

FIRE BURNS WHERE IT FALLS: A VERNACULAR SECURITY APPROACH
TO 2021 FOREST FIRES IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

FIRE BURNS WHERE IT FALLS: A VERNACULAR SECURITY APPROACH TO 2021 FOREST FIRES IN TURKEY

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In the summer of 2021, Turkey faced the most severe forest fires in its history. The issue went beyond an “environmental crisis” as it led to the deforestation of a large area and turned into a “political crisis” between the government and the people, as well as a “security crisis” as 8 people lost their lives, thousands were left homeless, and the ecosystem was endangered. This thesis explores how those fires came to be understood not just as an environmental catastrophe, but also as a complex security problem. Adopting “vernacular” security approach from the field of critical security studies, this thesis compares the official government narrative on the fires with how local communities themselves perceived and talked about them. The thesis draws on official speeches, policy documents, and press releases for the official (elite) narrative, while semi-structured interviews with local people and forest villagers in the fire-affected districts capture the vernacular narrative on the issue. Building on qualitative content analysis via MAXQDA, the thesis highlights a disconnect between the official and the vernacular narratives on the same phenomenon. In conclusion, the thesis confirms the vernacular security approach emphasising that security is not a homogenous concept and reveals the potential of forest villagers as

security providers during the 2021 forest fires in Turkey, thereby providing an empirical example of community-based indigenous fire management practices.

Keywords: Vernacular security, Indigenous fire management, critical security studies, environmental security, 2021 Forest Fires



ÖZ

ATEŞ DÜŞTÜĞÜ YERİ YAKAR: TÜRKİYE’DE 2021 ORMAN YANGINLARININ VERNAKÜLER GÜVENLİK YAKLAŞIMI İLE İNCELENMESİ

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2021 yılının yaz aylarında Türkiye, tarihinin en şiddetli orman yangınlarıyla karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Bu sorun, geniş bir ormanlık alanın yok olmasına yol açan bir “çevre krizi”nin ötesine geçerek, 8 kişinin hayatını kaybetmesi, binlerce kişinin evsiz kalması ve ekosistemin tehdit altına girmesiyle hem hükümet ve halk arasında bir “siyasi krize” hem de kapsamlı bir “güvenlik krizine” dönüşmüştür. Bu tez, söz konusu yangınların yalnızca çevresel bir felaket olarak değil, aynı zamanda karmaşık bir güvenlik meselesi olarak nasıl ele alındığını incelemektedir. Eleştirel güvenlik çalışmaları alanındaki “vernaküler” güvenliğin yaklaşımını benimseyen tez, yangınlara ilişkin devletin (elit) resmî söylemiyle yangından etkilenen bölgelerdeki yerel toplulukların söylemleri arasında bir karşılaştırma sunmaktadır. Resmî konuşmalar, politika belgeleri ve basın açıklamalarından oluşan devlet söyleminin karşısında, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler aracılığıyla elde edilen yerel halk ve orman köylülerinin anlatıları analiz edilmektedir. MAXQDA kullanılarak gerçekleştirilen nitel içerik analizi, aynı olguya dair resmî anlatı ile yerel (vernaküler) anlatı arasındaki uyumsuzluğa dikkat çekmektedir. Sonuç olarak tez, güvenliğin homojen bir kavram

olmadığına işaret eden vernaküler güvenlik yaklaşımını doğrularken, 2021 orman yangınları sırasında orman köylülerinin “güvenlik sağlayıcı” potansiyeline vurgu yaparak topluluk temelli yerel yangın yönetimi uygulamalarına dair ampirik bir örnek sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Vernaküler güvenlik, Yerel yangın yönetimi, eleştirel güvenlik çalışmaları, çevresel güvenlik, 2021 Orman Yangınları





To my family Kadir, Ayten and Gamze

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I previously described the doctoral journey as a process of growth, maturation, and development. In my case, it would not have been nearly so fulfilling without the support of certain institutional structures that provided academic freedom, financial and psychological backing, and valuable networks. The Middle East Technical University (METU) and its Department of International Relations have played an unforgettable part in this process, thanks to the healthy and open environment they foster. Carrying forward the pride of being a METU graduate—and upholding the distinctive METU spirit—will be a guiding principle in my future academic career. I therefore offer my heartfelt thanks to the entire faculty and administrative staff of the International Relations Department. Among the many who have influenced me, I particularly benefited from the engaging and horizon-expanding courses taught by Prof. Dr Hüseyin Bağcı, Prof. Dr Zana Çıtak, Prof. Dr Nuri Yurdusev, and Prof. Dr Faruk Yalvaç. Meanwhile, our departmental secretary, Mr Halil Kamil Tekin, was unfailingly available whenever I needed help, swiftly resolving any issues that arose. I also owe a great debt of gratitude to TÜBİTAK. The fieldwork for this thesis was supported by a TÜBİTAK 1002-A research project with the project number 223K933, and I likewise drew upon TÜBİTAK grants for participating in international conferences. Without these financial resources, my doctoral work would not have been possible. Finally, I wish to thank the early career team at Bodrum Institute. I met them at what was, psychologically, the most difficult period of my doctoral research, and they provided both the encouragement and the space I needed to remain committed to academia. I am especially grateful to Assoc. Prof. Dr Cihan Dizdaroğlu and Assoc. Prof. Dr Haluk Karadağ, whose Security Studies Workshop gave me the opportunity to present my thesis's initial outline and to receive valuable feedback.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

There is a frequently used proverb about pain and grief in Turkey. We say, “ateş düştüğü yeri yakar” [fire burns where it falls]. It means that the greatest burden of pain and grief is borne by those who endure it; not everyone is equally affected by an event. Without having gone through similar experiences, we cannot truly comprehend the suffering of others. This is meaningful for researchers working on security from a critical perspective. This is especially true when security is not something to be objectively discovered ‘out there’, but a political phenomenon that affects a wide range of objects of reference as a result of a process of social construction. Ultimately, it suggests that what is called security can be interpreted differently by those who are actually affected by it and those who talk about it. Indeed, in the summer of 2021, Turkey faced a nation-wide grief. She has suffered the largest forest fires in the 100-year history of the Republic. The fires, which have caused extensive deforestation, have escalated into a crisis, particularly in the Aegean and Mediterranean regions—the country’s top tourist destinations—as well as affecting the nation as a whole.

As a critical security studies student trying to prepare his PhD proposal during the summer of 2021, I was witnessing these fires, which were recorded as “four times larger than any other fire in the country’s records”¹, on the internet, on television and in everyday life. My observations during this process showed that two different

¹ Jonathan Watts, ‘Turkish Fires Sweeping through Tourist Areas Are the Hottest on Record’, The Guardian, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/30/turkish-fires-sweeping-through-tourist-areas-are-the-hottest-on-record>.

narratives about the fires were taking place. On the one hand, government officials, to whom traditional security approaches attribute the role of providing security, emphasise that fires are being successfully responded to, that they are in control and that firefighting is improving every day. This narrative implied a linear progress towards success in the fight against fire. In this way, a perception of success was also being constructed. Every day, assessments were provided to the press, offering increasingly quantitative figures on the number of personnel, officers, and equipment on the ground, while conveying the message that ‘we have the situation under control’.

However, when looking at ‘where the fire really fell’, it could also be seen as a challenge to this construction of the perception of success. From a security perspective, however, the issue could not be taken solely as an environmental catastrophe. The issue went beyond an ‘environmental crisis’ as it burned an area nearly the size of 200,000 football fields and turned into a ‘multi-security crisis’ as 8 people lost their lives, thousands were left homeless, and the ecosystem was endangered. In fact, due to the large-scale effects of the fires, the fire-affected districts of Antalya, Muğla, Mersin, Adana and Osmaniye provinces were declared as ‘Disaster Areas Affecting General Life’ by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). As the crisis worsened, however, many citizens began to criticise the government’s and state officers’ response to the fires. Eventually, the issue became a ‘political crisis’ between the government and the people by creating polarisation about the efficiency of the security conduct.

A prototype of this polarisation occurred in two incompatible social media campaigns during forest fires. While many local people and groups around the nation rallied under the hashtag ‘HelpTurkey’, calling for firefighting planes and international assistance to deal with the fires,’ government officials and their supporters launched a rival campaign called ‘StrongTürkiye’, emphasising the state’s capabilities and self-reliance. The ‘HelpTurkey’ campaign, driven by public frustration with the government’s perceived failure to control the fires, implicitly securitised the issue by framing it as a matter of urgent external assistance. In response, the ruling elite accused the campaign of undermining the state’s image,

arguing that such appeals for foreign aid portrayed Turkey as weak.² As a result, what started as an environmental catastrophe quickly turned into intertwined security and political crises, revealing a deep polarisation between state-society relations regarding the imagination of security. On one side were the people—often seen as the ‘end users’ of security—, expressing deep concerns about the government’s competence. On the other side was the ruling elite, who were trying to maintain their traditional role as security providers while at the same time countering accusations of ineffectiveness.

I, therefore, prepared the proposal of this dissertation as my curiosity for understanding this contradiction from the perspective of security studies. This dissertation aims to understand the contradictory stances regarding one of the most significant environmental insecurity the country had faced up to that time. It explores the connection between forest fires and security, highlighting the conflicting approaches taken by the state and by the people who experience these challenges in their everyday lives. It demonstrates how these two contradictory security narratives are constructed by prioritising which referent objects, actors, measures, and threats. It also investigates how these narratives define forests and see the drivers of deforestation. Finally, it aims to evaluate the political debate around the 2021 forest fires.

1.2. Problem Statement and Research Questions

While forest fires are often treated as environmental crises, the fires in 2021 quickly acquired political dimension in Turkey, sparking a pronounced tension between official and vernacular imaginations of security. The rapid transformation of forest fires from an environmental crisis into a political and security crisis highlights the need to examine how different actors conceptualise and respond to forest fires in this case. While the official narrative emphasises the state’s capacity as the sole security provider, vernacular narrative has the potential to tell a different story, emphasising

² Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Yeşil Vatanı Korumak İçin Cansiperane Mücadelemiz Devam Edecektir”, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/128926/-yesil-vatani-korumak-icin-cansiperane-mucadelemiz-devam-edecektir->.

perceived vulnerabilities. This contestation calls into question whether the ‘fire’ really ‘burns everyone equally’ or, instead, whether the perception and experience of insecurity differ across various contexts.

In order to address this problem, this dissertation aims to unveil how the 2021 forest fires in Turkey were constructed and contested as a multi-dimensional security issue, rather than merely an environmental insecurity. By challenging the traditional dichotomy that positions the state as the sole security provider and citizens as passive security end-users, the dissertation focuses on two distinct narratives: the official narrative propounded by governing elites and the vernacular narrative emerging from local communities. Understanding how these narratives diverge- or, at times, converge- may offer valuable insights for comprehending broader security dynamics and environmental policy in Turkey. Accordingly, the dissertation is guided by two main research questions:

- a) How do the official and vernacular narratives conceptualise and contest security during the 2021 forest fires in Turkey?
- b) What does this divergence (or convergence) in these narratives reveal about broader security dynamics and state-society relations in Turkey?

The first question constitutes the primary research question of the dissertation, as the second is dependent on it. The first question looks for to discover and understand the imaginations of the 2021 forest fires of the two units of analysis, namely the governing elite (official narrative) and the local people (vernacular narrative) in terms of three dimension: security, environment, and political. This is basically the question based on the empirical contribution of the dissertation based on original primary data through field research. The empirical findings for answering the question are discussed in Chapter V on official narrative and Chapter VI on vernacular analysis, respectively.

Building on the findings of the first question, this second question allows for a comparative and analytical assessment of how conflicting or overlapping narratives shape the broader security discourse and state-society relations in Turkey. By examining these tensions, Chapter VII highlights potential contributions of

vernacular security insights to broader security debate, illustrating the relevance of bottom-up perspectives in shaping effective and inclusive security practices.

Ultimately, addressing these questions can shed light on the character of security as a contested concept and the value of vernacular security. While the role of the state remains crucial, the experiences, grievances and mobilisations of local communities complicate monolithic views of security. By situating the 2021 forest fires at the intersection of environment, politics and security, this dissertation aims to provide an empirical case study, showing how local narratives imagine and respond to these fires.

1.3. A History of Forest Fires in Turkey

1.3.1. Making Sense of Forest Fires in the Mediterranean Basin Context

As this dissertation delves into different security narratives of forest fires in Turkey, it is necessary to briefly evaluate the history of the phenomenon without diving into the technical debates of the issue. Forest fires can be considered as natural disasters caused by climatic and ecological conditions. The characteristic features of the Mediterranean climate, which is one of the most favourable regions for forest fires, are very effective in the emergence of this consideration. The Mediterranean climate with hot and dry summers and mild and rainy winters are climatic characteristics that significantly increase the risk of forest fires. Turkey, which is located in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Basin, is considered a country of forest fires, as these climatic characteristics prevail in most of the country. Indeed, other places with a Mediterranean climate, such as California in the United States, central Chile, the Kap region of South Africa, and the southern and south-western regions of Australia, are also frequently affected by forest fires.³ The role of climate change as a threat multiplier for forest fires in these regions cannot be underestimated. Calda et al. reported that the impact of climate change on forest fires in the Mediterranean Basin has been increasing in recent years, and that the basis of this problem is that summers

³ Ali Kavgacı, ‘Orman Yangınları’, in *Cumhuriyetin 100. Yılında Türkiye Ormancılığı ve Geleceği*, ed. Murat Alan et al. (Ankara: Türkiye Ormancılar Derneği Yayını, 2023), 221.

have become hotter and drier in regions dominated by the Mediterranean Basin due to climate change, thus causing an increase in the number of forest fires.⁴

For Mediterranean ecosystems under natural conditions, fires are considered a natural component of the ecosystem cycle; in fact, fires have existed for thousands of years and plants have evolved naturally with fires.⁵ On the other hand, it is stated that human activities play an important role in the forest fires that occur today.⁶ Indeed, as many scholarly works underline, forest fires are deeply intertwined with social, political and economic dynamics.⁷ In regions with a Mediterranean climate, human-caused fires are the most common type of fire.⁸ This situation requires both interdisciplinary and comprehensive research on the phenomenon of forest fires, considering the unique dynamics of each country and even regions.

As a matter of fact, Erdoğan Atmış et al. stated that fire statistics worldwide vary due to the differences in the definitions of forest and forest fire. However, it is estimated that a total of 7.20 billion ha of land, including forests, was exposed to fires between 2001-2018, of which 4.83 billion ha was in Africa and 0.59 billion ha in South America. On the other hand, it is stated that the Russian Federation, which has a large forest area, does not report fire statistics regularly.⁹ According to the published reports, among the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, Turkey has the least amount of forest area burned annually on average. While Spain was the country that lost the most forest area to fires in the 1980s and 1990s, Portugal has come to the fore in the last 20 years. However, while the decadal averages of forest fires have

⁴ Burcu Calda et al., 'Effects of Climate Change on the Wildfires in the Mediterranean Basin', *Int.J.Adv.Eng.Pure Sci.* 1 (2020): 15–32.

⁵ Juli G Pausas et al., 'Are Wildfires a Disaster in the Mediterranean Basin?—A Review', *International Journal of Wildland Fire* 17, no. 6 (2008): 713–23.

⁶ Kavgacı, 'Orman Yangınları', 221.

⁷ Erdoğan Atmış, Doğanay Tolunay, and Cihan Erdönmez, 'Orman Yangınlarının Sayısal Analizi', in *Orman Yangınları*, ed. Ali Kavgacı and Mehmet Ali Başaran (Ankara: Türkiye Ormancılar Derneği Yayını, 2023), 41.

⁸ Anne Ganteaume et al., 'A Review of the Main Driving Factors of Forest Fire Ignition over Europe', *Environmental Management* 51 (2013): 652.

⁹ Atmış, Tolunay, and Erdönmez, 'Orman Yangınlarının Sayısal Analizi', 23–24.

decreased in other countries except Turkey, it is noteworthy that the average of the last 10 years in Turkey has doubled in the 1990s.¹⁰

1.3.2. History of Forest Fires in Turkey

Academic interest in forest fires in Turkey has increased and diversified after 2021. In the following years, this knowledge has developed and gained an interdisciplinary character with the opening of forest faculties and the increase in research institutes. Therefore, it can be stated that the number of comprehensive studies on the history of forest fires in Turkey is still low. The most comprehensive studies on the multifaceted nature of forest fires are *Orman Yangınları* and *Cumhuriyetin 100.Yılında Türkiye Ormancılığı ve Geleceği*, published by the Turkish Foresters Association in 2023.¹¹ I rely on these two studies in this section on the history of forest fires.

An assessment of the history of forest fires in Turkey is based on statistical data from the General Directorate of Forestry (Orman Genel Müdürlüğü - OGM) and secondary sources. When analysed periodically, these records show that there are large fluctuations in both the number of fires and the amount of area burned. Fire data also indicate that forest fires in Turkey are shaped not only by ecological and climatic conditions but also by political, economic and social processes. According to the OGM, official records on fires have been kept since 1937. Therefore, it is not possible to make an evaluation of the fires before this date.

The years 1945 and 1946 mark important dates since a record amount of forest area were affected by fires, respectively, 165,307 and 125,115 hectares. By highlighting the political character of the fires, Atmış et al. draws attention to the claim that forests might be burned as a reaction to the attempt to nationalise forests owned by private individuals with the Law No. 4785 enacted in 1945.¹² An important statistical

¹⁰ Ibid., 24–25.

¹¹ Kavgacı, ‘Orman Yangınları’, 223–24.

¹² Atmış, Tolunay, and Erdönmez, ‘Orman Yangınlarının Sayısal Analizi’, 27.

interpretation based on years is that although there has been a decreasing trend in the amount of forest area burned since 1937 (except for the period 2012-2021), the number of fires has been increasing continuously since the 1970s. In other words, apart from 2012-2021, there have been more forest fires, while the forest area affected by these fires has gradually decreased.¹³

Table 1.1. Forest Fires from 1937 to the present¹⁴

Years	Number of Fires	Burned Area (ha)	Area per Fire (ha)
1937-1941	2,719	92,531	34.03
1942-1951	8,298	666,586	80.33
1952-1961	8,122	263,455	32.44
1962-1971	5,803	94,080	16.21
1972-1981	10,041	167,505	16.68
1982-1991	14,216	115,853	8.15
1992-2001	21,646	140,982	6.51
2002-2011	19,739	83,638	4.24
2012-2021	27,150	226,846	8.36
TOTAL	117,734	1,851,476	15.73

Drawing on the country's records of major forest fires, a total of 254 incidents since 1970 – when data collection became much more accurate- are classified as large forest fires. Until the 2000s, the largest forest fire in the country's history was the 1979 fire in Muğla-Marmaris, known as the Çetibeli fire, damaging a total of 13,260 hectares. Following this, in 2008, the fires in Antalya's Serik and Taşagıl districts, which affected 15,795 hectares of land. According to Ali Kavgacı, it can be said that the 2008 Serik-Taşagıl fire and the large fires that occurred frequently in its aftermath numbed our social memory by making our fire memory familiar in terms of large fires.¹⁵ Later, the 2021 forest fires in Antalya – Manavgat district damaged

¹³ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kavgacı, 'Orman Yangınları', 225.

26,903 hectares, making it the largest forest fire ever recorded in Turkey. The 2021 forest fires, as mentioned at the beginning, mark an important historical break. Of the 20 largest fires in the last 50 years, 11 occurred in 2021. Furthermore, of the 20 largest fires in Turkey after 1970, eight occurred in Muğla, seven in Antalya, two each in Mersin and Çanakkale, and one in İzmir.¹⁶ This statistic shows that Antalya and Muğla regions are the places in Turkey that bear the suffer of forest fires most.

1.3.3. An Overview of the Causes of Forest Fires

According to Mustafa Avcı and Mehmet Korkmaz, who assessed the causes of forest fires in Turkey for the period 2001-2020, the two most significant changes are the decline in the number of fires caused by negligence and carelessness and the significant increase in the number of fires with unknown causes. In recent years, the rate of fires with unknown causes has almost 50 percent. In the words of Avcı and Korkmaz, this situation is an important problem in preventing forest fires before they occur. They argue that if the causes of fires are not known, the measures that can be taken to prevent them will not be sufficient.¹⁷ However, whether the cause is identified or not, it is accepted that most fires are caused by human actions.¹⁸

This can be confirmed by specifically assessing the Forestry Statistics for forest fires in 2021. According to the OGM's forestry statistics for 2021, 1329 of the total 2793 fires that occurred in 2021, or approximately 47.6 percent, were recorded as fires of unknown cause. Since the authorities have difficulty in linking the causes of the fires to concrete reasons and informing the public, an information gap arises. These information gaps both make it difficult to develop effective preventive measures against fires and allow for manipulation and the construction of different narratives (terrorism, rent, etc.). This manipulation can be two-sided and can take the form of both politicians manipulating public opinion towards certain policy interests and public opinion blaming politicians for certain issues. I will consider these different

¹⁶ Atmış, Tolunay, and Erdönmez, 'Orman Yangınlarının Sayısal Analizi', 23–29.

¹⁷ Mustafa Avcı and Mehmet Korkmaz, 'Türkiye'de Orman Yangını Sorunu: Güncel Bazı Konular Üzerine Değerlendirmeler', *Turkish Journal of Forestry* 22, no. 3 (2021): 230.

¹⁸ Atmış, Tolunay, and Erdönmez, 'Orman Yangınlarının Sayısal Analizi', 37.

narratives as traumatic subconscious thoughts in Chapter VI. Only 12.6 percent of the fires were caused by natural causes (lightning). Therefore, it is clear that 87.4 percent of the fires in 2021, which corresponds to the majority, are human-caused.¹⁹

Another noteworthy point about the causes of fires is that apart from the unknown causes, most of the known causes are driven by human factors. According to the study by Avcı and Korkmaz, who interviewed senior foresters about the causes of the increasing number of forest fires in Turkey, human mobility in forest areas and touristic activities were the most emphasised causes.²⁰ This confirms that the issue is human-induced. In the same study, it is also stated by senior foresters that mining, energy, touristic facilities, etc. permits granted in forests lead to an increase in forest fires and further complicate extinguishing efforts.²¹

According to 2021 forest fire statistics, another noteworthy issue is the rate of intentional fires. According to the OGM data, it is stated that 110 of the total 2793 fires were caused by intent.²² Although the rate of intentional fires, which is close to 4%, seems low compared to other categories, it is a very sensitive issue for both the public and security units. For example, although allegations of “burning for terrorist purposes” are made from time to time, the rate of fires caused by terrorism is generally very low in the official statistics of the OGM.

As Atmış et al. point out, among these intentional fires, there are no fires identified as being related to terrorist activity.²³ Therefore, as I will elaborate in the Literature Review section, the terrorism/conflict-centered approach of the studies in the field of political science in Turkey to the relationship between forest fires and security does not have a solid basis verified by the OGM data.

¹⁹ Orman Genel Müdürlüğü, ‘Ormancılık İstatistikleri 2021’ (Ankara, 2021).

²⁰ Avcı and Korkmaz, ‘Türkiye’de Orman Yangını Sorunu: Güncel Bazı Konular Üzerine Değerlendirmeler’, 232–33.

²¹ Ibid., 232.

²² Orman Genel Müdürlüğü, ‘Ormancılık İstatistikleri 2021’.

²³ Atmış, Tolunay, and Erdönmez, ‘Orman Yangınlarının Sayısal Analizi’, 38.

1.3.4. Criticised Aspects of the OGM

In Turkey, the OGM is the main institution responsible for preventing and extinguishing forest fires and restoring burned areas. Therefore, the institution that we will consider as the main security professional in firefighting is the OGM and its personnel. The institution has a 182-year history dating back to the Ottoman Empire and has expanded and renewed its nationwide organisation and supported it with developing technology.²⁴ However, recent large-scale fires and increasing criticism have raised some questions about the activities, institutional capacity and data sharing processes carried out by the OGM. Therefore, when writing a section on the history of forest fires in Turkey - and thus forming the relationship between forest fires and security - it is necessary to include these criticisms.

