Political Instrumentalization of the Ottoman Past in Contemporary Turkey: The Case of *Diriliş Ertuğrul*

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Abstract

"Political Instrumentalization of the Ottoman Past in Contemporary Turkey: The Case of 'Diriliş Ertuğrul'"

Burak Demiryakan, Master's Candidate at the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2019

Professor M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Thesis Advisor

The Ottoman past of Turkey has always been a source of nostalgia in Turkish political history. In contemporary Turkey, the use of the Ottoman past goes beyond nostalgia and has become the central feature of neo-Ottomanism. As an ideology of adopting Turkey's political and cultural Ottoman legacy, the concept of neo-Ottomanism was first used during the Turgut Özal period and has been revived under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP).

The objective of this research is to find out the characteristics of contemporary neo-Ottomanism. A television series about the father of the founder of the Ottoman Empire, "Diriliş Ertuğrul", is analyzed in pursuit of this objective. Because the series is aired on a television channel of the state-owned Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) and is explicitly endorsed by the political elite, it represents neo-Ottomanism as a political ideology.

As a result of the analysis of contemporary mass media in Turkey, it can be said that neo-Ottomanism which is represented in "Diriliş Ertuğrul", imagines a morally superior Turkish-Islamic nation and regards Turkey as a great power that protects the Islamic World.

27,000 words

Özet

"Günümüz Türkiye'sinde Osmanlı Geçmişinin Siyasi Amaçlarla Kullanılması: 'Diriliş: Ertuğrul' Örneği"

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Profesör Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Tez Danışmanı

Türkiye siyasi tarihinde Osmanlı geçmişi her zaman bir nostalji kaynağı oldu. Günümüz Türkiye'sindeyse, Osmanlı geçmişinin kullanılması nostaljinin ötesine geçti ve yeni-Osmanlıcılık'ın önemli bir özelliği haline geldi. Türkiye'nin kendi Osmanlı geçmişini siyasi ve kültürel anlamda sahiplenmesi gerektiğini savunan bir ideoloji olarak yeni-Osmanlıcılık kavramı ilk kez Turgut Özal döneminde kullanıldı ve AKP döneminde yeniden canlandı.

Bu çalışmanın amacı günümüzdeki yeni-Osmanlıcılık'ın özelliklerini bulmaktır. Bu amaç için, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun kurucusunun babasını anlatan "Diriliş Ertuğrul" isimli dizi incelendi. Dizi devlete ait televizyon kanalı TRT'de yayınlandığı ve siyasi elitlerin açık desteğini aldığı için, bir siyasi ideoloji olarak yeni-Osmanlıcılık'ı yansıttığı söylenebilir.

Günümüz Türkiye kitle medyasının analizinin bir sonucu olarak, "Diriliş Ertuğrul"'un temsil ettiği yeni-Osmanlıcılık'ın ahlaki olarak diğerlerinden üstün bir Türk-İslam milleti tahayyül ettiği ve Türkiye'yi İslam Dünyasını koruyan bir büyük güç olarak gördüğü söylenebilir.

27.000 kelime

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
ANAP	Anavatan Partisi (Motherland Party)
AP	Adalet Partisi (Justice Party)
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)
DP	Demokrat Parti (Democrat Party)
FP	Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party)
CUP	Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Committee of Union and Progress)
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Action Party)
MNP	Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party)
MSP	Milli Selamet Partisi (National Salvation Party)
TRT	Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation)

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1

Introduction

Political instrumentalization of the Ottoman past by political Islamists in contemporary Turkey, which can be called neo-Ottomanism, is the basis of this research. Neo-Ottomanism as a political concept in relation to Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) was first used in the academic literature on the AKP's foreign policy. Scholars who argued that the AKP should pursue more active foreign policy in the Middle East, Balkans and Caucasus, included the highest state officials such as the head of the national intelligence service, Hakan Fidan, and Ahmet Davutoğlu who designated the foreign policy of the AKP in the capacity of Minister of Foreign Affairs. These scholars resorted to the Ottoman legacy in order to prove that the Republic of Turkey has ties with the neighboring countries and in order to support more active foreign policy in the regions which were the parts of the Ottoman Empire. This vision was called "new geographic imagination" in an article which was co-authored by Hakan Fidan.[1] According to authors of this article, the new geographic imagination of Turkish policy makers was linked to Turkey's domestic political transformation that was started by the AKP.[2] The domestic political transformation that Hakan Fidan and Bülent Aras

1 Hakan Fidan, and Bülent Aras, "Turkey and Eurasia: Frontiers of a new geographic imagination," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 40, (March 2009), 193-215.

2 Ibid., 195.

mentioned about has gone hand in hand with the rise of the references to Ottoman past as a tool for constructing a national identity which emphasizes on Islam and an imperial state identity which sees Turkey as a continuum of the Ottoman Empire.

The AKP as a representative political Islam in Turkey has consistently resorted to the Ottoman past in its political discourse. Its references to Turkey's "glorious" Ottoman past, especially those of its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, have gradually increased, and history has been reproduced through various mechanisms ranging from public meetings to television series. The AKP intensely used the Ottoman past as a new national history narrative and as a basis for new national identity especially after 2009.[3] The Ottoman Empire has been consistently promoted through various symbols. The AKP gave central place to the Ottoman Empire in its political discourse. In fact, the emphasis on the Ottoman Empire was not limited to this. In addition to discursive aspect of the neo-Ottomanism like the usage of the terms of "resurrection" and of references to the Ottoman Empire in party officials' speeches, actions of the AKP have been in parallel to its political discourse. For instance, the AKP took a special interest in restoration projects of Ottoman buildings like palaces and historical bazaars in municipalities governed by mayors from AKP, promoted the Ottoman language by making Ottoman language courses compulsory in religious high schools and adding curriculum of all high schools as elective course, and named newly established universities and construction projects like the third bridge on Bosphorus after Ottoman sultans. More examples can be given like the invention of new national rituals like the "Conquest of Istanbul Festivities," establishment of civil society organizations like "Ottoman Hearts" with the support of AKP officials and production of movies and television series about the Ottoman Empire by state-owned Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT).

The AKP's promotion of the Ottoman past has become so intense that it has influenced even daily life. In this sense, the concept of "banal Ottoman-

3 Nagehan Tokdoğan, *Yeni Osmanlıcılık: Hınç, Nostalji, Narsisizm*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), 82.

ism" which is a term coined by Hakan Övünç Ongur is useful in understanding neo-Ottomanism.[4] Ongur borrows Michael Billig's conceptualization of "banal nationalism" which refers to everyday representations of the nation through constantly flagging routine symbols and habits of language in the media.[5] Similar to "banal nationalism," Ottomanism is reproduced through symbols repeatedly and it occupies a central place even in everyday life. Ongur is not the only scholar who noticed the banality of the promotion of the Ottoman past. Nagehan Tokdoğan examined neo-Ottomanism in her book in the context of the sociology of emotions in her book New Ottomanism: Hatred, Nostalgia, Narcissism (*Yeni Osmanlıcılık: Hınç, Nostalji, Narsisizm*). She handles neo-Ottomanism as new national history and national identity narrative which evokes desires and hatreds of the masses.[6] According to her, leader cult built around Erdoğan with an emphasis on the "resurrection" of the Ottoman Empire as a response to the West corresponds to emotions of hatred, imagination of Istanbul as a symbolic space for reviving Ottoman past evokes nostalgia, and creation of "15 July" myth in parallel to neo-Ottomanist narrative shows national narcissism. Unlike Tokdoğan's work which focus on perception of the neo-Ottomanism by the masses through commenting on emotions, this thesis analyzes how the content of neo-Ottomanism is produced rather than how it is perceived.

Here, I prefer to define neo-Ottomanism as an ideology that advocates Turkey's political and cultural adoption of its Ottoman legacy. Political instrumentalization of the Ottoman past is an integral feature of neo-Ottomanism. I explore two questions: What are the characteristics of neo-Ottomanism? And what is its imagination of nation and state? In pursuit of answers to these questions, I will focus on neo-Ottomanist popular art produced by the mass media. Therefore, this thesis will trace the ideology of neo-Ottomanism in the cultural field.

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4 Hakan Övünç Ongur, "Identifying Ottomanisms: The Discursive Evolution of Ottomans Pasts in the Turkish Presents," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45 (2), (2015), 417.

5 Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, (London: Sage, 1995).

6 Tokdoğan, *Yeni Osmanlıcılık*, 18.

The cultural field, which is defined by Bourdieu as a relatively autonomous of others such as the political and economic fields in terms of having its own way of functioning, may nonetheless reflect political ideologies because politics and culture have always influenced each other.[7] For instance, Edward Said showed this mutual interaction in his book *Culture and Imperialism* by describing the political ideology of imperialism through an examination of novels written by Western authors in the colonial period.[8] Similar to this, I will handle a popular art work, namely the influential television series *Diriliş Ertuğrul*, in order to comment on the ideology of neo-Ottomanism.

The cultural field consists of wide range of institutions and practices. Museums, movies, novels, newspapers, and magazines can be evaluated as parts of the cultural field. Therefore, I limit my analysis. As a television series broadcast by the state-owned TRT, *Diriliş Ertuğrul* is an ideal case to analyze the political discourse of neo-Ottomanism. The series narrates the story of Ertuğrul -the father of the founder of the Ottoman Empire, Osman- and his clan. It has aired for five years with the highest ratings and the ruling elite's public endorsements.

Methodologically, this research is based on a qualitative textual analysis used to analyze the meanings of messages within a given text.[9] This research deals with the first season of *Diriliş Ertuğrul* as a main text as well as the first episodes of *Payitaht Abdulhamid* and *Mehmetçik Kutül Amare*, which are other ongoing television series aired by TRT, as complementary texts. These television series, which are both the symptoms and means of contemporary neo-Ottomanism, are used as primary sources for this research about the characteristics of contemporary neo-Ottomanism.

Theoretically, the research is framed by two academic literatures. First, the literature on the political uses of history is essential for this research to make

7 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 6.

8 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Chatto&Windus, 1993).

9 Lawrance R, Carl H. Botan, and Gary L. Kreps, *Investigating Communication: An Introduction to Research Methods*, (London: Pearson, 1991).

sense of the political instrumentalization of the Ottoman past in contemporary Turkey. Second, the literature on the relationship between politics and the mass media show up as how mass media can be used as a tool of propaganda.

Before analyzing *Diriliş Ertuğrul* as a representative case of neo-Ottomanist popular art, it is necessary to grasp the form and content of neo-Ottomanism. In the following chapter, the roots, definitions and types of neo-Ottomanism as an ideological concept will be discussed following an introduction to theoretical and empirical studies on the political use of the past, which is intrinsic to neo-Ottomanism.

Chapter three is devoted to one tool of the political instrumentalization of Ottoman past, namely television series, which are part of the mass media. Television series about the Ottoman Empire, especially neo-Ottomanist ones like *Diriliş Ertuğrul*, *Payitaht Abdulhamid* and *Mehmetçik Kutülamare* that convey ideological messages to the masses, will be documented in this chapter after a theoretical discussion of the relationship between politics and the mass media.

In chapter four, a qualitative textual analysis of *Diriliş Ertuğrul* will focus on the historicity of the series and on ideological messages given to its audience. An analysis of *Diriliş Ertuğrul* as a representative case of neo-Ottomanist popular art with the explicit support of ruling elites is also an analysis of the characteristics of neo-Ottomanism.

2

Political Context of Neo-Ottomanism

In this chapter, theoretical and empirical accounts of the political uses of the past that deal with the political instrumentalization of history are explained to provide a theoretical background for the current political use of the Ottoman past. Then the roots and development of the idea of neo-Ottomanism are discussed. In the third section of the chapter, the current political context and the form and content of contemporary neo-Ottomanism are presented with the history and ideology of the AKP including its political predecessor, the National Vision movement.

§ 2.1 Political Uses of History

History, which has always been open to political use for various objectives, by its very nature does not represent the objective reality of the past. Rather, histories narrating same period may sharply differ from each other. According to David Lowenthal, three factors prevent historical accounts from ever corresponding precisely to any actual past: the immensity of the past itself, the distinction between past events and accounts of those events, and the inevitability of bias.[1] While the endless pile of events that happened in the past cannot

1 David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 214.

be fully accounted for in limited histories that have no choice but to select among these events, the fact that historical narratives are based on subjective primary sources threatens the accuracy of historical accounts. Also, no matter to what degree historical knowledge is communal and verifiable, it is biased both by its narrator whose perspective and preferences determine his/her choices and use of historical materials, and by its audience which evaluates historical accounts from a point of view that shaped by the present-day mindset.[2] In addition to these three factors, it should be noted that historians who use retrospectively defining frameworks and casual narrative sequences in their histories, which turns history into a retrospective reconstruction, need to form a coherent story for historical intelligibility.[3] Thus, it can be said that, history does not exactly reflect the past; but presents accounts of past events woven together as stories. As Lowenthal states "historical accounts have traditionally served many functions other than 'truth' and sometimes at cross-purposes with it – to secure the pedigrees of existing rulers, for example, or to promote patriotic zeal, or to sanction religious or revolutionary causes."[4]

According to Lowenthal, there are five reasons to revisit the past: to explain it, to search for a golden age, to enjoy the exotic, to reap the rewards of temporal displacement and foreknowledge, and to refashion life by changing the past.[5] Also, history has a close relationship with collective identity. Historical consciousness boosts communal and national identity.[6] Those who seek to change past may have several motives. Lowenthal argues that the main motives for tampering with the past are to improve the past and the lot of those who lived in it, to enhance present conditions by altering what has preceded them, and to guarantee the stability of the present by changing or preserving the past in the case others may intervene in it.[7] According to him, "the most compelling motive for altering the past is to change present – to ward off

2 Ibid., 216.
3 Ibid., 224.
4 Ibid., 235.
5 Ibid., 22.
6 Ibid., 44.
7 Ibid., 26.

global catastrophe, to secure national hegemony, to make one's own fame or fortune."[8] In many cases, political actors remake history by magnifying it and by connecting present society to its so-called ancestors to prove that this particular society has glorious past and is the continuum of a great ancestry. Many of these remade histories are chauvinist and serve nationalism.[9]

The relationship between the past and the present is evident as Lowenthal states:

> The past is always altered for motives that reflect present needs. We reshape our heritage to make it attractive in modern terms; we seek to make it part of ourselves and ourselves part of it; we conform it to our self images and aspirations. Rendered grand or homely, magnified or tarnished, history is continually altered in our private interests or on behalf of our community or country.[10]

Maurice Halbwachs puts forth similar arguments in his book *On Collective Memory*. He ponders the memories shared by communities and shows that collective memory has been instrumentalized to fulfill the present needs and objectives of society like sustaining and enhancing group membership.[11]

Fictionalizing history is also an important aspect of the relationship between the past and present. Historical fiction writers fabricate pasts to readers' taste; however, they also claim to help readers know the past, like historians.[12] Historical fiction, which gained momentum in the nineteenth century, not only makes history vivid but also serves to disseminate certain messages, as can be seen in the cases of British novelists such as Newman, Wiseman, and Kingsley who conveyed religious messages through their novels.[13] In addition to novels, visual narrations like documentaries and cinematic and television productions fictionalize history. According to Lowenthal, adapting histories

8 Ibid., 27.

9 Ibid., 334.

10 Ibid., 348.

11 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

12 Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 224.

13 Ibid, 225-226.

into television inflames the tendency to accept versions of past as reality. While written histories warn readers from the beginning that the framing of the text is the author's perspective, representations on television erases authorial specificity and responsibility.[14]

Nostalgia, which is yearning for the past, is another form of connecting the present to the past, and in some cases, it is more than a naïve motion and has a political dimension. According to Svetlana Boym, nostalgia concerns the relationship between personal memory and collective memory, unlike melancholy which is limited to individual consciousness.[15] Boym divides nostalgia into two categories: while restorative nostalgia attempts to reconstruct the lost home, and reflective nostalgia is concerned more with the feeling of yearning itself.[16] The political use of the past is a significant aspect of restorative nostalgia that, for Boym, constitutes the essence of recent national and religious revitalizations.[17] Nationalists resort to restorative nostalgia when they advocate for a return to one's origins and release conspiracy theories to convince people of the existence of an eternal good – as well as of the bad that is always trying to attack to "home".[18]

Nationalists' political instrumentalization of the past goes beyond nostalgia. In fact, the political use of history lies at the foundation of the nations and nationalisms. Benedict Anderson, who argued that nations are constructed as they are imagined through various mechanisms, pondered the role of history-making in constructing nations and national identities. According to him, it is no surprise that the emergence of nations coincided with the foundation of history as a distinct discipline in the nineteenth century.[19] Nationalists tried to form geneaologies having a sequential continuity as a manifestation of historical tradition.[20] Some nations went further and turned history into ethnic

14 Ibid, 230.

15 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xvi.

16 Ibid., xviii.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 43.

19 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and the Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso, 1991), 194.

20 Ibid., 195.

myths like those of "chosen peoples" election by God.[21] These myths relying on history are perfect examples of the instrumentalization of history. As Smith indicates, "election myths attach redemption through sanctification to a community of shared memories and myths of origin, turning it into the world's moral economy and thereby helping to purify and set the community apart from outsiders."[22] Furthermore, according to Smith, nations produce the discourse of a "golden age" which is an era in a particular nation's history distinguished for its collective dignity and external prestige, for various reasons.[23] An ideal for the community is defined by the standards of its glorious past or golden age, a sense of regeneration is stimulated, a nation's potential is implied through filiation, and a sense of collective destiny is strengthened.[24]

The aforementioned theoretical accounts of the political uses of the past are supported by empirical studies that constitute the vast literature of the politics of collective memory. For instance, *Political Uses of the Past* brings together articles written by historians discussing the role of history in the making of national identities in Mediterranean countries such as Greece, Palestine, Spain, and Italy.[25] *Controlling the Past, Owning the Future* consists of researches into the use of archeology for political ends in Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Egypt, Israel and Turkey.[26] *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey* is a collection of anthropological articles focusing on Turkey concerning the political uses of the past. It includes Aslı Gür's research on the narrative

21 Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 264. For detailed information see, Anthony Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

22 Ibid., 267.

23 Ibid., 263.

24 Ibid., 264.

25 Jacques Revel, and Giovanni Levi, comp., *Political Uses of the Past: The Recent Mediterranean Experience*, (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 2002).

