# Chapter 48
# Religious Social Movements and Economic Welfare in Modern Turkey

**Cemile Zehra Köroğlu**
*Gümüşhane University, Turkey*

**Muhammet Ali Köroğlu**
*Gümüşhane University, Turkey*

## ABSTRACT

*In all societies, there have been some movements that point out social, political, economic, ideological, or moral problems or aim at partial or complete change. This chapter discusses the new meanings attributed to the concept of social movements in the postmodern era. A theoretical framework is proposed to understand the nature of social movements since the 1960s and to demonstrate their differences from classical movements. Turkey provides a particularly rich context with high potential for social movements, both with secular and religious aspirations. Religious social movements have shown quite a tense relationship with the state throughout the history of the republic; yet, they have gained power and prosperity through evolving liberal economic policies since the 1980s. Therefore, resource mobilization and new social movement paradigms are used in this chapter to explain Turkey's religious social movements today.*

## INTRODUCTION

When community and social life are taken as a basis, it cannot be said that any society is entirely stable, closed to changes and differences at no time in history. Contrarily, in all societies from the most primitive to the most modern ones, social differences, rebelling to its location, struggling for changing its position and themes like change have been taken into consideration. This emerged as in the form of transformation of discontent, oppression, marginalization into rebellion or a philosophy of one's own life and meaning the world into action socially and massively. From this perspective, it is possible to claim that many social movements have appeared with a variety of purposes and principles in all periods of history. Sometimes economic conditions and sometimes

religious, cultural and political conditions have become the driving force of a social movement. Although, sciences, such as politics and sociology allow us to analyze the conceptual meaning of social movements, these sciences often are put forward by the modern era. As a result, most social movements that have been analyzed stem from the modern period. Here, especially, social movements which emerged in Western societies after the 18th century have been taken into account. However, no matter how different the reason, principles, objectives of a social movement; no society is isolated from social movement, demand and change.

When assessed in terms social movements, both traditional and modern Turkey provide us with a unique context to study social movements and economic prosperity. As in the past, many secular and religious movements are present in today's Turkey. For instance, in the protests of "Gezi" it has become highly apparent how easily social actors have been mobilized and turned into a social movement on the basis of a seemingly arbitrary problem refrained from religious or social objectives. Within the "Gezi-protests" all segments of society have been united over an environmental issue, making use social media and other alternative means of communication. However, a strong opposition has tried to transform this movement and made an end to the protests.

Ironically, these kind of movements have not been considered specifically in the general social movement literature. Only by tackling religious social movements or just secular movements in Turkey, we can identify dozens of different social movements. Many social movements can be examined in particular such as Feminist Movement of Turkey, other women's movements, environmental movements (like Bergama and Valley of Fırtına Boycott), movements related to human rights and humanitarian law violations, identity movements and political movements. Likewise, in the category of religious social movements, many individual mystical movements, political

and other movements struggle for participation in the public sphere. Although some of the religious social movements express historical continuity, many have emerged in the modern era and have been in constant change ever since. For Turkey, particularly the process of growing political and economic liberalism since 1980s has shaped social movements, especially in terms of religious social movements. From this period, religious communities have received a greater share of economic prosperity and have had the opportunity of better organization to make their voices heard. Departing from this observation, this chapter aims to review the concept of social movement in Turkey within the framework of three main periods: a) religious and social movements during the imperial period; b) religious and social movements between the years of 1923-1950 and; c) recent religious and social movements. With flourishing economic prosperity in the latter period, two social groups, that have turned into social movements and have achieved significant advantages to express themselves in the public sphere, step to the fore, i.e. the Kurdish ethnic movement and Islamic groups. Because classical theories of social movements are insufficient to explain social movements in both categories, a new paradigm is advocated.

## DEFINING SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

The most rampant discussions about social movements entail the definition of what a social movement actually is, how it should be dealt with and for which social conditions and reasons it has appeared. In general, social movements have been conceptualized as an "organized effort expended by remarkable number of people to change one or more major features of society (or else resisting to be changed). This concept has been coined by Saint-Simon who had to describe the opposition movements in France in the beginning of the 18th century" (Marshall, 1999, p.746). Undoubtedly,

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