

The Construction of the Family Ethic in Turkey

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ABSTRACT: The Republic of Turkey in 1923, is established on the foundations of secularism and modernity. The newly established state, which turned its face to the West by rejecting the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, carried out a modern nation building project with the imagination of a new nation, family and citizenship. Through family planning policies, the modern nuclear family was supported as a disengagement from the Ottoman traditional society. Due to secularist policies, beliefs, morals, values, ethics were accepted as individualistic matters and pushed to private sphere. This family-oriented modernization and ideal of national family required the construction of a new citizen woman who incurred the responsibility of raising new patriot generations devoted to principles of the reformist state. However, this perception of family and woman began to change in the last few decades especially with the neoconservative and neoliberal policies adopted by the rule of the Justice and Development Party (JDP). In accordance with the earlier governments, the family preserved its privileged position, however, with a new assignment on family which instrumentalizes ethics, morals and beliefs in the public sphere compatible with its policies. The birth control policies have come to an end and the care giving services assigned to families instead of public service, which eventually requires a renovation of duties and responsibilities of the family and women. This paper intends to analyze the mobilization of beliefs, morals and ethics for the sake of construction of the social order.

KEYWORDS: family, neoconservatism, neoliberalism, Turkey, values, Early Republican era

Introduction

The political ideology of the governments creates ideal family models and population policies that are integrated to general ruling mechanisms. The family planning signifies the desire of transforming the social order and in what direction the change should be. One of the ways that governments justify their intervention in fertility is to present an ideal family model cemented with morality and ethics in harmony with the governing ideology of the time and a promise of wealth for the future. The ruling powers of Turkey, for the third time intervening to change the fertility levels, in line with their political agenda (Özbay 2014, 106). The first intervention coincides with the foundation years of the republic that aimed national family. The Republic of Turkey that is established after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and decade-long war period, substantially lost its human capital. At that time, when fertility was high enough, abortion was banned, and contraceptive methods were prohibited. Early marriages were encouraged, and fertility has increased even more. With the adoption of the Law on Population Planning in 1965, the policy was changed in order to reduce the high fertility rate. The abortion ban was first relaxed and further liberalized in 1983. The minimum age for marriage has been raised and education programs were organized for women on family planning which eventually paved the way for a decline in fertility. The third intervention is taking place today. Together with the rule of Justice and Development Party (JDP), neoconservative and neoliberal policies are adopted in the last few decades which intend to design a new sacred family.

Turkish Modernization and the National Family

The dissolution of the empires after the First World War and the establishment of the nation states brought about irrevocable changes in the traditional social structures and governance. The Republic of Turkey that is established after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire is the case in

point of a societal transition from traditional to modern one. Established upon the bases of secularism and modernity, the newly established state, embarked a total modernization and secularization project which is not limited to political and economic area but also has implications in societal life and daily lives of the people. Disregarding the Ottoman legacy meant the refusal of every traditional aspect which are assumed as the remnants of backwardness and failure. Even in the early stages of the modernization process, it was understood that the lifestyles and mental structures of the actors acting in this structure had to be transformed in order to establish a modern political structure (Aytaç 2007) .

By turning their face to the West, the state elites carried out a modern nation building project with the imagination of a new nation, family and citizenship that was assumed to construct a modern citizen instead of subjects of the king and this citizen should be modernized and secularized by detaching beliefs, morals, values and ethics to private sphere. The ultimate goal that this transformation process was expected to reach was the realization of the ideal of a community of citizens made up of autonomous and rational individuals who were desired to lead a happy and peaceful life in their own home (Aytaç 2007, 17). By inventing a traditional past (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 1) to refrain, this new family required the creation of a new citizen woman together with invention of traditional family and society. Imagining of an urbanized nuclear family on the basis of modernist reasoning, the elites created a misrepresentation of the traditional family by labeling it with the terms of extended family, child marriages, polygamy, agricultural society, veil and high fertility rate. Although this idealization was challenged by asserting that the Ottoman rural society has a monogamist nuclear family structure to a large extent (Duben and Behar 1991; Olson 1982); the stereotypical images of the traditional family were associated with backwardness which should be eliminated from.

