

**BEING A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR IN TURKEY: CHALLENGING
HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN A MILITARISTIC NATION-STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the intersection between hegemonic masculinity and militarism in Turkey, the role of conscription in this intersectionality, conscientious objection as a possible way of challenging it and conscientious objectors, in particular. Military service is obligatory for male-citizens and it is one of the most important components of hegemonic masculinity in the Turkish Republic. Conscription is used by the state to construct the citizen identity in the society. As a result it constructs hegemonic masculinity through militarism. However, militaries or militarization processes do not create only ideal citizens but they also create pacifists, rebels or conscientious objectors, which is directly related to conscription as a modern concept. I claim that conscientious objection- refusal of the citizenship obligation- is a resistance to hegemonic masculinity, which is tightly related to militarist discourse.

Keywords: hegemonic masculinity, conscription, militarism, conscientious objection, Turkey.

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INTRODUCTION

*Orduya istiyorlar, savaş çıkar diyorlar
Silah veriyorlar anne, bana öldür diyorlar¹*

While I was looking for a job after graduating from the university like most of my friends, one of my friends told me that I was lucky because at least I did not have to fulfill the military service obligation. I was worried about him and other male colleagues around me because the companies prefer male employees who have completed their military service or offer low salaries and low positions. Therefore, after looking for a job for a while, most of my male colleagues preferred to complete their military services, which took six months for some of them or 12 for the others, depending on the lots drawn by them. Conscription is obligatory for the male citizens in Turkey since 1927, and for better jobs and long term positions, companies do not prefer the ones who did not complete the military service, since this service period interrupt the efficiency of the employees. Some other male friends of mine chose to enroll in MA programs right after they accomplished their BAs to postpone the military service. However they were planning to do the service at one point in the future.

On the other hand, I had other male friends who were determined not to serve in the military with various reasons. One day I was reading a forum of a website related to the concerts and music news. One of those determined friends sent the members of the website a declaration text of a conscientious objector, which stated that he will not serve in the military in any condition and will not kill or die for anyone. After reading that text, I knew that the member will be virtually lynched through comments about the text he sent. Some of the comments were harsh: “What kind of a man are you?, Are you a coward or a little girl?, Are

¹ A part of lyrics of Yaşar Kurt’s well known song Korku-Fear (or Anne-Mom). “Army calls me up, for an outbreak of a possible war. They give me the gun, mom, they tell me to kill”.

you a faggot?, How are you going to protect your family in the future if you do not want to protect your nation?, You traitor Kurds, you live in our beautiful country and you trait to people who feed you”. Some other comments were written with a fatherly language, or like giving advices to a younger brother, such as: “Conscription is hard but it teaches you well how to become a real man through carrying successfully those difficult tasks out. You will meet a variety of human characters and learn a lot about your country. It will be a different experience and the friendships built in the barracks are never forgotten.” Although conscription is a citizenship obligation, as it is also clear in the above example, comments mostly focus on “being a man”, in these conversations. These kinds of comments are highly familiar to those who grow up in Turkey or listened to conversations about conscription, however, what is new in this conversation is that a person publicly declared that he is not going to serve in the military.

The history of conscientious objection stretches back to the beginning of the history of conscription, thus it is not a new phenomenon, however, Turkey encountered this term in the beginning of the 1990s. Since there is no alternative service for conscription and conscientious objection is not recognized by the Turkish state, COs (conscientious objectors) are having legal problems and recognized as draft evaders. There are currently 76 COs in Turkey including 14 women, who refuse to serve in any kind of military related compulsory charges.

In addition to the legal problematic position of COs, they face society’s backlash since they refuse to accomplish a crucial task for the society. There is a saying in Turkey that a man cannot marry to a girl before he completes his military service since girl’s parents do not let their daughter to get married to a man who is not ready for a “real” life. Therefore there is a direct relationship between conscription and “hegemonic masculinity”, which is the dominant masculinity among the plurality of masculinities which exist in the society. Parallel to what

was stated in the above example, studies related to intersection between hegemonic masculinity and militarism in Turkey state that in Turkish nation state, hegemonic masculinity is defined in terms of modernity and militarization and one of the most important components of hegemonic masculinity in Turkish Republic is to serve in the military (Altınay, 2004, Lucassen & Zurcher, 1999). Therefore hegemonic masculinity, the norm masculinity in the society, is defined by the state through militarization of the civilian life, in other words imposing the normalization of militaristic values, norms and practices in the society.

In the first part of the first section I will discuss the concepts conscription in terms of intersection between gender and militarism. Conscription is a modern concept which is mostly used by the modern, nation states in order to achieve political means of the states. Conscription is one of the tools the Turkish Republic, as a nation state, used to constructed national identity, thus gender roles in the society. “Military nation myth” (Altınay, 2001) was produced and imposed on the society as a part of the state discourse. According to this discourse soldiery is a part of Turkish national identity. In addition to this myth, through conscription, a hierarchy between men and women, and also “proper men” and “improper men” was set.

Militaries are the institutions used by state to create and impose the hegemonic masculinity in the society, however, militaries do not create only ideal citizens but they also create pacifists, rebels or objectors. Conscientious objectors are one of the results of construction processes of nation-states and they limit the human resources of militaries while their existence also reveals the relationship between nationalism, militarism and hegemonic masculinity (Brockling, 2001, Altınay, 2004). Since it is the Therefore in the second part of the first section I will discuss conscientious objection as a concept and give a brief background for the development of the concept and the discussions. First I will focus on the

term in a general context and legal aspects of objection and then I will give information about conscientious objection and COs in Turkey.

This study is based on the theory which states that the codes of masculinity are militarized and these codes are supported by nationalism and the construction of patriarchal citizenship in Turkey. Based on these insights, my main question for this study is that; how might challenging the most important component of hegemonic masculinity in turn challenge other aspects of hegemonic masculinity as well? I would also like to pose these questions: If nationalism, militarism and masculinity are connected in Turkey and if compulsory military service is directly related to this militarization process, how is this articulation of militarism and masculinities affected by the appearance of conscientious objectors who publicly refuse to serve in the military? How do these conscientious objectors react to hegemonic masculinity roles in the society? Do they alter or reconstruct those roles? If so, how? Therefore in the second part of this study, first I will provide information about the interviews with twelve COs in Turkey, as the data of this study in order to answer my main question. I will introduce COs one by one and give necessary background information. Then I will analyze interviews in the light of the foregoing theories and discussions.

In the conclusion part, I will summarize the results of the analysis of the interviews with the COs based on the theory states that there is a strong relationship between militarism and hegemonic masculinity in Turkey and COs have the bases for a challenge of hegemonic masculinity in Turkey. I will also provide my opinion for possible further studies which will be able to discuss this issue in depth or with other dimensions.

CHAPTER I

I.1. Modern Aspects of Militaries: Conscription as Military Labor Source

I.1.1. Development of conscription through time: World and Turkish contexts

Soldiers are the backbones of militaries, and militaries have used a variety of means by which to employ soldiers throughout centuries. The labor source of the militaries has changed over time, with historic militaries using slaves, professional soldiers, or ordinary peasants as conscripts, inciting them to join by paying or meeting their basic needs or promising war prizes in the conquered lands. Until the 16th century, people who lived on a particular land, perceived conscription as the responsibility of the authorities of their lands (Lucassen & Zurcher, 1999). The concept of the “Citizen-army”, therefore, is relatively new source of military labor (Altinay & Bora, 2001).

Male-only conscription has been used as the primary military labor source by many nation states for the last three centuries. Contemporary direct compulsory military service was first used immediately after the French Revolution in France, in the late 18th century, although similar applications could be found in previous historical periods (Lucassen & Zürcher, 2003). The countries in the 18th century needed more soldiers during war times, since professional soldiers were no longer sufficient to sustain operations in extended, intense wars, which took tens of years at least. The male population in those countries was obliged to join the armed services through state legislation; however, this regulation required accurate male population statistics in order to organize the conscription process. Additionally, conscription required a definition of citizenship. Thus, throughout the implementation of these processes required to meet the requirements for conscription, bureaucracy and centralization of the state increased (2003).

Throughout the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was following the changes and improvements of the European states’ militaries closely, since the empire was looking for the

ways to survive². Especially with the victories of Prussia's modern army in Europe, the military became one of the first institutions, which was targeted in the modernization process of the Ottoman Empire. A male population census was held regularly, and "subjects" were transformed into "citizens" throughout this modernization process (Ustel, 2005; Kadioglu 2001; Keyman & Icduygu, 1998).

There were two important reasons for Ottoman Empire to look to Prussia as an example for its modernization process of the military: the success of total war policies of Prussia and the military-nation concept it used, which eventually intersected to become a part of the Empire's survival plan (Zürcher, 1994; 2003). The concept of "total war" indicates that a state and its citizens should always be ready for a war (Brockling, 2001, p.302): "total war is the situation of the usage of all the resources (economical, political and socio-cultural) of the whole nation for the war (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, 1990: 80-81). With this usage, the boundary between the military and civilian life is blurred, and the probability of a war transforms civilian life into a battlefield. The militarization process starts at an early stage, and the military-nation thus begins to appear as a result of this blurred boundary between military and civilian life (Altınay & Bora, 2001).

These two concepts, in addition to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire modernization process, have continued to influence the policies of the Turkish state, a modern nation-state. However, constructing the military-nation was a process and, obviously, took time. Until the 1930s³, although the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish state recognized male citizens (who used to be referred to as peasants) as potential soldiers throughout the

²For information about the Ottoman Empire in 19th century see: Zürcher, Eric J: (1993/2004). Part 1: Western Influences, Theory and Methodology. In *Turkey: A Modern History*, (pp. 9-92). NY: I.B. Tauris.

³ The Turkish state was found in 1923.

modernization process who could be called up to military service from time to time. Yet, it took time for male citizens to see themselves as potential soldiers, primarily because the connection between citizenship and conscription was a new concept for the time, and it was difficult for male citizens to internalize this connection.

The first article of the Military Service Law 1111 states that every male Turkish Republic citizen is obliged to serve in the military.⁴ This law, which has been in effect since 1927, still has not been removed; however, it was subject to change, in terms of the regulations regarding the conditions of conscription, such as the length of the service or the definition of eligibility for the service.

I.1.2. Contemporary regulations on conscription in Turkey

Since 1927, every man in Turkey is obliged to undertake military service when he turns 20, however delaying an individual's military service is possible if the citizen is studying in a university or has illnesses diagnosed in the military hospital. Those who work abroad also have the right to delay their military service or, if they worked for at least three years and pay the specified amount of money, they have the option of doing one month of military service. Other than that, those who are of military age (20-41) have to serve six to fifteen months, depending on their education. For example those who are university graduates serve six months as privates or twelve months as reserve officers, however those who are high school graduates have to serve 15 months. Individuals are sent to the various regions in Turkey through the drawing of lots, if they are found to be "eligible" in the medical examinations held in the military hospitals (Askerlik Yasasi, [Military Service Law], 2000).

