

CULTURAL REFLECTIONS OF VALUE CHANGES IN TURKEY*

Lecturer Dr. Özlem Becerik Yoldaş

(Corresponding Author)

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University
Biga Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences
Department of Public Administration
E mail: oez_bec@hotmail.com

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yunus Yoldaş

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University
Biga Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences
Department of International Relations
E mail: yyoldas@comu.edu.tr

ABSTRACT

The process of globalization thrust world societies into inevitable cultural erosion and led to a value change. It is well known that this change and transformation have accelerated the change of values in advanced industrial countries. Ronald Inglehart defined this movement in Western societies as a transition from materialist towards post-materialist values. With regard to the political culture, Inglehart identified that along with empirical research a global change that shifts needs for self-actualization and self-development to the fore. In contrast, material needs (e.g. security, existence) are pushed into the background as these needs have already been satisfied along with economic growth and existential security.

In this context, the 2012 World Value Survey gives significant information about cultural reflections on the cultural memory of the Turkish society; people's beliefs and attitudes, their opinions on democracy and politics in Turkey, and, last but not least, the data shows the social differentiation in Turkey. The aim of this study is to examine the remarkable changes which values have undergone in Turkey and their influence on cultural life in recent years.

Key words: Turkey, Ronald Inglehart, Value Changes, Cultural Reflections, Cultural Erosion

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1 Introduction

It is a well known fact that human behavior is not instrumental-oriented but that it is, indeed, oriented towards moral values. The deep interest of science and the public to study changes in values can be explained from the arising consequences. Values have an enormous impact on social development, and the value change process can lead to an adjustment crisis within a society. Development trends such as the duplication of cultures and lifestyles, the globalization of culture and society and, last but not least, the changes in values become the focus of attention in the cultural sociology. (Junge, 2009: 27)

Developed liberal societies show three common development trends: a change of dominant social values, the lowering of social classes to the benefit of the environment and the transition of collectively-shaped lifestyles to individually-selected lifestyles. (1)

For the value change thesis, the most influential works of Roland Inglehart are key for gathering empirical data concerning Turkey. In this context, the questions at hand are how have the changes in values influenced Turkish society and what are their cultural reflections?

2 The concept of value and value changes (definitions and terminology)

For one, value change is significant in more than one way. It shows the socio-economic transitions as people are adapt to new environments. The change in values can also be treated as an independent variable. Values guide behavior of people and influence the social, economic and political process of whole communities. In 1951, Clyde Kluckhohn defined the concept of value as follows: 'value is a conception of the desirable, not one's own wishes, these are bare needs but the desirable that are recognized as justified reflects and acceptance. Therefore, they are basic action orientation and general orientation standards on which both individuals and groups can orient their actions – they are closely correlated with social praxis.' (2)

A similar definition was given by Max Kaase. He defined that a value belongs to central analytical concepts of social sciences. In the narrow sense, this concept means that despite a wide range of meanings it is perceived as a permanent orientation of an individual in relation to social desirability. In this context, values function to steer behavior away from selected behavior alternatives (Kaase, 1992: 1141).

Another definition provided by Franz Urban Pappi who formulates 'values' as being 'understood as a standard which directs action of use that are promised to separate alternatives of actions so that you can decide for an alternative of action with the highest expected use.' This can be closely interpreted as a social orientation in value that means a permanent orientated individual according to social desires. Orientations in values are distinguished from spontaneous wishes and expectations (Pappi, 2007: 637). Pappi reveals that in social sciences the value change is generally perceived as a change in social orientations in values, with that he highlights an important part in cultural change (ibid., 2007: 637).

3 Ronald Inglehart: Materialism und Postmaterialism

In the 1970s in the field of psephology, the theory of value change became very important. In 1989, the American sociologist, Ronald Inglehart, defined a value change from the materialist values (property, possession, stability) towards post-materialist values (self-expression and communication, individual autonom and political participation) in Western countries. Referring to Abraham Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs Theory', based on the scarcity hypothesis and socialization hypothesis, Inglehart assumed that the older generation had to satisfy material needs after World War II when there was a lack of items. Therefore they were supporters of material needs, but the young generation was born into a new and affluent society that leaned toward post-material values. In later studies, Inglehart made a comparison with several prosperous societies and observed this tendency repeatedly ([Junge, 2009: 27–28](#)).

