POLITICAL CHARACTER OF THE SOCIAL ACTIONS IN THE PROCESS OF GLOBALIZATION: A CASE STUDY

Derya ÇAKIR
Hacettepe University
Department of Political Science and Public Administration
İİBF Beytepe 06800
cakir05@hacettepe.edu.tr

Kamil DEMİRHAN
Hacettepe University
Department of Political Science and Public Administration
İİBF Beytepe 06800
demirhankamil@hacettepe.edu.tr

─Abstract ─

Globalization's attribution of blurring the boundaries is not restricted to the economical and cultural terms. It is also notable for the questions of what is social, what is ecological and what is political. Due to the increase of ecological risks in the global world, some spontaneous social movements have developed to prevent the causes and negative effects of these dangers. Mostly, these movements are seen as in the respect of ecological and social actions. Today it is rather difficult to distinguish the ecological movements from the social ones, and the social and ecological ones from the political ones. This means that today, an ecological movement is at the same time a social and a political movement. The purpose of this study is to analyze the political character of social actions by means of a case study which centers upon ecological movements in Turkey in recent years. The study focuses on the social movements developing around HES project. Firstly, this study examines the development of a social-ecological movement reacted against the HES project. The first part of the study makes emphasis on the spontaneous nature of the movement in its early stage. Secondly, this study tries to make the characteristic of the way of organization of the movement clear. The movement has a distinctive nature compared to NGOs and their structure of organization. Lastly, the study tries to prove that just like the other social and ecological movements in recent years, the movement against the HES project can be evaluated as both a social-ecological and a political movement. In this part the political nature of the movement is tried to be examined within the scope of the issue of political participation, political pressure and political antagonism.

Key Words: *Social action, globalization, political action, ecologic movement.*

JEL Classification: D71, O44

1. INTRODUCTION

In the process of globalization, the interaction between political, economical or cultural spaces has dramatically increased in connection to the development of communication and transportation technologies. This interaction makes the relations between these spaces more apparent in local, regional and trans-national levels. Again, in the process of globalization, the central power of nation state begins to be distributed among different actors like trans-national organizations, multinational companies or international NGOs. This is regarded as power shift and is expresses as losing of autonomy, the capacity of autonomous action and as a result the losing of democratic power (Habermas,2008; Held et. al.,1999; Mathews,2004; McGrew,2004:135). It is in this process that political continuum becomes open to the effects of supranational institutions, pressure groups, NGOs and social movements based on local, regional or global movements. Just like the political continuum, the economical structure also becomes open to the effects of supra- national competition among companies. Thus this transformation makes multinational organizations like World Trade Organization, and International Monetary Fund more important than before they are (Held et al.,1999:187). When it comes to the cultural aspect of globalization, national culture begins to turn both into a more localized and particular and into a more globalized uniform culture. (Held et al.,1999; Thomlinson,2004; Barber,2004) The ironical side of globalization is that it makes culture something both heterogeneous and homogenous at the same time.

One of the most important transformations in the process of globalization is the issue of political continuum and actors. Today, the core issue of political movements is to organize itself in regards to these transformations (Enzensberger in. Beck,2005:209). Thus, political movements have begun to emerge as different social movements. These movements are new social movements like feminist or ecological movements.

Environmental movements take a significant place among these new social movements and they are embedded with political and social movements. Environmental movements can emerge as both large scaled civil associational movements instituted as NGOs and as movements which are small scaled and not institutionalized (Doyle et al.,1998:62). For example; environmental social actions are among these small scaled ones and they are different from social movements

in regards to their mode of organization, how they work, and their size. When compared to large scaled social movements, it is possible to claim that social actions are more local and spontaneous because they occur in the same region where the activists of it live and spontaneously respond to a kind of change effecting their life. Here, it is important that the activists of such actions live in the same living space and react spontaneously. However, the similarity between them is their aim of affecting the political decision making process. There is a dramatical increase in the number of environmental social actions in Turkey as well as in the world in the process of globalization. The reason of such an increase in Turkey is the attempt to use the renewable energy potential.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL ACTIONS AGAINST HES PROJECTS

Today, there is an increasing concern in using renewable energy in order not to give harm to environment. Kyoto Protocol which is signed in 1997 with the aim of reducing carbon emitted to atmosphere has accelerated the process of using renewable energy sources (Kaygusuz,2002; Yüksel,2010). Turkey accepted the protocol in 2009 and it has accelerated the attempts to use renewable energy[1]. Within this context, hydroelectric power plants have gained importance. Currently, there are 213 established, 145 under construction, and 1300 planned hydroelectric power plants (HES) in Turkey[2]. This shows that Turkey gives much importance to hydroelectric power plants. They consist of two basic types, one of them is barrage plant and the other one is run-of-the-river plant. This study focuses on the actions against the second type; run- of -the -river plant.