⁴ First article of the Military Service Law: "Madde 1-Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tebaası olan her erkek, işbu kanun mucibince askerlik yapmağa mecburdur". (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Adalet Bakanlığı [Turkish Republic Ministry of Justice] (2000). [Military Service Law]. Retrieved May 19, 2009, from <http://www.mevzuat.adalet.gov.tr/html/437.html>)

From time to time, with the new regulations, people are given the option to pay a fee and complete only one month of military service. For example, after the earthquake of 17 August 1999, which killed over 17000, in order to raise funds for the victims of the earthquake, the state introduced the opportunity for those who were born in 1973, or before, to pay the specified fee in exchange for only one month of military service. According to Sinclair-Webb, it is “a view to finding a means to ‘normalize’ the situation of the enormous number [426.000] of men officially known as draft evaders (*asker kaçağı*) - in the context of conscientious objection [refusing to serve in the military with political, moral or religious reasons] as not being a recognized category” (Sinclair-Webb, 2000: 68). This ‘enormous’ number has increased through the last ten years, and the Turkish Minister of National Defense has declared that, as of June 2008, there are at least one million draft evaders in Turkey. However, it is important to remember that Turkey still does not recognize conscientious objection as a category or a right.

The Turkish army, consisting of recruited citizen soldiers, has experienced combat situations in Cyprus (1974) and, as a member of NATO, missions in Korea (1950-53) and Afghanistan (2001-present). The involvement of Turkey in these conflicts was such that Turkish conscripts were sent to these regions. However, since the 1980s, with the start of the war between the PKK⁵ and the Turkish army, “military service has taken on a dimension that it did not have in earlier days” (78). Conscripts took part in this war against the PKK, and moreover other Kurdish nationalist armed groups, and “in the emptying of villages and depopulating of the region” (78) as a part of the war strategy of the Turkish army. Conscripts,

⁵ Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (The Kurdistan Workers' Party); best known as PKK, also called KADEK, Kongra-Gel, and KGK. The war between Turkish Military and PKK guerillas has been going on almost for 30 years. The organization is listed as one of the twelve active terrorist organizations in Turkey as of 2007, according to the Counter-Terrorism and Operations Department of Directorate General for Security.

who are sent to regions where the war against the PKK is occurring, primarily in southeastern Turkey, have to experience front lines of battle, which may result in deaths.⁶

However, conscription should not be seen only as a military labor source, but also as a means to achieve specific political purposes, such as building a new nation, constructing a new citizenship identity or imposing state ideology or state discourse. Therefore as an ideological state apparatus, militaries can be seen as the tools which states use to govern, (re)construct or militarize people who are subject to the state. As a modern-secular-nation state, the Turkish Republic use conscription as a tool of its nationalist and militarist discourse, as will be discussed in the following section.

⁶ A new regulation is about to be carried into effect totally in 2010 states that only volunteers or professional soldiers will be sent to those regions where war is going on between the PKK and the Turkish army.

I.2. Conscription as Politics

I.2.1. Conscription as a way of reconstructing the (new) citizen identity in the Turkish nation state

If we look at the nation-state's features, we see that nationalism and militarism have played an important role in shaping the structure of nation-states throughout the last two centuries. These two concepts of nationalism and militarism are intertwined and articulated in Turkey, in a way that, in most cases, it is difficult to differentiate one from the other (Altınay & Bora, 2001:141). Together, these two concepts play a crucial role in enacting the projects of the newly created nation states. As in the construction periods of other nation-states, the institutions of the Turkish nation-state developed practices and discourses that serve to define, enforce and spread this identity, in order to (re)construct the new Turkish national identity (Kadioglu, 2001; Unsal 1998). The military is one of the most crucial institutions that the Turkish State used for this mission. The military transformed into an institution, which protects not only the state, but also the regime and the nation as a whole. The primary explanation of this transformation lies in the existence of the military-nation myth, which was produced in 1930s within the state discourse (Lucassen & Zurcher, 1999; Altınay, 2005).

According to this myth of military-nation, the Turkish nation is a military-nation and the Turkish national identity is identified with 'being a soldier' or conscription. The aim of the nation was targeted towards catching up with the Western nations' standards through having a 'strong and modern' nation. This aim was constructed by the state elites and the leaders of the country were the officers who 'saved' the nation in the Turkish War of

Independence (1914-1918) and founded a modern nation state. ‘Kemalist’⁷ nationalism especially shows the military to be the base of “modern-Western identity”. The Turkish military, as a state institution, became the standard of Turkish nationalism and Turkish national identity (Altınay & Bora, 2001:142). Therefore, in Turkey, modernization and civilization are identified with war and soldiery, and it has become impossible to differentiate nationalism and militarism.

Social Darwinist ideology, which influenced the politics of many emerged nation states, affected the last decades of politics in the Ottoman Empire, which were focused on the survival of the Empire, and continued into the first decades of the creation of the Turkish nation-state. Intellectuals and politicians tried to shape their political approaches according to Social Darwinist thoughts, a set of values which holds that a society should be socio-economically strong and unbeatable in order to survive among other societies. The reflection of this ideology on militarism defined both the wartime and peacetime discourses of the state, because the principles of Social Darwinism affect all the institutions. According to Social Darwinism, “war is a natural result of the natural struggle between the groups and peacetime is just a ceasefire” (Under, 2001: 428-9). Again, international relations were also perceived as a battlefield by the Turkish nation-state. Therefore, the identification of modernization and civilization with war and soldiery are some of the most prominent characteristics of Kemalist nationalism and 19th century German militarist ideology, which had a crucial impact on Ottoman and Turkish militaries and education system.

⁷ “Kemalism” is a term named after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The basic principles of Kemalism or Atatürkism are republicanism, secularism, nationalism, popularism, statism and reformism. Secularism and nationalism are the distinctive characteristics of Kemalism,, which has even been described as a ‘Turkish religion’ (Zürcher, 2004, 183-4).

The First World War and the Turkish War of Independence affected the transfer process of Islamic concepts and traditions into the nation-state structure during the nation-state building period of Turkey. Concepts like “jihad” (Islamic holy war) or “shahid” (martyr – a Muslim who dies in a legitimate jihad) were added to the concepts of “national defense”, “national independence”, and “collective emotion”, and, moreover, celebration and mourning rituals were added to the ‘military’ and ‘military-nation’ concepts. The military, which was assumed to be the base of “modern-western national identity,” contributed to the reproduction of nationalism in a populist way, following the inclusion of Islamic references (Altınay & Bora, 2001:6).

After being identified with modern-Western civilization and popularized by being equipped with Islamic notions, the military as an institution has become extremely influential in society, with the functions of “education” and transformation. It can be argued that conscription is one of the most direct ways the state uses to communicate with its citizens. Another is via “mass education”. However, the state still could not reach the biggest part of the population through national education because of the low school enrollment rate among the adult population. Thus the mass adult population became the target of military “education” (Altınay & Bora, 2001). The conscription period served as a tool to shape the new citizen identity especially in the 1920s and 30s. It was crucial for the state to equip young male citizens with the new ideology, because those young male citizens were seen to be the commanders of their wives and children, and thus they could train the members of their families to be proper citizens, as defined by the state. Therefore, this discourse aimed to lead the “modernization” of the rural population as a whole.

After the military became an institution of education and discipline, it began to teach male-conscripts about the concepts of “civilization” and “modernization”. Turkey was a closed society from the beginning of the Turkish nation-state construction period until the

1980s when the neo-liberal economic policies have come into effect, conscription, especially for young men who lived in rural places, was the first institution and place in which conscripts from rural areas could meet modernity. During conscription periods, the military taught soldiers how to read and write, and the physical development and the health, rights and obligations, modern life, sexual intercourse and work related information, especially the ones related to agriculture and rural life (Kiral, 1937, Ustel, 2005).

Health and physical development were especially taken to be the most important elements in the army education, both for the sake of the whole society and also for personal health and physical development. Therefore these bodies were disciplined, educated or modernized, ultimately improved in a way that would contribute to the whole society's improvement. These education processes required disciplinary mechanisms to reshape every single conscript so that they would internalize this responsibility of societal improvement and become able to control themselves (Foucault, 1979). Disciplinary mechanisms in the barracks worked in accordance to Social Darwinist ideology, in order to improve the whole society and to make male citizens strong, healthy and modern so that the nation could survive among the rival nations.

The state discourse on conscription was built on the “need” for soldiers in the army because of the ongoing wars through the first decades of the 20th century. However, after the 1930s, state discourse based itself upon “Turkish” history and ethnic identity. The army was no longer only a necessity and conscription was no longer only an obligation. These two concepts became a part of the racial and cultural features of “Turkishness” and took on a privileged position among the features of “Turkishness”. As a result, Turkish nationalism transformed into an ethnic nationalism that was based on Turkish ethnic identity, from a civic nationalism, based on citizenship. “Militancy” was said to be a constant feature of the Turkish race and this discourse was consolidated with the expression “every Turk is born a soldier”

(Sirman, 2001). I argue that a new hegemonic masculinity was produced according to the state discourse which stated conscription is a part of Turkish male citizen identity. In order to have a closer look at the features of hegemonic masculinity and its militaristic components, I would like to go into the details of the nationalist and militaristic approaches to instituting hegemonic masculinity.

I.2.2. Constructing hegemonic masculinity through conscription: The intersection of gender and militarism

Scholars such as Nagel, Anthias, Yuval-Davis and Peterson have been discussing the relationship between nationalism and gender in their work, and argue that gender lies at the heart of nationalist projects, and that the roles of man and woman are constructed or reconstructed in accordance with these projects (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1989; Nagel, 1998; Peterson, 1999). According to these scholars, masculinity is an integral part of nationalism. In the Turkish nation state, hegemonic masculinity is defined in terms of modernity and militarization. One of the most important components of this hegemonic masculinity in the Turkish Republic is military service (Altınay, 2005, Zürcher, 1999).

The modernization, or in this case, westernization of the newly emerged Turkish nation-state needed a militarized society in order to be strong and compatible with other modern states. Therefore, the male population had to be motivated to become soldiers, first because the state needed to mobilize society according to its nationalist projects, and second, in order to strengthen the image of the military to use it to centralize the state by getting of control of male-citizens since they are the carriers of the nationalist projects. According to McClintock (1993: 66) “men [in general] represent the progressive agent of national modernity...embodying nationalism’s progressive or revolutionary principle of discontinuity”.

