Review

Ziya Gökalp's political sociology

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Regarded as the founder of Sociology in Turkey, Ziya Gökalp©s influence has not been confined to the social sciences. Gökalp's thoughts shaped the formation of the Republic of Turkey after the dissolution of Ottoman Empire. Gökalp's traces can be found in the public's political, economic and socio-cultural restructuring. In an attempt to combine social values (national culture) with the elements of Western civilizations that inspired his thinking, Gökalp considered the relations between the politics and society and asserted that the structures and identities to be constructed should be imposed by the state through the elites that were aware of the people's conditions, referring also to authoritarian methods as necessary.

Key words: Ziya Gökalp, politics, state, elite.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Sociology established by Ziya Gökalp (1876 - 1924) in Turkey was the first after Emile Durkheim's department was established in France (Tuna, 1991: 29). Sociology in France dealt with the social structures turned upside down. Sociology in Turkey sought ways to rescue the state and reshape society.

As the founder of sociology in Turkey, Gökalp influenced the social sciences and contributed to the political formation of the new Republic of Turkey. Gökalp's influence on relations between politics and society in Turkey has been long lasting.

The solution to the problems in the Ottoman Empire in Gökalp's era had occupied Turkish Statesmen since the 16th century. Series of questions are asked: What is the problem with the empire? Why had it failed to keep pace with its rivals? What should be done to rescue it? (Lewis, 1970) . It was not only the technological superiority of the West that forced Ottoman intellectuals to seek reform, but also the French Revolution that introduced the nation-state ideology and spread the ideas of freedom, equality and secularity throughout Europe (Lewis, 1970).

The political system of the Ottoman Empire favored patrimony in regard to legal authority. The Ottoman political system was characterized by the state's control of economic and social activities (Kalaycıo lu and Sarıbay, undated). The bureaucratic management of the public state was an extension of the Ottoman patrimonic system (Heper, 1977).

Under the patrimonic system, the people were considered as belonging to an authority, irrespective of the line of descent. In a patrimonic system, the patriarchal mode determines inheritance and social status (Senett, 1992).

The intellectuals of the Tanzimat era wanted to create an Ottoman Nation on the basis of loyalty to the territory and the dynasty. Ottomanism, as a political attempt to rescue the state, was the ideology of the young Ottomans. Intellectuals like Namık Kemal, Ahmet Rıza, Prens Sabahattin and Mizancı Murat emphasized Ottomanism, constitutionalism, progress and rescuing of the state in the 1895 Charter (Karal, 1977).

Of course, personal and political conditions were important in the development of Gökalp's thinking. The radical transformation and reforms of that era influenced Gökalp. Gökalp was a cosmopolitan and pro-Ottoman until the Balkan War, but after the Ottoman Empire began to disintegrate, Gökalp abandoned Ottomanism and adopted nationality, pan-Turkism.

Gökalp had introduced not only a system of thought, but created a utopia that heavily influenced Turkish intellectuals. It was he who revived ancient Turk mythology with his own sensibility and imagination (Kaplan, 1965).

Gökalp's thoughts are as important both for Turkish politics and sociology. Since Gökalp's thoughts were implemented in the first years of the Republic, Gökalp's perspective on his society and relation between policy and society reflects the contemporary relation.

GÖKALP'S INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Most studies of Gökalp have dealt with his intellectual development under historical and social conditions by referring to local and foreign authors; however, they disregarded the relations between his personal psychology and works. According to Kaplan, however, it had been stronger than it was considered (Kaplan, 1965).

Ziya Gökalp's life can be divided into five periods: (1) Childhood and Youth, (2) 1908 and 1913, (3) Productive Years (1913 - 1918), (4) Truce and Exile and (5) Foundation of Republic of Turkey and Death (Tanyu, 1981).

Gökalp's childhood and youth corresponded to the period of collapse of the empire. He was influenced by Abdullah Cevdet who visited Diyarbakır in 1890. Gökalp suffered from depressions when he had an acquaintance with Abdullah Cevdet. Collapsed almost completely upon fatality of his father, Gökalp was dragged to commit suicide upon the convulsion by impact of Abdullah Cevdet's revolutionary thoughts on his belief, combined with the efforts made by others to get him married his uncle's daughter, because of important role his uncle had in his education (Eri irgil, 1984).

It has been argued that Abdullah Cevdet was responsible for the suicide attempt. Gökalp was a friend to Abdullah Cevdet. His uncle was against their friendship because Cevdet was said to be an atheist. After reading atheism, Gökalp's depression deepened, his beliefs were shaken. He shot himself in the head, but survived (Fındıko lu, 1984).

