IBN KHALDUN'S ASABIYYA FOR SOCIAL COHESION

SOSYAL KAYNAŞMA İÇİN IBN KHALDUN'UN ASABİYYA KAVRAMI

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Abstract

The well-known 14th century historian, economist, and sociologist Ibn Khaldun analyzed the economic, social, and political development of organized societies systematically. In his comprehensive analysis, he put forward that there had to be some factor, some incitement for the desire to exist on a larger scale among some human beings than among others. He stated that this factor which large and powerful states originated was asabiyya.

He borrowed the concept of asabiyya from classical usage and gave a new, positive meaning to it. The original meaning of asabiyya implies people related to each other by blood ties. The group to which an individual feels most closely attached is his clan or tribe, the people with whom he shares a common descent. Ibn Khaldun re-considered asabiyya as a factor being shared by people not related to each other by blood ties but by long and close contact as members of a group. According to him, it meant solidarity, group feeling or group consciousness.

In this paper, I will try to highlight the concept of asabiyya as discussed by Ibn Khaldun. The aim of the paper is to quest whether asabiyya can be used as a fundamental concept for social cohesion in the EU, Turkey, and other political entities in the world.

Key Words: asabiyya, Ibn Khaldun, social cohesion, European Union, Turkey
Jel Codes: D63, D79, E69, N30, Z13

Öz

14. yüzyılda yaşamış olan meşhur tarihçi, ekonomist ve sosyolog Ibn Khaldun insan topluluklarının ekonomik, sosyal ve siyasi gelişimlerini sistematik olarak incelemiştir. Bu kapsamlı analizinde, büyük ölçekli bir arada yaşama arzusunun bazı insanlarda diğer insanlara göre daha fazla olmasının bir nedeni, bir faktörü olması gerektiğini öne sürmüştür. Büyük ve güçlü devletlerin ortaya çıkmasına neden olan bu faktöre asabiyya adını vermiştir.

Ibn Khaldun bu kavramı klasik kullanımından ödünç almış ve buna yeni ve pozitif bir mana yüklemiştir. Asabiyyanın orijinal anlamı birbirlerine kan bağı ile bağlı insan grubu demektir. Bir bireyin kendini en yakın hissettiği grup, ortak atalarının da bulunduğu kendi kavmidir. Ibn Khaldun asabiyya kavramını yeniden değerlendirmeye almış, insan gruplarını sadece kan bağı ile birbirlerine bağlı olmaları bakımından değil fakat aynı grubun üyeleri olarak uzun ve sürekli bağlantı içinde olmaları bakımından değerlendirmiştir. Böylece asabiyya, grup bilinci, grup duygusu, dayanışma duygusu anlamını almıştır.

Bu çalışmada Ibn Khaldun'un asabiyya kavramı incelenmiş ve Avrupa Birliği, Türkiye ve diğer siyasi oluşumlarda asabiyya kavramının sosyal kaynaşma için temel bir kavram olarak kullanılıp kullanılamayacağı sorgulanmıştır

Anahtar Kelimeler: Asabiyya, Ibn Khaldun, sosyal kaynaşma, Avrupa Birliği, Türkiye
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Introduction

Ibn Khaldun, the well-known 14th century historian, economist, jurist, scholar, traveller, statesman and the father of sociology, was born in Tunisia in 1332. His full name is Veliyyuddin Abdurrahman bin Muhammad bin Khaldun el-Hadrami (Alatas, 2006:123). His family was originally from South Arabia which first moved to Spain and then migrated via Seville to North Africa, Tunisia. Ibn Khaldun's early education included religion, law, mysticism, philosophy, history, and politics.

