

**“This uprising is a gift from Allah¹”:
political subjectivities of authoritarian
hegemony in the post-coup period in
Turkey**

By

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the dynamic interplay between the hegemony of the authoritarian Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey and discursive strategies of ‘the people’ supporting the party. More specifically, it scrutinizes the complexities of political subjectivities of the people who took it to the street to protest *for* the state in the evening of the 15 July 2016 coup attempt and in the month-long countrywide Democracy Watch Demonstrations (DWDs). Drawing on the mobilization of ‘the people’ under and for the state, I argue that generating dynamic consent of ‘the people’ who identify with the AKP is necessary for the state to legitimize the coercion on dissidents. Contextualizing the ascendancy of the party through its Gramscian passive revolution, I problematize how these political subjectivities emerged and in what ways they rationalize and are leveraged to legitimize state practices that reinvigorate the hegemony of the AKP over political, economic, and social relations within society. I conclude that political subjectivities emerge out of people positioning themselves vis-à-vis imagined others via bringing in emotions and re-appropriating history informed by religious-nationalist interpretations. Furthermore, I explore that main techniques of legitimation of the AKP, which are politicization of terror through a normalized state of exception and de-politicization of political decision-making mechanisms.

¹ Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the President of Turkey, addressing his supporters on 15 July 2016.

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1.Introduction

In the late evening of 15 July 2016, the pictures of armed soldiers standing on the bridges, closed to the traffic, of Bosphorus and Fatih Sultan Mehmet in Istanbul started to circulate in the social media platforms. Without having a crystal-clear understanding of the reason for the closure, some accounts asserted that there were bombs placed on the bridges by terrorists, while some others claimed that it was a coup d'état on the way. Trying to make a meaning out of this ambiguity, I witnessed people, including my family members, rushed to ATMs to withdraw money and to supermarkets to buy food to stock up just in case of a curfew.

Though there was no official explanation from the state, what happened in that evening resembled the coup d'états in the past. Similar to the coups in history, the newscaster of the state-run TV channel was handed a manifesto by a group of soldiers to read on air to make the military coup and its reasons known publicly. However, unlike the putsches in history, there also appeared videos on social media and TV channels showing that Turkish military jets were bombing their very own Turkish Parliament.

The uncertainty did not last long as Prime Minister Erdoğan went live on one of the mainstream TV channels through 'Facetime' video chat application:

This is the upheaval from a minority group within the Turkish military. The plotters are the supporters of the parallel state structure¹...We should not leave the squares to them.

¹ The name given to the conservative religious movement network of Fethullah Gülen. The movement had long been a powerful ally of the AKP. Due to its wealth and extensive educational institutions, the organization could educate its organic intellectuals. These graduates, then, were placed in position in bureaucracy, media, education, police, and military that enabled the AKP and the movement grew together powerfully (Zubaida 2011). After the party fell out with the movement over the power struggles firstly in 2013, the state adopted the discourse of Parallel State Structure to position itself against the movement. The state discourse, then, has been changed to FETÖ (Fethullahist Terrorist Organization in 2016).

This is a call to action to my nation. I invite you to the public squares and airports. Let them come with their tanks and helicopters² (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan 2016).

His speech drove quite a lot of people to the streets to protest and fight against the military intervention in the state government which left hundreds of people dead. People's taking it to the streets was of primary importance as it was going to be constructed as a defining moment in the recent history of Turkey and as a springboard for further authoritarian political implementations which would reinforce the AKP's grip on power.

Erdoğan's interpretation of the event as "a gift from Allah" relates to its authoritarian unfolding. The aftermath of the event enabled justification of subordinating priorities of public order to private interests with the help of law and popular legitimacy promoted through the state-supported Democracy Watch Demonstrations (hereafter DWDs). These were the protests organized the day after the coup evening and lasted one month against the non-democratic military intervention in the rule of democratically elected government. Amidst the protests, Erdogan declared a state of emergency which equipped the government with extraordinary disciplinary powers. Stated differently, the state of emergency nurtured ambitions of the state "to do things that would not be possible to do so during at normal times"³ (Erdoğan 2016). Extended seven times and lasting for two years, the state of emergency led to quite a lot of structural changes in the socio-political, economical and legal spheres via statutory decrees⁴

² My translation of the excerpt from Erdoğan's speech delivered on CNN, one of the mainstream TV channels in Turkey, amidst the coup attempt on 15 July 2016. Indeed, a Saudi businessman offered \$266,000 for the mobile phone the newscaster used to live talk with Erdogan citing that he would display it in the Saudi national museum to be a reminiscent of "repercussions of revolutions and battles." <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/266k-of-fered-erdogan-facetime-iphone-used-during-coup-attempt>

³ <http://haber.sol.org.tr/toplum/erdogan-acik-konustu-normal-zamanlarda-yapamayacagimiz-seyleri-yapabilme-gucune-sahip-olduk> [Erdogan spoke up: We have the power to do things that we would not do during normal times]

⁴To list a few; 125,800 were expelled from the civil service; 140,000 passports were cancelled, 148 academics were sued as they signed a petition against the violent attacks of the state on Kurds; 143 journalists were put in jail; 847 dormitories, 70 newspapers, 20 magazines, 33 TV channels 47 health institutions, 15 foundation universities were shut down as they were linked to FETÖ; legal actions were taken against 169,13 people 50,510 of whom got arrested; 4,424 judges and prosecutors were expelled; thousands of judges and prosecutors, 6,035 soldiers were arrested; trustees were appointed to 89 elected municipalities of Kurdish majority; 965 companies deemed affiliated with FETÖ were seized on and handed over to the Deposits and Savings Insurance Fund; 15 billion liras' worth of assets from those companies was transferred to the treasury (Yildiz 2018).

(hereafter KHKs ⁵). Although the KHKs intended to expel FETÖ members from the bureaucratic positions, they were extended so as to curb any dissident by associating them with FETÖ or labelling them as terrorists who pose a risk to the security of the country (Amnesty International 2018)⁶.

At this “critical juncture” in the face of “terrorization of the country⁷” (Erdogan 2017) a constitutional referendum was held, and as a result the executive presidency system replaced the parliamentary system in Turkey with the approval of 51.4 percent. This new system, removing the prime minister position, equips the president with extraordinary power, and enables Erdogan “to appoint senior judges, declare a state of emergency, dissolve parliament and in some cases issue new laws by decrees” (Sanchez and Yüksektaş 2017).

These recent current affairs got me thinking: how was demonstrations of people against an anti-democratic military intervention followed by their support to authoritarian⁸ practices of the state in the name of enhancing democracy and peace in the country. The question, full of oxymorons, captures the essence of the exacerbated socio-political circumstances in Turkey following the coup attempt in 2016. In a more concrete manner, I am interested in the questions of how people form their political subjectivities supportive of authoritarian power, how their discursive strategies legitimize authoritarian implementations of the government, and how people draw on the constructed memory of 15 July, the DWDs and its unfolding to articulate their political subjectivities. Exploring the answers to these questions, I also aim to show how

⁵ *Kanun Hukmunde Kararname* in Turkish. KHKs give the power to issue decrees to the cabinet of ministers who meet under the president. In state of emergencies, KHKs could also be issued so as to target fundamental rights and freedoms. They cannot be appealed through the Constitutional Court. In two years of emergency rule following the coup attempt, there issued 36 KHKs (Yinanc 2016).

⁶ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2018/07/turkey-state-of-emergency-lifted/>

⁷ <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/erdogandan-yeni-anayasa-aciklamasi> [Erdogan’s statement on the new constitution]

⁸ This is by no means to claim that the pre-coup period of the AKP government was democratic. On the contrary, I consider the post-coup period is a continuation of authoritarianism of the AKP (For details, see Jongerden 2018). However, I interpret that the post-coup authoritarianism of the party is different in that it is more visible, legalized, and legitimize coercion on dissidents via leaning against the majority.

these political subjectivities are leveraged to implement authoritarian decisions at the state level. In what follows, I break down my approach to the questions starting with my take on the DWDs.

1.1. Unfolding of the event: retrospective memory construction through Democracy Watch Demonstrations

The first thing that came to my mind was that what was going to happen tomorrow. We all have an established order, routine. That event spoiled that routine. You do not know if someone is going to put you in jail tomorrow...Just ambiguity...Terrifying (Yilmaz, 41, marketing manager).

One of my informant's description of the evening, in a way, reaffirms my pre-fieldwork thoughts that 15 July was as a rupturing point in everyday life. However, this should not be interpreted as warding off the coup attempt resulted in going back to the ordinary life. Besides reproducing the authoritarian context in which the coup attempt took place, the putsch has made major inroads into the socio-political conjunctures in Turkey. The nodal point of the coup I am interested in is this coupling of reproduction and change. To tackle it, I draw on the works which explored the duality of structure and event.

Structure and events have long been argued to be poles apart. On the one hand, structure refers to the overarching stable mechanisms of a society consisting of rules and resources that reproduce existing patterns of relations (Giddens 1984; Sewell 1992). On the other, events are conceptualized as contingent to the stationary structures. Sahlins (2004) argues, however, that structure and event are not mutually exclusive but instead feed into each other. This means that events and structures are in mutual interactions, in the sense that they shape and are shaped by each other. As Sahlins (2004:291) argues, "the event was contingent, but it unfolded in the terms of a particular cultural field, from which the actors drew their reasons and the happening found its meanings." In line with this, "the transformation of a culture is a mode of its

reproduction” and “the cultural categories acquire new functional values” through this change (Sahlins 1985:138). Simply put, the responses of the people to the events are determined by their self-perceptions shaped by already existing socio-cultural structures and eventually acquire different meanings.

Events, in this sense, cause further events which generate new socio-political arrangements, that is, evoke historical construction of it as a cultural memory in a mythical sense (Kapferer 2010). That is to say, an event is not a phenomenal happening in itself (Sahlins 1985). Building a relational understanding between event and structure in which the former unfolds, Sahlins (ibid.) posits that event becomes historically significant provided that it is interpreted through cultural scheme.

From this perspective on the structure and event, I analyze the coup attempt and the state-supported DWDs. I argue that these demonstrations, started right after the coup attempt and lasted almost one month, intended the retrospective construction of 15 July as a cultural memory. ‘The people’ who demonstrated *for* the state under the state discourse of the national will in the DWDs were constructed as the praiseworthy subjects of this cultural memory. This historical construction of the 15 July event and its unfolding is made meaningful so long as they are interpreted through the existing cultural scheme whose former components had been altered in the past during the passive revolution of the AKP government.