26 Ran Boytner; Dodd Swartz, and Bradley Parker, comp., *Controlling the Past Owning the Future: The Political Uses of History in the Middle East*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010).

of nation in the Anatolian Civilization Museum, which perpetuates the *Anatolian civilizations discourse*[27] by adopting a territorial kinship narrative and creating a sense of continuity, as well as Esra Özyürek's article about different and politically-motivated representations of early republican history by two different political camps – the Islamists and the secularists in the late 1990s.[28]

§ 2.2 Neo-Ottomanism

Neo-Ottomanism is an ideology advocating that Turkey should embrace its Ottoman political and cultural legacy. Its defining characteristic is the political use and instrumentalization of the Ottoman past. Before moving on to the different forms and contents of various neo-Ottomanisms, we should look at the concept of Ottomanism. Also, it is necessary to examine how the Ottoman Empire was remembered by the new state following its collapse in order to understand the emergence of neo-Ottomanism, which is partly a response to the attitude of the new state towards the Ottoman past.

2.2.1 *Ottomanism*

The ideology of Ottomanism emerged in response to the expansion of nationalism after the French Revolution, and it was concerned with maintaining the unity of the Ottoman Empire which comprised multiple ethnicities and religions. Its plan to prevent the dissolution of the Empire was to embrace the idea of Ottoman citizenship regardless of ethnicity or religion through constitutionalism and the cultivation of loyalty.[29]

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27 The Anatolian civilizations discourse, according to Gür, builds national identity around "Anatolian peoples" which are an imagined community across ages defined on the basis of territorial kinship instead of the essentialist, biologically-conceptualized basis of the Turkish History Thesis. For details, see Aslı Gür, "Stories in Three Dimensions: Narratives of Nation and the Anatolian Civilizations Museum," in *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, ed. Esra Özyürek (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 42-43.

28 Esra Özyürek, *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

29 A detailed account of Ottomanism in its relation to Turkism and Islamism may be found in Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma*, (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), 393-401.

The period following the Tanzimat edict announced in 1839, witnessed the rise of Ottomanism among intellectuals who argued that the empire could survive only if an Ottoman identity that would include non-Muslim elements of society were created if reforms to modernize the state were realized. Ottomanists predicted that the creation of an Ottoman nation above all ethnicities and religions and the cultivation of loyalty to the Ottoman motherland would inhibit separatist and nationalist revolts. Ottomanism gained pace after the Reform edict of 1856, and some intellectuals formed a society called the "Young Ottomans" in 1865 to spread the ideals of Ottomanism. Important intellectuals like Namık Kemal, Ziya Paşa, and Şinasi participated in this society and wrote about the principles of Ottomanism – like the unity of the empire, Ottoman identity, and constitutionalism – in newspapers and journals they founded. Their writings also included critiques of the bureaucratic absolutism of administrators. According to them, equality among all Ottoman subjects could only be realized through constitutionalism. Thus, they strongly advocated for a constitutional monarchy. As a result of internal and external pressures, Abdulhamid II proclaimed a constitution (Kanun-i Esasi) in December 1876, and a parliament convened in March 1877. However, the constitutional monarchy did not last long and was suspended after the Russo-Turkish War of 1878. The constitution influenced by Ottomanism, reflecting the validity of this ideology at the time among political elites, including Sultan Abdulhamid II who would come to favor Islamism in ensuing years. For instance, the constitution defined all subjects of the Empire as "Ottoman citizens" regardless of their ethnicity or religion.

After a thirty-year suspension, the constitutional monarchy was proclaimed again in 1908. However, the Ottomanists had weakened in time, and other ideologies like Turkism and Islamism emerged. Commitee of Union and Progress (CUP) dominated parliament, and after they staged a coup d'état in 1913 and seized executive power, as well, the liberal doctrine of Ottomanism started to fade in light of the increasing Turkism of the CUP. The Balkan Wars and the resulting loss of Balkan territories, were other reasons for the decline of Ottomanism given the dramatic loss of the non-Muslim and non-Turkish populations living there. The Arab Revolt during the First World War was an-

other event that weakened Ottomanism. However, Ottomanism was so popular among Ottoman intellectuals in short period of time, that even the ideologue of Turkism, Ziya Gökalp, and the ideologue of Arabism, Satı al-Husri, were adherents of Ottomanism until the end of the First World War, which resulted in the dissolution of the Empire.

2.2.2 *Remembering the Ottoman Empire*

The Ottoman Empire officially collapsed in 1 November 1922 upon the abolition of Ottoman sultanate by the new government led by Mustafa Kemal representing the parliament in Ankara. The Republic of Turkey was officially established on 29 October 1923, and in the following years, the Ottoman imperial structure was replaced by a modern state with a nationalist ideology. On 3 March 1924, the last post held by Ottoman dynasty – the caliphate – was lifted. All family members of the dynasty were banished, and their properties were seized by the government of the new state.

The new state imagined a national identity and national culture different from that of the Ottoman Empire, and it began to erase all that was Ottoman for the sake of adopting modernity which was put against tradition. The republican, Kemalist ruling elite embarked on a nation-building process that rejected the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and produced a new historical narrative for the Turkish people that showed that the roots of the Turks went deeper than its Ottoman past. History and anthropology were instrumentalized by the Kemalist ruling elite to build a Western, secular and, Turkish national identity.[30] Kemalist historiography rejected Ottoman history, culture, and literature and produced a new myth of Central Asia and Anatolia as the basis of a "civilized" Turkish culture and identity. This myth was determined by the Kemalist ruling elite – including politicized historians – during the first two decades of the Republic, especially in the 1930s under the guidance of the Turkish History Society founded in 1931.[31] The theory proclaimed by Kemalist

30 Zafer Toprak, *Darwin'den Dersim'e: Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji*, (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012).

31 Yılmaz Çolak, "Ottomanism vs. Kemalism: Collective Memory and Cultural Pluralism in 1990s Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42 (July 2006), 590.

elites as official doctrine propounded that Turks were a white, Aryan people originating from Central Asia that migrated throughout various parts of Asia and Africa carrying civilization with them and that they founded Chinese, Indian, and Middle Eastern civilizations.[32] Thus, according to this doctrine called the *Turkish History Thesis*, which was developed in two congresses on history in 1932 and 1937, Turks were the founders of Mesopotamian and Anatolian civilizations like the Sumerians and Hittites. This historical narrative was backed by anthropological studies – including the state-funded doctoral research on the physical traits of the Turkish race by Atatürk's daughter, Afet Inan – that claimed that Turks belonged to the brachycephalic Alpine race which played a pioneering role in the foundation of many civilizations.[33] This was a new, de-Islamized founding myth that did not need Ottoman history to justify the Turkish presence in Anatolia because it claimed that Turks were the autochthonous people of Anatolia. Also, this new, secular, Western, Turkish national identity was indoctrinated and popularized through People's Houses, which were founded in 1932 and under the direct control of Mustafa Kemal's Republican People's Party.

The Ottoman past was redefined as the archaic other to the new modern regime by the Kemalist elites during the 1920s and 1930s. According to Kemalist historiography, the identity of the Ottoman state was not Turkish but Muslim. The non-Turkish character of the Ottoman Empire, the rule of the sultanate, and the subjugation of the Turkish nation were the reasons for the failure of the Turks in their leadership of civilization.[34] Therefore, Ottoman rule was deemed "the dark age" of the Turks and was ignored in the writing of a new, glorious history of the Turks.[35] Antipathy towards the Ottoman legacy was also evident in the works of the ideologues of Turkish nationalism such as sociologist Ziya Gökalp and historian Yusuf Akçura who deeply influenced the ideology of the founding cadres during the 1920s and 1930s. In his famous work

32 Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 353.

33 Sibel Özbudun-Demirer, "Anthropology as a nation-building rhetoric: The shaping of Turkish anthropology (from 1850s to 1940s)" *Dialectical Anthropology* 35, (March 2011), 122.

34 Çolak, "Ottomanism vs. Kemalism," 590.

35 Ibid.

The Principles of Turkism, Gökalp praised Turkish culture in opposition to an "artificial" Ottoman civilization that, in his mind, had harmed Turkish culture.[36] Yusuf Akçura blamed the Ottoman Empire because it "did not pay enough attention to the Turkish language and history, and also did radically separate itself from Turkish history," and he argued that "the great victories and achievements of the Turkish nation to which the Ottomans belonged were not taken into account when writing history."[37]

Although defeat of the racist Axis powers in the Second World War resulted in the decline of the racist arguments in the *Turkish History Thesis* and its complementary use of physical anthropology, the official Kemalist approach towards the Ottoman Empire continued to reject its leagacy. The dominance of the official Kemalist approach towards the Ottoman Empire notwithstanding, some intellectuals attempted to compromise the new state with its Ottoman past in the 1930s. For instance, historian Fuad Köprülü situated the Ottoman Empire in a broader Turkish history and resorted to the Ottoman past to justify Turkish existence in Anatolia in his work *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*, published in 1934.[38] Also, a sense of nostalgia among some conservative intellectuals pushed them to embrace the Ottoman past. Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar, whose nostalgia was apolitical, wrote about yearning for the Ottoman past in the 1930s. And some conservative, nostalgic intellectuals like the architect Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi and the historian of literature Nihad Sami Banarlı – who founded Istanbul Conquest Society (İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti) to revive Ottoman history and culture in 1950 – praised the greatness of the Ottoman Empire.[39]

Beginning in the mid-1940s, nationalist and conservative historians tried to restore the honor of the Ottoman Empire; however, these efforts did not reflect the official attitude of the government until the Democrat Party (Dem-

36 Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, (Istanbul: Matbuat ve Istihbarat Matbaası, 1923).

37 Yusuf Akçura, "Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi," *Ülkü* 1 (February 1933). Cited in Çolak, "Ottomanism vs. Kemalism," 590.

38 Tanıl Bora, *Cereyanlar: Türkiye'de Siyasi İdeolojiler*, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 362.

39 Ibid., 355.

okrat Parti, DP) period, which started in 1950 when Turkey adopted a multiparty system. In the multiparty system, references to Ottoman past found a place in the official discourse and manifestos of some political parties including the DP. The DP gave significant place to the official definition of history as an objective of political debate, emphasized on the importance of local Islamic traditions and continuity with the near past, and reserved a larger place for the Ottoman Empire and its political and social system in history textbooks.[40] Also, the head of the DP and Prime Minister of Turkey during the 1950s, Adnan Menderes, lifted the ban on the return of female members of the Ottoman dynasty to Turkey in 1952 and put them on a state salary.

Like its predecessor, the DP, Justice Party (Adalet Partisi, AP), which was founded after the 1960 military coup, saw the Ottoman past as a part of Turkish collective memory. Moreover, the leader of the party, Süleyman Demirel, adopted "the great Turkey" discourse of conservative historian Yılmaz Öztuna who argued that the Republic of Turkey – which which, for him, was the heir of the Ottoman Empire – should develop a vision of a "great Turkey.""[41] Öztüna, who equated national consciousness and historical consciousness, wrote a twelve-volume Turkish history that started in 1071, praised the Ottoman Empire as a super power ("Cihan devleti"), and regarded Turkey to be its successor state. He was a deputy of the AP between 1969 and 1973. The attitude of Öztuna and of the AP towards the Ottoman legacy did not challenge Kemalist ideology; it exalted the Ottoman past without tangling with Atatürk.[42]

Other right-wing parties than center-right AP also referred to and instrumentalized Ottoman history in the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, the nationalist right represented by the National Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) used the idea of the Ottoman Empire to prove Turks' glorious past, and the Islamist National Vision movement emphasized the Islamic elements of the Ottoman Empire in its construction of an Islamic national identity and its Islamization of Turkish historiography.[43] Islamist intellectuals like Necip Fazıl,

40 Çolak. "Ottomanism vs. Kemalism," 591.

41 Bora, *Cereyanlar*, 364.

42 Ibid., 364.

43 Çolak. "Ottomanism vs. Kemalism," 591.

who pioneered a large literature praising Abdulhamid II as "a great ruler" ("Ulu hakan"), tried to restore the honor of the Ottoman Empire by creating a personality cult around Abdulhamid II.[44] Some nationalist historians like Osman Turan argued that the Ottoman Empire was the greatest success of the Turkish nation throughout history and synthesized Turkishness and Islam.[45] In any case, neither nationalists nor Islamists publicly objected to Atatürk or official ideology during the 1960s and the 1970s; rather, they embraced both their Ottoman legacy and the republic. As Çolak states, "Ottoman imagination and images continued to exist and even increased in Turkish popular social and political life until the late 1980s, but that imagination had not yet turned into a political vision combining the Ottoman system with modern political principles to produce policy."[46]

2.2.3 *Turgut Özal and Neo-Ottomanism*

Turgut Özal who served as a bureaucrat under right-wing governments before 1980 military coup, emerged as a political actor in 1983 when he founded the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi, ANAP) and participated in the first elections held after the coup. Before the foundation of the ANAP and the military coup, Özal pursued a political career by running for deputy with the Islamist National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi, MSP) in 1977 general elections. However, he was not be elected and continued his bureaucratic career as undersecretary to the prime minister and acting undersecretary of the State Planning Organization (Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı). In his capacity as undersecretary to prime minister Süleyman Demirel, he prepared an economic stability program for the neoliberal transformation of the economy which came into force on 24 January 1980. After the coup, he was appointed as deputy prime minister responsible for the economy in order to execute the stability decisions taken on January 24 under the provisional military government. He then resigned from this position to establish the ANAP, entered parliament with

44 Bora, *Cereyanlar*, 363

45 Ibid., 308.

46 Çolak, "Ottomanism vs. Kemalism," 591.

45.14 percent of the vote in the 1983 elections, and became prime minister of the ANAP's single-party majority government.

The ANAP was a coalition of various ideological currents including the center-right AP, the Islamist MSP, and the nationalist MHP as well as interest groups such as both the modern industrial bourgeoisie and the Anatolian petty bourgeoisie that had nowhere else to go because of bans on pre-coup political parties and leaders that had been imposed by the military.[47] Özal, who had connections with both capitalists who desired to liberalize the economy and Islamists like those of the Nakşibendi order and MSP, helped the party maintain this coalition.[48] Özal claimed that his party united four political currents, namely the democratic left, the liberal right, the Islamist right, and the nationalist right which had been represented by different parties before the coup.

After the bans on pre-coup political leaders were lifted in a referendum in 1987, Özal decided to hold early elections that same year, and his party emerged first among its rivals with 36.31 percent of the vote, which was a 9 percent loss compared to the previous general elections. He became president of the Republic of Turkey in 1989 and continued to influence Turkish politics until his death in 1993.

The concept of neo-Ottomanism as a new political instrumentalization of the Ottoman legacy was asserted for the first time by Özal and intellectuals who were ideologically close to him, like Cengiz Çandar and Mustafa Cedit who wrote for *Türkiye Günlüğü* journal in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Those who conceptualized neo-Ottomanism in the Özal period argued that Turkish foreign policy should be active with respect to the countries that had formerly been part of the Ottoman Empire in response to changes in the international context. Foremost, the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union, forced Turkey to redefine its anti-Soviet foreign policy and its anti-communist

47 Erik Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, translated by Yasemin Saner, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 407.

48 Ibid., 408.

national and state identities.[49] Also, the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed Turkey to become active in the Caucasus and Turkic states in Central Asia. Similarly, while the dissolution of Yugoslavia gave Turkey the opportunity to lead Muslim communities in Balkans, the failure of Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq could be an opportunity for Turkey to embrace Kurds in the region.[50] According to the neo-Ottomanists, Turkey should realize its "imperial vision" and "Ottoman legacy" instead of maintaining a republican foreign policy. Although Özal's neo-Ottomanism emphasized Islamic identity to connect Turkey to Muslim minorities in the Balkans and to Muslim Kurds, it was not Islamist. Şaban Çalış indicates that neo-Ottomanism can be said to have been "a secular project."[51] Indeed, far from trying to establish a counterhegemony on the basis of Islamic values vis-à-vis Western supremacy, the neo-Ottomanists were pro-West and pro-EU, unlike the Islamists. Özal applied for full membership in the EU in 1987 and continued his efforts to develop the relations with European countries. He even, argued that the neo-Ottomanist vision of Turkey that would make Turkey the leader of its region was supported by Western allies.[52]

Özal's neo-Ottomanism was not only a new basis for foreign policy but also an effort to renew the social contract based on a new collective memory. In light of the rise of the separatist Kurdish movement that opposed to the marginalization of Turkish identity, of Islamist groups that challenged secularism, and of Alevis who were excluded by the state's propagation of Sunni Islam, the official definition of Turkish culture and identity began to be questioned.[53] Turgut Özal's solution to mitigate the demands of various social identities and the internal sociocultural tensions emerging from cultural di-

49 Behlül Özkan, "Yeni Osmanlıcılık ve Pan-İslamcılık" in Evren Haspolat and Deniz Yıldırım, comp., *Türkiye'de Yeni Siyasal Akımlar*, (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 2016), 405.

50 Ibid., 410.

51 Şaban Çalış, *Hayaletbilimi ve Hayali Kimlikler: Neo-Osmanlılık, Özal ve Balkanlar*, (Istanbul: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2001), 164.

52 Özkan, "Yeni Osmanlıcılık ve Pan-İslamcılık," 412.