In 1981, Turkey was not yet included in the World Value Survey. From 1990 onwards, Turkey has been taking part in the project. The survey comprises data from the last 20 years, and based on data obtained, the value survey shows the change and stability of values in Turkey from 1990 to the present (Esmer, 2012: 5). Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel developed a World Culture Map based on the World Value Survey. This map reveals that a large number of basic values are closely correlated. There are two major dimensions of cross-cultural variation in the world: 1) **traditional values** versus **secular-rational values** and 2) **survival values** versus **self-expression values**. The global cultural map shows how many societies are located on these two dimensions. Towards the top of this map there is a shift from traditional values to secular-rational and moving to the right there is a shift from survival values to self-expression values.

In the diagonal of the Protestantian situated in Europe, Islamic societies are found. Turkey is found right at the top, but Turkish society is located in the middle of both axes. In other words, the survival values and the traditional values of Turkish society are closely positioned (Esmer, 2012: 7).

In 2012, Yılmaz Esmer conducted a representative national survey in Turkey and then published his research under the title 'The Boundaries of Cultural Change - Turkey's Value Map 2012'. Using Inglehart's theory, he demonstrated the percentage of materialists and post-materialists in Turkish society. His research revealed that in Turkey materialists place importance on economics, security, defense and public security whereas post-materialists perceive values such as freedom and participation rather than money as being quite important. The scale that resulted shows a fluctuation in values between scores of 0 and 5 with 5 being the category of post-materialists. Generally speaking, the index under 5 shows that post-materialist values are less preferred than materialist values in Turkey (score of 2). Turkey still scores high in traditional values, but Turkish society still has survival fears. Post-materialists are not as common. When examining the dispersion of regions it is clear that the percentage of materialists is lower in developed regions. The interesting and surprising fact is that in contradistinction to Inglehart's theory, Turkey's region of Southeastern Anatolia which is less-developed shows a high portion of post-materialists because this region almost eliminates choices such as power of defense, law and order and security. Overall, this area tries to distance itself from materialistic indications (Esmer, 2012: 17).

4 Value Changes and Social Structure in Turkey

Jean Baudrillard's essay 'From the Universal to the Singular: The Violence of the Global' makes an analogy between the concepts 'globalization' and 'universe'. The concept of universalization includes human rights, freedom, culture and democracy, but on the contrary the concept of globalization is related to technology, market, tourism and information. Baudrillard states in his thesis that if each culture becomes universal it will lose its singularity both in terms of modernity and changes to the value system. As a result, the culture dies, and values will be inevitably defeated. Furthermore, Baudrillard emphasizes that globalization puts an end to the universality of values. For him, globalization describes the process of homogenization that destroys singularity (Baudrillard, 2007: 19–20).

The impacts during the globalization process in Turkey triggered changes in values in a negative way. These changes appeared both in the process of globalization and universalization. In the area of globalization, starting with the point of view of life, deep impacts in politics, political ideology, economy and market economy will be found, whereby the developments in technology, tourism and information have a huge impact on nationalism, religious values, family structures and, last but not least, on the status of women in Turkish society. In fact, in the globalization process, criticism remains that Turkey can still not compete with modern Western countries when it comes to democracy, culture, human rights and freedom. Freedom House's annual report launched in 2014 highlights concerns pertaining to global rights and civil liberties. Turkey shows a decline in democratic rights and freedom of the press which causes its rating to drop from

'partly free' to 'not free'. (3) As a result, the increase of value changes is causing a confrontation with fundamental political parties and political leaders (Bürklin, 1993: 17). Accordingly, political parties and political leaders have to redefine political trust and make decisions transparent in an effort to adapt to the social environment. In light of the new value changes, political leaders with an authoritarian style are more open to letting go of their fatherly, authoritarian character (ibid., 29). If we look at Turkey, it seems that the value change has not led any political leader to drop his fatherly, authoritarian personality. The authoritarian personality of political leaders, for instance, is still a topic of discussion in the national and international press.