Mobilization of previously passive political subjects that have emanated through the passive revolution of the party, in this sense, are significant as their meaning-making process are adopted by the state to conduct further socio-political arrangements. With this in mind, I adopt a relational thinking approach in which subjectivities and entities are constitutive of each other through the relationships they establish (Rajaram 2016). This underlines the dynamism of transactions which indicates the possible alteration of the self-perception of subjectivities,

emergence of new opportunities or annihilation of them, enhancement or diminution of social lives, or reproduction of the already existing relations (ibid.). This allows me to engage in novel articulations of the relationship between power and political subjectivities which emerge out of their affiliation with that power.

To elaborate on this, I consider populist rhetoric as a means of interpellation of subjects which serves as a government mechanism praising the will of the ‘ordinary people’ who were present in the DWDs and which ultimately ‘guide’ (Dean 2010) them to appropriate ways of protesting, of being political and ultimately of being a citizen. Equally important, the experience of enthusiastic collective action of the participators plays a significant role in communicating the meanings associated with the event and its unfolding. In short, ‘the people’ becomes a part of the heroic narrative through the combination of official recognition and their collective experience.

My main point of inquiry is the relational understanding between the political subjectivities and the governmental power, so I partially agree with but also depart from the recent literature that puts forward that Turkey under AKP rule has been sliding into authoritarian neoliberalism by disciplining dissidents in the name of the market economy through the centralized state apparatuses rather than seeking for their consent in order to ensure the reproduction of the system (Bruff 2014; Bilgiç 2018 ; Kaygusuz 2018; Tansel 2018). I argue that, rather than ruling out generation of consent, it is also a component of authoritarian neoliberalism. However, it does not operate on the level of consent or cooptation of everyone but rather of popular majority. This is authoritarian in the sense that, I argue, the consent of the majority is leveraged to legitimize coercive methods on dissidents and to legitimize state practices aimed at maintenance of authoritarian neoliberalism at the expense of dissidents. Put

differently, I claim that authoritarian power needs to generate consent of its supporters dynamically in order to alleviate crises it faces.

To further my analysis on the relationship between entities and political subjectivities supportive of the authoritarian AKP government, I bring together Foucault and Gramsci. I employ Foucault's understanding of power/knowledge where he posits that formation of subjects are shaped by means of apparatuses of power that produce knowledge and discourse through which political subjectivities interprets the world (Blackman et.al 2018). Knowledge in the form of truth, then, generates subjects. To flesh out the genealogy of the present truth revolving within the field of possible political and protesting actions, I draw on the hegemony of the AKP government that ensued from the period of passive revolution of the party.

My analysis is two-fold. Firstly, I contextualize the present position of the AKP government from the perspective of Gramscian passive revolution, that is a strategy of emerging bourgeoisie in which ethos of subaltern classes is accommodated through linking civil society with political society on the way to new state formation. This enables me to account for the emergence and entrenchment of both the authoritarian neoliberal AKP, born out of the ashes of anti-capitalist radical Islamist, and its authoritarian religious-nationalist polarizing discourse which has become the modality of the party. In doing so, I can better ground political subjects at play in the current socio-political arena who cull from that discourse to act, and to make sense of their engagement with the state, each other and the imagined others. In this regard, 15 July coup attempt evening, and its unfolding is illustrative of a concrete setting where these subjectivities are performed to protest *for* the state, to interpret the events, and to give meaning to their actions.

The body of the thesis starts with theoretical points of departure in which I bring together Gramsci and Foucault to flesh out the concepts of hegemony and subjectivities formed

through hegemony. It is followed by a historical contextualization of the hegemony of the AKP in which I explicate the relationship between the neoliberalization of Turkey, which reached its peak during the AKP government, and passive revolution of the party. This lays the groundwork to understand how the party paved the way for configuration of political subjectivities supportive of its authoritarian practices. In the chapter three, I analyze the main themes through which hegemony and political subjectivities are aligned. From my interviews, I have come up with the assemblage of three main themes my informants draw on to form their political subjectivities: (1) positioning themselves vis-à-vis imagined others via (2) deployment of emotions and (3) re-appropriating history through Islamist-nationalist perspective. Secondly, furthering my analysis, in chapter four, I explore how the relationship between the AKP government and its political subjects is utilized for the authoritarian political implementations of the party following the coup attempt. Taking advantage of the identification of the people with the state, I argue that the AKP government capitalizes on political subjectivities on the ground of: (1) politicization of terror to through normalizing state of exception and (2) de-politicization of the political decision-making mechanism. Combination of these two strategies facilitates the hegemony of the AKP.

1.1. Notes on methodology

Prior to conducting my interviews between December and March in 2019, I had the opportunity to participate in the commemoration event of 15 July, which is now celebrated as a public holiday under the name of “Democracy and National Unity Day,” in Izmir in 2017. This provided me an opportunity to better grasp the formation of 15 July events on site and to observe the participators who share similar political subjectivities as my informants.

The demonstration was at the Konak square, the hub and one of the main squares of Izmir. Getting off the bus, I was flabbergasted to see the crowd of demonstrators carrying

Turkish flags together with flags on which portrait of Erdogan, the logo of AKP, the symbol of Kayi Tribe⁹ printed on (see Figure 1). Wondering how and where they purchased that paraphernalia from, I saw street vendors selling merchandise with those figures range from hoodies, flags, scarfs, hats to badges and stickers etc. on the road to the Konak square where they built a stage and huge screens for speakers from bureaucracy such as deputies, rectors, mayors etc. As I walked along the road, I stumbled upon a group of people queuing in front of a caravan which distribute *lokma*¹⁰ for the souls of civil `martyrs` who lost their lives in the evening of 15 July.



Figure 1. Street vendors selling demonstration paraphernalia. The text on fez, hat worn during the Ottoman Empire period and became obsolete since the republican hat reform, reads "We are the Ottoman Empire". The symbol on the blue flag belongs to the Kayi Tribe. Photo taken by me during the commemoration event on 15 July 2017.

⁹ The Kayi Tribe had its origin in the Oghuz Turkic people which were believed to have raised Osman I, the founder of the Ottoman Empire, though it is claimed that this information on the alleged Turkic origins of Osman I is falsified. The popularity of this logo, and claim has become prevalent in the Turkish popular culture after the TV series of *Dirilis: Ertugrul* (Resurrection: Ertugrul) which narrates the life of Ertugrul, the father of Osman I.

¹⁰ Deep fried dough coated with sweet syrup. Lokma is not sold for money but is distributed by people who would like to do a charity work. After eating lokma, one is expected to recite a prayer for the person/s lokma is distributed for.

Having reached the main square, I could hear the people chanting nationalist slogans. My observations got interrupted by the loudspeakers welcoming a deputy on the stage (see Figure 2). While staying relatively distant to the stage because of the crowd, I could hear the transition in his speech that went from how a brave nation defeated the terrorists in the evening of 15 July to how the national will showed its support to the AKP government and Erdogan, the leader of the Turkish people, by participating in the DWDs. This was the message to all inside and outside enemies of Turkey whoever it may be. As the context of the speech transformed into pro-government, so did the people's chanting which combined nationalistic feelings with strong liking of Erdogan and the AKP.



Figure 2. The stage for the speakers. People waving flags of Turkey, of the 2023 Vision of the AKP government which is a list of goals to be accomplished by 2023 in the fields of economy, domestic policy, energy, foreign policy, health care, transport, and tourism, and of the green flag with three crescents which symbolizes Islam with its green color and the three continents the Ottoman Empire dominated with its three crescents. Photo taken by me during the commemoration event on 15 July 2017.

Drawing insights from my participant observation, I furthered my research with ten semi-structured interviews with the long-time supporters of the AKP government. I reached my first two informants through family networks. The others I made acquaintance with were

through the references of my first two informants. All of my informants indicated that they are long-time supporters of the party and tried to participate in the DWDs organized in Izmir on as many days as possible.

My inner circle was and is still quite hesitant about my topic as people who are critical of the government might randomly get detained with the accusation of being a member of terrorist organizations. As a matter of fact, other than the ones I know personally, I was always nervous at the beginning of my interviews with my other informants as I thought some of my questions would offend them. I could also sense that they were uncomfortable as they were also trying to understand my positionality initially. However, as we progressed during the interviews, my informants and I became comfortable with each other.

I conducted the interviews, that lasted on average one and half hour each, at the places my informants wanted to meet in order to build trust between each other. These were mostly at cafes and their workplaces. All of the interviews were in Turkish. I faithfully transcribed the interviews in Turkish and then translated them to English. Throughout the interviews I kept a guideline with semi-structured questions in order to make sure that interviews were not rigid and went into details specific to each of my informants. Although most of my informants allowed me to record the interviews, some did not do so. For those, I took extensive notes. Throughout the thesis, I assigned my informants pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

To be of representative of a larger group of people, I made contacts with five women and five men whose demographics also are diversified. While the ages of my informants ranged between 24 to 53, their occupations were sales representative (1), marketing manager (1), housewives (2), nurse (1), IT service personnel (1), lawyer (1), small sized enterprise owner (1), math teacher (1) and, unemployed job-seeker (1).

In addition to interviews, I have accumulated extensive online news report between 2018-2019 in which include dominant governmental discourse about the coup attempt and the DWDs. This was of significance in terms of analyzing how is the interplay between discourse and practice of my informants. In doing so, my aim was to account for the productivity of power through which subjectification is materialized and for the effort of the AKP in seeking to rehabilitate its hegemony through dynamic subjects, rather than static and state-centered explanation of discourse.

1.2. Theoretical points of departure: bringing together Gramsci and Foucault

Against the backdrop of my inquiry into relational approach to the relationships between hegemony and political subjectivities, I aim to bring together Gramsci and Foucault. On the one hand, I draw on Gramsci to scrutinize ‘in which ways’ and ‘why’ macro-level structures are in constant effort to establish hegemony. On the other hand, I benefit from Foucault to go further and to account for ‘how’ political subjectivities are self-made and being-made discursively. This helps me account for the subtle modalities of rule that make hegemony of the AKP functional and in the following chapter to delve into the passive revolution of the party through which certain regimes of truth about the possible ways to relate to the government have been established.

Gramsci (1971) specifies the main duty of political parties towards building hegemony, or in other words leading the State, as organizing national collective will. To do so, he proposes, requires balancing “a dialectal unity...of force and of consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilization, of agitation and propaganda, of tactics and of strategy” (Gramsci 1971:315). This balancing act serves to establishment a national will and consequently the hegemony. Instrumental in collecting dispersed people under the national will is to arouse

emotions in “generic” people the party identifies itself with via the Machiavelli’s-Prince-style leader. In this regard, the efforts a political party/its leader to forge a culturally and socially unitary national will, out of dispersed aims, is correlated with operating in discursively “emotional ways” that could generate that “single cultural climate” (Gramsci 1971:665; Fontana 2002:162). The political party, only then, attempts to make use of this national will to formulate its political agenda that paves the way to its hegemony. Within this frame, Gramsci specifies doing politics as “art of governing men, of securing their permanent consent, and hence of founding ‘great States’” (Gramsci 1971:512). The last statement hints at Gramsci’s understanding of ideology. Expanding the Marxists idea of false consciousness, Gramsci (ibid.) puts forward that ideology is functional because it determines the very consciousness of men in the form of “common senses” which denotes the acceptance of the constructed knowledge within various fields without a thorough thinking. Hegemony of a group, in this regard, is established by means of producing commonsensical ideology.