Hence, the "New Life" understanding, which has been on the agenda since the first years of the constitutional monarchy, gained strength with the republic. This was the main axis that brought the Republic to the crossroads from the Ottoman Empire. However, the state capacity and financial possibilities were limited due to the post-war conditions to realize a cultural revolution. The new nation-state was starting out as poor and underpopulated where population fell from 20 million to 13 million within today's borders (Shorter 1985, 421). Medical capacity was limited which causes dramatic increase of child deaths. Due to loss of adult males, poverty was increased together with prostitution. In the whole world, the loss of the adult generation because of wars made the intergenerational problem more pronounced. Young generations lost their trust to their parents and religious beliefs were weakened. Technological innovations and Taylorism initiated a revolutionary process in production that paved the way for a new consumerism. In Turkey, these crises were felt more deeply due to the reform concerns the Republic, longing for secular norms and abandoning eastern culture norms and transition to western civilization. So, the incompatibility to reforms were experienced together with trauma (Toprak 2017, 16).

As society was shaken to a great extent, the family institution, which was the backbone of the order, collapsed, and moral problems came to the fore. Hence, the issues of family and women occupied the agenda of the intellectuals since the early modernization movements (Sirman 2013, 3). In the similar vein, these issues protected their privileged position in the new Republic. The Ottoman Empire gone with its moral and cultural codes, and the new state had to build a new person. According to this frame, theology was positioned against reason and the role of the new secular state was to abolish power of religious ideas, laws, values and customs to enhance people to higher rationality by cleaning of superstitions (Davison 1998, 179). Rejecting the past was not enough, it had to instill new values in his people and 'becoming modern' (Yashin 2000, 52) and 'raising the people to the level of modern civilization' were the mottos. The traditional, patriarchal extended family of Ottoman society was one of the institutions that revolutions aimed to change (Kongar 1999, 586).

The Repositioning of Women

The subject of the family planning are principally the women whose lives are directly affected by changing policies that usually end up with the repositioning of the women at home, at market and in the society and target was liberation of women (Bilge Zafer, 1; Kongar 1999, 586). In order to disconnect from the past, a legal revolution, that brought new rights to women for a more egalitarian and harmonious family life, began. The Swiss Civil Code was accepted, women gained political, economic and social rights (Abadan-Unat 1978; Taşkıran 1973). However, these state-led the modernization movements controlled by the elites did not evolve as a result of demands originating within society and let women movements to determine their agenda but they were imposed from above. (White 2017) Hence, the liberalization movements were limited within elites' envisaged framework (Zihnioğlu 2003).

As modernism grounds its existence on the basis of traditional-modern dichotomy, Chatterjee, claims that the binary relationship between traditional and modern was also an indicator of a much more strong dichotomy between outer and inner (Chatterjee 1989, 625). Sancar adds that, modernism, capitalism and nationalism processes that describes the last two centuries of Turkish history by focusing on state and market-based strategies would remain incomplete without family based regulatory strategies. While western oriented modernity has gained a very strong regulatory power with the feature of dividing human life into different areas such as society-state, family-society, private-public, civil-political, personal-social and attributing different aspects to sociability; it also creates a division between family life and social life. In this share, family is defined as the sphere of spirituality and morality, sentimentality, together with biologic needs and sentimental values whereas the society is defined as the sphere of the material, namely the profit, conflict, violence and power. These two opposite spheres are also constructed with the gendered characteristics. The femininity of the family and private sphere creates a unity based on difference with the masculinity of the social sphere (Sancar 2004, 3). With this mindset, the family has excluded from the economic interest represented by society and the power to establish politics. Seeing that the Turkish modernization project is fictionalized upon creation of a modern national Turkish family which bases upon the image of contemporary Turkish woman, what happens is the repositioning of the women in the family by excluding them from the area of politics and economics.

The value of the family as an institution in a nation-state, stems from production of populations. There is not only a health concern but also a moral aim to keep the citizens under control behind the state's incentives for fertility to take place especially within the family. Since the definition of a good citizen requires one to respect the law as well as to respect his social duties and therefore to be responsible to his family, raising good sons or good citizens is not considered as two different projects on the basis of nationalist ideology. While good citizenship for women means motherhood, for men this status corresponds to the father who has a job to support his family. In countries where modernization movement comes top-down like Turkey, ensuring the legitimate ground of coexistence of the people under the roof of a single nation is the state's duty. At this stage, the state resorts to systematic propaganda or political socialization through institutions for the establishment of national consciousness. By this way, the moral structure of the society is ensured by the solidarity between the family members (Şerifsoy 2000, 157).

