

TURKEY LOOKING WEST: CULTURE, IDENTITY, AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION?

A Public Lecture by

Hakan Yilmaz

Department of Political Science and International Relations

Boğaziçi University

Istanbul, Turkey

yilmazh@boun.edu.tr

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A spectre is haunting Turkey today. This is the spectre of West-skepticism, with its twin streams of Euroskepticism and anti-Americanism.

Euroskepticism and anti-Americanism have fed one another and led together to increasingly powerful movements of West-skepticism, anti-Westernism, and national isolationism. West-skepticism has left its mark on almost all ideologies and movements of the left and the right, albeit at varying degrees.

However, it has found an autonomous and authentic ideological articulation in the so-called “neo-nationalist” current of thought, which in Turkey has come to be named as “*ulusalcilik*”.

Although “*ulusalcilik*” literally means nationalism in Turkish, it has been used in place of the older and more popular Turkish term for nationalism, “*milliyetcilik*”, to put the accent on the West-skeptic and isolationist tendencies of the neo-nationalist movement.

Moreover, while classical nationalism, “*milliyetcilik*”, has usually had Islamic overtones, neo-nationalism, “*ulusalcilik*”, has hailed secularism and emphasized the Turkish rather than Islamic dimension of national identity.

There has been, in the last years, an intense questioning of the country's relations with Europe, America, and the Western world in general, blaming the West for a lack of understanding, a lack of respect, and in many cases for a lack of friendship in its relations with Turkey.

The West has been portrayed as a selfish world, that had used Turkey when it had badly needed Turkey's help during the Cold War, and then sacked Turkey soon after Turkey's friendship lost its previous value and utility, forgetting all of its past obligations, commitments, and promises.

According to this West-skeptic narrative, the moment Turkey has lost its use value for the West, the latter did not lose a moment to lift the cover of its historical claims from Turkey, which had been engraved in the articles of the 1920 Treaty of Sevres.

Hence, according to the Euroskeptic arguments, pressures have been put on Turkey:

to force it to accept the Armenian genocide (and to comply with the financial retributions and territorial compensations that would follow that recognition);

to yield to the Kurdish demands for regional autonomy and eventual independence;

to recognize Greek authority be established over Cyprus;

to let neighbouring Iraq be partitioned among ethnic and sectarian lines;

to swallow the humiliating remarks by European politicians that Turkey is not European and thus not fit for EU membership;

to make all the reforms demanded by a patronizing EU, without any assurances of membership in the foreseeable future.

This West-skepticism, of which Euroskepticism is a constituent part, has been thickening particularly in the last two years, after the start of the accession negotiations with the EU in October 2005.

This can be observed by sharply falling approval rates of public support for Turkey's EU membership, from a peak range of 70-75 percent in 2003 and 2004 down to the 60-65 percent interval in 2005, and then to the band of 55-60 percent in 2006 and 2007.

What is even more alarming than the falling approval rates has been the rise of Euro-rejectionism, which has been partly brought about by the defectors from the Euro-supportive camp and partly by a move of part of the indecisive voters to the Euro-rejectionist side.

Hence, the ratio of those would say no in an hypothetical referendum on Turkey's membership in the EU, which was between 15-20 percent in 2003 and 2004, has gone up to 30 percent by the end of 2005 and has stayed around that level since then.

PART 1:

INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF HISTORICAL MEMORY: THE TANZIMAT AND SEVRES SYNDROME AS THE OPERATIONAL CODES OF TURKISH NATIONALISM WITH RESPECT TO EUROPE AND THE WEST

DATA SOURCES:

"LE CONSERVATISME TURC ET L'IDÉE D'EUROPE" (TURKISH CONSERVATISM AND THE IDEA OF EUROPE). IN *LES DÉFIS ET LES PEURS, ENTRE EUROPE ET MÉDITERRANÉE*, ED. PAUL SANT CASSIA AND THIERRY FABRE, ARLES ET PARIS: EDITIONS ACTES SUD, 2005, PP.187-218.