53 Çolak, "Ottomanism vs. Kemalism," 587.

versity was to make use of Turkey's Ottoman legacy, invoke a collective cultural memory, and construct a nostalgic narrative of Turkey's shared past.[54] Özal introduced the idea of Ottoman pluralism which allowed for the coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups under a political community in order to formulate a common, supreme identity encompassing all Turkish citizens regardless of their ethnicity or religion. In this sense, his neo-Ottomanism aimed to curtail the possible destructive effects of identity movements by creating an inclusive national identity. It was similar to the Young Ottomans' Ottomanism which was a response to the rise of nationalism, and sought to build an overarching Ottoman national identity above ethnic and religious identities. Also, his neo-Ottomanism was, according to his ideologues, compatible with modern liberal multiculturalism and cosmopolitan liberal values. As Çandar argued, the premises of neo-Ottomanism were free enterprise, human rights, and cultural and ethnic pluralism.[55] Özal himself equated American and Ottoman multiculturalism as types of "melting pots" beyond the monocultural nation state. Neo-Ottomanists opposed ethnic versions of Turkish nationalism and pursued the redefinition of Turkish identity on regional and religious grounds.[56] Thus, broader religious identity was emphasized more than ethnic identity. In reimagining Ottoman pluralism as a model for a new Turkey, Özal emphasized the Ottoman vision of a more flexible and tolerant Islam, and for him, "this gave Turkish society a different outlook from that of other Islamic societies."[57]

Özal, as a conservative and nationalist politician, resorted to the Ottoman past as a source of collective memory to create a sense of belonging. Parallel to the cultural policy of the 1980 coup, based in large measure on the "Turkish-Islamic synthesis," the government under his prime ministry (1983-89) effectively popularized Ottoman cultural expressions such as classical Turkish music and some linguistic forms. It used state-controlled television and radio broadcasts in addition to the education system and history textbooks to

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 593.

56 Ibid., 592.

57 Ibid., 593.

preach the greatness of the Turks' Ottoman past and make Ottoman history part of Turkish collective memory – but on the basis of Kemalist legitimacy.[58] Also, it should be noted that the television series about the foundation of the Ottoman Empire and its first ruler, Osman – namely *Kuruluş Osmancık* – aired during his period in 1988 on the state-owned television channel TRT.

Özal's neo-Ottomanism remained limited to the writings of a small group of journalists and academics, did not gain popular support and, faded out after his death.[59] However, neo-Ottomanism survived in the views and programs of the political right, particularly of the Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, RP), which represented the National Vision movement and had become Turkey's largest political party by the 1995 elections.[60]

§ 2.3 The Current Political Context of Neo-Ottomanism

It is crucial to understand the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) and its roots in order to make sense of the current political context of neo-Ottomanism given that it serves as an ideology that helps ruling AKP elites build an imperial identity for the state and a new national identity for the people. Although the AKP was founded as a party joining Islamist, nationalist and liberal cadres together, which is reflected in its party program, it was originally a continuation of the Islamist National Vision movement led by Necmettin Erbakan. Because the ideological roots of the AKP lie in its predecessor's Islamism, it would be helpful for my analysis to include the National Vision movement.

2.3.1 *National Vision*

Necmettin Erbakan emerged as a political actor in Turkish political history in the late 1960s. He started to advocate for the Anatolian bougeoisie vis-à-vis the economic dominance of the Istanbul-centered bourgeoisie as secretary

58 Ibid., 592.

59 Özkan, "Yeni-Osmanlıcılık ve Pan-İslamcılık," 417.

60 Çolak, "Ottomanism vs. Kemalism," 595.

(1967-1969) and then as president (1969) of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği), a non governmental organization representing private sector. After being removed from his post by the AP, which acted in accord with the interests of the Istanbul-centered bourgeoisie rather than Anatolian petty bourgeoisie, Erbakan – whose application to be an AP candidate for membership in parliament rejected earlier – moved away from the AP and participated in the 1969 elections as independent candidate from Konya. After being elected to parliament, two deputies who had resigned from the AP joined him to form a new party. In January 1970, the Islamist National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi, MNP) was formed under the leadership of Erbakan. This was not the first Islamic party, but unlike earlier Islamic parties, the MNP did not fade away even if it did not keep the same name. Even though the party was disbanded after the 1971 military memorandum, it was reestablished as the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi, MSP) in October 1972 again, under the leadership of Erbakan, and played an important role in Turkish politics until the 1980 coup.

The ideology of the MNP and its successors, which was called the National Vision, was based on building Islamic identity in a conservative, nationalist framework. Erbakan did not place much emphasis on Turkishness, yet he appropriated the Ottoman legacy. The Ottoman Empire was seen as a glorious period in Turkish and Islamic history which should be revived. According to Erbakan, the aim should be to that Turkey be a leader like it was in the glorious days of the Ottoman Empire. Within this ideological framework, the West was seen as an enemy. Conspiracy theories claiming that masons and Zionists are evil powers working against Islamic world, which bear traces of anti-Semitism, accompanied this discourse of hostility towards the West. The hostility towards the West had implications for the MSP's views on foreign policy. Erbakan firmly opposed Turkey's membership in the European Economic Community – which would turn into the European Union in 1992 – on the grounds that it would turn Turkey into a modern colony of the West. He adhered to national developmentalism which sought the industrial development of the country and the rise of the Anatolian bourgeoisie. His developmentalism had

also a moral aspect. In the Islamic politico-economic vision of Erbakan, interest would be banned, and an unfair economic system would be replaced by emphasizing justice. Also, luxury and conspicuous consumption would be eliminated. Material development woud go hand in hand with moral development which aims for Islamic morality.

Although the MSP's ideological orientation placed the party among other right wing parties in the political spectrum of a highly-polarized period, Erbakan's party, which won 11.8 percent of the vote in the 1973 election, formed a coalition with the center-left CHP and became a partner of the government. The MSP's decision to form a coalition with a leftwing party was justified by the argument that the coalition was formed around the principles of national developmentalism and independence. Emphasis of these principles was suitable for the anti-American discourse that dominated the political climate of the 1970s. The coalition was an opportunity for Erbakan to prove his party's claim to be a third option in the left-right conflict. Indeed, in a period marked by polarization between left and right, the MSP joined coalitions with both. The coalition government of the MSP and CHP dissolved following the invasion of Cyprus in 1974 because both parties hoped to attract nationalists. The MSP participated in a coalition government with other rightwing parties called the Nationalist Front starting in March 1975 and was also a part of the Second Nationalist Front government. The party stuck with rightwing parties until the military seized the power in 12 September 1980.

The 1980 military coup dramatically changed Turkish politics. Existing political parties were closed and political actors were banned, including the MSP and Erbakan. However, the National Vision movement formed a new party called the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, RP) though it did not participate in the first elections after the army returned authority to civilians, held in 1983. Its share of the vote gradually rose throughout the 1980s and closed in on the 10 percent election threshold implemented by the army, winning 9.8 percent of the vote in the 1989 general elections. Meanwhile, Erbakan returned to his party and became its new leader in 1987, just after the bans on some pre-coup political actors were lifted. Finally, the RP entered parliament following the 1991 general elections along with its rightwing partners, Nationalist Working

Party (Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi) and the Reformist Democracy Party (Islahatçı Demokrasi Partisi) which had formed an election alliance that won 16.9 percent of the votes. The rise of the RP continued in following elections. The RP received 19 percent of the vote and won the municipalities of Istanbul and Ankara in 1994 local elections. Then, in the 1995 general elections, the party came out on top with 21.4 percent of the votes and formed a coalition government with the center-right True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi). Erbakan became the prime minister. This was an alarming event for Kemalist and secular circles because an Islamist had become prime minister for the first time.

The political discourse of the RP during this rise was based on the slogan "Just Order" (Adil Düzen). Like that of its predecessor, "Just Order" was a political program based on a moral economy opposed to interest which was regarded as unfair, ill-gotten gain. In addition to establishing "Just Order," the RP promised to provide both moral and industrial development. In terms of foreign policy, the RP was against supranational Western institutions like the European Union and favored developing relations with Islamic countries. The RP was eager to create a "greater Turkey" like in Ottoman times by applying Islam and Ottomanism to foreign policy to make Turkey a dominant regional power.[61] According to Tanıl Bora, they appropriated the Özalian neo-Ottomanism, but with a more Islamic tone.[62] Also, the redefinition of national identity based on Islamic principles and an Ottoman past constituted an important part of the RP's political discourse.[63] Politicians operating in the RP, including municipal leaders, members of parliament, and members of the RP-led coalition government boosted the usage of symbols of the Ottoman Empire by reviving Ottoman arts, calligraphy, foods, and architectural forms in order to Islamize society.[64] After the RP candidate for mayoralty of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan assumed the post following 1994 local elections, he began to organize activities commemorating Ottoman Istanbul such as scientific

61 Ibid., 596.

62 Tanıl Bora, *Türk Sağının Üç Hali*, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998), 137.

63 Çolak, "Ottomanism vs. Kemalism," 595.

64 Ibid., 596.

conferences called Ottoman Conferences, exhibitions about Ottoman art, sultans, and clothing; concerts of Ottoman-Turkish music; and screenings of movies about the Ottomans.[65] As part of the effort to utilize the Ottoman past, commemorations of the conquest of Istanbul that served to build an alternative national identity evoking Ottoman-Islamic civilization as opposed to the modern, secular Republic of Turkey began to be launched during this period.[66]

The RP's references to Ottoman Empire were not limited to these. The party also favored the multi-judiciary order that had been implemented in Ottoman times, which was developed based on Muhammed's Medina Charter and the Ottoman millet system.[67] According to this judicial order, each religious group would be subject to its own religious legal system rather than an all-encompassing modern law. This meant that in a country populated mostly by Muslims, Islamic Sharia law would dominate. However, Islamist intellectuals emphasized legal pluralism as part of the Islamic communitarian view of multiculturalism, and presented this as a solution for Turkey's ethnic problem.[68]

The RP's emphasis on Islam disturbed secular Kemalist elites and constituted the excuse for the 28 February 1997 military intervention that forced Erbakan to resign. Following the army's intervention, the RP was closed by the Supreme Court. However, the National Vision movement was prepared for this eventuality. Political figures from the movement – other than Erbakan who was banned from politics – joined the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi, FP) which was established in December 1997 as a standby to replace RP in case it was closed. Like its predecessors, the FP was closed in 2001, prompting reformist wing of the party – led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who had proven his political skills during his Istanbul mayoralty, and Abdullah Gül, who had been the reformist candidate for leadership of FP opposing the traditionalists in the party convention on 14 May 2000 – to form a more moderate party called the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP). Thus, the

65 Ibid., 596.

66 Alev Çınar, "National History as a Contested Site: The Conquest of Istanbul and Islamist Negotiations of the Nation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, (July 2001), 365.

67 Çolak, "Ottomanism vs. Kemalism," 596.

68 Ibid., 597.

National Vision movement divided into two. The Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi), which was established by conservative wing of the movement in July 2001, tried to maintain the Islamist National Vision ideology, but lost most of its voters to the AKP. The reformist AKP, meanwhile, claimed that it moved on from the National Vision movement to adopt democratic conservatism. It dominated the center-right in the first elections in which it participated in November 2002, winning 34.4 percent of the votes.

2.3.2 *The AKP*

Following the November 2002 elections, the AKP formed a single-party majority government with 363 deputies – that is 66 per cent of the members of parliament – having obtained 34.4 per cent of the vote. Because of the 10 per cent national threshold, almost half of the vote went unrepresented in parliament. All the parties that had entered the parliament as a result of the previous election failed to pass the threshold, so the parties in parliament completely were renewed. The majority party of the new parliamentary configuration, the AKP, which had been established only fifteen months before the election, defined itself as conservative and democratic rather than Islamist. It became part of the center-right because party officials avoided the emphasis on Islam as a political ideology.[69]

The party published a book that functioned as the official ideological statement of the party; called Conservative Democracy (*Muhafazakar Demokrasi*), it was written by Yalçın Akdoğan in 2003. Also, the leader of the party, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, declared in the party's first convention that "the identity of AK Party is conservative democratic."[70] The reformist wing of the National Vision movement adopted democratic conservatism in response to the traditionalists' political strategies to obtain and maintain state power and in response to its Islamist ideological stance, which was viewed as an obstacle that

69 Ergun Özbudun, and William Hale, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık, Demokrasi ve Liberalizm: AKP Olayı*, (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2010).

70 Yasin Doğan, "İslamcı Değil, Muhafazakar," *Yeni Şafak*, April 11, 2008. https://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/yasindogan/islamci-degil-muhafazakar-10323

excluded other segments of society other than Islamists. According to the reformists, the strategy should be more moderate, centrist, and inclusive. Indeed, the AKP's strategy attracted voters from different parties in a period when the credibility of existing political parties was shaken because of instable coalition governments and the 2001 economic crisis. Also, the reformists objected to the traditionalists' firm opposition to West and advocated a pro-EU foreign policy. Ideologically, AKP differentiated itself from Islamism. Democratic conservatism, which was called new Islamism by Yalçın Akdoğan, pursued gradual change in terms of the Islamization of society unlike the National Vision's desire for radical, rapid, and top-to-bottom change imposed by state apparatuses.[71] New Islamism was defined as social rather than political, and the ideological emphasis on Islam was replaced by an emphasis on conservative values. According to Akdoğan, the emergence of democratic conservatism was the result of pressures within Turkish domestic politics that pushed Islamists to plot a more reasonable route different from the National Vision's strategies.[72] The aims of AKP were described as "to normalize politics," "to place politics on more realistic grounds," "to produce a self-contained conservative political party," and "to produce an inclusive way of politics."[73] This discursive, ideological shift helped AKP to build a hegemonic bloc that would receive the support of both the conservative and secular bourgeoisie because of its promises of economic stability and commitment to neoliberal transformation. Moreover, this shift corresponded to the rising Anatolian bourgeoisie's search for more moderate, less ideological right-wing party to rely on.

The adoption of democratic conservatism differentiated AKP from traditional National Vision Islamism; on the other hand, it situated AKP as a conservative party similar to Western conservative parties.[74] According to Akdoğan, AKP aimed "to reproduce our indigenous and rooted system of values

71 Yalçın Akdoğan, *Muhafazakar Demokrasi*, (Ankara: Ak Parti, 2003), 6.

72 Yalçın Akdoğan, "Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık*, ed. Yasin Aktay (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 631.

73 Ibid., 626.

74 Deniz Yıldırım, "Muhafazakar Demokrasi ve AKP" in Evren Haspolat, and Deniz Yıldırım, comp., *Türkiye'de Yeni Siyasal Akımlar*, (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 2016), 549.

in terms of universal conservative politics."[75] Also, the party would pursue this aim with principles of democracy, rule of law, and human rights; democratize Turkey; and adopt a conservatism that was open to innovation.[76] Combined with the party's pro-EU foreign policy stance, the aforementioned identification with Western politics and emphasis on democratic values helped AKP to obtain the recognition and support of the West, securing its legitimacy in the international arena. Also, AKP's commitment to neoliberal transformation policies that had been in operation since the beginning of the 1980s and were modified in 2001 by Kemal Derviş in response to the 2001 economic crisis, would not threaten Western economic institutions and would attract foreign investment. Like Turgut Özal, who attempted to build a hegemonic bloc that would unite four different political views under one party in liberalizing the economy, AKP maintained and accelerated neoliberal restructuring with domestic and international support.

The moderate, centrist, and inclusive discourse of democratic conservatism paved the way for the rise of the AKP. The second election in which it participated, the 2004 local elections, resulted in an increase in the share of the votes of AKP to 41 percent. The rise of the AKP began to disturb Kemalist and secular elites, and debates revolving around the presidential election to be held in 2007 – ending Ahmet Necdet Sezer's tenure – escalated this disturbance. Secular civil society organized a series of rallies called "Republic Protests" starting from 14 April 2007 with the slogan "Claim Your Republic" and an emphasis on secularism. These rallies were organized against the AKP and its presidential candidate, Abdullah Gül, arguing that AKP had a secret Islamist agenda to undermine republican values, especially secularism. While the rallies continued, the military published a memorandum urging AKP to embrace secular values. For the first time, the military's intervention in politics did not result in the government's retreat. While Erbakan accepted the terms presented to him by the military on 28 February 1997, Erdoğan objected to the memorandum and did not withdraw Gül's candidacy. Secular reaction to a potential Gül presidency also showed itself in parliament. The presidential

75 Akdoğan, *Muhafazakar Demokrasi*, 128.

76 Ibid., 238.

election session in parliament was sabotaged by the CHP which argued that the session was valid only if at least 367 deputies were present. It did not participate in the session to prevent a quorum. In order to break the parliamentary deadlock, general elections were held on 22 July 2007. The AKP increased its share of the votes to 46.8 percent, which was a 12 percent increase over the previous general elections. A huge civil society campaign, the military's memorandum, and legal precautions against the rise of AKP to have backlashed. Following the elections, the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) participated in the presidential election session to reach a quorum, and Abdullah Gül was elected as president of the Republic of Turkey. Three months after the general elections, a referendum on having the president be directly elected by the people rather than by parliament was held, and the measure was approved.

The second term of the single-party majority government of AKP witnessed a wave of charges brought against the military members including the high commanders accused of conspiring to stage a coup against the AKP government. These included Ergenekon case which was opened in July 2008. The scope of the cases was not limited to the military and extended to Kemalist and secular civil society and the media. Thus, the discourse of fighting against military tutelage was utilized to suppress the Kemalist and secular opposition. As military cadres were renewed, the judiciary branch was reorganized following a referandum on 12 September 2010. In addition to the rearrangement of state institutions like the military and judiciary to suppress the opposition, AKP further increased its share of the votes on 12 June 2011 elections to 49.83 percent, becoming the first party in the political history of Turkey to increase its in votes three successive general elections.