Women were undergoing a transformation in line with the progress of the country and were part of the revolution (Toprak 2017, 128). Consequently, the new roles of women were defined as new motherhood and housewives in a frame of a new ideal of femininity while constructing the home and the family. Women operated as political actors only to the extent that they performed sexual and reproductive rather than social or political roles. According to Miller, the sexual and reproductive nature of citizenship is situated in the modern state's

relentless inclusion (Miller 2007, 349). This new positioning of women as mother and wife also drew the line of realm of freedom.

Both Kandiyoti and Kadioğlu define the republican woman who is a citizen before being an individual. This type of woman is modest, hardworking, faithful, Western looking but observant to tradition in private, dedicated to the principles of the Republic, good wife and self-sacrificing mother. In that sense, the image of Kemalist woman reflects the pragmatism of Kemalist ideology and it occurs as a combination of confounding images. An educated businesswoman at work; organizer woman that has social mobility at social clubs, associations and organizations; a good wife and mother that is aware of her duties at home; a woman who has biologic function; a feminine woman that pleases her husband at parties and balls (Kadioğlu 2006, 31). Reproduction turned into a political duty as one of the most basic peculiarity of citizenship; in other words, motherhood made identical to citizenship. The house and the family occupied central places in cultural spaces that would become modernized. In fact, idealizing the modern Turkish household was complementary to the modern nation-state designs of Turkish nationalists. As opposed to the primitive and traditional methods of the old generations, the authors reported more scientific and modern housework methods (Yashin 2000). In short, the republican women were idealized as well-educated, well-behaved daughters of the Kemalist fathers. These daughters were educated by modern methods and they can be socialized in men's society. In this context, the women were emancipated by reformist laws but remained unliberated in practice (Kandiyoti 1987, 330).

Economic Development and the Happy Family

Governments adopted population growth as official view to strengthen the new republic. With the General Health Protection Law enacted in the 1930s, the mission of increasing the population was given to the Ministry of Health and Social. Importing, domestic production and sale and use of all kinds of contraceptive and abortion drugs, and equipment were prohibited. Providing information on this matter was prevented and it was a crime to abort intentionally. Over time, the population increased rapidly. On the other hand, health, education, housing and similar services remained far from meeting the needs of the society (Kongar 1999, 596). Thousands of women died of miscarriage on their own, became disabled, worn out due to excessive births and became ill especially in rural areas (Özbay 2015, 89; Kongar 1999).

The slogan of the early republican government was "tough, cheerful and populated Turkey". However, by the 1960s, it became a hungry, unhappy and crowded country. Therefore, in 1965, the new ideal was achieving economic development through lowering the fertility rate. Through legislating the Law on Population Planning numbered 557, which constitutes a turning point in population policies, propaganda regarding the import, distribution and sale of contraceptive tools and drugs was legalized, the way for abortion was paved, and the General Directorate of Population Planning of the Ministry of Health, the implementing unit of the New Population Policy, was established (Özbay and Shorter 1970; TUSİAD 1999). For the ideal family, fertility was not encouraged but reduced. The "happy" family was also a Western-looking nuclear family; but now few children were targeted instead of many. Happiness meant quality of life. Families could improve their quality of life by having as many children as they could take care of and raise well. In summary, few children were necessary for the happiness of the family, the welfare of the state (Özbay 2014, 108).

Until the emergence of leftism and Islamism as contestant frames to suppress the potentially feminist voices in 1970s, republican patriarchy claimed a monopoly over women's issues (Coşar and Yeğenoğlu 2011, 558). It was only after the 1980 coup d'état that women started to voice their demands from an independent feminist perspective.

Beginning with the 1980s, the Islamists began to adopt identity politics with a demand of existing in the public sphere (Diner and Toktaş 2010). Moreover, 1980s were a milestone for the economic liberalization compatible with the neoliberal policies of the world. The articulation of neoliberal policies with government-backed rise of Islamic capital resulted in the emergence of a new Islamist bourgeois class and a change in Islamists' relationship with the state. One other result of this transformation was the emergence of new Islamist intellectuals accompanying to bourgeoisie, and consequently new lifestyles.

Diverging from the earlier era, the Islamist intelligentsia of the 1980s began to criticize secular values and reformist project of Turkish modernization. The loss of Islamic essence and departure from the true path of Islam were highly debated issues among the Islamist groups that blame Westernization and secularization for this corruption. Media, publishing and literature peaked up in this era as a crucial tool to organize mass movement by means of daily newspapers, weekly and monthly journals, private radio and TV channels, movie and cartoon agencies (Duman 1995; Çayır 2007). Islamist intellectuals were strongly opposing the hegemony of the West and modernity in daily lives and they earnestly warned the Muslim people to be cautious about the tricks of the modernity, capitalism and moral decline.

Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism and the Sacralized Family

With the rule of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) in 2002, neoliberal policies come to a climax which builds its road upon Islamist politics. The articulation of neoliberal policies with government-backed rise of Islamic capital resulted in the emergence of a new Islamist bourgeois class and a change in Islamists' relationship with the state. Unlike pre-1980s, the times when capitalism was declared as an arch enemy based upon its contradictory character with Islamic values, contemporary Islamists adopted the image of, secular, consumerist and individualized. despite their seemingly irreconcilable differences, how the conservatives adopted neoliberal policies? Tuğal's answer, absorbing the Islamic challenge to capitalism post-2000 and Islamist supporters began incorporating neoliberalism and values of modernity so smoothly, as opposed to the Islamism's historical disaffection of the Western capitalist ideology (Tuğal 2009). Cooper (2017) claims that, the union of neoliberals and social conservatives is more than merely political; it reflects a shared, if sometimes disavowed, understanding that the market does not supply its own pre-requisites but requires the family as a necessary support. The neoliberalization of economic and social policies has been accompanied by the strengthening of their conservative aspects in many countries and combined effects of neoliberalism and neoconservatism on feminist studies has discussed in literature (Brown 2006; Porter 2012). However Elomäki and Kantola goes further than analyzing the combined effect of neoliberalism and conservatism, and adds nationalism to complete a successful triangle that shapes feminist politics (Elomäki and Kantola 2018).

During seventeen years of rule, the family has always been a fundamental constituent of the conservative Justice and Development Party. This transformation had unfavorable unintended consequences in terms of moral values, family structure, rising devoted generations and solidarity of the society. Thus, in the last few years, the solidarity of the family has been underlined heavily and represented as the treasure of the nation which ensures the survival of the country and became the target of enemies. Moreover, family is assumed as power of the nation, core of the civilizations and strengthening the families is the only way to maintain a strong state and a peaceful society (Daily Sabah 2019; Sabah Gazetesi 2019). Together with the economic losses, the undertone denunciations upsurge in the conservative groups and made inroads to severe self-critiques. In this atmosphere, moral values and family come into prominence as effective remedies to consolidate the solidarity of the people.

The institution of family is sanctified by today's government to fulfill its duties to neoliberalism, neoconservatism and nationalism. To regulate intimacy and the family, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, under Turkey's neoconservative government, deploys state-employed religious functionaries to provide citizens with advice and guidance on family life despite the assumed separation of religion and politics (Kocamaner 2017, 2018). The government is not the only institution who calls attention to the importance of the family; tens of non-governmental organizations were established in the past few years to protect the family together with the active participations and contributions of the prominent figures, intellectuals, activists, writers, and volunteers of the conservative segment of society. In order to strengthen this ideal family, Islamic broadcasters started producing family-friendly entertainment programs and shows. Islamic TV's intend to their family-focused programming as civil initiatives against what they see as the increasing corrosion of the "moral fabric of the family" and weakening of family values in the society (Kocamaner 2017).

The family is expected to perform various vital responsibilities such as preservation of the core values of the society and maintain the pass down of these values to new generations; and raising the future generations of the country who will be the warrant of a strong and peaceful society. These slogans of strong family-strong society are promoted to legitimize its welfare politics which attempts at shifting social care from state to familial sources and essentially to women as primary caregivers (Yazıcı 2012). The idiom of sanctity of the family, requires a family that creates social bonds to provide service to disabled and aged members, babies and children, that eventually relieves the state from an economic burden. Although it applies to religious and traditional discourse, this new family ideal should not be considered as a retreat, but it is the product of the neoliberal policies economically and neoconservatism culturally.

As a result, the family stands at the junction point of political, economic and social organization of a society. In order to regulate the society in harmony with the ruling ideology, the governments assign certain tasks for families. These roles are fundamentally about controlling the fertility. In order to get the consent of the people, values, ethics and morality are put into action. Together with the neoliberalism, the tasks of families went beyond the scope of fertility and they act as economic units that lights economic burden of the state as well. Together with nationalism and conservatism, a new morality, that uses the discourses on religion and tradition, was created to strengthen the family.

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