According to the data collected from the World Values Survey, 31 political institutions in Turkey have been surveyed on the issue of trust (Esmer, 2012: 48). The results reveal that Turkey is a country where people have less trust and confidence in other people. No major change has been registered in this area for over 22 years. While only 10% of Turkish people tend to trust other people, the rate in Scandinavian countries is as high as 80%. Obviously, a decline in trust in the military has been evident in recent years. There are significant differences in the level of trust by specific region. While 86% of the respondents in 2009 had a high level of trust in the military, only 78% of the respondents in 2011/2012 had slight trust in the military. Focusing on the confidence in Turkey's justice system, the figures monitor how trust fell between the years 2008 and 2012. While 80% of the respondents had a high level of confidence in the justice system in 2008, the level of trust in the Turkish justice system fell to 72%. The survey also revealed a decline in trust in the European Union which was first noted in 1990 and continued into 2012. A total of 36% of Turkish people expressed less trust in EU in 1990; in 2012 the figure was 39%. The results of the study indicate that in Turkey the majority of the population does not trust others, particularly foreigners. From 1990 to the present many different surveys have been conducted that show that 10% of Turkish people think that people can never be too careful when dealing with others. So, 9 out of 10 people share the view that most people cannot be trusted (Esmer, 2012: 21–23).

Such findings point to an inherent lack of trust in different Turkish institutions. Consequently, there is an urgent need for a high degree of trust in political and social institutions and, indeed, in political leaders to tackle political concerns and political disengagement in the future. If trust levels continue to decline in Turkish society, the social system might very well be unable to deal with new concerns that arise during the process of globalization and universalization that, in turn, will lead to anarchy in the social system. In this context, decision-makers are asked to redefine the changes in values and redesign political institutions which are charged with finding solutions to social problems in the 21st century. Otherwise, the ongoing decline in trust in institutions or societies along with the high level of distrust in others can put society at risk in the long run.

The work of Jürgen Habermas 'Politik und Religion' revealed that a secular state does not mean that a society is also secular. Seen from this point of view, religious citizens regard this as a paradoxical situation because while the liberal democratic constitution guarantees freedom to religious communities the constitution also limits the political impact of powerful religious communities in the political process (Habermas, 2013: 289). Western values were adopted in Turkey with the establishment of the Republic in 1923 despite a legitimacy crisis during the modernization process. In fact, Esmer points out that at the time of secularization in Turkey, secularization of society was not realized in way that corresponded to the secularization of the state. According to the 2012 World Value Survey, Turkish society is the most devout country in Europe, also compared to other countries. So, religion is a top priority and plays a significant role in social life. A total of 76% of Turkish people believe that religion only makes sense after death. Some 64% think that everybody has to obey religious rules and that God has a high status in an individual's life. One out of three people fast during the month of Ramadan and perform the namaz. For the last 22 years, the number of devout Turkish citizens has increased enormously (Esmer, 2012: 52).

Surveys also show the factors influencing the population's voting behavior. One influencing factor is definitely left-wing or right-wing ideology. With the inception of the multi-party system in 1950 in Turkey, the majority of Turkish citizens voted for right-wing parties. The city of Izmir, for instance, is still left wing, but the Central and Eastern Anatolian regions are right-wing (ibid., 52).

Looking at the developments of political parties in Turkey, it is not easy to determine which political party is left-wing or right-wing because they are interconnected. Left-wing parties are often criticized that their policies on women's rights, social state and freedom are mostly implemented by right-wing parties, which bolsters the image of right-wing parties. When it comes to globalization and universalization, identity comes to the fore. Results of the survey show that nearly 88% of the respondents from the Black Sea region are very proud to be Turkish; in the southeastern region this figure is only 23%. A total of 10% identify as part of an ethnic minority which are Kurdish or Zaza groups in the Eastern Anatolian provinces. Only 6% identify as Alevi (ibid., 37). National identity in Turkey was often at the core of debates on social values. In general, political scientists share the view that the concept of identity is used for discriminating and polarizing instead of for unifying people. In his work "Laws of Form" George Spencer Brown describes the concept of discrimination as a law and order and argues that discrimination should first be defined and then indicated as an objective. Here, it is required to mark the concept of discrimination with a symbol to realize it at all (Yoldaş, 2013: 64). Gender discrimination, sexual division, racial and ethnical discrimination are some examples of discrimination. Discrimination based on ethnicity, race, religion or belief would just divide and harm society. Long-running public discussions that endeavor to make more efforts to eliminate each form of discrimination in Turkey have been made, but prejudices are so deeply rooted in society that policies on fighting discrimination or prejudices will not resolve these crucial issues very soon. In Turkey, people have little tolerance of outgroups which include gays and lesbians. The life philosophy of Turkish society is quite different from that in the whole of Europe.

