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The prolonged financial crisis, the irrepressible rise of radical, anti-establishment political movements in the member countries, the sway toward authoritarianism of liberal democracies in the continent, *Brexit*, and finally the refugee crisis conglomerated into an immense threat that brought the European Union to the brink of a cliff. In fact, the underlying reason behind this multi-layered crisis is the main contention present and unsettled ever since the establishment of the Union in 1957. It is the conflict between those in favor of "supranationality" for whom common economic benefits will pave the way for a voluntary transformation, and those against it. The notion of "supranationality" is the core principle behind a "united Europe." Therefore, those against an EU based on that principle perceive the process of transformation and integration under a supranational government as an imposition.

Utopia

There are multiple reasons behind the opposition to the concept of the EU. First is the fact that the European citizens are expected to heed democratically taken decisions of an unelected EU Commission. According to people who oppose the EU on this basis, un-elected institutions are attempting to form an artificial and abstract European identity for the sake of integration. Instead of devising its project along the lines of the traditions and habits of its people, the EU is trying to adapt the habits and lifestyles of its people to the project. In doing so, the ambiguous notion of "ever closer", mentioned in the Rome Treaty, is used to justify the efforts of integration to the detriment of nation-states. Accordingly, some constitutional powers of the member states are turned over to institutions criticized for their level of transparency and accountability.

Therefore, a considerable number of people in the Union deem this continent-wide transformation and integration project that lacks transparency and a clear objective and is crippled with a "democratic deficit", a utopia. In addition, political elites in democratically advanced countries such as Britain are of the opinion that their countries are in no need for change or transformation.

According to these critics, the real reason behind the Union's long-standing economic, financial and political troubles that are now exacerbated by the refugee crisis is this utopic vision, rendering the EU ungovernable. Therefore, they argue that this utopia cannot be a viable path to overcome the very obstruction it is causing. Furthermore, they claim that the unelected EU Commission members, that have long exercised a supranational government model, are now reaping the whirlwind.

Global Utopia

The EU project is in fact the first step of a global utopia. Considered on a global scale, this model aims to establish world peace and prosperity, observing common global rules nation-states form at their own will. Hence it is believed that should the EU project succeed, it will prove that global peace and prosperity can be attained by voluntary compliance to common rules of global governance. However, in the current system of international relations, the notion of "balance of power" dominates over the idea

of "voluntary participation", thereby reducing the functionality and effect of the supranational government models to a secondary role, both in Europe and the world.

Responses

According to those opposing the model of EU integration, supranational government defies the significance of everyday realities and traditions of the ordinary citizens. It raises the value of partially contentious, unlimited and radical personal choices, on which consensus is yet to be reached, to the level of fundamental rights that are compulsory to observe. Among these are multiculturalism, certain sexual preferences, and traditions that serve as pillars of stability for the daily life. There is a tendency to alter the flow of conservative and ordinary life in favor of a more progressive order; opponents state that such a stance leads to a multiculturalism that is hostile to the notion of multiculturalism itself. When multiculturalism or unorthodox freedoms are imposed on a conservative society, social tolerance is eroded and eventually shattered by waves of xenophobia, marginalization, racism and extreme nationalism. Furthermore, the supranational government model as exercised in the EU does not draw its political power from institutions that are accountable to an electorate.

"Soft Utopia"

One way to overcome this protracted crisis triggered by the model of supranational government, lies, in fact, in transferring a larger share of the nation-states' powers to the supranational bodies, to include constitutional, financial and social domains, and even the fields of foreign policy, defense and security. However, it seems unrealistic to think that political movements opposing the principle of supranationalism in the EU would consent to a larger power transfer to the EU institutions, especially under the conditions of the current crisis.

Due partially to the aforementioned reasons, the opponents of the supranational government model liken it to the communist or fascist ideologies. There is, however, a difference: in communist or fascist systems, persons that refute the founding ideologies are subjected to coercive measures and criminal charges, whereas the opponents of the supranational ideology in the EU are of course in no such danger.

Nonetheless, despite the democratic deficit and all the criticism, in the last sixty years, this "soft utopia", so to speak, of the EU has led to a large-scale transformation both at the European and global levels. It has made undeniably significant contributions to the diffusion of rule-based democratic governments, social market economies and the principle of the rule of law, not only within Europe but in the world, in the last quarter of the 20th century.¹

Turkey's Situation

The transformative power of EU's supranational government model based on volition has had visible effects even in countries that are not full members yet, such as our country, Turkey.

¹ The first section of this article was inspired by *The New Totalitarian Temptation: Global Governance and the Crisis of Democracy in Europe*, Todd Huizinga (<http://newtotalitariantemptation.com>)

In Turkey, where pluralist democracy has reigned continuously since 1946 despite many hiatuses, the process of socio-economic and democratic transformation has gained an impetus with the 1963 Ankara Treaty. Albeit through a bumpy, challenging and gradual process, we always made our significant moves of democratic transformation thanks to the EU, with the Additional Protocol of 1970, 1987 application for full membership, and accession negotiations in 2004. Still, Turkey is in dire need to continue its transformation.

Without continuing the reform process, it is not possible for us to become an open society that is modern, transparent and accountable, and based first and foremost on the rule of law, freedom of expression and the press, and objective and free judiciary.

We are all well familiar with the difficulties in our relations with the EU. It is fair to say that a significant part of it is due to the EU going back on its promises. Thus, EU membership may not materialize, whether it is due to this reason or other possible reasons, including an array of geopolitical ones. Yet, whether or not Turkey becomes an EU member, it cannot give up on its objective of modernization based on human dignity and equality of sexes, and its goal of being ranked among civilized and developed countries of the 21st century.

Three Key Objectives

Modernization is always a risky process because of the numerous elements of uncertainty that it entails. It is a painful process because it is transformative, and transformation does not happen at once. We should not underestimate the progress we have made; however, whether we can move forward from here shall be determined by our resolve to continue with the reforms.

The objectives in fact are so clear that they can be summarized in three points: (i) adapting our judiciary system to the modern global standards; (ii) placing the main tenets of democracy including freedom of expression and the press higher among the priorities of political parties, bureaucratic and civilian institutions, and the broader public; and (iii) developing the institutional capacity to become compatible with the global legal, commercial and financial structures that will enable us to get out of the middle income trap.

The EU membership framework, with its model of supranational government, is of significant importance for putting the reforms that will help us attain these objectives on a natural path, one in which the timing, content and pace is determined solely by Turkey. We just need to refrain from giving up with the excuse that the conjuncture in Turkey, Europe and the world is not ripe for democratic ventures.