The “soldier body”, in “Docile bodies” (Foucault, 1979), is one of the most useful examples in understanding the projects of the modern world that served to discipline the body. Military is a clear example that includes all of the elements in the docilization of the body in the Foucauldian way: enclosure, the control of activity, the organization of geneses and, finally, the composition of the forces (Foucault, 1979). At this point it is important to remember that the military does not only create docile bodies, but rather chooses specific bodies to discipline in order to transform them into docile bodies.

In my opinion, it also defines hegemonic masculinity, the ideal man and the ideal citizen and it is also important to clarify the ‘improper’ bodies, as applied to the Turkish military, since, as Nagel also defines, hegemonic masculinity constructs itself on the pillars of the “other”: “Indeed, hegemonic masculinity often stands in contrast to other class-, race- and sexuality-based masculinities. None the less, hegemonic masculinity remains a standard – whether reviled or revered – against which other masculinities compete or define themselves” (Nagel, 1998: 247). In addition to Nagel’s definition, Kimmel explains these “other” masculinities as “constantly changing collection[s] of meanings that we construct through our relationships with ourselves, with each other, and with our world. Manhood is neither static nor timeless; it is historical... it is socially constructed” (Kimmel, 1994: 120). Kimmel emphasizes everyday life and its relation to macro-cultures or with the world. Masculinities vary from society to society, over time or even among people in a particular society at a particular time. However hegemonic masculinity is more stable than the other, non-hegemonic masculinities in society.

In addition to the defined hegemonic masculinity, Kimmel argues that it would be easier to define it by what it is not. According to Kimmel, there are some features which define what hegemonic masculinity is not (Kimmel, 1994). The first feature Kimmel provides is the “flight from femininity,” which is directly related to the definition of femininity. This

feature thus works to define hegemonic masculinity in terms of having “non-feminine” features. A second feature is homophobia or heterosexism, two components of heteronormativity which is a dominant discourse in institutions and in our daily lives, and therefore hegemonic masculinity excludes male gayness to fit heteronormativity. The last feature is “racism”. Hegemonic masculinity in a society or a group of people demands the exclusion of a defined race. Men who belong to the defined “inferior races” cannot be “proper men” since they are, by default, non-masculine.

When we think about the Turkish state policies on citizenship, we see a similar definition of hegemonic masculinity based on the “other”, which was set by the state itself and imposed on society. Male-only conscription creates a difference between male and female citizens in terms of obligations. This exemplifies the flight from femininity feature of hegemonic masculinity that Kimmel emphasizes, since women were not accepted to the regular army, except in some extreme cases. In the contemporary world, some countries accept women as soldiers, however this is still limited and the number of women is always less than the number of men. Only in two countries is conscription obligatory for women: Israel and Eritrea. However in these countries, although women get military training, they mostly do not take part in engagements on the front lines (Speck, 2006). Therefore the link persists between male citizens and the strengthening of the state through conscription. Since conscription is the “holy” obligation in the eyes of the Turkish state, male citizens have thus gained first class citizenship rights. Enloe summarizes this difference between male and female citizens, and emphasizes that men get privileges in return of military service:

Still the Turkish military...continues to depend on male-only conscription, thereby preserving a masculinized hold on its conception of militarized national citizenship... A Turkish young man may not look forward to his tour of military service, and his sister may be relieved that she can get on with her schooling or paid civilian work without having to endure military service, but the military tour will have its reward – not only for individual men, but for all those men who reap advantage in political life from the privileging of masculinity. (2000: 246)

In order to define and recruit these civilian privileged men, the medical examinations were instituted to determine the eligibility of the soldier before the conscription period. These examinations consist not only of physical, but also psychological evaluations. If a military officially decides that a person has psychological or physical problems, that person is counted as “rotten.”⁸ An interesting example of the “rotten” label is the “extremely homosexual” diagnosis, which falls under the content of “sexual behavior disorder” (Biricik, 2008). Being ‘extremely homosexual’ is a result of a selection method concerning the dressing and the behavior of the person, it is not about his sexual orientation, contrary to the report’s name. The military decides that the person is not eligible for the army due to his feminine behavior and outfit, and the “extreme femininity” of that person. If we recall what Kimmel says about hegemonic masculinity, this ‘extremely homosexual’ diagnosis represents both the homophobic nature of the state defined hegemonic masculinity and the flight from the feminine behavior. As Peterson states; “in regards to nationalism, the modern state’s juridical and productive power denies male homosocial sexuality in favor of male homosocial politics” (Peterson, 1999: 43), like the Turkish military insists on male-only conscription and at the same time define homosexuals as improper bodies for the military.

According to the Turkish state, a nation-state should be modern, so that it can be able to compete with other nations. Modernization and strength were to be accomplished through militaristic ways and via the militarization of society. Therefore conscripts must be strong, modern and equipped with national identity, so that they could spread this ideology of the state from the position of ideal role-models of society. As Whitworth emphasizes, “soldiers

⁸For further information see Biricik, Alp. (2008). *Curuk Raporu ve Türkiye’de Hegemonik Erkekliğin Yeniden İnşası* [Rotten Report and Reconstruction of Hegemonic Masculinity in Turkey] In Özgür Heval Cinar & Coskun Usterci (Eds.), *Çarklardaki Kum: Vicdani Red* [Conscientious Objection: Resisting Militarized Society], (pp. 143-152), İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

are not born; rather they are made, through training, institutional expectations, psychological conditioning, and a variety of material and ideological rewards” (Whitworth, 2004: 86). Therefore military is the institution which makes soldiers.

The military worked as a center of production of the discipline to make soldiers, and it tried to regulate social life through conscription, and then through educated and disciplined soldiers. Especially in the first two decades of Turkish nation-state life, the military tried to regulate all social life in both public and private spaces, in the name of the modernization process. Sports, leisure activities, and physical and health issues composed the main interests of the military, and the conceptions of the soldier body and hegemonic masculinity were defined according to these important issues. A good soldier, and therefore a good male-citizen, should be healthy, strong, well mannered, respectable, careful about his appearance, educated and modern and not conservative, but respectful to the traditions (Ustel, 2005: 194).

According to the hegemonic masculinity which is constructed through the state discourse, the Social Darwinist trend, and the process of the militarization of the nation and nationalism, a Turkish man should be ready in every stage of his life to fight in a war, because there existed and exists internal and external enemies. Therefore independence was and is in danger and only nationalist Turkish males who were physically strong and educated in a modern way could save the country. In order to be a real man, a true male citizen should not run away from killing or dying. Imagined fraternity links among men creates the belief that every man is born to kill or die for the other members of the imagined “big family” (Anderson, 1983). Therefore according to the nationalist discourse of the Turkish state, conscription was not only an obligation for male citizens but it was also a part of Turkish identity, race and culture. So, every (male) Turk was born a soldier and educated in military camps in order to complement his process of “becoming a soldier.”

I.3. Conscientious Objection

I.3.1. Development of the concept and the legal regulations for conscientious objection

Although militaries are the primary institutions used by the state to create and impose hegemonic masculinity within society, militaries do not only create ideal citizens, they also create pacifists, rebels or objectors. The CO but one of the results of the construction processes at work in the nation-state. A conscientious objector is a person who, out of political, moral or religious reasons, refuses to participate in combat, the military or the armed forces. In addition to limiting the human resources and capital available to militaries, conscientious objectors also reveal a substantial amount about the relationship between nationalism, militarism and hegemonic masculinity (Brockling, 2001, Altınay, 2005).

The history of rebels, pacifists or disobedients stretches back to the beginning of the history of war, however, conscientious objection existed, differently from these concepts, with the emergence of armies consisting of conscripts who are obliged to serve in the military (Bröckling, 2008: 69-70). Until the 20th century, the reasons prompting conscientious objection were mostly religious. In the 20th century the followers of some churches in Europe, for instance Mennonites or Quakers, were conscientious objectors (Bröckling, 2008:70-71) and therefore they refused to serve in wars. However, until the mid 20th century, conscientious objectors were recognized as criminals or mental patients, and, in most cases, were put into prisons. (Bröckling, 2008(2001):389).

Especially with World War I, a number of conscientious objectors who refused to serve in the military for political reasons, such as humanism, socialism, anarchism etc., were added to those who refused to participate because of their religious believes. Although the concept has been known for centuries, it is a recent development that conscientious objection has been recognized as a right. The Human Rights Commission of the UN, the Council of

Europe and the European Union recognized conscientious objection as a right in 1987.⁹ In the Council of Europe, conscientious objection is a right in 26 member countries where conscription is still compulsory. However in two countries, in Turkey and Azerbaijan, conscientious objection is still not recognized (Çınar, 2008).¹⁰

While legal developments surrounding conscientious objection have been occurring throughout the 20th century, the definition and content of the concept was also taking place in literature. Studies in the literature related conscientious objection mostly to subjectivity (Toker, 2008). Objection was regarded as a moral code, and therefore was related to people's own moral beings. For example, when Hannah Arendt compared conscientious objection to civil disobedience¹¹, she stated that they are different because conscientious objection is subjective, and not related to other people: "The fear of being responsible to settle up with ones own beliefs may keep that person from to do harm, however because of subjectivity of this situation this doesn't affect other people" (1972). Similarly, Carl Cohen also stated that an objector does not demand a change in the system when he refuses to serve in the military as a conscript, but only refuses to obey the rules in order to protect his or her own moral being, and that this is a detachment from the political system since he or she prioritize his or her own personal "good," rather than the greater good (Cohen, 1964).

⁹Article 18 of both the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

¹⁰For further information on the international standards and regulations see: Brett, Rachel. (2008). *Vicdani Red Hakkında Avrupa Standartları ve Alternatif Hizmet* [International Standards on Conscientious Objection to Military Service and Alternative Service]. In Özgür Heval Cinar & Coskun Usterci (Eds.), *Çarklardaki Kum: Vicdani Red* [Conscientious Objection: Resisting in a Militarized Society], (pp. 267-272). Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

¹¹ For a further discussion on civil disobedience see: Arendt, Hannah. (1972). *Crises of the Republic: Lying in politics, Civil disobedience, On violence, Thoughts on politics and revolution*. New York : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

However, through the support of antiwar organizations, such as War Resisters International¹² which was founded in 1921 and aims to promote nonviolent action against the causes of war, the boundary between conscientious objection and antiwar or antimilitarism was blurred. Especially with the rise in the number of secular COs, conscientious objection as a concept has been combined with antiwar or antimilitarist movements. A good example for this blurred conceptualization is conscientious objection in Turkey, where it is regarded as a subgroup of antimilitarism.

