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The Effect of the Threat Perception on Social Movements

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Abstract- The social movements arising from the social discontent comes to the forefront among the subjects that have begun to be studied after the 1960s within the sociology discipline. The explanation for the reasons of the social discontent which causes the emergence of the social movements may change according to the sociology schools. While the matters canalizing the society to step into reaction were assessed, the threat perception fed by the emotions which lead the actors to act was overlooked and thus this situation brought about mistakes in the examination of the movements. It is necessary to question the approaches on social movements in terms of the threat perception. This approach will bring the importance and necessity of the role of the emotions in human behavior to the attention of the researchers, as well.

Keywords: *social movement, social discontent, emotion, threat perception, social action.*

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The Effect of the Threat Perception on Social Movements

Tehdit Algisinin Sosyal Hareketlere Etkisi

Prof. Dr. Abdullah Korkmaz

Özet- Sosyal hoşnutsuzluktan kaynaklanan sosyal hareketler konusu sosyolojinin 1960'lı yıllardan sonra incelemeye başladığı konuların başında gelir. Sosyal hareketlerin ortaya çıkmasına sebep olan hoşnutsuzluğun sebeplerinin izahı sosyoloji okullarına göre değişebilmektedir. Toplumu tepkiye yönelten hususlar değerlendirilirken aktörleri harekete geçmeye yönelten duyguların beslediği tehdit algısı dikkatlerden kaçmış ve bu durum hareketlerin incelenmesinde hatalara yol açmıştır. Sosyal hareket yaklaşımlarını tehdit algısı açısından sorgulamak gerekmektedir. Bu yaklaşım aynı zamanda insan davranışlarında duyguların rolünün önemini ve gerekliliğini araştırmacıların dikkatine sunacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: sosyal hareket, sosyal hoşnutsuzluk, duygu, tehdit algısı, sosyal eylem.

Abstract- The social movements arising from the social discontent comes to the forefront among the subjects that have begun to be studied after the 1960s within the sociology discipline. The explanation for the reasons of the social discontent which causes the emergence of the social movements may change according to the sociology schools. While the matters canalizing the society to step into reaction were assessed, the threat perception fed by the emotions which lead the actors to act was overlooked and thus this situation brought about mistakes in the examination of the movements. It is necessary to question the approaches on social movements in terms of the threat perception. This approach will bring the importance and necessity of the role of the emotions in human behavior to the attention of the researchers, as well.

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I. Introduction

Two concepts stand out in the study of social movements: actor and social action. The actor is considered as person who carries out social action by taking part in social movement. Since the considered thing is individuals and their behaviors, that is, social behaviors, human behavior must be explained firstly for the correct analysis of social movements.

The social behavior of each person is shaped according to the way s/he perceives the world from the most suitable point for her/him. Unless one understands the world of an individual and her/his way of seeing the world, her/his movements and behavior may seem strange and incomprehensible to others. An individual's perception of the world is the result of physical and social environment, physiological structure, goals and efforts and past experiences (Krech et al., 1983: 25). It is necessary to count in the past experiences inherited from the experiences of other people –starting from the close circle the individual– among the past experiences, which are factors affecting the perception of the individual, who is a social being.

There are two factors that determine the perceptions of individuals. Structural factors are the content of the physical monitions faced by the individual and the emotional effects that they evoke in the nervous system. Functional factors of structuring perception are mainly the elements that arise from the individual's needs, mood, past life and memory (Krech and Crutchfield, 1970: 85).

Although two different persons' visions about the world are not exactly the same, there are common points in these visions of people. The main reasons for this situation are that everyone has alike nervous system and everyone has more or less certain requests and common problems that require solutions. For this reason, the worlds of understanding of individuals belonging to a certain cultural world can also be similar because their wishes, needs, goals and efforts are more or less similar, and their physical and social environments are also similar and they have the same learning experiences (Krech et al., 1983: 26).

