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The Evolution of the Implementation of the Basic European Values in Turkey – a Historical Review

Abstract

This article examines the Westernization process in Turkey. It illustrates some facts about the historical political changes which are linked to the development of western values in Turkey. For the research, the historical methodology is used. Primary and secondary sources are analysed. The historical facts are given in a chronological order. The background of the process has been clarified and detailed information is included. The correlation between European Union and Turkey regarding the European values is examined. The values' significance to modern Turkish society is emphasized. The process of the Westernization, before and after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, regarding the three pillars of individual values, i.e. humanistic thinking, rationality, and secularity, is also examined. The article refers to the main legislative changes which have had a significant effect on Turkish citizen's daily life and shows the Turkish legal system's background. The importance and legislative implementation of human rights are emphasized. The significance of developing the relations in between European Union and Turkey is also stressed.

Key words: Turkey, European, westernization, values, democracy.

Introduction

“Not life, but good life, is to be chiefly valued”(Plato, Kriton 48b, Kekes 1999, 33) is a quote of Socrates, a classical Athenian philosopher (470–399 BCE), one of the

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founders of Western philosophy. He was discussing values nearly 2400 years ago and since then we have been debating this essential topic, which prompts us to examine and re-examine our lives.

The constitutional elements of culture are values which have an absolute influence on the life of each one of us at one point or another (Europaeischewerte.info 2010, 4). In the modern era “Western culture” is a value shared mainly by the countries of Europe. However, Turkey also shares the same values. The interest of Turkey in western values existed for many years. Although, as a country, Turkey has its own values and cultural background, European values have come into prominence during the recent decade, since Turkey has decided to join the European Union.

The formation of Western Civilization has been greatly influenced by the Church and more specifically by the Catholic Church, which not only defined the way charitable work should be done but it also affected the development of the university system, the international law, the sciences, important legal principles, and many other things (Woods 2005, 1).

As Spielvogel J.J. observes, Western Culture has expanded to most parts of the world, although some societies see it as a challenge to their own culture and national identity. At the same time, other societies are also strongly influencing Western cultural expressions, making recent Western culture a reflection of the evolving global response to the rapid changes in human society today (2009, 670).

He further points out that “When we speak of Judeo-Christian heritage of Western civilization, we refer not only to concept of monotheism but also to ideas of laws, morality, and social justice that have become important parts of Western culture. Another relatively small group of people, the Greeks, were an important impact on Western civilization” (Spielvogel 2009, 35).

Hayes C.J.H. (1882–1964), although a devout Catholic, also agrees that “certain distinctive features of our Western civilization – the civilization of Western Europe and of America – have been shaped chiefly by Judaeo – Greco – Christianity, Catholic and Protestant” (Hayes 1954, 2). The rich religious and cultural heritage bequeathed to the world by the philosophers of ancient Greece, the laws of the Romans, the austerity and devotion of Judaism and the charity of the Christian faith had an enormous influence in the shaping of the common values on which the Western Civilization is based, to the degree that Western culture, is sometimes equated with Judeo-Greco-Christian civilization. Islam, the third Abrahamic monotheistic religion, has much in common with Judaism and Christianity. During the last decade there appeared a growing amount of literature highlighting the common ground between these three religions aiming at their most desirable peaceful co-existence.

However it is commonly agreed that “the great ideas of the West-rationalism, self-criticism, the disinterested search for truth, the separation of church and state, freedom of conscience and thought, human rights, and liberal democracy-remain the best means for all people, no matter what race or creed, to reach their full potential and live in freedom” (Thornton 2007).

Having defined the character of European Civilization, the following aims to answer and illustrate the research question: “What is the historical evidence that supports the position that European Values were gradually implemented in Turkey.”

1. Turkey and Europe

Turkey’s geopolitical place links its history with the history of continental Europe and consequently with the European Civilization. Economic and social interests to each other’s territories have been demonstrated by numerous monumental events.

During the late 18th century the Great Powers of that period (Russia, Great Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Italy and Germany) were competing for the domination of the vast Ottoman holdings. In European diplomacy “The Eastern Question” was raised about the fate of the Balkans if and when the Ottoman Empire would dissolve. Each of the states strived to emerge with the maximum advantage. Turkey, to ward off Russian policies for dividing the empire, formed close cooperation with other states. In the 1856 Treaty of Paris, Turkey was an ally of Britain and France. Up to 1870s Britain was the guardian of Turkey’s interests. After 1878 Germany was its economic and military sponsor.