Meanwhile, Ahmet Davutoğlu was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs and found the opportunity to put his theoretical vision of "Strategic Depth" into practice. He favored a more active foreign policy that would engage in regional politics. His neo-Ottomanist vision will be mentioned in the next section, so I will not present a detailed discussion of his views here. However, one important impetus that prompted AKP to further engage in the politics of the Middle East should be mentioned. The Arab Spring, which started with self-immolation of a protestor in Tunisia on 17 December 2010, was seen

as an opportunity to export this ideology to Arab countries by foreign policy decisionmakers. The Arab revolts targeted authoritarian regimes and included the Islamist opposition like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its proxies in neighboring countries. The AKP formed alliances with the Islamist opposition and gave advice, as it did in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and armed opposition groups regarded as ideologically close to AKP, as in the case of Syria. Davutoğlu pushed his vision of becoming a model country and leader in the Islamic world throughout the Arab revolts.

As foreign policy towards the Middle East became more active, the AKP embarked on a "solution process" for the Kurdish issue in domestic politics. Although Gülenists in the judiciary – who had helped the AKP in operations against the Kemalist and secular opposition through lawsuits like Ergenekon and secured their position after the 2010 referendum – tried to interrupt the process from the beginning by calling the head of the intelligence service, Hakan Fidan, to hearings on his meetings with PKK leaders in February 2012, the process continued until 2015 and was instrumentalized by the AKP as a new project to attract Kurdish voters, liberals, and some leftwing groups. However, the "solution process" was put aside following the 7 June 2015 elections in which a decline of AKP's votes was apparent. From then on, AKP followed a nationalistic, militaristic strategy towards the Kurdish issue.

During the heyday of the "solution process," an unexpected revolt against the AKP government broke out in June 2013. The revolt was initially a protest by a small group of environmentalists oppose the construction of a mall in place of Gezi Park in Taksim. Given the harsh intervention of the police combined with the opposition's discomfort with the authoritarian tendencies of the government, the protest quickly turned into a large-scale wave of protests across Turkey targeting the AKP government. The protests included several political groups such as the socialists, Kemalists, the Kurdish movement, Turkish nationalists, and anti-capitalist Muslims. The common demands of these groups were shaped by objections to neoliberal policies of privatizing public spaces, the sentiments of city rights, and reaction to police violence and authoritarian governance.[77] The AKP reacted to Gezi Park protests by arguing

77 Bora, *Cereyanlar*, 500.

that they were a part of an international conspiracy against "the rise of Turkey" led by "interest lobbies." Also, Erdoğan regarded the protests as the opposition's desire to seize power and bypass the "national will," polarizing the people with his statements. This emphasis on international conspiracies and national will would take a central role in the discourse of the AKP following the Gezi Park protests.

As the Gezi Park protests gradually ended, a new conflict arose between the Gülen Movement and the AKP which became visible when AKP announced its plan to close private teaching institutions which were used as a tool for recruiting followers by the Gülen Movement led by Fethullah Gülen. The Gülen Movement had formed an alliance with the AKP since its foundation and acted together with it, especially to suppress the Kemalist and secular opposition with lawsuits like Ergenekon. The roots of the movement date to the end of the 1960s. Over the years, the movement founded private education institutions, media outlets, financial institutions, and civil society organizations. Followers of Fethullah Gülen had become dominant in many state institutions like the judiciary, the police, and the military, and gradually Erdoğan started to feel that his power was threatened by the movement. The Gülen Movement retorted to AKP's decision to close the private teaching institutions on 17 December 2013 by initiating an investigation into corruption that included the sons of four ministers, to which Prime Minister Erdoğan's own son Bilal was added on 25 December 2013. Erdoğan saw these investigations as an attempted coup against the elected government by members of judiciary working with the "parallel state." According to Erdoğan, the Gülenists formed a state-within-the-state to fulfill the goals of their organization. Thus, a war was declared against the Gülen Movement, private institutions ranging from educational to financial institutions were appropriated, and Gülenist public figures like journalists were charged with being members of an illegal organization.

After the Gezi Park protests and the December 17-25 investigations, the AKP became harsher than ever and adopted even more authoritarian strategies vis-â-vis the opposition. Stress on conspiracy theories and on national will – which could only be reflected by elections, according to Erdoğan – increased and were used as a discursive method to mobilize supporters against attacks

by the opposition, which were claimed to be directed by international powers. This discourse placed the AKP in a position of being "local and national" and supported by "national will" whereas political figures in the opposition were represented as favoring a coup, being disrespectful of the national will and values of the nation, and acting in accordance with international conspiracies. The polarizing discourse of the AKP was successful in the March 2014 local elections which resulted an AKP victory with 43.39 percent of the vote. Erdoğan managed to canalize attention on corruption charges to conspiracy scenarios and the "parallel state." Erdoğan was then elected as new president of Turkey on 10 August 2014 in the first session with 51.79 percent of the vote following a similar campaign to the one made before the March 2014 local elections which was based on polarizing discourse.

Although Davutoğlu became the new Prime Minister of Turkey and head of the AKP, Erdoğan's influence over the party was evident. Also, Erdoğan did not conform to the traditional role of the president, which is mainly ceremonial in practice, but maintained some authority over the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches. Erdoğan, unlike former presidents, fully used his authority and sought to stretch it. While his public statements in favor of the AKP were criticized for being against the principle of impartiality of the presidency, he responded that he "was not impartial but on the side of the nation," which according to his majoritarian understanding, was represented by the AKP. Moreover, he publicly advocated for a presidential government system and pressured Davutoğlu to put the realization of this system into the party's program and place it on the immediate agenda. He advocated a "Turkish-style presidency" which projected a president with broad authority over the legislative and judiciary branches and as the sole head of the executive branch instead of the existing parliamentary system with two heads of the executive branch – the prime minister and president – but in practice the former's authority over the executive was more legitimate because he was elected by the people directly. Erdoğan thought this system change was necessary given that president was also elected directly by the people following the 2007 referendum. He acted as both head of the executive and head of the state as the first publicly elected president. However, Davutoğlu was also a head of executive,

and he was none too eager to replace the parliamentary system with a presidential one. In this political context, the AKP participated in the 7 June 2015 general elections with, again, a polarizing campaign that involved Erdoğan and Davutoğlu in separate rallies propagating for the AKP it received 40.87 percent of the vote, which was a 9 percent decline in comparison to the previous general elections. As a result, the AKP lost the majority that allowed it to form a single party government for the first time.

Meanwhile, authoritarianism gained pace with an increasing security discourse against "terrorist threats" and the passage of legislation like the Internal Security Law which entered into force on 1 May 2015. Following the 7 June 2015 general elections, a coalition government was not able to be formed, and President Erdoğan called for snap elections. The Government put an end to the "solution process" in July 2015, and military operations started in Kurdish regions right after the elections. The period between two elections witnessed an increase in bombing attacks throughout the country by the Islamic State (IS), which was operating in Iraq and Syria, and the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and its affiliates. Finally, elections were held on 1 November 2015 and the AKP increased its votes to 49.50 percent of the vote. During the campaign process, Davutoğlu emphasized security and did not mention the presidential system having declared that the AKP had given up on the presidential system after the 7 June 2015 general elections. Also, Erdoğan did not participate in the campaign unlike in previous elections.

Although the election results were a victory for Davutoğlu, disaccord between him and Erdoğan was evident and in time led him resign after the publication of a blog entry about Davutoğlu's disrespect of Erdoğan written from an Erdoğanist point of view. Binali Yıldırım replaced him as Prime Minister of Turkey and head of AKP in May 2016. Once he took over the post, he declared that the immediate political agenda was to bring about a presidential system. Initially all the parties in parliament except for the AKP objected to this system, but MHP changed its attitude towards the system and started to advocate for it after the attempted military coup on 15 July 2016.

The 15 July coup attempt can be evaluated as the peak of aforementioned conflict between the Gülen Movement and AKP. The coup attempt, which was staged mostly by Gülenist officers, found no support from political parties,

civil society, or the media. Also, the coup encountered with the huge resistance of the people who poured into the streets to oppose the army upon Erdoğan's call to resist. On July 16th, soldiers involved in the coup attempt retreated and Erdoğan arose victorious. Fethullah Gülen and his followers were fingered as the perpetrators of the coup attempt, and the term "parallel state," which had been used by Erdoğan to define the Gülen Movement, was replaced by "FETÖ," which is the abbreviation of the Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Organization. The government announced a state of emergency that gave the president the authority to promulgate decree laws and started a wave of eliminations of not only Gülenists but also other opponents of Erdoğan employed in public sector. The military, which was completely reorganized after the coup attempt, the police forces, the judiciary, and all other state institutions were subject to firings by decree laws that claimed the fired people were terrorists. The coup attempt helped Erdoğan who was in a legitimacy crisis given his partial, executive presidency under the parliamentary system in which the presidency was and impartial and ceremonial position. His approval ratings increased to 67.6 percent, a 21 percent rise over the previous month.[78]

Soon, Erdoğan reopened the issue of changing from a parliamentary system to a presidential one in this new political context. This time, the MHP supported the draft and started to advocate for a new presidential system of government in which the president could be politically partial and would be the sole head of both executive branch and the state. This meant that, in the case of Erdoğan, he could be the head of his party, which maintained a single-party government in legislative branch, head of the executive, and head of the state at the same time. Also, the president would have authority over the judicial branch, such as the authority to appoint a number of judges to the supreme courts, and over state institutions like universities given that his authority to appoint rectors. The system change was approved by the public in disputed elections on 16 April 2017. Following the elections, Erdoğan returned to his party and became leader of AKP once again. Since then, Erdoğan has acted as the first president under this new system given his broad authority because of the state of emergency.

78 Metropoll, *Türkiye'nin Nabzı: Darbe Girişimi Sonrası Türkiye'de Siyaset ve Toplum*, July 2016.

2.3.3 *The AKP and Neo-Ottomanism*

The concept of neo-Ottomanism in relation to AKP was first used by international relations scholars to define its foreign policy. Among these scholars were such political figures as the head of the national intelligence service under Erdoğan, Hakan Fidan, who co-authored an article about "new geographic imagination" of Turkish foreign policy in order to describe foreign policy decision making with respect to Eurasia.[79] Ömer Taşpınar argues that there are three characteristics of neo-Ottomanism. First is a willingness to come terms with Turkey's Ottoman and Islamic heritage at home and abroad, which includes a broad vision for Turkish foreign policy requiring the embrace of the Ottoman "great power" legacy and a redefinition of Turkey's strategic and national identity.[80] Second, according to Taşpınar, neo-Ottomanism sees Turkey as regional super-power, creating a sense of grandeur and self-confidance.[81] Finally, Taşpınar argues that the goal of neo-Ottomanism is to embrace the West as much as the Islamic world.[82]

Some scholars including Taşpınar, argue that the political decision making of leading AKP politicians were independently guided by religious ideas.[83] However, others examine AKP's foreign policy after 2011 and suggest that Islam has much more influence in neo-Ottomanist foreign policy than Taşpınar predict. Behlül Özkan even proposes calling AKP's foreign policy pan-Islamist rather than neo-Ottomanist, the latter term of which is used by Özkan supposedly as an ideological concept defining foreign policy during the Özal period.[84] The roots of pan-Islamism, like Ottomanism, go back to the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. During the reign of Abdulhamid II, the empire lost most of its Christian population following the loss of Balkans, and

79 Hakan Fidan, and Bülent Aras, "Turkey and Eurasia: Frontiers of a new geographic imagination," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 40, (March 2009), 193-215.

80 Ömer Taşpınar, *Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism*, (Carnegie Papers, 2008), 14-15.

81 Ibid., 15.

82 Ibid.

83 Dietrich Jung, "The domestic context of new activism in Turkish foreign policy: Does religion matter?" *International Journal* 67, (Winter 2011-12), 23-38.

84 Özkan, "Yeni-Osmanlıcılık ve Pan-İslamcılık."

Muslim population increased in the empire's remaining territories due to Muslim migration from these lost territories. Meanwhile, intellectuals pondered ways to restore the empire and tried to create loyalty ties which would make empire survive. As opposed to the Ottomanists who advocated for a broad definition of Ottoman citizenship and Ottoman identity regardless of religion and ethnicity and to the pan-Turkists who thought that the empire could only survive through Turkish nationalism in a period of rising nationalisms, the pan-Islamists favored building an Islamic identity to restore the empire. They argued that the Ottoman Empire should embrace its Islamic identity and undertake the leadership of the Islamic world as its sultans were also the caliphates of the ummah.

Throughout republican history, Islamist intellectuals like Necip Fazıl and Sezai Karakoç reformulated pan-Islamism. Necip Fazıl, who was firmly opposed to westernization, praised Abdulhamid II because, according to him, Abdulhamid II synthesized western technical developments with Islamic values. Sezai Karakoç argued that an "Islamic nation" has existed for more than thousand years and that its last incarnation was the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, according to him, the boundaries that divide the ummah should be removed and Turkey should be the leader of this new, borderless Middle East. As a manifestation of these ideas in real politics, Erbakan, who was deeply influenced by these intellectuals, criticized Westernism and pro-Western foreign policy. He proposed that Turkey turn its face to the Islamic world as an alternative ever since he entered parliament.

A pan-Islamist worldview that emphasizes and instrumentalize Ottoman legacy at home and abroad has gradually become dominant since AKP came to power in 2002. The opportunity for it to be officially implemented emerged especially after 2011. This process was actively directed by Ahmet Davutoğlu, a respected academic in Islamist circles. He became the foreign policy advisor to Erdoğan in 2002, Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009, and prime minister in 2014 after Erdoğan left this post for the presidency. As opposed to aforementioned scholars who argued that the foreign policy of AKP was not determined by the principles of Islam but decided upon using rational principles that pushed AKP towards a more proactive foreign policy that included developing favorable relations with both the west and the east through soft power,

Özkan indicates that Davutoğlu's pan-Islamist vision was always evident and AKP's good relations with Middle Eastern dictatorships that were based on a soft power principle of until 2011, were a part of a "wait and see" period.[85] According to him, Davutoğlu argued that Islamist movements like the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates, which were seen as the ideological siblings of AKP, were rising in the Middle East, and he advocated for the support of these movements. Therefore, Özkan argues, he waited for that these movements to take power before openly supporting them, and during this wait, he developed relations with Middle East countries to increase Turkey's influence over them. In this respect, 2011 was a turning point. In addition to the effect of the 2011 elections – which resulted in an absolute AKP victory with the highest percentage of votes compared to previous elections – on AKP's confidence with respect to its foreign policy decision making, the Arab revolts that started in late 2011 were an impetus for Davutoğlu, who predicted that the Islamist movements would succeed, to pursue his pan-Islamist vision by supporting them. Davutoğlu was so insistent on this policy that he completely abandoned "soft power" by arming the Islamist opposition in Syria.

Foreign policy of Davutoğlu was related to his academic writings published before he was appointed to government posts. It is necessary to analyze his writings, especially his book Strategic Depth (*Stratejik Derinlik*) published in 2001, to make sense of his neo-Ottomanism and its emphasis on Islam. Although Özkan differentiates Davutoğlu's vision from Özal's neo-Ottomanism given his emphasis on Islamic identity rather than Özal's broader, pro-Western identity imagination, I prefer to call Davutoğlu's vision neo-Ottoman because, in the end, he intrumentalizes the Ottoman legacy to construct Muslim national identity and an imperial state identity. His imperial claim can be seen from both his theoretical conceptualization and argumentation in Strategic Depth. First, he uses the same concepts used in imperial geopolitical theories that emerged in the late nineteenth century among scholars like Alfred Mahan, Nicholas Spykman, and Halford Mackinder who tried to construct a the-

85 Özkan, "Yeni-Osmanlıcılık ve Pan-İslamcılık," 432.

oretical underpinning for their countries' imperial expansion. Imperial geopolitics served to justify imperial expansionism and accepted conflicts and wars between imperial powers as given without developing any critique of them.[86] Among these concepts, central location (*mittellage*), hinterland, and life space (*lebensraum*) are the ones that came to the fore.[87] According to Davutoğlu, Turkey is central because it inherited the position of being a political center from the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, it should interest in its "natural" life space ranging from the Adriatic to Caspian Seas.[88] He blames earlier foreign policy makers for, according to him, making Turkey a periphery country of the West instead of realizing its central position. Davutoğlu argues that the territories that belonged to the Ottoman Empire including the Middle East, Balkans, and Caucasus constitute the hinterland and sphere of influence of Turkey. He pursue the revival of the the "natural" and "ancient" region of the civilization of the Ottoman Empire.[89]

His argumentation bears significant imprints of earlier Islamist figures like Necip Fazıl, Sezai Karakoç, and Necmettin Erbakan. Parallelling their opposition to westernization, he argues that, "Turkish political elites who see a future for Turkey in transferring bedraggled European values to society should pull their heads from the sand in which they have hidden since the 1830s and avoid from focusing only one direction."[90] Instead of a Eurocentric foreign policy, he propose pursuing hegemony over the Middle East, Balkans, and Caucasus by redefining the identity of the nation and of the state on the basis of Islam.[91] According to him, historical and geographical conditions inevitably push Turkey towards the mission of leading the Islamic world.

Aforementioned conceptualization and argumentation was shaped in flesh and bones after 2011 as foreign policy towards the Middle East that

86 Ibid., 428-429.

87 Ibid., 430.

88 Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*, (Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001), 56.

89 Bora, *Cereyanlar*, 482.

90 Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Asiaamerica," *İzlenim Dergisi*, (January 1994), 13. Cited in Özkan "Yeni-Osmanlıcılık ve Pan-İslamism," 426.

91 Özkan, "Yeni-Osmanlıcılık ve Pan-İslamcılık," 428.

shifted to a more militant approach that would ally with Islamist political movements, namely the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates, in Middle Eastern countries. Davutoğlu, who hoped that Islamist opposition would replace the authoritarian regimes of Arab countries, pursued a policy of a renewed Middle East which consisting of Islamist regimes led by the Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, after the subversion of Arab countries triggered by the Arab revolts, he tried to introduce AKP to both Arab countries and the West as a model proving that Islam and democracy could coexist.[92] AKP did embrace the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates in Arab countries; Erdoğan hosted Islamist politicians from Arab countries in an AKP convention on September 2012 that included the President Mursi of Egypt, the leader of Ennahda of Tunisia, Raşit Gannuşi, the leader of Hamas in Palestine, Halit Meşal, Iraqi Sunni politician Tarık Haşimi, and the vice president of Sudan, Ali Osman Taha. However, Davutoğlu's prediction that the Islamist opposition would seize power and embark on a new order in the Middle East under Turkey's leadership to form "pax-Ottomana" was not realized. Tarık Haşimi was exiled and Shiite politicians became dominant in Iraq, the Egyptian army staged a coup against Mursi and crushed the Muslim Brotherhood, and Syria was dragged into bloodshed.