I.3.2. Conscientious objection and the conscientious objectors (COs) in Turkey

Although there were Jehovah's Witnesses who refused to serve in the military before the 1980s, Turkish society encountered the term conscientious objection in 1989 when Tayfun Gönül declared in a journal called *Sokak*¹³, that he refused to serve in the military, thereby becoming the first publicly known conscientious objector in Turkey. The subsequent objectors were mostly the members of the Savaş Karşıtları Derneği (SKD - War Resisters Initiative) which was founded in İzmir in the 1990s. Antimilitarists and COs were organized in SKD, which was eventually dissolved by a court decision and founded again under a slightly different name, the İzmir Savaş Karşıtları Derneği (İSKD)¹⁴.

There were already nine conscientious objectors in 1996 and three of them received punishment, while one of them, Osman Murat Ülke, was put into prison and stayed there for

¹² For further information about War Resisters International see their official web page: <http://www.wri-irg.org/>

¹³ Sokak Dergisi: The first journal in Turkey which underwent trial because of “alienating the public from compulsory military service” since they published the conscientious objection declaration texts of Tayfun Gönül and Vedat Zencir.

¹⁴ For further and detailed information on conscientious objection in Turkey see Usterci, Coskun & Yorulmaz, Ugur. (2008). Türkiye’de Vicdani Red [Conscientious Objection in Turkey]. In Ozgür Heval Cinar & Coskun Usterci (Eds.), *Carklardaki Kum: Vicdani Red* [Conscientious Objection: Resisting in a Militarized Society], (pp. 217-233). Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari.

two and a half years. After Ülke's punishment, the İstanbul Antimilitarist İnisiyatifi (İAİ-İstanbul Antimilitarist Initiative) was founded, and support for COs increased all around Turkey. COs were antimilitarists and, most of the time, anarchists. In 2004, Militarizm Fest I was held in İstanbul to provide an event for conscientious objectors to declare their objections with an antimilitarist focus. Female objectors declared conscientious objection for the first time in this festival and stated that the military charged them with various duties, such as being the mothers or wives of conscripts, or being combat soldiers when necessary. The basic grounding for women's objection was antimilitarism. Women have been declaring their objection during last few years and the more recent female objector is a 20 year-old woman, who declared on the 16th of May 2009, at the 15th of May International Conscientious Objectors' Day event. Now there are 14 women objector among the 76 conscientious objectors in Turkey¹⁵.

While all of these antimilitarist events were occurring and antimilitarist and/or anarchist objectors were declaring their conscientious objections, on the 24th of July 2007, Enver Aydemir declared his conscientious objection with his Islamic religious beliefs. He is neither an antimilitarist nor an anarchist. He does not have a declaration text, which most of the other COs have written. He refused to serve in the military of the Turkish State and fight in it as a Muslim. Therefore, in my opinion, his existence is a challenge to the blurred boundary between antimilitarism and conscientious objection and a reference for the subjectivity that appears in the conscientious objection concept.

A big part of the COs did not have any penal sanction. Some of the COs were punished, while some others were released with the provision that they were required to

¹⁵ Savas Karsitlari (2009, May). *The Conscientious Objectors in Turkey*. Retrieved May 26, 2009, from <http://savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=2&ArsivAnaID=27221&ArsivSayfaNo=1>

immediately start to serve in the military. Since they are COs, they refused to go to the draft office. This prompted the start of a vicious cycle, called “civilian death,” since their mobility and rights were legally restricted by the state. Recall from the previous section that the Council of Europe recognized the right to conscientious objection and, because of other international treaties; Turkey must adopt this law and regulate the right. However, since most of the COs refuse to do any kind of compulsory public service and call themselves total objectors, an alternative public service option is not an option for most of the COs.

Therefore by refusing the compulsory military service, and in some cases all compulsory public services, they refuse to kill or die for the imagined community which is defined by the Turkish State, or in some cases by other systems, and smash the fraternity link. In order to have a closer look to how COs challenge hegemonic masculinity, if they even do so, I will go on to discuss the interviews I conducted with twelve COs in Turkey.

CHAPTER II

In the previous chapter, I discussed the intersection of hegemonic masculinity and militarism in Turkey, and conscientious objection as a way to challenge this intersectionality. I have argued that hegemonic masculinity in Turkey is defined by the state through the militarization of society. The practice of and state discourse on conscription are two of the tools used in this militarization process. Therefore by refusing to serve in the military, which is not recognized by the state as a right nor an offense, and openly stating the personal reasons behind this refusal in a public space going as far to call themselves conscientious objectors (COs), these people challenge at least one of the tools of the militarization process and, therefore, a tool in the construction of hegemonic masculinity. In this chapter I would like to trace the experiences of some of the Cos in order to discuss the intersection of hegemonic masculinity and conscription more thoroughly.

In order to discover an answer to my main question; “how might challenging the most important component of hegemonic masculinity in turn challenge other aspects of hegemonic masculinity as well?” I, first of all, want to introduce my personal research on the subject, including the interviews I conducted in Turkey with twelve COs. Before analyzing this research, I will give information detailing my research design and my position as a researcher. After that, I will focus on the interviewees, namely the COs, and give further information about them, later analyzing the interviews, as the main focus of this study.

II.1. Interviewees: Research Design and Methods

II.1.1. Research design and the researcher's positionality

I have been following the news about COs in the media, especially within independent media, for the last five years since I have been personally interested in the topic, and support their cause. Therefore, I have taken part in some demonstrations to support the COs in Turkey, and, during the course of this involvement, have met and befriended a few of them. However, I did not know the majority of the COs personally, and the concept of “conscientious objection” used to seem so clear to me, that as an antimilitarist, I did not feel the need to talk to them about the details or reasons behind their objection. I noticed my lack of knowledge and, after I had decided to conduct semi-structured interviews with some of the objectors as the focus of my studies, a pre-research period had started for me. This period involved the reading of all of the written materials I could obtain as well as talking to the people who are familiar with the subject through their contacts with the COs, including the COs themselves, in order to have a broader idea about COs.

First of all, I talked to some of my friends who could give me preliminary information about the concept and COs. I spoke to one of my friends who has been preparing a documentary about the COs in Turkey and had interviewed some of the COs a few years ago. His unfinished documentary does not contain a gender perspective, however, his observations about the COs he interviewed were useful. Second, I talked to Halil Savda, one of the COs who also happens to be one of my friends. He was the person who helped me to contact most of the COs I eventually interviewed. The COs, especially the ones in İstanbul, are in touch via internet or phone, and are ready to help and inform each other, in case of, for example, a CO has court case or the occurrence of a demonstration to support a CO in prison. Halil has been following almost every conscientious objection case, in addition to being a CO himself.

Therefore, he was one of the key persons for the interviews. Moreover, for example, Fikret Yetişener introduced me to Yavuz Atan and Ersan Uğur Gör helped me to meet Erkan Ersöz.

Second, I have surveyed all of the declarations uploaded to the *Savaşkarşıtları*¹⁶ website by the website administrators. I learned about the locations and dates of the declarations, and gathered brief information about the context in which the declarations were issued. This site includes news about individual COs or newspaper articles in which conscientious objection or COs are mentioned. Therefore, I could get written material mostly from this website since they gather every online article about conscientious objection. Moreover, it contains articles and news about militarism, antimilitarism, antiwar and states and militaries as well, which contributed to my studies and helped me to analyze the declaration texts of the COs.

While analyzing the declaration texts, I paid attention not only to the words written within them, but also to the author's tone and the audience of the text, since this is the way that the COs wanted to communicate with their target audience. Since these are all written or prepared texts, they often stress the motivation and target of the declaration clearly. However these resources are mostly focused on conscientious objection itself and not on the personal histories of the objectors or their ideas about gender aspects related to objection, upon which this study focuses. Another problem with the declarations lies in the fact that they were written in the past, and therefore they may not reflect present cases. Thus, I have chosen semi-structured interviews as the research method in this thesis in order to overcome these problems. These interviews give voice to the COs by focusing on the personal stories of the objectors and delve into gender related questions.

¹⁶ "War Resisters" Turkey website, which is a center on the internet for war resisters, conscientious objectors and antimilitarists. <http://savaskarsitlari.org/>

There are three more reasons, apart from those mentioned above, to choose semi-structured interviews as the method for this study. First, I had specific questions based on the literature review, about objectors' ideas about Turkey, nationalism, militarism and being a conscientious objector. These questions covered topics such as the definition of a conscientious objector, what and why do they refuse, how they define themselves in terms of their identities, how they define hegemonic masculinity, and how they position themselves according to the hegemonic masculinity they define. These questions were very crucial because they led me to connect the answers to the related literature about conscientious objection and the interplay between militarism and hegemonic masculinity. Second, I wanted to be flexible with the order of the questions and feel free to ask follow-up questions according to the flow of the interview. Since I assumed that objectors had already thought about those issues and had made those thoughts a part of their lives, this might have led the interview to move onto new subjects, which would help me to understand their reactions in a new light. Therefore I needed to be free to develop follow-up questions in order to clarify the initial questions or the details about the objectors. Third, I tried to ask open-ended questions about each objector's life in order to understand his past, his life experiences, and his socio-economic situation. I tried to base those questions on the interviewees' statements and the information that I had collected beforehand. Additionally, I had other advantages when I was interviewing COs in a semi-structured way. I could observe interviewees' appearance, mimics, gestures and tone of voice. I could also intervene when it was needed, to clarify some points or to limit the speech in order to avoid an unnecessary flow of information. Therefore it was necessary for me to use a semi-structured interview method with COs in order to compensate for elements that may be difficult to predict beforehand.

I should also mention that the main reason behind focusing primarily on the result of the interviews is that lived experience became crucial for my work in the analysis of

masculinity at the micro level. As Joan Scott discusses, personal stories recounted by people provide the opportunity to question the assumptions of big narratives and history¹⁷, in this case hegemonic masculinity.

While all the interviewees were undertaken with men,¹⁸ and I am neither a conscientious objector nor a man, I may seem as an outsider in this research. However, I share similar concerns about the Turkish Republic, seeing it as a totalitarian, militaristic state, as do many of the COs. Moreover, as an anti-militarist, I support conscientious objectors and similar resistance movements. I have also taken part in some antimilitarist or anarchist groups, of which some of the COs that I spoke with used to be a part. Therefore, I can also position myself as an insider of sorts. This position as an insider has aided this research and can be advantageous in possible further studies.

Apart from the plurality of my position as a researcher, the time limitation of this study prohibited me from developing close relationships with most of the objectors. This intimacy level depended on the COs' character as well - some of them were very relaxed, while others felt uncomfortable. In addition to their perception of me as a person, a researcher, an interviewer, a friend, a woman or someone they have prejudices about because of the knowledge they carried from past experiences about me or the groups I used to belong to, might have affected the communication and limited the intimacy level. This kept me from asking more personal questions, such as those about the sexuality and sexual lives of COs.