Kaplan points out a successful "sublimation" as Freud put it in Gökalp's creation of a "life philosophy" or "ideology" in combination with the culture. It is said that Gökalp felt at peace and recovered from his depression after he found a social purpose, in his own word, an "ideal" (Kaplan, 1965).

Abdullah Cevdet introduced Gokalp to French thought and in particular to French Sociology. He convinced Gökalp to join *ttihat ve Terakki* (Unity and Progress) (Parla, 1989).

In 1909, Gökalp attended *ttihat ve Terakki*'s congress at Slavonic as Diyarbakır's delegate. He sat on the Central Committee until the dissolution of the party in 1918. He taught sociology at *ttihat ve Terakki*'s secondary school in Salonica from 1911 - 1912. When the Balkan War broke out in 1912, he moved to Istanbul with *ttihat ve Terakki*. He wrote for *Turk Yurdu,* a media organ of *Turk Oca ı.* At that time, Gökalp's intellectual performance was at its best. He wrote most of his important works during that period (Tütengil, 1949).

Gökalp joined the executive board of a party that controlled the state. His opinions became the ideology of *ttihat ve Terakki*. It can be asserted that *ttihat ve Terakki* pursued different political goals at different times. From 1908 to 1918, Gökalp's opinions were dominant. He wrote most of the circulars and memoranda that were issued (Duru, 1963). Gökalp provided an intellectual basis for Turkic policies of *ttihat ve Terakki* leaders. He said, "it is the training and sensation of a man that determines the nationality of anyone" (Heyd, 1976).

On January 28, 1919, Ziya Gökalp was arrested. That marked the end of his academic carrier. He was exiled to Malta (Heyd, 1980). He returned from exile in 1921 and settled in Diyarbakır. Here, he published *Küçük Mecmua,* where he supported Mustafa Kemal's accomplishments. In 1923, he was selected as Deputy of Diyarbakır and appointed to the Education Board. His health deteriorated and he died on October 25, 1924.

GÖKALP UNDERSTANDING ON POLICY AND STATE

Search for how to rescue the state at the time of Gökalp can be considered as a benchmark to understand what was Gökalp's comprehension of the policy as well as what the context of his intellectual life was at that time. The political concept at that time was mainly state centered. There was a political understanding from statist point of view, rather than finding solutions where all social claims are uttered in the political domain, that is, to look at the policy from a social standpoint.

Ziya Gökalp's thoughts on the state, policy, election, decree and legality belonged to the post-1908 period (Duru, 1963). For Gökalp, there were two social wills in each society: culture and policy (Gökalp, 1972).

For Gökalp, the state is, "a machine sets in motion with legal mechanisms." "The political power" sets the political machine in motion (Duru, 1963). Notwithstanding this statist political understanding, Gökalp defined the state as a "machine". Such an approach, of course, marks the state's holiness that is not attributed to it belonging to its very own existence.

The values attributed to the state will be sourced from the political power that operates such a "machine". In his attempt to explain political power, Gökalp argues the relation between the political powers in terms of the difference in the political regimes. In each regime, there are political powers that are specifically revealed to its own nature (Duru, 1963).

The state cannot assume an organized political power, because its legal structure and mechanical operation keep it as a political machine. One part of the political power that attempts to operate and manage such a political machine is out-centered and others are the followers of the economy (Duru, 1963).

For Gökalp, political parties should have a comprehensible program and clear principles. The parties that do not announce these should be disregarded. Parties that do not back progress and innovation are bad. The intellectual value of a party is measured by its con-formity to the national cause (Duru, 1963).

For Gökalp, there are two types of parties, both have moderate and extremist sides. The moderate and extre-

mist of the innovative parties are liberals and radicals, respectively. The moderate and extremist of the traditionalists are conservatives and reactionaries, respectively. From the beginning of constitutionalism, liberals and conservatives had to form a coalition. The radicals and reactionaries joined the coalition. They were anti-national, stateless and treasonous. These cosmopolitans must withdraw should the regular party struggles be initiated (Gökalp, 1980). It was indispensable to keep both radicals and reactionaries from the policy for the integrity of the country. They had to be prevented from taking power in one way or another.

Gökalp became too rigid in his opinions about political parties. He said: "it is necessary to establish a comprehensive party that will merge all the people instead of a political conflict that has given rise to nothing but separatism" (Gökalp, 1980). Having dominated everything, such a party would also control economic life. Gökalp emerged as a corporatist (solidarist) who backed the guild system.