Upon all these arguments, Gramsci builds his theory of the State which comes into being through the combinations of civil society (so-called private institutions of church, schools, media etc.) and political society (juridical and military state apparatuses) representative of consent and coercion respectively (Daldal 2014). In this regard, civil society with its institutions is a medium of “the state as educator” to (Fontana 2002:161) transmit values, ethico-political ideas, interests, cultural practices, intellectual ideas, and morals of the ruling class over the subordinate. In other words, the state, consisting of civil society + political society, is a powerful actor that disseminates the ideology of the ruling class through the society. Here, the Law and education, as extensions of political and civil societies respectively, are significant instruments for dissemination and internalization of ideological values of the ruling class. While education equips citizens with self-conscious ‘truths’ imbricated via both civil society and social relations of one has with his immediate circle, the Law ‘rationalizes’

‘possible’ ways of living up to standards in order to punish those fall outside of the ‘possible’ and to reward the ones act within the ‘possible’ (Gramsci 1971:509).

Such an emphasis on the dialectical co-existence of civil and political societies, or in Gramsci’s words “integral state”, led him to conceptualize “passive revolution” within societies in which capitalism or, that is to say, characteristics of the ruling class is well established. What concept denotes is the molecular rather than abrupt changes within cultural and political spheres as circumstances would not permit insurrectional actions (Hardt and Negri 2009). In other words, instead of “war of manoeuvre”, Gramsci proposes the tactic of “war of position” in the path of class struggle to form a state. In this regard, he puts forth that war of manoeuvre, or in other words frontal attack on the state, is only subsequent to passive revolution which yields the conquest of consent generator civil society through war of positions (Gramsci 1971:195). That said, I delve into the passive revolution of the AKP, in which the party absorbed its antecedent radical Islamists’ grassroots movements into the well-established secular, nationalist and capitalist rationales of the country, to explain the gradual change within the political and civil societies. This helps me account for how the AKP, as a political Islamist party, could form its hegemony despite the secular reality in the country protected by the military.

I complement Gramsci’s understanding of power as to formation of integral state with Foucault’s micro-level perception of power that indicates discursive production of truths through which governable subjects are formed. In this sense, construction of truths, in my case normative ways of protesting, being political, deploying emotions and re-appropriation of history compatible with the ideology of the AKP government, pave the way for subjectivation aligned with the state or party. This backs up my argument that authoritarian governments dynamically generate consent to its coercive acts on dissidents via leaning against its popular

electoral base to sustain their hegemony. This dynamic nature of power which invokes formation of political subjectivities equipped with the truths links up to Foucault's conception of power.

As Gramsci, Foucault takes up the question of productive nature of power, however, without locating it in a concrete entity in the form of state. Rather, Foucault conceptualizes power in a way to not coming from a single fixed point. Later acknowledging the state as an actor in which multiplicity of power is concentrated, he problematizes government to account for the relation between "technologies of self and technologies of domination" (Lemke 2000). In relation to that, he introduces the concept of governmentality to understand the rationale which 'govern' the 'mentalities' (Dean 2010). Put differently, he tries to understand how relations of power get involved in subjectification. To elaborate on his linking technologies of self with of domination, Foucault conceptualizes government as 'conduct of conduct' in the forms of 'guiding' the self in its relations with the environment and of governing the others by structuring the fields they act within (Lemke 2000:3). From his perspective, coercion and consent emerge as tools of exercising power (ibid.). For Foucault, governmental power produces the knowledge or regime of truth within the field of possible practices of 'rational guidance' (Lemke 2000), whereas in Gramsci power produces and disseminates ideology of a ruling class. Put differently, Foucault does not restrict government to legitimacy to use force, just as Gramsci did not restrict its concept of hegemony to political society. All in all, in comparing Foucault and Gramsci, Daldal (2014) posits that the former reiterates the latter's hegemonic civil society within which the ideology of the ruling class floats and subjects are interpellated into thinking and acting 'freely' by drawing on those structures of governance, with his concept of governmentality.

Foucault delves into how production of regimes of truth is realized intricately by work of discourse. The regimes of truth, according to Foucault:

...induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault in Rabinow 1984:73).

That said, Foucault refers to discourse as a means of structuring the truth from which subject draws on to form its subjectivity. Therefore, the process of subjectification is bipartite; "self-made and being-made" (Foucault in Ong 1996). In other words, discourse becomes structural knowledge within a field, and later on generates truth bearing subjects. In his later writings, Dean (1994) acknowledges that this is Foucault's revised analysis on discourse in which he seeks out the relational effect of discourse in formation of self rather than solely scrutinizing the regular discourse or its institutionalized forms. Drawing on this, I explore how effective the dominant governmental discourse on issues related to 15 July in formation of political subjectivities and how the AKP government avail itself the political subjects to reinvigorate its hegemony.

2. The historical contextualization of the hegemony of the AKP

In what follows, I give a brief account of the neoliberalization process of Turkey which is the precursor of the AKP government, and then ground my historical contextualization of the hegemony of the party in its Gramscian passive revolution. This helps me account for the emerging of specific discourses by means of which the truth is generated.

2.1. The neoliberalization of Turkey

The establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 was predicated upon the confinement of religion to the private sphere. Breaking with the Ottoman Empire, the predecessor of the republic where Islam had permeated into every regulatory sphere, the identity of the newly emerged nation-state was envisaged as being secular. In the context of Turkey, secularism is more of an equivalent of *laïcité* as it denotes the governmental control over religion rather than absolute separation. Regardless of this structural change, religion has always been one of the most potent instruments in politics and in navigating everyday life practices of people in contemporary Turkey. As the Turkish military and bureaucracy are the guardians of the secular Turkish nationalism, the history of developing democracy in contemporary Turkey has impeded many times through military coups whenever the politics seemed to be affiliated with religion.

Upon top-down secularization of the politics, dispersed informal religious organizations could arrange a fixed political structure under the neo-Islamist National Order Party (hereafter MNP) for the first time in 1970, whose ideology of “National Order” represented strong anti-free market, anti-Western, anti-European Union, pro-state intervention stance in favor of Islamist morals (Esposito 2003). As the party’s way of mingling religion

with politics become popular, the party was perceived as a threat to *laïcité*, hence, it was banned by the military only to make it came back under the name of *Milli Selamet Partisi* (National Salvation Party, hereafter MSP). Before suffering the same fate as its predecessor MNP, the MSP party was powerful enough to form a coalition with the secularist mainstream party *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (Republican's People Party, hereafter CHP) in 1977 (Atacan 2005). After its preclusion from the politics during the notorious 1980 military coup, its successor the *Refah Partisi* (Welfare Party, hereafter RP) gained a wider appeal, not limited to Islamists, throughout the country in 1994 local elections as its campaign focused less on anti-Western and Islamist sentiments but more on defeating poverty alongside other economic reforms (Rabasa & Larrabee 2008). Following the closure of the RP in 1997 on the same grounds as its predecessors, party member Recep Tayyip Erdogan led the formation of the AKP in 2001. These political affairs exemplified that the well-established secularist military rule of the country readily ceased even the possibility of revolution-like attempts of political Islamists to form an integral state.

It is imperative to situate these states of political turmoil and the current ascendancy of the AKP within the processes of neoliberalization of the country started in the 1980s. Through the coup d'état in 1980, the military took an active role in promoting neoliberalization of the state (Erol et.al 2016). On the one hand, the military rule imposed neoliberal economic policies for privatizations and deregulations within the economic sphere to alleviate economic crises. On the other hand, these economic policies were accompanied by the replacement of the 'old' politics of right-left with 'new' depoliticized ways of claim-making so as to include "identity, locality, consumerism, and a celebratory rhetoric of free choice" (Erol et.al. 2016:4) as the Turkish military feared the possibility of leftist turning into communists during the Cold War era. In this regard, the Cold War frightened the Turkish military into implementing the Turkish-Islamist synthesis which aimed both at taming Islam to make it compatible with the Turkish

nationalism and pacification of the leftists (Baran 2010). In other words, the top-down imposition of neoliberalization brought about the eradication of left-right politics but paved the way for new subjectivities formed along the axis of dichotomous identities of Kurdish/Turkish and republican Kemalists/Islamists. As a concomitant of this change in the political sphere, together with the absence of powerful labor organizations, top-down implementation of neoliberalization and culturally localized consumer practices, the hegemony of the market has been built since the 1990s (Özden, Akça, and Bekmen 2017). These redefined frames of action of hybrid identities under the making of neoliberal Turkey have been marked by the rise of Islamist middle class thanks to proliferating manufacturing sites, political Islam and Kurdish politics. The military, as the guardian of secular Turkish nationalism, stepped in to inhibit these groups from growing stronger, and therefore induced the crisis of hegemony (ibid.).

Amidst the crisis of political representation, Turkey also experienced several economic crises due to neoliberal structuring in the form of financial liberalization. Especially the severe economic crisis in 2001 left citizens in Turkey desperate (Onis 2006). In search of recovery, 34 percent of people voted for the AKP government whose election manifesto aimed at reinvigorating the Turkish economy and overcoming the political crises (Öztürk 2015). The AKP is the first party under which neoliberalization of the country has been accelerated on an unprecedented scale. The economic prosperity of the initial years of the AKP government heavily hinged upon those neoliberal policies of the party (Tugal 2009).

Experimenting with neoliberalism the state conceived of social groups as having discrete life trajectories. Although some social groups flourished conspicuously thanks to bank loans given out freely, the others got their share from neoliberal populist distributions which transformed social policies of welfare state to charity work of the AKP government, therefore, emerged loyalty to the party (Ozdemir 2017). Put differently, neoliberalism under the AKP rule

generated a loyal middle class who could consume and poor sections who are indebted to populist material distribution. This composite group of supporters with divergent interests coalesced around discourse of progress/development of the country via neoliberal practices of AKP. Employing a shared discourse, then, these two strands in majority justified the very policies the AKP has been implementing in the name of progress. However, considering the contentious nature of the relationship between the military and conservative Islamists parties I explicated, the uninterrupted seventeen-year rule of the Islamist conservative rule of the AKP government since 2002 has been an unexpected success in Turkey. Therefore, the enduring popularity of the Islamic-rooted AKP among the Turkish society despite the crises it has been through, shows that the neoliberal stance of the party is not limited to restructuring of the economy but also of the political sphere, and of civil society through neoliberal policies (Tuğal 2009).