History shows the establishment of common grounds between Turkey and European Union. Some examples demonstrating the abovementioned statement can be the wars fought between Turkey and European countries some decades ago, the mutual agreements between the European Union and Turkey as well as the joint declarations for facing contemporary problems of continental Europe. There might be some benefits to the development of relations even from being engaged in conflicts. But the history of the relations between Europe and Turkey is not only a series of conflicts, compromises and alliances. As it has been rightly observed “Be it through war, diplomacy, commerce, art, cuisine, or intermarriage, Turkey has always been an integral part of Europe’s history” (Tocci 2014, 1).

2. Individual Values and the Rule of Law in Turkey

The new Republican Parliament established the Republic of Turkey in 1923, after the Grand National Assembly abolished the Ottoman Sultan in 1922. Two significant decisions about the abolishment of the Sultanate were made: The first decision, taken in 30th November 1922 (Decision of Assembly number 307) was that “the Ottoman Empire is decadent” so “the government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey is formed and the new government of Turkey replaced the Ottoman Empire” (Düstur, Tertip 3, Vol. 3, 149). The second decision of the Assembly, taken in 1st and 2nd November 1922 (Decision of Assembly number 308), was that “People of Turkey annihilated forever, from 16th March 1920, the government in Istanbul, which was based on selfhood’s sovereignty. The Caliphate still belongs to the dynasty of Ottoman Empire, but the Caliph will be chosen by the National Assembly of Turkey” (Düstur, Tertip 3, Vol. 3, 149).

These decisions show clearly that, from then on, in the new, modern Turkey sovereignty belongs to the people. By these laws the competent authorities of Sultanate and Caliphate were also made separate from each other. That was the beginning of a steady process of Westernization in Turkey. The development of that process was directed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Father of the new Turkish Republic. He was responsible for the implementation of the new principles in the modern country. The goal of Atatürk was to modernize Turkey and to bring the country into the twentieth century. These changes deeply affected the daily life of every citizen in the country (Sanal 2011, 154).

Soon Mustafa Kemal Atatürk moved on to his most significant achievements: the proclamation of Turkish Republic, and the disestablishment of the Caliphate Office held by the Ottoman Sultan. Due to some changes within the constitution, the decision 364 declared that “regime of the governance in Turkey is Republic” (Düstur, Tertip 3, Vol. 5, 158). On 3rd March 1924 the decision 431 declared that the “the Caliphate was abolished and the Caliph, along with all members of the House of Ottoman remaining in Turkey, were exiled” (Düstur, Tertip 3, Vol. 5, 323).

The changes implemented by Atatürk had an impact on all the aspects of the country’s governance, including revision in people’s daily life; e.g. in 1925 the Parliament legislated the “*hat law*”, which declared that it was obligatory for everyone to wear a Western-style hat instead of the traditional fez (Genç Kaya, 2013). In addition to that, the Parliament prohibited to wear religious clothing in 1934 (e.g.

türban). The next steps towards the Westernization of the country were made by providing equality between genders and by giving full political rights to women, e.g. the voting right. All the aforementioned changes instigated by Atatürk were made immediately after the Independence War of Turkey. Turkish society willingly accepted the new principles of the country and there was little opposition to those changes. These alterations, which can be regarded as an expression of humanistic thinking and a sort of an anthropocentric world-view implementation, were soon deeply rooted in people's daily life (Mügge 2010, 152).

Legislative amendments were the most significant part in the process of Westernization. With the establishment of the Turkish Republic the structure of legal system changed dramatically. Turkey implemented a new model of codes based on European law regulations: a new civil code, modelled on Swiss legal system, and a penal code taken from the Italian system. The commercial code of Turkey was modelled on the German code. Administrative law was adopted from French law (Landau 1984, 249).

