EUROPEAN-TURKISH IDENTITY INTERACTION FROM THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

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-Abstract-

Identity formation efforts of the EU draw attention in Turkey's membership process. This paper is based on a hypothesis that identity, culture, norms and values which construct the social structure affect European and Turkish identity interaction. In the paper, right and left views within the Turkish parliament and European parliament will be analyzed in the framework of social constructivism.

Social constructivism which is provided as an alternative area of study in the social sciences to the European integration, is still evaluated as a debated approach in the internatioal relations literature. Wendt, Checkel, Smith, Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner define social constructivism as an approach between rationalism represented with neo-realism, neo-liberalism and neo-liberal institutionalism- and reflectivism represented with post-modernism and post-structuralism. On the other hand, some other authors evaluate social constructivism within the critical theories. This paper is based on the first definition.

The first assumption of the social constructivism asserts that material structures should be observed beyond the biological facts (Jupille, Caporaso, Checkel,2003). According to this asumption, material structures gain importance by interpreting within the social conditions and environment. By following this assumption, this paper will focus on different foreign policy strategies of Turkey and Europe as a result of different identity perceptions. The second assumption points to the nature of the actors and their relations with the institutional environment. In accordance with this assumption, opinions, values and discourses of the party groups in the Turkish parliament and European parliament will be taken into consideration. Social constructivism stresses on the social interaction of the states and non-state

actors. In this respect analyzing the social interaction within the framework of Turkish-European identity will make a contribution to the literature.

Key Words: *Social Constructivism, Identity, European Union, Turkey*

JEL Classification: Z00

1. INTRODUCTION

Social constructivism stresses on the agent-structure interaction. In this respect, structure (interest) is constructed by actors (member countries and EU institutions). In the literature, the construction and transformation of Turkish identity and European identity are evaluated conceptually and historically. Despite of this, there is a cavity for the case studies on mutual interaction of these identities. In this paper, right and left views in Turkish parliament and European parliament will be analyzed in order to fill this cavity. And the role of social elements, especially the role of identity in the aim of Turkey's integration to the EU since 1950s will be enlightened.

1.1. Social Constructivism and Identity

There are different approaches on European identity in the literature. According to Diez (2005:632), EU perceives some countries, especially Turkey and some other Mediterranean countries, as third countries and transforms them into 'other' and then constructs a special identity for itself. In parallel, Rumelili (2004:39) asserts that the EU uses mode of differentiation in its foreign relations and this causes the ones outside the European collective identity to be perceived as different and threat to the European identity. Other is defined in Europe as barbarian and cruel (Neumann and Welsh,1991:329). As a result, other has an important role in the development of European identity and in the continuation of the order in Europe.

Social constructivism aims to analyze some neglected issues in the European integration process. According to Kauppi (2003:783), some of the neglected issues are "policy-making with rules and norms, transformation of identities, construction of a new European identity, ideas and discourses". This paper emerges as a result of a curiosity on the possible results of Turkish-European identity interaction.

In the literature, there are articles on the subjects of Turkish identity and European identity. Turkey has been one of the most influential 'other' in the construction of European identity. In the Middle Ages, Europeannes had been integrated with Christianity; in the modern period with nationalism, and today with Copenhagen criteria. In the Cold War period, European countries had supported Turkey's

membership to the Western/European originated international organizations such as NATO, OECD, European Council, because of the security concerns on the bipolar system. So, identity issues have traditional perceptions in Europe. Kılıçbay stated that Turkish people have been European since the establishment of Ottoman Empire. According to Kılıçbay, Ottoman is perceived as East by the West because of its Islamic characteristics. However, Christianity which is seen as the religious element of European identity was born in Arabian peninsula as an Eastern religion (Kılıçbay,2005:35).

Inaç (2004) evaluated the views of the right, left, liberal and nationalist parties on the EU and EU membership. European identity has transformed with the European integration process, and European history had been established on difference and diversity. As a result, Europeannes was established on various cultures. However, Turkey has been passing through a more different and longer process than the other candidate countries, and the Islam and the Turkish culture have been excluded in Europe in general. Laçiner (2005:17) stresses that a Europe where Turkey is excluded will transform into a Europe of Medieval Ages. The elements of today's European identity are not religion and culture, but values like democracy, liberalism, human rights and the rule of law. In the historical process, European tradition excluded different religious and cultural elements. However, Turkish identity can be a model in EU's relations with East. Akdoğan (2004) stresses that Europe should ignore unity in geography, religion, race, language and lifestyle as being elements of European identity, and should make its own definition for the future.