Ibn Khaldun worked as a judge, a statesman, and a diplomat in a variety of places in the Maghreb, such as Morocco, Granada, and Tunisia. In most of these posts, he was confronted with the jealousy of his colleagues and had to leave each place. He decided to leave the Maghreb and head for Cairo, then a famous place in the Mashreq. He spent fifteen years in Cairo. He was appointed six times as the grand judge. The last link with the Maghreb was broken when Ibn Khaldun's family, along with his worldly possessions were shipwrecked near Alexandria. This accident put him in great grief. He resigned his post and went to Makkah. In 1401 he met Taimur who had trapped him, along with the Egyptian ruler's army in Damascus. He stayed in Taimur's camp for thirty-five days and the dialogue between the two is one of the most interesting recorded in history. During the last seven years of his life in Egypt, and up to his sudden death in 1406, Ibn Khaldun remained active as a scholar and judge (Ahmed, 2002: 101-104).

Ibn Khaldun's *Kitab al-Ibar,* world history, ranks high in the esteem of scholars. The well-known British historian Arnold Toynbee states that it is 'undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place'. For Toynbee, Ibn Khaldun was the sole point of light and the one outstanding personality of Islamic thought. His work was regarded as the most comprehensive and illuminating analysis of how human affairs work that has been made anywhere (Ahmed, 2002; Katsiaficas, 1999:47).

The introduction part of Ibn Khaldun's book of world history, *Kitab al-Ibar* is known as the *Muqaddimah.* This introduction part is named as *Prolegomena* in English. It has been stated that the *Muqaddimah* is written very thoughtfully and scrupulously, based on a certain pattern and within a particular framework or theoretical foundation (Ahmad, 2003:159). The excerpts from the *Muqaddimah* were first translated in 1806. Although a complete French translation was published in 1856, it was not until 1957 that a complete

English translation of the *Muqaddimah* was published (Katsiaficas, 1999:48) It has been underlined that Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* established a sophisticated theory to explain the rise and fall of dynasties (Matar, 2005:56).

Five centuries before Darwin, Ibn Khaldun wrote 'species become more numerous'. Nearly half a millenium before Marx, Ibn Khaldun wrote 'labor is the real basis of profit'. Four hundred years before Auguste Comte, Ibn Khaldun unveiled his 'science of culture' (Katsiaficas, 1999:46). All these show his power in scientific research, his high knowledge in various disciplines, and his wisdom in analysis of facts.

Some of the formulae put forth by famous scientists can be seen in Ibn Khaldun's theories at first. The examples are Karl Marx's stages of human history which provide the dynamics for the dialectics of conflict between groups; Max Weber's typology of leadership; Vilfredo Pareto's circulation of elites; Ernest Gellner's pendulum swing theory, can be seen in Ibn Khaldun's theories (Ahmed, 2002:101).

Ibn Khaldun was a true Muslim who believed in the other world. He insisted that philosophy could not comprehend divinity. In this respect, he clearly believed that logical thought could not completely grasp all facets of life. Yet, this orthodoxy in religion did not keep him from differentiating between the physical world and the divine world. The firm commitment to orthodoxy did not prevent Ibn Khaldun from distinguishing between religious and political principles of social organization (Arnason and Stauth, 2004:38).

He used abstraction in trying to find the essential parts of truth and knowledge. He insisted that logical abstraction of universals could lead to an understanding of the essential nature of the physical world. He was against the application of dogma (Katsiaficas, 1999:49). In addition to the reality captured by the soul, he established emprical reality as an important object of inquiry.

His methodology was the use of a priori assumption, using logical hypothesis. In addition, he used empirical data wherever possible and viable. He would never have made any unsupported conclusions such as the famous sociologist Max Weber suggested that 'eastern societies were less intelligent than the Europeans and that Europeans are genetically endowed with greater amounts of rationality' (Abdalla, 2007:62). In that sense he is incomparable with Weber.

For Ibn Khaldun, there is a dialectic relation between the past and the present. His famous proverb says 'the past and the present are alike as water is alike water'. Water falls

down on the earth as rain, then goes to river, then evaporates, and becomes rain again (Cabiri, 2006).