The principle of separation of Religion and State was included in the constitution. Secularity has been also implemented in Turkish people's life (Zuckerman and Shook 2017, 155). Those changes, regarding the legal system, were passed by the Parliament of Turkey between the years 1924–1937. The three pillars of individual values, i.e. humanistic thinking, rationality, secularity, were demonstrated since the establishment of the Turkish Republic. The founding principles of the current constitution of 1982 affirm, in article 2.1, that “The Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular and social state governed by the rule of law; bearing in mind the concepts of public peace, national solidarity and justice; respecting human rights; loyal to the nationalism of Atatürk, and based on the fundamental tenets set forth in the Preamble” (Constitution 1995). Furthermore the article 6.1 indicates that “Sovereignty is vested fully and unconditionally in the nation”. Legislative and Judicial powers are defined in Article 7.1 and Article 9.1., which declared that “Legislative power is vested in the Turkish Grand National Assembly on behalf of the Turkish Nation. This power cannot be delegated and Judicial power shall be exercised by independent courts on behalf of the Turkish Nation”. Fundamental Rights and duties are defined in article 12.2 “Everyone possesses inherent fundamental rights and freedoms which are inviolable and inalienable”. From the abovementioned articles it is obvious that the individual values and the rule of law are assured by the constitution of Turkey. The implementation and adoption of the rules of law from different European countries indicate the versatility and credibility of Turkey.

It should not be forgotten that these agonizing decisions and choices could not have been taken easily. Adaptation to values, different than those to which people were used for centuries, and adjustment to a new social environment may take a long time to be understood and implemented in every single aspect of people's daily life. Acclimatization to new rules had to be observed very carefully during their implementation period within the previous social life style. The Society and politicians had to constantly eliminate the inadequate and inappropriate sequences of new values by using the division of powers.

3. Democracy in Turkey

Democracy has more meanings than just "rule of people" in today's society. It was sort of building castles in the air even to discuss democracy until the time when the Ottoman constitution called "Loi constitutionnelle" was declared in Turkish history in 1876 (Davison 1963, 383). It is certain that European powers influenced Turkey to take such a democratic step.

Turkey, for the first time, was considered as a part of the European world in the Treaty of Paris, concluded in 1856, two decades back from the first Constitution implemented in Turkey (Andıç 2002, 4). The Treaty of Paris was signed by the Ottoman Empire, and its allies (the British Empire and France) with the defeated Russian Empire, after the Crimean War (Davison 1963, 4). The compulsory relations between Europe and Turkey, with mutual benefits, against Russia, opened the door to democracy for the Turkish people and the first transition to the parliamentary system began. The first constitutional era declared by the Sultan which was called "Kanun-i Esasi", meaning Basic Law, survived a very short period. After just two years the Ottoman Sultan suspended parliamentary monarchy until 1908, when the Young Turk revolution appeared on the Turkish historical scene. The effect of the revolution forced the Sultan to establish the second constitutional era (Oliver 2004, 165).

Democracy, defined as a political system where sovereignty is established based on citizen's decisions, started in Turkey after the proclamation of Republic of Turkey by Ataturk in 1923. The Grand National Assembly ratified the Constitution of Turkey in 1921; "Sovereignty is vested in the nation without condition. Governmental system is based on the principle of self-determination and government by people" has been declared in article 1. This statement remains untouched in all constitutional changes. The 1924 constitution, in section I article 3, declares that "Sovereignty belongs without

restriction to the nation” (Mead Earle 1925). The importance of sovereignty was underlined from the very beginning of the establishment of modern Turkey. In the constitution of 1961, article 4, it is stated that “Sovereignty is vested in the nation without reservation and condition. The nation shall exercise its sovereignty through the authorized agencies as prescribed by the principles laid forth in the Constitution” (Constitution 1995). The significance of democracy and rule of law, as characteristics of the Republic of Turkey defined in Article 2.1 of the 1982 constitution, is highlighted above in part 2.1. Individual Values and Rule of law in Turkey.

An argument is that for democracy to be correctly managed the preceding political system has to be unconditionally changed (Europaeischewerte.info 2010, 18). Though a new political system was implemented into the country in 1923, it was a one party political system. The multi-party system, a characteristic of Democracy, barely managed to begin in Turkey in 1950s (Karpas 1959, 397).

Major political changes took place since the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), which is still in power now, began to govern the country in 2002. The success of AKP can be witnessed in the five legislative elections, since the party managed to come out as the first party in all of these elections. The constitutional referendum which allows the citizens, and not the Parliament, to choose their President was accepted by 69 % of the voters in 2007. Another constitutional referendum which was held in 2010 was about the Justice system in Turkey. The citizens also accepted the changes in this referendum with a majority of 58% (SEC 2017).

