ethnicity» exists as a precursor to the modern Kurdish nationalism, which includes ethnic origins, myths and collective memories and values.

Kurdish nationalism is the result of tensions between the forces of homogenization and the struggle to maintain cultural and local autonomy. This tension is the basis for the politicization of Kurdish culture.

Although the Kurdish ethnic entrepreneurs tend to determine the Turks as «the other» in the construction of Kurdish nationalism, they have large tribal, linguistic, religious, symbolic and regional rifts inside the Kurdish identity. The sources of these units are socio-historical, and they prevent the emergence of full-fledged Kurdish identities. Tribes named as «ashiret» in Turkey are based on kinship, geographically oriented, and religiously-shaped group solidarity. This tribal structure played a dual role: it prevented the formation of Kurdish unity, keeping them fragmented and kept elevated Kurdish particularism through the Turks, Persians and Arabs.

Close links between Islam and Kurdish nationalism not develop as close ties between Islam and Turkish nationalism. Islam plays an important role in ideology of Turkish nationalism and the Turkish nationalists. Secularization and Transformation of Kurdish identity was held within the broader leftist movement in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s, the Kurdish identity is secularization occurred interaction with socialist ideology. Alevi Kurds played a decisive role in this process.

Kurdish ethno-nationalism has posed a threat to the existence of the Turkish state since 1984. Its nationalist demands range from cultural recognition of distinctiveness to outright separation. The Turkish army fought a low-intensity war in the southeast of Turkey against the PKK. The Kurdish question also posed a great threat to the future stability and territorial integrity of Turkey. Furthermore, the Kurdish insurgency has resulted in crippling the economy in Turkey (Sezai, 2006, p.137).

At the end of the 1990s, Kurdish nationalism was still «in formation» and consisted of a multitude of heterogeneous groups. In shaping this new politicized Kurdish identity, class issues were perceived Kurdish national conditions. Kurdish nationalism offered a space in which class and regional differences can be suppressed. In short, it was the PKK, which ended in a mutually constitutive relationship between Islam, tribe, and nationalism in favor of the latter (Yaruz, 2007).

Social scientists to present many different versions of the analysis of the individual and, more currently, the criticisms, that these theories are not applicable to the solution of the conflict. Social identity theory (SIT) is one of the leading theories applied to the group, and in particular, ethnic conflicts. SIT assumes that all people desire a favorable social identity and form this identity based on group membership or outside the group (Brawn, 2000, p.747). Stereotypes and categorization is fundamental to participate as a group they support and self-esteem and directly related prejudices, «antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization.»(Cuhadar, 2011). Social identity theory thus explains that intergroup conflict is

the result of intra-built discrimination. However Isazhiv proceeds to argue that SIT does not consider broader factors beyond us and them-groups. For example, Yegen explains that discrimination against the Kurds by the Turks was not the result of simple group differences, but was an active movement to eliminate the Turks and Kurds to change to meet the standards of their group (Yegen, 2007).

According to Brown, Social identity theory SIT (Social Identity Theory SIT) did only four significant contribution to the understanding of ethnic conflict, one of which - the understanding of stereotypes and prejudices - has been said above. Applies to the Kurdish issue is that he defines as SIT link between identity and discontent (Brawn, 2000, p.749). Subsequently, researchers have turned their attention to the behavior or, more precisely behavioral intentions especially for the reactions of collective protest by subordinate groups. An important theoretical point of view in this area was "relative deprivation theory" (RDT). Theory suggests that when the group does not get what they believe to deserve, the group becomes dissatisfied. Collective action follows (Brawn, 2000, p.749). Yegen, while outlining the consequences of Turkish nationalism on the Kurds, reveals several examples of RDT. For example, the 1924 Constitution of the Republic said, «Turkey is not a multinational state. The state does not recognize the nation, but the Turks. The Kurds have been deprived of any legal or cultural rights and their language was banned. Yegen notes that collective action in the form of uprisings soon followed deprivation that the Kurds considered their inalienable rights (Yegen, 2007).