Another important thing about Ibn Khaldun is the subject of his analysis. For many centuries, the focus of the West has been on the individuality. For Ibn Khaldun, the group, not the individual, was history's focal point and determining factor. Individuals seldom- if ever, unless they were divinely inspired- have more than a minor influence on the overwhelming forces of history. Indeed, the individual for Ibn Khaldun is practically neglected as a philosophical topic (Katsiaficas, 1999:53).

His neglect of individuality did not keep him from studying the nature and characteristics of human beings. He pronounced that man is by nature a domineering being and his desire to overcome others and subdue and coerce them (*qahr*) is the source of wars. He regarded human beings savage, stupid, weak, and ignorant. Given the lack of virtue and low level of intelligence accorded to humans by Ibn Khaldun, how then could societies hold together? His answer was *asabiyya*.

This paper, "Ibn Khaldun's Asabiyya for Social Cohesion", is written with the aim of trying to find answers to what keeps society together in general and in particular in Turkey and in the European Union. In this context, I analyzed and studied Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyya* which can be translated as group feeling. The method of the study is based on a priori assumption founded on definitons and principles.

The paper is divided into three sections. The introduction part summarizes Ibn Khaldun's life, methodology and his philosophy. The second part, conceptual and theoretical framework, highlights the characteristics and components of *asabiyya* and its relation with other political and social concepts. The last part, concluding remarks, summarizes and reviews *asabiyya* and makes a proposition that *asabiyya* can be used as a fundamental concept in the political and social analysis what the fundamental dynamics which give life to a political structure is.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

What is Asabiyya?

The concept of *asabiyya* lies at the centre of Ibn Khaldun's comprehensive theory of history and society. This is one of his most untranslatable terms, and Western interpreters have differed widely in its meaning. Rosenthal translates it as '*group feeling*', Monteil mostly as '*esprit de corps*' or '*esprit de clan*'. It seems misleading to equate it with

Durkheim's mechanical *solidarity* and ascribe to Ibn Khaldun the claim that this is solidarity *tout court* (Arnason & Stauth, 2004; Kayapınar, 2006:88; Chapra, 2001:5-6). Some others have used it as group consciousness, gemeinsinn, nationalitatsidee, corporate spirit, feeling of solidarity, group solidarity, group will, communal spirit, social cohesion, martial spirit, striking power and social solidarity (Kayapınar, 2006:87-89). Ibn Khaldun's understanding of *asabiyya* is too complex and multifaceted to be circumscribed in a mechanical solidarity.

Ibn Khaldun states that there must be some factor, some incitement for the desire for cooperation to exist on a larger scale among some human beings than among others. This factor he calls *asabiyya*, a word which he borrowed from classical usage and to which he gave a new positive meaning. The group to which an individual feels most closely attached is his clan or tribe, the people with whom he shares a common descent. But politically, *asabiyya* can also be shared by people not related to each other by blood ties but by long and close contact as members of a group.

Ibn Khaldun says that 'blood ties lead to affection for one's relations and blood relatives, no harm ought to befall them nor any destruction come upon them.' (Ibn Khaldun, 1967:98) Saying so, he goes on explaining that purity of lineage is not possible due to the conditions of life. On one hand he asserts that purity of lineage was completely lost among Arabs and other such people; on the other hand he puts forward that asabiyya is not simply a matter of tribal cohesion. Purity of lineage is found only among the savage Arabs of the desert and other such people. This is because of the poor life, hard conditions, and bad habitats. Sedentary Arabs mixed with Persians and non-Arabs. Purity of lineage was completely lost, and its fruit, the group feeling, was lost and rejected. The tribes, then disappeared and were wiped out, and with them, asabiyya was wiped out.(Ibn Khaldun, 1967: 99-100). Muhammad said: 'The noble son of the noble father of the noble grandfather of the noble great-grandfather. Joseph, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham. This indicates that Joseph had reached the limit in glory.(Ibn Khaldun, 1967:106)

Asabiyya is not simply a matter of tribal cohesion. The goal of *asabiyya* is royal power. He stresses that *asabiyya* is needed to inspire the struggle that accompanies a broader spectrum of human activities, including prophecy and missionary propoganda. All references to *asabiyya* are strictly subordinated to the analysis of the state. In any case, it can be argued that we are dealing with a capacity for collective will-formation and

commitment to sustained action, rather than simply a high degree of social cohesion (Arnason & Stauth, 2004:34).

