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ACTIVISM AND WOMEN'S NGOS IN TURKEY: CIVIL SOCIETY, FEMINISM AND POLITICS.

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The main objective of the study is to determine to what extent and in what way women's rights activists contribute to civil society, as well as to identify the dominant neoliberal and gendered views, as the author puts it. In this context, it is based on the inquiries of non-governmental organizations and is based on contributing to these inquiries. The study has been put forward to complete the gap in the literature in terms of investigating how women's non-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in general, contribute to civil society.

The study is shaped around two main research questions: What are the primary characteristics of the civil society ideologies formed by Turkish women activists, and what variables influence their articulation? Lastly, how and to what extent do these narratives reflect and question the existing dominant civil society discourses in Turkey?

The author states that the issue of feminism and women's rights can be framed as equality, justice-based equality, empowerment, emancipation, and liberation for every segment of society. While it is stated that the first three of the four basic principles mentioned above can be effective in drawing attention to the importance of women activists on civil society, it is emphasized that the last principle, namely the principle of liberation, can guide how to overcome the basic problems and difficulties of civil society such as hierarchy and patriarchy.

On the other hand, the author emphasizes the reason for choosing Turkey for the work as the author thinks that Turkey is a unique example in the promotion and institutionalization of civil society. The author attributes the choice of Turkey as a sample to three main reasons. Firstly, the author underlines that the Turkish modernization process fueled the tension between secularism and Islam, which affected both civil society and women's organizations in

different ways; the dynamics of modernization and the tensions between secularism and Islam have shaped women's movements in Turkey in a unique way. The author states that the second reason behind making this choice is that, unlike other examples in the Middle East, there is a large European Union influence in the evolutionary development of civil society and especially in the expansion of the sphere of influence of women's organizations. It is emphasized that the European Union strongly encourages the women's movement to participate in the process in civil society and to increase its effectiveness and contributes significantly to strengthening women's rights and their reflections in society. Thirdly, and lastly, the reason is given that a conservative civil society and state establishment with alarming consequences for women offers a unique field of observation. Stating that the AKP government has passed many controversial laws and decrees that started an ideological war to control the female body and sexuality, the author underlines that the effectiveness of the European Union on women's rights declined with the third term of the AKP government.

The book has a methodological framework blended with Critical Discourse Analysis and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. The author states that the focus of Critical Discourse Analysis is to reveal the relationship between language and power. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, on the other hand, has formed the framework of the work with these two methods, as it emphasizes the importance of gender as the thing that shapes power relations and offers a critical perspective on gender relations based on the need to change existing conditions.

The starting point of the book can be summarized in one sentence: The place of the women's movement and civil society in Turkey. The book consists of seven chapters. The first part contains the main research questions and objectives. The second part is an overview of civil society and feminist literature. In the third part, the author

sums up Turkey's civil society background briefly. In the fourth and fifth parts, the findings obtained from the association representatives interviewed are presented. The sixth part, the study analyzes the critical discourse of civil society in Turkey of women in these associations. In the seventh and final chapter, the main arguments and discourses of the book are being discussed.

The study begins by determining the history of the concept of civil society, which is considered "controversial" in the literature, and its place in the literature. The author explores the relationship between civil society and feminism and the position of women activists in civil society. At this point, the study mainly focuses on ten women's organizations in Turkey and discusses the approaches of women activists to the concept of civil society. The study collects data from (two from each: Kemalist, Islamist, Kurdish, feminist, and anti-capitalist) women activists from ten organizations. With this study, the author aims to be a platform for these women and be the voice of these women. In this respect, the study aims to measure the effects of women's activist discourses on civil society in Turkey.

The book aims for women to contribute to the questioning and perspectives of civil society and women organizations in particular in Turkey. The author views the Turkey example for a better understanding of the role and importance of civil society and women's activists as a unique case study. In the light of this goal, the author, who samples through active women's groups in the literature, which are Kemalist, Islamist, feminists, and Kurdish women's groups and makes inferences by evaluating these groups in different categories. After selecting two examples from each group, the study summarizes the aims and fields of study of the groups, then explains the backgrounds of the interviewees.