These criticisms can be summarised in two groups. The first group of criticisms is about the reliability of the OGM data. It is stated that the debate on the amount of area damaged as a result of forest fires has been going on for many years. Some studies criticise that the OGM sometimes underestimates the amount of area burned.²⁵ Scholars generally show the 2008 Antalya fires as an example of this argument. According to Atmiş et.al., while the ministry officials claimed a small area of forest had burned, several sources, including the Chamber of Forest Engineers and the District Governorship's official statement, indicated that actual figures were nearly three times more.²⁶ Indeed, the expert interviews in Avcı and Korkmaz's study also support the argument. In their study, the senior forestry personnel were asked "whether they underestimated the amount of area burned" and 54,6 percent of them answered that "the amount of area burned in forest fires was underestimated".²⁷ This representation of the data has two main reasons, which in fact illustrates the

²⁴ Avcı and Korkmaz, 'Türkiye'de Orman Yangını Sorunu: Güncel Bazı Konular Üzerine Değerlendirmeler', 229.

²⁵ Atmiş, Tolunay, and Erdönmez, 'Orman Yangınlarının Sayısal Analizi', 23–24; Avcı and Korkmaz, 'Türkiye'de Orman Yangını Sorunu: Güncel Bazı Konular Üzerine Değerlendirmeler', 234–35.

²⁶ Atmiş, Tolunay, and Erdönmez, 'Orman Yangınlarının Sayısal Analizi', 23–24.

²⁷ Avcı and Korkmaz, 'Türkiye'de Orman Yangını Sorunu: Güncel Bazı Konular Üzerine Değerlendirmeler', 234–35.

political character of forest fires, according to Avcı and Korkmaz's research. The first of these reasons is public pressure, while the second is the fear of being considered a failure in the eyes of senior management.²⁸ Therefore, such reasons call into question the reliability of the OGM's data on forests and make the institution – recognised as the main security provider for forest management - the focus of criticism.

The second group of criticisms points to OGM's inadequate infrastructure for preparing and responding to fires. These criticisms, which appear in some academic studies as well as in the reports of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Councils, are an expression of dissatisfaction with the level of preparedness against fire. As stated by Atmış et al., the fact that the rapid increase in the amount of burned area has not been questioned sufficiently, the impact of climate change has been ignored, preventive measures have been left in the background, and cooperation with different institutions has not been given the necessary importance is read as a harbinger of the picture in 2021.²⁹ In addition, in the report of the III. Agriculture and Forestry Council held in 2019, 2 years before the major fires, it was stated as the weaknesses of OGM that the land vehicles and ground teams cannot be formed in sufficient numbers due to the decrease in forest fire workers, the physical characteristics of the workers are not sufficient due to the increase in the average age of the workers, and the institutional memory on forest fires is weakened due to the rotation of technical personnel specialised in fires to other duties and places.³⁰

In conclusion, the 2021 forest fires in Turkey should be considered and analysed as a remarkable case in many respects. Given the human-induced nature of forest fires in Turkey, the importance of interdisciplinary studies on this case emerges, and critical security studies can provide an important context in this regard. Given that the main security provider, the OGM, has been criticised for its reliability and incompetence,

²⁸ Ibid., 235.

²⁹ Atmış, Tolunay, and Erdönmez, 'Orman Yangınlarının Sayısal Analizi', 32.

³⁰ Orman Genel Müdürlüğü, 'Orman Yangınlarıyla Mücadelede Yenilikçi Yaklaşımlar Çalışma Grubu Belge', III. Tarım ve Orman Şûrası (Ankara, 2019), 20–23.

vernacular security narratives are worth examining for their potential to offer alternatives.

1.4. Existing Research on Forest Fires and the Formation of the Forest Fires – Security Nexus

Before reviewing the literature on the forest fire-security nexus, it is necessary to address forest fires' broader significance from a governance and resilience standpoint in the social sciences. Although research on fire behaviour and ecology has a long history, social aspects and dynamics of fires have only recently gained attention.³¹ However social science inquiries are increasingly essential due to the issue's complexity. Therefore, forest fires now represent a global concern that invalidates narrow ecological or hazard-based definitions. Instead, they stand at the intersection of governance failures, increasing climatic changes and deeply rooted socio-ecological processes.³² Within this complexity -marked by governance failures, global warming and profound socio-ecological processes- many authors highlight the limits of conventional, fire suppression-dominated strategies.³³

Examining the USA's history of fire control, Calkin et al. argue that aggressive fire-suppression policies are costly and ultimately produce larger, more destructive fires. Under this approach, which seeks to prevent all fires, even small blazes are extinguished, allowing combustible materials—dead vegetation, dry trees—to accumulate in forests. These methods thus enable bigger future fires, a phenomenon

³¹ Sarah McCaffrey, 'Community Wildfire Preparedness: A Global State-of-the-Knowledge Summary of Social Science Research', *Current Forestry Reports* 1 (2015): 81.

³² Brett Alan Miller et al., 'Re-Envisioning Wildland Fire Governance: Addressing the Transboundary, Uncertain, and Contested Aspects of Wildfire', *Fire* 5, no. 49 (2022); Max A Moritz et al., 'Learning to Coexist with Wildfire', *Nature* 515, no. 7525 (2014): 58–66; Tania Schoennagel et al., 'Adapt to More Wildfire in Western North American Forests as Climate Changes', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114, no. 18 (2017): 4582–90.

³³ David E Calkin, Matthew P Thompson, and Mark A Finney, 'Negative Consequences of Positive Feedbacks in US Wildfire Management', *Forest Ecosystems* 2, no. 9 (2015): 1–10; Gleiciane O Pismel et al., 'Wildfire Governance in a Tri-National Frontier of Southwestern Amazonia: Capacities and Vulnerabilities', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 86, no. 103529 (2023); Schoennagel et al., 'Adapt to More Wildfire in Western North American Forests as Climate Changes'; Toddi Steelman, 'US Wildfire Governance as Social-Ecological Problem', *Ecology and Society* 21, no. 4 (2016).

Calkin et al.³⁴ call the “wildfire paradox”. Meanwhile, Maureen Essen et al. criticise such traditional frameworks for oversimplifying forest fire management as a simple risk rather than a complex one. When viewed as simple risk, attention centres on ignition probability, limiting exploration of context-specific fire factors. In the United States especially, Essen et al.³⁵ argue that top-down, expert-dominated approaches fail to capture forest fires’ complexity. Consequently, there is a shift toward more flexible, participatory, and complex risk-based governance models that value fire’s ecological function and prioritise local communities, including indigenous populations.³⁶ Accordingly, numerous scholars urge reframing forest fires as a socio-ecological, rather than purely physical, phenomenon.³⁷ They highlight adaptive governance and resilience thinking as cornerstones of this shift. Yet “resilience” is interpreted differently; for example, David B. McWethy et al.³⁸ propose moving beyond “basic resilience” –returning to pre-fire conditions- toward “transformative resilience”, reshaping land use and governance to accommodate recurrent fires. Moritz et al.³⁹ likewise contend that fire should be seen as a natural ecological force rather than a disorder to be forcibly suppressed. Doing so demands new forms of land-use planning that may limit development in fire-prone areas or utilise controlled burns to reduce fuel loads.⁴⁰ However, such measures can face resistance from policymakers reluctant to restrict development or support deliberate fire near residential zones.

³⁴ ‘Negative Consequences of Positive Feedbacks in US Wildfire Management’, 2–3.

³⁵ Maureen Essen et al., ‘Improving Wildfire Management Outcomes: Shifting the Paradigm of Wildfire from Simple to Complex Risk’, *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 66, no. 5 (2023): 910.

³⁶ William Nikolakis and Emma Roberts, ‘Wildfire Governance in a Changing World: Insights for Policy Learning and Policy Transfer’, *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy* 13, no. 2 (2022): 144–64; Vildan Oral and Melikşah Turan, ‘Fighting Anthropogenic Forest Fires: Implications from Forest Fires in the Mediterranean Region’, *Kent Akademisi* 16, no. Special Issue for the 100th Anniversary of the Republic of Türkiye (2023): 438–54.

³⁷ Sarah Clement et al., ‘To Burn or Not to Burn: Governance of Wildfires in Australia’, *Ecology and Society* 29, no. 1 (2024): 1–15; Essen et al., ‘Improving Wildfire Management Outcomes: Shifting the Paradigm of Wildfire from Simple to Complex Risk’; Moritz et al., ‘Learning to Coexist with Wildfire’.

³⁸ ‘Rethinking Resilience to Wildfire’, *Nature Sustainability* 2, no. 9 (2019): 798.

³⁹ ‘Learning to Coexist with Wildfire’, 58.

⁴⁰ Scott L Stephens et al., ‘Temperate and Boreal Forest Mega-fires: Characteristics and Challenges’, *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 12, no. 2 (2014): 118–19; Matthew P Thompson et al., ‘Rethinking the Wildland Fire Management System’, *Journal of Forestry* 116, no. 4 (2018): 1.

To address these challenges, substantial research underscores local communities' vital role in forest fire governance.⁴¹ Clement et al.⁴² and Oral and Turan⁴³ show how community-based approaches promote trust and collective ownership in forest fire management, countering top-down governmental models. Studies in China⁴⁴, Canada⁴⁵, and Spain⁴⁶ reveal that empowered local stakeholders can implement preventive measures like small-scale prescribed burns or forest thinning. A key facet of such approaches is the revival and formal recognition of indigenous fire management (IFM), which strategically applies fire for diverse objectives—protecting and clearing vegetation, mitigating forest fires' effects, preserving cultural practices, enhancing biodiversity, and supporting livelihoods.⁴⁷ Mary R. Huffman⁴⁸ and Dean Freeman et al.⁴⁹ document how indigenous groups have long used fire for ecological balance, resource management, and fuel reduction. In Australia, Aboriginal cultural burning has been incorporated into regional policies as a government program, though controversies persist around Aboriginal recognition and legal contradictions.⁵⁰ A similar situation exists in Canada, where indigenous burning practices are sometimes constrained by conflicting regulations and institutional

⁴¹ Judith Alexandra Kirschner, Julian Clark, and Georgios Boustras, 'Governing Wildfires: Toward a Systematic Analytical Framework', *Ecology and Society* 28, no. 2 (2023); Pismel et al., 'Wildfire Governance in a Tri-National Frontier of Southwestern Amazonia: Capacities and Vulnerabilities'.

⁴² 'To Burn or Not to Burn: Governance of Wildfires in Australia'.

⁴³ 'Fighting Anthropogenic Forest Fires: Implications from Forest Fires in the Mediterranean Region'.

⁴⁴ Jinjin Wu and Shoujun Lyu, 'Public Participation in Wildfire Rescue and Management: A Case Study from Chongqing, China', *Fire* 7, no. 9 (2024): 1–14.

⁴⁵ Nikolakis and Roberts, 'Wildfire Governance in a Changing World: Insights for Policy Learning and Policy Transfer'.

⁴⁶ Iago Otero, 'Social-Ecological Transformation to Coexist with Wildfire: Reflecting on 18 Years of Participatory Wildfire Governance', in *Urban Resilience to the Climate Emergency: Unravelling the Transformative Potential of Institutional and Grassroots Initiatives*, ed. Isabel Ruiz-Mallen, Hug March, and Mar Satorras (Springer, 2022), 147–75.

⁴⁷ Nikolakis and Roberts, 'Wildfire Governance in a Changing World: Insights for Policy Learning and Policy Transfer', 144.

⁴⁸ 'The Many Elements of Traditional Fire Knowledge: Synthesis, Classification, and Aids to Cross-Cultural Problem Solving in Fire-Dependent Systems around the World', *Ecology and Society* 18, no. 4 (2013).

⁴⁹ 'Cultural Burning and Public Sector Practice in the Australian Capital Territory', *Australian Geographer* 52, no. 2 (2021): 111–13.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 122–24.

mistrust.⁵¹ Scholars recommend structural reforms to engage indigenous knowledge in policymaking, modify regulations to legalise cultural burning, and provide enduring support for IFM practices.⁵²

In sum, researchers point to a paradigm shift from conventional Western-oriented fire suppression toward integrated, adaptive, and community-centred forest fire governance. Rising temperatures and increasingly destructive fires reveal the limitations of traditional approaches, prompting calls for frameworks that treat forest fires as socio-ecological challenges necessitating multi-level coordination. Indigenous fire management, decentralised decision-making, and resilience-based land-use planning emerge as promising measures to mitigate future risks and foster coexistence with fire. Yet despite broad support for these principles, legal barriers, institutional fragmentation, and cultural inertia persist in the cases studied.

When examining forest fires through a security lens, the literature typically branches into two key approaches: one prioritises ‘hard security’ and the other explores the broader, more inclusive dimensions of security. The first is strongly linked to terrorism studies through the notion of ‘pyro-terrorism’.⁵³ In 2006, Robert Arthur Baird posited that future terrorists would use arson as a weapon to harm local economies, impact military forces and terrorise the population.⁵⁴ By contrast, more critical studies take a wider environmental perspective. Some situate forest fires within global climate policies⁵⁵, whilst others consider them in a regional

⁵¹ Sarah Dickson-Hoyle et al., ‘Community Forests Advance Local Wildfire Governance and Proactive Management in British Columbia, Canada’, *Canadian Journal of Forest Research* 54, no. 3 (2023): 290–91.

⁵² Ibid., 291; Nikolakis and Roberts, ‘Wildfire Governance in a Changing World: Insights for Policy Learning and Policy Transfer’, 146–47.

⁵³ János Besenyő, ‘Inferno Terror: Forest Fires as the New Form of Terrorism’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 31, no. 6 (2019): 1229–41; Nick Deshpande, ‘Pyro-Terrorism: Recent Cases and the Potential for Proliferation’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 1 (2009): 36–44; Robert Arthur Baird, ‘Pyro-Terrorism—the Threat of Arson-Induced Forest Fires as a Future Terrorist Weapon of Mass Destruction’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 5 (2006): 415–28.

⁵⁴ Baird, ‘Pyro-Terrorism—the Threat of Arson-Induced Forest Fires as a Future Terrorist Weapon of Mass Destruction’, 415.

⁵⁵ Matt McDonald, ‘After the Fires? Climate Change and Security in Australia’, *Australian Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 1 (2021): 1–18.

environmental security context, notably the ‘transboundary haze problem’.⁵⁶ Although this literature extends beyond terrorism and conflict into broader security themes, it primarily remains on global, regional or national scales.

A comparable pattern appears in Turkey-focused research. Despite Turkey’s position in the Mediterranean basin—where fire risks run high in hot, dry summers⁵⁷, - few studies link forest fires to security concerns. Existing scholarship often frames forest fires as either a tool for counterinsurgency⁵⁸; or an act of terrorism⁵⁹, leaving aside the lived experiences and insecurities of those directly affected. This state- and terrorism-centred perspective ignores the everyday realities of forest villagers and local people, who are both highly vulnerable to fire risks and deeply connected to the forests through economic and cultural ties. Academically, forest fires and their management still appear largely as technical subjects within fields such as forestry and environmental engineering. There are a few studies on communication and media take the issue from the technical side to the political side, investigating the role of disinformation⁶⁰ and the politics of Turkish media’s coverage of the fires⁶¹. Adopting a vernacular security approach, thus, helps filling this critical gap by prioritising the voices of those whose security concerns are most urgent but least examined.

⁵⁶ Scott Adam Edwards and Felix Heiduk, ‘Hazy Days: Forest Fires and the Politics of Environmental Security in Indonesia’, *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 34, no. 3 (2015): 65–94; Muhammad Fachrie, ‘Indonesia’s Forest Fire and Haze Pollution: An Analysis of Human Security’, *MJIR| Malaysian Journal of International Relations* 8, no. 1 (2020): 104–17; James Cotton, ‘The “Haze” over Southeast Asia: Challenging the ASEAN Mode of Regional Engagement’, *Pacific Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1999): 331–51.

⁵⁷ Josep Peñuelas and Jordi Sardans, ‘Global Change and Forest Disturbances in the Mediterranean Basin: Breakthroughs, Knowledge Gaps, and Recommendations’, *Forests* 12, no. 5 (2021): 603.

⁵⁸ Pinar Dinç, ‘Çözüm Süreci Sonrası Dersim’de Orman Yangınları ve Çatışma İlişkisi’, *Birikim* 378 (2020): 109–20; Pinar Dinc et al., ‘Fighting Insurgency, Ruining the Environment: The Case of Forest Fires in the Dersim Province of Turkey’, *Human Ecology* 49, no. 4 (2021): 481–93.

⁵⁹ Hakan Ayhan Dağıstanlı and Cevriye Gencer, ‘Hibrit Tehdit Perspektifinden Orman Yangınları ve Türkiye’nin Mücadele Politikası’, *SAVSAD Savunma ve Savaş Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 1 (2023): 35–70; Yunus Karaağaç, ‘Çevre Terörizmi Kapsamında PKK Terör Örgütünün Orman Yakma Stratejisi ve Sabotaj Yapılanmaları’, *Journal of International Relations and Political Science Studies*, no. 7 (2023): 37–54.

⁶⁰ Kadriye Kobak and Şuheda Soğukdere, ‘Sosyal Medyadaki Dezenformasyon: 2021 Türkiye Orman Yangınları Örneği’, *Uluslararası Medya ve İletişim Araştırmaları Hakemli Dergisi* 4, no. 2 (2021): 167–89.

⁶¹ Ece Baykal Fide, ‘Turkish Newspapers Wildfire Coverage During the Summer of 2021’, *Kent Akademisi* 15, no. 4 (2022): 2110–27.

1.5. Significance of the Study

Since our imaginations and conceptualisations of security yield different outcomes, it is crucial to examine these various conceptualisations. Dependence of these various conceptualisations primarily stems from our metatheoretical stance on social phenomena. Since my approach to understanding and conceptualising security as a social phenomenon is grounded in a social constructivist metatheoretical position, I do not see security as an objective, ‘out there’, and homogeneous concept. Rather, I see it as a subjective phenomenon constructed by the ideas and practices of human beings and therefore yields heterogeneous imaginations. Indeed, understanding the conflicting security narratives that emerged in the context of the 2021 forest fires - and exploring how they shape (in)security- is necessary for establishing the forest fires–security nexus in Turkey and for developing a more comprehensive perspective on environmental security. A more comprehensive perspective on an environmental security issue -particularly from the lowest level of analysis- is essential, given that transformation in addressing environmental crises appears unlikely to be achieved solely through top-down policies. Indeed, in Turkey, the forest fire-security nexus has largely been examined from a highly militarised perspective, focusing on terrorism and conflict, as I evaluate below in the literature part. However, environmental crises are highly complex; understanding how people whose daily lives are directly affected by such crises perceive them through a security lens is necessary for uncovering their underlying mechanisms and for advancing potential solutions.

This, however, necessitates a theoretical and methodological shift away from traditional security studies. Indeed, recently there is an emergent critique in security studies arguing that traditional research methods and approaches are designed to study elites and high politics.⁶² Instead of relying on an elite-centric lens that examines phenomena through top-down analyses, there is a need for more bottom-up, in-depth research. Tracing such a theoretical and methodological stance within critical security studies is one of the key academic endeavours that this dissertation’s

⁶² Liam Stanley and Richard Jackson, ‘Introduction: Everyday Narratives in World Politics’, *Politics* 36, no. 3 (2016): 223–35.

theoretical chapter aims to articulate. Indeed, I contend that this shift can be found in the vernacular security approach, which has recently started to gain traction within critical security studies.

This study is significant primarily because it provides an original empirical contribution to the emerging vernacular security approach within critical security studies. By emphasising the importance of context, vernacular security offers a theoretical perspective that examines context-specific, diverse conceptualisations of security, without taking these various meanings as eternal or inevitable. As a country located in the Mediterranean basin, which is one of the most vulnerable places against forest fires and experiencing forest fires almost every year, it is important to establish a forest fires-security nexus in Turkey's context from a bottom-up perspective.

1.6. Chapter Outlines

This dissertation consists of seven main chapters. Here in **Chapter I**, I have outlined the dissertation by providing a general background of the study. The reader is informed of the principal aim and the research questions that guide this work. **Chapter II**, while pursuing the objective of presenting the philosophical and theoretical perspectives necessary for interpreting the social world, constructs a framework that connects the security–environment–politics nexus and ensures that political dimensions are not overlooked when examining an environmental issue through a security lens. In addition, it discusses why a theoretical shift is required within critical security studies in order to investigate this phenomenon from a bottom-up perspective. The chapter also introduces the emerging vernacular security approach, which is gaining increased advocacy in the literature. In doing so, this study aims to contribute to vernacular security theory by applying it to a novel case, thereby testing its applicability in a new context.

Chapter III aims to establish a conceptual framework for the topic under discussion. This section begins by examining the conceptual foundations in International Relations literature that link forest fires to security. After introducing the concept of

deforestation within this framework, I will then turn to the broader context, starting with an evaluation of the environment–security–politics nexus in Turkey. The discussion subsequently addresses deforestation in Turkey and culminates in an analysis of the evolution of forest management and the transformation of the forest regime from the late Ottoman era through the Republican period, including the AKP era.

Because bottom-up research necessitates engaging directly with the context, this dissertation includes a fieldwork component. In **Chapter IV**, I will describe in detail the processes involved in collecting the two main data sets—namely, the official and the vernacular data sets, used to address the dissertation’s research questions. It will also explain which academic traditions guided the study’s research design. Furthermore, in this chapter, I aim to clearly articulate the methodological approaches employed in data processing and analysis.

In the following two chapters, the dissertation’s empirical findings will be presented. **Chapter V** examines the official narrative, evaluating how the ruling elite conceptualises the 2021 forest fires in terms of security, environmental, and political dimensions. **Chapter VI** then shifts the focus to the vernacular narrative, highlighting the security perceptions shaped by local communities—whose voices have been marginalised by conventional approaches—through their lived experiences.

Finally, before drawing the overall conclusion of the dissertation, **Chapter VII** will compare and contrast these two narratives and examine how any resulting divergence (or convergence) may inform broader discussions of security in Turkey.

CHAPTER 2

ON THE MERGING OF ENVIRONMENT, SECURITY AND POLITICS: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

The conceptualisation of environmental problems as not only ecological but also political and security-oriented issues is important in order to understand their complex effects. In this dissertation, I take environment, security and politics as intertwined and mutually shaped. In this theoretical chapter, I discuss how these concepts intersect with each other and through which theoretical perspectives this intersection can be understood. Thus, by theoretically grounding the intertwining of environment, security, and politics, I lay the groundwork for the empirical analysis of my dissertation.

Later sections of this chapter will discuss environment, security, and politics interrelatedly in order to form tripartite nexus between these concepts. A theoretical debate section will follow this, and then, finally, I will try to clarify the value of vernacular security as an alternative bottom-up security framework to evaluate the context of the dissertation.

2.2. The Environment in the Security Debate

Security is generally defined as an “essentially contested concept”,⁶³ so does the debate on the environment as a security issue. The field of “environmental security” is so fragmented that it denotes different things to different groups of scholars.⁶⁴

⁶³ David A Baldwin, ‘The Concept of Security’, *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 1 (1997): 10.

⁶⁴ Rita Floyd and Richard A Matthew, ‘Environmental Security Studies: An Introduction’, in *Environmental Security*, ed. Rita Floyd and Richard A Matthew (Routledge, 2013), 1–2.

Therefore theoretical approaches to security studies perceive the concept very differently in terms of who or what is to be secured and the character of the threat. Rita Floyd, thus, argues that “[...] environmental security is not so much a concept as it is a debate, with different approaches to environmental security at odds with one another”.⁶⁵ Although some define environmental security as a good idea;⁶⁶ as “ultimate security”;⁶⁷ and as useful because it challenges the superiority of traditionally associated security concepts;⁶⁸ some others, most notably Daniel Deudney, see it as dangerous. Stressing mainly the zero-sum rationality of traditional understanding of security, Deudney argues that denoting an environmental problem as a security issue might introduce militarised solutions, from which the environmental debate should be kept apart.⁶⁹ However, as seen below, “the environment” completed its journey to be regarded as a security issue in the literature. But before that, I aim to question this plurality of thoughts and knowledge on the environment.

2.2.1. Knowledge and Agenda on Environmental Security: Environment-Politics Nexus

What forms of knowledge or agendas are used in determining environmental problems as security issues? As Kate O’Neill argues, scientific, technical and other forms of knowledge shape our understanding and perception of - and responses to - environmental problems.⁷⁰ Traditionally, the scientific knowledge and associated

⁶⁵ Rita Floyd, ‘The Environmental Security Debate and Its Significance for Climate Change’, *The International Spectator* 43, no. 3 (2008): 51.