¹⁷ Joan Scott, "Experience" in Judith Butler and Joan Scott (eds.), *Feminists Theorize the Political*, New York and London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 22-40

¹⁸ With the reason that they do not want to be gendered with any of the terms we use (such as man, woman, girl, boy), some objectors refused to be called "men." I refer here to their biological "sex" which can also be considered as a socially structured term, therefore, I am using this term without their consent and the responsibility belongs to me.

However, in this limited time, I was able to ask specific crucial questions related to my main research question, which were useful enough.

II.1.2. Twelve conscientious objectors as interviewees

I contacted twelve objectors through two key COs. After the key COs had talked to them on the phone, I called them and introduced myself, and then we decided on the place for the interviews. I interviewed eleven COs in Istanbul and one in Izmit, a city close to Istanbul. I mainly chose quiet places in order to record the interviews, but I also attempted to choose locations in which the interviewees felt comfortable, because of their familiarity to the place. One of the most frequently used interview locations was the Amargi Feminist Bookstore-Café in Beyoglu, which is a haunt of feminists, antimilitarists and LGBTQ activists. Another place was the Leyla Pub in Beyoglu, which was run by a CO, who was also one of the interviewees. I also used other places in Beyoğlu, which is the heart of Istanbul, and some other places in the center of the city. The duration of the interviews varied from 30 minutes to two hours, and most of the time the interviews resembled an informal conversation, although the tone of the proceedings largely depended on the interviewees.

Although they have common features, based on the discussion in the previous chapter about how conscientious objection is a “tactics” of *individuals* for coping with state imposed “strategies”, I would like to introduce the twelve interviewees one by one, in order to be able to avoid considering them as a *group*:

Tayfun Gönül (51), after completing a medicine degree, he refused to fulfill the compulsory public service for doctors¹⁹, along with the compulsory military service. He

¹⁹ Newly graduated doctors have to conduct compulsory public service. The duration of compulsory public service differs with respect to the region where the doctors are appointed. *The State Planning Organization* has determined six areas where the service can be done based on the socio-economic development index.

declared his objection in a journal, *Sokak* in 1989 and become the first publicly known CO in Turkey. He had been a member in some leftist groups for a while, and then became an anarchist before he declared his objection. Through one of his foreign friends he first heard about the concept of conscientious objection. After working in various fields, he is now a doctor in a private company.

Yavuz Atan (44), from Tunceli²⁰, took part in leftist organizations when he was a university student, even as a student leader. After he became an anarchist in the late 1980s, he decided to declare objection. Even though he made this decision in 1991, he waited two years before declaring, mainly as a result of the decision taken by the Izmir War Resisters Association, a group he was in as well, to keep objection visible by not declaring at the same time but by transforming them into intermittent declarations. He is one of the founders of BEDI²¹. He is a management graduate and has worked in various jobs. Now he runs Leyla Pub, which I used as a place for some interviews.

Mehmet Bal (34), shared the same prison ward with Osman Murat Ülke²² where he encountered the concept of conscientious objection. He was in prison for seven years for a simple offense, between 1995-2002, and before that he was a member of a radical nationalist group. After being released from prison, he started to serve in the military, until he disobeyed orders. At this point he had already been serving in the military for 9.5 months. He was put into military prison again and tortured on the grounds of disobedience. He now defines

²⁰ Tunceli (Dersim) is a city where the citizens are mostly Kurdish and Alevi. The most prominent characteristic of the city is that the population is politicized with leftist ideology. The Turkish state has been applying repressive policies to control the area, including military operations. For more information see: Yegen, M. *Devlet Soyleninde Kurt Sorunu* [Kurdish Question in the State Discourse]. Istanbul: Iletisim, 1999.

²¹ BEDI-Biz Erkek Degiliz Inisiyatifi ('We Are Not Men' Initiative)

²² Osman Murat Ülke is a CO, who declared conscientious objection in 1995, was in prison for 2.5 years. For this, the European Human Rights Court punished the Turkish state.

himself as an antimilitarist and anarchist in some cases, but he prefers not to be associated with anarchism anymore. He revised his declaration text in 2009 to reflect his gender sensitive point of view in conscientious objection issue. He has received a “bad apple” report from the military, which states that he is not eligible for military service, without his application or consent.

Erkan Ersöz (33), declared his conscientious objection in 2003. He was a member of leftist organizations when he was in high school and afterward he became an anarchist. He had been working as a chief editor in a trade journal for four years when I interviewed him, however, a few days after the interview he was dismissed for “lack of discipline”. He is an International Relations graduate. His ex-wife is also a conscientious objector, and he has a five year old son.

Ersan Uğur Gör (33), declared his conscientious objection in 2004, in an organized event called the First Militarizm Fest, where eight more COs declared as well. He had been a member of anarchist groups for a long time; however he defines himself now as an antimilitarist only. He has been working as a designer, as a freelancer, or in some companies where his boss and colleagues do not care about his conscientious objection.

Doğan Özkan (32) was participating in an event organized against the NATO Conference in Istanbul in 2004 when he declared his objection. He was a member of some leftist groups and he defines himself as an antimilitarist. He was expelled from university, and has said that he does not work because he does not need to, since his family supports him.

Halil Savda (34) was taken to military barracks immediately after coming out of prison, where he spent 3 years for being a PKK member. He was forced to serve in the Turkish military, but he declared that he would not take military orders as a result of his beliefs. He received a disciplinary punishment of seven days and was charged by a Military Court with refusal to obey orders. After a while, he was put in jail again, this time for

“alienating the public from military service.” He is from Hakkari, in the Kurdish region of Turkey, where the war has been going on between PKK and Turkish military. He quit school after completing his primary education, and is now unemployed. He also has received a “bad apple” report from the military without his application or consent.

Fikret Yetişener (31) declared conscientious objection in the Second Militarizm Fest in 2005. He had been a member of the SİP²³ for seven years. Now he defines himself as an anarcho-communist. He is still a student, however since he is over 30; he is supposed to serve in the military regardless of his educational status. He does not have a regular job.

Enver Aydemir (31) declared conscientious objection in the military draft office where he was taken by force in 2007. He is Kurdish and his father is a mullah. He defines himself as Muslim and lives according to his religion, which is the reason behind his declaration. He lived abroad during his years in university and for Arabic language education. He is married and has two sons. He has his own business for now, but is not planning to work for a long time.

Deniz Özgür (27) declared his objection in 2008, in an organized event called Militurne with three other COs. He is from Diyarbakır²⁴ and he is Kurdish, however he does not identify with Kurdishness. He calls himself an anarchist and dropped out of the university for ideological reasons. He works as a shop assistant.

İbrahim Yılmaz (31) is a Kurdish anarchist who declared his conscientious objection in 2008, in the Militurne organization, as Deniz Özgür did. He worked as a teacher in a state school and was married, however, he quit his job and got divorced for ideological reasons. He

²³ SİP-Sosyalist İşçi Partisi (Socialist Worker Party); former TKP-Türkiye Komünist Partisi (Turkish Communist Party).

²⁴ Diyarbakır is a large Kurdish city in the South-eastern part of Turkey.

defines himself as an anarchist. He does not have a regular job since he does not want to produce surplus value.

İnan Mayıs Aru (28) called his friends one night in 2008 and told them that he would declare objection the next day in the Tomb of Sheikh Bedreddin.²⁵ He wrote a poem detailing the reason for his declaration and his ideology in general. He calls himself a Muslim and an anarchist. He dropped out of his university for ideological reasons and he now works as a freelance translator.

We can conclude that the interviewees declared objection in various ways and places, including in a journal, in the draft office, and at organized events designed for objection declarations. Declarations texts are mostly prose, including manifestos and letters, and there is one poem among them as well. Tayfun Gönül's declaration text is not online. Enver Aydemir stated that he does not have any declaration text, and that all of the texts found in the media under his name are texts written by other people.

Although we cannot talk about a group or an organization of COs, we can still talk about sub-groups or commonalities among the COs I interviewed. Except Enver Aydemir, the other eleven COs define themselves in terms of antimilitarism. Among those antimilitarists, there are politically active antimilitarists, who used to be anarchists, are anarchists or operate in the anarchist circles. However, there are also anarchists among those eleven COs who are not activists and are not willing to take part in any kind of political activity. Additionally, among those eleven COs, there are COs who have regular jobs as well as those who are ideologically opposed to living a regular life. Without existence of Enver Aydemir, I could

²⁵ Sheikh Bedreddin (1359-1420) was a revolutionary theologian and charismatic preacher who led a rebellion against the Ottoman Empire in 1416. (Aru left his declaration poem "The Bird Of Miracles" at the tomb, after he read it to his friends).

conclude that all of the COs are somehow related to antimilitarism and anarchist ideology, like other studies did. However, because Enver Aydemir only refuses to serve in a specific military, that of the Turkish State, and live an orthodox Islamic life, differing from the other eleven COs, this testimony added another dimension to the conscientious objection issue. Therefore, a direct relationship between antimilitarism and conscientious objection can no longer be established.

All in all, after summing up the information about the interviewees, I now analyze the interviews and declaration texts, as supplementary data, in the following part.

II.2. Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity? Analysis of the interviews

II.2.1. Becoming a conscientious objector in Turkey

Before I go on with the analysis of the interviews to answer my main question for this study, I would like to give a brief background about the process of becoming a CO, based on the interviewees' own words. As discussed in previous sections, there are only 61 male COs²⁶ in Turkey, while there are one million draft evaders²⁷. Therefore, it is worth discussing their reasons for refusing to serve in the military and making this decision publicly known, which is one of the ways that makes them distinct from draft evaders.

Since conscription is an obligation for all male citizens and there is no alternative service or conscientious objection option, deciding not to serve the military forces citizens to accept any legal problems which may arise. However, if they are caught by an authorized person²⁸, they are sent immediately to the military barracks, and usually then serve in the military. However COs declare that they *will* not serve in the military in case they get caught, or they have already declared themselves COs by disobeying orders when they are in the military. In addition to disobedience stemming from this decision, they also make their position publicly known. Therefore, I would like to have a closer look at their motivations for their declaration as COs and if, and how, their lives have changed after declaration.

The COs I interviewed declared objection mostly for political reasons. They consider declaration to be complementary to their antimilitarist or religious stand points. It is obvious from the previous section, when we recall the short biographies of the interview subjects, that

²⁶ There are currently 75 COs, including 14 women COs, in Turkey.

²⁷ Minister of National Defense of Turkey has declared that there are at least one million draft evaders in Turkey (01.06.2008, <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=2904197>)

²⁸ Police has not been authorized to catch draft evaders since 2006 because of the new security law. This provides COs free mobility in the city.

most COs have active political backgrounds, and they have spent their years as activists. For example, Deniz Özgür, who defines himself as an anarchist and lives accordingly, said that he thought he could transform his conscientious objection declaration into his personal activism. Similarly, Fikret Yetişener, a new anarcho-communist who spent ten years as a member of the Socialist Workers Party, also sees declaration as a way of activism, and “a proper political attitude” for himself:

Those days I was worried about my future because the university was almost over and I didn't know what I would do with the military service problem. I saw the conscientious objection declarations on the internet and I thought that this was a proper political attitude for me. I immediately contacted them. I also liked the artistic ways they demonstrate their declarations, Militarizm Fest for instance. Maybe I thought I could combine arts and politics in this way.