The first of the main arguments of the book is that women activists and associations are lacking in developing a common discourse. This is, it can

be said that the main reason why the women's movement remains obscure. However, the author holds the government responsible for post-2011 policies as the main reason. The second argument of the study is that funding, geographical location, organizational structure, and the framing of women's rights and feminism play a major role in shaping women's ideologies. Third and finally, the author argues that the women's NGOs do not passively reproduce the dominant discourses and the critical language of Turkey is important for women activists of the civil society to gain a new identity.

According to the author, the struggle for women's rights started with the Tanzimat period, and with the 1908 revolution, women started to take place as activists. With the proclamation of the republic in 1923, Kemalism was on the rise and the elimination of the impact of Islam on the state was deemed important for nation-building and modernization. Until the 1960s, there were not many important developments on women's rights and the general impact of women activists on civil society, and associationalism started to rise in the 1960s. By the 1980s, liberal thought and the distinction between state and civil society and pluralism gained importance. In the 1990s, the democratization rhetoric was dominant. The impact of democratization on civil society and the women's movement began to emerge more prominently the next periods in civil society in Turkey have developed and grown thanks to EU funds and reform policies.

The main findings of the study were official civil society discourse in Turkey in the 1990s emphasized democratization and increased autonomy and Apart from anti-capitalist groups, women's organizations from all communities play a part in the concept of civil society as a volunteer-based site as well as an autonomous and intermediary agent, which generally represents a popular understanding of civil society.

There were times when civil society was not

separate from the state and the necessary importance was not given to women. The development of civil society and women's organizations in Turkey is based on the European Union and Turkey relations. In other words, the author underlines that, unlike other Middle Eastern countries, developments in civil society in Turkey are directly related to EU funding and reform policies. It can be said that the main focus here is the coordination problem of women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The issue that they impose their ideas is one of the most important reasons why they cannot produce policies on common ground and that the women's movement remains at the level of discourse. Because the position and difficulties of the women's movement in civil society and the discourse and the policies followed can be in different directions from time to time, and even the statements can sometimes be out of context.

The author underlines that the Justice and Development Party (AKP) made serious gains in democratization, dialogue building, and project-based civil society processes from 2002 to 2011, as well as civil society and women's associations. However, according to the author, after 2011, gains were negatively affected due to autocratic transformations. It is difficult to agree with the author at this point. There is no parameter that the gains have been lost or fallen away, the political statements cited in the study are personal statements and are situations that have not changed the administrative practice and laws. Therefore, these are far from being a scientific reference and make the book look less scientific.

Another weakness of the study is the difficulty of determining whether the associations interviewed, which are close to the government or vice versa, making objective comments. Because the interviews were made completely transparent, and the names of the associations' representatives were openly shared. There is a possibility that this situation is reflected in the statements. One can

argue that there should be a policy about women, but it shouldn't be politicized. If every single individual in the community injects their own opinion into women's politics, it will be difficult to meet on common ground. The only result that can be achieved in a trend in this direction will be to gather individual supporters. These are the biggest obstacles to policies for women. Human rights must come first, and on the other hand, exaggerated opposition to defend women's rights can also be a part of discrimination.

To mention the strengths of the study, first of all, it blends different views in the literature. because in a multicultural and dynamic society, a one-sided approach would be equivalent to turning a blind eye to problems. From this point of view, it is valuable to conduct interviews with organizations and individuals with many different views and backgrounds. On the other hand, in the study, women activists in Turkey, the impact of civil society is important in terms of their contribution to their work. Also, the study can contribute to civil society perspectives on the point of making a comparative analysis by blending different perspectives. Another point that can count as a strength is that direct contact with NGOs, which include women activists, through interviews by revealing similarities and differences in inferences about the author's interview with civil society and women's activists in Turkey. This point of view provides some in-depth knowledge to this study.

To sum up, the overall goal of the study is to create a framework for women's views and, in the author's own words, «allowing their voices to be heard.» One can argue that in terms of photographing the position of women's movements in Turkey among non-governmental organizations. By interviewing a total of 41 people from 10 different communities and organizations, the efforts of women activists and the responses of these efforts in Turkish civil society are scrutinized. The book might be of great interest to the readers of civil society in Turkey and could

be interesting for those interested in the women's movement. Reading it by women activists might also be useful in identifying women activists' and women's associations' shortcomings. however, as long as the determinations and policies remain at the level of discourse, it will not be possible to meet on common ground. Non-governmental organizations, especially women's non-governmental organizations, should get rid of their traditional and conservative shells and obtain policy-oriented, not discourse-oriented, determinations and work in this direction.