2.2. The passive revolution of the AKP

Liberals, and some seculars in Turkey, as well as the liberals in the West, rejoiced at AKP's victory in the elections in 2002 as the party promised to enhance civil society by including long-suppressed Kurds and Islamists in, to join the EU, to support market economy, to liberalize the political field from the tutelary democracy and to free the market. Indeed, what the party projected was a whole different political setting which distinguished it from other Islamic political parties I explicated in the historical part of contemporary Turkey. Rather than imagining a radical Islamic state as its predecessors did, the AKP did not attempt to rule out secularism and modernization and was supportive of neoliberalism. Cihan Tuğal (2009) argues that the alteration of the political stance of Islamic rooted political party AKP is not related to the Weberian trend of rationalization of religion. Instead, he attributes this change to historical

contestations between Islamists and seculars in the country. In this regard, he explains the current socio-politically powerful position of the party through Gramsci's passive revolution.

As I explicated in the theoretical part, instead of abrupt revolutionary changes, Gramsci (1971) posits that passive revolution could be considered as a revolution with “‘molecular changes which in fact progressively modify the pre-existing composition of forces, and hence become the matrix of new changes’ (292). Gramsci (1971) uses the concept to shed light on the potential of a new hegemony that emerges as a consequence of ‘passive revolution’ which implies realigning structures of the former hegemony with the conceptualizations of potential hegemonic group. In order to do so, however, Gramsci (1971) does not neglect that:

A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise “leadership” before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to “lead” as well (Gramsci 1971:212).

Pointing to a similar situation in Turkey, Tuğal (2009) applies the concept of “passive revolution” to the AKP case. He posits that what lies behind the AKP's success was its ability to channel the already-available radical Islamists' grassroots network formation in Turkey into neoliberal and secular rationales of the country. In other words, having observed and experienced continuous crackdown on the political Islamists parties, the AKP could establish its hegemony by its ‘war of position’ aimed at transforming gradually the former institutions of the Turkish state without confronting the doxic elements of neoliberal government and secular nationalism within political field they were entering in. Absorbing the radical-Islamist ground into these structural forces, the party successfully appealed to groups belonging to different ideologies with moving discourses and strategies. Negating the crises of political radical Islamists and projecting a prosperous country through neoliberal extractions brought along the agglomeration of ex-radical Islamists, secular bourgeoisie, liberals, and the Western forces.

The AKP government, therefore, could establish its hegemony which is defined by Tugal (2009:24) as: “(1) the organization of consent for domination and inequality (2) through a specific articulation of everyday life, space, and the economy with certain patterns of authority (3) under a certain leadership, (4) which forges unity out of disparity” (24). It is understood from his revised definition of hegemony that the AKP engineered civil society in accordance with its ideology and connected it to the political society which consists of organizations, including but not limited to political parties, that “form, control, and regulate (1) local and extra-local leadership and authority figures and (2) imagined political bodies, belongings, and collectivities, which together constitute people's experience and contact with the political” (Tugal 2009:25). It is through political society, he further adds, that people establish a bond with the state, hence becomes citizens. That said, the political society acts as a mechanism that connects civil society to state. For this reason, the unity among the political society is of importance on the part of the state to generate consent, therefore, to consolidate its hegemony over the society.

During the AKP period, civil society with its formal and non-formal institutions such as unions and mosques worked together to generate consent of the masses who fell outside the system. The political leadership under the moderate Islam understanding of the AKP meant struggles of Islamists, nationalists, center-right, right-wing and others could be directed systematically by use of neoliberalism and democracy without discarding them (Tugal 2009). As a result, radical-Islamists and other right groups turned into loyalists and flourished. They stopped organizing the streets radically but when necessary did so for the state as now the state cultivated their groups. Tugal (2009:153) calls this abatement of the religiously-informed activism by the work of civil society actors as “the mobilization of demobilization” meaning that the remnants of the street mobilization supported the hegemony of the AKP and became passive.

Central to this transformation was the charismatic leadership of Erdogan whose admirable rhetorical skills enabled him to communicate the injustices he faced as a pious politician in the past with the people. Playing around with his bravado, father-like authoritarianism, piety and populist attitudes, he established himself as of and for the people. Some even claim that “Erdoganism” is the new political regime in which the state, economy, society and politics all identify with Erdogan and this manifest itself via “electoral authoritarianism, neo-patrimonialism, populism and Islamism (Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018).

In parallel with these developments, the inclusion of the working class into the market is gradually chipping away at already-weakened labor organizations. With the absence of movements representative of labor came new subjectivity of labor which is shaped by the convergence of Islamism, conservatism, nationalism instead of class solidarity and collective action (Özden et. al. 2017). This reconfiguration of social and class relations resulted in a great support for the AKP government and consent to neoliberalization of the country through various practices of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2003). Mystifying power relations in times of escalating inequalities, it paved the way for the steady hegemony of AKP over a considerable group of people (Tugal 2009). In other words, the hegemony AKP built over years has cultivated an emerging “civil society” through which the state spreads its ethos (Gramsci 1971).

To summarize, the transformation of those spheres during AKP period is related to: 1) forging an alliance between politically different groups of capitalists, namely Western-based bourgeoisie and Islamist-capitalists 2) enhancing the consumerist middle class, and 3) redistributing to lower classes via populist policies in order to prevent backlashes driven by widening inequalities (Karataşlı 2015).

2.3. The transformation of the AKP

The following years witnessed a gradual change in AKP's discourse embracing the tripartite of modernity, liberalism, and democracy. Instead, the party started to give prominence to the authoritarian coexistence of Islam and Turkish nationalism in regulating socio-political and economic life in Turkey while remained adherent to ever-increasing implementation of neoliberal policies. In addition to increased macro-level neoliberal authoritarian surveillance and punishment on critical journalists, newspapers and the internet¹¹, the AKP brought about a new Turkish identity under the name of 'New Turkey' which aim to forge majoritarian-led national will at the micro-level. Although it conceives of liberal-conservative Turkey as a proud member of humanity and rising power of the global world with its cultural richness, libertarian democracy experience, robust economy, people-oriented politics understanding, solid social fabric, dynamic human agency, efficient foreign policy¹², the 'New Turkey' narrative became dominant with divisive populist discourse in an attempt to justify coercion on opponents and to garner the support of the AKP electorates after the electoral loss of the party following the Gezi Park Protests (hereafter GPPs) in 2013 (Capan and Zarako1 2019).

'New Turkey' represents the re-imagination of Turkish nationalism through reinvigorating cultural and political life of the Ottoman Empire era and the role of religion in regulating those realms. With religion at the forefront, the identity of 'New Turkey' reinterprets secular Kemalist national identity that dominated Turkey throughout the 20th century. That is to say, religion, instead of secularism occupies the foreground of this New Turkey identity

¹¹ For a detailed account of the authoritarian interventions in the Turkish media, see Akser, Murat and Banu Baybars-Hawks. 2012. "Media and Democracy in Turkey: Toward a Model of Neoliberal Media Autocracy." *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*. 5(2012): 302-321.

¹² This is one of the 100 articles in the official New Turkey Contract announced in 2015 by the AKP government.

together with long-standing Turkish nationalism elements (Eissenstat 2018). Neoliberalism is blended into the new identity as it is compatible with the moderate Islamic stance of the party.

Cultivating a generation of ‘pious youth’¹³ in line with the ‘New Turkey’ identity appears as the initial step towards consolidating the hegemony of the AKP in the long run:

Do you expect from the AKP to raise an atheist generation? We do not have such a goal. We are going to raise a conservative, pious and democrat generation who protects the values of his nation and his homeland and his historical values. We are working on that (Recep Tayyip Erdogan 2012)¹⁴

This pious generation, however, are expected to compatible with neoliberalism. Comparing ‘his youth’ with the ‘other youth’ who are rebellious, Erdogan (2012) states¹⁵ that:

They [i.e. the rebellious youth] could carry Molotov cocktails in their hands, but the AKP youth will carry computers in his hands and write our resurrection epic with those computers. Thanks Allah, there are the youth who have faith in their hearts.

The inclusion of religion into the ‘New Turkey’ identity discourse is along the lines of neoliberalism and cultural discussions, in which authentic Turkish culture is depicted only with the elevated form of Islam in every aspect of life (Eissenstat 2018). Together with the AKP’s main role in leading such a way of life, the ever-increasing reference to Islam seeps into many subjects ranging from the appropriate number of children in a family, dress code for men and women, alcohol consumption, childbirth types etc. The projection of a life style compatible with Islam has come to be imposed on a broader level by utilizing media and state power (Taştan 2013). Therefore, neoliberal-Islamization of every aspect of life has become hegemonic with the help of construction, and reproduction of identities in socio-political and cultural realms (Tuğal 2009).

¹³ I do not elaborate on the policies on the youth due to the limited space. For details, see: Lukuslu, Demet. 2016. “Creating a pious generation: youth and education policies of the AKP in Turkey.” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 16(4): 637-649.

¹⁴ Bianet. 2012. Başbakan açıkladı: “Dindar gençlik yetiştirmek istiyoruz.” [Erdogan clarifies: We would like to raise pious youth]

¹⁵ <https://www.ihh.com.tr/haber-basbakandan-genclere-tavsiyeler-256118/> [Erdogan give advice to the youth]

The internationally-known GPPs were against this perpetual didactic discourse on the lived culture and neoliberal policies of the AKP. Starting out of a resistance to the destruction of a green space in Taksim-Istanbul, the GPPs turned into a movement that brought people from different political views together to revolt against the AKP's intervention in public spaces, and socio-cultural life of citizens before it was suppressed violently by the government (Taştan 2013). In relation to this, Tuğal (2009) argues that modern hegemonic states are so powerful that unsuccessful revolts against them are absorbed by the hegemony. This was also the case after the suppression of the GPPs. Having terminated the protests with inhumane state violence, the AKP implemented ever more authoritarian decisions on those who supported the movement, and on use of social media. In short, the government used the protests as a means to consolidate its grip on power. In doing so, they appealed to and were backed by its popular base in Turkey.

Taking as an example the consequences of absorption of anti-system movement by the hegemony in the system, I argue that the failed coup attempt followed a similar path that culminated in the resilience of the authoritarian hegemony of the AKP. In the pathway to ever-authoritarian rule of the AKP, the interconnection between the civil and political society could elucidate the irony of the people's revolt against anti-democratic military intervention only to support anti-democratic politics of the party in the name of democracy and peace just as it could provide an answer to more general bemusement caused by the silence and support of socio-economically deprived groups to the AKP in the face of increasing unemployment, inequalities and poverty brought along the uneven development.