In order for the behavior of an individual to change: (1) S/he must encounter a problem situation, (2) There must be significant changes in the state of physiology, and (3) Dynamic factors must be activated in recalling process (Krech and Crutchfield, 1970: 117). People perceive, construct, evaluate and react to stimuli from the outside world. Perceptions inevitably affect our lives, clothes, and dreams. Perceptions are created when we interpret the outside world and objects in the way they reflect to us. Where the interpretation exists, the only truth in objectivity disappears.

When an obstacle is encountered on the road to the target, the reconstruction of the world of understanding is in question, and the nature of the construction is in a way to remove the tension (anxiety caused by the obstacle). It cannot be expected that the reconstruction of the world of understanding would

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always be in the direction of adaptation, and many times tensions have disruptive effects on the reconstruction of the world of understanding. Whether a blocked target would cause anxiety, or a threat perception, depends on many factors. These factors include the severity of the tension caused by the inability to meet the need, the characteristic response style of the individual against the inhibition, and the perception of the element that hinders the target. In the case of negative emotions in the perception process, there is anxiety about future dangers and threats, self-concerns and feelings of not being able to predict future dangers and to control them when they become realities.

Anxiety is an indication of an individual's awareness level. It is a new possibility of existence with the threat of extinction. The era of rapid changes and flows in the 21st century changes the structure and functioning of the individual and all social institutions, and behavioral reference systems lose their effectiveness. This situation nourishes the threat perception.

Anxiety is the general concern about a possible future danger. The adaptive value of anxiety is that it can cause us to plan and prepare for possible threats (Butcher et al., 2013: 330). It should not be overlooked that anxiety does not produce results similar to that of fear. According to the science of psychiatry, one of the causes of anxiety stems from the feeling of perception of a dangerous situation in the outside world. This is due to the absence of a needed object in the environment or the existence of an object in the environment that jeopardizes the sustainability of life. Anxiety is an inevitable part of life and continues from birth to death (Gençtan, 1988: 161). How a concerned person reacts depends on the knowledge and beliefs valid in the culture of the said person. The processes that cause people's concerns about not reaching their social, political and cultural goals strengthen the perception of threats that exist innately in humans.

The threat perception explained above based on neurobiological data is activities aimed at preventing people from achieving their economic, social and political goals, and are threats especially to their existence. Threat perception can be on the corporate level as well as on the individual level. When those, who occupy the peak status that determine the policies of the institutions and supervise the practices, start to worry about the function areas of the institutions or the requirements of the function procedures, perception of the threat at the institution level would arise and strengthen. While this situation causes the reconstruction of decision makers' world of understanding, the restructuring process will produce results according to the nature of the threat perception. Experiencing such a process will affect the functionality among the institutions and as a result, the system will tend to take a new position.

In the analysis of the social, ignoring the individuals as arbitrariness or ignoring the elements arising from human nature while explaining the behavior of the individuals will take the researcher away from the scientific explanation of the one.

II. Explanation of Social Movements

When the social movement is considered as "the collective behavior style acting to create a new lifestyle, a new model in society" (Türkdoğan, 2013: 14), it can be described as collective actions that individuals, who have agreed upon within the framework of the attitudes and manners inclining to same purpose, put into practice.

Social movements that sociology is interested in began to sprout in England at the end of the 18th century and began to take root in Europe, North America and elsewhere in the 19th century (Tilly, 2008: 25). The resource mobilization theory, which occupies an important place among the social movement approaches, has become a dominant paradigm to study collective action. This paradigm provided significant theoretical benefits in securing resources and understanding the social movements with the characteristic possibilities of rational actors engaged in instrumental action through a formal organization.