⁶⁶ Maria Julia Trombetta, ‘Environmental Security and Climate Change: Analysing the Discourse’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 21, no. 4 (2008): 586.

⁶⁷ Norman Myers, *Ultimate Security: The Environmental Basis of Political Stability* (London and New York: W.W. Norton, 1993).

⁶⁸ Hugh C Dyer, ‘Theoretical Aspects of Environmental Security’, in *Responding to Environmental Conflicts: Implications for Theory and Practice*, ed. Eileen Petzold-Bradley, Alexander Carius, and Arpad Vincze (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), 68.

⁶⁹ Daniel Deudney, ‘The Case against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security’, *Millennium* 19, no. 3 (1990): 461–76.

⁷⁰ Kate O’Neill, *The Environment and International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 16.

“scientific consensus” has been the form of knowledge that determine environmental problems and changes as dangerous and something that must be taken into consideration. However, as Daniel Sarewitz highlights, “scientific inquiry is inherently and unavoidably subject to becoming politicised in environmental controversies”.⁷¹ Julian Emmons Allison, again, supports this claim stating that scientific facts may be manipulated to employ specific interests, especially by sceptics and deniers.⁷² Consequently, scientists are not the only party or “experts” in struggling against environmental problems, producing knowledge, and setting the agenda of environmental security. Interest groups, the bureaucratic elite, and other segments of the society, especially the non-elite lay people that directly feel security problems in their environment, become more critical when *practising* against environmental security.

O’Neill highlighted this issue by stating that scholars have been engaged in questions of who the experts and expert communities are, how they affect the international policy process, and topics such as the politicisation of science. Recently, though, she argues there is a tendency to turn to the local knowledge on environmental policy processes.⁷³ Turning to the local is important, she argues, since the impacts of environmental change are unequal and vary from one region to another.⁷⁴

These tendencies bring this study to look at the political dimension; as Floyd and Richard Matthew argue, “[...] environmental issues, including environmental conflict, cannot be explained without accounting for political factors”.⁷⁵ And when it comes to scientific and political agendas of environmental security, I rely on one of the most cited and milestone works of critical security studies, namely *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap De Wilde.

⁷¹ Daniel Sarewitz, ‘How Science Makes Environmental Controversies Worse’, *Environmental Science & Policy* 7, no. 5 (2004): 385.

⁷² Juliann Emmons Allison, ‘The Study of Global Environmental Politics: Strategies for Research and Learning’, in *Routledge Handbook of Global Environmental Politics*, ed. Paul G. Harris, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2016), 64.

⁷³ O’Neill, *The Environment and International Relations*, 16.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁷⁵ Floyd and Matthew, ‘Environmental Security Studies: An Introduction’, 8.

Buzan et al. argue that the most striking feature of the environmental sector is its Janus face character. Namely, it has two agendas: a scientific and a political one. They stress that although these two agendas intertwine and shape each other, the scientific one is rooted in the natural sciences and nongovernmental activity.⁷⁶ Then, they highlight the main differences between these two constituting agendas of the environmental sector. On the one hand, the scientific agenda is mainly constructed out of the political realm by experts, scientists, or a scientific community. Therefore, the lead actor in setting this agenda is not states but a global, environmental epistemic community, such as certain branches of the United Nations, most notably the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) or the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Consequently, the scientific agenda produces the scientific knowledge and communicates that knowledge to mainly the political elites. Therefore, it underpins securitising moves.⁷⁷

On the other hand, the political agenda is constructed by governments or intergovernmental agencies. It consists of the public and political decision-making processes. It addresses environmental problems' emotional and sensational manifestations as a scene of mundane politics. Thus, it is more about politicising the environment rather than securitising it. Political agenda plays a vital role in responding to the scientific agenda: "how much of the scientific agenda is recognised by policymakers, their electorates, and their intermediaries – the press".⁷⁸ Political agenda mainly concerns the public sphere about the securitising moves; therefore, the lead actors are activists and lobbying nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), most notably Greenpeace or World Wildlife Fund.⁷⁹

As stated above, although these two agendas look very different, they co-constitute each other. However, it seems that there is a hierarchy between these agendas. Buzan et al. argue that the system level seems dominant in the environmental sector, as

⁷⁶ Barry Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 71–72.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 72–77.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 72–77.

securitising moves by the above-mentioned epistemic communities and bodies of the UN take place at the system level. Thus, they propose the political power of this scientific agenda depends on context-specific in answering the question of how the scientific knowledge is regarded as high politics by public spheres. This requires studying the unit level and turning to the local since “even when the concern is global, its political relevance is decided at the local level”.⁸⁰ In this dissertation, I try to justify the reasons for turning to the local in studying the environmental sector, as Buzan et al. stated in 1998. However, I refrain from using their theoretical framework, the securitisation frame of the Copenhagen School, and instead rely on the vernacular framework put forth in 2005 by Nils Bubandt.

In concluding this section and before evaluating the historical journey of environmental security, it is crucial to revisit how the environmental agenda is formulated, drawing once again on the framework provided by Buzan et.al. The environmental agenda encompasses a broad spectrum of interconnected issues, which Buzan et al. systematically categorise into six sub-headings: a) disruption of ecosystems: climate change, deforestation, forms of erosion, etc; b) energy-related problems, such as the depletion of natural resources, scarcities and uneven distribution; c) population-related problems; d) food-related problems; e) economic problems; and f) war-related harm to the environment and environmental degradation related violence. Among these categories, Buzan et al. identify disruptions of ecosystems as the most explicitly environmental issue area.⁸¹ In line with this conceptual framework, this dissertation specifically concentrates on the issue of deforestation through the lens of forest fires in 2021, a linkage that will be explored in detail in Chapter III.

2.2.2. Historical Development of the Environmental Security: Environment-Security Nexus

Scholars have developed specific typologies to trace this historical development of the environmental security discourse. The question is, however, when is this

⁸⁰ Ibid., 91.

⁸¹ Ibid., 74–75.

discourse entered the agenda. Some scholars point out that although there were articulations of “the environment-security nexus” before the end of the Cold War era, the discourse entered the agenda mainly after the Cold War.⁸² The reason for this was the political opportunity to discuss the issues traditionally regarded as “low politics” before the Cold War.⁸³ Some scholars denote the Brundtland Report published in 1987 and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev’s introduction of the topic at the UN as the key moments in bringing the nexus to the front.⁸⁴ Some others mention the 1992 Rio Earth Summit as the key driver that set the scientific consensus on the global agenda as an urgent issue in motion.⁸⁵ While Buzan et al. highlight the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972,⁸⁶ there are scholars pointing out the importance of two institutions, namely the Stockholm Peace Research Institute and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo, as the key starter of the discourse.⁸⁷ In summary, there is a general consensus that the nexus entered the agenda at the end of the Cold War era.

Scholars often categorise the literature into distinct typologies to better capture and understand its nuances. Regarding the historical development of the environment-security nexus literature, scholars commonly adopt a “generation” or “wave” approach. Among these studies, one of the most frequently cited frameworks is provided by Carsten F. Rønnfeldt, who prefers the term “generation” over “wave”.⁸⁸

⁸² Columba Peoples and Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd Editio (New York: Routledge, 2020), 134.

⁸³ Matt McDonald, *Security, the Environment and Emancipation: Contestation over Environmental Change* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 2.

⁸⁴ Simon Dalby, Hans Günter Brauch, and Úrsula Oswald Spring, ‘Environmental Security Concepts Revisited during the First Three Phases (1983-2006)’, in *Facing Global Environmental Change* (Springer, 2009), 781.

⁸⁵ Floyd and Matthew, ‘Environmental Security Studies: An Introduction’, 1; Loren R Cass, ‘The Discipline of Global Environmental Politics: A Short History’, in *Routledge Handbook of Global Environmental Politics*, ed. Paul G. Harris, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2016), 18.

⁸⁶ Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 71.

⁸⁷ Marwa Daoudy, *The Origins of the Syrian Conflict: Climate Change and Human Security* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 27.

⁸⁸ Carsten F Rønnfeldt, ‘Three Generations of Environment and Security Research’, *Journal of Peace Research* 34, no. 4 (1997): 480.

Rønnfeldt evaluates three generations of the environment-security nexus research. In line with this categorisation, this section relies on Rønnfeldt's typology to explore and understand the evolution of scholarship on the nexus.

Contrary to the common argument on when the nexus entered the agenda, Dimitris Stevis points out the 1940s and 1960s as the hidden origin of international environmental politics. Stevis notes that during this period, most intellectual efforts originated from disciplines outside International Relations. Nevertheless, he emphasises that the foundational ideas concerning the nexus can still be traced back to classical texts.⁸⁹ Similarly, Floyd and Matthew argue that the intellectual roots of the environmental security can be identified as far back as Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War*, highlighting the greater security of self-sufficient societies in ancient Greece. However, they acknowledge that the contemporary conceptualisation of the environment-security nexus primarily emerged during the 1960s and 1970s.⁹⁰ Richard Ullman, as one of the earliest theorists or as a benchmarker, identified certain environmental threats to American national security.⁹¹ After Ullman's introduction, Norman Myers defined environmental security as the "ultimate security" and famously argued that "environmental problems recognise no frontiers".⁹² To sum up, this generation of works was still dominated by the realist state-centred understanding of security. Environmental problems were regarded as national security issues. Being mainly a conceptual debate on the nexus, the first generation was the era emphasising the under-studied relationship between the environment and security.⁹³

For Dalby et al., while the first generation of works was mainly about a conceptual debate – whether the environment should be conceptualised in a security framework-

⁸⁹ Dimitris Stevis, 'The Trajectory of International Environmental Politics', in *Advances in International Environmental Politics*, ed. Michele M Betsill, Kathryn Hochstetler, and Dimitris Stevis (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 16–18, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137338976_2.

⁹⁰ Floyd and Matthew, 'Environmental Security Studies: An Introduction', 3.

⁹¹ Richard H Ullman, 'Redefining Security', *International Security* 8, no. 1 (1983): 129–53.

⁹² Myers, *Ultimate Security: The Environmental Basis of Political Stability*.

⁹³ Rønnfeldt, 'Three Generations of Environment and Security Research', 473–74.

the second generation emerged as an empirical and methodological endeavour.⁹⁴ In this generation, the conceptual link between environment and security had been acknowledged, and the lack of empirical investigation constituted the main focus of research.⁹⁵ The 1990s denotes the beginning of this generation of research, as commonly agreed. This era's benchmarker was a group of researchers, notably the Toronto group headed by Thomas Homer-Dixon. Toronto group investigated the link between environmental scarcity, stress and conflict, and argued that resource scarcity and environmental degradation might cause violent conflict.⁹⁶ Another key group of researchers is the Swiss group, led by Günther Becher, and they dealt with environmental scarcity and degradation as causes of environmental conflict.⁹⁷ This generation of scholarship established a causal relationship between environmental problems and security concerns, explicitly connecting environmental degradation with security implications. Scholars employed various case studies to substantiate this link empirically. Nevertheless, their analyses predominantly focused on how environmental problems contribute directly to security threats or conflicts.

After the mid-1990s, the third generation of works denoted a "broadening and widening" of environmental security studies. While environmental security focused on the conflict in the second generation, third generation scholars started to discuss environmental changes' impacts on other security dimensions. This denotes moving away from focusing on national security to thinking about human security.⁹⁸ As Nina Graeger argues, environmental security should prioritise individuals rather than states as the central unit of analysis.⁹⁹ Similarly, Dalby et al. underline this shift by emphasising that environmental security scholarship increasingly foregrounds the

⁹⁴ Dalby, Brauch, and Spring, 'Environmental Security Concepts Revisited during the First Three Phases (1983-2006)', 781.

⁹⁵ Rønnfeldt, 'Three Generations of Environment and Security Research', 474–75.

⁹⁶ Thomas F Homer-Dixon, 'Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases', *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 5–40.

⁹⁷ Dalby, Brauch, and Spring, 'Environmental Security Concepts Revisited during the First Three Phases (1983-2006)', 781–82.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 782.

⁹⁹ Nina Graeger, 'Environmental Security?', *Journal of Peace Research* 33, no. 1 (1996): 112.

vulnerabilities and insecurities experienced by people rather than states.¹⁰⁰ In this regard, Nicole Detraz and Michele Betsill divide the literature into two lines. On the one hand, *environmental conflict* connects traditional security concerns to the environment. The main focus of this scholarly work is to analyse the hypothesis that societies will engage in violent conflict due to the resource scarcity caused by environmental degradation. On the other hand, those focusing much on the *environmental security* discourse stress the harmful effects of environmental degradation on human beings. This discourse is more akin to human security thinking. In this discourse, the referent object is not the state but the individual human beings. Attention here is on the belief that people will experience environmental degradation differently than each other.¹⁰¹

2.2.3. Studying the Environment from Security Perspective

As security studies is a sub-field within International Relations (IR), the ontology, epistemology, and methodology of security theories naturally stem from broader theoretical debates within IR. In recent decades, environmental issues have increasingly been analysed through diverse security lenses, each focusing on different referent objects beyond the state-centric framework. Consequently, it is crucial to summarise how various security traditions conceptualise the environment, highlighting their respective strengths and limitations, and examining their underlying theoretical assumptions. Many scholars have divided IR theories into certain dichotomies, such as rationalist versus reflectivist,¹⁰² explaining versus understanding,¹⁰³ and problem-solving theory versus critical theory.¹⁰⁴ These distinct

¹⁰⁰ Dalby, Brauch, and Spring, 'Environmental Security Concepts Revisited during the First Three Phases (1983-2006)', 783.

¹⁰¹ Nicole Detraz and Michele M Betsill, 'Climate Change and Environmental Security: For Whom the Discourse Shifts', *International Studies Perspectives* 10, no. 3 (2009): 305–6.

¹⁰² Robert Keohane, 'International Institutions: Two Approaches', *International Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1988): 379–96.

¹⁰³ Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁰⁴ Robert W. Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium* 10, no. 2 (1981): 126–55.

classifications result from the meta-theoretical foundations on which these theories are based. Different understandings of science result in different theory sets. Nuno Monteiro and Keven Ruby argue that there are three foundational positions in the philosophy of science from which IR theories are derived: instrumentalism, social constructivism, and scientific realism.¹⁰⁵ Traditional IR theories, namely realism and liberalism and their neo variants, and Marxism find their root in the instrumentalist foundation of science. Instrumentalism is a foundation rooted in the positivist understanding of science. It adopts an empiricist epistemology and assumes an ontological stance that acknowledges mind-independent, observable phenomena. Instrumentalist philosophy of science and its associated theories with it agree that there is only one truth that is open to empirical observation. Thus, these theories rely on hypothesis testing and tend to generalise the outcomes of these tests. In terms of IR, as it takes the existing order for granted, it deals mainly with solving the problems of that order rather than questioning the very characteristics that produce those problems. Defined as *problem-solving theories* by Robert Cox, these theories “take the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized [...]”.¹⁰⁶ The main advantage of this kind of doing science is, for Cox, its ability to reduce a complex issue area to a limited number of variables so that it can be examined in a precise way.¹⁰⁷ Producing law-like regularities to better capture the causality in this way,¹⁰⁸ however, this way of theorising is reductionist since its *ceteris paribus* tendency.

When studying the environment from the positivist traditional IR perspective, it is fair to say that these theories take the order as anarchic and consisting primarily of states for granted. Since there is no hierarchy over the states, the main problem with the environment is the question of who has the responsibility to act on an issue area that does not belong to any sovereign actors like the environment. Hence, the environment is generally regarded as the “tragedy of the commons” articulated by

¹⁰⁵ Nuno P Monteiro and Keven G Ruby, ‘IR and the False Promise of Philosophical Foundations’, *International Theory* 1, no. 1 (2009): 15–48.

¹⁰⁶ Cox, ‘Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory’, 128.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 129.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Garreth Hardin.¹⁰⁹ Another defining characteristic of traditionalists is their focus on national and military security.¹¹⁰ While advocating for a redefinition of security, Ullman's¹¹¹ work specifically questions how to secure American national security. Similarly, in the second generation of environmental security studies, Homer-Dixon's research primarily engaged in empirical investigations and established a causal link between environmental degradation and violent conflict.

The second foundational position in the philosophy of science is social constructivism. The social constructivist line of science accepts that the truth is socially constructed. Thus, the ontology here is not something mind-independent phenomenon but a socially constructed one. It means that there is no one commonly agreed reality, but there are multiple realities. Social constructivist philosophers, such as David Campbell, acknowledge the power-knowledge relationship in constituting the truth claims. Therefore, they see the truth as a function of social and political processes.¹¹² This kind of doing science entered the IR debate with the "critical turn" in the 1980s. Critical theories are meta-theoretically *insiders* in Fred Chernoff's language. They believe that to understand the social phenomena, one must understand the inside of the heads of humans. The priority is *understanding* events and ways to interpret them. Therefore, the interpretation of meanings, symbols, and intentions is important. They generally reject core features of positivist science, such as naturalism, objectivism, empiricism, and value-free social theory. In total, these critiques stress the reflective characteristic of the social world.¹¹³

In IR, critical theories do not take institutions and power relations for granted; instead, they question how they originated. They reject ahistorical analyses contrary

¹⁰⁹ Garreth Hardin, 'The Tragedy of the Commons', *Science* 162 (1968): 1243–48.

¹¹⁰ Rita Floyd, 'Analyst, Theory and Security: A New Framework for Understanding Environmental Security Studies', in *Environmental Security*, ed. Rita Floyd and Richard A Matthew, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 21.

¹¹¹ Ullman, 'Redefining Security'.

¹¹² Monteiro and Ruby, 'IR and the False Promise of Philosophical Foundations', 17.

¹¹³ Fred Chernoff, *The Power of International Theory: Reforging the Link to Foreign Policy-Making through Scientific Enquiry* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 23.

to their traditionalist counterparts; rather, they believe in the continual process of change. Cox argues that this tradition's weakness is its strength, meaning that since critical theories deal with making sense of the ever-changing reality, it must adjust itself to the changing object.¹¹⁴ First and foremost, studying the environment from a critical lens is criticising the state-centric focus of the study and bringing up those most vulnerable to the agenda.¹¹⁵ Bringing theory and practice together, critical theorists aim to “imagine, teach and ultimately bring about a better future in which those identified as most vulnerable (environmentally insecure) are rendered more secure”.¹¹⁶ Thus, the critical endeavour of the environmental security is a challenge as traditional environmental security “has been written by the rich omnivores in their comfortable offices and libraries”.¹¹⁷

Critical theory is an umbrella term including Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, Paris school, feminism, post-colonialism, post-structuralism, and constructivist approaches. In global environmental politics, Foucauldian scholars use discourse analysis and governmentality to uncover underlying meanings as to the environment.¹¹⁸ Feminists, on the other hand, deal with the presence and absence of women in the global environmental governance as well as the masculine character of that governance.¹¹⁹ The human security approach takes the human as the referent

¹¹⁴ Cox, ‘Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory’, 129.

¹¹⁵ Larry A Swatuk, ‘Environmental Security’, in *Advances in International Environmental Politics*, ed. Michele M Betsill, Kathryn Hochstetler, and Dimitris Stevis (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 233, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137338976_9.

¹¹⁶ Floyd, ‘Analyst, Theory and Security: A New Framework for Understanding Environmental Security Studies’, 22.

¹¹⁷ Simon Dalby, *Environmental Security*, vol. 20 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 184.

¹¹⁸ Hayley Stevenson, ‘Alternative Theories: Constructivism, Marxism and Critical Approaches’, in *Routledge Handbook of Global Environmental Politics*, ed. Paul G. Harris, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2016), 50; Angela Oels, ‘Rendering Climate Change Governable: From Biopower to Advanced Liberal Government?’, *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 7, no. 3 (2005): 185–207; Carl Death, *Governing Sustainable Development: Partnerships, Protests and Power at the World Summit* (London: Routledge, 2010).

¹¹⁹ Stevenson, ‘Alternative Theories: Constructivism, Marxism and Critical Approaches’, 51–52; Olaf Corry and Hayley Stevenson, ‘IR and the Earth: Societal Multiplicity and Planetary Singularity’, in *Traditions and Trends in Global Environmental Politics*, ed. Olaf Corry and Hayley Stevenson, 1st ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 11–12.

object and questions resource use, human development, and political and economic freedom.¹²⁰ In the Copenhagen School, environmental hazards can be uttered in a security grammar to be seen as an “existential threat”. On the other hand, for the Welsh School, environmental harm is part of the structural insecurity, requiring being emancipated.¹²¹ For Corry and Stevenson, these critical interventions to the environment allow us to study how planetary or ecological systems can be the focus of “high” politics.¹²² Finally, recently a new materialist and post humanist agenda emerged critiquing anthropocentric thinking on the environment.¹²³ Depending on complexity theory, posthuman environmental studies decentre the human as the object of study¹²⁴ and address threats to the non-human species with which ‘we’ humans share the planet.¹²⁵

The final foundational position in the philosophy of science is scientific realism. Scientific realism can be thought of as a via-media between positivist and social constructivist philosophies of science. It mainly criticises positivism’s reductionist flat ontology focused on only observable phenomena on the one hand; and on the other, social constructivism’s irresponsible relativism¹²⁶ or its dependence on the linguistic or social construction of the reality. Derived from English philosopher Roy Bhaskar’s works,¹²⁷ scientific realism (or “critical realism” in social sciences)¹²⁸ presents a stratified ontology, investigating not only the observable empirical realm but also the deeper unseen underlying causal mechanisms. After considering all these

¹²⁰ Daoudy, *The Origins of the Syrian Conflict: Climate Change and Human Security*, 52.

¹²¹ Corry and Stevenson, ‘IR and the Earth: Societal Multiplicity and Planetary Singularity’, 13.

¹²² Ibid., 13–14.

¹²³ Erika Cudworth and Stephen Hobden, ‘Complexity, Ecologism, and Posthuman Politics’, *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 3 (2013): 643–64.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, 146.

¹²⁶ Heikki Patomäki and Colin Wight, ‘After Postpositivism? The Promises of Critical Realism’, *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2000): 213.

¹²⁷ Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

¹²⁸ Faruk Yalvaç, ‘Eleştirel Gerçekçilik: Uluslararası İlişkiler Kuramında Post-Pozitivizm Sonrası Aşama’, *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi* 6, no. 24 (2010): 4.

stratified ontologies (from empirical to actual to the real in the end), the truth can be reachable. In sum, Heikki Patomäki and Colin Wight, as two of the main advocates of critical realism, define critical realists:¹²⁹

“to be committed to ontological realism (that there is a reality, which is differentiated, structured, and layered, and independent of mind), epistemological relativism (that all beliefs are socially produced and hence potentially fallible), and judgemental rationalism (that despite epistemological relativism, it is still possible, in principle, to provide justifiable grounds for preferring one theory over another)”.

In IR, critical realism is represented by names such as Colin Wight, Milja Kurki, and Heikki Patomäki, among others. Discussion on critical realism and environmental issues focused on the problematic dichotomies, namely nature/society, people/animals, or women/men.¹³⁰ According to Tim Forsyth, critical realist studies on the environment aim to provide how scientific explanations investigate only one side of the complex biophysical processes.¹³¹ This is especially important in terms of the debate on Anthropocene. Anthropocene is defined as an era in which human being “has emerged as a globally significant – and potentially intelligent – force capable of reshaping the face of the planet”.¹³² Anthropocene, therefore, challenges the human/nature distinction and finds an important place in critical realist works regarding the environment. This way of thinking has implications for the study of environment and security in the sense that “there is no ‘natural’ nature anymore”.¹³³ In other words, nature cannot be thought independently of the impact of the human being. In sum, critical realism aims to present more comprehensive analyses with its stratified ontology and its tendency to unearth the underlying causal mechanisms rather than only the observable ones.

¹²⁹ Patomäki and Wight, ‘After Postpositivism? The Promises of Critical Realism’, 224.

¹³⁰ Tim Forsyth, ‘Critical Realism and Political Ecology’, in *After Postmodernism: An Introduction to Critical Realism*, ed. Jose Lopez and Garry Potter (London: Athlone Press, 2001), 146.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² William C. Clark, Paul J. Crutzen, and Hans J. Schellnhuber, ‘Science for Global Sustainability: Toward A New Paradigm’, in *Earth System Analysis For Sustainability*, ed. Hans J. Schellnhuber et al. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), 1.

¹³³ Alan P. Rudy and Damian White, ‘Hybridity’, in *Critical Environmental Politics*, ed. Carl Death (London: Routledge, 2013), 128.