Stability and economic performance of the ruling party in the country was greeted positively by the Turkish citizens. The current constitution, which was written in 1982 by generals, who carried out a military coup, needed to be revised, since constitution forms the basis of Turkey’s political system. Almost 50 million people, out of 58 million eligible registered voters, went to the polls. This number of voters shows how much citizens care for the major changes in their country’s constitution. Those 50 million voters, who represent 85% of the total number of voters, indicate the importance of the results. A report of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which was invited by the authorities of the Republic of Turkey to observe the 16th April 2017 referendum, estimates that “The legal framework for the referendum was negatively impacted by the declared state of emergency and actions taken under it” (OSCE/ODIHR, 22nd June, 2017, 6). It refers to the closure of 158 media outlets and the arrest of 150 journalists for alleged links to terrorism (OSCE/ODIHR, 22nd June, 2017, 15) and points out that the “YES” campaign had 76% of the total airtime on television, while the “NO” campaign had only 23.5% of the total airtime and space (OSCE/ODIHR, 22nd June, 2017, 17).

In the referendum 51% of voters said Yes to the change and 49% voters said No. Though the difference is narrow, Turkish citizens voted for approval of the 18 proposed amendments (SEC 2017). The major change in the constitution is about abandoning the parliamentary system for an executive presidency. It is the most critical change since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

4. Economic and Populace Facts

The young republic of 1923 had to deal with numerous problems instantly. All those most basic European values had to be supported along with an economic transition. It was a country now having to absorb a combination of different European countries' codes into its constitution. At the same time it was a country which tried to survive economically after the War of Independence and to pay back to the creditors the huge debts created by their ancestors. The payments of these debts would end exactly 100 years later, in 1954. According to the Treaty of Lausanne, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the highest amount of its debt to creditors had to be paid by the Turkish Republic and the rest of the debt was divided between Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Italy (Özdemir 2009).

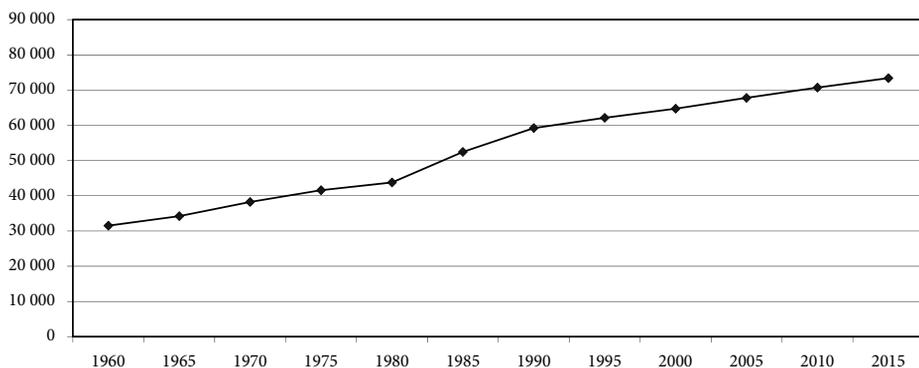
These economic transformations had dreadful ramifications on the economy of the newly established country. Turkey tried to use mixed economical models: liberal economy from 1923 to 1930 followed by an Etatism period from 1930 till the beginning of the World War II. Although Turkey maintained its neutrality during World War II, except for a symbolic move, which was the declaration of war to Germany and Japan almost at the end of the war, the war economy was applied to the country from the very beginning of World War II. More liberal economic system was followed when the country accepted the multi-party political system, a fact demonstrating the parallel relation between economic and political systems.

A Keynesian Economic model was applied in Turkey from 1960 to 1980. That allowed the country to have a social government and the import substitution industrialization policy. The most significant change in the economy came after 1980, when the country had to face a coup attempt. Export subsidy policy and free market economy were welcomed in Turkey (Özer 2004). Economic stability, as it was mentioned above, is related to the political system. During the 95 years of Turkish Republic's history, there have been changes in the government 65 times (The New York Times, 14th April 2017). A new constitutional change will soon take place,

moving from parliamentary system to the executive presidency system in 2019. Among these changes is the abolition of the post of the Prime Minister. The cabinet will be appointed by the President, who will no longer have to be neutral, and there will be some Vice-Presidents. The President will also appoint 4 of the 13 Judges who will form the highest judicial authority of the country (Shaheen Kareem 2017). This new movement in the democratic arena of the country may let the people focus more on other issues which will lead to the development of country's values, such as education, science, industry, and technology. However the opposition has expressed its fears that these changes may lead to autocracy in the country and the Council of Europe surmised that "this constitutional revision would result in a profound change and a shift from a parliamentary to a presidential system, granting the President of the Republic extensive powers while drastically reducing the supervisory role of the parliament" (COE, 27th January 2017).