The discussions that the resource mobilization approach is not sufficient to explain today's movements have paved the way for the emergence of new approaches. These developments created an intellectual space for complementary or alternative perspectives to analyze social movements. One such alternative is social structuralism, and it brings a symbolic interactionist approach to collective action research, emphasizing the role of framing the social activism activities and cultural processes. The new social movement theory is based on Europe's traditions of social theory and political philosophy. This approach has largely emerged in response to the inability of classical Marxism to analyze collective action. For new social movement theorists, two types of reductionism have prevented classical Marxism from adequately understanding contemporary forms of collective action (Buechler, 1995: 443). First, the economic reductionism of Marxism was to assume that all politically important social action would come from the basic economic logic of capitalist production, and that all other social realities were best secondary in shaping such actions. Marx, while explaining the proletarianization process, does not take into account that actors are arbitrary, but argues that the actions of individuals are shaped through the system of production relations (Touraine, 2014: 140). Second, the class reductionism of Marxism is to assume that social actors will be defined by class relations based on the production process and that all other social identities are secondary in forming social actors.

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These issues led Marxists to base the proletarian revolution on the sphere of production and marginalize any other social protest. In contrast, new social movement theologians have placed politics, ideology and culture as collective identity identifiers at the core of movements that are seen as the origin of social movement actions (Buechler, 1995: 445).

It is necessary to pay regard to Manuel Castells (Spain), Alain Touraine (France), Alberto Melucci (Italy) and Jurgen Habermas (Germany) (Williams, 2006: 91) as theorists who consider their new social approaches in the context of their intellectual traditions.

The focus of Castells is the impact of capitalist dynamics on the transformation of the urban space and the role of urban social movements in this process. He argues that urban issues have become central because of the growing importance of collective consumption and the absence of state intervention to promote the production of non-profitable but vitally necessary public goods. In this context, Castells sees the rise of urban social movements in a dialectical struggle with the state and other political forces seeking to reorganize urban social life. For this reason, he describes the city as a social product that is the result of conflicting social interests and values (Castells, 2008: 210). On the one hand, he tries to define the city as the area of the dominant interest groups, in line with the goals of capitalist commodification and bureaucratic domination; on the other hand, social movements based on the people try to defend popular interests, establish political autonomy and maintain cultural identity. Castells argues that other sources of identity and exchange, including the state, as well as group identities on the basis of gender, ethnicity, nationality and citizenship, are the cornerstone of class relations. According to Castells, urban protest movements develop around three main themes (Buechler, 1995: 445): First, some demands focus on collective consumption patterns regulated by the state; therefore emphasis is placed on the usage values in community contexts that challenge the logic of capitalist exchange. Second, other demands focus on the importance of cultural identity and its regional ties; thereby counteract standardization and homogenization associated with the form of bureaucratic organization by establishing and defending real forms of society. Finally, it refers to the political mobility of citizens who emphasize self-management and autonomous decision making and seek more decentralized forms of government.

Alain Touraine claims that with the passing of the meta-social guarantees of social order, more and more of society comes to be seen as the product of reflective social action. "The growing capacity of social actors to construct both a system of knowledge and the technical tools that allow them to intervene in their own functioning makes possible the increasing self-production of society, which becomes the defining hallmark of post-industrial or programmed society. The control of historicity is the object of an ongoing struggle between classes defined by relations of domination. Such classes take the form of social movements as they enter this struggle. In post-industrial society, the major social classes consist of a popular class of consumers and clients and a dominant class of managers and technocrats. For these classes, the principal field of conflict is culture, and the central contest involves who will control society's growing capacity for self-management" (Buechler, 1995 446). It is believed that as the state become the repository of society's ever-increasing capacity to control historicity, the central conflict in post-industrial society will come to center around this institution. Touraine refers to the role of the system that wants to maximize production, power, money and knowledge, and of those who want to defend and expand their personality in new social movements. This issue can be qualified as a center-periphery conflict. In industrial society, while this conflict is centered around material production, there is uncertainty about the "other" required for social movements to occur in post-industrial society (Williams, 2006: 91). Touraine argues that there is no single class or group that represents a future social order and that different oppositional social movements are united simply by their oppositional attitude (Buechler, 1995: 445). He sees contemporary social movements as evidence of a protest from the economic to the cultural field, with the privatization of social problems. In other words, Touraine (1985) argues that movements based on difference, specificity or identity too easily dismiss the analysis of social relations and the denunciation of power, and in another study (1988), he implies that these movements are in the search for identity. The typical outcome is an anxious research for identity, and an individualism which can exclude collective action (1985). They are purely defensive unless they are directly linked with a counter-offensive that is directly political, and appeals to self-determination (Büechler, 1995: 446).