Ibn Khaldun replies the question of 'why people have common behaviours' not in terms of power, egoism, hedonism, social contract, language, religion, symbolic communication, instincts, individual psychology, imitation, learned behaviour, obedience; but by *asabiyya* (Eyüpoğlu, 2004:6). In order to realize *asabiyya* further, some other concepts brought about by Ibn Khaldun, such as *umran*, *mulk*, and *fitrah,* need to be elaborated.

Umran- Civilization

Ibn Khaldun's most fundamental concept, *umran*, defines the general object of historical inquiry. Like Monteil and Rosenthal, some translated it as civilization and like Lacoste, some interpreted it as the totality of economic, social and cultural activities (Arnason & Stauth, 2004:31). As soon as some kind of social organization is formed, *umran* results. When a social organization grows more populous, a larger and better *umran* results. This growth in numbers, with a corresponding growth in civilization, finally culminates in the highest form of sedentary culture man is able to achieve (Dawood, 1967:x-xi).

Ibn Khaldun distinguishes two civilizational patterns. His labels for them are beduin (*badawa)* and sedentary (*hadara*). The beduin type includes agricultural and pastoral groups and the sedentary includes urban ways of life plus rural communities involved in handicrafts and trade and thus integrated into the broader orbit of the urban network. He assumes that beduin civilization preceded the sedentary type, and the older form of life is also a more limited and stagnant pattern of human development. Beduin tribes possess a high degree of *asabiyya* (Arnason & Stauth, 2004:33; Kayapınar, 2006:88).

It is on this understanding that Ibn Khaldun sees the level of achievement in crafts and habit as representing the level of achievement in civilisation. He views it as another important indicator that determines the level of civilisation achieved. This process takes place simultaneously with the process of transformation from nomadic culture (*umran badawi*) to sedentary culture (*umran hadari*) (Ahmad, 2003:157). Ibn Khaldun describes the Arabs as the most extreme case of beduin civilization but he adds 'no people are as quick to accept [religious] truth and right guidance' (Arnason & Stauth, 2004:34).

However, he never made any ethnical conclusions. He just wanted to underline that '*differences of condition* among people are the result of the different ways in which they make their living.' With this simple statement, he laid the foundation for the modern scientific historical method, what can be called today historical determinism. He compared different societies, showing that it was their mode of production that determined their structures and their historical limits (White, 2009:226; Ibn Khaldun, 1967:91).

He was able to show that human society became more or less steadily more complex, as production techniques became more sophisticated and the division of labour more extensive. He argued that the forms taken by the social psychology, religion, juridical and social structures of a given society, are linked to its *economic mode of production*. Ibn Khaldun had no illusions that everything obediently follows economics as the Marxists claim. The main difference between the atheistic Marxists and Ibn Khaldun was that Ibn Khaldun concieved the spiritual realm as existing prior to and influencing the physical world (White, 2009:227).

Ibn Khaldun states that 'the life span of a dynasty corresponds to the life span of an individual; it grows up, passes into an age of stagnation and thence into retrogression. ' Thus, every society ultimately experiences 'senility which cannot be cured or made to disappear, because it is something natural, and natural things do not change.' Thus societies have cycles of develeopment. But these cycles are not all identical in all societies, since all societies- like all of creation- are undergoing very dynamic processes of continual change, due to a range of influences (White, 2009:228; Kayapınar, 2006:83-85).