It is known that run-of the river plants are more advantageous compared to barrage plants because of their being easier and cheaper to establish. It is also argued that they are advantageous because the newly produced energy can be used in the same place it is produced, because there is not the risk of flood, soil loss or water loss, lastly because it helps to slow down the climate changes (Dragu et. al.,2001; OECD/IEA,2008:390; IHA,2003). On the other side of the debate, there is disadvantageous side of the run-of the river plants. People have no more the possibility of using rivers for transportation, they lose the life spaces around the rivers, there becomes a great changes in their means of existence, there becomes a decrease in the number of fishes living in rivers, and the decrease in the quality of

[1] Turkey's capacity of potential hdro power is 1% of the world, and 16% of Europe (Balat,2007: 2154)
[2] http://www2.dsi.gov.tr/hizmet/enerji.htm (03.08.2011)

water, and the most severe one is the extinction of some species which can no more live in a waterless area (Dragu et. al.,2001; IHA,2003).

These disadvantages are the basic causes of anti-HES actions. The fact that HES destroys potable water supplies and the areas in which some species live. One more important thing is that people lose their sites or parks and eventually this causes their daily life habits to change. All of these are among the reasons why people are against HES projects (Hamsici,2010:100-16). These anti-HES actions emerged as local demands in order to prevent the harms given to local social areas.

The first anti-HES action in Turkey developed in Blacksea region, Fındıklı in Rize (Hamsici,2010:111). Anti HES actions are observed to be small scaled, local, and not institutionalized. In the process of the development of anti HES actions, people behave according to their free will without outsider effect. This means that in this process, they behave spontaneously. "Spontaneity is the moment of personal freedom when we are faced with a reality and see it, explore it and act accordingly… It is the time of discovery, of experiencing of creative expression" (Spolin,1999:4). This is a general way to explain what spontaneity is. These movements are voluntary, not planned before or not based on coercion (Kindler,2010). The spontaneous social actions reveal the potential of effecting a process in which national, supra-national or trans-national actors take a great role with the help of self organizing spontaneously in an issue of direct interest having economical, social or political dimension.

3. WAY OF ORGANISATION OF THE ACTIONS

It is observed that social actions against HES projects, step by step, begin to earn institutionalized peculiarity and begin to be more and more effective in the continuum. These spontaneous social actions which is local and environmentalist at the same time began to get in touch with some student or media organizations or other civil associations. Since 2007, many local environmentalist platforms has been established in most regions of Turkey and actions against HES from different regions has began to merge (Hamsici,2010).

By means of these platforms, anti HES actions can easily get contact with some local authorities, civil associations, political parties, or media agencies all of which are effectual in the political process. The method of these social actions consists of non-violent reactions and protests. With these reactions and protests, people are trying to create a kind of social pressure on companies responsible for the construction of power plants (Hamsici, 2010).

Anti HES actions are different from each other as well as they are different from NGOs. NGOs are institutionalized and highly effectual organizations in political and social issues. They can facilitate both in national and international level and they can produce solution to global problems easier than the states (Methews,2004:270; Wapner,2004:377; Boli et al.,2004:264). NGOs are seen as the new partner to the power of nation state like market forces in the subjects of social and political issues (Bond,2004:278). NGOs are hierarchical organizations. Nevertheless, social actions are different from NGOs in respect of their way of organizing, their power to be effectual, and how they work (Doyle,1998:62). Platforms based on anti-HES actions are local, small scaled, their participants are few and from the similar social networks and they mostly do not have a proper budget. They are spontaneous, not institutionalized, and do not have much political power. But it is in this point that these actions begin to be institutionalized in order to be effective in the political continuum. Thus they can be included or shaped by civil associations.

4. POLITICAL CHARACTER OF THE SOCIAL ACTIONS

More generally, social action is what individuals do in interaction with others (Giddens,2008; Tuomela,1984). Social actions can emerge depending on various reasons. One of them is ecocide. Ecocide can cause social changes which can be the cause of social action. Social actions caused by ecocide are transforming current economical, political and moral perceptions in a slightly different way. In Turkey, social ecological actions against HES projects are at the same time against ecocide which is regarded as the result of these projects. These spontaneously organized social actions as time passes start to systematically struggle against changes caused by HES. Giddens (2008: 917-19) argues that new social actions reflect society's concern to the policies and acts, and they help democracy to progress. Similarly, anti HES actions can be evaluated from this perspective. Thus it is possible to claim that these social actions have political character. The political character of these social actions can be explained in three basic respects.