The instrumentalization of the Ottoman legacy was not only evident in foreign policy. Domestic politics and the cultural field were also exposed to neo-Ottomanism. The geographic imagination of Turkish policy makers was strongly influenced by Turkey's domestic political transformation.[93] While the Ottoman legacy was used to make an imperial claim over other countries of the region and construct an imperial state identity, it served to help the AKP construct a national identity based on Islam with references to Ottoman Empire and claims of a continuum from the Ottoman Empire to contemporary Turkey.

The 2010s witnessed a dramatic rise of nostalgia for the Ottoman Empire. While in many cases this nostalgia was relatively independent of the AKP government in terms of its actors, sometimes the Ottoman nostalgia was pumped

92 Bora, *Cereyanlar*, 482.

93 Hakan Fidan, and Bülent Aras, "Turkey and Eurasia: Frontiers of a new geographic imagination," 195.

directly by government and state officials. In any case, Ottoman nostalgia during this period was restorative, in Boym's taxonomy, because of its emphasis on the reconstruction of the "greatness" of the Ottoman Empire. Symbols of the Ottoman Empire started to be widely used by politicians from AKP, and an emphasis on the adoption of the Ottoman legacy increased in the political discourse of AKP. Municipalities governed by mayors from AKP took an interest in restoring Ottoman buildings like Ottoman palaces and historical bazaars, organizing exhibitions about Ottoman art including calligraphy, tilework and marbling art, and organizing various activities that commemorate the Ottoman Empire. Municipalities such as Ankara, Bursa, Konya, Niğde, Kocaeli, and Bilecik formed Janissary bands that perform Janissary music (*mehter*) on various occasions like opening and welcoming ceremonies.[94]

In addition to municipalities, the official appraisal of AKP towards the Ottoman Empire can be seen in Erdoğan's speeches made at group meetings in parliament, opening ceremonies, rallies, and various other occasions in which he makes references to the Ottoman past. For instance, in an official ceremony commemorating Abdulhamid II called "Understanding Abdulhamid on the Centenary of his Death" (*Vefatının Yüzüncü Yılında Abdulhamid'i Anlamak*) organized by the presidency in Yıldız Palace on 10 February 2018, Erdoğan made a speech calling Abdulhamid II "the last ruler of the world, the last universal emperor" and complaining about the Republican portrayal of Abdulhamid as being authoritarian and cruel.[95] According to him, the official history of the early Republicans – which, for Erdoğan, is currently being reproduced by the CHP – represents Abdulhamid as an oppressive sultan and insists that the history of the Republic of Turkey start from 1923.[96] However, "the Republic

94 Tanıl Bora, "Mehter," *Birikim Dergisi*, March 16, 2016. http://www.birikimdergisi.com/haftalik/7572/mehter#.Wp_stOjFJPY

95 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's speech, February 10, 2018. https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/90385/vefatinin-100-yilinda-sultan-abdulhamidi-anlamak-konulu-konferansta-yaptiklari-konusma.html

96 Ibid.

of Turkey is the continuation of the Ottoman Empire just as it is the continuation of former Turkish states."[97] While Erdoğan criticizes the Republican attitude towards Abdulhamid on the grounds that it is ideologically loaded, he claims that his appraisal of Abdulhamid as "the most important, visionary, and strategical mind of the last 150 years," which mirrors the Turkish political right's general revivalist attitude towards Abdulhamid, presents impartial and historical facts.[98] During his speech he congratulated TRT for broadcasting a television series about Abdulhamid II, namely *Payitaht Abdulhamid*, and advocated that such series should exported to Middle Eastern and European countries.[99]

One of the most apparent examples of the instrumentalization of the Ottoman legacy is the "Conquest of Istanbul Festivities" (*Fetih Şöleni*) organized by the president along with the Istanbul governor and municipality. Erdoğan organized two rally-like festivals in 2015 and 2016. The festivities included not only speeches by state officials but also mehter concerts, visual narratives of the conquest, airshows, and poetry recitals. The presidency organized another festivity in 2017; however, it was not a rally-like event but rather part of an iftar program. The fact that Erdoğan organized huge rally-like commemorations during the campaign for the 7 June 2015 general elections and when a referendum on the presidential system was being discussed among the public in 2016 – but he held much more modest commemorations in 2017 when there were no elections on the horizon – shows that the Ottoman past was used for political propaganda. In all three commemorations, the emphasis on the Ottoman legacy, the greatness of the Ottoman Empire, and the continuity between the empire and Turkey was accompanied with the propagation of the AKP and its projects.

The "Conquest of Istanbul Festivity" of 2015 celebrating the 562nd anniversary of the conquest was a perfect example of the political use of history. The festivity was held on 30 May 2015, a week before general elections, and included both the prime minister (and head of AKP), Ahmet Davutoğlu, and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Actually, this was a violation of the principle

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

of impartiality of president who participated a political rally with the leader of AKP on this occasion. However, the Supreme Election Committee (*Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*) allowed the meeting on the grounds that the festivity was not political but an activity organized by the state. Nevertheless, Erdoğan criticized all parties except AKP during his speech as he did in previous rallies organized by the presidency during the campaign for the 7 June 2015 elections. Erdoğan was called to the stage to make his speech with an introduction in which he was called *evlad-ı fatihan*, which literally means "descendant of conquerors." During his speech, he compared himself to Abdulhamid II when he criticized a news story about his authoritarian tendencies published in *New York Times*, arguing that "this paper said similar things about Sultan Abdulhamid in 1896; they do what they did against the Ottoman Empire against Turkey and against the one who represents it, myself."[100]

The festivity held the following year was even more ostentatious than the previous one. The meeting was announced to public with news stories in media outlets and in a huge billboard advertising campaign all around the city. The biggest 3D mapping stage of the world in the shape of wall was built for the meeting which ended with an exaggerated 3D visual narrative of the conquest that lasted twenty minutes and was followed by a firework show. The speeches made by state officials including Erdoğan and Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım not only concerned the importance of the conquest and the Ottoman legacy but also current political issues, especially the AKP's agenda to bring about a new presidential government system. During his speech, Erdoğan said that "we are pursuing a 'new Turkey', a new constitution, and new government system." He argued that his ideal "new Turkey" disturbed western countries that "still do not accept our presence in this land for thousand years." According to him, Muslim societies "pinned their hopes on Turkey." State officials placed Turkey with its Ottoman legacy in the position of the leader of the Muslim world in opposition to western countries and their collaborators within the country, like the Gülenists and PKK, who conspire against Turkey. Also, Turkey and the Ottoman Empire were repeatedly connected to each other. For

100 "562. Fetih Coşkusu," *Hürriyet*, May 31, 2015. http://www.hurriyet.com.tr//562-fetih-coskusu-29154070

instance, during his speech, Yıldırım said that "like Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, who moved ships over land in order to conquer Istanbul, his descendant Tayyip Erdoğan has moved trains and cars under the sea." According to him, "it is time to rise up with the spirit of conquest once again."[101]

The AKP's, particularly Erdoğan's, promotion of the Ottoman legacy has repercussions in fields than the political field, such as in civil society and the cultural field. For instance, a civil society organization called "Ottoman Hearths" (*Osmanlı Ocakları*), which is militantly supported Erdoğan, was founded in 2009. As another example, a sports team in Ankara called Ankara Belediyespor, for whom Melih Gökçek, who was then the AKP mayor of Ankara, is honorary president, changed its name into *Osmanlıspor* in 2014. In the cultural field, in addition to above mentioned cultural policy reproducing and popularizing Ottoman culture and arts through various activities, which have been undertaken by municipalities ruled by AKP, including large, expensive projects like the Panaroma 1453 History Museum which narrates "the conquest" of Istanbul by Ottomans and that was opened with a ceremony that included then-prime minister Tayyip Erdoğan and by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality ruled by AKP on 2009; popular culture has also been exposed to neo-Ottomanism. Movies and television series about the Ottoman Empire that correspond to the official ideology of AKP regarding the Ottoman past. While television series about the Ottoman Empire, like *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* which attracted viewers with the love story between Sultan Süleyman I and his wife Hürrem and with the intrigues of palace politics rather than through a nationalistic use of history that reproduce the AKP's neo-Ottomanism, started to be broadcast in 2011 but were not welcomed by ruling elites.[102] Television series that aired on TRT like *Diriliş Ertuğrul*, *Payitaht Abdulhamid* and

101 "İstanbul'da 'Fetih Şöleni,'" *Hürriyet*, May 29, 2016. http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/istanbulda-fetih-soleni-alarmi-40110571

102 Erdoğan publicly criticized *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* by accusing the television series of distorting history and misrepresenting Turkish and Islamic values. See, "Erdoğan'dan 'Muhteşem Yüzyıl' eleştirisi: Bizim öyle bir ecdadımız yok," *Radikal*, November 25, 2012. http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/erdogandan-muhtesem-yuzyil-elestirisi-bizim-oyle-bir-ecdadimiz-yok-1109303/

Mehmetçik Kut-ül Amare, represent the AKP's neo-Ottomanism and are promoted by state officials.[103] The details of neo-Ottomanism in the mass media that appeared as a neo-Ottomanist television series as examples of popular art are is discussed in the following chapters with a theoretical background of the relationship between politics and mass media.

103 Erdoğan recommended these television series and supported them in various ways including participating in their first screenings and visiting their sets. With regard to his promotion of *Payitaht Abdulhamid*, see "Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Tarihi bilmek için Payitaht Abdulhamid'i izleyin," *TRT Haber*, December 31, 2017, http://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/cumhurbaskani-recep-tayyip-erdogan-tarihi-bilmek-icin-payitaht-abdulhamidi-izleyin-345026.html; for his participation to the first screening of *Mehmetçik Kut'ül Amare*, see "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Kut'ül Amare dizisinin tanıtımına katıldı," *Anadolu Ajansı*, January 16, 2018, https://aa.com.tr/tr/gunun-basliklari/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-kutul-amare-dizisinin-tanitimina-katildi/1032978; for his visit to the *Diriliş Ertuğrul* set, see "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, 'Diriliş Ertuğrul' setini ziyaret etti," *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı*, June 7, 2015, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/32612/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-dirilis-ertugrul-dizisinin-setini-ziyaret-etti.html

3

Neo-Ottomanism in Mass Media

In this chapter, neo-Ottomanist television series (other than *Diriliş Ertuğrul*) are evaluated as examples of neo-Ottomanist popular art following a discussion of theoretical and empirical accounts of the relationship between politics and the mass media. Because this study examines the ideology of AKP through cultural products, the focus will be on series aired on TRT, a station that represents the ideology of the ruling elites because it is owned by the state and produces programs in accordance with the ideology of the state and the ruling party.

§ 3.1 Politics and Mass Media

Mass media, which can be defined as a collection of media technologies – ranging from the press to television and from cinema to the internet – that reach broad audiences through mass communication, has political and social aspects in addition to the fact that it is a part of the cultural field. For Frankfurt School thinkers as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the "culture industry," the term they use to describe mass media, was a tool for manipulating

and dominating the masses in the hands of a group of elites.[1] While media systems all over the world are shaped by the broader context of political history and culture, media also shapes politics. For instance, the two-way relationship between politics and the mass media can be seen in the emergence of nations and nationalisms invented through mass media, especially newspapers, and determined the form and content of the mass media, as Benedict Anderson put forward.[2]

The very nature of the mass media that it addresses millions of people, makes it a useful tool for organizing social action, if not political propaganda. Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton pondered the social role of the mass media and emphasized the social control exercised by powerful interest groups in society.[3] According to them, mass media is a way of persuading masses rather than using physical force to control the opinions and beliefs of society.[4] In their notable work that evaluates various aspects of the social role of the mass media, they describe its social functions such as status conferral, the enforcement of social norms, and narcotizing dysfunction. According to them, the mass media legitimizes selected persons, groups, and ideologies by supporting them through a conferral mechanism; publicly reaffirms social norms by exposing deviations from them; and narcotizes the audience instead of energizing them by transforming active participation into passive knowledge.[5] Also, they argue that the structure of commercialized ownership and control of the mass media constrains social criticism and lowers esthetic standards.[6] The final aspect of

1 Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment:Philosophical Fragments*, translated by John Cumming, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

2 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and the Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso, 1983).

3 Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action," in *Mass Communications: A Book of Readings*, ed. Wilbur Schramm (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1960), 493.

4 Ibid., 494.

5 Ibid., 497-502.

6 Ibid., 502-508.

the social role of the mass media is its use as propaganda for social and political objectives. Propaganda through mass media canalizes the current system of values instead of changing them and is most effective when the monopolization of the mass media is realized by an authoritarian government or during times of war.[7]

According to Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, propaganda is intrinsic to mass media that communicate messages and symbols to a large audience because systematic propaganda is necessary to fulfill mass media's role of inculcating individuals with the values and beliefs that integrate them into the institutional structures of the society.[8] Propaganda is so central to the functioning of the mass media that propaganda systems are not only evident in authoritarian states that have established monopolistic control over the media for the interests of a dominant elite. They are also at work when the media is in the hands of private sector and formal censorship is absent.[9] Chomsky and Herman examine the mass media in the United States and argue that economic and political power "filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public."[10] They describe five filters that show the propagandist nature of the mass media. These filters are: mass media's integration into the market and its legal dependence on government; the position of advertising which shapes the opinions of people and determines which media outlets survive among the mass media given that it is their primary income source; the use of information provided by the government and by experts funded by primary sources and agents of power; negative responses to a media statement or program, ranging from threats to punitive actions; and the ideology of anti-communism which serve as a political control mechanism.[11]

7 Ibid., 508-510.

8 Edward Herman, and Noam Chomsky, *A Propaganda Model in Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 280.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 281.

11 Ibid., 281-302.

A more recent study on the relationship between politics and the mass media, the work of Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini, classifies media systems in eighteen countries in North America and Western Europe with respect to their relation to politics. They propose four aspects to describe media systems.[12] According to them, the media systems of the examined countries can be divided into three models – the liberal, democratic corporatist and polarized pluralist models – in terms of their political parallelism, which refers to a media outlet's inclination to reflect certain political orientations, the degree of state intervention through public broadcasting and legal regulations, the historical development of the media markets, and the extent of journalistic professionalism.[13]

Since the 1930s, television has been one of the most effective apparatuses of the mass media in terms of its potential for propaganda. The change that television as a new medium of mass communication brought is controversial. One of the most influential studies regarding this change and the social role of this new medium is that of Marshall McLuhan whose works have left a mark on media theory. His most well-known argument – "the medium is the message" – implies that the medium itself and its characteristics affect society more than the message which is carried and determined by the medium.[14] Therefore, in addition to messages conveyed to the masses, television as a medium affects people's way of thinking. Neil Postman, who focused on the social aspects of television, went further and argued that a change in the dominant medium, namely the transition from an oral to a print culture, and then to the ascendancy of television not only shifted the content and meaning of public discourse but also brought about a new epistemology.[15] According to him, "definitions of truth are derived, at least in part, from the character of the

12 Daniel Hallin, and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

13 Ibid.

14 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding the Media: The Extensions of Man*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

15 Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, (London: Penguin Books, 1985).

media of communication through which information is conveyed."[16] Therefore, while print culture based on the written word paves the way for coherent, serious, and rational public discourse, the rise of television undermines these values of public discourse because of its nature based on visual attraction and amusement.[17]

Aside from these studies that ponder the effects of television as a medium and form of disseminating certain messages, it is important to mention studies on the content carried by television – that is, the messages and myths reproduced through it. For instance, Sari Thomas argues that television is not only an entertainment medium but also a powerful educational force and significant source of orientation. She examines the cultural reproduction aspect of television which produces certain myths about consumer culture and social mobility such as "cheap is vulgar" and "anyone has a chance of accomplishing upward mobility."[18] Another study about the social role of messages given by television is that of Alexander Dhoest who is concerned with the mobilization of television dramas in the construction of national identity in the case of Netherlands.[19] He argues that Flemish television drama helped form national identity through producing discourses about Flanders' shared history, shared culture, national language, and national character.[20] A study about the political role of the television in the Turkish case, that is worth mentioning was conducted by Pınar Sayan who examined the influential television series *Kurtlar Vadisi* to explain the characteristics of new-nationalism.[21] According to her, the new form of nationalism that emerged after the end of the Cold War can

16 Ibid., 17.

17 Ibid., 16-29.

18 Sari Thomas, *Myths In and About Television: Entertainment and Economics*, in *Questioning the Media: A Critical Introduction*, edited by John Downing, Mohammadi Ali, and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1995).

19 Alexander Dhoest, "Negotiationg images of the nation: the production of Flemish TV drama: 1953-89," *Media, Culture and Society* 26, (2004), 393-408.

20 Ibid., 396-398.

21 Pınar Sayan, *New-Nationalist Popular Art in Turkey: The Case of Kurtlar Vadisi*, (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010).

be understood through television series that spread ideological messages to their audiences.[22]

In Turkey, the roots of the mass media lie in the nineteenth century. The first Turkish-language newspapers were established by state authorities to counter the newspapers founded by foreigners to promote their own interests in the early nineteenth century.[23] Some thirty years after the foundation of the first Turkish newspaper, privately-owned newpapers began to appear in the 1860s. The press was highly politicized in this period as the Young Ottomans used it as a tool to scrutinize authoritarian state institutions and push for modernization. Indeed, the Young Ottoman press played an important role in the proclamation of the constitutional monarchy in 1876.[24] The constitutional monarchy was suspended a year later, and under the rule of Abdulhamid II, the press was exposed to various pressures like censorship. After the second proclamation of a constitutional monarchy in 1908 the press enjoyed relative freedom for a short time, but strict censorship policies were revived during the First World War.[25] The strong relationship between politics and the mass media in Turkey started from the very foundation of the mass media, and continued in the Republican period.