Karacasulu (2007) asserts that social constructivism makes a stress on identity in understanding enlargement, and analyzes discourses. However how the meaning of the 'other' has changed is not sufficiently studied. This paper aims to analyze identities by the help of discourses of Turkish and European parliamentarians, and research to what extent the 'other' perception of Turkish and Muslim has changed into normative perception based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

2. 'IDENTITY' FROM TURKISH AND EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

In this section, foreign policy strategies of Turkey and EU will be evaluated on identity basis. And then discourses of party groups in both sides will be analyzed in order to shed light on the influence of identity strategies to the relations.

2.1. Different Foreign Policy Strategies of Turkey and EU

While looking at the EU from the social constructivist perspective, two assumptions of this approach draw the attention. Firstly, "the environment that the

actors operate is social as well as material"; and secondly, this situation provides the actors to construct their own interest understandings, so the actors construct themselves" (Checkel,1998:325).

For Turkey, EU membership has been evaluated one of the results of the Westernization project. And Turkey applied for full membership firstly in 1959. Today the relations are continuing on the framework of 1963 Ankara Agreement. Despite of the military interventions and human rights problems until today, Turkey, and majority of Turkish parliament have supported full membership process, and have worked hard in order to meet Copenhagen criteria.

On the other hand, norms, social and cultural characteristics in the EU influence the developments in the Union. While collective identity develops within the Union, we/other differentiation emerges, and this differentiation reflects to the Union's relations. The EU has a different status for its members by the help of Copenhagen criteria. Morocco, Russia and the Middle Eastern countries are excluded by the Union because of their geograpic locations and culture. According to Rumelili (2004), EU's different interactions with different countries should be explained more clearly in the literature. So, EU's different approaches to the countries such as Central and Eastern European countries, Ukraine, Morocco and Turkey should be analyzed in detail.

Checkel argues that rational theorists do not analyze norms, discourses, and relations between language and material abilities like social constructivism does (Smith,1999:685). However these factors are as important as economic factors in the process of EU's taking on a shape. In order to enlighten this issue, it will be beneficial to look at Article 49 of the Consolidated Version of Treaty on European Union: "Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union". In Article 49, being European (being in European geography) is identified as one of the identity criteria, and Europeans are differentiated with some characteristics (Rumelili,2004:39). It is because of that the countries which do not have these characteristics are evaluated as 'other'. EU leaders do not want to see Northern African countries inside the Union. For example, Morocco's membership application was rejected in 1987. This rejection had been in a very short time. Because according to the European perception, Morocco is not European, and the claim that this country has a European identity cannot be understood (Rumelili,2004:40). The same differentiation method is used for Ukraine and Russia by the EU. The EU provided candidacy status for Tukey in 1999, but the relations between the parties were suspended. However the EU evaluated

positively the membership applications of Central and Eastern European countries. The reasons of the EU are counted as shared history, shared culture and Europeanness (Akgül Açıkmeşe,2004:26).

2.2. Discourses of Party Groups in Turkey and EU

Subnational, national and supranational actors have significant roles in the construction of a European identity. From a social constructivist approach, European identity and the 'other' left outside the European identity can gain different meanings. And these identities are reconstructed by different political actors. In this respect the discourses of European People's Party (EPP) and Party of European Socialists (PES) in the European Parliament, and the parties' different European identity arguments against Turkish identity will be analyzed.

On the other hand, different political and cultural identities show different attitudes on Turkey's EU membership process. Right and left elements in civil society, right and left political parties perceive and interpret Turkish-European identity interaction differently (İnaç,2004:35). In this respect, the discourses of Justice and Development Party (JDP) and Republican People's Party (RPP) in Turkey which are member parties of EPP and PES will be analyzed.

European Parliament is gaining an important role in the decision-making system of the EU. Parliament's role has increased year by year especially after 1986 Single European Act, 1992 Maastricht, 1997 Amsterdam Treaties and lastly 2011 Consolidated Version of Treaty on European Union. And it started to shape EU policies. The treaties provide European Parliament to make legislation like national parliaments. European Parliament which is a supranational body and its members are directly selected, reflects ideas, values and beliefs of European citizens.

2009 elections showed that 43 per cent of European citizens participated in the elections and Group of European People's Party (EPP) or Christian Democrats had 265 seats in the Parliament. Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) follows Christian Democrats with 184 seats. While 36 per cent of the Parliament represents Christian Democrats, 25 percent represents Social Democrats (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament. Accessed on 01.08.2011).