The first one is that social action is a part of political participation. All actions which have the aim of effecting the political decision making process are all political actions (Verba et al.,1995). In the process of globalization, the new mode of policy called governance has a tendency to define politics wider than restricting it with state and bureaucracy. Governance covers social problems and accordingly social movements, actions and their participation to political decision making process. Today these actions and movements can be claimed as the unalienable

parts of democracy (Kaase,2011). The change in the political domain requires ecological problems, and private sphere issues to be accepted as political. The engagement of private and public spaces is expressed by Beck (2005:228) as a situation in which private and public spaces are connected to each other in a direct and short way. Thus, the process of governance is both open to the participation of different actors, their interaction and decentralized and non-hierarchical organizing (Wijkman,1998). This situation shows the potential of active participation. Anti HES actions verifies the tendency of spontaneous intervention by citizens exposed to change. This tendency is the reason why these movements should be evaluated within public space issues. For example, an association called Artvin Meydancık Beldesi Yardımlaşma ve Kültür Derneği(Artvin Meydancık Cooperation and Culture Association) conducted a survey in order to measure the reaction against HES projects, and asked many scholars and occupational groups their approach to the issue. They presented the results to cabinet representatives suggesting other places but not the current ones for power plants' constructions (Hamsici,2010:162).

The second one is that social actions become agents of political pressure by effecting public opinion with their protests or actions. They can be articulated into movements. By this way they can affect public opinion easier than before. Here it is important that by effecting public opinion, they become agents of public pressure. Political actions based on ecological issues try to create public opinion (Burnheim,1996:50). Today these movements and actions are significant in creating public consciousness (Merchant,2005 in. Thomas,2007:2). Doyle and McEachern state political character of new social movements as following: "New social movements are characterized by their informal modes of organization; their attachment to changing values as a central part of their political challenge; their commitment to open and ultra-democratic, participating modes of organization; (at least initial stages); and their willingness to engage in direct action to stop outcomes that they see as harmful" (Doyle et al,1998:57). Essentially, social actions aim at being included in political power. Social actions against HES are becoming more and more systematized and institutionalized, and articulated into social movements. In 2010, young people from 23 different countries came to Turkey for attending a camp; "Sustainability and Green Economy Summer Camp" against HES in Şavşat, in Artvin organized by Türkiye Genç Yeşilleri (Young Greens of Turkey). This shows that social actions against HES do not only create public opinion in national level but also in international level (Hamsici,2010). Another example is the march of "Anadoluyu Vermeyeceğiz" (we do not give up Anatolia) to Ankara. This is again a social action against HES yet it had many

attendants from different regions of Turkey signifying how the public opinion toward HES is created.

The last one is that social actions against HES projects created a new kind of political antagonism among citizens caused by the actions' construction of new kind of life, economy and ethic conception in society. The peculiarity of these actions is that they are local at the beginning but global through the end, because they become more and more comprehensive as they articulated into larger social movements (Thompson,1996:31-32). All these actions adopt an understanding of protecting environment against progressive projects. (Giddens,2009:198-208; Barns,1996:101). This is a matter of choice in a way to prefer progress or to prefer ecology. Preferring ecology means seeing human beings not the sovereign of nature but the part of it as equal to other beings living in nature. This constitutes a new kind of politics (Naess,1973). These new approaches to politics create a new kind of antagonism which has taken the shape of being pro-power or oppositional based on power or oppositional parties. In Turkey, while some people are against HES, some people are among proponents of it. The oppositional sides are the ones who do not agree on energy policies of government while the propositional side sees these policies as helpful in respects of their potential to create employment, to supply high purchase of expropriation. These reasons can divide people of the same area in the issue of HES. For example, in Kastamonu, some villages are divided into two regarding the power plant to be constructed in Loç Valley (Hamsici,2010:24). Similarly in Güneysu, Rize, people are divided into two in a hostile way regarding power plants to be constructed in relation to HES Project (Hamsici,2010:109-10). It is known that the current discrimination base in the region is to be pro or anti HES. (Hamsici,2010:109-10),

5. CONCLUSION

Today, in the process of globalization, it is possible to claim that in the essence of a social action there are certainly economical and political factors whether it is national or supranational level. Because of the fluidity of knowledge, information, money or culture, it becomes easy for a local issue to become global or a global issue to affect the local one. The dynamics of a social action can be economical, cultural, moral, or political at the same time. New understanding of politics in the globalization process encompasses all of them. In this study, political character of the social actions is tried to be examined with the help of the case of anti HES actions in Turkey. Firstly, the paper gives information about HES projects, how social actions against it emerged, and in which context it can be evaluated. It is claimed that social actions against HES are different from social movements

because of their being local, spontaneous and not institutionalized at the beginning. Secondly, the changing nature of these social actions is emphasized by comparing them with NGOs. The founding of this part is that social actions against HES are step by step institutionalized and delocalized in direction to their political aim. Lastly, the paper focuses on the political character of these actions. It is claimed in the study that these anti HES social actions are political as well as all current social actions in respects of political participation, political pressure and political antagonism. Because these social actions have the aim of affecting policy making process related to at least environmental issues, they are political in the issues of participation and democracy. The fact that these actions are aiming a kind of political pressure makes them political as a whole. As the last point, being pro or anti HES creates a new political antagonism and conflict between citizens which is also political at the core.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Balat, Havva (2007), "A renewable perspective for sustainable energy development in Turkey: The case of small hydropower plants", *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, Vol.11, No. 9, pp. 2152-2165.