"TWO PILLARS OF NATIONALIST EUROSKEPTICISM IN TURKEY: THE TANZIMAT AND SEVRES SYNDROMES". IN *TURKEY, SWEDEN AND THE EUROPEAN UNION: EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS*, ED. INGMAR KARLSSON AND ANNIKA STROM MELIN, STOCKHOLM: SIEPS (SWEDISH INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN POLICY STUDIES), 2006, PP.29-40.

WHAT IS MEMORY?

Memory is not only what we remember...

Memory is usually what we are reminded of, constantly and insistently, by the intellectual authorities: the school, the media, the political party, the religious establishment, and the opinion leaders of our local community...

Memory is therefore a product of ideological hegemony

WHAT IS A “SYNDROME”?

A “syndrome” is a mode of perception and a code of operation, which are rooted in a traumatic past experience.

States and similar organized collectivities, like big corporations, develop syndrome-like perceptual and operational patterns and transmit it from one generation to another as the time-honored wisdom of the past.

WHY DO SYNDROMES NOT CHANGE EASILY?

Syndrome-like perceptual modes and operational codes do not change easily, even though the external conditions, which had in the past caused the trauma, have changed.

What could be the “rationale” behind this “seemingly irrational” behavior?

WHY DO SYNDROMES NOT CHANGE EASILY?

High Transaction Costs for Organizational Adaptation:

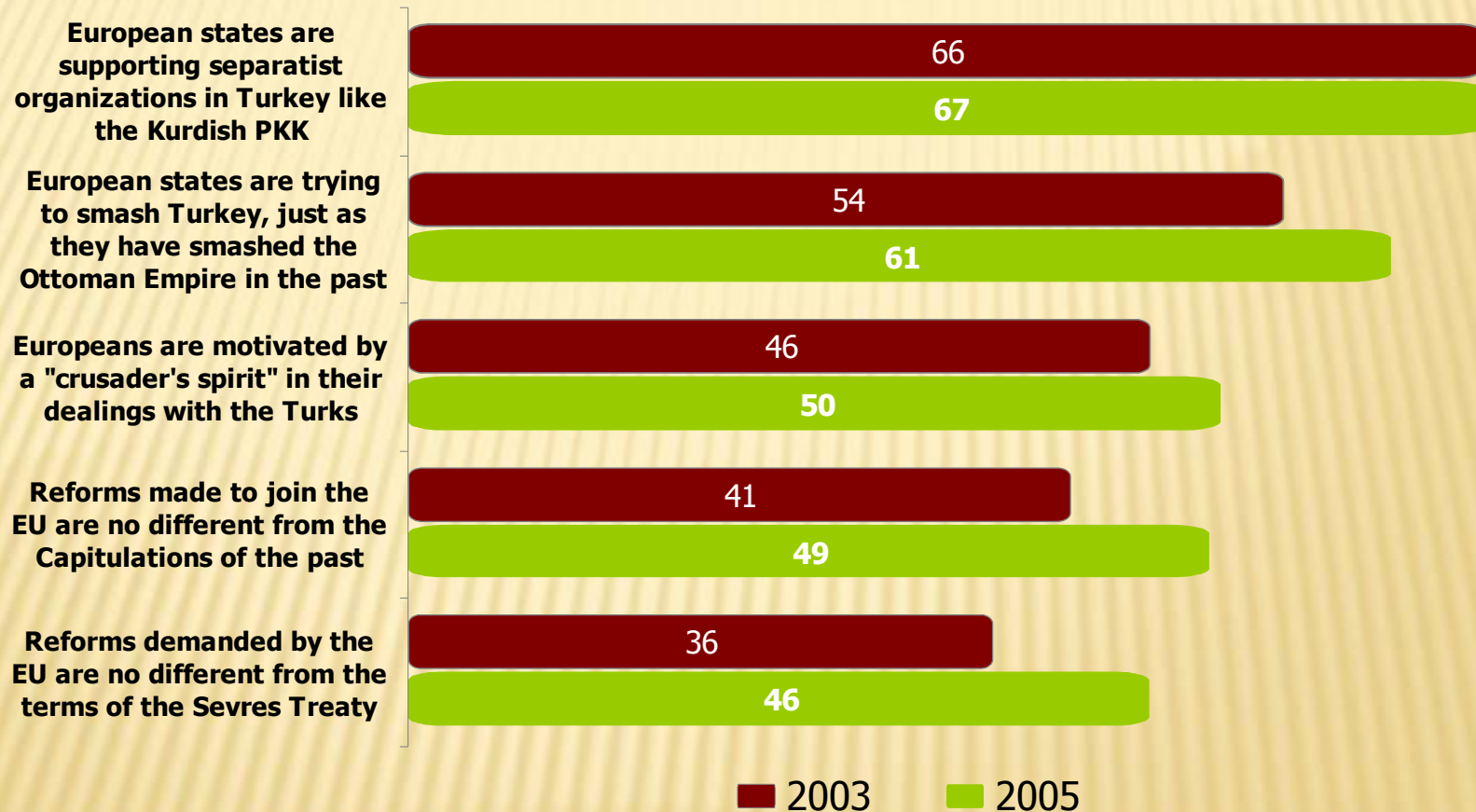
High “transaction costs” of adapting the organization’s philosophy and behavior to the changing conditions, particularly for the big organizations like states.