Population has always played a significant role in every period of the country's history. As a result of the substantial territorial losses in Europe suffered during the Balkan wars, the area of the Ottoman Empire in 1914 was 1,800,000 km² and the total population of the empire fell to 18,520,016 (Karpas 1985, 190). The Treaty of Lausanne (1923) established the present boundaries of the Republic of Turkey. Turkey's area, including lakes, occupies 779,452 km², of which 755,688 km² square kilometers are in Southwest Asia and 23,764 km² are in Europe. In 1923 Turkey had a population of 13,177,000, in the 1927 census the population was recorded as 13,648,000 but, according to 2017 census, the population has increased to 79,814,871. With a population of almost 80 million, Turkey ranks as the 18th most populous country in the world (TUIK 2017).

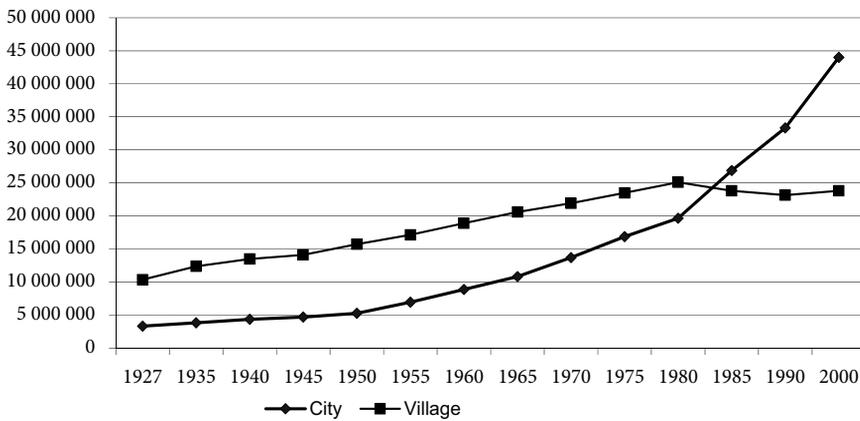
Figure 1: Urban population in Turkey



Source: World Bank, World Urbanization Prospects, 2016.

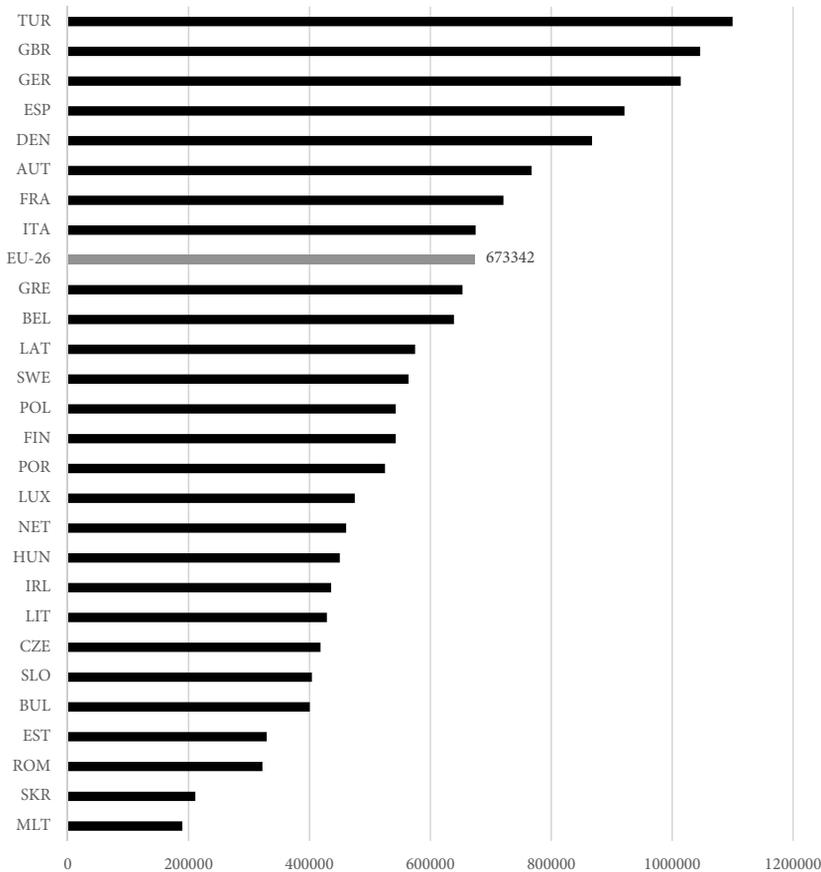
Turkey is a developing country with a dynamic, young population. According to the CIA (the World Factbook, 28th September 2017) 74.4% of the total population live in the cities and the annual rate of urbanization between 2015 and 2020 is estimated to be 1.54 %. A sharp increase of urbanization in Turkey could be observed during the past years. By 2015 the urban population increased to 56 million people, a 73 % of the total population in Turkey. The increase in population may have some beneficial effects on economic growth (Ghatak 2003, 271). Figure 2 shows the steady increase of urbanization in Turkey from 1927 to 2000s. The results also show that there is a parallel between the increase of country's population and urbanization.