Deniz and Fikret's motivations, as stated above, are examples of the political reasons surrounding objection. Yet, there are other reasons for COs to declare conscientious objection. It should be remembered that in some cases, like in the ones mentioned above, conscientious objection is a commitment, and therefore it is related to the future of the CO. However, in some other cases, declaration itself is a practice of a direct refusal of conscription, such as in Halil Savda's case. Halil spent two and a half months in the Turkish army, then one day he went home on leave and never returned to his army service, and then joined the PKK. He declared objection when he was taken to the military barracks by gendarmerie, after spending one year as a PKK guerilla and fighting against the Turkish army. He was caught by the Turkish state and spent three years in prison. After having all of these “military experiences” in the PKK and in the Turkish army, and additionally experience in prison life, Savda emphasized that he had turned into someone who was not an innocent child anymore. He wanted return to the state of an innocent child through rejecting killing and being killed, by not carrying or using a gun and by not serving in any kind of military system. Therefore, he could not serve in the military and be armed anymore. When he was taken to the military

barracks right after he was released from prison, he refused to obey the rules and declared conscientious objection. He defines his motivation with the following words:

My motivation for conscientious objection is... The child [himself] who was away from violence and never fights had turned into someone who was full of anger, wanted to take revenge by having a weapon. I see this transformation as if my childhood committed suicide. Violence cannot be transformed into peace. I didn't become an anti-militarist immediately of course, it was a process. And my motivation for being a CO is related to this anti-militarist thought.

Needless to say, the reasons behind declarations are more complicated and multileveled, however, it should be clarified that this research does not aim to study the detailed reasons and background for being a male CO, since it requires a detailed socio-economic analysis of the contemporary Turkish state. Whatever the reasons for conscientious objection were, their lives become similar in terms of legal status, because the Turkish state does not recognize conscientious objection as a term or a right. The legal status of COs, who have already been living civilian lives as draft evaders, are still characterized as draft evaders or a "rotten". COs, like Halil Savda, who declare objection when they are in the military, or in the draft office, are either taken to by force or are put in to military prison because of disobedience. Then, the vicious circle between 'military'- 'military prison' and 'court', which was discussed in the previous parts, begins. However, after they are conditionally freed and obliged to go to military service, since they turn back to the civilian life, they become draft evaders once again.

However, according to the COs, the reality seems slightly different than the one drawn above. According to the COs I interviewed, the government has been trying to avoid having any trouble with COs for the last few years, because of the ECHR (European Court of Human Rights) decision in 5 January 2006, which required Turkey to implement legislation to prevent the continuous prosecution of conscientious objectors. The COs stated that they are freer than a draft evader with this new situation. For instance, Erkan compares his life before and after the declaration and explains this so called "protection" for COs:

Neither my political perspective nor my social status changed after the declaration. Nothing happened since then. Maybe I was even protected as a CO because there is a protection for COs, which hasn't been named yet, however I sense it by experiencing it for the last six years. I was taken into custody since I was supporting other COs at a demonstration, but not because I am a CO.

Mehmet adds that draft evaders are silenced, and they have a different position in their lives because they have to keep their position as a secret. However, COs have already declared that they will not serve in the military, so they have been marginalized in the society since they were not silent about a taboo issue. This makes their position in the society different than the draft evaders. Mehmet says:

Draft evaders live among ordinary people. But COs are different. We are at the margins of the society but it is not something we constructed. The state and the police are aware of us and we are labeled as troublemakers and therefore marginalized. Draft evaders' hiding practices are really interesting but they never talk about it. They may talk to you about these hiding practices if they are alone. But if there are at least two of them, they say that they are having some problems, let's say problems in the family and add that they will serve in the military as soon as they solve these problems.

As an addition to what Erkan and Mehmet said, the new regulation in İstanbul, which indicates that the police are no longer authorized to catch draft evaders, also contributes to draft evaders', or COs', mobility in the city. However, the situation was different for the COs who declared objection when they were already at the military. First of all, they were placed in military jail because of disobedience. COs stated that, despite the relative freedom they had after they entered civilian life, they were treated badly during the military lockup period, since they went on disobeying the orders of their commanders. Moreover, their families were harassed by the state through legal procedures and "visits" of the police. Mehmet, who was sent to a military lockup for disobedience after nine and a half months of service in the military, discusses the bad treatment he experienced during his lockup period:

I didn't have that many problems except during the military lockup period. I wasn't having problems when I had the chance to talk to the other soldiers when they were alone, however if there were at least two soldiers, each was trying to prove how more nationalist he was than the other one... Commanders set the soldiers in the military

lockup upon me, they told them that I am a rapist and a traitor before I was sent there, they used those poor guys.

It can be concluded, then, that being “outside” or “inside” of the military when declaring objection, can make a difference in terms of the short-term results. If a male Turkish citizen declares objection outside of the military when he is already a draft evader, his draft evader status persists. However if he declares objection by refusing to obey orders in the military, he gets maltreatment. Still, in both situations, the CO maintains his stand against military service.

Since COs have taken a stand against military service before and after the declaration, the declaration moment itself can be taken as a part of this position. According to most of the COs I interviewed, declaration was not a turning point in their lives. All of the interviewees emphasized that it is just a part of their lives and life styles. Most of the interviewees specified that the things which shape their lives such as their thoughts, their circle of friends or their political positions, have been constructed over time and in accordance with their outlook on life. Therefore, these life styles and their horizontal relationships created a suitable base for their daily lives, during and after the conscientious objection declaration period. Moreover, COs declared that their attitude is a concern shared by the majority of their social circles. For instance, they said that most of their friends supported COs both before and after their declaration, or did not support them at all, not because they were against the idea of declaration, but because they cared and worried about them. Enver Aydemir, who declared objection because of his religious concerns, said that the community he lives in consists of Muslim people who are also against serving in the Turkish military. However, according to Aydemir, they chose to serve in the military and do not want to live an “illegal” life of a draft evader or a CO:

I have a lot of friends who think similarly, who share the same concerns. But they prefer serving in the military rather than handling the problems they may have with the state. And also their personalities are different than mine so they could come through

this service period even though they were unwilling to serve, I couldn't have done that; uniform, haircut...

In addition to what Enver Aydemir stated, Ersan, an antimilitarist, also defines how his horizontal network supports him on this issue and how the network is constructed in this way:

People around me mostly supported me and my decision. I didn't get any negative reaction except in my family. Besides, people already form their network in a way to include people who are of their minds; so there are no people around me who are not of my mind.

Conscientious objection is a step in the life processes of the COs I interviewed. It would be inappropriate to define COs as people whose lives have changed with the conscientious objection declaration. Rather, it can be said that it was just another step which represents their viewpoints in their lives. Although declaration is an expression of their stances and their way of communication with the public, it is still not a significant turning point in their lives. Therefore, declaration is neither a separate part of a CO's lives nor a big step, rejecting one of the most important parts of hegemonic masculinity or rejecting being a "proper man" cannot be related only to the declaration itself, but the to COs complete identity and gender roles. Starting from this fact, I will investigate their words to find out about their position in relation to the hegemonic masculinity of the Turkish state.

II.2.2. Perception of Hegemonic Masculinity by the COs

As was discussed, hegemonic masculinity is constructed by the state through the militarization of society in Turkey (Altınay, 2005; Lucassen & Zurcher, 1999). The militarization of the society was fed by a Kemalist ideology and Social Darwinist principles, which influenced the Turkish politics by holding that the society should be ready for war and is under constant threat from external and internal enemies (Under, 2001). Therefore men are obliged to protect the nation, should be well equipped and strong enough to be able to protect women and children, and be loyal to the nation. Despite the fact that a plurality of

masculinities exists (Sancar, 2008) in Turkish society, like in other societies (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), this dominant figure of masculinity, namely hegemonic masculinity, which is constructed through the state in the Turkish case (Altınay & Bora, 2001), has a big impact on masculinities in society as a whole, and therefore should be considered to be a very important power which has influenced the other types of masculinities in society. In order to focus on the micro level of understanding of hegemonic masculinity in Turkish society, I asked COs about their perception of “hegemonic masculinity” in order to be able to position their usage of hegemonic *erkeklik*²⁹, especially when they position themselves in relation to this concept in the later parts of this chapter.

The interviewees defined hegemonic masculinity in their own terms; however in some cases, because of the concepts they use, such as heteronormativity, it is clear that they have information about related studies previously mentioned, on the intersection of militarism and gender. However, in my opinion, their definitions are still crucial since they represent the interviewees’ perception of hegemonic masculinity and their daily reflections related to hegemonic masculinity. With these definitions, both their perception of hegemonic masculinity and of society in general can be tracked. For example, Enver Aydemir, who says that he will not serve in an army which is not a proper army according to his religious beliefs, says that he “could serve in a proper type of military. Every man does it. Men are warriors, they fight, there is no such man who is not a warrior, even the coward ones are warriors as well”. In contrast to Aydemir’s essentialization of men as warriors, most of the interviewees described hegemonic masculinity as a number of features a man should have, or roles he

²⁹ There is no separate a word for “masculinity” in Turkish, as was discussed before. “Erkeklik” or “erkeklik in the society” have a close meaning to “hegemonic masculinity”. *Erkeklik* means “manhood”, “being a man”, “masculinity” and “sexual performance of man” at the same time. Therefore, from now on I will refer to the term “hegemonic masculinity” when I use “erkeklik in the society”.

should perform in order to be “respected” as a “man” in the society, which are culturally structured and defined. Halil summarized the general features of being a “real” man in Turkey’s context, with the following words:

There is a strong discourse in society as if all the men are willing to serve in the military and also that one of the most important features of being a man is to serve in the military. The other important thing is to be a heterosexual. Another one is that you should have a proper job because you are responsible for your family and you have to earn money for your family. You also have to have children because you will perform your authority through those children. Having a family is really important to be recognized as a man in the society. You cannot have a family as a homosexual, since it is legally not possible for now and the social structure would never allow such a thing. Therefore to be a “real” or “full” man, you should be a heterosexual breadwinner. You should also be a Sunni Muslim and circumcised since circumcision is the first step to become a man. And of course you should be a Turk.