WHY DO SYNDROMES NOT CHANGE EASILY?

Organizational Survival and Overvaluation of the Lessons of the Past:

If a set of perceptual codes and operational modes are believed to have ensured the **survival** of the organization in the face of the past challenges, then the organization in question may **overvalue** them and develop an even stronger resistance to their revision, even when the external world has changed.

HISTORICAL MEMORY AND FEARS FROM EUROPE. THOSE WHO TEND TO AGREE THAT...



PART 2: SITUATING TURKEY VIS-A-VIS EUROPE AND TURKS VIS-A-VIS EUROPEANS

Data Source:

“Euroskepticism in Turkey: Manifestations at the Elite and Popular Levels”. Research project jointly supported by a grant from the Open Society Institute Assistance Fund (Project No:20010556) and Bogazici University Research Fund (Project No:03M105).
Date of completion: July 2004.

Based on a public opinion survey conducted in November 2003, over a nation-wide random sample of 2250 people.

As a citizen of Turkey, which of the following geographic regions of the world do you feel you most belong to?

Asia	33
Europe	21
Mediterranean	16
Middle East	8
Balkans	2
NA/NO	20
Total	100

***As a citizen of the Republic
of Turkey, which of the
following cultural
communities of the world
do you feel you most
belong to?***

Turkic world	38
Islamic world	27
Humanity	26
Europe/Western World	5
NA/NO	4
Total	100

	<i>Have you or somebody from your family ever worked, or are still working, in an European country?</i>	<i>Have you ever had a European as a friend?</i>	<i>Have you ever been to a European country?</i>
Yes	43	30	11
No	57	70	89
Total	100	100	100

***Do you generally have
positive or negative
feelings towards
Europeans?***

Positive 64

Negative 26

NA/NO 10

Total 100

<i>In your opinion, is Turkey a part of Europe?</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>NA/NO</i>	<i>Total</i>
Geographically	58	26	16	100
Historically	51	33	16	100
Economically	25	61	14	100
Culturally	24	62	14	100
Religiously	7	84	9	100

When you think of the near future, which of the following identities do you think would be more appropriate for you?

Turkish Only	54
First Turkish, then European	30
First European, then Turkish	5
European Only	4
NA/NO/Other	7
Total	100

	<i>Would you oppose if a <u>man</u> from your family wanted to marry a <u>European woman</u>?</i>	<i>Would you oppose if a <u>woman</u> from your family wanted to marry a <u>European man</u>?</i>
No	61	49
Yes	36	47
NA/NO	3	3
Total	100	100

	<i>Applies to Turkey</i>	<i>Applies to Europe</i>	<i>Applies to Both</i>	<i>Total</i>
Having strong family ties	94	3	3	100
Respectful of the elderly people	93	4	3	100
Hospitable	92	1	6	100
Having good relations with one's neighbors	85	10	6	100
Tolerant	65	25	10	100
Clean	59	24	17	100
Rational	45	41	14	100