As conclusion, after tracing the historical journey of the environment in the security debate and classifying different mindsets and their reflections on the environment-security nexus, I take environmental security as inherently political and changing from one context to another. Therefore, I aim to build this research within the social constructivist paradigm. In the next chapter, I will elaborate more deeply on the political character of security and try to justify my theoretical choice, namely vernacular security.

2.3. Security as Political: Theoretical Framework

The fact that security is a contested concept means there are different views on whose security should be prioritised over another. Dealing with a particular issue in terms of security language is a matter of choice of “whose security” for the security researcher. Above, I tried to elaborate on the philosophical foundations of theories. They are the meta-theories from which IR and security theories are derived. However, to answer the question of “whose security” more concretely and to justify my theory choice to better grasp and answer the research questions of this dissertation, I will briefly examine the trajectory of critical security studies (CSS). Then, I will criticise the dominant “schools” of critical security and try to substantiate why these schools are not suitable to deal with the main question of this dissertation. Lastly, I will try to justify the need to study environmental security from vernacular perspective and highlight its merits as a distinct and alternative theoretical perspective in critical security studies literature.

2.3.1. Security-Politics Nexus

Until now, I began sections with the sentence “security is a contested term”, since it has a significant meaning. The fact that it is contested means that it has multiple meanings. In addition, for Simon Dalby, considering the different reformulations of security can be read as destabilisations and contestations of the term itself. Thus, the implications of these different security readings propose that the practices in the name of security can be understood as political problems.¹³⁴ For Matt McDonald as

¹³⁴ Simon Dalby, ‘Contesting an Essential Concept: Reading the Dilemmas in Contemporary Security Discourse’, in *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (Routledge, 2002), 6.

well, security is not something of an ontological given as in the traditional understanding, but it is a “fluid political construction”.¹³⁵ Therefore, acknowledging the political character and forming the nexus between these two concepts is vital.

Seeing security as political means being aware of and questioning “what security does politically”¹³⁶ or in other words, it means seeing the political effects of security.¹³⁷ It reflects the role of security and what the representations or discourses of security encourage or marginalise certain sets of practices or how practices related to it constitute political communities in particular ways.¹³⁸ For Joao Nunes, security as political means comprehending security as “something more than a natural response to a self-evident threat, and security studies as something more than the provider of expert knowledge to tackle threats ‘out there in the world’”.¹³⁹ Then, with the development of the critical security studies literature, this nexus come to the fore.¹⁴⁰

Critical security studies literature as a broad church¹⁴¹ emerged as a challenge to the traditional understanding of security characterised by the four ‘S’s: state, science, status quo, and strategy.¹⁴² In other words, traditional security approaches prioritise mainly the ‘state’s security, in terms mostly of military threats, to solve the problems of the existing order, with the positivist way of study. Therefore, on the political role

¹³⁵ Matt McDonald, ‘Environment and Security: Global Eco-Politics and Brazilian Deforestation’, *Contemporary Security Policy* 24, no. 2 (2003): 69.

¹³⁶ Christopher S Browning and Matt McDonald, ‘The Future of Critical Security Studies: Ethics and the Politics of Security’, *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 2 (2013): 238.

¹³⁷ João Nunes, ‘Reclaiming the Political: Emancipation and Critique in Security Studies’, *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 4 (2012): 348.

¹³⁸ Browning and McDonald, ‘The Future of Critical Security Studies: Ethics and the Politics of Security’, 238–39.

¹³⁹ Nunes, ‘Reclaiming the Political: Emancipation and Critique in Security Studies’, 346.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 347.

¹⁴¹ Alan Collins, ed., *Contemporary Security Studies*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁴² Paul Williams, ed., *Security Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

of security analyst, Eriksson defines traditional security with the motto “observe, let others advocate!”.¹⁴³ Although this motto denotes that traditional security has no political implications, Eriksson goes on to argue that it has political implications by legitimising state sovereignty and its legal monopoly on the use of military force and delegitimisation of non-state groups.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, some scholars argued that since traditional security is directly related to physical survival, “conventional notions of security cannot provide food, health care, and shelter.”¹⁴⁵ The liberal project of security as exchanging security with freedom legitimises states as the providers of security.¹⁴⁶ Reminding the social contract idealists such as Hobbes and Rousseau, Anthony Burke stresses that in this project, it is believed that human existence is realised within the state, which is the product of human will.¹⁴⁷ Traditional security, however, forgets its promise to provide freedom to humans due to its statism. Critical security studies prioritise referent objects that have been traditionally neglected. It has unveiled that traditional security privileged the concerns and interests of the Global North and West, especially the United States and Western Europe, and has highlighted the need for different definitions of security.¹⁴⁸

These different referent objects and existential threats came into focus with the “widening-broadening debate” in critical security studies literature. Although this debate mainly put forward the necessity of new referent objects and threats and their investigation in the security analysis,¹⁴⁹ another focus of the debate has been the consideration of the political responsibility of security researchers.¹⁵⁰ However,

¹⁴³ Johan Eriksson, ‘Observers or Advocates? On the Political Role of Security Analysts’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 34, no. 3 (1999): 311–30.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 313.

¹⁴⁵ Dalby, ‘Contesting an Essential Concept: Reading the Dilemmas in Contemporary Security Discourse’, 8–9.

¹⁴⁶ Browning and McDonald, ‘The Future of Critical Security Studies: Ethics and the Politics of Security’, 240.

¹⁴⁷ Anthony Burke, *Beyond Security, Ethics and Violence: War against the Other* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 20.

¹⁴⁸ Daoudy, *The Origins of the Syrian Conflict: Climate Change and Human Security*, 25.

¹⁴⁹ Jef Huysmans, ‘Security! What Do You Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier’, *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 2 (1998): 227.

¹⁵⁰ Eriksson, ‘Observers or Advocates? On the Political Role of Security Analysts’, 311.

critical security studies is a broad field encompassing various schools of thought, each with distinct perspectives on the political role of the researcher. For Eriksson, the motto of Copenhagen School is “observe how others advocate!”.¹⁵¹ In conceptualising security, the Copenhagen School stresses that security is a socially constructed phenomenon by linguistic acts. As I mentioned above in the meta-theory part, if a phenomenon is comprehended as a social construct, it is not an objective, unchanging thing. Therefore, for Eriksson, the role of the security researcher is not to observe the threats but to question and investigate how these existential threats occurred.¹⁵² However, there is also a normative dimension of the Copenhagen School, namely ‘desecuritisation’. Advocates of the Copenhagen School argue that securitisation fosters international paranoia. Furthermore, they contend that issues such as environmental concerns should be desecuritized, as desecuritisation involves shifting issues from the realm of ‘panic’ politics back to the ‘normal’ political agenda.¹⁵³

When it comes to the Welsh School’s understanding of the politics of security, the motto becomes “to observe is to advocate!”.¹⁵⁴ In terms of meta-theoretical foundation, the Welsh School also argues that security is a social construct. Contrary to the Copenhagen normativity, however, Welsh School normativity lies in its emancipatory vision regarding security issues. In the process of reaching the emancipatory end, advocates of it argue that theory becomes a form of practice.¹⁵⁵ This relationship implies that security theories and practices mutually inform one another in the name of security, and that “reconceptualised understandings of security and strategy might aid the transformation of real-world practices”.¹⁵⁶ Ken Booth defines the political role of the security researcher as “[...] to speak for

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 314.

¹⁵² Ibid., 315.

¹⁵³ Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 4;71.

¹⁵⁴ Eriksson, ‘Observers or Advocates? On the Political Role of Security Analysts’, 318.

¹⁵⁵ Pinar Bilgin, ‘Security Studies: Theory/Practice’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 12, no. 2 (1999): 33.

¹⁵⁶ Richard Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 167; Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, 36.

cosmopolitan values and to speak up for those who do not have a voice”.¹⁵⁷ Although the stress on the “cosmopolitan values” lead to criticisms, which I will evaluate later, with the emphasis on the theory-practice relationship, the Welsh School is the most explicitly concerned with the political role of the security researcher.¹⁵⁸

Compared to the Copenhagen School, the Welsh School prefers “politicising security” over desecuritisation for three key reasons, as outlined by Pınar Bilgin. The first is strategic: desecuritising issues risks leaving security mechanisms under the exclusive control of elites, who may not always be responsive to the security concerns of ordinary people. Politicising security, on the other hand, allows for a critical examination of security policies. The second reason is ethico-political: the Welsh School opposes the statist focus of traditional security studies and argues that broadening the security agenda to include human insecurities is both possible and necessary. Additionally, the researcher’s role is to amplify the voices of the marginalised, ensuring that those who are unheard can make their concerns known. Finally, the third reason is analytical: the decision to desecuritize an issue or politicise security should be guided by empirical, historical, and discursive analysis. In other words, determining whether desecuritisation or politicisation is the more effective approach depends on context-specific critical investigations to better address both individual and state insecurities.¹⁵⁹

Another school of critical security studies is PARIS school. Emerging from post-structuralist tradition, Political Anthropological Research for International Sociology (PARIS) school has been concerned mainly with practices of security and how security and insecurity are co-constituted via the security elite’s knowledge and mundane practices. As a natural consequence of these practices, individuals conduct themselves against securitised subjects.¹⁶⁰ Conceptualising security in this way

¹⁵⁷ Ken Booth, ‘Security and Self: Reflections of a Fallen Realist’, in *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (London: UCL Press, 1997), 116.

¹⁵⁸ Eriksson, ‘Observers or Advocates? On the Political Role of Security Analysts’, 320.

¹⁵⁹ Pınar Bilgin, ‘Güvenlik Çalışmalarında Yeni Açılımlar: Yeni Güvenlik Çalışmaları’, *SAREM Stratejik Araştırmalar Dergisi* 8, no. 14 (2010): 84–85.

¹⁶⁰ Browning and McDonald, ‘The Future of Critical Security Studies: Ethics and the Politics of Security’, 240.

allows us to comprehend what is at stake in the process of (in)securitisation, which these processes are synonymous with the processes of (un)freedomisation and (in)equality.¹⁶¹ PARIS school equate security with insecurity as the result of their deconstructive meta-theory. As post-structural tradition opposes the progressivist notion of modernity and end goals such as “emancipation”, it tends to unveil insecurity character of security and proposes practices of resistance to escape the exclusionary logic of security.¹⁶² The politics of security, thus, works as a governmentality technology to conduct the people. As an ardent defender of this view, Mark Neocleous argues that:¹⁶³

“[s]ecurity has become the master narrative through which the state shapes our lives and imaginations (security risks here, security measures there, security police everywhere), producing and organizing subjects in a way that is always already predisposed towards the exercise of violence in defence of the established order”.

In other words, the politics of security endorses a logic that limits rather than enhances individual freedom, constructs a vision of a national community serving the state’s interests, and produces othering languages.¹⁶⁴ The researcher’s duty is to critically approach all kinds of practices of (in)securitisation, to unveil and deconstruct the underlying repressing logics these practices bear, and in this way to resist these illiberal security practices.

In this section, I tried to elaborate on the tripartite nexuses: *environment–politics*, *environment–security*, and *security–politics*. The following section presents the critics of dominant schools of critical security studies. The research questions of this dissertation require a bottom-up investigation of the security conceptualisations of

¹⁶¹ Didier Bigo and Emma McCluskey, ‘What Is a PARIS Approach to (In)Securitization? Political Anthropological Research for International Sociology’, in *The Oxford Handbook of International Security*, ed. Alexandra Gheciu and William C. Wohlforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 4.

¹⁶² Browning and McDonald, ‘The Future of Critical Security Studies: Ethics and the Politics of Security’, 239.

¹⁶³ Mark Neocleous, *Critique of Security* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 5.

¹⁶⁴ Browning and McDonald, ‘The Future of Critical Security Studies: Ethics and the Politics of Security’, 240.

non-elite ordinary people. Among these dominant schools of critical security studies, the Welsh School seems to be the most suitable in studying the research questions. However, both the Welsh School and the human security framework - developed by the United Nations Development Programme- as bottom-up approaches are not immune from critique. To better respond to the research questions, an alternative approach within critical security studies, known as the vernacular turn, will be justified.

2.3.2. Why is there a need for an alternative bottom-up approach in Critical Security Studies?

I first thought of writing this section in the context of the above question when one of the questions in my PhD qualifying exam prompted me to think in this context. In order to answer this question, I started by reminding three different mapping strategies of the critical security studies field argued by Columba Peoples and Nick Vaughan-Williams. They highlight three dominant mapping strategies, namely intellectual, temporal and spatial. The intellectual narrative places critical security studies directly against traditional security. The temporal narrative places the field according to its beginning and ending of different periods concerning historical periods. In general, this historicity denotes the end of the Cold War era, marking the field's burgeoning. Spatial narrative maps the field according to the emergence of different schools of thought, namely Aberystwyth or Welsh, Copenhagen, and Paris.¹⁶⁵

However, these three dominant narratives of the field have been criticised as they lead to a vicious circle that limits the development of unique and new theorising in the field. Joao Nunes made another attempt to “map” the field's development, dividing the literature into two lines, namely the negative deconstructive stance and positive reconstructive stance.¹⁶⁶ Following this mapping, another discussion embraces the debate on the value of security or ethics of security, namely security is

¹⁶⁵ Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, 3.

¹⁶⁶ Nunes, ‘Reclaiming the Political: Emancipation and Critique in Security Studies’, 348.

good or bad.¹⁶⁷ Although all these mappings and debates on critical security are quite helpful in comprehending the weaknesses and strengths of these various theories, there is nothing new in transcending the existing dominant theories of critical security theorising.

Writing in 2021, Simon Tulumello, coming from a distinct field of study – urban and regional planning- uttered the need to transcend this dichotomy between reconstruction and deconstruction.¹⁶⁸ Arguing for an agonistic security, instead of an antagonistic one, Tulumello bases his views on Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau’s political theory on agonism. Mouffe defines “agonism” as:¹⁶⁹

“[...] a different mode of manifestation of antagonism because it involves a relation not between enemies but between ‘adversaries’, adversaries being defined in a paradoxical way as ‘friendly enemies’, that is, persons who are friends because they share a common symbolic space but also enemies because they want to organize this common symbolic space in a different way”.

In this way, agonistic politics departs from the Schmittian understanding of politics, which sees it as the distinction between friend and enemy. Thus, first and foremost, it undermines “the fantasy of absolute security” producing “others”, thereby leading to an antagonistic understanding of security.¹⁷⁰ To produce an agonistic security theorising, however, Tulumello stresses three conceptual shifts in understanding security; a) from an absolute/static to a relational/dynamic; b) from universalism to pluralism at a world scale; and c) from the dominance of individual rights in Western/liberal thinking to an understanding of security as a collective endeavour.¹⁷¹ This understanding is also important for a vernacular understanding of security, which I think that agonistic security is in certain ways compatible with vernacular

¹⁶⁷ Jonna Nyman, ‘What Is the Value of Security? Contextualising the Negative/Positive Debate’, *Review of International Studies* 42, no. 5 (2016): 821–39.

¹⁶⁸ Simone Tulumello, ‘Agonistic Security: Transcending (de/Re) Constructive Divides in Critical Security Studies’, *Security Dialogue* 52, no. 4 (2021): 325–42.

¹⁶⁹ Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), 13.

¹⁷⁰ Tulumello, ‘Agonistic Security: Transcending (de/Re) Constructive Divides in Critical Security Studies’, 331.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 332.

conceptualisation of security. Especially the departure from the Western/liberal thinking and shifting to a relational/dynamic understanding of security has similarities with the vernacular definition of security as “conceptualised and politically practised differently in different places and at different times.”¹⁷² Moreover, since vernacular security defines the concept as context-specific, it helps shift security from universalism to pluralism. In criticising the dominant logic of security, Tulumello highlights that “[s]ecurity is distributed very unevenly *internally* within societies, along geographic, class, ethnic/racial, gender, and other divides...”.¹⁷³ Moreover, in vernacular understanding, Bubandt highlights that “[...] socially situated and discursively defined practice open to comparison and politically contextualised explication, rather than merely an analytical category that needs refined definition and consistent use”.¹⁷⁴ Conceptualised in this way, the study of security allows a pluralistic framework.

Nevertheless, the reason why Tulumello’s work is important is that it led me to question the merits of the Welsh School. Both Tulumello and Nunes argue that although the deconstructive side in the literature is strong and well-established, the reconstructive side (the Welsh School) is relatively weak.¹⁷⁵ Trying to understand this weakness led me to question more of this school of thought, which initially I thought was the most promising bottom-up theory of critical security at first to study environmental issues. The Welsh School has been criticised so far in different ways. For Eriksson, the Welsh School focuses primarily on critique but falls short in offering clear guidance on the political roles of the security analyst.¹⁷⁶ From a post-colonial perspective, for Mohammed Ayoob, the school has an instinctive moralism, wishing to impose Western values. Ayoob criticised security as emancipation as a

¹⁷² Nils Bubandt, ‘Vernacular Security: The Politics of Feeling Safe in Global, National and Local Worlds’, *Security Dialogue* 36, no. 3 (2005): 291.

¹⁷³ Tulumello, ‘Agonistic Security: Transcending (de/Re) Constructive Divides in Critical Security Studies’, 329.

¹⁷⁴ Nils Bubandt, ‘Vernacular Security: The Politics of Feeling Safe in Global, National and Local Worlds’, *Security Dialogue* 36, no. 3 (2005): 275–96.

¹⁷⁵ Tulumello, ‘Agonistic Security: Transcending (de/Re) Constructive Divides in Critical Security Studies’, 330; Nunes, ‘Reclaiming the Political: Emancipation and Critique in Security Studies’, 348.

¹⁷⁶ Eriksson, ‘Observers or Advocates? On the Political Role of Security Analysts’, 320.

“semantic jugglery” and “the height of naivete”.¹⁷⁷ Criticising security as emancipation as delimiting the boundaries of ‘the real’, Laura Shepherd argues that it is a part of the liberal framework.¹⁷⁸

One of the most detailed contributions to the critiques of security as emancipation comes from Tara McCormack. Arguing that critical approaches and especially the emancipation framework cannot pose a challenge to contemporary power relations,¹⁷⁹ McCormack removes her arguments apart from the critiques mentioned above. McCormack criticises critical theories and emancipation since they rely on problematic political assumptions regarding power structures and discourses.¹⁸⁰ McCormack mainly argues that although emancipation dreams of new forms of political community transcending the state in which there are no “physical and human constraints”, she highlights that there is no democratic world government at the moment.¹⁸¹ In the final analysis, McCormack argues that emancipation theorists “fail to understand that in the current political context, they are arguing for fictional rights and communities”.¹⁸²

In terms of this study, the Welsh School has some drawbacks. As a well-established bottom-up theory in critical security studies, I refrain from studying environmental security from the perspective of ‘security as emancipation’. Firstly, the critiques mentioned above argue that the Welsh School – since it is rooted in the Frankfurt School tradition - has organic bonds with the modernist Western Enlightenment

¹⁷⁷ Mohammed Ayoob, ‘Defining Security: A Subaltern Realist Perspective’, in *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (London: UCL Press, 1997), 126–27.

¹⁷⁸ Laura J. Shepherd, *Gender, Violence & Security: Discourse as Practice* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2008), 70.

¹⁷⁹ Tara McCormack, *Critique, Security and Power: The Political Limits to Emancipatory Approaches* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 135.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 140.

¹⁸² Ibid.

thought.¹⁸³ However, studying environmental security from a bottom-up perspective requires understanding security as context-specific. I argue that this context-specificity cannot be fully reached with the modernist Western Enlightenment thought. With a *tabula rasa* mind, seeing security as an empty concept, context-specific conceptualisations of security can be heard. It will also end to universalistic conceptualisations of security, leading to plural conceptualisations of the concept of security. Finally, this theoretical shift departs from the Welsh School's liberal framework and fantasy of absolute security.¹⁸⁴ Thus, to investigate different conceptualisations regarding forest fires as a security issue in Turkey, a theoretical shift is required.

Secondly, Ken Booth defines the aim of 'security as emancipation' approach as engaging with the security of "real people in real places".¹⁸⁵ I believe that this motto generates a methodological implication. In other words, as I quoted Dalby earlier, investigation of the insecurities of "real people in real places" cannot be conducted in "comfortable offices and libraries".¹⁸⁶ Thus, it requires academics to go directly to the field in which real people experience insecurities in their real places. It requires a methodological shift to study insecurities from a bottom-up perspective in a non-elitist manner. Earlier in 2012, Matt McDonald argued that critical theoretical approaches to security could and should engage with constructivist approaches that develop more sophisticated sociological approaches. And especially for the Welsh School, engaging constructivist approaches "[...] can overcome the dangers of utopianism and elitism, and develop a genuinely empirical critical approach to security [...]".¹⁸⁷ For Mark Neufeld, an emancipatory framework that is not focusing on empirical questions of how security is framed in political discourse falls into a pitfall. In order to avoid this pitfall, then, Neufeld proposes that the emphasis should

¹⁸³ Lee Jarvis, 'Toward a Vernacular Security Studies: Origins, Interlocutors, Contributions, and Challenges', *International Studies Review* 21, no. 1 (2019): 114.

¹⁸⁴ Tulumello, 'Agonistic Security: Transcending (de/Re) Constructive Divides in Critical Security Studies', 330.

¹⁸⁵ Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xii.

¹⁸⁶ Dalby, *Environmental Security*, 20:184.

¹⁸⁷ McDonald, *Security, the Environment and Emancipation: Contestation over Environmental Change*, 49.

be directed on exploring how different conceptions of security find their way into public debates.¹⁸⁸

The main methodological tool of the Welsh School to study security is the method of immanent critique. It is a method that aims to unveil positive features immanent in the existing order and highlight these intellectual spaces to bring about new emancipatory social change.¹⁸⁹ Unveiling these immanent possibilities for emancipatory change is the researcher's duty to start researching at first to transform the existing order. However, how much space is devoted to the real people and their voices in this intellectual endeavour? It brings me to the issue of methodological elitism.

In 2016, the journal of Politics published a special issue titled "Everyday Narratives in World Politics". According to Liam Stanley and Richard Jackson, the special issue aims to draw attention and find ways of transcending "methodological elitism" foregrounded in political science and international relations.¹⁹⁰ They define it as a methodologic difficulty in generating concrete methodological strategies to grasp and comprehend the data produced by non-elite audiences and investigate these data analytically.¹⁹¹ They identify three problems with methodological elitism: a) it is unclear how audiences (non-elite people) receive or mediate elite-driven discourses; in other words, the interaction of elite and non-elite discourses becomes unclear; b) its shortcoming to unearth and analyse the power relations embedded in the mundane aspects of everyday lives of ordinary people since elitist approaches rely heavily on the data from official sources; c) it results in a type of "knowledge subjugation" of the non-elite ordinary people.¹⁹² In the method of immanent critique, the one who

¹⁸⁸ Mark Neufeld, 'Pitfalls of Emancipation and Discourses of Security: Reflections on Canada's "Security With a Human Face"', *International Relations* 18, no. 1 (2004): 111.

¹⁸⁹ Robert J Antonio, 'Immanent Critique as the Core of Critical Theory: Its Origins and Developments in Hegel, Marx and Contemporary Thought', *British Journal of Sociology*, 1981, 330.

¹⁹⁰ Liam Stanley and Richard Jackson, 'Introduction: Everyday Narratives in World Politics', *Politics* 36, no. 3 (2016): 224.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 225.

¹⁹² Ibid., 227–28.

makes the immanent critique and thus finds out the emancipatory possibility within the prevailing order is the researcher itself.

However, I believe that to transcend elitism in academic studies, the researcher should approach the issue under consideration with a tabula rasa mind, which would be filled with non-elite knowledge. Only a theoretical framework with no prior taken-for-granted assumption as to security can maintain such an understanding. Vernacular security, in this way, promises to be such a framework as it sees the concept of security as “a fundamentally empty concept”.¹⁹³ In this way, vernacular security becomes an approach, avoiding the vagueness of the human security approach¹⁹⁴ and the universality of emancipation of the Welsh School. In sum, departing from the Welsh School and embracing vernacular security has an important implication for this study. In Zalewski’s words, departing from theory as mere critique – understanding how the world ‘got to be as it is’, with an underlying idealistic fantasy as emancipation- and turning to theory as everyday practice – understanding that we are all theorising at all levels- means that the act of theorising is not confined to either policymakers or to academics.¹⁹⁵ By directing the researcher to conduct context-dependent bottom-up research with a tabula rasa mind as to security, vernacular security makes it possible to study the ordinary people as a ‘security theoriser’ rather than ‘security end-user’. Therefore, such a shift in theoretical framework welcomes theorising from ordinary people.