Brown describes several problems with SIT, one of which he calls «the effects of intergroup similarity». Social identity theory argues that such groups should be logically tend to emphasize intergroup differences, but studies show that some groups show more interaction (Brawn, 2000, p.757). If the theory is true, Kurds and Syrians, who wish some autonomy or control of Turkey, will accentuate the differences between their groups, but they are united against Turkey. SIT, in this case, does not explain the out-group, uniting against a group. Another problem with the SIT, according to Brown, is the inability to make any theoretical prediction under the action of low-status, because the theory is too one-dimensional (Brawn, 2000, p.758).

Other theories that have used group conflict by scholars are basic human needs theory and psychodynamic theory. Basic human needs theory emphasizes authenticity and security as two of the most important needs, along with ownership and Ozcelik emphasized that the oppression of the Kurdish language and culture, as noted above, is «the main cause of the conflict in Turkey,» however; the universalization of human needs between different groups is practically impossible (Ozcelik, 2006).

The Kurdish question in Turkey today is very complex. Economic, social, and political factors must be taken into account. The Kurdish question is also connected with the transformation of Turkey from a traditional society where religious identity is defined in the municipal level, to a modern society, where the aim is to identify the individual rights at the state level. In the process of nation building and state building, the Kurdish question shows the failure of nation-building process in Turkey. Modernization of society absorbed many Kurds. However, this modernization created new and growing Kurdish elites who sought recognition of a separate Kurdish identity. Kurdish case has a significant ethnic dimension in the country for Turkey, with interstate implications. Internal sources of ethnic issue (micro variables) interact both with actor-level variables, forming ethnic conflicts (micro variables such as formalized elite preferences, political leaders or political structures), as well as system-oriented and other international organizations (macro variables), which reflect internationalization. These complex relationships can be explained effectively with foreign-based model political system (Carolyn, 2009). In Turkey, especially important organizational foreign policy elite is the military. Military has repeatedly provided political power over Turkey's policy towards external actors. For example, in 1998, when Turkey hardened its attitude towards Syria for its support of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants, military organizational elites were one of the instrumental groups to pressure the government. Various institutions closed elite groups may have unique attributes decision-making. Bureaucracy of Foreign Affairs of Turkey is another example, has a policy of non-participation known in Middle Eastern affairs (Carolyn, 2009, p.21-22). Ozcelik states that when psychological boundaries groups (which protect the ethnic identity and autonomy) are threatened, they will resort to violence, and not to live in anxiety (Ozcelik, 2006, p.137). For example, the Kurds, although never fully assimilated into the Ottoman Empire, were integrated into society and allowed to retain their cultural identity; however, since the fall of the Ottoman to this day, their cultural autonomy was threatened political reform programs of centralization Turks. These reforms have stimulated nationalist and Kurdish common concern (Yegen, 2007, p.127). Although this theory gives a great insight into the unconscious actions of individuals and groups in the conflict, it is not beneficial in explaining motives and it does not provide a solution to the conflict after the change.