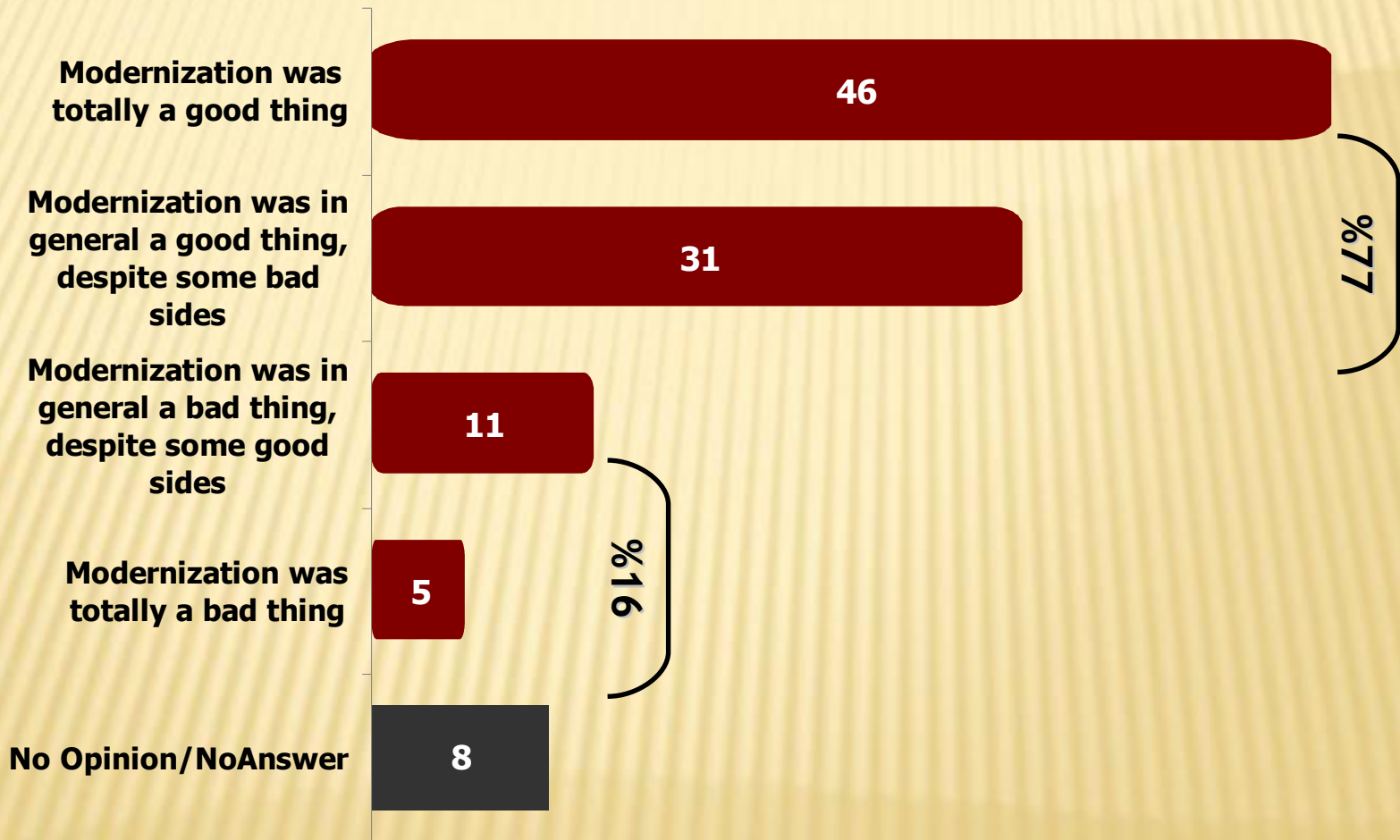
	<i>Applies to Europe</i>	<i>Applies to Turkey</i>	<i>Applies to Both</i>	<i>Total</i>
Sexually free	93	4	3	100
Rule-abiding/ Systematic	68	25	7	100
Dirty	61	24	14	100
Racist	58	30	12	100
Respectful of the rights of others	54	38	9	100
Individualist	48	41	11	100

PART 3: "MIXING" TURKISH AND EUROPEAN VALUES...