This definition advanced by Halil reminds me the newly published book by Pınar Selek, *Sürüne Sürüne Erkek Olmak*³⁰, where she defines the necessary steps an individual must take in order to deserve and receive the title of “man” (Selek, 2008). The steps in this book, which was also mentioned in some of the interviews as well, are circumcision, conscription and marriage. Circumcision, which is an Islamic requirement, is also a ceremony of transformation from childhood to manhood. In conscription, a man should obey orders so that he can learn to be the commander of his prospective family-- his wife, children and also grand children. By accepting the hierarchy and setting aside his citizenship rights during the conscription period, when his life is totally under the control of the state, he earns future “benefits” from this bargain, as was discussed before. In the third step toward becoming a man, a man should have a family through the marrying of a woman and having children. Becoming a father is the ultimate level required for a man to become a “proper man”. As an

³⁰ Becoming a Man by Creeping: The title indicates how difficult it is to become a man by using the words “sürüne sürüne”, which means both “by creeping”, referring to the creeping exercises soldiers do in the military and “having excess difficulty” through life, in general.

addition to Halil's summary, Deniz focuses on the father figure and how this authoritative figure is crucial in the construction of "the man":

First of all "a proper man" has responsibilities such as being the protector of his family and his wife. We, the society, see the military as the constructor of this role, it constructs "proper fathers". There is a belief that there are people who have to be protected, such as women, children or old people. The "proper man" concept is based on this belief. So the "proper man" should be strong and authoritative. Every rude or violent manner of the man is tolerated by his family and society because this task of being strong and authoritative is perceived as the most difficult task in life.

As Deniz mentions, a man is free to be violent or rude as a recompense of protection mission he undertakes. Additionally, other interviewees specified some other benefits men get as return for his difficult mission such as easier mobility especially at night, and not having to account for the things that they do. These are some "advantages" a man has in return of performing and participating in hegemonic masculinity. As discussed in previous sections, this "bargain" is one of most crucial aspects of hegemonic masculinity and is a way to reconstruct patriarchy in society, by positioning the "proper men" as superior to women and "other" men. It also serves to reconstruct the obedient male citizen, who accepts the authority of the state over him, yet exercises his own authority over the others members of his family, as a right promised by the state.

It should also be underlined that most of the interviewees agreed on the fact that this authoritative role of men is required by women in their social circle, and that these women force them to perform the "proper man" role as well, even though this role harms them. Doğan says there are two reasons for this. First, women recognize men with the "proper man" model, and therefore they expect their men to be "proper men", and, for example, fight on the streets with other men if necessary (if those men harass woman or curse the man). Second,

women care about men, and they do not want them to have problems in the society as a different, improper, man:

The male role model given to women is slightly better than Tecavüzcü Coşkun³¹ and they [women] impose this model to their partners or relatives. If men do not want to behave in accordance with this role model, women start to think that there is something wrong with those men. Women remind men about the manly works they have to accomplish and if men refuse to do those works, they leave those poor guys. And also, especially my sister reminds me about “manly” works to see me as a “real” man since she cares about me, wants me to live a happy life as a *normal* man.

As Doğan narrates briefly, hegemonic masculinity finds a place for reconstruction in the society, with the help of all of its members, even the ones who are addressed to violence, namely women, because of the performance of hegemonic masculinity.

Finally, it can be concluded that the interviewees’ perception of hegemonic masculinity in Turkey is parallel to the hegemonic masculinity definitions in academic studies, including those mentioned in previous sections. Again, these studies stress that there is a hierarchy that defines the proper man and positions him on a level above woman and above the “improper” man, but below the state and the nation. In order to understand the role of conscription in these hierarchy levels consisting of ‘the state’, ‘the proper man’ and ‘the others’, I will have a closer look at what the interviewees, as Turkish male citizens who objected to conscription and refused to serve in the military said about the concept and performance of conscription.

³¹ *Tecavüzcü Coşkun* (Rapist Coşkun) is a well known movie character in the Turkish movies, in the 1980’s, which deceives innocent girls and has sex with them or rape them.

II.2.3. “A laboratory to produce men”: Being out of or a conscript in the military barracks

It was a well-known phenomenon in Turkey that both male and female students present military band performance and a show, including marching,³² in the stadiums of every city on national holidays. These preparations take a few months and these shows are designed to be something in which Turkish youth show their strength to the nation and to the other nations. When I was interviewing İbrahim, the noises of the school band, which plays military marches in uniforms, with trumpets and drums, were coming from the high school next to the café in which we were sitting. School teachers were preparing students for ‘The Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day’. While the place of national education in the militarization process of the Turkish nation is not the focus of this study, it is crucial to point out that there is a strong relationship between national education and national security (Altınay, 2005). The military is one of the institutions where conscripts, namely male citizens, are educated, and therefore these two institutions, in which national identity and gender roles are constructed, are two brother institutions which can be characterized as education centers. In addition to the fact that the military resembles a school, the schools also resemble military barracks with Monday morning and Friday evening ceremonies, physical education classes, uniforms, hierarchy and discipline (Altınay, 2001). Most of the interviewees indicated that they do not only object to compulsory military service, but also to national education, as part of the militarization of the nation. For example, Ersan summarizes how conscription is a further step in the militarization process after national education:

³² Marching on national days was repealed for students with a new regulation beginning in April, 2009.

The thing I actually object to is militarism. Militarism is imposed to the society. For instance, if we look at the national education system, there are a lot of racist, discriminatory discourses in the text books. They try to shape children, try to stereotype them. They try to bring them up as prototypes. For the National Security classes³³ an officer comes to class. Conscription is just one of the bases of militarism. They try to work on the young men, whom they think is not shaped enough in the national education, more. First they smash his ego and then they make him believe that he is subordinate in the military but he will be the chief at home, boss of his wife, his children.

Therefore, after looking at Ersan's comments on "shaping the generation" and taking into consideration that the social circles of antimilitarist COs have similar political standpoints, COs, or total objectors³⁴ can be thought of as heroes among antimilitarists, since COs are not silent and publicly declare their standpoints despite the state. Therefore a 'heroic' discourse can be constructed based on this difference among antimilitarists. For example, Cohen states, when he discusses how people call COs cowards, that "if courage is to be honored, it is well to remember that to apply for conscientious objector status when the nation is at war, or threatened by war, requires very great courage indeed. It is only a brave man who can stand up to the social pressures which every conscientious objector must face." (1964:3). Speck points out the danger in this discourse and says that antimilitarists reconstruct the "strong men image" through a "strong and brave antimilitarist men image" (2006). Objectors object to the military's, one of the strongest state institutions, orders, which is a difficult standpoint, and they declare that they will not fulfill one of the citizenship obligations that have been defined by the state. According to the COs, this discourse, which indicates that

³³ National Security Classes (Milli Güvenlik Dersleri) are compulsory classes for all high school students (for more information see: Altınay, Aysegul. "The Army is a School, the School is an Army: The Nation's Two Fronts". In *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey*. New Ed. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005: 119-140.)

³⁴ Recall from the previous chapter that most of the COs I interviewed declared that they also reject public service as an alternative service for military service, therefore, they are total objectors. However, since there is no regulation about public service option in Turkey, they sometimes use conscientious objection and total objection interchangeably.

choosing ‘civilian death’³⁵ requires courage, is not used by COs, but rather used by the media and the political circles that they run in. However, almost every CO I interviewed voiced their feelings that they find this discourse dangerous, because they say it is a misunderstanding and it constructs a false image of the CO. For example, Deniz says that this discourse marginalizes COs and positions them away from society:

Some of my friends based this issue [conscientious objection] on ‘courage’ but I don’t agree with them. Because calling it courage leads people to relate it with the concept of ‘pride’ as well. It is not something someone feels proud of. Bravery is also a socially constructed norm; my effort is just to be loyal to the word-thought-action harmony, because it is something I define myself with. I am just saying that I can’t do what they want me to do. There is no such feeling called courage or pride. If they keep relating conscientious objection to the concept courage, it puts the problem away from people, it gains the meaning that it is not something which an ordinary person can do.

Fikret, on the other hand, does relate the concept of conscientious objection to courage and he says that someone has to have courage to declare conscientious objection in Turkey, especially since the future is ambiguous for a CO. However, he also adds that this ambiguity is a common case in Turkey even for “proper” citizens, as they may have legal problems with the state as well (he says “this is Turkey, everything may happen even to ordinary people on the street”), and therefore just living requires courage in Turkey, and courage is thus a *normal* concept. As indicated in the previous section, conscription is a tool that states use to discipline their citizens (Foucault, 1979; Bröckling, 2008), although not necessarily only male citizens. Conscription is also used to construct citizen identity, including gender roles. Therefore, conscription is a step on the path of becoming a “proper man” and many COs refuse to take that important step. However, they also reject the concept of “civilian death”, which

³⁵ In order to underline the life long difficulties COs experience; such as the vicious circle between military-military prison and court, and the legal restrictions, media and the people in their political circles use the concept “civilian death”.

marginalizes them, as well as the attribution of “hero” or “courage”, which reconstructs a strong male image, since especially in political circles the more a person suffers because of legal restrictions, the more that person becomes heroes, leaders and the ones who are dedicated their lives to the political arena more than the others.

Moreover, by rejecting conscription, COs challenge the identification of violence with men, which was discussed in the first chapter, since only male citizens are eligible for the compulsory, legal and institutionalized ‘violence education’. To support this argument, some of the COs note that they are already pacifists, and thus they are against all types of violence. However, not every CO is a pacifist, and the relationship between violence and conscientious objection is far more complicated. Therefore, I will have a closer look at this relationship below.

II.2.4. A villain or a good man? Violence and hegemonic masculinity

As previously demonstrated, there is a strong connection between violence and hegemonic masculinity, which indicates that one of the rewards male citizens get in return for fulfilling their end the bargain of military service is the right to violence. The advantages men obtain from this bargain allow them to “command and control the women and the children in their family...fight against the enemies of the nation-state” (Sancar, 2008). All of these tasks, or performances of power, are identified with men and involve various types of violence. As Serpil Sancar notes, male violence is not related to biological sex, it is related to gender. This culture based on male violence provokes and disciplines the capacity for violence in men, while controlling and excluding this capacity in women (2008). However, it cannot be argued that all men use violence and women are only the victims of violence. For instance, women use male violence through patriarchal bargain (Sancar, 2008; Kandiyoti, 1988) and there are also men who reject using violence or the advantages of this culture (Sancar, 2008). Some of

the COs who declared that they are against violence exemplify this category. However some other COs stated that they were not against every type of violence. For example Deniz, an anarchist, is against making the concept of anti-violence a fetish as a new discourse. He says that nowadays people or groups declare themselves as against violence without thinking deeply about the meaning of it. He added that he is only against institutionalized violence, such as the violence of the state. İbrahim, who used to be married and a teacher, agrees with Deniz in opposing institutionalized violence. He related his objection to his antiviolenace thoughts:

The meaning of violence may differ depending on the definition. In my opinion, working at a certain place is also violence and I am against it. I don't accept that someone should work to earn money. I passed through those stages: I was married, and I was a teacher. Since I am against violence I gave up all those things: marriage, and the job. I also have problems with perceptions of security. I think being against violence is not just being against using guns. You should also be against the production of those guns if you say you are against the usage of guns. I object to all the processes of creating violence.