In relation with *umran*, it can be concluded that *asabiyya* is closely related with the badawi way of living. For Ibn Khaldun this is so because when societies become more civilized, they get used to luxury and forget about the values they possessed once.

Fıtrah- Natural Disposition

Khaldun views man's vacillations as externally determined, since 'man is a child of the customs and the things he has become used to", having become accustomed to luxury, which replaces 'his natural disposition', *fitrah*. Those who lose their religion are behaving unnaturally by behaving contrary to their true nature. As their asabiyya withers, their human nature (*fitrah*) is corrupted and greed overcomes society, sending prices and taxes (White, 2009:236).

Khaldun demonstrates the factors that would lead to the weakening and demise of Arab civilisation, as it moved away from *fitric* values. Islam provides humans with a framework that we are free to accept or reject; we can choose to either act justly or unjustly- or suffer the consequences in each case. Ibn Khaldun shows that unjust, tyrannical societies are always decadent societies, sliding towards social and political disintegration. Ibn Khaldun upholds the ideal of monotheism- *fitrah*- which eliminates all differences of class or race that falsely divide humanity (White, 2009:238). It can be deduced that *fitrah* and *asabiyya* are positively related. When one withers, the other withers too; when one increases, the other rises too.

Mulk/Dawlah- Royal Power, the State

His major contribution is his analysis of the correlation between *asabiyya* and political power. Although power was the basis of rulership and royal authority was established through military might, the glue that held societies together was *asabiyya*, based on kinship and religion and stronger in tribal than in urban societies. Conquerors with strong group feeling could create greater and longer-lasting empires (Darling, 2007:329).

For Ibn Khaldun, those groups with a strong sense of *asabiyya* are destined to be strong and to rule- at least as long as they are able to maintain their sense of identity and solidarity. For Ibn Khaldun, *asabiyya* is the basis for political power and cultural hegemony, while unrestrained individualism was one source of the downfall of groups. He comprehended revolutions as consisting of the struggle for power between outsider groups struggling to overthrow insider groups whose '*asabiyya*' was declining due to the comforts that ruling provided (Katsiaficas, 1999:53). The goal to which group feeling leads is royal authority. This is because asabiyya gives protection and makes possible mutual defence, the pressing of claims, and every other kind of social activity (Ibn Khaldun, 1967:107). Royal superiority (*dawlah*) is a goal to which asabiyya leads. Even if an individual tribe has different 'houses' and many diverse group feelings, still, there must exist a group feeling that is stronger than all the other group feelings combined, that is superior to them all and makes them subservient, and in which all the diverse group feelings coalesce, as it were, to become one greater group feeling. Otherwise, splits would ocur and lead to dissension and strife (Ibn Khaldun, 1967:108). It is thus evident that royal authority (*dawlah*) is the goal of group feeling (Ibn Khaldun, 1967:109). As long as a nation retains its asabiyya, royal authority that disappears in one branch will, of necessity, pass to some other branch of the same nation (Ibn Khaldun, 1967:114). Royal authority and large-scale dynastic power are attained only through asabiyya. When a dynasty is firmly established, it can dispense with asabiyya (Ibn Khaldun, 1967:123).

Ibn Khaldun underlines that royal power and urban life constitute the preconditions for an autonomous growth of culture. After he establishes the relation between the royal power and the hadari civilization, he examines the self-destructive characteristic of the royal power. He states that the civilizing process seems to perpetuate or even reinforce the destructive trends. In other words, the state serves to protect civilization against itself. Ibn Khaldun's formula for the upshot of this civilizational push and pull between the desert and the walled is his most famous idea: the dynastic cycle as a self-destroying but ever-rebuilt bridge between two worlds (Arnason & Stauth, 2004:35-36).

It is stated that *asabiyya* assisted a regime to build on the achievements of its predecessors and that augmented and improved the governing mechanisms through which justice reached the people of the realm. Lack of *asabiyya*, on the other hand, seems to have have had a part in inhibiting the operation of institutions of good administration, thus blocking the legitimacy granted by a reputation for justice (Darling, 2007:356).