“Conservatism in Turkey”. Research project jointly supported by a grant from the Open Society Institute Assistance Fund (Grant No:20014746) and Bogazici University Research Fund (Project No: 05M103). Date of completion: July 2006.

Based on a public opinion survey conducted in December 2005, over a nation-wide random sample of 1650 people.

WAS TURKISH MODERNIZATION OF THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS (SECULARIZATION, WOMEN'S RIGHTS, CHANGE OF THE ALPHABET, ABOLITION OF THE SULTANATE AND SO ON) A GOOD THING OR A BAD THING?



THE "IDEAL TURK": HOW MUCH WESTERN, HOW MUCH NATIONAL?

**A person has fused
Western and Turkish
values in his culture**

53

**A person who only has
Turkish values in his
culture**

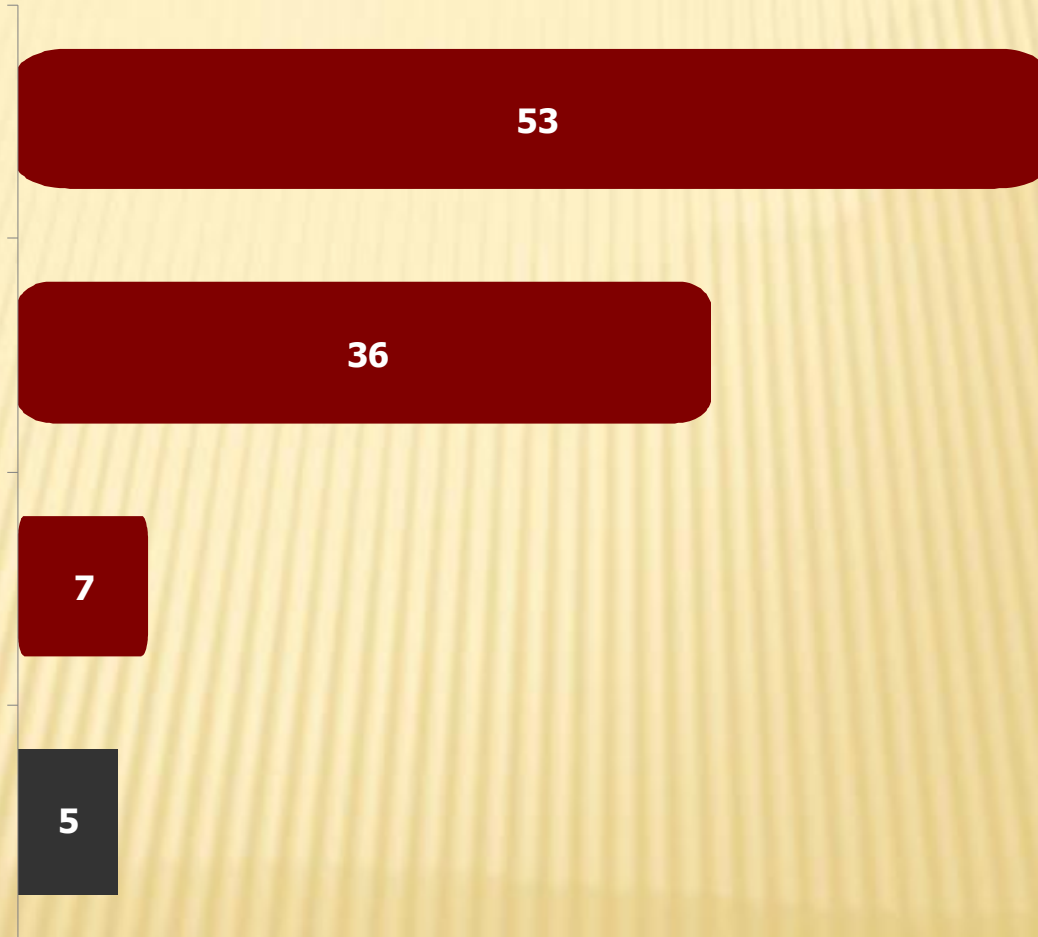
36

**A person who only has
Western values in his
culture**

7

No Opinion/No Answer

5



PART 4: COMPATIBILITY OF EUROPEAN, TURKISH, AND ISLAMIC VALUES... EUROSKEPTICS, STRONG EUROSUPPORTIVES, WEAK EUROSUPPORTIVES...