Notwithstanding frequent emphasis on Turkism, he argued that it was not a political ideology. For Gökalp, Turkism was a scientific, philosophical and aesthetic school of thought. In other words, it was a cultural effort and a renovation method. At the same time, it could not be distant from political ideals. Turkism could never be related to clericalism, theocracy and oppression. For Gökalp, Turkism could only be related to populism. Gökalp introduced Turkism into the political arena through populism. In Gökalp's words: "our careers in the policy and culture are populism and Turkism respectively" (Gökalp, 2007).

Gökalp attached crucial importance to the state sector, but neither socialism nor economic statism makes the state more powerful than the individual (Türkdo an, 1973: 46). Gökalp's etatism is related to a concept specific to the Turkish people. For him, "Turks would never be socialists since they adore freedom and independence". But they are also individualists (liberals) since they back equality. The system that was best suited to Turkish culture was solidarism. Private property was legal so long it served the social solidarity. If property did not serve the social solidarity, it should not be legal, since social property should live with social one (Gökalp, 1999).

The purpose of the state should be neither to protect big capitalists nor to enrich the state for an illusive classless society. The purpose of the state should be to promote national prosperity (Gökalp, 1999). Gökalp saw corporative societies as the final stage of civilization (Celkan, 1991).

Notwithstanding such statist opinions, Gökalp aggressively opposed concentration of the power in the hands of the state and its domination of social and in particular cultural arenas. His proposed separation of policy and culture would keep the state away from science, art and education. The only effort the state may make was to enhance free cultural activities by material support. Like-

wise, he was against statist control of the press (apolyo, 1943).

The concept of state in Gökalp's political understanding occupied an important place. Nevertheless, he saw the state as a political machine operated by political parties. The ideal state would be controlled by the elite who were nourished with their own national culture and able to carry the contemporary civilization to their people. In such a case, we see that the elite played an important role in Gökalp's approach to political-social relations.

GÖKALP'S APPROACH ON POLITICAL-SOCIAL RELATIONS AND ELITE'S ROLES

Gökalp also cared for the individual, even if he prioritized the society in confrontation with the individual. Gökalp opposed individualism and backed the principles of solidarism and societism. In his societism, Gökalp protected and encouraged individual identity. The purpose of protecting identity is for the benefit of society (Gökalp, 1981).

For Gökalp, the political regime would be established on the basis of Muslim and natural culture. Even so, no one would ever be free to express their idea on the ground of "the liberty." Anything said should be for the benefit of the society. The decisions adopted in common should be observed, otherwise, that would be separatism (Gökalp, 1976).

The liberal intellectuals/elite appeared after the *Tanzimat* era and were shaped during the *I. Mesrutiyet* era. But it was Gökalp who led the way to the opinions that rose the statist intellectual generation in idealism and science (Kongar, 1993). Gökalp attached special importance to the elite in regard to political-social relations.

For Gökalp, the elite of a nation included its intellectuals and thinkers. The elites were characterized by their comprehensive education and training (Gökalp, 2007: 199). For Gökalp, there were two types of leaders that introduced innovations: one in politics, religion, society and economics (reformists) and the other in science and literature (inventors) (Gökalp, 1981: 123). Gökalp called the first type as the reformist whom he considered for Gökalp; the reformists were the creators of the history. They emerged when the social crisis deepened and there was a need for a rescuer. Gökalp described such a process in relation to "solidarity, social conscious and social remorse". Gökalp saw the reformist leaders who would reshape the political, religious, social and economic structures as the products of the social consciousness (Ülken, 1966).

Gökalp saw a mutual relation between the intellectuals/ elite and people, which was indispensable for regular and established societies and then he regretted, on the basis of his analysis performed on the Ottoman's intellectuals, that this was not the case. Gökalp described Ottoman intellectuals as follows: "In the past, the elite of Turkey

considered anything that belongs to the people was banal, ordinary and vulgar and therefore, they called the people as the rank and file" (Gökalp, 1977).

For Gökalp, the elites fell short in their education. That was because their schools were not national. The elites of the country were thus deprived of their national culture. For Gökalp, the elites were not expert in the national culture, even though they knew about international culture. Therefore, they should be brought into contact with the people. The Turkish elite would be "nationalized" as long as they lived with the people and learned Turkish culture (Gökalp, 2007). For Gökalp, the elite might be characterized and differentiated by their training in positive science, but they should not be alienated from the people.

Here, Gökalp described two concepts of the elite: national and non-national. The non-national elite had been deprived of their economic and political privileges, offending the public consciousness and lost of their legality. Non-national elite should be kept out of the government (Gökalp, 1999).