Jurgen Habermas (1984,1987) proposes the most elaborate theory of modern social structure by distinguishing between a politico-economic system governed by generalized media of power and money and a lifeworld still governed by normative consensus (Williams, 2006: 93). The problem for Habermas is that in modern society, system imperatives and logic intrude on the lifeworld in the form of colonization, so that money and power come to regulate not only economic and political transactions but also identity formation and normative regulation (Habermas, 2001: 849). Habermas argues that colonization process alters each of the basic roles arising from the intersection of the politico-economic system and public and private lifeworld: employee, consumer, client and citizen. Habermas suggests that the relationship of clients to the welfare

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state is a model case for this colonization of the lifeworld, since money and power control the extent and kind of spending on welfare policy; it damages and bureaucratizes social relationships (Büechler, 1995: 446). Habermas's explanation is, in a sense, the expression of the fact that chaos, hopelessness and anxiety in the individual's perception world trigger the threat perception.

According to the evaluations made by Habermas regarding the social system, the increasing possibilities and means of public authority allow the state to intervene in various areas of life increasingly. People, who start to feel anxious to lose what they have in the face of the public's intrusive attitude, have a protest attitude towards the lifestyle they will be forced to live (Habermas, 2001: 851). This point highlights the defensive aspect of the new social movements emphasized by Habermas.

Alberto Melucci argues that the modern world (post-modern) brings new forms of social movement, reactions, and computing. Movements are triggered by new places of conflict intertwined with everyday life; the conflict itself includes symbolic codes, identity claims and personal or flashy claims. Social movements play an important role as messages expressing opposition trends and methods in a society that is increasingly shaped by information and signs. Focusing on the personal, spiritual or expressive aspects of modern life specific to new social movements is the implicit rejection of the instrumental rationality of the dominant society. Perhaps the most important systemic effect of new social movements is to make a modern form of power behind the rationality of administrative procedures visible; in this way, collective action emphasizes the social nature of the world and the possibility of alternative arrangements (Buechler, 1995: 447). Melucci's positive view of today's social movements and messages reveals the importance of free spaces between political power and everyday life where actors can strengthen collective identities through both representation and participation.

One of the most prominent issues in Melucci's approach is that today's social movements are identity oriented. In an identity oriented perspective, the demands and characteristics of actors differ. Melucci portrays the actors of the old social movements as "tragic characters who, in the stage of history, take the role of heroes or traitors, but always tend to great ideals or a dramatic destiny". The actors of the new movements, on the other hand, have turned to themselves rather than the outside world. While the old social movements have an economically defined class base, the social base of the new movements consists of different classes. While old movements mobilize entrepreneurs, workers and middle class, new social movements find support from the new middle class (young generation and higher education level groups) (Çayır, 1999: 19). "Today, social movements seem to have shifted their focus from class, race and other more traditional political issues to cultural ground. Social studies that have emerged in developed societies over the past two decades have developed a cultural challenge to the dominant language, the rules that regulate knowledge and shape social practices, rather than expressing themselves through political action. The crucial dimensions of daily life (time, space, interpersonal relations, individual and group identity) have been involved in these conflicts, and new actors had laid claim to their autonomy in making sense of their lives" (Meluci, 2014: 80).

III. Reflection of Threat Perception to Social Movements

Analyzing social movements in terms of threat perception requires prioritizing the actors of collective actions. It is necessary to discuss the social movement explanations, taking into account the references of the actors' behaviors, the characteristics of the time frame of the actions and the imperatives of the social system.