Ibn Khaldun condemns unjust government as a threat to civilization and to the very survival of the human species. In that connection, he introduces the idea of a well-known Circle of Justice. It is a model devised to highlight the interdependence of enlightened rule, military strength and economic prosperity (Arnason & Stauth, 2004:39). In Ibn Khaldun's view, the Circle of Justice summarized the role of governance in the maintenance of civilization and prosperity and formed the basis of his 'science of civilization' (Darling, 2007:332).

It is worth to mention about the Circle of Justice which guided some predominant rulers in the past, and also which was used as the main motive in various well-known tales, stories, and epic poems that belong to different geographies in the ancient and medieval time. There are a number of versions of Circle of Justice. Some examples given by the cited author (Darling, 2007:331-332) are: 'There can be no royal authority without men, no men without money, no money without prosperity, and no prosperity without justice and good administration.' 'Royal authority exists through the army, the army through Money, Money through taxes, taxes through cultivation, cultivation through justice, justice through the improvemnet of the officials, the improvement of officials through the forthrightness of viziers, and the whole thing in the first place through the ruler's personal supervision of his subjects' condition and his ağabeylity to educate them, so that he may rule them, and not they him.' 'The world is a garden, the fence of which is the dynasty. The dynasty is an authority through which life is given to proper behaviour. Proper behaviour is a policy directed by the ruler. The ruler is an institution supported by the soldiers. The soldiers are helpers who are maintained by Money.

Money is sustenance brought together by the subjects. The subjects are servants who are protected by justice. Justice is something familiar/harmonious, and through it the world persists. The world is a garden….'

Thus, " the good qualities in man are appropriate to political and royal authority since goodness is appropriate to political authority. The existence of *asabiyya* without the practice of praise-worthy qualities would be a defecet among people who possess a 'house' and prestige." (Ibn Khaldun, 1967:111-112).

Ibn Khladun states that "only those who share in a group feeling can have a 'house' and nobility in the basic sense and in reality, while others have it only in a metaphorical and figurative sense. This is because nobility and prestige are the result of personal qualities." He adds; "Whereever the group feeling is truly formidable and its soil kept pure, the advance of a common descent is most evident, and the group feeling is more effective. It is an additional advantage to have a number of noble ancestors. Thus, prestige and nobility become firmly grounded in those who share in the group feeling, because there eists the result of common descent. The nobility of a 'house' is in direct proportion to the different degrees of group feeling, because nobility is the secret of group feeling." (Ibn Khaldun, 1967:102).

He highlights that ruling power and nobility pass away after some time. He says that "Prestige lasts at best four generations in one lineage" (Ibn Khaldun, 1967:105). Yet, people usually are not aware of this new situation. In this respect he continues (Ibn Khaldun, 1967:102-103): Later on, the people who have a house divest themselves of that nobility when group feeling disappears as the result of sedentary life, and they mingle with the common people. A certain delusion as to their former prestige remains in their souls and leads them to consider themselves members of the most noble houses. They are, however, far from that, because their group feeling has completely disappeared. Many inhabitants of cities who had their origins in noble Arab or non-Arab houses share such delusions.The Israelites are the most firmly misled in this delusion. They originally had one of the gretaest houses in the world because of the great number of prophets and messengers born among their ancestors, extending from Abraham to Moses, and next, because of their group feeling and the royal authority that God had promised and granted them by means of that group feeling. Then, they were destined tol ive as exiles on earth. For thousands of years, they knew only enslavement and unbelief. Stil, the delusion of nobility has not left them. They can be found saying: 'He is an AAronite'; 'He is a descendant of Joshua'; 'He is one of Caleb's progeny'; 'He is from the tribe of Judah'.