Figure 2: Urbanization in Turkey



Source: Tuik 2001.

Turkey's urban area has increased dramatically in the past years. Figure 3 shows the comparison of population size in urban areas between twenty six European Union countries and Turkey. The average rates show that Turkey stands in the front line of all the European countries as the most urbanized country. It should be kept in mind that urbanization is an essential aspect which has a certain effect on human life.

Figure 3: Average Urban Area Population Comparison

Source: Peteri and Sevinc, 2011.

5. Human Rights in Turkey

“All individuals are equal without any discrimination before the law, irrespective of language, race, colour, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such considerations.”(Constitution 1995). The article 10.1 in the constitution of Turkey clearly declares that people who live in Turkey are equal against the law. Regardless of their belief, race, colour, and political opinion all citizens’ rights are

protected by the state. This article defines, defends and protects the same rights as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 2:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty (UDHR 1948).

Furthermore Article 10.2 of the constitution of Turkey declares the gender and individuals equality: “Men and women have equal rights and the State is responsible to implement these rights. No privilege shall be granted to any individual, family, group or class” (Constitution 1995). This also is similar with the article 1 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (UDHR 1948).

The citizens’ beliefs have been guaranteed by the nation’s constitution. Freedom of religion is identified in article 24: “Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religious belief and conviction” (Constitution 1995). The Freedom of thought and opinion is assured by constitution in article 25: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and opinion. No one shall be compelled to reveal his thoughts and opinions for any reason or purpose, nor shall anyone be blamed or accused on account of his thoughts and opinions” (Constitution 1995). Homosexuality between consenting adults is not considered a crime in the country and article 12.1 declares that “Everyone possesses inherent fundamental rights and freedoms which are inviolable and inalienable” (Constitution 1995).

Human rights are not only protected by the Turkish law, but also by the international treaties which Turkey has signed. These treaties have priority over domestic acts of legislation. The article 90.1, as amended in 22nd May 2004, clarifies that: “The ratification of treaties concluded with foreign states and international organisations on behalf of the Republic of Turkey shall be subject to adoption by the Turkish Grand National Assembly by a law approving the ratification” (Constitution 1995).

According to Article 40.1 Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedom, which was amended on the 17th October 2001, “Everyone whose constitutional rights and freedoms have been violated has the right to request prompt access to the competent

authorities” Citizens have the right to defend their human rights against any kind of violation.

The basis of these entrenched rights comes mainly from the international bill of rights as it is shown by the examples given above from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Turkey is amongst the first nations which signed and accredited this declaration in 1948.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), obliges all committed countries, who signed the treaty, to respect the civil and political rights of individuals, including the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and the rights to due process and a fair trial. This treaty was signed by Turkey in 2000 and entered into force just 14 years ago, during the governance of Justice and Development Party (AKP). As it was mentioned above Turkey signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The country accepted the right to apply individually to the European Court of Human Rights in 1987, and started to recognise the compulsory jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights in 1990 (Çınar 2014). With all those changes in its constitution, Turkey has made an effort to create identical rules with international law. The country tries to give its citizens equal rights within the global arena as the other countries’ citizens and protects their human rights.

It is a healthy sign of Democracy that, nevertheless, the Human Rights continue to be one of the leading topics in the country. Turkey still keeps some laws which are likely against human rights. At the beginning of this year the United Nations has accused the Turkish government of massive destruction of the Kurdish minority (OHCHR 2017, 4-13-24).