2.3.3. Vernacular Security

After I had summarised the reasons for my dissatisfaction and my quest for an alternative theory in critical security studies, “vernacular turn” appeared to me as the most promising solution for the study of this dissertation. Scholars tend to trace this

¹⁹³ Jarvis, ‘Toward a Vernacular Security Studies: Origins, Interlocutors, Contributions, and Challenges’, 118.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Marysia Zalewski, “‘All These Theories yet the Bodies Keep Piling up’: Theory, Theorists, Theorising’, in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, ed. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 345–46.

turn back to the work of Nils Bubandt.¹⁹⁶ Criticising the universal, unchanging definition of the concept of security, Bubandt highlights that “[w]hen the global concept of security is contextualised in terms of local political histories, it becomes apparent that ‘security’ as a political problem is neither unchanging nor semantically homogenous”.¹⁹⁷ When security is defined in terms of managing threat and (un)certainly Bubandt argues it becomes a tool for creating imagined communities to control and reduce the ontologies of uncertainty. However, in every scale – in Bubandt’s work, these are global, national and local scales- ontologies of threat and (un)certainly differ. The unique contribution of vernacular security is here: it “[...] does not reduce local ontologies of uncertainty to current political (and political science) conceptualisations of security”.¹⁹⁸ This is a break away from the universalist understandings of security. Since vernacular security sees security as an empty concept, it “neither *means* nor *does* the same thing in different contexts”.¹⁹⁹ In this way, a vernacular study of security opens space for multiple conceptualisations of security. Just as what Christopher S. Browning and Matt McDonald propose for the future of critical security studies, vernacular security highlights the need to develop an understanding of the politics of security that is context-specific; that investigate and prioritise different security conceptualisations; and that unearth these different meanings without taking them for granted as timeless and inevitable.²⁰⁰ Therefore, vernacular approach to security argues that security may not be equally understood, or even desired, by people living in different times and places.²⁰¹

Context-specificity may also be important point in transcending the fantasy of absolute security and us/them binaries. Bubandt argues that security as a tool for

¹⁹⁶ Bubandt, ‘Vernacular Security: The Politics of Feeling Safe in Global, National and Local Worlds’, 2005.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 276.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 277–78.

¹⁹⁹ Jarvis, ‘Toward a Vernacular Security Studies: Origins, Interlocutors, Contributions, and Challenges’, 116.

²⁰⁰ Browning and McDonald, ‘The Future of Critical Security Studies: Ethics and the Politics of Security’, 248; Jarvis, ‘Toward a Vernacular Security Studies: Origins, Interlocutors, Contributions, and Challenges’, 116.

²⁰¹ Jarvis, ‘Toward a Vernacular Security Studies: Origins, Interlocutors, Contributions, and Challenges’, 117.

controlling uncertainty promises freedom as the absence of uncertainty. However, it constantly produces forms of subversion.²⁰² It is the Schmittian logic of politics and security. In contrast, vernacular conceptualisations eschew predefined starting points since it urges researchers to study with a *tabula rasa* mind. In this way, it avoids and transcends the prioritisation of specific subjects such as gendered insecurities in feminist security, subalterns in postcolonialism or marginalised people in the Welsh School.²⁰³ With its capability to disrupt or challenge the dominant elitist narratives,²⁰⁴ vernacular narratives have the potential to transcend certain binaries.

Another contribution of the vernacular approach to critical studies of security is that it promises to eschew elitism. It is especially valid in terms of collecting non-elite data and analysing it. First and foremost, vernacular security accepts that academics are not the only experts who theorise security; rather, it includes non-elite ordinary people as active theorists of security.²⁰⁵ Focusing on accessing the ‘security speak’ of voices otherwise excluded,²⁰⁶ vernacular security calls for opening space for bottom-up qualitative research agendas in critical security studies.²⁰⁷ It also calls for interdisciplinary research beyond international relations with ethnographic and anthropologic bottom-up research methods, such as participant observation, focus groups, or autoethnography.²⁰⁸

²⁰² Bubandt, ‘Vernacular Security: The Politics of Feeling Safe in Global, National and Local Worlds’, 2005, 279.

²⁰³ Jarvis, ‘Toward a Vernacular Security Studies: Origins, Interlocutors, Contributions, and Challenges’, 117–18.

²⁰⁴ Nick Vaughan-Williams and Daniel Stevens, ‘Vernacular Theories of Everyday (in) Security: The Disruptive Potential of Non-Elite Knowledge’, *Security Dialogue* 47, no. 1 (2016): 40–58; N. Vaughan, Williams, *Vernacular Border Security: Citizens’ Narratives of Europe’s Migration Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 13.

²⁰⁵ Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Vernacular Border Security: Citizens’ Narratives of Europe’s Migration Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 9.

²⁰⁶ Stuart Croft and Nick Vaughan-Williams, ‘Fit for Purpose? Fitting Ontological Security Studies ‘into’ the Discipline of International Relations: Towards a Vernacular Turn’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 52, no. 1 (2017): 24.

²⁰⁷ Lee Jarvis and Michael Lister, ‘Vernacular Securities and Their Study: A Qualitative Analysis and Research Agenda’, *International Relations* 27, no. 2 (2013): 162.

²⁰⁸ Jarvis, ‘Toward a Vernacular Security Studies: Origins, Interlocutors, Contributions, and Challenges’, 119.

Nick Vaughan-Williams lists six key aspects that vernacular security differs from other people-centered approaches to security, such as human security and the Welsh School. First, it sees “the public” not as an atomic unit that is homogenous and stable. Instead, it highlights “diverse publics” having different “imagined communities”. As a result of this, second, it avoids defining “public opinion” as the cumulative preferences of citizens since this kind of conceptualisation of public opinion is simplistic and reductionist. Third, it pays utmost importance to the qualitative analyses of diverse publics to reach a thick definition. Fourth, it aims to recover subjugated knowledge and unearth everyday forms of resistance. Fifth, while doing that, it warns researchers to avoid the trap of “methodological populism”²⁰⁹. Instead, it stresses the self-reflexivity of researchers; that is, certain biases and choices of the researcher shape and delimit research aims and findings. Lastly, Vaughan-Williams pays attention to the similarities between vernacular security and everyday security studies. However, he stresses the former’s main focus is on non-elite voices.²¹⁰

Lee Jarvis et al., on the other hand, emphasise five basic principles of vernacular security. According to Jarvis et al., vernacular approach sees security as ontologically ‘empty’ and emphasise that the meaning of it is shaped by specific subjects and contexts. In this context, local and ‘non-elite’ approaches that fall outside traditional (elite) understandings of security are also analytically, politically and normatively important. This is because the language, logic, references and examples of security can take different forms in the everyday discourse of ordinary actors, and there is not always a fixed definition of ‘real’ security. For this reason, vernacular security studies advise caution in generalisations, while paying attention to the specificities of different geographies and communities; thus, examining

²⁰⁹ Methodological populism is an important trap for vernacular security researcher. Nick Vaughan-Williams highlights that vernacular analysis is not one that reflecting a direct image of what people think. He warns that such a reflection simply produce the populist conceit presupposing that “‘the people’ and their views exist independently of how they are performatively produced and represented as such”. Therefore, he stresses that vernacular researcher should be aware of the fact that methodological assumptions, choices, and biases shape and delimit the reserach findings. Please see: Vaughan-Williams, *Vernacular Border Security: Citizens’ Narratives of Europe’s’ Migration Crisis*, 11.

²¹⁰ Vaughan-Williams, *Vernacular Border Security: Citizens’ Narratives of Europe’s’ Migration Crisis*, 10–12.

security discourses produced in local contexts allows for a more holistic and inclusive understanding of security.²¹¹

2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I tried to form a tripartite nexus: *environment-security-politics*. The two nexuses, namely the environment-security and security-politics nexus, are well-established and studied in the literature. However, the environment-politics nexus is still open to improvement with different cases and ways of studying, theoretically and methodologically. Therefore, this chapter's first aim was stressing this necessity and forming this nexus. I stressed that there are scientific and political agendas of the environment. Although scientific knowledge of the environment is critical, the struggle against environmental degradation cannot be understood without comprehending the political factors. Therefore, I argued that when it comes to practicing environmental security, its political character becomes evident.

An examination of the environment-politics nexus should be grounded in its specific context, given that the meaning ascribed to the environment varies across locations and over time. Consequently, a bottom-up approach is required. However, I argue that such an approach calls for both methodological and theoretical shifts. Although the Welsh School of Security may provide a potential bottom-up framework, I have explored why I ultimately chose not to adopt it. This exploration constitutes the chapter's second aim: to critique existing dominant schools of critical security and to propose vernacular security as an alternative bottom-up approach. I contend that vernacular security can deliver the theoretical and methodological realignment necessary for studying the environment-politics relationship. Aligning the chapter's first and second aims indicates that the environment should be investigated as a security issue in a context-specific manner, without disregarding its historical and political dimensions. Moreover, vernacular security invites us to reconsider whether ordinary citizens are merely passive recipients of elite-defined security, or whether they actively shape and negotiate security discourses within their own local contexts.

²¹¹ Lee Jarvis, Andrew Whiting, and Stuart Macdonald, *Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation, and Prevent: A Vernacular Approach* (Manchester University Press, 2024), 44.

By establishing the conceptual groundwork of the environment–politics nexus from a bottom-up perspective, this chapter has emphasised the significance of environmental challenges as security concerns within their historical and political contexts. The next chapter will extend this discussion by tracing the development of environmental security perspectives and environmental awareness in Turkey, where deforestation will be introduced as a focal issue. Deforestation stands out as a critical issue, highlighting the importance and meaning of forests from a security perspective, given their far-reaching socio-economic and ecological implications.



CHAPTER 3

ENVIRONMENT – SECURITY – POLITICS NEXUS IN TURKEY AND DEFORESTATION AS A SECURITY ISSUE

3.1. Introduction

In line with the previous chapter, I start the present section by underscoring the contested character of the concept of security.²¹² This emphasis is significant as it forms the central premise of this chapter. As the political economy literature on the environmental change in Turkey reveals, the understanding of the environment is in contestation with the development policies of the state.²¹³ In security studies language, this argument can be read as that there is a contestation over which referent object should be prioritised. However, when it comes to environmental security literature, it mostly takes the state as its referent, and thus, lacks such a contestation. In her 2012 study, Rana İzci calls attention that *hard security* issues occupy the top of the agenda in Turkey. While environmental hazards find itself a place in the soft security agenda, “it is either economic or energy security that first comes to mind in Turkey when one mentions *soft security*”²¹⁴. Thirteen years have passed since Rana İzci’s arguments, and bottom-up critical inquiries into environmental security studies in Turkey have recently begun to attract attention.

²¹² Baldwin, ‘The Concept of Security’, 10.

²¹³ Hande Paker, ‘Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey’, in *Turkey in Transition: Politics, Society and Foreign Policy*, ed. Ebru Canan-Sokullu (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020), 142–43; E Fuat Keyman and Ahmet İçduygu, ‘Globalization, Civil Society and Citizenship in Turkey: Actors, Boundaries and Discourses’, *Citizenship Studies* 7, no. 2 (2003): 219–34; Fikret Adaman, Murat Arsel, and Bengi Akbulut, ‘Introduction Neoliberal Developmentalism in Turkey: Continuity, Rupture, Consolidation’, in *Neoliberal Turkey and Its Discontents: Economic Policy and the Environment under Erdoğan*, ed. Fikret Adaman, Bengi Akbulut, and Murat Arsel (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2017), 1–18.

²¹⁴ Rana İzci, ‘Turkey’s Approach to Environmental Security: A Case for Soft Security’, in *Debating Security in Turkey: Challenges and Changes in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Ebru Canan-Sokullu (Lexington Books, 2012), 250.

In Turkey, there has been a contestation between environmental politics and the desire of modernisation. During the early republican era of Turkey, industrialisation of the country depended on protectionist and statist economic policies. Developmentalist red apple of the state was encapsulated in the motto “çağdaş uygarlık seviyesine ulaşmak” [reaching to a level of contemporary civilisation], and since then has been the national desire.²¹⁵ This desire has found itself in a “neoliberal developmentalist fetishism”²¹⁶ of ruling elites in Turkey later on, especially after the 1980s, during the era of Turgut Özal. For Ümit Şahin, this understanding of development depends on natural resource exploitation and land rent,²¹⁷ which puts environmental security at stake for the sake of national development. For example, Turkish efforts to regulate the country’s greenhouse gas reduction rates and climate change policies often contradict with its economic and developmental concerns. Just because of this double-edged sword situation, Turkey gained a status called “special circumstance”²¹⁸ within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Indeed, the ruling party of Turkey, The Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP), adopted such a neoliberal-extractivist economic regime, depending on public housing, energy and construction sectors called as “three-pillared neoliberalism”.²¹⁹ Therefore, Hande Paker clearly defines this situation as “a fundamental trade-off between economic growth and industrialisation, on the one hand, and the environment, on the other”.²²⁰ Similarly

²¹⁵ Ümit Şahin, ‘Intertwined and Contested. Green Politics and the Environmental Movement in Turkey’, *Südosteuropa. Zeitschrift Für Politik Und Gesellschaft*, no. 03 (2015): 443.

²¹⁶ Bengi Akbulut and Fikret Adaman, ‘The Unbearable Charm of Modernization: Growth Fetishism and the Making of State in Turkey’, *Perspectives: Political Analysis and Commentary from Turkey* 5, no. 13 (2013): 1–10.

²¹⁷ Ümit Şahin, ‘The Politics of Environment and Climate Change’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Turkish Politics*, ed. Alpaslan Özerdem and Matthew Whitting (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 177.

²¹⁸ “Special circumstance” refers to Turkey’s demand as being listed in the developing countries rather than the developed countries within the framework of the UNFCCC. For Murat Türkeş, this is due to the historical responsibility of industrialised countries’s carbon-intense development and their moral duty to mitigate their emissions and provide climate finance to the developing countries. Please see: Murat Türkeş, ‘Climate Change Policy and the Cost of Inaction: An Institutional Account from Turkey’, *New Perspectives on Turkey* 56, no. 9 (2017): 134–35.

²¹⁹ Fikret Adaman and Bengi Akbulut, ‘Erdoğan’s Three-Pillared Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism, Populism and Developmentalism’, *Geoforum* 124 (2021): 279–89; Onur İnal, ‘Authoritarianism, Populism, and the Environment in Turkey’, *Environmental History* 27, no. 4 (2022): 634.

²²⁰ Paker, ‘Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey’, 143.

Dilek Ünalın defines this trade-off as “a confrontation between the economic dynamics of neoliberalism and the political dynamics of local communities”.²²¹

This trade-off has been recognised in the literature of political economy of environmental change in Turkey. However, from security studies perspective the issue is generally taken from a state-centric perspective and debated as a soft security concern. Furthermore, Rana İzci argues that in the prioritisation of “soft” security issues, environmental security remains situated at the lowest level of the hierarchy.²²² This also shows the relative paucity of studies focused on the security of the environment, despite the considerable research devoted to the political economy of the issue. This deficit may be attributed to the relatively recent emergence of grassroots movements regarding environmental issues, which date back only to the 1980s and 1990s. Similarly, Turkey’s inaugural environmental law came into effect in 1983, and the Ministry of the Environment was established in 1991.²²³ As these milestones indicate, environmental issues and the study of it are relatively new in Turkey. Within this relatively new area, environmental security studies lack critical and bottom-up research. Environmental security studies in Turkey generally took the issue of climate change and climate change negotiations in the international organisations at its core. Very few studies focus on a particular environmental security issue, such as deforestation and forest fires. From security perspective, the issue of forest fires is studied either as a tool for fighting insurgency;²²⁴ or as a tool for terrorism in Turkey.²²⁵ By situating the issue within the everyday security challenges of local people, rather than adopting a state- or capital-centred lens, this

²²¹ Dilek Ünalın, ‘Governmentality and Environmentalism in Turkey: Power, Politics, and Environmental Movements’, in *The Making of Neoliberal Turkey*, ed. Cenk Ozbay et al. (Ashgate, 2016), 230.

²²² İzci, ‘Turkey’s Approach to Environmental Security: A Case for Soft Security’, 250.

²²³ İnal, ‘Authoritarianism, Populism, and the Environment in Turkey’, 636–37.

²²⁴ Lina Eklund et al., ‘On the Geopolitics of Fire, Conflict and Land in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq’, *Remote Sensing* 13, no. 8 (2021): 1575; Dinç, ‘Çözüm Süreci Sonrası Dersim’de Orman Yangınları ve Çatışma İlişkisi’; Dinc et al., ‘Fighting Insurgency, Ruining the Environment: The Case of Forest Fires in the Dersim Province of Turkey’.

²²⁵ Karaağaç, ‘Çevre Terörizmi Kapsamında PKK Terör Örgütünün Orman Yakma Stratejisi ve Sabotaj Yapılanmaları’; Emrah Akyüz, ‘Türkiye’de Çevresel Terör: PKK Terör Örgütü Örneği’, *Ulusal Çevre Bilimleri Araştırma Dergisi* 3, no. 4 (2020): 197–207.

dissertation aims to contribute to the existing environmental security literature by incorporating a vernacular security perspective. Moreover, by providing a Turkish case on the issue, the dissertation aims to open a way for comparative studies.

In sum, it is fair to argue that environmental security concerns both lacks critical bottom-up investigation and takes a backseat within security debates in Turkey when especially those concerns contest with the developmentalist red apple of the elites of the state. Studies that are state-centric and elitist in methodology, therefore, tend to reproduce that double-edged sword relationship, rather than to unearth the contested nature of the issue. This tendency to overlook the perceptions of ordinary people who are directly affected by environmental insecurity in their everyday lives is a significant concern. Consequently, I argue that studying environmental security within this contestation requires a change in theory and methodology, which I evaluated in Chapter II. Studying this issue through a vernacular lens may contribute to produce “a more complete knowledge of what security means and does in specific contexts, as well as of potential emancipatory possibilities that exist within them”.²²⁶

With this aim in mind, I focus on the forest fires that occurred in the summer of 2021 and destroyed a vast area in the south-western part of Turkey. However, it is important to note that this dissertation does not promise to make a scientific/technical investigation on the causes of these forest fires. Instead, it aims an investigation that may unearth local people’s everyday security understandings and perceptions as to this case. Since security is considered a socially constructed concept driven by political forces, transcending scientific and technical investigations becomes inevitable. Writing in 1993, Paul Dauvergne argued that the issue of deforestation has a political “engine” which drives the process of deforestation, of which scientific/technical studies has been void.²²⁷ Similar to Dauvergne’s Indonesia case study, many environmental security studies in Turkey focusing on elite narrative explain this engine as neoliberal development. However, I aim to uncover whether

²²⁶ Vaclav Walach, ‘Vernacular Security in a Socially Excluded Locality’, in *Panorama of Global Security Environment: The Central European Perspective 2017-2018*, ed. Robert Ondrejcsak et al. (Bratislava: STRATPOL, 2018), 127.

²²⁷ Peter Dauvergne, ‘The Politics of Deforestation in Indonesia’, *Pacific Affairs* 66, no. 4 (1993): 503.

local people who experience this security issue in their daily lives have a different understanding on the issue.

Forest fires are seen as the main cause of deforestation issue in Turkey.²²⁸ Studies that have been conducted as to forest fires in Turkey accept that the great majority of forest fires are caused by people-induced factors.²²⁹ These people-induced fires are generally taken under three sub-categories: voluntary/intentional, involuntary/inattentional and unknown.²³⁰ Leaving aside unknown and inattentional cases, intentional cases of forest fires may have diverse causes, most notoriously arson or pyro-terrorism. This demonstrates that technical measures and investigations alone are insufficient to address forest fires. Indeed, the issue of forest fires has socio-economic and political drivers.²³¹ However, the effects and causes of these socio-economic and political drivers have mostly been neglected in the formation of policies. Consequently, the 2021 forest fires serve as a suitable case study to examine the nexus of environment, security, and politics in Turkey.

To do that, this chapter starts with the investigation of the contested nature of the environment in Turkey. Neoliberal transformation that Turkey experienced is generally located at the centre of this contestation. Therefore, a brief focus on the neoliberal turn in Turkey will be highlighted. It will be followed by the focus on the politics of environment in Turkey. Here, the chapter will investigate how the environmental awareness, institutionalisation, and policy-making in Turkey has developed. Then, the chapter will narrow down the issue to focus on deforestation more specifically. This section aims to situate the issue of deforestation and forest

²²⁸ Refik Baş, 'Türkiye'de Orman Yangınları Nedenleri, Zararları ve Yangınlara Karşı Alınacak Önlemler', *Journal of the Faculty of Forestry Istanbul University* 27, no. 2 (1977): 52.

²²⁹ Munir Ozturk et al., 'Forest Diversity, Climate Change and Forest Fires in the Mediterranean Region of Turkey', *Journal of Environmental Biology* 31, no. 1 (2010): 3; Ali Küçükosmanoğlu, 'Türkiye Ormanlarında Çıkan Yangınların Sınıflandırılması İle Büyük Yangınların Çıkma ve Gelişme Nedenleri', *Journal of the Faculty of Forestry Istanbul University*, 1986; Baş, 'Türkiye'de Orman Yangınları Nedenleri, Zararları ve Yangınlara Karşı Alınacak Önlemler', 53.

²³⁰ Küçükosmanoğlu, 'Türkiye Ormanlarında Çıkan Yangınların Sınıflandırılması İle Büyük Yangınların Çıkma ve Gelişme Nedenleri'.

²³¹ Dauvergne, 'The Politics of Deforestation in Indonesia'; İsmail Baysal, Ertuğrul Bilgili, and Emin Zeki Başkent, 'Orman Yangınları ve Orman Amenajman Planları', *Kastamonu University Journal of Forestry Faculty* 16, no. 1 (2016): 174.

fires on the tripartite nexus of environment, security, and politics. Lastly, the chapter will provide the issue of deforestation and forest fires in the context of Turkey.

3.2. Context: The Contested Nature of the Environment in Turkey

The scholarly literature agrees that the health and the sustainability of the environment in Turkey is at stake due to the state's desire towards development.²³² Indeed, the environmental security–development nexus is well recognised in the literature, which is a part of a general debate on security–development nexus. Scholars find these two concepts inextricably linked. The concept of development, like the concept of security, is essentially a contested concept and the meaning attributed to it changes over time and space.²³³ Furthermore, Maria Stern and Joakim Öjendal argue that these two concepts have similar grand narratives. The most prominent of these narratives is the linear modern narrative, which is reflective of the European experience and resonates with colonial logics. Theorising the nexus as mutually reinforcing each other, the authors argue that conditions of development are bound to the conditions of security, and vice versa. However, in situations where both the conditions of security and development are deficient, the mutuality fails, and many developing countries suffer as a result.²³⁴ This trade-off is not unique to Turkey, Rana İzci argues that China, India, and many other developing states face the same dilemma of choosing between development and environmental protection.²³⁵

²³² Şahin, 'The Politics of Environment and Climate Change', 177; Paker, 'Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey', 138–39; İzci, 'Turkey's Approach to Environmental Security: A Case for Soft Security', 261; Fikret Adaman and Murat Arsel, 'Introduction', in *Environmentalism in Turkey Between Democracy and Development?*, ed. Fikret Adaman and Murat Arsel (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1; Fikret Adaman, Bengi Akbulut, and Murat Arsel, 'The Political Economy of Environmental Policymaking in Turkey: A Vicious Cycle', in *The Oxford Handbook of Turkish Politics*, ed. Güneş Murat Tezcür (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 205–25.

²³³ Björn Hettne, 'Development and Security: Origins and Future', *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 1 (2010): 33.

²³⁴ Maria Stern and Joakim Öjendal, 'Mapping the Security—Development Nexus: Conflict, Complexity, Cacophony, Convergence?', *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 1 (2010): 17–18.

²³⁵ İzci, 'Turkey's Approach to Environmental Security: A Case for Soft Security', 261.