Under the rule of the single party regime, the press was under the direct or indirect control of the state and divided into camps both of which used the press for political advocacy: the Kemalist and liberal.[26] The transition to a multiparty system did not changed this politicization; rather it helped new parties such as the Democrat Party to politically instrumentalize the press.[27] Although the DP promised press freedom and enacted a new law expanding the rights of journalists just after it formed a single-party majority government in parliament in 1950, this law was amended as the party's power grew in ensuing

22 Ibid., 11.

23 Raşit Kaya, and Barış Çakmur, "Politics and the Mass Media in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 11 (2010), 523.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 524.

27 Ibid.

years, and the press was again subjected to legal censure such as closures and the imprisonment of journalists. In addition, the DP's clientelist attitude towards the press favored certain media owners and journalists who were given state subsidies and benefits.[28] In the 1960s, a commercial press emerged, and as a result, the party-directed press declined. However, even though the commercial press was owned by private companies and grew throughout the following decades, this privately-owned media gradually came to be dominated by a few holding companies that operated various businesses other than their media initiatives. These companies have acted in accordance with the government because of their tendency to instrumentalize mass media for their business interests.[29]

§ 3.2 Television Series About the Ottoman Past

In this section, leaving *Diriliş Ertuğrul* aside, television series about the Ottoman past are documented. Because the Turkish Radio Television Corporation (TRT), which is owned by the Turkish state, is a medium that represents the ideology of the ruling party and of the state, the focus is on TRT. However, in order to better grasp neo-Ottomanist popular art and neo-Ottomanism, series broadcast on privately-owned televsion channels are also mentioned.

3.2.1 *Turkish Radio and Television Corporation*

TRT was founded in 1964 as an autonomous entity to perform radio and television broadcasts on behalf of the state. In spite of its institutional autonomy which projects TRT as politically impartial, the impartiality of TRT in practice is controversial. After the 1971 military intervention, TRT's autonomy was redefined. TRT's initial, official objectives to "realize informative, educative, entertaining, true and impartial broadcasts" were replaced. The objectives to "contribute to culture and education" were transformed into "apply the prin-

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 526.

ciples of Turkish national education to contribute to national culture and education" in the TRT law.[30] Also, this new law included the new objectives to "follow the necessities of national security and public morals and protect national customs" and to "strengthen the integrity of the Turkish state and nation."[31] In ensuing years, TRT was highly influenced by pressure from the rightwing political parties.[32] Anyway, TRT as a state institution produced broadcasts in compliance with official state ideology and the government's political vision. Since 1971, Turkish Radio and Television has been working under the direct control of the state and the majority party.[33]

TRT started to broadcast in 1968 on some days of the week and began to be on the air all days of the week in 1974. At that point, it reached 55 percent of the population.[34] It began to broadcast in color in 1981 and became more widespread with technological developments. In 1986, another television channel founded by the institution, TRT-2, beganbroadcasting cultural and educational programs. TRT continued to establish new television channels such as TRT-3 for foreign films and television series and GAP TV for cultural programs in 1989, TRT-4 for educational programs and TRT-International for Turks living in Europe in 1990, TRT-Avrasya for Caucasia and Central Asia in 1995, and Meclis TV for live broadcasting from parliament in 1995.

Expansion of TRT continued during the AKP period with the foundation of TRT Çocuk for kids in 2008, and in 2009, TRT-6 for broadcasting in Kurdish, TRT Avaz for programs from the broader Turkic world, TRT Anadolu (which turned into TRT Diyanet three years later) for religious programming, TRT Müzik for music videos and programs about music, and TRT Belgesel for documentaries. The next year, TRT Haber for news, TRT El Arabia with Arabic programming aimed at the Arab world, and TRT Spor for sports programming were established. Today, including TRT World which was founded in

30 Özden Cankaya, *Bir İletişim Kurumunun Tarihi: TRT, 1927-2000*, (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), 95.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Kaya and Çakmur, "Politics and the Mass Media in Turkey," 526.

34 "Tarihçe," *TRT Website*, http://www.trt.net.tr/Kurumsal/Tarihce.aspx

2015 for worldwide broadcast in English, TRT has one international and fifteen national television channels that broadcast to a large audience.

The first television series about the Ottoman past was *4. Murat*, the four episodes of which aired in 1981 and fictionalized the reign of Murat IV which lasted between 1623 and 1632. Before that, TRT started to broadcast television series with Ottoman background in their narration but which were not directly about the Ottoman past. These included adaptations of Turkish literary classics such as *Aşk-ı Memnu* which was an adaptation of Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil's novel that aired in 1975. Such literary adaptations continued to be broadcasted. For instance, in 1984 TRT aired *Küçük Ağa* adapted from Tarık Buğra's novel which was about last days of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish War of Independence, *Kırık Hayatlar* which was adapted from Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil's novel in 1985, and Mehmet Rauf's *Eylül* and Reşat Nuri Güntekin's *Yaprak Dökümü* in 1988. Aside from these adaptations of Turkish literature, TRT broadcast historical television series narrating certain periods of the Ottoman Empire like *4. Murat*. In 1982 a television series titled *Preveze Öncesi* narrated events leading up to the battle of Preveza of 1538 that resulted in an Ottoman victory, and in 1986, *Kuruluş Osmancık* narrated the early years of the Ottoman Empire led by Osman.

In the 1990s, TRT did not air documentary-like historical television series about the Ottoman past; rather, it aired programming about the foundation of the Turkish Republic that represented the Ottoman Empire as backward. While *Kuruluş* (1994) concerned the Turkish War of Independence, *Cumhuriyet* (1998) fictionalized the first ten years of the Turkish republic and the modernizing reforms implemented in this period.

During the AKP period, the number of television series about the Ottoman past rose significantly. In 2008, *Dur Yolcu*, which revolved around the battle of Gallipoli, was aired. Then in 2012, the channel broadcast a television series named *Bir Zamanlar Osmanlı* which was about the Tulip period during the reign of Ahmed III. *Osmanlı Tokadı*, the two seasons of which aired in 2013 and 2014, told a story regarding Mehmet II period. *Çırağan Baskını* concerning the attempted coup against Abdulhamid II in 1878 was broadcast in 2014. A detective story set during the Abdulhamid II period named *Filinta* lasted two seasons in 2014 and 2015. In 2016, two documentaries about the battle of

Gallipoli were broadcast on TRT-1 as single-season mini series: *Seddülbahir 32 Saat* documented the failed landing of British and French forces at Cape Helles, and *Yüzyıllık Mühür* narrated the stories of fifteen people who contributed to the Turkish side in the battle. These were categorized as "Young Heroes," "Women Heroes," and "Non-Muslim Heroes," and each consisted of five episodes.

Three television series about the Ottoman Empire are ongoing, and their influence among the public and their political significance is proven by their ratings and the government's explicit support. In 2014, *Diriliş Ertuğrul* which concerns Ertuğrul, the father of founder of the Ottoman Empire, Osman, started to be broadcast. *Payitaht Abdulhamid* which narrated the Abdulhamid II period from the point of view that praised Abdulhamid as religious, open-minded, humble, intelligent leader in line with the aforementioned positive attitude of Islamists towards Abdulhamid II, began in 2017. Most recently, recently in January 2018, *Mehmetçik Kutülamare* about a troop fighting on the Iraqi front during the First World War started to air. It is produced by the same producer as *Diriliş Ertuğrul*, Tekden Film. Because *Diriliş Ertuğrul* will be analyzed in following chapter, the other ongoing television series will be mentioned in detail here. *Payitaht Abdulhamid* and *Mehmetçik Kutülamare* are similar to *Diriliş Ertuğrul* in terms of their political instrumentalization of Ottoman past. Because these two series are other works of neo-Ottomanist popular art that politically instrumentalize the Ottoman past through the mass media like their contemporary, *Diriliş: Ertuğrul*, the first episodes of these series are analyzed.

Payitaht Abdulhamid is a television series publicly recommended by Erdoğan,[35] one storyline of which revolves around Abdulhamid II and his circle, and the other of which represents the founder of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, as a Jewish journalist obsessed with the idea of Israel state who conspires against Abdulhamid II from Vienna. The political opponents of Ab-

35 For his statements recommending Payitaht: Abdulhamid see, "Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayip Erdoğan: Tarihi bilmek için Payitaht abdulhamid'i izleyin," *TRT Haber*, December 31, 2017, http://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/cumhurbaskani-recep-tayyip-erdogan-tarihi-bilmek-icin-payitaht-abdulhamidi-izleyin-345026.html

dulhamid II such as Mahmut Şevket Paşa and Prince Sabahattin are represented as working together with evil foreign powers to undermine Abdulhamid II. The first episode of the series portrays Abdulhamid as a wise sultan who foils the tricks of deceitful foreigners and slaps the British ambassador who tries to trick him into a deal that would favor of British interests. As a sincere Muslim, he gives his pashas commands regarding India and Africa, regions where Muslims are living, in his capacity as Khalifa. He intendts to break British hegemony over Muslims in these regions by attacking British posts. He knows deep secrets about his enemies and sends a spy to Buckhingam Palace to find and report on a "secret room" hidden in the palace that contains all the secret information, plans, and conspiracies of the British Empire.

Mehmetçik Kutülamare was introduced in a premiere held in the presidential palace which was joined by Erdoğan.[36] The series concerns a special troop of volunteers fighting in Iraq in the First World War that was founded by the secret service of the Ottoman Empire (Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa), namely the Osmancık troop. It starts with a scene showing the Turkish leader of the troop, Süleyman, making a speech about the role of the Ottoman Empire as the last independent Muslim state and the last hope of Muslims from Iraq, India, North Africa, and other parts of the Islamic World, in a room adorned with Turkish flags. These tirade-like monologues are frequently seen throughout the series such as in a scene involving a similar public speech about the importance of the Ottoman Empire for the Islamic World in front of the Hagia Sofia accompanied by valls of "Allahu Akbar" from the crowd and in a scene consisting of a speech concerning the virtues of martyrdom delivered by Süleyman. Like *Payitaht Abdulhamid*, this series portrays foreigners, especially the British represented by the spy Cox, as deceitful people conspiring against the integrity of the Empire by provoking the Armenians. As opposed to evil foreigners, the Turks, whose only aim is to protect their homeland and the Islamic world against the British who desire to dominate it, are honorable. The most explicit reference to the recent political history of Turkey and most

36 For the article detailing the premiere see, "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Kutül Amare dizisinin tanıtımına katıldı," *Anadolu Ajansı*, January 16, 2018, https://aa.com.tr/tr/gunun-basliklari/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-kutul-amare-dizisinin-tanitimina-katildi/1032978

explicit example of the political instrumentalization of the television series is the last scene of the episode which shows the oath-taking ceremony of the Osmancık troop. The oath ends with a quotation from a famous poem read by Erdoğan in a rally in 1999 which resulted in his imprisonment on the grounds that it was against secularist principles.

3.2.2 *Private Television Channels*

The first private television channel was established in 1989 and began broadcasting in 1990 under name of Star TV. From then on, television channels flourished throughout the 1990s, Show TV arrived in 1992, Samanyolu TV and Kanal D in 1993, and ATV in 1994. In spite of the emergence of a private press, the government's influence over the media did not stop. In fact, the commercialization of the media that accompanied the neoliberal transformation of the economy in the 1980s and growth of private broadcasting in the 1990s did not reduce the political parallelism of the mass media in Turkey but fortified because of the instrumentalization of the media outlets by the corporate interests.[37] Also, these corporations could not escape the control of state regulation and funding. The state supervised the broadcasting sector through the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) founded in 1994.[38]

In the AKP period, media companies that failed to support the government were subdued with legal measures like fines and the confinement of their journalists. For instance, Erdoğan publicly instructed authorities to fine Doğan Media Group for covering a court case against a charity accused of illegally transferring funds to several Islamists, including some figures close to AKP, in 2010. Doğan Group was thus forced to pay a tax fine of $3.1 billion.[39] Today, almost all private television channels produce broadcasts in line with the AKP's political vision in a political climate where 145 journalists are in jail.

Because I limited my analysis to television series aired by TRT due to its irrefutable links to the ideology of the government, television series concerning the Ottoman Empire that aired on private channels will only be mentioned

37 Kaya and Çakmur. "Politics and the Mass Media in Turkey," 523.

38 Ibid., 521.

39 Ibid., 532.

without detail. The first of these was *Hürrem Sultan* which aired on Star TV in 2003 and concerns the love story between Süleyman I and his wife Hürrem. From 2007 to 2009, another series named *Elveda Rumeli* was broadcast in ATV and was about the last years of the Ottoman presence in the Balkans. The television series that had the highest ratings among these, namely *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, which narrated the Süleyman I period focusing on the relationship between him and Hürrem, began airing in 2011 on Star TV and continued for three seasons. In 2012, Kanal D produced series named *Veda* regarding the last days of the Empire and ATV started airing *Son Yaz: Balkanlar 1912* about the Balkan Wars. A television series named *Fatih* about the life of Mehmed II was aired by Kanal D in 2013. In the same year, Samanyolu TV produced a series named *Osmanlı'da Derin Devlet* as a continuation of aforementioned TRT series, *Bir Zamanlar Osmanlı*. Star TV started to broadcast *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* centered around Kösem Sultan, the wife of Ahmed I, in 2015. The series ran for two seasons. Recently, in March 2018, Kanal D started to air another television series about the life of Mehmed II, *Mehmed: Bir Cihan Fatihi*, but it failed to have high ratings and was withdrew by the channel.

4

Diriliş Ertuğrul as a Representative Case of Neo-Ottomanist Popular Art

In this chapter, *Diriliş Ertuğrul* will be analyzed as an example of neo-Ottomanist popular art that represents the characteristics of AKP's neo-Ottomanism. The messages given by the series, the myths produced, and the relationship between the series and the ruling elites will be discussed.

The first episode of *Diriliş Ertuğrul* was broadcast on 10 December 2014, on the state-owned television channel TRT after six months of preparations and a remarkable advertising campaign that included a number of news stories in mainstream newspapers and television channels. The first episode of the series received high ratings and became first among its rivals that evening in the AB class ratings, referring to upper-middle class audiences, while it was third overall. After this success, the series continued to get high ratings and usually ranks first on the days it airs. *Diriliş Ertuğrul* has been broadcast through the present without any break and is in its fifth season without having lost its popularity.

- First season: 10.12.2014 and 17.06.2015 (episodes 1-26)
- Second season: 30.09.2015 and 08.06.2016 (episodes 27-61)
- Third season: 26.10.2016 and 14.06.2017 (episodes 62-91)
- Fourth season: 25.10.2017 and 06.06.2018 (episodes 92-121)
- Fifth Season: 07.11.2018 and ongoing (episodes 122-ongoing)

The series is produced by Tekden Film which produces another series about the Ottoman Empire, namely *Mehmetçik Kutülamare*. The production team of *Diriliş Ertuğrul* as follows:

- Producer: Mehmet Bozdağ
- Director: Metin Günay
- Scriptwriters: Mehmet Bozdağ, Atilla Engin, Aslı Zeynep Peker Bozdağ
- Coordinator: Cahit Ceylan
- Visual Director: Ömer Faruk Karacan
- Art Director: Doğan Özcan
- Music: Alpay Göltekin, Zeynep Alasya
- Visual Effects: Genius Park

Before the broadcast, many newspapers promoted *Diriliş Ertuğrul* using the introductory statements about the series used on its website: "In the 13th century, the Islamic world was in trouble like today. A leader and a hero was expected. *Diriliş Ertuğrul* has a lot to say for the new Turkey that is in the process of being built with the guidance of history." These words expose its intention to connect itself to the current political context and favor the ruling elites aiming to build a "new Turkey" with an ideology that emphasizes Turkishness and Islam together. In addition to the quotation above, the attitude of political elites towards *Diriliş Ertuğrul* reveals the connection between its ideology and the series. Several state officials such as then-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ, and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan repeatedly visited the set. The attitude of political elites towards the series became clearer during a public discussion started after the host of the Altın Kelebek Media Awards ceremony mocked the series and its crew was not allowed to speak onstage when they accepted their award during the ceremony. Erdoğan became involved in the discussion at the TRT World opening ceremony. He supported the series, saying with respect to the *Diriliş Ertuğrul* crew that "The nation (*millet*) embraced you; it doesn't matter whether they embrace you or not."[1]

1 "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan 'Diriliş Ertuğrul'a destek," *TRT Haber*, November 16, 2016, http://www.trthaber.com/videolar/cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-dirilis-ertugrula-destek-31565.html

§ 4.1 Academic and Journalistic Debates about *Diriliş Ertuğrul*

Both academic and journalistic debates about *Diriliş Ertuğrul* revolve around its ideological role in relation to the agenda of the political elite and questions about its historicity – whether the series accurately depicts historical facts. These two aspects of the debate are intertwined in some cases, because, according to some authors who contribute to the debate, history has been turned into fiction to favor the ideology of the ruling elites – a cocktail of nationalism and Islamism that emphasizes the Ottoman past.

The first academic study about *Diriliş Ertuğrul* was made by Zeynep Safiye Baki Nalcıoğlu who analyzed the first season of the series in the contexts of intertextuality and applied folklore.[2] She evaluates the different subtexts of the series and argues that it contributes to the establishment of a sense of belonging among its audience by creating an oriented identity and a historical and cultural connection.[3] She argues that *Diriliş Ertuğrul* justifies an ideological viewpoint by popularizing and normalizing it.[4] The series uses Dede Korkut stories, Orhun Inscriptions, Turkish sagas like those of Ergenekon and Oğuz Kağan, the story of Kürşad and his forty warriors, the Turkish Independence March, and stories from the Quran and prophet's life as subtexts.[5] Therefore, the series is utilized by the ruling elite to further a political ideology that desires to construct a Turkish and Islamic national identity to establish the "new Turkey."

