Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration

GREECE-TURKEY: Europeanization and Gender Equality

 a comparative analysis

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Abstract

The research examines and compares in a historical, political, cultural and societal context, the impact of Europeanization on the promotion of gender equality, in Greece and Turkey. The focus is on those historical facts and influences of Europe which are implicated in the social and political evolution of the demands for women’s rights. The methodological approach is descriptive of the historical phenomena, as well as multicausal and comparative. The theoretical framework of Europeanization is expanded beyond current conditionality commitments and the adoption of the European acquis, in order to include the historical impact of Europe on the construction of the nation- state and the establishment of demands for gender equality by the feminist movement, on the basis of the values of the European Enlightenment, in two countries of the periphery which did not take part in the Renaissance and the European Enlightenment.

The study investigates historical sources, facts and data, from the 19th century to date, in order to show the fluctuations, as well as the influences, of the early European orientation of the countries upon the recognition of women’s rights and to highlight Europe’s contribution to the weakening , if not in the elimination, of outdated perceptions and social stereotypes of the patriarchal/Balkan/Mediterranean culture. There is a dynamic relationship in the research between empirical study, comparative political analysis and feminist political theory, for all the specific themes.

It is argued that the feminist movement in both countries, which was in fact a small group of forward-looking educated women, under the beneficial influence of the European values, dared to challenge the established patriarchy and managed to oblige the political system firstly, to recognize gender equality as a value per se, and secondly, to undertake reforms which, in areas except those of the “dominant” religions, have laid the foundations for gender equality, at least under the law, strengthening the institutions of participatory democracy, of social justice and economic development. It is argued that women’s activism constitutes an invaluable social capital, an important variable which acts as a power for change and affects the shaping of policies and decision making.

The research shows that the two countries, despite differences due to their different points of departure, and to the historical relationship of a conqueror to the conquered, display similarities in many aspects, especially from the middle of the 19th century onwards, which are worth investigating: influences from the West and the ideas of the French Revolution transmitted through the Europeanized diaspora, efforts to acquire the European identity, geographical proximity, anachronistic economic and social structures, strong religious beliefs and patriarchal culture, discrimination and violence against women, a centralized state, incapacity to consolidate a modern, mature democracy and to enforce the rule of law. The research examines the existence and functioning of two hybrid political systems trying to combine and balance elements of the East with the evolution in values, human rights, gender equality, democracy, science and European modernity, as expressed in politics and social structures.

Following the course of history, the research describes, interprets, evaluates and compares the empirical evidence which contributes to a deeper understanding of the political process in the two countries during the long struggle for the recognition of women’s rights, and for societal convergence towards a common European ideal of gender equality. In this historical context, the research enters into the theoretical differences and disputes between the feminist movement and international politics, seeking to bridge the gap between “equality” and “difference”, and between the “hegemonic masculinity” of orthodox Realism and the “soft power” and the pacifism of the feminist approach to international relations. “Women’s diplomacy” is highlighted, as is the contribution of women to the national struggles, and emphasis is placed to their courage, selflessness and fighting spirit, although they are deprived of political rights or participation in the decision making process- a fact which poses critical questions for political science.

The interference in the activities of the social actors of a third supra- national actor, Europe, whose values and gender equality policy need to be transferred to the national context, gives the possibility to compare reactions in the two countries and draw general conclusions, which can contribute to enrich political science, feminist theory, the social-democratic political school of thought, and the theories of social capital and civil society. The study concludes with the personal testimonies of distinguished figures of public life in the two countries, with the comparative analysis of similarities and differences and with general conclusions derived from the research.

Key words: , Greece, Turkey, similarities/ differences, europeanization, european values, gender equality, feminism, historical evidence, political theory, comparative analysis, patriarchal/Balkan/ Mediterranean culture.