When it comes to Turkish case, Bengi Akbulut and Fikret Adaman argue that the very founding ideology of the young republic is built on the idea of progress through modernisation and economic growth in the Western way, which becomes a ‘fetish’, establishing a legitimacy for state-making.²³⁶ Turkey’s desire towards development depends on one of the foundational six ‘arrows’ of the state²³⁷ determined by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic. The arrow of *devletçilik* [etatism / statism] is seen as a remedy for the development of the weak republic. *Devletçilik* is defined as “[...] *milleti zenginliğe ve ülkeyi bayındırlığa ulaştırmak için milletin genel ve yüksek menfaatlerinin gerektirdiği işlerde özellikle ekonomik alanda devleti bizzat ilgili tutmaktır* [Etatism is to keep the state directly involved in the affairs required by the general and high interests of the nation, especially in the economic field, in order to make the nation wealthy and the country prosperous]”.²³⁸ According to William Hale, etatism in practice means that “the key to Turkey’s economic development lay in the establishment of new import-replacement industries, and that the state had the major responsibility for founding and managing them”.²³⁹ The main practical manifestation of etatism in Turkey was the Five-Year Development Plans, according to William Hale, in which the first plan stressed the invention of factories for a wide array of products.²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the environment was allocated a minor role within these plans, as the country’s economic and developmental objectives took precedence. In a similar vein, Adaman, Akbulut and Arsel find out that Turkish governments, irrespective of their ideological spectrum, have consistently prioritised economic/developmental projects despite their environmental costs.²⁴¹ However, the prioritisation of economy over the environment reached another level with the adoption of neoliberal economy in Turkey.

²³⁶ Akbulut and Adaman, ‘The Unbearable Charm of Modernization: Growth Fetishism and the Making of State in Turkey’; Paker, ‘Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey’, 143.

²³⁷ Nationalism, Republicanism, Secularism, Popularism, Reformism, and Etatism.

²³⁸ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Medeni Bilgiler: Türk Milletinin El Kitabı*, N.Aydın Dü (İstanbul: Toplumsal Dönüşüm Yayınları, 2010), 78.

²³⁹ William Hale, ‘Ideology and Economic Development in Turkey 1930–1945’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 7, no. 2 (1980): 100–101.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

²⁴¹ Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel, ‘The Political Economy of Environmental Policymaking in Turkey: A Vicious Cycle’, 210.

The 1980s marked the inception of Turkey's neoliberal economic transformation, coinciding with Turgut Özal's tenure as prime minister. This transformation was characterised by the state's withdrawal from the economic sphere²⁴² and the rise of private entrepreneurship. As scholars have asserted, neoliberalism and its rationality are intrinsically incompatible with environmental politics. Consequently, Turkey's adoption of neoliberal economic policies has engendered serious environmental consequences. Neoliberal rationality towards natural resources has resulted in pollution, deforestation, mineral extraction, buildings in natural areas, land grabbings, and finally has produced environmental conflicts.²⁴³ Indeed, Turkey's prioritisation of economic security and development, and its consideration of the environment as a resource to be exploited is one of the main reasons as to its laggard status²⁴⁴ in international environmental negotiations and environmental policy-making.²⁴⁵ According to Hande Paker, the fact that the state takes national developmental red apple at its centre subordinates pluralistic societal interests (e.g. preserving the natural environment) to state-defined national interests.²⁴⁶ This clash of interest situation has the potential to create more conflictual situation between state and society. Turkey does not have a shortage of empirical cases in these situations. Local resistance movement cases in Turkey contest the commodification of their environment, including the thermic and hydroelectric power plants constructions, mining, and transportation projects. Paker contends that a thorough analysis of contemporary state-society relations in Turkey should incorporate an examination of the politics of environment, with a focus on enhancing the participation of affected stakeholders in decision-making processes.²⁴⁷ Additionally, Fikret Adaman et.al. add another dimension to civil society's engagement with

²⁴² Fikret Şenses, 'Turkey's Experience with Neoliberal Policies Since 1980 in Retrospect and Prospect', in *The Making of Neoliberal Turkey*, ed. Cenk Ozbay et al. (Ashgate, 2016), 15.

²⁴³ Ünal, 'Governmentality and Environmentalism in Turkey: Power, Politics, and Environmental Movements', 221–22.

²⁴⁴ Ethemcan Turhan et al., 'Beyond Special Circumstances: Climate Change Policy in Turkey 1992–2015', *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 7, no. 3 (2016): 449.

²⁴⁵ Ünal, 'Governmentality and Environmentalism in Turkey: Power, Politics, and Environmental Movements', 225.

²⁴⁶ Paker, 'Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey', 143.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 144.

resistance movements, stressing that it also intersects with identity, gender and class politics.²⁴⁸ In conclusion, it can be argued that the environment embodies a multifaceted prototype of Turkish politics that encompasses various dimensions of socio-economic life.

It can be argued that this trade-off between national development and the sustainability of the environment has peaked during the AKP. Since it came to power in 2002 until now, AKP is the ruling party of Turkey. The era of AKP is widely seen as another breaking point in Turkey regarding environmental degradation. It is widely accepted that the era of AKP has adopted a new form of neoliberal development, which promoted above-mentioned developmentalist rush.²⁴⁹ Having been in power for 23 years currently, AKP has read the foundational ideology of development with vengeance, says Paker, and has used it to build its hegemony, despite its rhetoric of ‘serving the people’.²⁵⁰ Economic growth has been one of the main indicators of securing the consent of the people in Gramscian sense.²⁵¹ Therefore, securing the economic growth became indispensable priority for the AKP.

Abiding by crony capitalism, and motivated by the “glorious” Ottoman Empire days, the AKP derived a development idea based on material accumulation.²⁵² This material accumulation was primarily channelled into extractive and construction-oriented activities. For Şahin, energy and construction-intensive economic developmental model, which is among the main causes of environmental degradation, has been considered as the most important way to sustain development and economic growth by the AKP. As economic growth is seen as the main mechanism of securing the consent in building its hegemony, the AKP perceives

²⁴⁸ Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel, ‘The Political Economy of Environmental Policymaking in Turkey: A Vicious Cycle’, 207.

²⁴⁹ Şahin, ‘The Politics of Environment and Climate Change’, 177.

²⁵⁰ Paker, ‘Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey’, 143.

²⁵¹ Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel, ‘The Political Economy of Environmental Policymaking in Turkey: A Vicious Cycle’, 211.

²⁵² Adaman, Arsel, and Akbulut, ‘Introduction Neoliberal Developmentalism in Turkey: Continuity, Rupture, Consolidation’.

developmental investments necessary to reproduce its power, and opposes any objection to this policy as a threat to serving the nation.²⁵³ Adaman, Akbulut and Arsel decipher the running of this consent mechanism in three dimensions: in the first dimension, the objective of economic growth and development is constructed by the state as the main national goal to be achieved. The entire population, regardless of class, gender and ethnicity, etc., is commissioned with elevating this goal. This “duty” finds itself in the discourse of the “Second War of Independence”. By defining economic growth and development as a war of independence, economic security becomes associated to state survival, which makes issues related with economic security prioritised. In the second dimension, the state fosters employment in the short term through large economic projects, allowing it to reinforce its image as the ‘father state’ that cares for its citizens. In the third dimension, the AKP’s mega economic projects are associated with a sense of grandeur, thus evoking the glorious days of the Ottoman Empire.²⁵⁴

In sum, there has been a contestation between economic growth and development and the environment. The manifestation of this contestation in terms of security language would be the prioritisation of economic/national and even regime security over environmental security. It is obvious that ‘the state’ and its survival appear prioritised over the sustainability of the environment. In light of this contestation, next section will trace the development of the politics of environment in Turkey.

3.3. Politics of Environment in Turkey: A Brief History on the Development of Environmental Policies and Institutions

Rise of environmental policies and institutionalisation in Turkey does not have a long history, which is not unique to Turkey. According to Ümit Şahin, a well-known political ecologist, modern environmentalism dates back to 1960s in North America and Europe, which developed as a response to the ecological drawbacks of post-war

²⁵³ Şahin, ‘The Politics of Environment and Climate Change’, 177; Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel, ‘The Political Economy of Environmental Policymaking in Turkey: A Vicious Cycle’, 208.

²⁵⁴ Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel, ‘The Political Economy of Environmental Policymaking in Turkey: A Vicious Cycle’, 211.

industrial development.²⁵⁵ We have witnessed that in Turkey, this process started only in the late 1970s. This does not inherently mean that Turkey is void of environmental problems before the 1970s. However, Şahin argues that the industrial developments before the 1980s in Turkey did not cause any serious discomfort regarding local and environmental hazards. Direct consequences of this unconsciousness were the ignorance and despise of environmental challenges by the politicians and bureaucrats.²⁵⁶ The fact that the rise of environmental awareness and institutionalisation starts with the late 1970s is commonly agreed. The striking point is the fact that it converges with the neoliberal turn in Turkey and the rest of the world. Therefore, scholars link the environmental policies and movements to neoliberalism in Turkey.²⁵⁷

Environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) first emerged in Turkey in the late 1970s, comprising scholars, artists, and experts who were primarily motivated by anti-nuclear movements and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. This is a clear sign that the rise of environmental policymaking did not develop in isolation from international events, rather it was the consequence of both international and domestic determinants. The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm was among the first international event that affected national policy documents regarding the protection of the environment.²⁵⁸ In Turkey, in the third five-year national development plan (1973-78), the environment found itself a place for the first time. However, at the same time, it was the first testimony of the contestation between national economic development and the protection of the environment. The plan stipulated that environmental policies should be in harmony with national developmental goals and policies:²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Şahin, 'Intertwined and Contested. Green Politics and the Environmental Movement in Turkey', 440–41.

²⁵⁶ Şahin, 'The Politics of Environment and Climate Change', 178.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.; İzci, 'Turkey's Approach to Environmental Security: A Case for Soft Security', 256; Şahin, 'Intertwined and Contested. Green Politics and the Environmental Movement in Turkey', 443.

²⁵⁹ İzci, 'Turkey's Approach to Environmental Security: A Case for Soft Security', 256; Şahin, 'Intertwined and Contested. Green Politics and the Environmental Movement in Turkey', 443; Rüveyda Kızılböğâ and Salih Batal, 'Türkiye'de Çevre Sorunlarının Çözümünde Yerel Yönetimlerin Rolü ve Önemi', *Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 9, no. 20 (2012): 197;

“Çevre sorunları ile ilgili olarak uluslararası düzeyde sürdürülecek çalışma ve yasal düzenlemelerde Türkiye’yi sanayileşerek kalkınma hedefinden saptıracak hiçbir yükümlülük kabul edilmeyecektir.” [No obligations that will divert Turkey from its goal of development by industrialisation will be accepted in the efforts and legal regulations to be carried out at the international level regarding environmental problems.]

In 1978, one of the leading environmental NGOs in Turkey has been found. The Environmental Foundation of Turkey [*Türkiye Çevre Vakfı – TÇV*] was successful in raising environmental awareness and pushing an agenda to form environmental legislation, which eventually promoted the Article 56 of the 1982 Constitution.²⁶⁰ Within the framework of the Article 56 of the 1982 Constitution, “the right to live in a healthy and balanced environment” has been declared and taken into the legal framework under the protection of the state. This legal regulation has been strengthened with the adoption of the Turkish Environmental Act [*Türk Çevre Kanunu*] in 1983. The purpose of the act was to ensure the protection of the environment in line with the principle of sustainability.²⁶¹ Eventually, with the evolution of the Prime Ministry Undersecretariat for Environment into the Ministry of Environment in 1991, institutionalisation of this legal process has started.²⁶² In 2004, the ministry was merged with the ministry of Forestry, later in 2011 it was turned into the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation. According to Muammer Tuna, this merger started the process of dysfunctioning of the environment. The ministry’s staff began to consist mainly of civil engineers. Eventually, the priority of the ministry has not been to protect the environment but urbanisation or ‘construction’.²⁶³ Finally in 2021, the name of the ministry has been updated as ‘the

DPT, ‘Yeni Strateji ve Kalkınma Planı: Üçüncü Beş Yıl 1973-1977’ (Ankara, 1973), 866; Adaman and Arsel, ‘Introduction’, 2.

²⁶⁰ Şahin, ‘The Politics of Environment and Climate Change’, 178.

²⁶¹ Kızılboğa and Batal, ‘Türkiye’de Çevre Sorunlarının Çözümünde Yerel Yönetimlerin Rolü ve Önemi’, 196; Zerrin Savaşan, ‘Climate Governance in Turkey: A Forward-Looking Perspective’, *Turkish Studies* 20, no. 4 (2019): 547; Şahin, ‘Intertwined and Contested. Green Politics and the Environmental Movement in Turkey’, 444.

²⁶² Şahin, ‘Intertwined and Contested. Green Politics and the Environmental Movement in Turkey’, 444; Adaman and Arsel, ‘Introduction’, 4; Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel, ‘The Political Economy of Environmental Policymaking in Turkey: A Vicious Cycle’, 209.

²⁶³ Muammer Tuna, ‘Türkiye’de Çevre Toplum İlişkileri ve Çevre Sosyolojisi’, *Sosyoloji Konferansları* 2, no. 52 (2015): 304–5; Adaman and Arsel, ‘Introduction’, 4; Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel, ‘The Political Economy of Environmental Policymaking in Turkey: A Vicious Cycle’, 209.

Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change'. The addition of "Climate Change" to the name of the Ministry can be thought as an attempt to raise an awareness regarding the issue. However, considering the international climate negotiations and the policies adopted by the government, it is evident that economic considerations take precedence over climate change policies.

All these institutional changes have been accompanied with the process of weakening of existing environmental regulations. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulation, which entered into force in 1993, was mainly responsible for the protection of the environment. It was introduced within the Environmental Act in 1983. The Article 2 of this Act defined the EIA regulation as:²⁶⁴

"gerçekleştirilmesi plânlanan projelerin çevreye olabilecek olumlu ve olumsuz etkilerinin belirlenmesinde, olumsuz yöndeki etkilerin önlenmesi ya da çevreye zarar vermeyecek ölçüde en aza indirilmesi için alınacak önlemlerin, seçilen yer ile teknoloji alternatiflerinin belirlenerek değerlendirilmesinde ve projelerin uygulanmasının izlenmesi ve kontrolünde sürdürülecek çalışmaları,[...] ifade eder". ["the work undertaken to identify both the potential positive and negative environmental impacts of proposed projects, to determine and evaluate the alternative locations and technologies, to devise measures that either prevent adverse effects or minimise them to a level that does not harm the environment, and to monitor and oversee the implementation of these projects"].

The weakening of the EIA regulation is seen as the main cursor of dysfunctioning of the environment. According to Hande Paker, this regulation has been revised fourteen times during the AKP rule. Paker notes that the EIA process has become merely an ineffective formality, highlighting that, under this regulation, the authorities have rejected only 43 applications out of a total of 56,071.²⁶⁵ Another regulation, which remains dysfunctional, concerns urgent expropriation decisions. It was basically designed as a state of war or emergency act to give the power of confiscation of private land and property to the government.²⁶⁶ However, as Ümit Şahin argues, it is being used "to accelerate investments, particularly in energy and

²⁶⁴ T.C. Resmi Gazete, Çevre Kanunu (1983).

²⁶⁵ Paker, 'Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey', 146.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

mining projects”, which eventually results in water and land grabbing²⁶⁷ and commodification of these natural areas in, especially, the rural areas.²⁶⁸ Although only 14 cases of urgent expropriation decisions occurred between 1978 and 2000, the number was 828 between 2004 and 2014, two-thirds of these cases were taken to build power plants and the rest for energy, urban transformation and road or airport construction.²⁶⁹ However disruptive it may be, environmental dysfunction can be said to have heightened awareness of environmental issues in Turkey. This rise of awareness can also be linked to certain international agreements and events.

3.4. Politics of Environment in Turkey: A Brief History of the Rise of Environmental Awareness in Turkey

Environmental awareness has not risen in vacuum; instead, it has been a process affected by and benefited from both domestic and international events. Although a deep investigation of the process of the rise of environmental awareness in Turkey is not aimed in this section, several milestones in this process is required to be known. Therefore, I aim to scan certain milestones within this process without delving into deeply the issue. One of these has been the European Union (EU)-Turkey relations, and the related process of harmonisation with the *acquis* of the EU. Several scholars have pointed out that the process of accession to the EU and the harmonisation of the national legal framework with the EU environmental *acquis* have contributed to the rise of environmental awareness significantly.²⁷⁰ Zerrin Savaşan posits that the EU’s conditionality strategy, which formed part of the accession process, was a significant

²⁶⁷ For a detailed information on land grabbing in Turkey, please see: Mine Islar, ‘Privatised Hydropower Development in Turkey: A Case of Water Grabbing?’, *Water Alternatives* 5, no. 2 (2012).

²⁶⁸ Şahin, ‘The Politics of Environment and Climate Change’, 182; Paker, ‘Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey’, 146.

²⁶⁹ Şahin, ‘The Politics of Environment and Climate Change’, 182.

²⁷⁰ Savaşan, ‘Climate Governance in Turkey: A Forward-Looking Perspective’, 546; Şahin, ‘The Politics of Environment and Climate Change’, 185; İzci, ‘Turkey’s Approach to Environmental Security: A Case for Soft Security’, 258; Fethi Ufuk Özışık, ‘Türkiye’de Bir Kamu Politikası Olarak İklim Değişikliği: Tarihsel Gelişim, Uluslararası Müzakereler, Yapısal ve İdari Sorunlar Çerçevesinde Bir Değerlendirme’, *Marmara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilimler Dergisi* 8, no. 1 (2020): 72.

factor in the progression of environmental law and politics in Turkey.²⁷¹ However, Ümit Şahin highlights that even EU regulations concerning the environment have been compromised in favour of developmental policies.²⁷²

Another influential international event within these milestones has been the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Although it was a convention specifically on climate change, it directly affects the environmental policy-making mechanism in Turkey. Furthermore, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, acting within the UNFCCC, have been among the most important documents that influenced Turkey's stance regarding environmental problems and climate change. The Convention was opened for signature at the Rio de Janeiro Conference in 1992 to keep the greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere at a controllable level. It entered into force in 1994, however, after a long process, Turkey ratified it in 2004. Depending on an annex structure, the Convention divided countries into three parts. Annex-I countries are basically obliged to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and to take necessary measures to combat climate change. Annex-II countries, however, are obliged to transfer green technologies to other countries and to finance these technologies besides their duties defined in Annex-I. Non-annexed countries are only obliged to reduce their emissions and to cooperate in fighting against climate change.²⁷³ Turkey was included in both Annex I and II lists due to its Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) membership.²⁷⁴ However, this annex-structured obligations of the Convention contradicted with the national interests of Turkey. Being listed in both annexes, Turkey was obliged not only to limit its greenhouse gas emissions but also to provide financial assistance to developing countries.²⁷⁵ Turkey, thus, insisted on its “special circumstance”.

²⁷¹ Savaşan, ‘Climate Governance in Turkey: A Forward-Looking Perspective’, 546.

²⁷² Şahin, ‘The Politics of Environment and Climate Change’, 185.

²⁷³ ‘United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol’, Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed 24 December 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/united-nations-framework-convention-on-climate-change-_unfccc_-and-the-kyoto-protocol.en.mfa.

²⁷⁴ Paker, ‘Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey’, 140.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.; Şahin, ‘The Politics of Environment and Climate Change’; Turhan et al., ‘Beyond Special Circumstances: Climate Change Policy in Turkey 1992–2015’.

“Special circumstance” refers to Turkey’s demand to be listed as part of developing countries rather than the developed countries within the framework of the UNFCCC. Insisting on its “special circumstance”, Turkey argued that it is still a developing country that has not completed its industrialisation process yet, and thus that it had no historical responsibility.²⁷⁶ For Murat Türkeş, this is due to the historical responsibility of industrialised countries’ carbon-intense development and their moral duty to mitigate their emissions and provide climate finance to the developing countries.²⁷⁷ When Turkey’s discourse on justifying its “special circumstance” is analysed, as Ümit Şahin argued in one of his interviews, the most highlighted themes appear as *injustice* and *victimhood*. Understood as a half-nationalist and half-anti-imperialist discourse, Turkey blames the West as a blocker of its development and justifies its right to development in the same way as the West did: by polluting the environment.²⁷⁸ It is at the end of this debate that Turkey was removed from Annex II and the parties to the Convention recognised its “special circumstance”. After this removal in the Conference of Parties 7 (COP 7) in 2001, Turkey became a party to the Convention in 2004.²⁷⁹

As the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement are also important documents that raised environmental awareness in Turkey, it is important to mention these two as well. Kyoto Protocol is regarded as one of the most significant international efforts to fight against climate change.²⁸⁰ The protocol was adopted in 1997 under the UNFCCC and entered into force in 2005. The Protocol was based on the UNFCCC’s annex-based structure and aimed to urge industrial and developing countries to

²⁷⁶ Turhan et al., ‘Beyond Special Circumstances: Climate Change Policy in Turkey 1992–2015’; Paker, ‘Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey’, 140.

²⁷⁷ Murat Türkeş, ‘Climate Change Policy and the Cost of Inaction: An Institutional Account from Turkey’, *New Perspectives on Turkey* 56 (2017): 134–35.

²⁷⁸ Özişik, ‘Türkiye’de Bir Kamu Politikası Olarak İklim Değişikliği: Tarihsel Gelişim, Uluslararası Müzakereler, Yapısal ve İdari Sorunlar Çerçevesinde Bir Değerlendirme’, 78–79.

²⁷⁹ Turhan et al., ‘Beyond Special Circumstances: Climate Change Policy in Turkey 1992–2015’; Paker, ‘Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey’, 140; İzci, ‘Turkey’s Approach to Environmental Security: A Case for Soft Security’, 258.

²⁸⁰ Aynur Aydın Coşkun and Gökçe Gençay, ‘Kyoto Protocol and “Deforestation”: A Legal Analysis on Turkish Environment and Forest Legislation’, *Forest Policy and Economics* 13, no. 5 (2011): 366–77.

regulate and reduce greenhouse gases emissions according to agreed individual targets.²⁸¹ The Protocol defined Annex B countries (36 industrialised countries and the EU) to quantify their individual emission reduction targets. Turkey was not included in Annex B countries as it did not ratify the UNFCCC at that time in 1997. Therefore, Turkey has no obligation regarding this emission target. However, the Protocol was important in a sense that it raised the awareness of the protection of forested lands as forests are vital for carbon sinking.²⁸² Deforestation, thus, was one of the primary subheadings of the Protocol.

Lastly, the Paris Agreement is regarded as one of the most influential documents on environmental awareness as “it is the first-ever legally binding global climate change agreement”.²⁸³ It is adopted in 2015 and entered into force in 2016, which Turkey signed it in 2016 and ratified it in 2021. It aims to regulate climate change policies after 2020, in which the Kyoto Protocol ends up.²⁸⁴

The final subject under consideration is the civil movement against nuclear power in the 1970s. It can be thought as another international factor that raised the environmental awareness both in the globe and in Turkey. According to Ümit Şahin, anti-nuclear movement, peaked especially after Chernobyl disaster in 1986, had a new start in 1992 in Turkey after the government attempted to construct a nuclear power plant in Akkuyu. Stating that the reaction towards this nuclear power plant assembled various environmentalist groups and NGOs and brought about the establishment of many others, Şahin argued that environmental awareness awoke in the 1990s in Turkey.²⁸⁵

Anti-nuclear movement and its consolidative effect on the rise of environmental awareness in Turkey turns the attention to the brief history of domestic events that

²⁸¹ ‘What Is the Kyoto Protocol?’, United Nations Climate Change, accessed 24 December 2022, https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol.

²⁸² Coşkun and Gençay, ‘Kyoto Protocol and “Deforestation”: A Legal Analysis on Turkish Environment and Forest Legislation’.

²⁸³ ‘United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol’.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Şahin, ‘Intertwined and Contested. Green Politics and the Environmental Movement in Turkey’, 456.

raised the environmental awareness in Turkey. Fikret Adaman and Murat Arsel argue that although Turkey was not void of environmental problems and land-use conflicts, these did not find a place in the political agenda. Giving the example of severe air pollution in Ankara during the 1970s and 1980s, Adaman and Arsel highlight that these did not ignite an environmental awareness.²⁸⁶ As Nergis Canefe mentions, these environmental problems were dealt with apolitically. Struggles against environmental problems and land-grabbings operated not in civil society but mostly in state organs or through court cases.²⁸⁷

However, as Ümit Şahin highlights, with the implementation of early neoliberal policies during the 1980s, new construction-dependent energy, tourism, and urban development projects led to local environmental activism and protests, specifically in places where these projects were to be built on natural sites.²⁸⁸ After the 1980s, there have been several environmental protests. Among these, some protests produced a nation-wide effect. The first one was in a famous touristic region, Gökova Bay, located in Bodrum and Datça peninsula, in 1984 after a coal-fired power plant project was planned to be constructed. Later, in 1987 in the Dalyan Beach, famous natural habitat of Caretta turtles, protesters came to the fore against the construction of a luxury hotel. In 1990, environmental action peaked in İzmir Aliğa.²⁸⁹ Thousands of people gathered to stop the project of coal power plant in Aliğa.