Moreover, taking into consideration the passive revolution of the AKP, I expand on Tuğal's (2009) conclusion about "the mobilization of demobilization", which indicates the efforts of civil society actors to pacify the street organizations of Islamists and to encourage loyalty to the state instead. I argue that preaching loyalism to the state presupposes mobilization

for the state as well, when necessary. My analysis will show that through the DWDs the AKP successfully mobilized its popular base to the streets *for* the state via the discourse that had taken shape during its passive revolution. It was in this concrete setting that the link between civil society and political society became visible. While mosques encouraged street mobilization via *salah* prayers, the AKP used centralized SMS¹⁶ system to send personal messages inviting everyone to the streets to protest against the national enemy FETO. Although this enemy was a former close ally of the AKP, the party could veil the contestations between each other over the procurement of state power via playing over collective identity themes of nationalism and religion. As a result, the AKP could activate a community out of passivity which had been given a shape in years.

¹⁶ “The State of the Republic of Turkey” as the sender of the SMSs, they stated that: We are waiting for all our people to squares to defend the national will. I received such an SMS as many others. In addition, there was also voice message by Erdogan heard when calling someone on the first anniversary of the coup attempt and saying: “As president, I send congratulations on the July 15 Democracy and National Unity Day and wish the martyrs mercy and the heroes (of the defeat of the coup) health and wellbeing” (Daily Sabah 2017). <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2017/07/16/turkish-mobile-users-get-surprise-july-15-message-from-erdogan>

3. Mobilizing political subjectivities

In this chapter, I analyze the salient components of my informants' political subjectivities in relation to the governmental discourse. Tracing in my interviews, I have come up with three main themes my informants draw on to form their political subjectivities: (1) positioning themselves vis-à-vis imagined others (2) via deployment of emotions and (3) re-appropriation of the history.

3.1. Positioning subjectivities vis-à-vis imagined others: *“the resistance of ‘the people’”*

Under the guidance of CHP¹⁷ and HDP¹⁸, a group, supposedly gathered for the International Women's Day, desecrated our call to prayer by whistling and chanting slogans. We promise an all-embracing municipal administration. They, on the other hand, directly attack our independence and our future by disrespecting our flag and our call to prayer... Those who do not protect our call to prayer will not protect the country either. They would also applaud the enemies at the gate. (Recep Tayyip Erdogan, BBC News, March 10, 2019).

On March 8, 2019 the police tear gassed and fired plastic bullets at thousands of women gathered in İstanbul to participate in “The Feminist Night March”, organized since 2003 by different women organizations on International Women's Day to protest against the inequalities women face in every sphere of life. Following Erdoğan's speech, an irate group of Islamists and nationalists arranged a counter-demonstration chanting slogans resonant with Erdoğan's quotation above. Legitimizing the violent measures of the police through the governmental discourse attests to the centralization of repressive state apparatuses (Althusser 1971). Besides, the mobilization of furious groups of Islamists and nationalists against groups targeted by the AKP government accurately epitomized the contentious nature of the public

¹⁷ The Republican People's Party. The main opposition in the Grand National Assembly.

¹⁸ The Peoples' Democratic Party. Pro-minority (mainly Kurdish) political party.

sphere in Turkey and its narrowing down on those groups. Who has the right to the public sphere in Turkey? The ideal Habermasian answer of ‘everyone’ lost its meaning especially after the internationally-known GPPs in 2013 during which the police resorted to violence against protesters via use of water cannons, tear gas and pepper spray, plastic bullets, beatings, unofficial detentions, and sexual assault (Amnesty International Report 2013).

This contemporary impromptu resistance against the increasing authoritarian and neoliberal practices of the AKP government seemed to mark the decline of its hegemonic power (Tugal 2013). However, Tugal (2009) in his previous studies argued that modern hegemonic states are so powerful that unsuccessful revolts against the state are absorbed by the hegemony. This was also the case after the suppression of the GPPs. Having terminated the protests with extreme measures of state violence, the AKP implemented ever more authoritarian decisions on those who supported the movement.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the GPPs were quite surprising and encouraging for many as they gathered together heterogenous communities such as feminists, Kurds, queer activists, middle-class secularists, labors etc.in a public space (Demiryol 2018; Yildiz 2013; Ustundag 2014). As a result, alongside the violent repression of the protests, the AKP government heavily relied on discursive strategies to prevent the protests from gaining wider appeal and to communicate with its voter base. Insinuating a covert threat to the protesters by drawing its supporters into the debate, Erdogan stated that his government “barely holds back the 50% (of Turkey) at their

¹⁹ Amnesty International (2013) provides a detailed account of the authoritarian measures following the Gezi Park Protests. These were including but not limited to detention of protesters during police raids on their houses, and members of Taksim Solidarity platform which represent numerous NGOs and political parties, targeting businesses that helped protesters during the protests with tax audits, firing and forced resignation of journalists, regulation of social media against defamation, and investigation of the medical staff who treated injured protestors. Investigations of the protesters were held under the anti-terrorism legislation which accuses demonstrators of being affiliated with illegal organizations. Evidences for investigations were mainly protest-related posts shared on the social media, possession of leftist books and magazines obtained during police raids.

homes.” (Hurriyet 2013). His message could be interpreted as violent state apparatuses are not the only option to resort to punishing dissidents. Encouragement of violent mobilization of the AKP supporters was also a viable alternative to suppress opponents. Therefore, discursive framing of the GPPs and deployment of police force were complementary. Within this frame, alongside the police violence, state`s portrayal of the Gezi protesters as marginal actors, infidels, non-nationals, fringe terrorists, drunk, and freeloaders had widespread media coverage (Gole 2013; Popp and Schmitt 2013; Owen and Batty 2013).

As the rarest moment of collective action against the AKP government during its uninterrupted seventeen-year rule (Anisin 2016), however, GPPs introduced the country to the repertoires of contention (Tilly 1994), performative ways of claim-making language, and ways of protesting (Erhart et. al. 2019). For this very reason, in solidarity with the Turkish government, the DWDs against the coup attempt in 2016 appropriated the repertoire of the GPPs and of other social movements in other countries. Protesters laid down in front of military tanks to stop them running the streets just as in Tiananmen Square, adopted the Muslim Brotherhood’s four-fingered hand raising gesture “R4BIA” (standing for one nation, one religion, one language, one religion in the context of Turkey), collectively ate food in the squares, and chanted pro-government, religious and nationalist slogans. This amorphous collectivity was portrayed by the Turkish state as the exact opposite of the GPPs. Above all, unlike the GPPs, the DWDs were *for* the state. According to news agencies, and narrative of state officials from the AKP, these people set an example of a ‘real national struggle’ to be proud of in order to protect democracy from military intervention, as well as to protect president Erdoğan, the government, and ultimately the Turkish state. While the GPPs were *the others`* resistance, the DWDs were *the people’s* resistance.

How do these two contrasting discourses reverberate among the DWDs demonstrators? How is the interplay between the discourse and its effect on the subjectivities of my

interlocutors in the concrete setting of DWDs? Indeed, during my very first interview, Yilmaz compared the 15 July coup attempt and its unfolding with the GPPs even before I asked him about the similarities and/or differences between the two:

15 July and its unfolding were totally different than Gezi Park incidents. During the Gezi, the youth hit the streets because their lifestyle had been threatened. However, the reason why people were on the streets for 15 July was to prevent the fall of the country. Therefore, the level of participation was higher for the Democracy Watch Demonstrations. The moral of the story, the compensation was that it was a turning point for the youth who used to be apolitical. They had a disconnected perception of history. As they experienced the 15 July events and its unfolding firsthand, they now have a better grasp of the Turkish history.... There, we had a commonality among us which was to protect the future of the country, to protect the current regime, to protect democracy. The other, as I said, was to overthrow the government.

Right from the outset, I noticed that Yilmaz deliberately used and emphasized the noun ‘incident’ to describe the GPPs; on the other hand, he referred to word ‘demonstration’ to explicate the DWDs and to construe them as democratic. The intentional word choice of him hints at the deeply-fragmented situation of the public sphere in Turkey, contentiousness over how to participate in it, the polarization among its participants, and tactics of circumvention my interlocutors drew on to define their political subjectivities.

The competitive comparison made between these two discrete events both in the media and among my informants over the discrepancies of the characteristics of the youth in the GPPs and the DWDs highlights that the discourse on the youth serves as a source to justify positions of the subjects. This is not to suggest that the youth was relied upon for the goals of political projects of the governments for the very first time by the AKP government. Indeed, Turkish youth have always played an important role in official Turkish nationalism in both its past secular and present religious forms. Distinguishing between the three periods of public discourse on the Turkish youth, Neyzi (2001) argues that during the first period (1923-1950), the Turkish state constructed the youth as the wellspring from which modern secular Turkish nationalism would spread through the whole society. The governments of the second period (1950-1980) portrayed them as rebellious, as the division between leftist and rightist

movements witnessed violent attacks in the public sphere. Following that period, in 1980, Turkey achieved notoriety for the bloody coup attempt which caused detrimental effects on the country as I presented in the second chapter of the thesis. Dissolving the class politics with the politics of neoliberalism and right-wing populism, it shaped the ways of doing politics²⁰ (Benlisoy 2018). Identity politics brought along neoliberalization of Turkey after the 80s, the pacification of the youth was ensured under the official name of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis given by the military government. Pious-nationalist not leftist-rebellious youth has been dominating the public discourse progressively with the ideal pious generation of ‘New Turkey’ project of the AKP.

Informed by the prevalent narrative on the youth, Yilmaz distinguished between those present in the GPPs and DWDs by pitting them against each other. This dovetails with President Erdogan’s comparison that “the youth present there (at the squares on the 15 July coup attempt evening) was not the Gezi Park youth. They were the youth who risked their lives for his flag and call to prayer.”²¹ Yilmaz’s contemptuous overtone to define the youth in the GPPs was derived from his belief that they were on the margins of Turkish society, and therefore were not the representative of the ‘national will’; he also relegated their claims to ‘lifestyle issues.’ For this reason, by stripping the political aspect of the GPPs, which was clearly against the neoliberal practices and authoritarian mode of governing of the AKP government, he defined the youth as apolitical before the DWDs. In other words, he denied the political stance of the GPPs. In relation to this, the DWDs, he accentuated, turned the apolitical youth political in a proper way. The youth he is proud of joins the ordinary people, like him, from the margins of

²⁰ I detailed the transformation of doing politics in the section of the passive revolution of the AKP government.