We can think of social action guided by the basic principles defined by actors. According to this perspective, values affect how players define specific goals and identify both effective and morally acceptable strategies. Moreover, the values would provide the motivations necessary to continue the action. Someone socialized according to a certain worldview has a stronger motivation to act. The properties of a particular system of values will shape the components of the action. Collective actions can be associated with the lack of social integration in the system, on the one hand, and with the inability to reproduce and strengthen the core values of the system. On the other hand, collective action can be interpreted as a means of emerging tendencies towards social reintegration rather than separation. In other words, from this point of view as evidence of the creation and consolidation of new value systems, the success of the global justice mobility may be linked to the spread of new values, with equal attention to social justice, human rights and environmental protection. Empirical evidence of value change has revealed a remarkable set of analyzes of the characteristics of the new policy, the emergence of green parties and the supporters and activists of the new movements.

The link between post-materialist trends and new social movements has also been questioned. Hostility to the law and order policy appears to be a distinctive feature of these movements. They have turned to social movements on several occasions to promote freedom of expression and direct democracy. However, they have equally supported other movements (e.g. against war, nuclear energy or environmental pollution) that are difficult to examine, regardless of

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engaging in personal and collective security, or in other words completely independent of "materialist" concerns (Porta and Diani, 2006: 64-67).

While explaining the causes of the new social movements, the perception of the threat posed by the anxiety about the things that would be possibly occur (according to the participants), which takes part in the background of the reaction against the increasing effectiveness of the public, should be taken into consideration. Social movements respond to value system and cultural changes in general. The relatively clear distinction between public and private in industrial society has allowed social interests, political freedoms and civil rights to be explained as a whole, without any qualification. The difference in lifestyles and the growing social identity problem constitutes another resource for social movements. In a world where class loyalties are fragmented and political ideologies are in crisis; cultural consumption, using leisure time, ways to regulate one's emotional orientation, eating habits or clothing styles can be powerful factors for diversification. In other cases, collective action on lifestyles is related to the defense of values and traditions that are threatened (Porta and Diani, 2006: 64).

In order to define collective action, we need to reveal the motivations that motivate people in these situations. Often, individuals are motivated by the personal benefit that they will draw from the results of collective action at the price of their participation in collective action. On the other hand, if each participant limits her/himself to the direct costs and benefits of cooperation, individual withdrawal prevails over individual cooperation. If all of those involved in collective action are rational and self-interested people, disintegration will occur (Elster, 2010: 466). Although not always interrelated, the importance of new social movements is related to the defense of certain behavior models and moral rules rather than the protection of economic interests, and the capture of political power.

The effects of socio-economic characteristics upon social and political conflicts have often been addressed by looking at political cleavages; that is, at the main politicized conflict lines (Porta and Diani, 2006: 35). Political cleavages have traditionally created a model of collective action in which actors fought against each other in order to protect their material or political interests and defined themselves as members of a class, a faction or a group member. While explaining the reason for the conflicts, Smelser was drawing a framework characterized by this dominant understanding when describing collective behavior as an irrational, exceptional and hysterical response to structural strains emerging from modernization process. This understanding indirectly tells us that the social base of the conflict is made up of alienated, marginal and reactionary sections of society, that irrational and emotional responses can be delayed by means of social control, and that institutions can be protected, in other words, that resistance is destined to fail and this resistance will weaken when everyone starts to benefit from the blessings of the modernization process (Offe, 1999: 73).

The main problem in the analysis of the relationship between structure and action is whether social changes have made it easier to develop certain relationships and feelings of solidarity and of collective belonging to identify specific interests, and to promote related mobilization. The idea that culture's impact on collective action can be reduced to values has been controversial. It has been observed that culture influences action not by providing values that regulate action, but also shaping a repertoire of styles, skills, and vehicle habits from which people construct strategies of action. In other words, culture creates a world of understanding that enables people to orient themselves in the world. The world of understanding includes beliefs, ceremonies, cultural and ideological elements, and informal practices such as narratives, stories, daily rituals and language. The content of cultural models, of which values are a key element, is of secondary importance here in relation to the vision of culture as a set of instruments used by social actors to make sense of their own life experiences. These are the problems neglected by an analysis that focuses only on values in the study of collective action. Systems of similar values may support collective action under certain conditions but may fail to provide adequate motivation in others. For example, participation in environmental movements may not be at the same level in two countries with similar development levels (Porta and Diani, 2006: 73). Due to the different characteristics of the actors' world of understanding, their skills and flexibility in adapting to different environmental conditions clearly emerge there.