However, the literature commonly agrees that the starting point of the environmental protest or activism was the Bergama gold mine case in 1994. Bergama case was a local resistance movement against the planned gold mining in the region by a private extractive company. Initially starting as a local resistance movement organised by the local people disturbed by the negative consequences of the gold mining, Bergama case, then, gained traction and became a nationally visible movement with the

²⁸⁶ Adaman and Arsel, 'Introduction', 1.

²⁸⁷ Nergis Canefe, 'The Politics of Public Protests Against Extractivism in Turkey', *Peace Review* 28, no. 1 (2016): 13.

²⁸⁸ Şahin, 'The Politics of Environment and Climate Change', 178.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 178–79.

engagement of outsiders.²⁹⁰ According to Ümit Şahin, this case transformed local people with no previous engagement with environmental issues into eco-activists.²⁹¹ Similarly, Nergis Canefe stressed that the Bergama local rural community “was the first organised movement against extractivist state policies and has been resisting gold-mining activities in Turkey for more than fifteen years”.²⁹² Furthermore, for some scholars, the Bergama local community was not solely a reaction of the deterioration of the natural habitat; rather it was more like a profound critique of modernism. For instance, Hande Paker argues that it was more than a resistance movement for the preservation of their land, but was a criticism of modernisation and neoliberal developmentalism in Turkey besides its stress on the democratic right to legal remedies.²⁹³

‘The critique of modernisation’ makes sense since the consequences of neoliberal developmentalism in Turkey have brought about a confrontational relationship between civil society and the state.²⁹⁴ This is a clear manifestation of the contestation over the environment. Furthermore, it shows that environmental degradation is not void of politics in Turkey. Now, the chapter will try to bring a third pillar to this nexus, namely the security dimension. To do that, the conceptual framework will be highlighted first: deforestation and the forest fires as a security issue.

3.5. Deforestation in the Environment-Security-Politics Nexus

In this section, I aim to narrow down the research focus from a general framework of environmental security to the issue of deforestation, before moving into the case of forest fires. The issue of deforestation lies at the heart of the tripartite nexus of this dissertation: *environment-security-politics*. It is such a concept that it is related with and dependent on all the pillars of the tripartite nexus. Therefore, it should be

²⁹⁰ Şahin, ‘Intertwined and Contested. Green Politics and the Environmental Movement in Turkey’, 455.

²⁹¹ Şahin, ‘The Politics of Environment and Climate Change’, 183–84.

²⁹² Canefe, ‘The Politics of Public Protests Against Extractivism in Turkey’, 13.

²⁹³ Paker, ‘Politicizing the Environment: The Ecological Crisis of Turkey’, 148.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 147.

evaluated on the basis of the tripartite nexus. Firstly, there is *the environment* pillar of this nexus. Deforestation is a serious issue for the health and sustainability of the environment. In order to understand this critical relationship better, I will first focus on the concept of deforestation and what it means for the environment. This will be followed by the pillar of *security*. After linking the issue of deforestation with the health and sustainability of the environment, it becomes apparent that it is a serious security threat. Its referent objects range from the individual level to the global level. Lastly, I will try to link deforestation with the last pillar of the nexus, *politics*. This linkage mainly means that the concept of deforestation cannot be understood by studying it solely from scientific/technical analyses. It has also a political dimension without which the reading of deforestation would be thin.

Definitions of the term ‘deforestation’ vary in the literature. Some researchers accept a broad definition of it as “the total long-term removal of tree cover”.²⁹⁵ However, for others, it results from a complex process with variegated agents and causes. For Yalçın Kuvan, deforestation occurs by the acts of humans or by natural disasters.²⁹⁶ The definition of the concept adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) is also a broad one highlighting the negative transformation of the forested land into the non-forested area.²⁹⁷ Then, the question arises: why forests are important for the environment? Why deforestation is/should be taken seriously as a global environmental security issue? These questions were taken seriously by the international community and the United Nations at the beginning of the second millennium. In response to the need for a scientific report on these questions, the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked for such an assessment in 2000 in his report to the UN General Assembly, “We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century”. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA²⁹⁸), subsequently initiated in 2001, was conducted

²⁹⁵ Arild Angelsen and David Kaimowitz, ‘Rethinking the Causes of Deforestation: Lessons from Economic Models’, *The World Bank Research Observer* 14, no. 1 (1999): 74.

²⁹⁶ Yalçın Kuvan, ‘Mass Tourism Development and Deforestation in Turkey’, *Anatolia* 21, no. 1 (2010): 157.

²⁹⁷ FAO, ‘Global Forest Resources Assessment’ (Rome, Italy, 2010).

²⁹⁸ Since the abbreviation “MA” is used for “The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment” in the original document, I adopt this use here.

under the auspices of the UN and was governed by a multi stake-holder board, including the representatives of international institutions, NGOs, governments, business, and indigenous peoples.²⁹⁹ According to the MA report, there are five major classes of forest services, which can be seen in the figure below: ecological, resource, biospheric, social, and amenities.

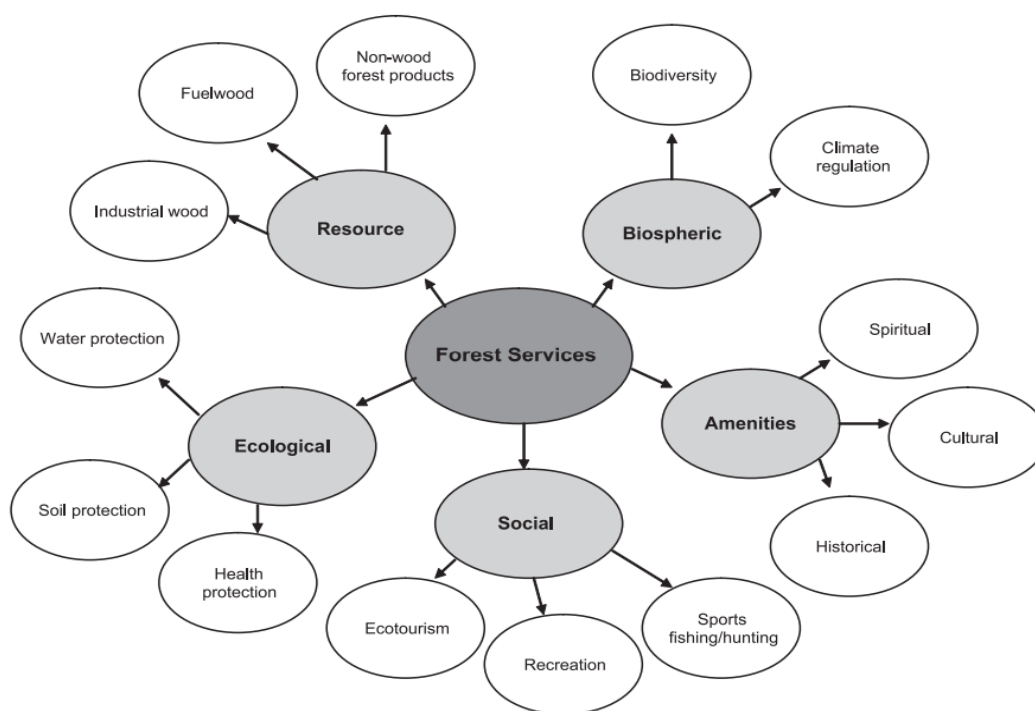


Figure 3.1. Major Classes of Forest Services.³⁰⁰

As the figure shows, forest services are essential for both ecological and human well-being. These ecosystem services are indispensable for the sustainability of human life on earth and ecological life cycle. Forests maintain several critical ecosystems services which are constituents of well-being. Firstly, forests have *provisioning services*, which constitute certain raw materials necessary for human life and ecosystem cycle. These are for example: food (fruits, nuts, and forest animals), water, timber, fibre, and non-timber forest products, such as silk, bamboo, and rubber. Secondly, forests have *regulating services* that affect and control climate,

²⁹⁹ Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 'Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis Report' (Washington, DC., 2005), ii.

³⁰⁰ Marian de los Angeles and Cherla Sastry, 'Forest and Woodland Systems', in *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Current State and Trends*, ed. Rashid Hassan, Robert Scholes, and Neville Ash (Washington, DC.: Island Press, 2005), 601.

climate change, natural disasters, such as floods, water quality, and diseases. Thirdly, forests have *cultural services* that provide aesthetic, spiritual, touristic, and recreational benefits. Lastly, forests have *supporting services* such as soil formation, erosion prevention, photosynthesis, nutrient cycling, and primary production.³⁰¹

All these ecosystem services that the forests conduct show that forests are indispensable assets for the health and sustainability of humanity and the planet.³⁰² These services clearly show the link between deforestation and *the environment*. They can also be considered as components of security dimensions. For example, supporting services can be linked to the dimensions of environmental and human security. Provisioning services are essential for food security, and regulating services cannot be separated from health security, and climate security.

Indeed, regulating services of forests and their security impacts are more established in the literature than others. This is especially valid for forests' ability to prevent carbon emissions that cause climate change. Many scientific reports show that the degradation of forests (deforestation), particularly in tropical areas (most notably in Amazon and in Indonesian rainforests) is an important contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions, and thus to global climate change.³⁰³ The literature forms this relationship between deforestation and security primarily on two distinct cases, namely the Brazilian Amazonian deforestation and transboundary haze problem resulting from the widespread 1997 Indonesian forest fires. It would be fair to argue that the Amazon deforestation case has been the first seed for the burgeoning of the literature. Many studies justified deforestation as a security threat at the international and global level;³⁰⁴ as a sovereignty issue, and thus a national security threat;³⁰⁵ and

³⁰¹ Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 'Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis Report', v.

³⁰² Joyeeta Gupta, Nicolien Van Der Grijp, and Onno Kuik, *Climate Change, Forests and REDD: Lessons for Institutional Design*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 7.

³⁰³ Timothy R H Pearson et al., 'Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Tropical Forest Degradation: An Underestimated Source', *Carbon Balance and Management* 12 (2017): 1–11.

³⁰⁴ Andrew Hurrell, 'The Politics of Amazonian Deforestation', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23, no. 1 (1991): 197–215; Emilio F Moran, 'Deforestation and Land Use in the Brazilian Amazon', *Human Ecology* 21, no. 1 (1993): 1–21; McDonald, *Security, the Environment and Emancipation: Contestation over Environmental Change*; Ans Kolk, 'From Conflict to Cooperation: International Policies to Protect the Brazilian Amazon', *World Development* 26, no. 8 (1998): 1481–93.

as a transboundary complex security threat, including human, environment, health, economic security issues, resulting from forest fires–related deforestation.³⁰⁶ Forest fires-related deforestation is also called as “transboundary haze problem” in the literature. It depends on the case of 1997 Indonesian forest fires and its effects as air pollution and haze spreading to neighbouring countries such as Malaysia and Singapore. Since then, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) took more serious steps to revise its security definitions and to adopt initiatives on transboundary haze problem. One of these steps was the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution signed in 2002, which is a legally binding paper to force the countries to mitigate forest fires and to cooperate on the issue.³⁰⁷ Another event that connects the issue to security was in 2006. The then Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono declared “war on haze” and the Indonesian government attempted to securitise the haze problem.³⁰⁸ These show that deforestation and forest fire are/should be taken as a *security* threat.

This argument can be substantiated by a brief investigation of the development of international environmental politics regarding deforestation. Forests and the issue of deforestation have been under international concern since the 1960s. During the 1970s, certain international agreements forbidding the trade of endangered tree, plant and animal species were put into force. In 1975, the World Heritage Convention took a decision to protect sites of key natural and or cultural values, including a vast area of forest land. Until the 1980s, there had been little attention given to the issue of deforestation and its adverse effects. However, with the development of the scientific awareness of the impact of greenhouse gases (GHGs) on the climate and the role of

³⁰⁵ Catherine Aubertin, ‘Deforestation Control Policies in Brazil: Sovereignty versus the Market’, *Forests, Trees and Livelihoods* 24, no. 3 (2015): 147–62; McDonald, ‘Environment and Security: Global Eco-Politics and Brazilian Deforestation’, 80–82.

³⁰⁶ Edwards and Heiduk, ‘Hazy Days: Forest Fires and the Politics of Environmental Security in Indonesia’; William J Jones, ‘Human Security & ASEAN Transboundary Haze: An Idea That Never Came’, *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 5, no. 4 (2014): 603–23; Cotton, ‘The “Haze” over Southeast Asia: Challenging the ASEAN Mode of Regional Engagement’.

³⁰⁷ David Seth Jones, ‘ASEAN and Transboundary Haze Pollution in Southeast Asia’, *Asia Europe Journal* 4, no. 3 (2006): 438.

³⁰⁸ Edwards and Heiduk, ‘Hazy Days: Forest Fires and the Politics of Environmental Security in Indonesia’, 67–68.

forests to mitigate it, deforestation started to be seen as a problem in the public consciousness.³⁰⁹ In the rise of this consciousness, the concern and degradation of tropical rainforests had an immense place. During the 1980s, the interest in the Brazilian Amazon rose due to its size and impact on the global ecosystem and the images of burning forests.³¹⁰ In 1983, the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) was agreed to regulate the international trade of tropical timber. In 1987, international and non-governmental organisations such as the World Resources Institute, the FAO, the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Bank adopted the Tropical Forest Action Plan to prevent the degradation of tropical forests. Later, a more important international action acknowledged forests as assets in fighting climate change. In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol highlighted forests as major carbon sinks so that they might be used to meet parties' emission reduction commitments.³¹¹

The Kyoto Protocol also underlined the double-sided role of forests in fighting against climate change. As stressed above, forests have a natural emitting role as carbon sinks by reducing the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. As carbon dioxide is the most important greenhouse gas driving climate change, afforestation and reforestation activities are promoted for the health of the ecosystem. On the other hand, deforestation reverses this process. Furthermore, if deforestation occurs in the form of forest fires, this worsens the situation as forest fires emit carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and thus contribute to the climate change. According to a report of World Economic Forum, in 2021, forest fires released a record amount of carbon in parts of Siberia, the United States, and Turkey. The total amount of carbon is calculated as 1.76 billion tonnes, which is “equivalent to more than double Germany’s annual carbon dioxide emissions”.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Gupta, Van Der Grijp, and Kuik, *Climate Change, Forests and REDD: Lessons for Institutional Design*, 10–12.

³¹⁰ Ans Kolk, *Forests in International Environmental Politics: International Organisations, NGOs and the Brazilian Amazon*. (Utrecht, the Netherlands: International Books, 1996), 145.

³¹¹ Gupta, Van Der Grijp, and Kuik, *Climate Change, Forests and REDD: Lessons for Institutional Design*, 10–11.

³¹² Kate Abnett, ‘This Is How Much Carbon Wildfires Have Emitted This Year’, World Economic Forum, 2021, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/12/siberia-america-wildfires-emissions-records-2021/>.

Finally, as an action toward developing international environmental politics on deforestation, the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) has been established in 2008. The main goal of the programme is to reduce forest emissions and deforestation rates of the countries in order to contribute sustainable forest managements in countries.³¹³ By reaching out 65 partner countries and nationally led REDD+ efforts, UN-REDD appears as one of the important international efforts to combat deforestation issue.³¹⁴

This brings us to the investigation of the drivers of deforestation. It is at this point that *the political* dimension of deforestation appears. The drivers of deforestation are complex and can be grouped as proximate/direct and underlying/indirect. While proximate causes directly affect deforestation, indirect causes influence the former to influence deforestation. While proximate causes are mostly local and should be conceptualised contextually, underlying causes can be local to global in scope.³¹⁵ Proximate causes include agricultural activities, logging, extraction and infrastructural activities such as the construction of roads and settlements as well as natural disasters like forest fires.³¹⁶ On the other hand, indirect or underlying causes are more complex and rooted in social, economic, political, cultural or technological processes. They include local economic effects, such as changes in rural household behaviours and poverty, national demographic/economic/political effects, such as population growth, migration, urbanisation, economic structures, and changes in national policies and forest management, and international/global effects, including the effects of neoliberal international economic order, demand and consumption of

³¹³ Gupta, Van Der Grijp, and Kuik, *Climate Change, Forests and REDD: Lessons for Institutional Design*, 77.

³¹⁴ 'The Programme', UN-REDD Programme, accessed 16 February 2023, <https://www.un-redd.org/about/programme>.

³¹⁵ Gupta, Van Der Grijp, and Kuik, *Climate Change, Forests and REDD: Lessons for Institutional Design*, 29.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 30; Julia C Allen and Douglas F Barnes, 'The Causes of Deforestation in Developing Countries', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 75, no. 2 (1985): 174; G M Kissinger, Martin Herold, and Veronique De Sy, 'Drivers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation: A Synthesis Report for REDD+ Policymakers' (Vancouver, Canada, 2012), 10; Noriko Hosonuma et al., 'An Assessment of Deforestation and Forest Degradation Drivers in Developing Countries', *Environmental Research Letters* 7, no. 4 (2012): 2.

forest products or climate change.³¹⁷ However, as I stressed above, I will focus on forest fires as one of the proximate drivers of deforestation. The causes of forest fires are also wide-ranging, although most of the causes of fires remain unknown. However, the known reasons can be grouped as intentional and unintentional. While most of the unintentional fires occur because of climatic reasons, negligence, and carelessness, intentional fires happen due to agricultural burnings or even arson/pyro-terrorism.³¹⁸

These show that both deforestation and forest fires are complex events that cannot be comprehended by solely scientific/technical investigations. According to Andrew Hurrell, this complexity derives from the interdisciplinary character of the drivers of deforestation and the scope of possible solutions.³¹⁹ In this interdisciplinarity, there is political dimension as well. Furthermore, some state that “drivers of deforestation vary across geographies and historical contexts”.³²⁰ As a consequence, it requires context specific investigations. There are studies that pay attention to the political aspects of deforestation in the Amazonian case;³²¹ in Indonesia;³²² in Africa;³²³ in

³¹⁷ Gupta, Van Der Grijp, and Kuik, *Climate Change, Forests and REDD: Lessons for Institutional Design*, 30; Kissinger, Herold, and De Sy, ‘Drivers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation: A Synthesis Report for REDD+ Policymakers’, 10.

³¹⁸ Robert Arthur Baird, in his 2006 piece, mentions that future terrorists would use arson as a weapon to harm local economies, impact military forces and terrorize the population. He defines pyro-terrorism as “the use of incendiary attacks to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, to advance political or social objectivities”. See: Robert Arthur Baird, ‘Pyro-Terrorism—the Threat of Arson-Induced Forest Fires as a Future Terrorist Weapon of Mass Destruction’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 5 (2006): 415. Empirical examples of this concept can be seen in the cases of ISIS and Al Qaeda. Certain terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Al Qaeda advise their followers to use arson as a new weapon. For example, according to a newspaper article, one of the issues of *Rumiyah*, the magazine of ISIS, published that arson is a method of just campaign. See: Michael Daly, ‘ISIS Has a New Weapon: Fire’, *The Daily Beast*, 2017, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/isis-has-a-new-weapon-fire?ref=scroll4>. On the other hand, Al Qaeda-related magazine *Inspire* called for its members to start forest fires in the USA. See: Bill Gabbert, ‘Al Qaeda Magazine Encourages Forest Fire Arson in the US’, *Wildfire Today*, 2012, <https://wildfiretoday.com/2012/05/02/al-qaeda-magazine-encourages-forest-fire-arson-in-the-us/>.

³¹⁹ Hurrell, ‘The Politics of Amazonian Deforestation’, 215.

³²⁰ Nadia Rabesahala Horning, *The Politics of Deforestation in Africa: Madagascar, Tanzania, and Uganda* (Springer, 2018), 14.

³²¹ Marko S A Monteiro, Sonia Regina da Cal Seixas, and Simone Aparecida Vieira, ‘The Politics of Amazonian Deforestation: Environmental Policy and Climate Change Knowledge’, *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 5, no. 5 (2014): 689–701; Hurrell, ‘The Politics of Amazonian Deforestation’.

India³²⁴, and in Southeast Asia.³²⁵ Without such context-specific investigations, it would not be possible to comprehend the political character of the issue. In sum, the investigation of deforestation relies on policies, values, and attitudes of the contending political forces within the context,³²⁶ and thus politics become an “engine” to the explanations of deforestation.³²⁷

3.6. Politics of Deforestation in Turkey

I tried to contextualise the complex issue of deforestation within the tripartite nexus in the section above. The environment pillar clearly puts deforestation as an important degradation problem. Among the pillars consisting of the tripartite nexus, it is the only one that is not context-specific, and thus, universal. However, the politics and security dimensions of the nexus are context-specific, change over time and space. In this section, I aim to evaluate the politics pillar of deforestation regarding the case of Turkey. In doing so, I will first start with a brief introduction and rationale of the issue. Then, it will be followed by an evaluation of the politics of the issue in a temporal frame, starting from late Ottoman period to the post-2002.

As I outlined in the previous section, deforestation is a striking problem in all over the world with serious consequences. Therefore, many diverse agents conduct studies and analyses to identify whether a country’s forest area decreased or not. The FAO is such an agent and has been monitoring the forest assets of the world since 1946. Accordingly, every five years, it publishes *Global Forest Resources Assessment*

³²² Dauvergne, ‘The Politics of Deforestation in Indonesia’; Elías Cisneros, Krisztina Kis-Katos, and Nunung Nuryartono, ‘Palm Oil and the Politics of Deforestation in Indonesia’, *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 108 (2021): 1–19.

³²³ Horning, *The Politics of Deforestation in Africa: Madagascar, Tanzania, and Uganda*; Jacqueline M Klopp, ‘Deforestation and Democratization: Patronage, Politics and Forests in Kenya’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6, no. 2 (2012): 351–70.

³²⁴ Marcus Moench, ‘Politics of Deforestation: Case Study of Cardamom Hills of Kerala’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1991, PE47–60.

³²⁵ Peter Dauvergne, *Shadows in the Forest: Japan and the Politics of Timber in Southeast Asia* (MIT press, 1997).

³²⁶ Hurrell, ‘The Politics of Amazonian Deforestation’, 198.

³²⁷ Dauvergne, ‘The Politics of Deforestation in Indonesia’, 503.

reports to show how the world's forests have changed. According to the latest report, "Turkey is one of the countries which increases the forest areas although the forest areas of the world has been decreasing".³²⁸ This contrast is attributed to Turkey's ambitious afforestation programme carried out under the National Forest Program.³²⁹

The country reports of FAO, however, have been prepared by the national correspondents. Above-mentioned report has been prepared by the collaborators of the General Directorate of Forestry [*Orman Genel Müdürlüğü – OGM*] in Turkey, and the data belong to the OGM. All forests in Turkey fall under the State's responsibility and supervision, with the OGM holding primary responsibility for managing these forest assets.³³⁰ However, some scholars have raised concerns about the accuracy of the data and information provided by the OGM. According to Doğanay Tolunay, the argument that there is no deforestation issue in Turkey is controversial.³³¹ Some authors have stated that the increase in forest areas does not cover all the country and that some provinces are experiencing a decrease in forest areas.³³² Moreover, Erdoğan Atmış et.al. highlighted that the increase in forest areas is largely due to the spontaneous conversion of abandoned agricultural areas and pastures into forest areas due to migration.³³³ Therefore, it is necessary to approach the issue of deforestation in Turkey critically.

Although there is a general view on the increase in the forest areas in Turkey, some studies questioned this view and argued that deforestation and forest crimes in

³²⁸ FAO, 'Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020' (Rome, Italy, 2020), 25, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9825en>.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Osman Devrim Elvan et al., 'Forest Fire and Law: An Analysis of Turkish Forest Fire Legislation Based on Food and Agriculture Organization Criteria', *Fire Ecology* 17 (2021): 3.

