

MEDIATIC DISTORTION OF SOCIAL CONSERVATISM OVERLAPPING WITH POLITICAL CONSERVATISM

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Bu makale, Türkiye'de toplumsal muhafazakarlıkla örtüşen siyasi muhafazakarlığı kültürel, ekonomik yönleriyle incelerken, medyatik olarak muhafazakarlığın tahrifini araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Menderes ve Özal dönemlerinde görüldüğü gibi, literatürde "yaratıcı", "tepkisel" ve "liberal" özelliklerle adı konan ve toplumsal muhafazakarlıkla örtüşen Türk siyasi muhafazakarlığının nasıl ve ne şekilde statükoculuğa ya da egemenlerin düzenine dönüştüğü belirlenmiştir. 1980'lerden sonra özellikle ticari televizyon kanallarının yayın hayatına girmesiyle, toplumsal muhafazakarlığın kendini temsil imkanı bulunmakla beraber, ilerleyen zaman içinde, tıpkı siyasi statükoculukta olduğu gibi, "halk böyle istiyor!" ya da "hükümetçe söylem"lerle medyatik muhafazakarlığın da statükoculuğa ya da egemenlerin düzenini temsil etmeye başladığı ve böylesi bir temsiliyetin kendini yeniden üretmeyecek bir biçimde kitleselleşme sürecine yapmış olduğu katkı vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Toplumsal muhafazakarlık, siyasi muhafazakarlık, statükoculuk, hükümetçi söylem, medyatik tahrif.

Social conservatism in Turkey overlapping with political conservatism is a "creative", "reactionist" and "liberal" type of conservatism.

Possible as it may seem to relate the pre Republican notion of conservatism to Islamism, Turkicist and Westernization, which have contributed to the Turkish intellectual world, Çiğdem points out that "these three movements are forms of thinking proceeding in different directions, but ultimately joining along one line" that conservatism cannot be attributed to any one of these movements, and that the Turkish conservatism is that which, rather than deciding on what to conserve, has had to "create" (Çiğdem 1997: 45).

Yılmaz on the other hand, who looks upon today's conservatism within the framework of modern and postmodern quests, states that conservatism cannot be considered as distinct from liberalization, and that the Turkish representation of liberalized conservatism is based on firm grounds on which the liberal discourse has become legitimized and the bureaucratic proceedings have lost their prevalence. Maintaining that the Turkish conservatism is more "reactionist" than "critical", Yılmaz attributes this fact that this conservatism (Yılmaz 1995). However, in the West, by the time we came to the 20th century, the development of conservatism had been a critical process that had materialized as a rejection of social disorder

(Nisbet 1990: 102, 104).

The new conservatism developing in the world today, on the other hand, advocates an order that highlights change, and, economically, unconditionally accepts the market economy (Mert 1997: 59).

Social conservatism is a dual notion which involves two distinct processes, and the other being social conservatism that integrates with political innovations and the other being that which conflicts with pro status quo conservatism. The innovationalists, in Turkey, initially welcomed novelties, until such a status quo was developed eventually that the picture was a mere defence of the order.

As a matter of fact, political conservatism does not mean defending the status quo or the order of the dominant class. The Turkish left, for instance, is conservative in this sense. Harun Karadeniz, one of the representatives of the Turkish left states in his *Emekçinin Kitaplığı*, that the capitalists without capital, those who lack capital, have become capitalists (Karadeniz 1995: 37). Displaying the conservative tendency of the Turkish left with the same logic. Due to this feature, the political conservatism, which has substantialized as the order of the dominant class, cannot be solely referred to a rightist policy. The periods during which the Turkish political and social conservatism coincide are those of Adnan Menderes and Turgut

Özal.

THE CONSERVATISM OF THE MENDERES AND ÖZAL PERIOD WHICH INTEGRATES WITH SOCIAL CONSERVATISM

After the Democratic Party was established in January 1946, the most important feature of Menderes period represents the dissolution of the sharp boundaries between the state and the populace. Restrictions are lifted importation were raised and investments increased. A liberal economic policy was adopted. In a speech Menderes said " the fundamentals we have adopted are those which are advanced, liberal and democratic " (Kılıçık 1991:76), while papers like Akşam Haberleri, called such meetings " black crowds ".