As a result of the widening use of communication technologies and the importance of globalization, Kurdish ethnic nationalism in the Turkish context is likely to be of significant importance. The developments in Iraqi Kurdistan and in what is likely to emerge in the potential breakup of Syria provides other precedents that focus Kurds in Turkey in relation to separatist nationalist ethno-cultural movements. The existing literature on the Kurdish question has made inconsistent assertions as to the forces of ethnic mobilization drawing on social movement theories (Romano, 2006), the nationalism literature, or the formation of social capital. Since the end of the Cold War, contemporary nationalisms have provided the conditions for conflict because of the primacy afforded to ethnicity as the dominant paradigm in the creation of national identity. Such a set of conditions is also of great consequence in understanding the "Kurdish question" within the Turkish context, although race-based class conflict analysis also applies in this case. Some have argued that this particular form of nationalism is more ideological than a question of socioeconomic inequalities (Ekmekci, 2011), while others have argued that the racialization of the ethnic category itself has created the problem. This racialization is argued to be a function of Turkish national political dogma that is resistant to ethnicity claims by Kurdish groups (Ergin, 2012). But today some Kurdish elites do not consider ethnicity as an obstacle in a peaceful solution to the existing conflict (Gurses, 2010). Perhaps there is an alternative to boundary changes or assimilation as a way in which to resolve ethnic conflict between groups within states (Akturk, 2012), where identity claims are based on adhering to a mode of national citizenship that is inclusive and cohesive (Fuat Keyman, 2012). However, the essential question is whether Turkey is ready to move on from its past and embrace a new future (Bakiner, 2013), where there are still distinct processes of "alienation", the "other," and where the popular vernacular is to equate Kurdish identity politics with "terrorism."

Alevi Question

Alevi-Bektashi communion in İslam includes some cultural code of Shiism as Karbala, Ali etc., but not exactly the same Shiism in Arabia. Turkish historian Ahmet Yasar Ocak emphasizes that the main cultural reasons of Alevism is not only influenced by Islam, but also by Christianity, shamanism, Buddhism and historical religions of Anatolia. Thus, the new state system under the national association should be alevism change its culture.

When Turkey was established as a nation state from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, new laws of the Republic aimed to construct a secular public sphere and integrate all ethnic, cultural and religious communities into a single national identity in the form of a secularized Turkish

nation. The Turkish version of secularism not only focused on emancipating the state from religion, but also on transferring religious authority from multiple religious institutions and groups to the single hand of a centric state (Yavuz, 2000). To this end, the Law on the Dissolution of Dervish Houses, enacted in 1925, entrusted the provision of religious services, the coordination of religious affairs and the management of places of worship to the state institution of the (General Directorate of Religious Affairs) GDRA. Thus, rather than breaking all state ties with religion, Turkish Republican secularism instead created a strong connection to religion through the GDRA and created a Sunni-centered public control over religious institutions and groups (Koc, Oncu, 2004).

The modernist elite saw the GDRA as an administrative tool of the center that would enlighten society about religion, while eradicating radicalism from the Sunni majority and keeping them under state control (Gozaydin, 2008). To the extent that the GDRA was organized according to a Sunni interpretation of Islam, it turned the Sunni-Islam faith into the official religion. The Republic's promotion of one state-favored religion among the diverse interpretations and practices of Islam actually helped to maintain official heterodoxies and orthodoxies from the Ottoman era. Accordingly, non-Sunni Muslim communities were relegated to a status of heterodoxy (a sectarian community outside the mainstream interpretation of a religion), not directly by Sunni-Islam itself but more indirectly by its official institutionalization (Ocar, Isyani, 1996).

The state-sponsored GDRA monopoly over religious life narrowed the social and legal grounds of religious pluralism in general; but the Sunni designation of its personnel and services left almost no space for Alevi culture and identity in particular.