As the percentages show, the Group of European People's Party and European Democrats (EPP-ED) is the most powerful group in the European Parliament. The dominance of this group in the parliament shows the general tendency of the European citizens. This group has representatives of all 27 member countries of

the Union, and its references to religious, moral values in its constitution draw the attention. This group sees the EU as "a political community composed of its citizens and nations". On the other hand, the EU's fundamental values such as human rights, fundamental rights and freedoms, the rule of law are defined as "values influenced by Christianity and Enightenment" by the Group (http://www.epp-ed.eu/home/en/aboutus.asp Accessed on 01.08.2011). For that reason, members of this Group rejects Turkey's full membership. In this respect, it can be said that today and in the future of politics the views of Christian Democrats is and will be influential within Europe.

Today, a person who is Turkish and Muslim is perceived as 'other' by this Group (Diez,2004:328). In 1994, the leader of Christian Democrats in European Parliament, Wolfgang Schauble declared that Turkey did not have Christian traditions, and because of that, the country could not be an EU member. The declarations in European Christian Democrats Summit in 4 March 1997 in Brussels on EU enlargement were also quite noteworthy. Christian Democrat leaders said "our civilization is different, Turkish people are Asian". After 1997 Luxembourg Summit, EU president J. C. Junker interpreted candidacy status of 12 countries and exclusion of Turkey with these words: "History and geography of Europe united" (Kohen,Milliyet,1997). In 2002, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, the president of the Convention which prepared the draft version of EU Constitution asserted that Turkey is not a European country (Diez,2004:329). This type of discourses are continuing and different suggestions rather than full membership are made to Turkey. For example, president of Germany, Angela Merkel stated that privileged partnership would be the most suitable result of negotiations. The president of France, Nicholas Sarkozy have similar discourses on Turkey's status. It is clear that the leaders' declarations influence the public opinion in the EU. EU Constituion was rejected in France and Holland. Lizbon Treaty was rejected two times by the member states. And after many changes and exclusions, the Consolidated version of Treaty on European Union come into force in 1 December 2009.

In the light of these developments, it is seen that values, norms and identity understandings of European elites shape EU policies. For that reason, social constructivism restarted to discuss these neglected issues. Discourses of the member state leaders and historical policies of these countries are continuously in social interaction. And this interaction brought suspension of Turkey's negotiation process by the EU.

In Turkey, we see that Justice and Development Party is a member party of European People's Party. However there is a big difference between these two. JDP is an Islamic party, whereas EPP is a Christian Democrats' group of party. And Christian Democrats never support Islamic rules and the existence of Muslims in Europe. Because of that there is no relation and interaction between these two parts. This can be seen in the website of EPP on the link of the party's relations with South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and South Causasus. There is no document on Turkey and anything about JDP when press releases between 10.06.2001 and 22.07.2008 were checked (http://www.epp-ed.eu/home/en/aboutus.asp. Accessed on 01.08.2011). However similar to EPP, JDP defines its political identity as a "conservative democratic modern party" : having a reformist outlook; consensus-building, non-confrontational attitude; supremacy of national will, limited authority; carrying the demands of the society into political arena; modernizing or carrying some changes while keeping some of the values of the conservative build-up; promoting democracy and secularism (Karacasulu and Unalp,2007:2). JDP supports Turkey's full membership process, and it is part of the party's foreign policy goals.

Republican People's Party (RPP) has supported Turkey's EU membership process since 1963 Ankara Agreement. The chairman of the party, İsmet İnönü at that time, signed this agreement. The party has been one of the members of Party of the European Socialists (PES) in European Parliament. However, the relations between the two parties have shown some changes recently. RPP declared in its formal website that socialist, social democrat and workers parties came together in the PES; and RPP shared the aims of the PES which were to empower social and social democratic movement in Europe and the EU. PES supported the opening of negotiations between Turkey and the EU. However, the party has different understanding from the RPP. PES supported the open-ended process for Turkey. The news after the 2007 elections in Turkey has shown some criticisms of PES about RPP. Jan Marinus Wiersma, vice chairman of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, declared that they strongly wished for a real social democrat party in Turkey, but the RPP didn't fit the bill. Wiersma also labeled the JDP as more "social democrat" than the RPP, and claimed the RPP represented the "old elite"(Karacasulu and Unalp,2007:3).

As it is seen from the declarations of the parties, the PES and the RPP have different views on some issues. The RPP resist the conditions demanded by the EU in order to protect national interests and to protect the status quo. However, the PES takes many of the conditions demanded by the EU as necessary steps for Turkey to be a member and for the social order.

3. CONCLUSION

European identity and Turkish identity structures are shaped by the discourses, norms, values and social developments in the continent. It can be concluded that with social constructivist approach, the existing identity perceptions can be changed the other way around. In this respect, governments and parliaments have key roles. Europe and Turkey need more integrative approaches in order to prevent divisions and excesses, and promote peace.

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