DATA SOURCE:

“In Search of a Turkish Middle Class: Economic Occupations, Political Orientations, Social Life-Styles, Moral Values”. Research project supported by a grant from the Open Society Institute Assistance Fund (Grant No:20018998) and Bogazici University Research Fund (Grant No:07M103). Date of completion: December 2007.

Based on a public opinion survey conducted in September 2007, over a nation-wide random sample of 1850 people living in Turkey’s urban areas.

COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN EUROPEAN VALUES, ISLAMIC VALUES, TURKISH NATIONAL VALUES?

	Agree	Disagree	NA/NO/DK	Total
A person can be a good Muslim and s/he can fully adopt the basic political and cultural values of the EU	76%	17%	7%	100%
A person can fully adopt both Turkish national values and the basic political and cultural values of the EU	72%	18%	10%	100%
Turkey should become a member of the EU	58%	32%	10%	100%

BENEFITING FROM GLOBALIZATION AND INTEGRATION WITH THE EU?

	Agree	Disagree	NA/NO/DK	Total
In the last few years, there has been a marked improvement in the living standards of our family	69%	28%	3%	100%
In the last few years, me and people like me have generally benefited from Turkish economy's globalization, outward orientation, and integration with the outside world	63%	27%	10%	100%
In the last few years, me and people like me have benefited from the reforms made for Turkey's membership in the EU	59%	31%	11%	100%

MAJOR GROUPINGS BASED ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS EUROPE

Major Groupings Based on Attitudes towards Europe	Properties	Share in the Sample
EUROSKEPTICS	<i>(Support for EU membership lowest; opposition to EU membership highest; supporters slightly more than opponents)</i>	36%
EUROSUPPORTIVES	<i>(Support for EU membership highest; opposition to EU membership average; supporters much more than opponents)</i>	40%
PAROCHIAL-ETHNIC EUROSUPPORTIVES	<i>(Support for EU membership low; opposition to EU membership low; supporters slightly more than opponents)</i>	24%

	EUROSKEPTICS	EUROSUPPORTIVES	PAROCHIAL EUROSUPPORTIVES
Benefited from economic and political globalization and EU reforms	DISAGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION
Experienced positive changes in their economic welfare in the recent past and expect positive changes in the near future	DISAGREE	AGREE	PARTLY AGREE
Believe that European cultural and political values are fully compatible with Turkish national and Islamic values	DISAGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION
Political Orientation	Left-wing/Kemalist	Right-wing/Conservative	Right-wing/Kurdish Nationalist
Believe that all problems can be solved by democracy and compromise/Against military interventions	DISAGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION

EU CONDITIONALITY – DEMOCRATIZATION,

**REVERSE CONDITIONALITY – AUTHORITARIAN
BACKLASH**

DATA SOURCES:

“THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT OF DEMOCRATIZATION”. 2009. IN *DEMOCRATIZATION*, ED. CHRISTIAN W. HAERPFER, PATRICK BERNHAGEN, RONALD INGLEHART, AND CHRISTIAN WELZEL, OXFORD AND NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, PP.92-106.

The term 'conditionality' has been coined to describe the democracy promotion strategy of the EU. Schmitter and Brouwer (1999:15) have defined 'conditionality' as 'imposing or threatening to impose sanctions or providing or promising to provide rewards in order to promote or protect democracy'.

For EU conditionality to be an effective catalyst of democratization, a number meta-conditions have to be met.

