

Başak İnce

Citizenship and Identity in Turkey-From Ataturk's Republic to the Present Day

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As introduction of the book indicates, it is a well-structured academic research evaluating the controversial relations between 'citizenship and identity' given than multi-religious and multi-ethnic socio-political structure of Turkey. It applies Kymlicka and Norman's analysis method which has three dynamics of citizenship; legal, identity and civil virtue. She argues that rarely studied the third dynamic has made their method much more applicable and also beneficial in case of applied into Turkey's socio-political structure. Although it is a complete book, by providing conceptual frames, and methodology it is more likely to be an academic thesis.

The most striking point of the book is that it theoretically combines the relations between the concept of citizenship and implication of the way in which this concept is understood by ruling elites into the textbooks of the national education. With a comprehensive literature over the historical and theoretical background of "the concept of citizenship", by explaining liberal (France) and republican (German) ways of citizenship, the authors clearly indicates her being in favour of the notion of "civil virtue" as the third dynamic of citizenship in addition to being legal status and (national) identity. She explains what she meant by emphasizing the third dynamic is that it is the understating of tolerance for ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic differences among people. That is why stating that she has used Kymlicka and Norman's theoretical research of "citizenship." Furthermore, she believes that "constitutional patriotism", elevated by by Jurgen Habermas, might free from nation-state's citizenship and identity pressure on differences and also from pre-political core ethnic and Sunni Islam-based citizenship concept in Turkey and thus is conducive to probable co-existence of differences in terms of identities.

What makes the book distinctive is that it looks for "how the transmission socio-political and civic ideas has occurred through schools" by employing the 'Civil Education Across Countries' based on International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement data, which has not applied into Turkey but other 24 countries. Taking the transition from single party to multi party system, the 1960 coup d'états and the 1980 coup d'état of Turkey as reference of chapters is quite meaningful as at the end of all these occasions, the state's Kemalism-dominated ideology slightly altered its way of understanding of citizenship although there is no complete abandonment. It also can be considered of an extension of the IEA study as analysing Turkey in terms of legal citizenship concept.

After the theoretical chapter, the author moves on practical explanations of the understanding of the concept of the citizenship' in Turkey. By using archival and first hand



data such as related laws and amendments, The party program of CHP (Republican People's Party) she shows that the concept of citizenship was not egalitarian as it was supposed, but at early dates of the republic, it was shaped by primary ethnicity (being ethnically a Turk and having Turkish culture), and then religion and lastly by territorial borders. That sort of the notion of citizenship, she argues, was inculcated by turkification of history, of education, language, and lately, economy through official and unofficial imposition. This chapter clearly indicates that ruling elites of the single party era employed religion against non-Muslims and ethnicity against non-Turks Muslim according to their requirements of forming a single secular-Turkish national. Together with having neither liberal nor republican concept of citizenship in practice, based on reliable sources such as text of books on civil duties in single party era, She argues that emphasising the uniqueness of and the highest quality of ethnic Turks within these books, the Republican elites created a hidden hierarchy among so-called 'equal citizenship' causing non-existence of civil-virtue among young generations. By doing so, the republican elites had seeded a superior psychology among ethnic-Muslim Turks against non-Muslim and non-Turkish Muslims. Furthermore, in terms of that the idea that citizens' rights were always affiliated with duties and that supremacy of community over individuals were covered all educational materials, she claims that these are another fundamental reason behind for not having civil virtue tolerating the other identities among 'equal citizens'! The next chapter engulfing the multi-party system era, from 1946 to 1960, seems to stress that just because of the atmosphere generated by "multi" system there had been a bit softness all notions of citizenship. For instance, not officially but practically accepting of differences as long as they approve and behave so their Turkishness, more emphasize democratic values, especially voting and respecting nation's will were core flexibilities of the era. Regarding to school text books, the situation was almost the same, just a bit flexibility was practically given to the nationalism and secularism ideas but not officially tolerating differences was articulated.

Regarding to the period of 1960-1980, fluency in term of firstly looking for the much more liberal and right-based rather than duties-based articles, and then citizenship of different identities (Kurds as non-Muslim Turks, non-Muslims and Alevis as different sect from sunni-orthodox Islam) are quite clearly considered. Thanks to evaluation of the features of the 1961 constitution, their practical implications and eventually reflection of relatively more liberal concept of citizenship, civic virtues that these conditions brought are being analyzed at the end of the section. The author emphasizes the acceleration of individual-oriented liberties of the 1961 constitution while stating that the state structure based on strict nationalism and secularism preserved itself. From my point of view, as a root of political Islamist movement in Turkey, if National Outlook Parties (Milli Görüş Partileri) such as National Order and National Salvation Parties which played their roles between 1969 and 1980 have their place in this part of the book, I believe it would much comprehensive in terms of "primary or secondary citizenship" and of also Turkish political history. Furthermore, increased conscience of participating into civil politics in line with their prior identity might be given more places and worth to mention so that whether negative or positive ways, civic virtues as a third dynamic of the concept of citizenship could be examined a little more further.

The practical chapter of the book covering the time period of 1980-2010 explicitly indicates the understanding of ruling elites reflects itself into education from the legal regulations on "citizenship" to civic virtues within the textbooks of the schools. Again by relying on legal acts and regulation of the citizenship which has still emphasised and prioritize Turkish ethnic and Sunni Islamic origin by not sparing any rooms for distinct identities (non-Muslims, non-Turkish Muslims and non-Sunni Muslims), She rightly argues that state-centric approach has shaped the 1982 constitution in which there is no mention of



distinctive identities. Furthermore, it is an undeniable fact that there has been a tendency from denying other identities by excusing citizenship which makes everyone “Turkish” to approving the other components of the society in Turkey. Yet, legalization of this transformation is not proceeding in parallel with gradual changes among the minds of people. At the end of the chapter, that is why she rearticulates paramount significance of “civic virtues” in terms of changing people’ minds from single-oriented to multi-oriented approach regarding to different identities and tolerating them among the society.

“Nationalism in civic education textbooks in Turkey appeared to be defined as political nationalism based upon race is promoted. The word ‘Turk’ has no racial meaning but embraces everybody who lives in Turkey, the books argued, yet throughout, the ethno-cultural definition of Turk was emphasised more than the political one. The definition of ‘Turk’ did not include people tied to the Turkish nation through citizenship, but rather though ethnicity” (Ince, 2012, pp.184-85). This quotation taken from the conclusion part of the book is quite meaningful and a sort of summery of what the ruling elites of the republic of Turkey understood from the concept of citizenship. Because of this mind-set, the author suggests that features of being ‘Turkish’ have been unrealistically exaggerated while other ethnic, religious and sectarian identities have never been touched upon in textbooks throughout of the history of Republic of Turkey. Moreover, imposing the ideas that the integrity of the republic has been always in danger stemming from internal (Kurds, Alevi and non-Muslims) and external (Greeks, Russians, Europeans) threats within civic education constituted a generation lacking of civic virtues perceiving different identities as something tolerable within the society.

Eventually, just after the giving examples of countries which are analyzed by the IEA study and concluding that it is not an easy task to provide civic virtues within nation-state-centric state such as Greece, France and England, the author promotes the concept of ‘constitutional citizenship’ which, she believes, can guarantee the loyalty of distinct identity groups towards the states and suggests it as a solution for existent identity problems of Turkey which has been facing since its inception.

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