For Ibn Khaldun, badawis are closer to auspiciousness (*hayr*) more than hadaris. When first created (*fitratu'l-ula*), man was at equal distance to wickedness and auspiciousness in the sense that man's nature was open to the effects of both of them. Nevertheless, man is more inclined to auspiciousness than wickedness potentially. Yet, life conditions determine man's closeness to wickedness or auspiciousness. Badawis were close to auspiciousness because they were close to original *fitrah*. Original first *fitrah* is the state where only God's will prevails and therefore it is away from all sorts of wickedness. Ibn Khaldun quotes Prophet Mohammad's hadith that 'every child is born upon *fitrah*, then their parents grow them as Jewish, Christian, or Zoroastrian.' (Kayapınar, 2006:97-98).

There is a compulsory relation between *asabiyya* and good/auspicious merits. Good virtues are religious merits in the sense that they are *fitric* values. In order to have royal power (*mulk*), the ruling person/s have to be graced with good merits. *Hilafah* (to rule on behalf of another one) and *mulk* (royal power) are necessary for God's verdicts to materialize in this world. God's verdicts are completely auspicious. In this case, the person/s who will implement God's verdicts on the earth have to be graced with auspicious merits. Therefore, the source of *mulk*, namely *asabiyya*, become integrated with auspicious characteristics (Kayapınar, 2006:103).

Religion and Asabiyya

Ibn Khaldun applied his theory to the main topics of the pre-Islamic religions as well. This is why his approach is to be considered as a pioneering one not only in sociology but also in history of religions (Gürkan, 2009:341).

Ibn Khaldun established a strong relation between religion and political hegemony. He stated "Religious propoganda cannot materialize without asabiyya. This is because every mass (political) undertaking by necessity requires asabiyya."(Ibn Khaldun, 1967:125).

According to him, calling to religion strengthens asabiyya, and in return it helps the maintenance of political hegemony, since the ultimate goal of asabiyya is political hegemony. The prophet or the leader supports the unity in aim and solidarity. Therefore, blood ties are not sufficient to establish big states; but unity in aim/object (religion) is also required (Gürkan, 2009:343).

Ibn Khaldun analyzed the relation between asabiyya and the concept of 'electi' which has often been put forward by the Israilites. According to Ibn Khaldun, Israilities were a group of people based on *asabiyya* like the other groups of people. Moreover, their

religious structuring was based on strong *asabiyya* relations. Therefore, the fundamental principle which helped to constitute their *asabiyya* could lead to lack of *asabiyya* in the contrary situation. *Ahd* (a contract, a pact with God; a promise; a swearing) is important here.

When the requirements of *ahd* are not fulfilled, then it is stated that they would lose their *asabiyya* and their hegemony. For Ibn Khaldun, Israilites lost their asabiyya by ignoring the rules and principles of their *ahd.* Consequently, they lost their asabiyya and went under the influence of other tribes and nations (Gürkan, 2009:341-345). Spinoza tried to explain the concept of the 'electi' from a sociological and historical perspective. For this reason, he was excluded from the Dutch Jewish Community. According to Spinoza, being an 'electi' or superiority should be understood with a metaphorical meaning. For him, divine grant of superiority or hegemony to one group is impossible. For Ibn Khaldun, Israilites had neither knowledge nor ethical merits to be superior than the other groups. Therefore they should be taken as metaphores for *asabiyya* and hegemony.

Concluding Remarks

Why do people have common behaviours? What are the fundamental dynamics which give birth and empower a political structure like the state? What keeps a society together? Ibn Khaldun replied these questions by using the same instrumental concept- *asabiyya*. Can *asabiyya* be used as a fundamental, instrumental and functional concept for social cohesion in Turkey and in the European Union where many nations and nationalities with different cultures and ways of living exist? This paper is mainly written with the effort of trying to find a reply to this question.