(1) In order to be effective political conditionality must involve a rightly balanced mix of conditions and incentives. The adoption of the political conditions by the receiving countries create serious adjustment costs, which can only be outweighed by substantial incentives. A situation of conditions with no incentives, instead of contributing to the promotion of democracy, might produce just the reverse effect and might play into the hands of the opponents of liberalization and democratization.

(2) The EU must not change the conditions in the middle of the game (consistency of the conditions).

(3) The EU must apply essentially the same conditions to all the candidates (fairness of the conditions).

(4) The candidate country must have an undisputable prospect for joining the club, when she meets all the conditions for membership (attainability of the prize).

Reverse Conditionality and Authoritarian Backlash

If one or more of these meta-conditions are violated, conditionality might not produce the desired outcomes. What is more worrisome, violations of these meta-conditions by the EU might provoke a nationalist reaction within a candidate country and thereby produce the opposite outcome, in the form of a backlash against EU-driven democratization and liberalization.

The case of Turkish candidacy illustrates the notion of “Reverse Conditionality”

Turkey has been a candidate state for the EU since December 1999 and it has started accession negotiations in October 2005.

Turkey has been the only candidate country for which an accession date has not been specified. Not only has a date for joining the European club not been set, but many influential politicians from the EU member states, including French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, have started to question whether Turkey is a European country and therefore has a right to join the EU.

New membership conditions have also been created for Turkey, which make the accession process harder and longer, compared to the central and east European countries. For example, for the case of Turkey, the EU has formulated a new concept, the so-called ‘absorption capacity’ of the EU, meaning that, even if Turkey met all the conditions, the EU could still refuse entry, if it judged that it was not ready to take in a new member.

The impact of these and other violations of the meta-conditions of conditionality was to bring about in Turkey what may be called a ‘reverse conditionality’.

In other words, as the EU has started to disengage itself from Turkey, critically placed Turkish political actors and social forces have responded to this signal coming from the EU by either detaching themselves from the EU project or at least adopting a position of indifference with respect to it.

The consequence of ‘reverse conditionality’ might be that European values might lose their support base in the Turkish political and civil society, with the outcome of an erosion of the reforms made in the area of democratization and liberalization.

Ironically, to save the earlier democratization reforms that had been made under EU conditionality, Turkey might now need to de-link the project of democratization from the project of EU accession, because reversals in the latter process could seriously harm the advances made in the former.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

There seem to be three paths that Turkey can walk on in its relations with the EU:

5) WITHDRAWAL (EXIT) (“Papaza kızıp oruç bozma” – A Muslim breaking his fast because he gets very angry with a Christian priest”

2) APPEASEMENT (LOYALTY)

3) ENGAGEMENT (VOICE)

5) WITHDRAWAL (EXIT)

Possible consequences of a withdrawal from the EU integration process are:

At the Foreign Policy Level: Isolationism, Strategic alliances with the USA and Israel, Regionalism, Eurasianism, Pro-Russian/Pro-Iranian foreign policy stances

At the Domestic Politics level: This would almost inevitably result in an increase in the influences of Islamicism, Turkish nationalism, and Kurdish separatism.

2) APPEASEMENT (LOYALTY)

This means complying with the demands coming from the states

Possible consequences of a withdrawal from the EU integration process are:

At the Foreign Policy Level: European integration increasingly becoming dead-end process leading nowhere. Integration stopping basically at the level of economic integration.

At the Domestic Politics level: Erosion of commitment of the critically positioned social actors to the EU integration process.
Instrumentalization of the EU. Rising indifference towards the EU.
Rising Euroskepticism.

3) RE-ENGAGEMENT (VOICE)

Asserting Turkey's legal rights stemming from agreements and treaties.
Example: Turkish Truck Drivers' Case against the German government in the European Court of Justice; Turkish businesswoman's case against the British government in a British court.

Continuing with the reforms as required by the accession process.

Increasing Turkey's presence at multiple levels in the EU (civil society dialogue, sports, arts, culture, science, academic exchange, popular culture, NGOs, etc.)

Developing closer cooperation with the governments and institutions that are supportive of Turkey's integration with the EU (UK, Sweden, Spain, Poland, and the like)