Turkey is also facing some freedom of expression and freedom of assembly problems after the failed coup attempt. However it should be stressed that, for the first time, Turkey’s ruling party and the opposition parties were united in condemning the coup attempt. A few days after the coup supporters of different parties congregated together in huge demonstrations in support of “Republic and Democracy”. Pro-government channels broadcast a speech of Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the main opposition leader, who said “This is a day to unite, a day to stand up against coups and dictatorial regimes, a day to let the voice of the people be heard... We are all together in Taksim today. Today is a day we made history all together”. “The state should not be governed by anger and revenge” he said “The culprits of the putsch should be tried lawfully with the understanding of abiding by the rule of law” (Reuters, 24th July 2016). Nevertheless a year later, on 3rd April 2017, Kemal Kilicdaroglu claimed “that the July 15, 2016, coup attempt occurred within the knowledge of the government and was therefore a

“controlled coup”, eliciting strong, verbal reactions from the Prime Minister and the President (*Hürriyet Daily News*, 3 April 2017).

Freedom of the press is declared with the article 28.1 in constitution of Turkey 1982, which as amended in 2001 declares that “The press is free, and shall not be censored. The establishment of a printing house shall not be subject to prior permission or the deposit of a financial guarantee.” The freedom of press is also guaranteed by the State in article 28.2 “The state shall take the necessary measures to ensure freedom of the press and freedom of information”. The State undertakes the responsibility for the freedom of press with this declaration. In the same article 28.5 it is mentioned that any kind of embargo should not be practised on press: “No ban shall be placed on the reporting of events, except by the decision of judge issued to ensure proper functioning of the judiciary, within the limits specified by law”.

Immediately after the coup many Western countries declared their support for democracy in Turkey, but at the same time they expressed concern over the scale of subsequent purges of state institutions. Under the declaration of a state of emergency many journalists, judges, prosecutors, professors, high officers and government clerks were arrested or suspended for allegedly having a relation with the outlawed movement led by the US-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, a movement accused of being behind the failed coup attempt. European partners of Turkey feel discomfort because of the desultory arrests and suspensions of Turkish citizens. The Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly has put Turkey on a monitoring watch list over serious concerns about democracy and human rights. These concerns refer to the way security operations were conducted under the state of emergency, to “the scale and extent of the purges conducted in the public administration and the judiciary, and many other public institutions”, to the derogation of certain human rights and to repeated violations of freedom of the media (COE, 27th January 2017).

Due to the above the European Parliament, on 6th July 2017, condemned the Turkish government for serious decline in democratic standards and advised the European Union “to formally suspend the accession negotiations with Turkey without delay if the constitutional reform package is implemented unchanged”, as some amendments are not consistent with the Copenhagen political criteria (European Parliament, 6 July 2017). Turkey is associated with the European Union since 1963 and in 1995 both sides formed a customs union. In 1999 the EU agreed to consider Turkey’s 1987 application for full membership. Since 2005 the two sides have negotiated over 35 chapters to harmonize the laws, regulations and standards of Turkey with those of the EU. So far 16 chapters are opened, 14 chapters are blocked

and only one chapter is temporarily closed (Turkish Ministry of EU Affairs, 6th June 2017).

Conclusions

Since its creation in 1922 the Republic of Turkey strives to defend and secure the rights of its citizens. Turkey is amongst the first nations which signed and accredited the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The Turkish Constitution clearly defines the human rights which are protected by the law. Furthermore the country accepted the right to apply individually to the European Court of Human Rights in 1987, and started to recognise the compulsory jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights in 1990.

It is apparent that since 1922 Turkey has gone a long way towards the adoption and implementation of the European Values. The strife was more intensive in the last decade, when Turkey tried to join the EEC, showing Turkey's strong state structure and its willingness to achieve a better future for the country's citizens.

Turkey is a country where the majority's religion is Islam (99% of the population), though, comparing it to the other Middle Eastern countries, it is apparent that Turkey's society is more liberal, more democratic, secular and progressive. The influence of the European values on the country cannot be ignored. Freedom, equality and solidarity as human rights pillars should continuously be supported by the nations where the democracy works in a harmony with all its own institutions. Turkey, as an example of a modern society implementing socio-economical changes due to European and even global values, needs support in every stage. Turkey shares the same values as the countries of the European Union and tightening the relations between the two could only lead to the prosperity of both.

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