²¹ Erdogan gives this speech on 28 May 2017 at the annual meeting of Ensar Charitable Foundation which aims to provide education on religion and ethics, and Islamic values through intense Arabic language courses. This foundation has become country-wide known after one of its dormitories got involved in child rape scandal in 2016. <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/321438/erdogan-15-temmuzda-gelenler-gezinin-gencleri-degildi> [Erdogan: Those who showed up in July 15 were not the Gezi youth]

the society. Now, according to Yilmaz, the youth have a shared history with the ordinary people through the commonality they built together on the ground of support to nationalist-religious regime. He sets up boundaries around the political in a way that exercising democratic right to protest is narrowed down to supporting the state which is horizontally aligned with the ordinary people. Put differently, the right to become political and to resist are discursively confined to some accepted forms and domains of the popular which operates through a majoritarian understanding of the nation.

3.2. Making sense of the demonstrations: bringing in emotions

Central to positioning techniques of my informants was the articulation of emotions they attach to the demonstrations and then draw on to form their political subjectivities. In my interviews, the recurring interplay between emotions and political subjectivities allowed me to think through anthropology of emotions which treat emotions underpinned by power relations. Accordingly, Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990) treats emotions as sociocultural construct which derive their meanings through lived experience and discourse of the public. Within this perspective, emotions introduce the moral framework via power relations that materialize discursively in a social hierarchical setting (Svašek 2008).

Although Hutchby (2001) does not explicitly scrutinize the role of emotions in events, his argument – that is being present at or sharing collective grounds with participants of a specific event leads to discursively legitimizing the event, its authenticity and actions undertaken during it – implicitly implies that first-hand experience of emotions affect justification of the event itself. Similarly, Yilmaz drew on his experience, feelings, and the uniqueness of ‘the spirit and atmosphere’ he was surrounded by during the demonstrations to justify his reason to participate in the DWDs, specifically the prevention of the fall of the

country when he stated that “the DWDs were something different in terms of their spirit, and atmosphere as we were preventing the country from falling prey to terrorists. You cannot compare it with other things”.

However, taking into consideration the collective nature of demonstrations, it is argued that the deployment of emotions is different in collective justifications than it is in interpersonal relations. Widening her lens to look at what emotions do, Sara Ahmed (2004) points out the relations of power embedded in the deployment of emotions. Against this background, she posits that emotions do not reside on the surfaces of subjects, places or objects. Instead, emotions are to be constantly worked on to create meanings bound up with cultural and social knowledge in relation to the emotion in question. Rather than conceiving of emotions as individual psychological traits, she argues that emotions are embedded in power relations and dynamically function as a mechanism shaping relationships at the level of society. In so doing, emotions are dichotomously situated so as to exalt and revile some emotions as indicators of strength and impotence respectively. The accumulation and circulation of emotions put in motion the “affective economies” (Ahmed 2004:8) of meaning-making in which emotions come out of power relations as being hierarchically ‘lower’ or ‘higher.’ Then, they are attached to specific sorts of bodies of collectivities to create boundaries for self and the other only to legitimize political decisions aligned with the self. Language is a prominent means to convey emotions.

Speaking through relational emotions, Sercan, a 24-year-old sales representative at a private company expressed his sentiments regarding the DWDs by situating his rationale to protest as opposed to non-participants:

As far as I have heard of, there are people who did not participate in the Democracy Watch Demonstrations. I do not know what they were thinking of doing instead... Different political views notwithstanding, some situations require unity and solidarity. The 15 July Coup attempt was one of those unique moments. If there were people who refrained from

participating in demonstrations, it is because they do not care about their country and are just trying to be in the opposition side. This is not what conscious people would do.

I then asked why he would consider those who decided not to participate in the street action on the 15 July evening and the DWDs as vacuous:

I mean this government has made lots of investments we should be thankful for to develop our country. The others did not. Now, they are faced with a heinous treason by a group of people infiltrated in the state. They wanted to return Turkey back to its dark days. I said not conscious (for those who did not participate in demonstrations) because if they were, they would understand that they owe a debt of gratitude to the government. They do not support but they live a good life thanks to the government. Every day, they use the services the government has done... We wanted to express our gratitude during the demonstrations. At least we did something.

Though he was just seven years old when the AKP came to power and has not seen any other government than the AKP, he identifies with the party on the ground of comparison with other political parties. What Sercan expressed borders on absorption of charity understanding by the political power in the Turkish context which generated a symbolic economy of social assistance as a gift that necessitates feeling indebted and the need to give it back to the providers of assistance (Yilmaz 2013). The AKP's combination of neoliberal populist policies with conservative principle of charity work – that derives its meaning from the established link between charity, donation and alms in Islam evoking the continuous owing to the provider as they are life-time responsibilities of Muslims – intervenes in the symbolic economy of gift giving. It transforms it into political relations of power that comes into being among subjectivities who construct the party-state AKP as an actor of philanthropic activities rather than a welfare state. This reproduces the hegemony of the AKP, in two ways. Firstly, the party generates social classes dependent on its 'charity works.' Secondly, it demands submissiveness

to its rule in exchange for its populist material re-distribution²². Concomitantly, subjects are free to participate in the public sphere as long as they are not political but vocal about their demands of public service (Rajaram 2014).

In this regard, the AKP eventuates ‘emotionalities of rule’ (Campbell 2010), that is “discursive and material forms which propose and suppose particular ways of feeling about the world” (39). Campbell (ibid.) argues that rationalities and apparatuses of neoliberal governance, or in other words discursive formulations of problems and offering solutions to those problems, is affective when imbued with emotionalized government that speaks to heart. This enables subjects not only to think that the way government is exercised is right but also feel it. In this respect, conservative neoliberal populist policies of the AKP render subjects indebted to the party and, in a way, compel them to show gratitude to it in the best possible ways as acts of ethical responsibility. As this become commonsensical, those who do not protest *for* the state or protest for other reasons that might undermine the working of government emerge as others who lack respect. In a similar vein, citing Norbert Elias, Sara Ahmed (2014) writes that the narrative of evolution not only aggrandizes reason but also values selectively adjusting emotions deemed ‘appropriate’ to distinct places and times. The excerpt from my interview with Sercan pointed to ‘inappropriateness’ of not protesting *for* the state whose preservation he assumes to mean upholding the country. He portrayed himself as having the virtue of putting aside his political views in the name of unity of his nation. This is, indeed, an act of power that shows he and the protesters alike are bound up with same moral fibers

²² In the very recent example of expectation of submissiveness to its rule, Erdogan targeted supporters of one of the biggest football club in Turkey who hanged banners of the slogan of the opposition leader in their stadium. Erdogan (2019) stated that “We built these stadiums. These people are on the wrong track. We will fix it. They are all recorded” http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/futbol/1389775/Ya_bu_statlari_biz_yaptik.html [Oh! We built these stadiums]. By ‘recording’ he refers to the Law to Prevent Violence and Disorder in Sport which introduced extensive surveillance and profiling techniques to the stadiums through electronic tickets. This law enacted after the intrepid confrontation of football supporters with the police violence during the Gezi Park Protest (Nuhurat 2016).

(Rajaram 2014), that privileges his position vis-a-vis others who he considers deficient of morality.

Following these, I argue that my interlocutors' establishment of emotional bond with the demonstrations works as a normative collective ideal of loving the nation. This becomes a means through which they define themselves in a contrasting relationship with the other collectives. The party's conservative underpinning of neoliberal material distribution of the party, in this sense, engenders both the party-state as a benevolent actor who desires nothing but to improve the country, the object of love of my informants, and grateful political subjectivities who pay their dues when possible. Additionally, given their majoritarian understanding, they normatively expect unconditional giving of support to the demonstrations which they equate with protecting the nation, the object of love, from enemies. With this in mind, enemies are readily aligned with those who stand on other grounds, hence, who are not *conscious* (as Sercan indicated) enough to embrace the ideal love of the nation. I interpret my informants' hierarchical alignment of stimulations to participation is a discursive strategy to rationalize their cause over 'the other's'. This eventually denies some groups, who adopt hierarchically 'lower' ranked causes to protest, access to the public sphere, if not, consenting to inhibition of the democratic principle of all-inclusive public sphere.

3.3. Civil martyrs not soldiers: the religious-nationalist twist to history

Here, I argue that the re-appropriated history act as a modality of government that fashion political subjectivities who emotionalize their position vis-a-vis imagined others in relating the political rule within their socially and politically constructed environment. In this regard, religious-nationalist political subjectivities come into being through engaging in the cultural frames provided by the re-appropriated history.

In discussing the processual nature of culture, Raymond Williams (1977) argues that the culture consists of dynamic relationships among its dominant, residual, and emergent forms. That is to say, within the dominant cultures emerges new meanings and values continuously through reinterpretation of the residual elements of the dominant culture. The very dynamicity of culture with its residual and emergent forms helps remaining legitimacy and hegemony through incorporation of those form into the dominant one (Taylor 2010).

The changing discourse over the Battle of Gallipoli (1915-16) corresponds to a similar dynamic understanding of culture. As the last victory of the Ottoman Empire against the allies, Gallipoli symbolizes the proclamation of the western-oriented secular Republic of Turkey which broke with the Ottoman Empire past. Before the AKP government came to power, the politics of the battle centered on Mustafa Kemal, the founder of the republic, and soldiers who sacrificed his lives to defend the Turkish nation (Uyar 2016).

Since 2002, as a concomitant to neo-Ottomanist stance of the AKP government, the residual symbol of religion in Gallipoli has been incorporated back into the official discourse during commemorations of the battle. But it does so in a way that civilians propelled by their Islamic faith to defend their nation come to the forefront, rather than soldiers. This helps the AKP government define the concept of martyrdom in a way to include more of religious civilians who died in the battle, rather than soldiers in the militaristic context which is historically tied to secular Turkish nationalism (Baykut 2016). Working on the reframing of the martyrdom concept so as to equate it with civilians is significant as martyrdom in Islam is considered as the most aspired cause of death (Kurt 2012). Civilians ready to die to become martyrs, then, alludes to not eschewing to fight in the name of Islam.

As the source of the legitimacy of that changing discourse, Bakiner (2013) points out the conservative and nationalist voter base of the AKP which has a majoritarian understanding

of Turkey. According to majoritarian conservatives, as Bakiner (ibid.) conceptualizes, history is a means to imagine the coupling of the Turkish-Muslim identities as the highest of accolades and incorporating it into life. That said, the governmental discourse constructs 15 July as an extension of the totalizing narrative of Turkish history as Erdogan stated that “just as in the Battle of Gallipoli, cutting-edge weapons were desperate in the presence of tenacity, faith, and determination of our nation in the evening of 15 July”²³ (Milliyet 2017). Far from being a one-off reference, his expression was a part of long-standing reinterpretation of official narrative on Gallipoli. This re-appropriated discourse on Gallipoli, I argue, extends itself over the present 15 July events so as to frame political subjectivities in the protests.