IV. Evaluation and Conclusion

Perception of threat, in other words, anxiety felt by people when they think that they may be harmed in issues concerning them, is a token affecting the individual and collective actions of people. The perception of threat affects the reconstruction of the world of understanding both of the individual carrying out action and their interlocutors.

Considering the institutional feature of the elements of the social structure, it is seen that the functions change according to the conjuncture and this change is directly proportional to the intensity and severity of the demand for the functions of the institutions. The change also causes differentiation in the status structure of institutions and the importance and reputation of the status. Failure to meet the functions demanded by individuals from institutions also leads to increased social discontent and anxiety in the process. While the spread of anxiety causes threat perception on

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the one hand, it also prepares the ground for collective action.

It is necessary to apply to the testimony of history for the analysis of the facts and events caused by the perception of threats caused by anxiety.

The common belief of social movement theorists is that the industrialization process, especially in England, is characterized by the intense period of social movements. The period under consideration is an era when Marx asserted that the capitalist system is preparing its own end, and people believed that maintaining capital stock should be prioritized, and foreign trade should be organized with the theory of "Comparative Advantages", and the product created in the industry should be in favor of the capitalist. Considering the fact that there is a concern about the slowdown in capital accumulation, and that the labor takes more than the capitalist is disadvantageous to the capitalist, a process is in question in which a policy is adopted and implemented to ensure that the worker receives enough wages to meet her/his physical needs to sustain the system.

The policies adopted by decision-makers who believe in the correctness of the system to eliminate possible threats to the system, on the other hand, made the life of the workers difficult and increased the perception of threat. The perception of threat led the workers to collective actions. Would there be social movements in question if there were no practices that led workers to worry about their future and thus to strengthen their perception of threat? The protest actions in the period created the concern that people may show favor to socialist system understanding, which is a threat to the system. Concern about the future of the system caused by social movements has led to increased threat perception of public authorities and public administrators have made new arrangements to eliminate the threat. In this context, sociological jurisprudence such as providing municipal services to poor districts (1890), granting broader powers to labor unions (1890-1900), occupational safety (1891), limiting the working time of women and children (1895), compensation for workers and legal regulations for the protection of children (1906), such as granting pensions to employees (1908) and acceptance of sickness and disability insurance (1911), have been enacted. The events caused by the social movements and cause to increase in the threat perception of the public have caused changes in the functional areas and procedures of the institutions.

The anxiety of individuals who occupy social status and, as a result, the effect of threat perception on the social system is not limited to social movements. It is not possible to argue that the anxiety caused by revolution export strategy of the Soviet Union after the Second World War was not affected by the implementation of the social policies required by the understanding of the Social State. Otherwise, the question of why the understanding of social state after the collapse of the Soviet Union is not as important as used to be will be obliged to be explained only with the difficulties faced by the liberal world, and the necessities of financial policies.

The necessity of taking "threat perception" into account as a variable in sociological analyses has revealed itself in recently experienced "15th of July Coup Attempt" in Turkey. The coup attempt has caused decision makers to worry about the country's future. The anxiety caused by the incident strengthened the threat perception, and the increased threat perception led to the redefinition of the function areas and procedures of the institutions, especially in the fields of law and security. The concerns of the authority were attributed to the mass by means of communication and the measures taken against the threat were made to be supported by the public.

Sociological analyses to be performed without considering the feelings, attitudes and behaviors of people prevent to make correct determinations. As adopted in the dominant sociological paradigm, the assays to be made with the assumption that human behaves rationally will be incomplete. While examining the actions of people, besides being a social entity, biological and psychological characteristics should also be taken into consideration. In this framework, threat perception should be included in as a variable in the analysis of social movements.

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