The second representative of liberal conservatism is Özal. During the Özal period the *ortadirek* lower middle class a term that emerged out of the jargon of political folklore, which refers to what is local, embodies the farmer, the laborer, the *esnaf* the provincial tradesman and the retired. The term " the Individual of the Age of Information " which points to the globalistic process, on the other hand, is a predecessor of the rise of liberal individual and economic and cultural take off.

The social and economic policies all aim at strengthening the *ortadirek* " the 21th century will be that of high technology and information. The coming century is that of the individual, of information (Özal 1993:159). formulating his views pertaining to organization of the service sector he emphasizes the need to highlight education, health, and high technology, and goes on to say, " unless we make serious mistakes, the 21th century will be that of the Turks and Turkey " (Özal 1993:163).

Through the policies employed during the Özal period not only was the control of the state rendered narrower, but also conservatism was institutionalized by way of the " Committee for Protection of Juniors against Immoral Publications " and " the Institute of Family Research " Besides this practices like the " Fund for Incentives for Social Aid and Solidarity " were introduced to public opinion, and this liberal policies were put into effects, with the conservative aspect weighing heavier (Yılmaz

1995:233) .

The novelties introduced in both period integrated with the reactionist attitude of the public, though a two sided conflict subsequently emerged between those who determined the innovations and the vigorous pro status quo theorists on the one hand, and between the latter and the public, on the other.

Just like the fate of the novelties of the Özal period as administered by the policies of today's Motherland Party, the liberal (political) conservatism policy was transformed into pro status quo fanaticism, so that it has come fall in conflict with social conservatism.

CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC CONSERVATISM

There is not one and only one discourse of conservatism. There are discourses of conservatism, which, vary according to context. Three discourses of conservatism are in question which are currently in circulating in Turkey, the first two of which are cultural and economic conservatism respectively. The third one, as distinct from the rest, although not conservatism in itself, represents conservatism that which spreads through the media owing to its instrumentality.

The most important representative of cultural conservatism in Turkey is " Association of Intellectuals " (Aydınlar Ocağı). Its dominant discourse is that the efforts of the " Association of Intellectuals ", based on the Turkish Islamic synthesis, are directed towards the conservation and development of Turkish culture. While the " Association ", with its desire or motive of self defense and maintenance, regards cultural elements such as language, religion, customs and traditions, history, and art as constituting national culture, adopts the conservation and development of culture as its major principle (Aydınlar Ocağı 1989).

Economic conservatism, on the other hand, involves a political attitude which stands against privatization. For example, the " I won't have them sold ! I won't " attitude against privatization assumed by Mümtaz Soysal, the Foreign Minister in the 1994 Republican Party True-way Party Coalition was long remembered as populist policy.

In our country, banking is based on the interest paying system. Whereas Citybank operates on non interest basis elsewhere in the world, it operates on an interest based banking system in Turkey. During the Özal period, which is considered as a major period of the liberal conservative policy, establishments such as Al Baraka, Faisal Finans and Kuveyt Türk, which operate with the " share in profits and losses " logic as an alternative to interest paying banking appeared in the market. Subsequent to such developments, especially Istanbul holdings, with a pro status quo attitude, tried to keep out of the market those holdings that had only recently entered the market, together with their owners, calling them the " Anatolian Tigers ".

REPRESENTATIONAL OR INSTRUMENTAL CONSERVATISM: MEDIA CONSERVATISM / PRO GOVERNMENT CONSERVATISM

Media's conservatism which represents the conservative policies and people's conservatism with its instrumentality, stood out following the appearance of commercial/ private TV channels on the screen as a result of the adoption of liberal conservative policies especially after the 1980's. For example, the program called " İcraatin İçinden " (Out of State Operations), in which the people were informed by Özal, the Prime Minister of the time, about the government's operations, was a program to which we were not used to those days. Similarly, religious programs, native serials, commercials, programs for women, and open discussion programs in which people of different opinions were brought together represent the reflection of the conservative policies through the media. Such mediatic televising and broadcasting policies coincide with creative, reactive and liberal conservatism.