From what İbrahim said, it can be concluded that regular jobs, marriages and militaries are also institutions of violence, even though they may seem less obvious. Halil, who experienced both the PKK guerilla army and the Turkish State army, defines himself as a victim of violence, compounded by his growing up in a Kurdish area as a Kurdish man:

I lived in an area where people experienced extreme violence. It is a place where the state tortured random people to prove authority, killed families in the middle of the night without showing reasons, doused people in acid and burned them, bombed the towns³⁶... There is no respect for human rights. But not only the state, but also the PKK tortured people and bombed some towns, which they labeled as supporters of the state. I know the victims, I am one of them. Therefore as the opposite of what state discourse indicates that violence is necessary for security, I have understood that violence cannot provide security for people. And also, there is violence used by PKK, which says they are fighting against the Turkish state since it practices violence,

³⁶ There are a number of Kurdish people from the area who disappeared during the war between the PKK and the Turkish state.

exploitation, assimilation and oppression on Kurdish people. As a Kurdish person, I was subjected to violence and I am against every type of violence since I know that it doesn't solve any problem.

Halil also adds that his participation in the PKK and the Turkish armies was a big mistake, since it only contributed to the existing culture of violence, which oppresses all of the people around the world, especially civilians. On the other hand, for example Mehmet, who used to be a member of a radical nationalist group and declared objection after nine and a half months of military service, stated that he experienced violence through using it, not as a victim of it, and now he defines himself as a pacifist and wants to carry the burden of all of the responsibilities of the execution of violence, especially violence against women, by people and specifically by men.

I used to be against only the military but I am a pacifist now. My anti-violence thoughts were influenced by feminist politics mostly and my friends are all pacifists. Most of the COs' conscientious objection originated from their position as the object of the violence. But I used to be the subject of the violence; I experienced violence through using it. My self-criticism stemmed from this fact. I don't want to get rid of the guilt of that subjective position in the violence, I want to carry it and I want to take responsibility for that guilt. I am a pacifist but I feel responsible for all the violence performed by men.

Yavuz, who is the founder of *Biz Erkek Değiliz İnisiyatifi* (We Are Not Men Initiative or BEDI), says that he is also against institutionalized violence and adds that conscientious objection is a part of his anti-violence thoughts. He stated that under BEDI's refusal to be men lies the mutual relationship between violence and hegemonic masculinity. In contrast to what Mehmet said about how he wants to take the responsibility of the violence performed by all men, the members of BEDI refuse to take the responsibility of the violent behavior of the "other men". They argue that they are against institutionalized violence, including psychological violence, such as homophobia. As Kimmel argues, homophobia is a fear stemming from 'homosocial enactment', which leads men to silence, "the silences that keep other people believing that men actually approve of the things that are done to women, to

minorities, to gays and lesbians” (Kimmel, 1994). However, this group of men refuses to behave in accordance with the general violent and homophobic image of men, and they are not silent at all. The starting point of the group activities is a good example of these anti-silence politics. After Pipa Bacca, an Italian artist, was raped and killed in Turkey, the group demonstrated in black veils to condemn the violence. They also prepare demonstrations in conjunction with feminist and LGBTQ groups. However, they also consider men to be the oppressor, and therefore, their aim is not to point out the problems men have, but rather to point out that there are different men who are against violence. Yavuz summarizes this viewpoint by indicating:

If there appear more groups like BEDI, the most important effect will be on the prevention of violence in the society. Violence is not only at the hands of men; however violence is legitimized when men use it because of the cooperation between the system and men. Therefore, if we can be conscious enough of this fact, and the types of violence, we can control our violent behaviors against people’s integrity; not only against their physical or psychological integrity. Conscious raising and not being silent about violence is very crucial.

Therefore it can be concluded that those COs who are antimilitarists or pacifists, are all against institutionalized violence. According to them, the normalization of violence or identification of it with men in society can be changed over time and starting with the individual. Conscientious objection is one of the ways of rejecting institutionalized violence and the mutual relationship between hegemonic masculinity and violence.

II.2.5. Are the objectors different? A comparison of hegemonic masculinity and objectors’ masculinity by the objectors themselves

I asked the COs I interviewed to compare themselves to *erkeklik* in society. Although I observed how they positioned themselves in relation to hegemonic masculinity, I wanted to ask this question directly to get their self-perceptions, since in their previous answers their ideals and their individual positions were mixed.

None of the COs said they were the “proper” men and only a few of them related this situation to conscientious objection. Most of them did not mention that they are not ideal citizens, although they defined the ideal citizen with terms they do not fit. For example Enver Aydemir said that he is far more critical than the men around him, and he does not support a football team, which makes him different than his friends. However, he did not mention that he is Kurdish when he was comparing himself to the *erkeklik* in the society, which is built upon Turkishness, nor did he say that he is not a nationalist, secular citizen, who is charged by the state with the mission of raising obedient, secular, and nationalist children. On the other hand, Halil said that he does not fit into the ideal male citizen model as defined by the state since he is a CO and an antimilitarist, and the state documented it by giving him a “rotten” report. Deniz and İbrahim do not even wish to define themselves even with the word “men”. However, as some other COs also said, society, except within their own social circles, still recognizes them as men and permits them to have certain advantages, such as walking on the streets at night without complication. For example, Mehmet said that the military identity was one of the easiest identities to reject among those other identities. Rejecting the *erkeklik* identity is not as easy as rejecting the military identity. In his words:

Military identity is so visible, so clear to identify. But other identities are articulated with every day lives so it is difficult to notice them. It was easier to get rid of that military identity by just rejecting it. But, for example, *erkeklik* is so difficult to be recognized. Because I can’t just say “I am not man”. Even my hair-style, my clothes etc. label me as a man. Although I want to be different and alternative, society provides advantages and keeps treating me as a man. For example, my partner [female] and I went to a school to talk to the head-mistress about our puppet project, she talked to me not to my partner, and she didn’t recognize her as someone to talk to because I, a man, was there. These are some advantages I want to get rid of; conscientious objection may be just a little step.

Some of the COs argue that conscientious objection is an attitude, and therefore a step, in rejecting hegemonic masculinity, but it does not mean that they managed to reject every

aspect of hegemonic masculinity just through becoming a CO. For example, Yavuz said that conscientious objection made him question *erkeklik* more:

Of course I was questioning *erkeklik* before being a CO, but conscientious objection makes me question it more. Although I cannot object or change all my behaviors related to *erkeklik*, I got more suspicious about every step I take and everything imposed on me in the name of being “normal”. We are against the institutions and blame them but what are we doing? First I have to change myself and the social circle I am in; at least I have to be aware of my oppressor position in the society and try to change it.

Therefore, it can be said that COs see themselves different than the “other” men in society, though at different levels. Some say that they are totally distinct, or even not men at all, while some others say that they are trying to be different, but indicate that there is a long way to go. However most of them focus on their daily lives, not the relationship they have with the state and say that as long as the identity is visible, it is easier to reject that identity. According to them *erkeklik* is not easy to be defined, and thus it is difficult to be aware of all of the aspects of it, and it is primarily reconstructed by society as a result of the bargains society has with the power. Since society reconstructs *erkeklik* and imposes it on all of the members of that society, trying to change their identity is a difficult process for men, and in this case, for COs.

CONCLUSION

This thesis discussed the intersection between hegemonic masculinity and militarism in Turkey, the role of conscription in this intersectionality, conscientious objection as a possible way of challenging it and conscientious objectors in particular. It was explored so far in the thesis that conscription is still an important component of hegemonic masculinity since the beginning of the Turkish Republic. As a part of militarization of society, conscription is crucial in constructing the citizenship identity and a patriarchal society. However, conscientious objection, refusal of the citizenship obligation, is a resistance of hegemonic masculinity which is defined in terms of militarism.

As it was discussed in the first part, militarization of the society is a result of nationalist projects of the Turkish Republic. In order to create its imagined community, the Turkish Republic based itself on the modernization of the nation through militarization. The “military nation” myth is a result of this militarization process and realized itself in the male-only compulsory military service. Conscription is used to construct the new citizen identity and therefore the gender roles of the “proper citizen”.

According to the feminist studies, gender lies at the heart of nationalist projects, and that the roles of man and woman are constructed or reconstructed in accordance with these projects, and masculinity is an integral part of nationalism and vice versa. When we look at the Turkish Republic, we see that hegemonic masculinity, which is the dominant masculinity among masculinities in the society, is constructed by the state in accordance with the militarization of the society, and the soldier man is defined as the norm. This constructs heteronormativity in the society and patriarchal hierarchy, as it was discussed in the first chapter of this study.

Although militaries are the primary institutions used by the state to create and impose hegemonic masculinity within society, militaries do not only create ideal citizens, they also

conscientious objectors. The history of conscientious objection stretches back to the beginning of the conscription, 18th century. There are a variety of reasons for being a CO, such as religious or political. However, political reasons are more recent and related to the antiwar movements and ideology. Conscientious objection is internationally recognized as a right in 1987, however, Turkey is one of the countries which still does not recognize conscientious objection as a right and treat COs as draft evaders.

The studies on conscientious objection mostly focus on the subjectivity of the concept and argue that it is a resistant and outside of the system, not like disobedience. Again, these studies create a blurred area between conscientious objection and antiwar movements, antimilitarism and anarchism. Turkey is one of the examples in the studies related to conscientious objection for this blurred area.

In order to discuss and apply the theories mentioned above I conducted semistructured interviews with twelve male COs from Turkey. I tried to explore the reflections of hegemonic masculinity on conscientious objectors in order to find an answer to the main question of this study. This study can be seen as a bridge between micro and macro levels of the analysis of the intersectionality between hegemonic masculinity and militarism. According to the findings of this study, COs, as individuals, create gaps in the hegemonic masculinity and stay out of the system. Therefore they do not aim to change the system as COs, but protect their own self integrity by refusing the external power. However, because of their other identities, such as being antimilitarists or Muslim, they stay in the system and challenge the hegemonic masculinity through staying visible in those social circles.

It can be elaborated more on this issue and make general conclusions with a more comprehensive study including other aspects of the theory, such as psycho-sociology of conscientious objection, or exploring the related communities which include or create COs; such as anarchists, antimilitarists or Islamic communities. Moreover, a comparative study

between Turkey and other countries could provide more reliable results. Therefore, this study is a step taken in the discussions on the relation between conscientious objection and hegemonic masculinity, and may lead further studies in the future.

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