Ibn Khaldun states that in the beginning when blood ties were a few, *asabiyya* was a natural happening. When the number of the group with close blood ties increases, then the phenomenon of blood ties does not reflect the reality but rather it becomes a delusion believed by the members of the group. The people in the group get into the illusion of close blood ties but in fact they do not have them any more. At this point Ibn Khaldun asserts that blood ties are not that much important. The existence of the *belief* of having such ties which could lead to close relation and mutual assistance becomes important. Ibn Khaldun's concept of asabiyya is not biological or ethnical, but rather functional (Kayapınar, 2006:91).

Thus, Ibn Khaldun does not limit *asabiyya* with blood ties. The condition of non-existence of blood ties constitute a solid ground for the use of *asabiyya* as a concept in social cohesion in the EU and in Turkey.

Ibn Khaldun moves forward and adds that v*ela* and *hilf* can generate *asabiyya* too. *Vela* means protecting or being responsible of other person/s. *Hilf* means being in cooperation, being in contract, being in pact. People who are attached with each other with *vela* or *hilf* feel the same kind of misery or sorrow that they would feel for their relatives in the case of being tortured or humiliated. Thence, cohesion due to *vela* is like or close to cohesion due to blood ties (Gürkan, 2009:431).

It is clear that both terms are vital concepts for the constitution of any form of political structure. *Vela* and *hilf* are the two main concepts which are currently been practiced by the European Union organs. These organs, the Commission, the Council, and the Parliament use the political power transposed to them by the member states and countries by contract.

Ibn Khaldun clearly asserts that the aim of asabiyya is *mulk* or *dawlah,* in other words royal power, hegemony or governance. Ibn Khaldun underlines that *asabiyya* has a political aspect. In the case of its existence, it guides the members of the group for politically collective action. It forces them to demand for a higher political position than the present one. *Asabiyya* brings time and spatial dimensions and a multi-disciplinary approach to politics (Kayapınar, 2006:114).

In this sense, *asabiyya*, as a very very political term, and as a very dynamic and dialectic concept, can serve for the future needs of Turkey and the EU as well.

Is religion an internal and integral component of *asabiyya*? According to Ibn Khaldun, a religious calling cannot materialize without *asabiyya*. *Asabiyya* can exist without religion but religion cannot exist without *asabiyya*. Religion empowers asabiyya because it abolishes competition and jealousy among the members of the group and focus their hearts to one point. Asabiyya becomes the foundation of a political group. Religion, at this point, might help asabiyya to establish royal power. It can be said that not only religion but ideologies can also accomplish this. When there are more than one asabiyya in a region, the greatest and strongest *asabiyya* overcomes the others and subordinates them. In this case, all the other *asabiyya's* melt in this strong *asabiyya* and then a big new *asabiyya* comes out of it (Kayapınar, 2006:104-105).

Hence, the use of religion for the purpose of social cohesion loses its impact. The poeple in the EU and/or in Turkey do not have to be all Muslim, Christian, Jewish or Zoroastrian. For such cohesion, the dictum of 'the majority of religion' fades out.

Another tough issue for a political entity is nationalism. Nationalism is a historical phenomenon. On the other hand, asabiyya has been the engine of any political change. It would be misleading to equate *asabiyya* with nationalism. Moreover, *asabiyya* as a term understands and explains the change more than the other concepts such as equality, freedom, autonomy, power, ethics, justice, rights, and legality. So, *asabiyya* is a more comprehensive concept than nationalism is.

Can *asabiyya* be used as a conceptual framework to understand and analyze multi-cultural, multi-national political structures like Turkey and the European Union and also other political entities in the world? I would say- yes. *Asabiyya* is a very dynamic, sui generis and dialectic concept. Theoretically it is comprehensive, but not complicated or ambiguous. Ibn Khaldun used this concept, *asabiyya,* to understand the social and political changes in the midst of many political upheavals and turmoils of his time. This concept might help us in understanding "the change" at various levels and in various political structures and might guide us in establishing and implementing our goals for peace and progress.

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