Only GDRA personnel were allowed to use religious titles, and only mosques were accepted as places of worship for the entire Muslim population, irrespective of sectarian divisions. The Law on the Dissolution of Dervish Houses thus prohibited the use of religious titles related to Alevi-Bektashi leadership, such as *dedelik*, *seyyitlik*, *celebilik* and *nakiplik*, and Alevi places of worship (*cem evi* - *cem haouse*)¹ used for practicing and reproducing Alevi-Islam faith. The institutionalization of an official religion through the GDRA excluded all officially unrecognized religious convictions and groups, including Alevis, from the legal and political instruments necessary for their survival. Because of this political and legal exclusion, Alevi faith and practices, from the early years of the Republic, largely survived as an underground culture until the 1980s. Through the inherited channels of an oral tradition, Alevi community networks continued to provide educational and religious services, and hence kept the Alevi identity alive despite the uniform inclinations of republican modernization. Ironically, the majority of Alevis did not interpret the Kemalist modernization project to impose state control over religion as favoritism of Sunni-Islam. Rather they expected that Turkish secularism would restrain Sunni groups and prevent them from dominating the public sphere. As Erik Jan Zürcher and Harry van der Linden, prominent analysts of Turkish politics, have argued, "Alevis were prepared to accept that the Republic did not recognize them as a religious community, as long as that same Republic would deny all forms of religion a place in the public sphere." (Zürcher, Linden, 2004, p.127). The Alevi community expected the new republic to provide a more secure environment than the Ottoman Empire, during which there had been periodic violent Sunni-Alevi sectarian clashes and maltreatment by Ottoman authorities. In view of their expectations of secularization reforms, Alevis became one of the most loyal groups of the Kemalist modernization project (Shankland, 2003).

With the rise of identity politics in the late 1980s that dominated Turkish political agenda, Alevi circles started to see Alevis as a source of religious, cultural and ideological identity and Alevi public opinion leaders started to demand communal rights and legal-political recognition of their distinctiveness. It was at this stage that Alevis became a recognized political issue for the first time in the Alevis and Alevis Republican era. Furthermore, from the 1990s, the rise and local and national electoral victories of Islamist parties with their large Sunni constituency and religious political agenda worried the Alevi community. For historical and theological reasons, Alevis consider the political expression of Sunni-Islam as a threat to their community's security, citing in support of their fears the many violent Sunni-Alevi sectarian clashes that date even back to Ottoman times (Erdogan, 2008).

Since the beginning of the republic Turkish nationalism aims to control the secularization of Islam, but it is included in the control of Islam. In the 1960s, the Turkish-Islamic nationalism begins panturkism.

By the nature of Turkish nationalism, he was against communism and it does not take into account Alevi culture and the idea of motivation for communism and atheism, especially during the Cold War. Thus, before the coup, ethnic conflicts have been between Alevi and Sunni groups in 1978 in the cities of Sivas and Kahramanmaraş and also in 1980 in Corum. In 1993, radical Islamist protestors of Sunni origin burnt down a hotel (the Madimak Hotel) in Sivas where Alevis were participating in a religious festival, killing thirty-six people. The event forced Alevi groups to develop a stronger organizational movement for the protection and promotion of Alevi identity against assimilation and the newly increased power of Sunni-Islam in Turkey's social and political life.

Conclusion

The term «turbulence» is increasingly used to refer to the Turkish domestic and foreign policy, as well as the developments around neighboring Turkey, from the Ukraine in the post-Arab Spring Middle East. Protests on the park «Gezi» that erupted in early June 2013, in conjunction with a corruption scandal involving cabinet members and their families at the end of this year, has attracted great attention of the public to internal political developments in Turkey. This provoked considerable political and economic instability. The President, Abdullah Gül, himself recently used the term «turbulence» when it comes to these recent developments in Turkey. Various groups in Turkey challenge this growing authoritarian management style, which Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan uses. His majoritarian understanding of democracy is becoming increasingly polarized country, as it still faces unresolved major political issues such as the Kurdish issue. Problem installed recently 'Hizmet' movement led by Fethullah Gulen, a preacher, a US-based, accelerated major political crisis. This crisis is compounded by structural problems that the Turkish economy is still not able to overcome at that time, when the days of «cheap money» that won economic indicators Turkey is quickly coming to an end. Turkish currency in the first couple of weeks in 2014 lost more than a quarter of its value against the U.S. dollar and the euro, and interest rates have increased significantly, despite the opposition of Erdogan. These events are likely to have serious consequences for performance.