In relation to that, I could trace in my interviews that my informants referred to Gallipoli to articulate their religious-nationalist street experience:

Our history is full of these kinds of events. This is one of them. We are the generation who had been through this. The next generations will grow up listening the stories of 15 July just as the Battle of Gallipoli. They will hear of how the power of faith in Allah makes the people unflinching. This is going to be as impressive as (our) Gallipoli victory (Bulent, 35, IT service personnel).

Bulent culled from the dominant discourse combining the concept of martyrdom, Turkish nationalism and religion to frame their first-hand experience in the demonstrations by blending it into his political subjectivity. In a similar vein, Ali, a lawyer in his fifties, explicated his experience with a reference to Gallipoli, but also included in his statement those who could not participate in the demonstrations:

I know the people who could not participate in the demonstrations prayed a lot in their homes. Those who took to the streets showed great courage and we are deeply indebted to them... But I am pretty sure there were people who prayed and performed prayer (*namaz*) in their homes for our martyrs just as during the Battle of Gallipoli. Ali

²³ <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-dan-18-mart-m-siyaset-2415445/> [Erdogan`s message on 18 March emphasized 15 July]

The way both Ali and Bulent correlate the two historically discrete events is on the basis of a sort of `imagined communities` (Anderson 2006) in which those unseen contributed to the victory-like result with their prayers and those in the future will forge a bond with the event by taking into consideration its religious characteristic. Put differently, the re-appropriated past extends itself over the present in order to define the future. Through this discourse, my informants and the government conceive the past as an imagined nation in which Turkish and Muslim identities become inseparable from each other.

Hegemonic interpretations of the 15 July memory with a distorted framing of the history, in this sense, is to achieve dynamic subjectivities within a majoritarian understanding of the nation who could be relied upon during the times of crisis to sustain or restore existing social, political and economic relations in the society. In other words, the political subjects I studied become essential for the AKP to reinvigorate its hegemony.

4. To reinvigorate hegemony

How does the interplay between political subjectivities and the governmental rule affect state-level decision making processes? How does so-called democracy symbols of 15 July and its events rationalize authoritarian political decisions? How do they come into effect to restore the hegemony of the AKP? In this chapter, I claim that the relationship between political subjects and the AKP operate on two levels. At first, it facilitates politicization of the concept of terrorist to define its objects of security, namely `the people`, in order to take measures against to protect them; then, depoliticize the political decision-making mechanism through casting political decisions as non-political via linking reasons of decisions to the DWDs in which `the people` supposedly had not a political motive.

4.1. Politicization of terror: normalized state of exception

The justification of the authoritarian post-coup measures lies in the discourse of terrorism that necessitated the declaration of the so-called provisional emergency rule following the coup attempt. I argue that the statutory decrees (hereafter KHKs) with permanent verdicts on those labelled as terrorists, normalized *state of exception* through politicization of terror. Agamben (2005), defines the state of exception as suspension of law in order to protect the order in the face of existing threats. Maintaining the continuity of the state of exception, Agamben (ibid.) argues, is a distinctive feature of modern totalitarianism in which it enables not only the integration of political dissidents but also other categories of citizens who somehow cannot be integrated in the system. Inspired by Foucault's biopolitics, Agamben sees normalization of state of exception as a technique of government which targets not only subjects' rights as citizens but also their right to live. To legitimize this, Agamben (1998) posits that the state of exception of the sovereign conceives of the homo sacer human being and politicize its bare life. Homo sacer is the one who is excluded, and could be killed without its killing considered

as murder; its bare life can be stripped of any rights to live. I interpret the KHKs carried out after the 15 July events throughout a year-long state of emergency of the normalization of the state of exception in which ‘terrorist’ label is politicized to enhance the hegemony of the AKP government.

Officially pronounced, the rationale behind the KHKs was to clean out treacherous terrorists who betrayed the state and the nation²⁴. Terrorists, in this sense, are portrayed as ruining math the coup attempt, therefore, allowed for stretching out the label so as to include whoever is decided to spoil the unique relationship between the state and ‘the people’ under the state of exception. Along the same line, securitizing discourse brought together the internal enemies of GPPs protesters, the FETO, and Kurds as organizers of the coup attempt (Kaygusuz 2018). In my fieldwork, I learnt that different categories of people are clumped under the category of homo sacer through decrees that label them as terrorists. For example, Ali reproached groups of people who were not visible on the streets during the 15 July evening and the DWDs:

Where were the Kurds, leftist elite, *Gezici*²⁵ during the 15 July evening and the DWDs? They were rubbing their hands with glee as they watched terrorists were killing the people in that night. Then, what is their difference than terrorists?

Drawing on Ali’s categorization of groups of people, I put forth that communicating the politicized groups of people under the terrorist label is as significant as constructing them as terrorists in the first place. This is important in the sense that popular sovereignty, that is vested in ‘the people’, constitutes the basis of legitimate use of violence on ‘terrorists.’ Following that, politicizing the bare life of homo sacer in the authoritarian context of Turkey is permissible through the KHKs. Not only do KHKs strip off political rights of arbitrarily labelled terrorists but also deny their right to live. To illustrate, public employees expelled from their jobs also

²⁴ https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/genel_kurul.cl_getir?pEid=72230 [KHK no: 701]

²⁵ *Gezici* is a derogative word for describing the GPPs protesters.

lost: their future opportunities to work in public sector in general; accommodation and health benefits provided within the scope of their jobs; work options in the private sector as employers would not be willing to hire terrorists; and their freedom of movement as their passports were cancelled (Karakas 2017)²⁶.

When I asked Ali about the arbitrary implementation of the KHKs, he said:

They were the reflex of the state in its struggle to exist, to survive. They were like you know sometimes you want to make a joke by hitting very slowly on someone's head but ended up accidentally hitting strongly. We are a country open to dangers. Danger could come from anywhere. Therefore, they were necessary. Yes, there might be innocent people in jail who had nothing to do with the coup attempt, but sometimes you have to throw the baby out with bathwater."

I interpret that the recurring theme of imminent danger comes out of politicization of terror, that requires taking whatever measure against and provokes insecurity in subjects and uncertainty about the future. As Ali expressed:

Who is going to replace Erdogan? Let me tell you: no one. They are waiting in the wings to attack from all quarters. FETO, PKK²⁷, you name it. They will not stop. We must be prudential.

Taking into consideration that the categorization of enemy and how to tackle it is exclusionary political (Mouffe 1993), the abuse of collective hysteria by the government, which is through spreading constant fear about shadowy figure of terrorist in subjects, is leveraged as a governing technique. To elaborate, the problematization of security, dependent on the construction of the concept of terrorists, rationalizes disciplinary techniques on those unmanageable bodies. This is biopolitical in the sense that construction of terrorist, or homo sacer, requires the construction of lives to be nurtured as well, therefore, security is not solely geopolitical but also biopolitical (Dillon and Guerrero 2008). In this sense, the problematization of security, on the one hand, exerts disciplinary power on those terrorists who

²⁶ <https://journno.com.tr/af-orgutu-ihrac-raporu> [Amnesty International's report on expulsions]

²⁷ Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê. Kurdish armed forces.

spoil the link between ‘the people’ and the state and on the other, cultivates subjects who are granted a life as a consequence of their ‘free’ alignment with state. The elimination of homo sacer reinstates the relationship, as Erdogan indicated:

The squares are chanting with lament. In the face of terror incidents, the people have reached to the point that these terrorists must be killed. There is no way out. Why would I feed those in prisons sentenced to life imprisonment? The citizens are saying that.²⁸

The state, in this context, emerges naturally as the main provider of security which legitimizes both its monopoly over use of violence on and its monopoly over definition of threats to security (Dillon and Guerrero 2008). Construction of threats waiting in the wings to ruin the strong link between civil and political society evokes insecurities among the subjects of that relation. In stating that “15 July was an existential struggle”, Ali exactly conveyed how he felt insecure about the future of the country which he equates its wellbeing with the resilience of the AKP government.

From the perspective of biopolitical security problematization, the micro-political and macro-political becomes entwined through discourses on security (ibid.). Likewise, in my case, micro-level politicization made inroads to discursive formulation of *beka*²⁹ problem to be solved by macro-level restoration of the hegemony of the AKP which is in the position of the main security provider. The discourse of *beka* is presented as the political rationality in which loyalty to the state eases insecurity as threats are promised to be annihilated. Pointing out that “the most prominent problems of Turkey are of *beka* and the opposition³⁰” in the face of terror

²⁸ <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/48682/abd-suclularin-iadesi-anlasmasi-geregi-guleni-vermek-durumunda> [The US must return Gulen as a requisite for extradition agreement]

²⁹ The word *beka* (perpetuity) also has an Islamic underpinning in Erdogan’s discourse in which it indicates the eternity of Allah. In this sense, there is not beginning and ending to the existence of Allah. It is primordial as well as everlasting. Drawing on this meaning, he posits that continuation of the AKP government is necessary in the face of security problems.

³⁰ In Erdogan’s speech the opposition encompasses all political parties which explicitly indicate their opposition to the AKP. This includes but not limited to HDP and CHP. <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-turkiyenin-en-onemli-sorunu-beka-sorunu-ile-muhalefettir> [*Beka* problem and the opposition are paramount problems of Turkey]

at the Eastern border of the country which “martyred his citizens and soldiers”, Erdogan implied that the continuation of the AKP government is the only way to ease insecurity caused by the terror and the opposition on the part of ‘his citizens’. It could also be interpreted that the discontinuity in the seventeen-year old AKP rule is pictured as would be generating subjects vulnerable to terror in a chaotic space. Also note that the terrorist takes the form of the opposition to the AKP government.

Out of political agitating, the discourse of *beka* problem emerged right after the coup attempt and shortly before the 2017 constitutional referendum which marked the beginning of the presidential system with all-powerful Erdogan as the first president. Besides that, the election held under the state of emergency rule and the media censored the campaign of the opposition (Turmen 2018)³¹. According to Sercan, equipping the president with extraordinary powers was “for the *beka* of the country. It had to be done in order to eliminate coups and terrorism from our lives.”

From Sercan’s point of view, I draw a conclusion that the centralization of power becomes the right way to govern in order to ensure the security of subjects. Going coercive on ‘terrorists’ who threaten the life of ‘the people’ is granted to the AKP government as it is constructed as the sole fighter against the security-threatening forces. The politicized discourse agitating the insecure subjects, with reference to the 15 July crisis, leads to readily configuration of indiscernible boundaries between the criminal and those hazardous to security of ‘the people’ (Hallsworth and Lea 2011), in that, they amount to same treatment. In other words, coercion on ‘terrorists’ is legitimized with the consent of subjects whose lives are the object of security.