Another academic study is by Namık Çencen and Ahmet Şimşek who interviewed expert historians to discuss the historicity of the series.[6] Although almost all the historians agree that the decor, clothes, and accessories used in the series reflect the time of Ertuğrul and nomadic life, the uses of some places and characters are historically incorrect. For instance, one interviewee, Ahmet

2 Zeynep Safiye Baki-Nalcıoğlu, "Metinlerarası Uygulamaya Bir Örnek: Diriliş: Ertuğrul," *Milli Folklor Dergisi* 109 (2016), 58-70.

3 Ibid., 58.

4 Ibid., 60.

5 Ibid., 62.

6 Namık Çencen, and Ahmet Taşağıl, "Usta Tarihçilerin Bakış Açısıyla Diriliş Dizisi," *International Journal of Human Sciences* 12 (2015), 1377-1396.

Taşağıl, argues that Kayı clan did not reside in the Southern Anatolia in contrast to the script of the series.[7] Another historian, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, asserts that Ertuğrul neither encountered İbn'ül Arabi nor fought with the Knights Templar though the series centrally places İbn'ül Arabi as the mentor of Ertuğrul and the Knights Templar as the archenemy of the Kayı clan.[8] Furthermore, he indicates that the claim that the Kayı clan founded the Ottoman Empire, is a myth added to Ottoman historiography in the 15th century, not historical fact.[9] In addition, most historians who evaluated the series argue that Ertuğrul's father was Gündüz Alp not Süleyman Şah in contrast with the script of the series. There is a consensus among the historians interviewed that there is a lack of sources which from the period. Regarding this absence, İbrahim Şirin suggests that the ambiguity of the period gives screenwriters the opportunity to abuse history and fill in the gaps in favor of the ruling elite's political agenda.[10]

Journalistic debates about *Diriliş Ertuğrul* started months before its broadcast. The first news stories about the series appeared in newspapers as early as July 2014, five months before its broadcast. These introductory stories covered the preparations, cast, and technical details of the series. Once the series started to be broadcast, debates about its historicity flourished. One of the first columns regarding this issue was published in *Radikal* on 14 December 2014, two days after the first episode aired.[11] The column written by Tayfun Atay argued that the series was based on a "foundation myth" constructed during the reign of Murat II, not on historical fact. According to him, this foundation myth asserts that Süleyman Şah was the father of Ertuğrul was also used in another series named *Kuruluş Osmancık* that aired in 1987 under the influence of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis ideology. By pointing out this resemblance,

7 Ibid., 1385.

8 Ibid., 1386.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 1388.

11 Tayfun Atay, "Osmanlı'ya Değil Osmanlıcılığa Açılan Yol: Diriliş-Ertuğrul," *Radikal*, December 14, 2014. http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/tayfun-atay/osmanliya-degil-osmanliciliga-acilan-yol-dirilis-ertugrul-1250493/

he argued that AKP is continuum of the post-1980-coup era in which Turkish-Islamic ideology was tried to be popularized. In his opinion, *Diriliş Ertuğrul* has more to do with AKP's Ottomanism than the Ottoman past.

Regarding the instrumentalization of television series, Semuhi Sinanoğlu argues that current series about the Ottoman Empire like *Diriliş Ertuğrul* and *Payitaht Abdulhamid* are examples of political technology fictionalizing and reconstructing the past to gain political support for nationalist and conservative policies.[12] A column written by William Armstrong published in the *New York Times* also ponders this issue.[13] Armstrong says: "Series like *Diriliş Ertuğrul* express the idea that Turkey has a unique mission as the heir of a great empire, a nation founded by men of strength, courage and wisdom."[14] In sum, critical evaluations of *Diriliş Ertuğrul* agree that the series serves for a nationalist, conservative political regime that perceives itself as a great power in the international arena.

§ 4.2 Plot of the First Season of *Diriliş Ertuğrul*

The story of the series begins in the year 1225 in an unknown place in Anatolia where the nomadic Kayı clan (*oba*) lives within the boundaries of the Anatolian Seljuk Empire. The main storyline of the series centers on the leading character Ertuğrul Bey whose father Süleyman Şah is the leader of the Kayı clan. Ertuğrul is a courageous, honorable man who fights for the well-being of his clan against many enemies such as the Knights Templar (in the first season), the Mongols (in the second season), the Byzantine Empire (in the third, fourth, and fifth seasons), other Turkish clans (also in the third, fourth, and fifth seasons), and internal traitors (throughout the series).

At the beginning of the first season of the series, the Kayı clan is searching for a new land (*yurt*) due to the scarcity they are experiencing in their current

12 Semuhi Sinanoğlu, "Parti Ebed Müddet: Bir Siyaset Teknolojisi Olarak Yeni-Osmanlıcı TRT Dizileri," *Birikim*, March 30, 2017. http://www.birikimdergisi.com/guncel-yazilar/8236/parti-ebed-muddet-bir-siyaset-teknolojisi-olarak-yeni-osmanlici-trt-dizileri#.WnLBC6hl9Pb

13 William Armstrong, "What a TV Series Tells Us About Erdoğan's Turkey," *New York Times*, May 14, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/14/opinion/erdogan-tv-show-turkey.html

14 Ibid.

one. The lords (*beys*) of the clan decide to ask for land from the governor (*emir*) of Aleppo, El Aziz, who is from the lineage of Selahaddin Eyyubi, in exchange for military support in time of need. El Aziz offers them a fertile but dangerous land near the Principality of Antioch and an important castle owned by the Knights Templar. Although the Knights Templar try to prevent their relocation using spies in the palace of Aleppo including people close to El Aziz and by resorting to various conspiracies against the Kayı clan, Ertuğrul foils their plans and takes the land. Ertuğrul also foils the Knights Templar's bigger plan of creating a war between the two great Muslim powers at the time, the Seljuks and Eyyubis. Throughout the season, Ertuğrul eliminates not only his Christian enemies but also traitors from the clan who work with the Knights Templar, and in the end he leads a siege of the main castle of the Knights Templar in the region. At the end of the season, the warriors (*alp*) of the Kayı clan burn the castle down, and after a meeting with the lords of other Oğuz clans in Anatolia, they returned to Anatolia to answer the call of the other Oğuz lords to help resist against the Mongols.

Throughout the season, Ertuğrul, who is the leading character, solves all the problems. He is the one who negotiates and seals the deal with El Aziz about his clan's relocation, who foils the plans and conspiracies of Knights Templar vis-à-vis the Kayı clan and El Aziz, who saves one of his captured soldiers, Turgut, from the castle of the Knights Templar, who finds and punishes traitors in the clan, who finally takes the castle, which is shown throughout the season as a place where dark plans are discussed. In the series, he is the second son of Süleyman Şah who is married to Hayme. Sometimes, weaknesses of the oldest son Gündoğdu are exploited by one of the lords of the clan and the closest friend of Süleyman, Kurtoğlu, who works with the Knights Templar to undermine Süleyman's leadership. Kurtoğlu is not the only one who provokes Gündoğdu to assume the leadership of the clan. His wife, Selcan Hatun, whose father was killed by Süleyman many years before for starting a mutiny, tries to convince Gündoğdu to be more active in the politics of the clan and to replace Süleyman as leader. In the end, Gündoğdu stops listening to them and sticks with his father. After Gündoğdu turns against Kurtoğlu, who publicly supported Gündoğdu's leadership, and acts in harmony with his father, Kurtoğlu tries to poison him as revenge. At this point, Selcan Hatun

realizes her wrong-doings, confesses her intrigues, and apologizes to the family members. Unlike Selcan Hatun, Kurtoğlu continues his intrigues, stages a coup against Süleyman, seizes power, and exiles Süleyman and his family planning to kill them on the road. However, Ertuğrul returns from the mission of saving the younger brother of his lover Halime from Knights Templar, Turgut, who was converted by Knights Templar by torture and made to drink a conversion potion during his captivity in the castle, does not kill Süleyman and his family, disobeying the orders of Kurtoğlu who believes that Turgut is still a convert. Ertuğrul and Turgut then overthrow Kurtoğlu and return the throne to Süleyman with the support of the public. After that, the clan focuses on burning down the castle of Knights Templar.

While a war between the Kayı clan and the Knights Templar and power struggles within the clan constitute the main storyline of the series, there is also a love story between Ertuğrul and Halime. In the first episode, when Ertuğrul goes hunting, he follows a gazelle which brings him to Halime and her captors. He saves Halime, her father Numan, and her younger brother Yiğit from Knights Templar who had transported them from the castle to the mansion of Kara Toygar, one of the important commanders of the Seljuk Sultan Alaaddin, just before leader of the knights about to rape her. Halime's father Numan is the last living prince (*şehzade*) of the Seljuks who could threaten Sultan Alaaddin's rule. That is why Kara Toygar makes a deal with Knights Templar – he wants to apprehend the prince and his family in exchange for collaborating with the Knights Templar. His objective is to bring prince and his family to Sultan Alaaddin and win the latter's favor so that he can consolidate his power in Alaaddin's palace to act in accordance with the Knights Templar. However, Ertuğrul foils his plan by saving Halime and her family and bringing them into the clan. Even though Kara Toygar asks to take them from the Kayı clan, they refuse because it is not in line with Turkish customs (*Türk töresi*) to give guests away to strangers. Every time Kara Toygar tries to take them in ambushes planned together with the Knights Templar, he fails because of Ertuğrul's efforts. Kara Toygar is not the only one who wants to take Halime and her family. In Aleppo, El Aziz meets Halime and falls in love with her. One of the spies of the Knights Templar in the Aleppo palace, who is a commander of El Aziz, Nasır, convinces him to marry her. Knights Templar plan to create

a war between the Seljuks and Eyyubis through the marriage of the fugitive Seljuk princess Halime and El Aziz who promises Numan that he will support him as the Seljuk sultan. However, Ertuğrul prevents the marriage by proving to El Aziz that many people, including those closest to him, are spies of the Knights Templar and that they want this marriage to take place for their own reasons. Again, Ertuğrul saves not only Halime – who does not want to marry El Aziz –but also the Islamic world. A former Seljuk commander, Afşin Bey, helps Ertuğrul protect Halime and her family because he respects the Seljuk family. After a number of obstacles, Ertuğrul and Halime finally marry in episode 25.

Ibn'ül Arabi is another important character in the series. As early as the first episode, Ertuğrul encounters Ibn'ül Arabi. Ibn'ül Arabi appears in all episodes throughout the season and helps and gives advice to Ertuğrul. In the episode 18, when Ibn'ül Arabi and six other sheikhs gather to talk about the future of the ummah, he tells them that Ertuğrul will be the one to carry the flag of Islam. He comes to the Kayı clan's yurt, stays there for a while, and performs the marriage of Ertuğrul and Halime. Throughout the series, he tells stories from the Quran and from Islamic history to his followers and other characters. Another character who tells stories from the Quran and from Islamic history is Deli Demir, the blacksmith of the clan. Deli Demir also shares stories from Turkish history, like that of Kürşad and his forty soldiers raid of a Chinese castle.

The series makes a clear distinction between good and bad characters, which will be discussed below. Evil characters in the first season are Knights Templar and people who work with them, like Kara Toygar and Kurtoğlu. The master of the Knights Templar of the region and the commander of the castle is the Grand Master Petrucio Manzini whose brother Giovanni, who converted to Islam after he met Ibn'ül Arabi, is in the castle dungeons. The Grand Master's main objective is to convince the papacy of a new crusade. In order to convince the pope, he first needs to convince Cardinal Thomas who came from the Vatican to write a report about the political situation in Anatolia. To ensure that Cardinal Thomas writes a report encouraging another crusade, Grand Master Petrucio and the commander of the Knights Templar of the castle, Titus, aim to create a political environment suitable for a new crusade by

trying to create a war between the two great Muslim powers, the Seljuks and Eyyubis, and by eliminating obstacles along the way to Jerusalem, like the Kayı clan.

§ 4.3 Critical Analysis of the First Season of *Diriliş Ertuğrul*

The first season of *Diriliş Ertuğrul* is analyzed below using a qualitative textual analysis. First, the historicity of the series is discussed by looking at whether the series reflects historical fact, and by analyzing how scriptwriters disrupted them. Then, the portrayal of good and bad characters is evaluated. The series conveyed messages about Turkishness and Islam which are promoted to the audience; after commenting on these, the representation of Ertuğrul's clan as the savior of the Islamic world is examined.

4.3.1 *Historicity*

According to the series, Ertuğrul is one of the sons of the leader of Kayı clan, Süleyman Şah, and Hayme. Ertuğrul has two brothers: Gündoğdu who is older than Ertuğrul and was given birth to by Süleyman's former wife, and Dündar, the youngest son of the family. Also, in the episode 9, Hayme mentions the oldest son of the family, Sungur Tekin, who has been lost for many years. However, the claim that Süleyman was the father of Ertuğrul is controversial among historians. While Ertuğrul's name appeared on the first coins issued by his son Osman, the founder of the Ottoman Empire,[15] Süleyman's name only appeared in the histories written in the 15th century by historians such as Yazıcızade and Aşıkpaşazade.[16] The earliest source on the origins of the Ottoman Empire, Ahmedi's history, did not mention Süleyman. The lineage myth that claims the Seljuk prince Süleyman was the father of Ertuğrul was added

15 Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 61.

16 Halil Inalcık, "Son Araştırmalarla Ertuğrul Gazi'nin Gerçek Hikayesi," *NTV Tarih* 15 (April 2010).

to Ottoman histories later.[17] In an Ottoman history written in the 16th century by Ruhi, Ertuğrul's father was named Gündüzalp. This bloodline is more commonly accepted as historically correct among historians.[18] According to Paul Wittek, the Ottomans added elements into history in the 15th century, such as the connection between Süleyman and Ertuğrul and the myth Kayı clansmen were the ancestors of the Ottomans, in order to claim superiority over political rivals.[19] Also, Cemal Kafadar argues that historians told the mythical stories taken from marginal narratives in the 15th century 150 years after Osman's reign.[20] Therefore, these additions were historiographical constructions that responded to contemporaneous political needs and exemplify the political use of past to claim legitimacy. Also, while some histories name Ertuğrul's brothers as in the series, other histories provide different names. There is no consensus among historians about the origins of the Ottoman Empire, especially the period of Ertuğrul and the period preceding him. The discrepancies in histories about the origins of the Ottoman Empire and the lack of sources about the period point to knowledge gaps about the period, that were filled with stories and myths to strengthen the political legitimacy of the Ottoman state in the 15th century. They were filled by *Diriliş Ertuğrul* in order to serve similar aims of strengthening legitimacy and claiming superiority over political rivals.

Modern studies of the origins of the Ottoman Empire are shaped around different approaches. While H. A. Gibbons argues that the empire has Western origins, M. F. Köprülü suggests that Osman's clan was one of the Muslim Turkish clans running from the Mongols in the east.[21] Another work about the period, written by Paul Wittek, searches for the origins of the Empire in loyalties to faith rather than tribal or ethnic loyalties. He argues that Ertuğrul's clan

17 Paul Wittek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Doğuşu*, translated by Fatmagül Berktay, (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1985), 24.

18 Namık Çencen, and Ahmet Taşağıl, "Usta Tarihçilerin Bakış Açısıyla Diriliş Dizisi."

19 Paul Wittek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Doğuşu*, 7-11.

20 Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*.

21 Ibid.

was organized around the Gaza principle and religiously motivated.[22] While Köprülü accepts the official Ottoman narrative that the Ottomans came from a clan of the Kayı tribe, Wittek refutes this by pointing to the fact that the earliest sources regarding its origins date to the 15th century and by pointing to contradictions among the family trees showing Ertuğrul's lineage prepared by different historians.[23]

The script of *Diriliş Ertuğrul* is based on myths that connect Ertuğrul to the Kayı clan and Süleyman. Also, the series begins in the year 1225 during the reign of Alaaddin Keykubat in Anatolian Seljuk Sultanate. While above mentioned myth about the lineage of Süleyman added into Ottoman historiography in 15th century, referred to a Seljuk prince, Süleyman Şah, who founded the Anatolian Seljuk Sultanate and died in 1086 in Aleppo, the Süleyman Şah in *Diriliş Ertuğrul* is the leader of the Kayı clan, not a Seljuk prince. So, the series is using but distorting the myth. Although the series does not connect the Ottomans to Seljuks through Süleyman Şah myth, the screenwriters did so in a different way. The Seljuk prince Numan and his son Yiğit and daughter Halime, who were abducted by Knights Templar, encounter and are saved by Ertuğrul in the first episode. Ertuğrul and Halime fall in love with each other and marry in the episode 25. After their marriage ceremony, Halime gives Ertuğrul two necklaces, one of which has the symbol of the Kayı clan and the other of which has a double-headed eagle, which was the symbol of the Seljuk Empire and its foundering Kınık clan. She says: "The Kayıs and Kınıks band together in this tent. We united two clans, Ertuğrul." Even though there is no evidence that Osman's mother and Ertuğrul's wife, Halime, was a Seljuk princess, the screenwriters added this detail to connect the origins of the Ottoman Empire to the Seljuks, just as the Süleyman myth added into Ottoman historiography did.