When in England the Conservative Party won the elections under Thatcher in 1979, Philo, investigating the relations between the new right and the media, first pointed to the fact that traditionally social democratic BBC and the new right were in conflict. The conservative policy supported the US, which bombarded Libya, while BBC opposes to this and fall into bad terms with the government. BBC refused to support the government when England entered the Falkland Islands, and one BBC authority criticized the government in a speech he made

in Spain with the words, " We do not need to be taught lessons on patriotism. " The second is the extensive use which the Conservatives made of the media and public relations techniques in promoting their new policies and political ideology. There was another key area of government advertising which promoted the philosophy of New Conservatives. This was the sales campaigns for the privatization of the nationally owned industries, which were on a scale not seen before. The dominance of the New Right as reflected in other areas of programming as well. Enterprise became routine concept and the BBC made a series of programmes under the Enterprise Culture (Philo 1995:198, 207, 217). In practice, there was a strong consensus amongst professionals in both the private and public sector about the cultural, informative and educational role of television (Philo 1995:223).

In our country, the representation of political conservatism which coincides with social conservatism has been open first to the introduction of the novelties, and then to distortion. The distortion has been in two directions:

The first one designing programs under the pretext. ' The public likes it this way ', and the second one is directly representing the pro status quo attitude. The indicators of designing programs with the motto ' The public likes it this way ' are the entertainment programs, the " televolley's, paparazzi programs, and pop quizzes. The most conspicuous indicators of pro status quo attitudes of the media is their pro government discourse. The major factor that influences the governmental conservatism is the utilization of financial supports like incentive funds, state credits and the commercials of state banks. Besides, big part of the channels expect Channel 7, NTV and STV, have not as yet established consensus as to being informative or educationally and culturally oriented.

As far as rating is concerned, the four channels that range highest are Channel D, Atv, Show and Star, respectively (ANAR 1998:20). These are also the most criticized channels. Being the most commonly watched and most commonly criticized means a contradictory mass attitude. TGRT, which originally ran parallel to social conservatism represents a public display of the pro governmentalistic approach like the other cartel medias.

Since 1990s, the medias as the representatives of pro governmentalistic conservatism negatively affect social conservatism in three aspects: First, social conservatism, ceasing to renew itself after a certain period of time, necessarily assumes a pro status quo attitude, affecting the media, so that at the stage at which they conform to the status quo, they focus on their essential function, their popularization activities. Second, as a result of economic liberalism, the medias act as companies. The sources of information they depend on are public opinion probes, rating analyses, public relations activities, and institutes contributing to standardization. Culture is neglected during all this process, which contributes to cultural degeneration and alienation. Third, especially with February 28 decisions, almost all channels, the cartel media coming first, have come to function as the ideological devices of the state in the Althusseristic sense. The medias displaying a governmentalistic form of pro status quo approach, have added to this attitude their pro state attitude and thus committed themselves to the protection of the order of the dominating class, that is, to the consolidation of status quo.

As representatives of the governmentalism and pro state approaches, our medias cannot perform any function in making public life meaningful, and, distortion life itself, are converting the public into mere crowds. As quoted by Nisbet, the mass: " From Burke to Ortega y Gasset and Hannah Arendt by this word: substantial aggregates of the national population have become relatively amorphous, rootless, disconnected and estranged from many symbols and values which represent the difference between society and crowd (Nisbet 1986:197).

Thus, as Ortega y Gasset tries to explain in his *The Revolt of the Masses* (1996), the Turkish

individual is being prepared to the fate of everyone resembling everyone else, and individuals are being doomed to stand watching a mirror in which they will never ever see themselves again.

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