³¹ <https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/riza-turmen/ohal-altinda-secim,19650> [Election under the state of emergency]

Additionally, I interpret the approval of the centralization of power in the presidency position by the plebiscite as normalization of the state of exception. In other words, I argue, faced with crises, the restoration of the hegemony of the AKP government does not only rely upon coercive techniques of government but also operates through mechanisms of consent which have been made functional through the strong link between civil and political societies. Consequently, impediments to hegemony of the AKP government is annihilated via the normalization of the state of exception.

In the context of Turkey, intensified politicization of terror after the coup, which combines coercion and consent, has crystallized in the centre of statecraft with its counterpart of depoliticization of the political. That is, the political nature of decision-making mechanism at the state level has become blurred thanks to the securitarian discourse whose object is to protect ‘the people.’ The people, in this sense, are valued not because of their political identifications but because they are constructed as the core of the nation.

4.2. Depoliticization of decision-making mechanism: *“nothing is political”*

Here, the political parties you support, the ideology you follow disappear as your country is of concern. The only thing you think about is the future of the country (Ebru, 45, math teacher).

That day, when people decided to take to the streets, they did not do so in order to defend the party they vote for. They hit the streets to protect the future of the nation, this must be their psychology (Ahmet, 44, small-sized enterprise owner).

Everyone was worried about the future of the country; whoever thinks the opposite is malevolent. We all are on the same boat. We all sink if the boat sinks. This is not about being on the opposition side. This is about our country. You cannot involve politics. It is above that. However, yes you are right, some considers the coup attempt was controlled. I mean they claim the government knew about it already but let it happen anyway. I have respect for them, but I did not take into consideration those rumors when I decided to participate in Democracy Watch Demonstrations or others did not think that it might have been staged or a fiction. It was all instinctive. Some worried about his/her future, some did for the future of the country. Both of those on the streets and prayed at homes were sincere. Nothing is political (Sevinc, 39, housewife).

According to Burnham's (2002:128) widely acclaimed definition, depoliticization is "the process to place at one remove the political character of decision-making" as a governing strategy. The removal of the political, however, does not mean the end of politics. Instead, it denotes more intricate webs of politics where it becomes invisible, and therefore agreeable for the general public (Hay 2014). In comparison to depoliticization, Hay (ibid.) favors politicization as political decisions become visible to public so that the public can scrutinize those decisions via deliberation and accountability.

In the context of authoritarian Turkey, I argue that the dismissive understanding prevalent in the public sphere, in which the outsider is disciplined if he/she is a vocal critic of the political decisions, delineates the boundaries of politicization through deliberation. As such it becomes acceptable only if the deliberation is aligned with the state's way of politicization. Only then are the political decisions accountable. In line with this, taking to the streets on 15 July and through the DWDs emerged as both the right way of politicization and locus of depoliticization. This is because my informants cast their political decision to protest for the state as non-political by reason of equating participation with the future of the nation which is supposedly above politics. Further to that, political decisions are rationalized as long as there is an established link between the decisions and the 15 July events. That is, the political nature of decision-making is blurred via making the ordinary mass, clumped together under the discourse of national will, the sole decision-making authority who do not act politically but for the future of the country. Here, I interpret that 'the people' are constructed as experts who are claimed to hold neutral knowledge, and to have authority necessary to solve problems. Transferring responsibilities to non-state actors of experts, political decisions are projected as out of governmental bodies (Stone 2017).

Under these circumstances, the concrete setting of DWDs enables the AKP government to efficiently capitalize on this assumed transfer of power in which the people nominally feel empowered as they come to see that they are the reasons Turkey stays resilient in the face of external and internal enemies. Here, I use the concept of empowerment to denote a change in the perception of from being powerless to have a perceived control of selves over life, fate, and immediate environment in the sense that the passive state of powerlessness is neutralized through the dynamic activity of controlling (Sadan 1997):

Everything could have been worse if we had not hit the streets. Fortunately, the public showed itself. We will not let a coup be successful anymore. (Gulten, 47, housewife).

The 15 July coup attempt is different than the other coups that happened in history. The main difference is that the other coups were successful. In this coup, the people routed the enemies of our country meaning that we, the Turkish nation, achieved our objective. (Seda, 34, nurse).

This coup attempt was a great example thanks to the people. No one will ever attempt to do something like this again in the future. Now we have the reasoning that; if something like this happens, we the people can prevent it. (Emine, 26, unemployed job-seeker).

These protesters perceived themselves as having a voice in managing their selves and, in conjunction with this, the future of the country they live in. Flattering this belief through the governmental discourse of “I have never recognized a form of power above the power of the people in my life”³², therefore, establishes an organic link between the government-supporting protesters and the government which eventually contributes to perpetuation or restoration of AKP’s hegemony over the economic and political powers (Gramsci 1971).

As I fleshed out throughout my analysis, political subjectivities are both self-made through experience, emotions and taking positions and being-made through official discourses.

³² <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/46651/halkin-gucunun-ustunde-bir-guc-yoktur.html> [Erdogan: There is no power above the people]

This relationship becomes apparent in the framing of governmental policies of AKP as aligned with the majoritarian understanding of the people (electoral success of AKP):

With the help of Allah; the bravery of millions of people, the blood of our martyrs, sacrifice of our veteran soldiers will not be disappointed... We have taken important steps which completely liberate Turkey from oppression of tutelage, pave the way for democracy, stabilize our system of government. We have changed, as you know, our system of government and together with this system you will see the leap of Turkey.³³

By developing our democracy and economy, strictly protecting our independence and freedom, we will strengthen our position. 15 July is the symbol of our belief and determination to this... Together with our new system of government, we took the trump out of those hands who govern the country as they wish by blocking our decision-making and implementation mechanisms.³⁴

In these quotes, the government appears as only implementing the decisions of ‘the people’ or, in other word, experts. This depoliticization strategy embedded in the authoritarian decisions following the coup attempt played a significant role in legitimizing and restoring the neoliberal hegemony of the AKP. Securing 51% of the votes in the referendum campaign to change the parliamentary system with a presidential one, which removed the prime minister position and equipped the president with extraordinary power; enabled Erdogan “to appoint senior judges, declare a state of emergency, dissolve parliament and in some cases issue new laws by decrees (Sanchez and Yuksekkas 2017).” Put differently, the state of exception has become permanent. However, its mystifying rhetoric conflates symbols of Islam, warlike figures associated with the 15 July and its unfolding, and nationalism, obscuring the struggle for absolute power. To do so, it employs a depoliticizing language which “places at one remove the political characteristic of the decision” (Burnham 2002:128) by highlighting the necessity of the decision to honor the people. The people emerge as the exclusive reason for the new

³³ The president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s speech on the 15 July Martyrs Bridge (the official new name of the Bosphorus Bridge) at the national holiday of 15 July Democracy and National Unity Day. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/94898/-15-temmuz-turk-milleti-nin-yeniden-dirilisinin-ve-sahlanisinin-adidir-> [15 July is the resurrection of the Turkish nation]

³⁴ The president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s speech at the national holiday of 15 July Democracy and National Unity Day. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/94893/-15-temmuz-istiklalimize-ve-istikbalimize-sahip-cikma-kararliligimizin-semboludur-> [15 July is the symbol of our determination to protect our independence and future]

presidential system. Bülent, interprets the new presidential system in conjunction with the governmental discourse:

Some structural changes (referring to the presidential system) have been made so coups disappear from our lives. On top of the chain of command, now, there is the person we call the president. People decided that by voting. Would he want his country to stall? Would he want his citizens to die? No. They claim that it (the presidential system) is not democratic, but as you know it has been the system of the USA for years. It would be terrible if that many people would have to die again in coups... Whenever we tried to do something good as a country, something positive, they blocked our way with interventions. This system precludes that.

In his comment, Bulent portrayed the change in the governmental system as non-political and as the only solution approved by the people. Furthermore, he conceives of Erdogan not as a politically-driven actor but as more of a father figure who considers what is best for his citizens.

Reference to the 15 July coup attempt also paralyzes the opposition in their attempt to politicize the struggles of power that culminated in the coup attempt by the former ally of the AKP. That is, questioning of the power relations behind the coup is either neglected or, backed by the strong link between the civil and political societies, is seen as being disrespectful to the democratic decision of the people, and hence supportive of the coup.

Conclusion

The starting point of this thesis was the question of how the authoritarian neoliberal political Islamist AKP in Turkey could generate mass support to its hegemony despite the crises it has been through during its 17-year uninterrupted rule. I argued that this support was generated through the dynamic relationship between the state actors and political subjectivities. The recent literature on Turkey has predominantly claimed that under the authoritarian neoliberal rule of the AKP, dissidents are punished in the name of the market economy through the centralized state apparatuses. Instead, I argued that, generation of consent is also a central component of the AKP government. However, this seeking of consent is authoritarian in the sense that it does only seek to obtain the consent of its own supporters. Leaning on its electoral majority, the party can legitimize its coercion of dissidents.

In order to back up my argument, I drew on the events of 15 July and state-supported DWDs organized afterward. I approached the demonstrations through the perspective of mutuality of structure and event. This helped me explain the dynamic relationship between meaning-given structures and meaning-making agencies. In other words, I could account for how existing socio-cultural structures shaped the meaning-making process of the people about 15 July and DWDs and how these events paved the way for further socio-political arrangements.

To flesh out the existing socio-cultural meanings, I explained the current hegemony of the AKP through the top-down neoliberalization of the country and its Gramscian passive revolution during which the party established a durable link between civil society and political society. In order to buttress my argument about the relation between micro and macro levels, I combined Gramsci's hegemony with Foucault's understanding of truth generating power through which discursive subjectification takes places. Applying the combination of Gramsci and Foucault to the state-supported and mass participated DWDs, I came up with three main themes my 10

informants draw on to establish a relationship between their political subjectivities and the governmental rule. This is through (1) positioning their subjectivities in comparison with the imagined others (2) via deploying emotional language, and (3) re-appropriating history within the Islamist perspective.

Furthermore, I argued that establishing a bond with the AKP government, the political subjects supportive of the party legitimize the state's further authoritarian socio-political arrangements which are claimed to be implemented for the good of "the people." In order to do so, I showed that the AKP government politicizes the concept of terror so as to construct its object of security, or "the people", from terrorists who could be anyone against the government. This helps the AKP government to depoliticize the state level political decisions as their rationale appears as protecting the nation. These two mechanisms paved the way for the AKP to reinvigorate its hegemony.

I believe my analysis of novel articulations of political subjectivities aligned with authoritarian governments, that is how authoritarian governments utilize supportive political subjects as a part of their macro level governing could be useful for other researchers when exploring similar phenomena around the world i.e. Vučić supporters' gathering that countered anti-government protests in Serbia. This way of relational thinking does not solely focus on how authoritarian governments employ oppressive methods on dissidents but also takes into consideration how they dynamically rely upon and make efforts to mobilize their electoral base to legitimize coercion on opponents, which ultimately strengthens their hegemonies.

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