The series opens in the year 1225 in an unknown place in Anatolia, and in that same year, the Kayı clan migrates to Aleppo after making a deal with the emir of Aleppo, El Aziz. Then, according to the script, the Kayı clan led by Süleyman fights the Knights Templar. However, historical sources about the

22 Paul Wittek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Doğuşu*.

23 Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*.

period indicate that Ertuğrul fought the Empire of Nicea, which was founded by the aristocracy of the Byzantine Empire who had fled Constantinople after the Fourth Crusade, as the lead warrior (*akıncıbaşı*) in the army of Alaaddin Keykubat between the years 1222 and 1230 after he and 340 members of his clan joined Keykubat's cause. The clan was residing around Ankara to which it had migrated from Ahlat years before.[24] Then, Keykubat who went back east around 1230, allowed Ertuğrul to settle in Söğüt with his clan in order to protect the western frontier of the Anatolian Seljuk Sultanate.[25] Also, there was no Eyyubi Sultan named El Aziz and no evidence that Ertuğrul's clan ever dealt with any Eyyubi Sultan to ask for land. Like the encounter of Ertuğrul's clan with El Aziz, the encounter with the Knights Templar was added into the script without relying on historical sources. It is clear that the story of the first season of the series is fictional rather than historical. In the first season, Ertuğrul's clan gain the respect of El Aziz, who represents the Eyyubis, as well as of Keykubat because of its services to the Islamic world like fighting against the Knights Templar, eliminating the spies working in the palace of Aleppo, and foiling the plans of the Knights Templar to divide the Islamic world. The role of Ertuğrul's clan in the politics of the Middle East is exaggerated in the series. Ertuğrul's clan receives both the Seljuk's and Eyyubi's approval in addition to that of other Turkish clans that paid homage to Ertuğrul's clan during the meeting of the clans in the episode 26. These additions which contradict historical accounts construct a narrative that places Ertuğrul's clan – which is claimed to be the Kayı clan in the series – above its political rivals, claims Ertuğrul's clan was superior, and represents it as a more important power than it actually was.

Another encounter produced by the screenwriters of the series is the one between Ertuğrul and Ibn-ül Arabi, who was a great Islamic scholar who died in 1240 in Damascus. During the years covered by the series, Ertuğrul was fighting the Empire of Nicea in Keykubat's army in Western Anatolia while Ibn-ül Arabi was living in Damascus. Probably they never met. The Ibn-ül

24 Halil Inalcık, "Son Araştırmalarla Ertuğrul Gazi'nin Gerçek Hikayesi."

25 Ibid.

Arabi character in the series appears in every episode of the season. He mentors Ertuğrul, gives him and other characters advice, and tells stories from the Quran and from Islamic history throughout the season. In the episode 15, he comes to oba to stay for a while. In the episode 18, he heralds Ertuğrul and his lineage as the new leaders of the Islamic world in a mystical dervish meeting. And in the episode 25 he presents a chest that contains an unknown relic. By giving the Ibn-ül Arabi character such a central role, a narrative is produced that portrays Ertuğrul's clan as a sacred one heralded as the next leader of the Islamic world by the greatest living Islamic scholar of the period.

4.3.2 *Dichotomy of Good vs. Bad*

The series draws a clear moral distinction among characters. Some characters are good, and some are bad; there is no middle ground or inner conflict. Throughout the season, only two characters change sides: Selcan, who gives up conspiring and repents of her sins in episode 20, and Cladius, who was assigned to assassinate Ibn-ül Arabi and obtain the relic he carried in his chest but abandoned his mission to become a disciple of Ibn-ül Arabi after repenting of his sins in episode 17. Other than these two characters, all the characters are either completely good or completely bad through the season. So the story revolves around conflicts between good and bad.

The good side of the conflict, which is centered around the main character Ertuğrul, consists of brave, honest people as opposed to their cowardly, and deceitful arch enemies, the Knights Templar, who resort to tricks, ambushes, conspiracies, and slander. From the beginning of the season, the Knights Templar conspire to weaken the Islamic world from their hidden castle and in the backrooms of El Aziz's palace. In the first episode, the Grand Master of the Knights Templar reveals his master plan to "provoke Turks and Selahaddin's sons each other" to his commander Titus, and they pursue this plan using their spies until they are defeated at the end of the season. In the episode 25, after taking the castle, Süleyman, Ertuğrul, Gündoğdu, and Afşin find secret documents. After reading the documents Afşin says: "As I can see from these documents, they resorted to every means to convince the Pope and Emperor Frederick to embark on a new crusade. They provoked Muslims each other to weaken them; they assassinated important people; and they bought hundreds

of people who are active in politics and the military in the Islamic world. On top of that, they victimized Orthodox Christians whom they hate." The Knights Templar try to spread the plague to Ertuğrul's clan, lay several ambushes for Ertuğrul, his inner circle, and important caravans, and slander. In the episode 7, they bribe the *kadı* who dealing with the case of Atabey who was falsely accused of being a spy by the spies of Knights Templar in El Aziz's palace, and they hire false witnesses. As opposed to them, Ertuğrul's side is brave and honest. As Süleyman points out in episode 17: "We don't have to be sneaky and vile like them; bravery, intelligence, and, of course, faith are enough for us."

Another difference between the two sides is their attitude towards the enemy. While Ertuğrul's side is merciful and just, the enemies are cruel. In the first episode, Kara Toygar, who works with Knights Templar makes his female slave kill a messenger who brought bad news and then he kills her with joy. In the episode 2, Master Petrucio wishes that "everywhere from Baghdad to Aleppo smell of burnt corpses." In the episode 5, the Knights Templar's spy in Aleppo Palace, Nasır, celebrates the fact that "death cries will soon rise from Muslim capitals." In the episode 23, Titus warns the other masters in a meeting: "Only if we kill every one of them including their babies, will our sacred cause be realized." They kill civilians and innocent people as when Nasır and his soldiers kill all the dervishes of a monastery in the episode 12. They torture their captives as they do Ertuğrul in episode 8. Turgut is tortured for several episodes starting in the episode 8 to convert him. On the other hand, Ertuğrul's side is just and does not resort to torture as seen in the episode 9 where Atabey stops Bamsı before slapping their captive Eftelya, saying, "We are not like them. We don't torture. Our only debt to our enemies is justice."

Ertuğrul's side differs from its enemies vis-à-vis its motives to fight, which are justice and faith, as opposed to the motive of hate of Knights Templar. In the first episode, Grand Master Petrucio emphasizes the importance of revenge in knighthood when he talks with his niece who is staying in the castle: "Without revenge, a knight is a worthless soldier." Whereas the Knights Templar's hate for Ertuğrul, Turks, and Muslims is emphasized throughout the season, Ertuğrul's side fights for justice and faith as it can be seen in the episode 6 when Atabey prays alone: "God! Let me be injured so long as justice is

not injured. If the cruel would kill me, let him kill so long as the order that exalts your name will last forever." In the episode 11, Ertuğrul likewise prays: "Dear God! Give me the strength to confront the cruel. Let me have your mercy to help the oppressed. Put the justice of my sword under your command. Let me and my lineage serve only you."

Ertuğrul's side is identified with bravery, honesty, mercy, justice and, faith which are presented as good deeds, while his enemies are introduced as cowardly, deceitful, cruel, and hateful. Turkishness and Islam is promoted through "good" characters, implying that Muslim Turks are morally superior to their non-Muslim enemies.

4.3.3 *Promotion of Turkishness*

The series is based on the myth that Ertuğrul's clan was descended from the Kayı tribe which is one of the oldest Turkish tribes. The symbol of the Kayı tribe is frequently used in the series, and the tribe's Turkishness is often emphasized by the narrative, by the stories that characters tell, and by references to historical Turkish texts like the Dede Korkut stories and Turkish epics such as the epic of Oğuz Kağan.

The script of the series gives Ertuğrul's clan a central role in Turkish history. Ertuğrul's clan is represented as an important, respected Turkish clan that serves the Turkic world. Ertuğrul's relationship with a group of wise men called whitebeards (*aksakallılar*) is an example of this representation. Afşin, who introduces Ertuğrul to the whitebeards in the episode 23 says that "since [the time of] Oğuz Kağan, Turkish states and Turkish tribes have been born and have developed in the hands of the whitebeards, and it will always be so." In the episode 26, Ertuğrul meets with the whitebeards who give him the duty of making Turkish rule in Anatolia possible. Through this encounter, Ertuğrul and his clan receive the approval of a fictional symbol of Turkishness – the secret, highest authority that protects Turkish tribes and states with its wisdom. Also, the Turkishness of Ertuğrul's clan is emphasized through his encounters with Seljuk princes and his marriage with the Seljuk princess Halime. As early as the first episode, the Seljuk prince Numan, his son Yiğit, and his daughter, Seljuk princess Halime, are saved by Ertuğrul from the Knights Templar and take shelter with Ertuğrul's clan.

Throughout the season, the scriptwriters made many references to Turkish history and historical Turkish texts. First, the names of some characters such as Selcan Hatun, Bamsı Beyrek, Korkut, and Banu Çiçek are taken from the Dede Korkut stories. The series contains many references to these stories and in some cases even quotes them. In the first episode, Ertuğrul comes across his future wife, Halime, by following a deer just as Bamsı Beyrek found his love, Banı Çiçek, in a Dede Korkut story named *Kam Büre'nin Oğlu Bamsı Beyrek Boyu* (The story of the Kam Büre's son Bamsı Beyrek). The phrase used by Deli Demir in the episode 6 when he prays for his deceased wife – "The one whom I saw when I opened my eyes, the one whom I loved with my heart" ("göz açıp da gördüğüm, gönül verip de sevdiğim") is used in several Dede Korkut stories. The verses Selcan recites at the cradle of her dead baby in the episode 10 and those she tells her unconscious husband while being treated after being poisoned by Kurtoğlu in the episode 20 are quoted from the poem that appears at the end of the Dede Kokut stories. Also, the poem recited by Bamsı and Doğan in episode 16 is taken from above mentioned Dede Korkut story. In addition to Dede Korkut stories, the series refers to other texts like epics and stories from Turkish history. These anecdotes from Turkish history and mythology are transmitted to the audience mostly through Deli Demir's narratives. He is the storyteller of the clan who symbolizes the oral tradition. He tells stories about Turkishness to the kids of the clan in the evenings as well as to grownups to motivate them before important battles. He tells the story of the Battle of Malazgirt in the episode 15, summarizes the epic of Oğuz Kağan in the episode 19, and narrates the story of Kürşat and his forty soldiers. Various characters of the series frequently mention figures from the Turkish history like Alparslan, Ahmet Yesevi, Tuğrul Bey, and Çağrı Bey. Also, in the episode 5, Numan summarizes the history of the Turkish states from Oğuz Kağan to the Seljuk Empire in a conversation with Ertuğrul and states that a new hero for the Turks is needed.

Furthermore, old Turkish culture, traditions, and a lifestyle based on nomadism are shown to the audience. Women of the clan weave carpets while the men are either warriors or employed in animal husbandry. During celebrations and wedding ceremonies, traditional Turkish sword dances are performed by the warriors. The importance of Turkish customs (*Türk töresi*) is

repeatedly emphasized throughout the season by leading characters like Süleyman, Ertuğrul, Hayme, and Gündoğdu.

4.3.4 *Promotion of Islam*

Ertuğrul's clan is represented as sacred through Ertuğrul's relationship with the Islamic scholar Ibn-ül Arabi. They meet in the first episode and throughout the season Ibn-ül Arabi tells stories and guides Ertuğrul and his relatives. In the episode 18, he heralds Ertuğrul as the leader who will restore Islam with his intelligence, mercy, fairness, and faith. In the episode 25, he presents the chest that contains a sacred relic for which the Knights Templar are searching. Also, Ibn-ül Arabi protects Ertuğrul with his spiritual powers. In the episode 2, he senses that Ertuğrul is being poisoned by smoke from a candle put into his room by the Knights Templar in the palace of Aleppo during an invocation session, and he puts the candle out with wind created from his breath. In the episode 15, he haunts his imprisoned disciple's dream and instructs him to help Ertuğrul. In addition to the relationship of Ibn-ül Arabi and Ertuğrul, the representation of Ertuğrul's clan as the clan that foils conspiracies and plans against the Islamic world shows the central place of Islam in the story.

Characters in the series, especially Ibn-ül Arabi, frequently tell stories from Islamic history. In the episode 5, Ibn-ül Arabi shares an anecdote about Selahaddin Eyyubi and his conquest of Jerusalem with his disciples. In the episode 7, he consoles his disciples about Atabey's imprisonment after Knights Templar slander him by saying that "the God who saved Jonas from the stomach of the fish, Eyüp from the worm in his wound, Joseph from the well, Moses from the Nile, and the last prophet from the cave will save our brother if he wills it." He tells the story of Abraham sacrificing his son Ishmael by likening Ishmael to Ertuğrul in the episode 9. He also tells anecdotes from the prophet Hızır's life in the episode 12, and the story Khalifa Ömer's conversion to Islam in the episode 20.

Ibn-ül Arabi is not the only character to share stories from Islamic history. In the episode 21, Hayme likens herself and her family to Hüseyin and the situation they are in to Kerbela when Kurtuğlu decides to exile Süleyman's family from the clan after he takes power by force. Similarly, Süleyman identifies his clan with Joseph, Moses, and "the followers of Abraham" (*İbrahimi*)

while he calls the Grand Master Petrucio "the Great Evil" in the episode 25 after taking the castle of Knights Templar. In addition to stories from Islamic history, the scriptwriters often give place to verses from the Quran. Ibn-ül Arabi tells an excerpt from Surah Ankebut in the episode 2, quotes from Surah Baraka in the episode 8, and continues to share verses from other Surahs such as Inşirah, Isra, and Enfal in ensuing episodes.

While the audience is exposed to narratives from Islamic story and quotations from the Quran and the prophet Muhammed, the details of the daily life of Ertuğrul's clan are accompanied by Islamic motifs. Ablutions, prayers, invocations, and Islamic-style weddings are shown in detail as essential parts of the daily life of the clan.

4.3.5 *Ertuğrul: Savior of the Islamic World*

At the beginning of the season, Ertuğrul finds himself and his clan in a situation that threatens not only the future of the clan, but also the future of Islam. He happens to be the only person who can ruin Knights Templar's conspiracies against the unity of the Islamic world and their plans to initiate a new crusade. After Ertuğrul's clan takes the castle of Knights Templar, the leaders of the Turkic and Islamic world including Seljuk Sultan Alaaddin Keykubat and Eyyubi Sultan El Aziz send their respects to Süleyman and his sons for his efforts to protect the Islamic world.

Beginning in the first episode, Ertuğrul's actions save the Islamic world from trouble. He prevents Knights Templar from using the Seljuk prince Numan against the Seljuk Empire by saving the prince and his family from the Knights Templar in the first episode. However, in the following episodes, Numan and his family come to Aleppo with Ertuğrul, and El Aziz falls in love with Halime. The Knights Templar's spy in Aleppo Palace, Nasır, then arranges a marriage between El Aziz and Halime, hoping to gain the support of Turkish clans against Alaaddin Keykubat. In the episode 14, Ertuğrul joins a secret meeting between Nasır and the Turkish clans, informs the Turkish lords of the truth, and captures Nasır without the objections of the lords who trust to Ertuğrul rather than Nasır. In the episode 15, he convinces El Aziz about the Knights Templar and their spies and takes Halime back. In the episode 17, Ertuğrul is assigned to protect the wedding caravan for the marriage between

Alaaddin Keykubat and Eyyubi princess, which was sent by Alaaddin Keykubat to Eyyubis in Damascus. Süleyman happily accepts this offer as an opportunity to serve the unity of Islam. Ertuğrul also protects the Islamic world by taking the castle of Knights Templar which is represented as the source of all conspiracies against the Islamic world in the region in the episode 25. Finally, in the episode 26, Ertuğrul convinces all other Turkish lords to unite against the Mongols.

It is clear that the series exaggerates the role of Ertuğrul's clan in the politics of the region. He prevents both a war between Islamic states and a new crusade. He eliminates Knights Templar and leads other Turkish clans against another threat, Mongol invasion. He gets the approval of Ibn-ül Arabi, the whitebeards and important statemens.

5

Conclusion

The starting point of this research was the rising political instrumentalization of the Ottoman past by ruling elites, which is an aspect of neo-Ottomanism. The contemporary neo-Ottomanism adopted by the AKP differs the political and cultural adoption of the Ottoman past by former rightwing parties – including Özalian neo-Ottomanism – because of its imagination of a national identity and an imperial state identity for Turkey which it regards as the leader of the Islamic world.

In addition to history, mass media is politically instrumentalized to disseminate ideological messages to its audience through television series. Propagandistic use of the mass media is an efficient tool for indoctrination, making it easier to perform a political analysis of a cultural product – in our case, a popular art work produced by the mass media: *Diriliş Ertuğrul*.

Diriliş Ertuğrul is a representative case of neo-Ottomanist popular art that reflects the political ideology of the AKP and instrumentalizes the Ottoman past as a source of Turkish-Islamic national identity and imperial state identity. The series serves as a propaganda tool for the AKP. Therefore, a qualitative textual analysis of *Diriliş Ertuğrul* may explain the characteristics of the AKP's neo-Ottomanism.

After a comparison of the narrative of the show with scientific studies based on historical sources, it is clear that the series reproduces uncorroborated myths about Ertuğrul's lineage to Süleyman and about his clan's relation

to the Kayıs, and it overestimates the role of Ertuğrul and the Kayı clan in the region's politics and in the Islamic world. The series distorts history by relying on fictional events and encounters. Like Ottoman sultans who amended the aforementioned myths into their own histories to claim political superiority, the producers of the show add fictional details that exalt the Ottomans.

The series imagines a Turkish-Islamic nation that is morally superior to others. References to Turkish history, the historical texts from Turkish history, the Quran, and stories from Islamic history – in addition to long scenes about Turkish tradition and lifestyle and scenes involving ablutions, prayers, and invocations – prove this imagination. Also, Ertuğrul's clan receives the approval of fictional symbols of Turkishness (the whitebeards) and Islam (Ibn-ül Arabi), so his nation is represented as "chosen" and "sacred." Aside from these fictional approvals, the series narrates Ertuğrul and his clan as the savior of the Islamic world in its very storyline.

In sum, the neo-Ottomanism represented in *Diriliş Ertuğrul* imagines a morally superior Turkish-Islamic nation and regards Turkey as a great power that protects the Islamic world. Also, the political instrumentalization of the Ottoman past – through a period piece in this case – is itself, one of the characteristics of neo-Ottomanism.

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