Gökalp warned that the national elite would circumvent the problem faced after their power on the pretext of "public opinion" and "public spirit." For Gökalp, our political tendency was not sufficient and public opinion was not intellectual. Public spirit was the consciousness of a nation. It was comprised of its justice, humanity and the collective benefit of its inconvertible opinions. No one has any domination on that part. No one could make any claim on that part. That was because it was unanimous; it emerged from very national character. It had been inherited from the ancestors. For Gökalp, "the public spirit" knew what public opinion did not (Duru, 1963).

The public spirit was independent from the individual. That was why it was afraid neither of the reactions of the fashion nor of political changes. It remained the same at the beginning of the century as it was before. There were two reasons why it remained unchanged. First, universal ethical rules prevented its modification. Second, the rules ensured the continuation of the nations and races and transfer to their successor possession with his body and soul (Duru, 1963).

The most important difference between the public opinion and public spirit was that the public opinion was always out-spoken while public spirit was always silent. The public spirit spoke whenever it was necessary. Its activities are far apart from each other. But when it was activated, its words echoed infinitely and its behaviours gave birth to unexpected outcomes. Public opinion always tried to separate the citizens of its nation even if it was extremely agitated and caused problems. The behavior of the public spirit, however, emerged in full cooperation with its citizens (Duru, 1963).

In reality, public opinion can do wrong, just like governments. Disobedience can be excused. In most cases, resisting public opinion and facing opposition might be considered as the most patriotic behavior. There were cases when opposing the public spirit should be considered illegal. The public spirit looked for what the nation did. The most difficult task for the government was the genuine opinion of the public spirit. That was because, the public spirit was not so out-spoken and tended to keep its silence or else, utter its opinion imperceptible and therefore, could not be comprehended by the regular people what it was all about. The reason the leaders and notable and renowned emperors wanted to be successful was nothing, but for the perception of the public spirit (Duru, 1963: 241).

Gökalp saw democracy and nationalism as closely related. But Gökalp's perception of the democracy was not a liberal one. For Gökalp, populism was nothing but democracy. In fact, he considered it appropriate to let the supreme supervision by a national body, or more precisely the elite to manage in regard to people's cause, rather than the masses. For him democracy was management by the elite instead of management by the illiterate masses (Heyd, 1976).

The guidance of the elites was specific to the democratic era. There had been times when the people were ruled by undemocratic regimes. In the pre-democratic era, the patrimonic system had ruled the people. In a democracy, anyone had access to education and to any position by working. If skillful, he may be the greatest scientist, or manager in the country. Then it was possible to have the elite in a democracy. Therefore, in a democratic era, it was the elite who ruled. The government was a machine and it was impossible for it to produce ideas. Only free scientists and the elite could do this. The government's men accept and apply that (apolyo, 1943). Gökalp defended his opposition to liberal democracy with his assertion of the non-existence of local bourgeoisie and the masses' political ignorance (Heyd, 1980).

CONCLUSION

Ziya Gökalp's influence has not been limited to the social sciences. His thoughts were widely applied in the Republic of Turkey after the dissolution of Ottoman Empire. It is quite common to come across his ideas in politics and economics.

In Gökalp's time, concerns about rescuing the state brought the emergence of statist political approaches. These approaches called for redesigning of society from top to the bottom by authoritarian methods. But for Gökalp, that should be made on the basis of a public national culture. In that context, it was necessary to add soul to the state that was a soulless machine, which was derived from the national culture.

Rather than being emancipatory and democratic, Gökalp's political discourse entailed the enlightenment of the people by the elite; more precisely, the effort to make the people adopt "the common good" that had been

created by mixing the values specific to Western civilization with the popular national cultural values. With an elitist approach, Gökalp backed the creation of an elitist class to manage the state and enlighten society, even though he rejected the privileged class.

For Gökalp, the state was the guardian of the society. In other words, policy is determined if the society failed in determining the policy, where it comprised the professsional groups. In a way, we see the same "elitist" approach in Gökalp, which was attributed to Plato and extended by Pareto's social distribution approach. Gökalp saw the adoption of the elitist understanding with the democracy.

For Gökalp, democracy meant the populism. The elite should approach the people, for two reasons. One was the natural culture to be learned from the people, the other was they would make the people learn Western civilization. Thus, the elite should not be parted from the people; they should refrain from alienation, develop the policies on behalf of the people and implement and give way to true democracy.

In attempt to combine social values (national culture) with the elements of Western civilizations that inspired his thinking, Gökalp considered the relations between politics and society, and asserted that the structures and identities to be constructed should be conducted by the administration via the elites. In other words, in Gökalp's system of thought, all was about the efforts to merge and adopt in particular prominent positive political and cultural concepts that emerged in the West with the values that bound his society together. This was also valid for his understanding of the relations between policy and society.

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