When investigating the development of women's role in the environment from feminist perspectives, the main question arises as to whether a feminization of values is feasible (Kristeva, 2007: 115). In this regard, statistics on values in Turkey compared with European countries show major differences in the role of women in social, political and cultural areas. Values relating to gender equality inevitably come to the fore. International and national statistics indicate that Turkish women and women in other Islamic societies are still treated differently than men. The number of Turkish women is very low in politics, working life, administration and bureaucracy. Inglehart and Norris developed a gender equality index. This index consists of questions asked to the public. The comparative framework is based upon almost 70 nations worldwide, ranging from less prosperous nations such as India, Bangladesh, Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Nigeria and Turkey to some of the most affluent nations in the world including Finland, Germany, Canada, Sweden, Norway and the United States. The range of nations provides significant variations in levels of socioeconomic development, rates of democratization and types of cultural region which are incorporated into explanations of cross-national patterns of gender roles (Esmer, 2012: 113). In light of this current situation, the Turkish government and political opponents should commit themselves to enacting a law on gender equality which is necessary to enable Turkish women to access different social areas (cf. Kristeva, 2007: 115). The data obtained from the 2012 WVS reveals that 71% of women believe that the man should be the head in a family. A total of 59% of the respondents think a woman should always obey her husband. Focusing on specific regions, this proportion differs in Izmir (40%) and in Eastern Anatolia (71%). Like gender inequality, unemployment is also considered in the World Value Survey and reflects the differences between working women and men in business life. Progress in reducing Turkey's unemployment rate is still uneven. Since the global financial crisis, women have been more affected than men. This situation leads to the perception that men may transition into another job faster than women. For example, in Denmark only

2% share this point of view. Additionally, 71% of Turkish citizens think that men are more capable to act as political leaders than women. This profile shows that female leadership and political participation are still limited. In this case, stronger initiatives and new laws are required to overcome these obstacles. By providing more opportunities in education and training, women might benefit from the resources to become more empowered and more engaged in politics. Marriage and family play an important role in Turkey. Turkish society is conservative with 63% believing that humanity depends on marriage and family. Only 6% see marriage as a thing of the past. In France, 36% of citizens think that a marriage is not necessary to start a family. (4)

Conclusion

By the end of the 1950s, Lipset said 'if a nation prospers economically, the greater the probability that democracy will get a start'. Accordingly economic development, industrialization, urbanization and education changed social conditions to the extent that democracy is favored. Ronald Inglehart has further expanded the modernization theory based on economic development to include the theory of cultural change. For Inglehart, a post-material value change can be only triggered by a modernization process that constantly accelerates democracy (Blühdorn, 2013: 64). Contrary to Lipset, Inglehart stresses that value changes in modern societies may deeply influence democracy as opposed to economic development (ibid., 65). Today, in comparison with European countries, Turkey has not yet completed the industrialization and urbanization process. The low level of education in Turkey is affecting the modernization and democratization process in a negative way. Nevertheless, research shows that 50% of the respondents in Turkey say that a country should be ruled by democracy although with the exception of voting, Turkey is far behind European countries such as Sweden, Norway or France when it comes to engaging in boycotts, protesting and participating in unions (Esmer, 2012: 62–69). According to the empirical results of the World Value Survey, during the process of globalization, Turkish society has undergone a deep-rooted change and transformation over the last thirty years. It is important to note that Turkey has experienced cultural erosion. In this context, former governments did not do enough in the field of culture. The current government has to compensate for this lack by developing new strategies and policies to bolster the cultural system.

NOTES

1. <http://www.bpb.de/politik/grundfragen/deutsche-verhaeltnisse-eine-sozialkunde/138454/werte-milieus-und-lebensstile-wertewandel>
2. <http://www.geschichte.uni-mainz.de/neuestegeschichte/Dateien/AndreasRoedder-Antrittsvorlesung.pdf>
3. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/map-freedom-2014>
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