Barns, Ian (1996), "Environment, Democracy and Community", (in: Freya Mathews-Ed. *Ecology and Democracy*), England: Frank Cass, pp.101-133.

Barber, Benjamin (2004), "Jihad vs. McWorld", (in: Frank J. Lechner and John Boli-Ed. *The Globalization Reader)*, USA: Blackwell, pp. 29-35.

Beck, Ulrich (2005), Siyasallığın İcadı, Trans. Nihat Ülner, İstanbul: İletişim.

Boli, John and George M. Thomas (2004), "World Culture in the World Polity: A Century of International Non-Governmental Organization" (in: Frank J. Lechner and John Boli-Ed. *The Globalization Reader)*, USA: Blackwell, pp.258-264.

Bond, Michael (2004), "The Backlash Against NGOs", (in: Frank J. Lechner and John Boli-Ed. *The Globalization Reader)*, USA: Blackwell, pp.277-282.

Burnheim, Lohn (1996), "Power-Trading and the Environment", (in: Freya Mathews-Ed. *Ecology and Democracy*), England: Frank Cass, pp.49-65.

Doyle, Timothy and Doug McEachern (1998), Environment and Politics, London: Routlege.

Dragu, Catalin , Tom Sells, Ronnie Belmans (2001), "Small Hydro Power – State of The Art and Applications", *Proceedings of International Conference Power Generation and Sustainable Development*, pp. 265-270.

Giddens, Anthony (2008), Sosyoloji, İstanbul: Kırmızı.

Habermas, Jurgen (2008), Küreselleşme ve Milli Devletlerin Akıbeti, Trans. Medeni Beyaztaş, İstanbul: Bakış.

Hamsici, Mahmut (2010), "Dereler ve İsyanlar", Ankara: NotaBene.

Held, David, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, Jonathan Perraton (1999), Global Transformations, ABD: Standford University.

International Hydropower Association, (2003), The Role of Hydropower in Sustainable Development, IHA.

Kaygusuz, Kamil (2002), "Sustainable development of hydropower and biomass energy in Turkey", *Energy Conversion and Management* Vol. 43, No. 8, pp. 1099-1120.

Kindler, Alan (2010), "Spontaneity and Improvisation in Psychoanalysis", *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 222-234.

Mathews, Jessica. T. (2004), "Power Shift", (in: Frank J. Lechner and John Boli-Ed. *The Globalization Reader)*, USA: Blackwell, pp. 270-276.

McGrew, A. (2004), "Power shift: from national government to global governance?", (in: David Held-Ed. *A globalizing world? culture, economics, politics*), UK: Open University, pp. 123-159.

Naess, Arne (1973), "The Shallow And The Deep, Long Range Ecology Movements: A Summary", *Inquiry*, 16.

OECD & International Energy Agency, (2008), Energy Technology Perspectives, International Energy Agency.

Spolin, Viola (1999), Improvisation for the theater: a handbook of teaching and directing techniques, Evanston: Northwestern University.

Thomas, Frank R. (2007), "Carolyn Merchant (ed): Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World. 2nd Edition", *Human Ecology*, 35, pp: 645–646.

Thomlinson, John (2004), Küreselleşme ve Kültür, Trans. Arzu Eker, İstanbul: Ayrıntı.

Thompson, Janna (1996), "Towards a Green World Order: Environment and World Politics", (in: Freya Mathews-Ed. *Ecology and Democracy*), England: Frank Cass, pp:31-48.

Tuomela, Raimo (1984), A Theory of Social Action, Holland: D. Reidel.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Henry E. Brady (1995). Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics. Cambridge: Harvard University.

Wapner, Paul (2004), "Greenpeace and Political Globalism", (in: Frank J. Lechner and John Boli-Ed. *The Globalization Reader*), USA: Blackwell, pp. 377-383.

Wijkman, Anders (1998), "Does Sustainable Development Require Good Governance?", *UN Cronicles* Vol. 35, No. 3.

Yüksel, İbrahim (2010), "As a renewable energy hydropower for sustainable development in Turkey", *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, Vol. 14 No. 9, pp. 3213–3219.

Kaase, Max (2011), "Democracy and Political Action" *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 31, No. 5. pp. 539–551.