Turkey's foreign policy too is experiencing considerable turbulence. Infamous «zero problems with neighbors» policy of Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, increasingly referred to as «zero neighbors without problems» analysts. The Arab Spring that was so enthusiastically welcomed in Turkey has evolved in a way that left the economic and political relations with almost every Arab country, except Libya and Tunisia, are negatively affected. Turkey's relations with Israel have remained problematic too, despite the apology issued by Israel for the deaths of Turkish citizens on board.

From the perspective of asylum in 2013, it represented an extraordinary year for Turkey: After 12 months, more than 500,000 refugees from Syria came to the Turkish territory, and as of June 2014, there are about 1 million Syrian refugees living in Turkey.

¹ Cem house is specific place of Alevis which is the they perform their rituals which consist of dancing, singing, performing rituals, praying etc.

Relatively negative coverage of Turkish policy toward Syrian refugees can be explained by the accumulation of a variety of factors: some genuine concern of Turkish citizens in relation to the inconvenience caused by a significant number of Syrians in Turkey; critical evaluation of embedded civil society actors working on asylum, whose role is to constantly press the Turkish state and society in relation to a higher standard; growth of anti-government vote in the Turkish public that it is sometimes easy to assume that any public policy attacker; close relationship between Turkey's policy towards the Syrian refugees and many-more-controversial.

Many unreasonable or unfounded rumors prevalent in the Turkish social media claiming that the Turkish government has more help Syrian refugees than to displaced persons from Van earthquake in October 2011; that subsidies to Syrian refugees were more than twice the minimum wage in Turkey; Syrian refugees that have made a very high level of vandalism and attacks; and more widespread and persistent allegations of Syrian refugees that gave easy access to Turkish citizenship and moved strategically on Turkish territory, in order to influence the future elections in favor of ACT. Although these rumors were exaggerated or not, they emphasize the politically sensitive nature of the issue.

Other critics of the Turkish policy toward Syrian refugees have focused on other aspects of this issue. Early set of issues was raised in the autumn of 2012 and the summer of 2013 on the ethnic composition of refugees (mostly Sunni Syrians) live in areas important Alevi communities in Turkey (especially in Hatay), and potentially destabilizing the fragile ethnic balance in the region. Existentially, the Syrian presence of refugees on Turkish territory also raised the issue of spillover of conflicts and insecurity, especially in the wake of the bombing Reyhanlı in May 2013, which killed more than 50 people. Economically, the locals complained about the impact that the Syrian refugees on rent increases and wage cuts. Finally, there is a growing awareness that the refugees are here to stay, and in a country that lacks appropriate infrastructure for long-term integration of these refugees, it will no longer be a problem.

The 2013 Transatlantic Trends report from the German Marshall Fund were some interesting data on the Turkish public on immigration, which indicate that the Turkish public remains confused about the status of foreigners residing in Turkey, the reasons for their stay, as well as the rights and responsibilities that befall them. My own research shows that the Turkish public has not yet formed strong opinions on immigration, including the movement of refugees. However, the context in which certain issues become politically important will greatly affect whether Turkish society to be sensitive to and inclusive of migrants and refugees, or rather suspicious and exclusive. Therefore it is very important that the Turkish public proactively informed and educated on the situation of Syrian refugees before further

The politicization of the issue affect policy-making for policies in place, and the policies that should be set to more effectively address the urgent problems of safety Syrian and Turkish citizens and long-term welfare of the Syrian population, living in Turkey.

Beyond the issue of refugees, Turkey, within the country, is in the middle of a very difficult and stressful situation. Syrian refugees cannot be the number one priority in mind, when the Turkish voters go to the voting booths, but no one can afford to have their situation has become a victim of petty politicization. Syria is unlikely to see an immediate political solution to the conflict, in turn, paves the way for further dramatic humanitarian situation. We need to be able to continue to provide Turkey so much relief as possible to Syrian refugees. This means preventing problems Syrian refugees tangling with domestic Turkish politics. It also means that the U.S. and the EU should boost its assistance to Syrian refugees and symbolically and materially really help Turkey to help Syrian refugees.

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