³³¹ Doğanay Tolunay, 'Dünyada ve Türkiye'de Ormansızlaşma', in *Ormancılık Politikaları ve Orman Köylülerinin Durumu*, ed. Onur Bilge Kula and Şükrü Durmuş, 1st ed. (Ankara: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Yayınları, 2016), 169.

³³² H B Günşen and E Atmış, 'Analysis of Forest Change and Deforestation in Turkey', *International Forestry Review* 21, no. 2 (2019): 182–94.

³³³ Erdoğan Atmış, Cihan Erdönmez, and Nuri Kaan Özkazanç, 'Türkiye'de Ormansızlaşma', in *Türkiye Ormancılığı 2022: Türkiye'de Ormansızlaşma ve Orman Bozulması* (Ankara: Türkiye Ormancılar Derneği Yayını, 2022), 37–52.

Turkey gained momentum especially with the deterioration of the legal framework regarding forestry.³³⁴ A brief historical journey of the legal framework and the politics of it will be evaluated later in detail. However, before doing that, there are certain technical issues needed to be mentioned briefly. Besides the deterioration of the legal framework, there are two important issues that affect the estimation of forest area. One of them is the issue of definition of forest. The way forests are defined affects how deforestation, reforestation, and afforestation can be estimated.³³⁵ Comparing the definitions of forest by the OGM and the FAO, Lund finds that the OGM's definition leads to a forest area estimation that exceeds the FAO's by nearly 50%.³³⁶

This discrepancy is the result of the definition of forests. The Forest Law of Turkey (6831 law no.) defines forests as “*tabii olarak yetişen veya emekle yetiştirilen ağaç ve ağaççık toplulukları yerleriyle birlikte orman sayılır*” [naturally grown or cultivated stands of trees and shrubs, together with the land they occupy, are classified as forests.].³³⁷ Certain areas covered by trees or shrubs, including sedges, fields supporting steppe plants, parks, certain graveyards, and trees or shrubs on private lands, are excluded from this forest classification. Drawing on a ‘land use’ approach, the OGM's definition of forest includes both normal (or ‘productive’) forests and degraded forests.³³⁸ The FAO, by contrast, sets specific criteria related to minimum area size and tree characteristics. Accordingly, it defines forests as “land spanning more than 0.5 hectares with trees higher than 5 metres and a canopy cover of more than 10 percent, or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ. It does not include land that is predominantly under agricultural or urban land use.”³³⁹ The FAO

³³⁴ Elvan et al., ‘Forest Fire and Law: An Analysis of Turkish Forest Fire Legislation Based on Food and Agriculture Organization Criteria’, 7; Coşkun and Gençay, ‘Kyoto Protocol and “Deforestation”: A Legal Analysis on Turkish Environment and Forest Legislation’, 376; Erdoğan Atmış and H B Günşen, ‘Türkiye’de Orman Yıkımına Karşı Mücadelelerin Analizi’, in *Third Annual International Conference on Turkey and Turkish Studies, Athens, Greece*, 2016.

³³⁵ H Gyde Lund, ‘What Is a Forest? Definitions Do Make a Difference an Example from Turkey’, *Avrasya Terim Dergisi* 2, no. 1 (2014): 1–8.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³³⁷ ‘Orman Kanunu’, Pub. L. No. 6831 (1956).

³³⁸ Lund, ‘What Is a Forest? Definitions Do Make a Difference an Example from Turkey’, 3.

³³⁹ FAO, ‘Terms and Definitions’, *Global Forest Resource Assessment* (Rome, 2010), 6.

adopts these thresholds to exclude degraded forestland, which is one of the principal differences between its estimates and those of the OGM.³⁴⁰

The other issue affecting the estimations of the forest are in Turkey is the problem of cadastre. The forest cadastre is an important procedure that defines the boundaries of the lands considered as forest. The process of cadastre is necessary to successfully implement the forest regime.³⁴¹ However the preparations of the forest cadastre in Turkey can be described as an endless story. The start of forest cadastre operations in Turkey dates to 1937, following the enactment of Forest Law No. 3116. According to the Article 10 of the Law, forest cadastre operations had been planned to be completed within a five-year timeline, until 1942. Nonetheless, the forest cadastre works have not been completed yet due to diverse problems encountered in the implementation of this Law and its associated regulations.³⁴² Besides this, it is argued that Turkey's forest inventory methods are far from reflecting exactly how much forest areas change annually. As Tolunay figured out, measurements are gathered on-site every 10 years for fast-growing species and every 20 years for slow-growing species. Therefore, changes in the forest areas are not determined until the next period. Tolunay gives the example of third airport construction in Istanbul, which is located on forest land. Because the forest management plan for the site where the airport was constructed was finalised in 2012, any subsequent changes to the forest area in that region will continue to be classified as forest until 2032.³⁴³ Furthermore, the cadastre issue has also been abused by people, hoping land rent from that forest area. While there has been an intense political debate as to the legal status of forest borders, illegal real-estate developments have taken place in forests with the expectation from governments to issue general amnesty.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ Lund, 'What Is a Forest? Definitions Do Make a Difference an Example from Turkey', 4.

³⁴¹ Orhan Ercan and Kemalettin Toker, 'Assessment of the Completion of the Forest Cadastre Considering the Legal Grounds, Collaboration, and the Use of Technology: The Case of Turkey', *International Journal of Engineering and Geosciences* 7, no. 1 (2022): 49.

³⁴² Ibid., 50.

³⁴³ Tolunay, 'Dünyada ve Türkiye'de Ormansızlaşma', 169–70.

³⁴⁴ Utku Balaban and Albert S Fu, 'Politics of Urban Development and Wildfires in California and Turkey', *Environment and Planning A* 46, no. 4 (2014): 825.

Indeed, the issue of general amnesty shows the political character of the issue. Although the 1961 Constitution clearly expressed that “no general amnesty shall be granted for forest crimes” (Article 131), this provision was removed with the amendments of the constitution in 1970 during the Justice Party government.³⁴⁵ The Law No.1255 is a striking example of the situation that the political establishment in Turkey frequently chooses to make concessions from the sustainability of forests in order to derive political and also developmental advantages.³⁴⁶ As Atmış and Günşen found out political parties in Turkey, whether in power or in opposition, deal with the issue superficially by promoting mostly vague promises that do not offer concrete solutions.³⁴⁷ Political and developmental rent-seeking becomes crucial for political elites since they are players in an environment where cities are seen as “growth machines”,³⁴⁸ as Balaban and Fu asserts.³⁴⁹ This motive of rent-seeking is highly cited in the political ecology literature, as has been mentioned above of this chapter. However, this rush leads to a contestation over land between people and the state. Moreover, as Paul Robbins indicates, the ‘official’ models of environment and development are significantly distinct from the ‘vernacular’ models that are represented by *real people in real places*³⁵⁰ [italics mine].³⁵¹ Only by conducting a vernacular analysis, this difference can be understood meaningfully.³⁵² This

³⁴⁵ Erdoğan Atmış and Hikmet Batuhan Günşen, ‘Political Parties and Forestry Relations in Turkey’s General Elections in’, *Journal of the Faculty of Forestry Istanbul University* 66, no. 2 (2016): 588.

³⁴⁶ Cihan Erdönmez and Seçil YURDAKUL Erol, ‘Türkiye’de Ulusal Ormancılık Politikasının Tarihsel Gelişimi Açısından Bir Dönüm Noktası: 1255 Sayılı Yasa’, *Bartın Orman Fakültesi Dergisi* 23, no. 1 (2021): 198; Atmış and Günşen, ‘Türkiye’de Orman Yıkımına Karşı Mücadelelerin Analizi’.

³⁴⁷ Erdoğan Atmış and Hikmet Batuhan Günşen, ‘2018 Genel Seçimlerinde Siyasi Partilerin Ormancılığa Yaklaşımları Üzerine Analizler’, *Bartın Orman Fakültesi Dergisi* 21, no. 3 (2019): 818.

³⁴⁸ The term “growth machine” refers to the political economy of the place. To better comprehend the issue, see: Harvey Molotch, ‘The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place’, *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 2 (1976): 309–32.

³⁴⁹ Balaban and Fu, ‘Politics of Urban Development and Wildfires in California and Turkey’, 821.

³⁵⁰ My stress above on “real people real places” indicates the security dimension of the issue. As advocates of vernacular security argue, vernacular research try to unearth emancipatory potentials so that the Welsh School is not the only one to provide an emancipatory vision.

³⁵¹ Paul Robbins, ‘Obstacles to a First World Political Ecology? Looking near without Looking Up’, *Environment and Planning A* 34, no. 8 (2002): 1511.

³⁵² Michael R Dove and Daniel M Kammen, ‘Vernacular Models of Development: An Analysis of Indonesia under the “New Order”’, *World Development* 29, no. 4 (2001): 621.

contestation, fuelled by politics and political ecology, raises the question “Who fights for what?”, which ultimately concerns security.³⁵³ Therefore, the issue of deforestation in Turkey should be approached critically, although the latest FAO report argues that Turkey increases its forest areas. I believe that this statement should not be taken-for-granted. Now, the section will investigate the politics of the issue, starting from the late Ottoman period to the AKP era.

3.6.1. Late Ottoman Period

It is generally accepted that during the late Ottoman period the management and legal regulations regarding forests were weak. Indeed, Sezai Ozan Zeybek argues that forests continued to exist as “cibal-i mübâha” [places that were out of state control and authority].³⁵⁴ Moreover, the term “mübâha” has also a legitimising connotation, which means the use of forests is open and legal to everyone. During the late Ottoman period, the great majority of the population lived in rural areas. Therefore, forests were the principal resource from which these people met most of their basic living needs.³⁵⁵ Forest villagers had been the main group that benefits from this status of the forests, mainly for shelter, fuel, and food.

While this status of forests had been dominant through the late Ottoman period, certain regulations started to be made during the second half of the 19th century to control and manage the forests. One of the initial steps of these was the formation of “the directorate of forestry” in 1839 in Istanbul. However, as scholars argue, this directorate was based on the purpose of providing and gaining economic opportunities from forests, instead of the protection and sustainability of forests.³⁵⁶ Another step was the tax regulations on the use of forest materials, as part of the *Tanzimat* reforms. The directorate was planned to institutionalise this tax system on

³⁵³ Balaban and Fu, ‘Politics of Urban Development and Wildfires in California and Turkey’, 821.

³⁵⁴ Sezai O Zeybek, ‘Fennî Ormancılığın Keçiler ve Köylülerle İmtihani: Sömürge İmparatorluklarından Ulus Devletlere Orman Koruma’, *Toplum ve Bilim* 137 (2016): 144.

³⁵⁵ Cantürk Gümüş, ‘Türk Orman Devrimi’, *TOD Yayınları*, no. 43 (2018): 13.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 18–19.

forests. However, these steps caused an inflation in the prices of timber, wood, and wood coal, which are among the basic needs of the local forest villagers. According to Erhan Kılıç, certain local interest groups who enjoyed autonomy for a long time reacted negatively to lose their forest revenues.³⁵⁷ Accordingly, the directorate was abolished in 1841.³⁵⁸

The year 1856 had also a revolutionary effect on the management of forests. During the second half of the 19th century, Ottoman Empire experienced many wars and riots. As one of the biggest of those wars, the Crimean War (1856) had a devastating impact on the Ottoman financial structure. According to Cantürk Gümüş, the Crimean War and the problem of external debt had a paramount effect on the institutional and educational development of forestry activities in the Ottoman era.³⁵⁹ Forests were thought to be a revenue gate at that time. For this reason, forest experts, Louis Tassy, Charles Simon, and Alexandre Stheme, had been invited from France to investigate the situation of forests and to form a high school [*Orman Mektebi* – Forestry School] that were planned to educate forest engineers.³⁶⁰ However, economic potential of forests had been prioritised over the education. During this period, certain Western companies were given the right to use forests.³⁶¹ Ultimately, there were no regulations aimed at protecting the forests until the Forest Act in 1870.³⁶²

The Ottoman State saw the opportunity that forests could generate income, especially with the contribution of experts brought from France, and thus established the

³⁵⁷ Erhan Kılıç, ‘Tanzimat’ın Başarısız Girişimi: İlk Orman Müdürlüğünün Kuruluşu ve Kapatılma Süreci’, *Ağaç ve Orman* 2, no. 2 (2021): 52–53.

³⁵⁸ Gümüş, ‘Türk Orman Devrimi’, 19.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 20.

³⁶⁰ Zeybek, ‘Fennî Ormancılığın Keçiler ve Köylülerle İmtihani: Sömürge İmparatorluklarından Ulus Devletlere Orman Koruma’, 145; Ümüt Akagündüz and Ahmet Nizamoğlu, ‘Osmanlı Devleti’nde Ormancılık Eğitiminin Değişen Boyutları ve Orman Ameliyat Mektepleri’, *Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, no. 69 (2021): 8–9.

³⁶¹ Zeybek, ‘Fennî Ormancılığın Keçiler ve Köylülerle İmtihani: Sömürge İmparatorluklarından Ulus Devletlere Orman Koruma’, 145.

³⁶² Erdönmez and Erol, ‘Türkiye’de Ulusal Ormancılık Politikasının Tarihsel Gelişimi Açısından Bir Dönüm Noktası: 1255 Sayılı Yasa’, 183.

General Directorate of Forests in 1869.³⁶³ A year later, the 1870 Forest Act [*Orman Nizamnamesi*] had been taken into effect, which was the first effective act to regulate and legalise the use of forests. With this Act, unauthorised tree cutting in state forests was prohibited and criminal provisions were taken into effect for forest crimes. The forests were placed under the authority of officers trained at the Forestry School, along with cavalry and infantry guards.³⁶⁴ At the same time, the Act decided to operate forests through concessions given to private enterprise. For the construction of the Oriental railway [*Rumeli Demiryolu*] project, for example, the State allowed concessions to financier Baron Maurice de Hirsh. With this concession contract, the railway company founded by Baron Hirsh had the right to operate forests in exchange for a 30 percent dividend.³⁶⁵ The primary goal was to generate economic revenue from forests³⁶⁶ as forests had indispensable raw materials for trade, transportation and sea power. Consequently, the Act subjected commercial logging by forest villagers to taxation, effectively abolishing the status of forests as “cibal-i mübâha”. The 1870 Forest Act remained in force for 67 years, until the year 1937.³⁶⁷

In conclusion, the Ottoman State tried to manage and control its forest area with the Forest Act in 1870. The Act came into effect in such a time that the State was in a severe economic decay. During this collapse, the State realised economic potentials of the forests. With the implementation of the Forest Act, this economic potential had been tried to be unearthed. It abolished the rambling status of forests as “cibal-i mübâha”³⁶⁸. However, the Act did not put into force meaningful contribution to the

³⁶³ Gümüş, ‘Türk Orman Devrimi’, 34.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 36.

³⁶⁵ Halil Nadir Kutluk, *Türkiye Ormancılığı İle İlgili Tarihi Vesikalar 893-1339 (1487-1923)* (İstanbul: T.C.Tarım Bakanlığı Orman Genel Müdürlüğü Yayını, 1948), 242–43.

³⁶⁶ Zeybek, ‘Fennî Ormancılığın Keçiler ve Köylülerle İmtihanı: Sömürge İmparatorluklarından Ulus Devletlere Orman Koruma’, 145.

³⁶⁷ Gümüş, ‘Türk Orman Devrimi’, 35–41.

³⁶⁸ According to Elvan Gülöksüz, the change in the thinking of “free use” (cibal-i mübâha) or “common use by local communities” regarding the status of forests is actually a historical process that occurred internationally at the same time as in the Ottoman State. Gülöksüz argues that until the mid-19th century, the utilisation of forests was based on the sharing of a social product generated by local labor. However, the state apparatus transformed the forest into a “defined area of land” to create taxes for its increasing financial and military burden. For further information, please see: Elvan Gülöksüz,

protection and sustainability of the forests.³⁶⁹ The Act imposed a tax on commercial logging by forest villagers while exempting logging for personal subsistence. According to Gümüş, this exemption had been seen essential in order not to damage state-society relations.³⁷⁰ In light of this evaluation, it is clear that environmental degradation resulting from developmentalist and rent-seeking approaches in Turkey predates the beginning of the neoliberal turn.

3.6.2. Republican Era

Later, with the early Republican era, the institutionalisation and legalisation of the forest management was tried to be accelerated. Pillars of this institutionalisation process were the Coppice Law in 1920 [*Baltalık Yasası*], the Law on the Scientific Management and Utilisation of All Forests in 1924 [*Ormanların Bilimsel Yöntemlerle Yönetilmesi ve İşletilmesi Yasası*], the Law on the Utilisation of State Forests by Peasants in 1924 [*Devlet Ormanlarından Köylülerin Yararlanma Yasası*], and the establishment of the Forest High Council [*Orman Yüksek Meclisi*] in 1924. However, Halil Cin characterises Turkish forestry from 1924 to 1937 as prioritising the use of forests rather than their protection and conservation, which ultimately enabled domestic and foreign private enterprises to exploit these resources. He attributes this vulnerability largely to the economic decline experienced by the Ottoman State.³⁷¹

The year 1937 marks an important change in the management of forests in Turkey. In this year, the young Republic enacted a new act, the Forest Law no.3116. Scholars

‘Ormanda Mülkiyet Hakları: Tarihsel ve Güncel Gelişmeler’, in *Toprak Mülkiyeti: Sempozyum Bildirileri*, ed. Sonay Bayramoğlu Özügürlü (Ankara: Memleket Yayınları, 2010), 400–414. According to Melek Mutioğlu Özkesen, in the context of Turkey, this process corresponds to the era between late Ottoman and early Republic, where forests were exposed to the transformation from *cibal-i mübâha* to controlled by the state and taken into state ownership. Please see: Melek Mutioğlu Özkesen, *Toprakları Kapatmak Kamu Arazilerinin Özelleştirilmesi*, 1st ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2022), 157.

³⁶⁹ Gümüş, ‘Türk Orman Devrimi’, 48.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 49.

³⁷¹ Cin Halil, ‘Tanzimattan Sonra Türkiye’de Ormanların Hukuki Rejimi’, *Ankara Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi* 35, no. 1 (1978): 354.

consider this Act as a “transition to Modern Forestry”³⁷² and “the beginning of scientific and technical forestry”.³⁷³ During the preparations of the Law, President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk highlighted the need to formulate a balanced act that both recognised the need to use the forests and to protect and sustain them.³⁷⁴ Furthermore, Atatürk’s stress on the need to adopt a scientific and technical approach on the management of forests positioned the issue above politics. With such a positioning, Sezai Ozan Zeybek argues, the issue of forests had been given a supra-political character.³⁷⁵ This Law prioritised the protection of the forests. One of its key measures involved defining forest boundaries through cadastral surveys. The Article 10 of the Law ordered that the process of cadastre should be completed in five years.³⁷⁶ However, as I mentioned above, this process awaits to be completed. Another step settled the matter of “cibal-i mübâha” and banned the right to free use of forests. The goal of protection had been accompanied by the establishment of General Directorate of Forestry and General Command of Forestry in 1937.³⁷⁷ The establishment of the General Command of Forestry indicates that forest protection had been securitised by the state.

However, there are critical approaches as to this Law and its consequences. The concept of cibal-i mübâha had its own rationale, and according to Erdönmez and Erol, abolishing it intensified tensions between the state and local communities, particularly forest villagers.³⁷⁸ These villagers had long depended on forests for self-

³⁷² Gümüş, ‘Türk Orman Devrimi’, 116.

³⁷³ Zeybek, ‘Fennî Ormancılığın Keçiler ve Köylülerle İmtihani: Sömürge İmparatorluklarından Ulus Devletlere Orman Koruma’, 146; Murat Köse, ‘Examination of the Implementations of Taking out of Forest Boundaries in Istanbul in Terms of Forestry Policy’, *Journal of the Faculty of Forestry Istanbul University* 67, no. 2 (2017): 158; Erdönmez and Erol, ‘Türkiye’de Ulusal Ormancılık Politikasının Tarihsel Gelişimi Açısından Bir Dönüm Noktası: 1255 Sayılı Yasa’, 184.

³⁷⁴ Gümüş, ‘Türk Orman Devrimi’, 119–20.

³⁷⁵ Zeybek, ‘Fennî Ormancılığın Keçiler ve Köylülerle İmtihani: Sömürge İmparatorluklarından Ulus Devletlere Orman Koruma’, 146.

³⁷⁶ Gümüş, ‘Türk Orman Devrimi’, 134.

³⁷⁷ Erdönmez and Erol, ‘Türkiye’de Ulusal Ormancılık Politikasının Tarihsel Gelişimi Açısından Bir Dönüm Noktası: 1255 Sayılı Yasa’, 184; Gümüş, ‘Türk Orman Devrimi’, 138.

³⁷⁸ Erdönmez and Erol, ‘Türkiye’de Ulusal Ormancılık Politikasının Tarihsel Gelişimi Açısından Bir Dönüm Noktası: 1255 Sayılı Yasa’, 183.

sufficiency – a practice that contributed to forest degradation. As Gümüş observes, this phenomenon is rooted in diverse social and economic factors. Yet forest policies have tended to focus narrowly on forest protection, framing villagers as those who ‘destroy’ the forests rather than addressing the broader complexities at hand.³⁷⁹

Sezai Ozan Zeybek highlights another discursive attitude towards forest villagers. Cited from Fikret Saatçioğlu and Nuri İlkmen, Zeybek shows how forest villagers are shown as ‘enemies of the forest’.³⁸⁰ These discursive attitudes call up the issue of the displacement of forest villagers. Moreover, it has been stated that this tension between state and society fuelled by the politics during the multi-party period that began in 1946. According to Erdönmez and Erol, political parties have preferred to use this tension and turned it into a political propaganda.³⁸¹ One indicator of this has been the general amnesties regarding the forest crimes. During the years between 1950 – 1958, successive governments issued four general amnesties.

Cantürk Gümüş highlighted how multi-party system, and the atmosphere of the elections affected the management of forests. According to Gümüş, the abolition of the right to free use of the forests (*cibal-i mübâha*) has been one of the reasons why the Republican People’s Party [*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – CHP*] lost the 1950 elections.³⁸² The last important regulation during the CHP era was the nationalisation of all forest areas in 1945. The most crucial effect of this regulation on forests was that it fully ensured state ownership over forests.³⁸³ Although it is seen essential to nationalise all the forest areas to effectively protect them, this regulation attracted huge reaction. According to Üstüner Birben, following the first years of this regulation, a total of 2092 forest fires recorded. Birben argues that these forest fires

³⁷⁹ Gümüş, ‘Türk Orman Devrimi’, 172.

³⁸⁰ Zeybek, ‘Fennî Ormancılığın Keçiler ve Köylülerle İmtihanı: Sömürge İmparatorluklarından Ulus Devletlere Orman Koruma’, 146–47.

³⁸¹ Erdönmez and Erol, ‘Türkiye’de Ulusal Ormancılık Politikasının Tarihsel Gelişimi Açısından Bir Dönüm Noktası: 1255 Sayılı Yasa’, 195.

³⁸² Gümüş, ‘Türk Orman Devrimi’, 241.

³⁸³ Üstüner Birben, ‘Türkiye’de 1937 Yılından Sonra Ormancılık Mevzuatında Yaşanan Gelişmeler ve Toplumsal Yaşamla Etkileşimler’, *Journal of the Faculty of Forestry Istanbul University* 58, no. 1 (2008): 4.

could be read as the sign of dissatisfaction about this regulation.³⁸⁴ Similarly, Utku Balaban and Albert S. Fu agrees on the role of forest fires in the struggle over forests. They argue that since the 1950s, there has been a correlation between the intensity of political debates on the status of forests and the frequency of forest fires.³⁸⁵ Considering the views discussed above regarding the displacement of forest villagers, it is reasonable to argue that these fires may have been linked to dissatisfaction with the regulation, potentially serving as an act of protest. Eventually, Turkey faced a change in power in the 1950 elections and CHP lost the power.

After the 1950 elections, the Democratic Party [*Demokrat Parti – DP*] took power in Turkey. This transition in power showed itself in the economic realm as well. The DP adopted liberal economic policy, instead of the CHP's long-lasting etatism. During this period, the first comprehensive forestry law, the Law no. 6831, was enacted in 1956 and remains in effect today. Law no.6831 means the abolition of the previous regulations that nationalise the forests and constitutes the first legal and political step in making forests open to the private property regime. The Law no.6831 allows the removal of legally defined forest areas outside the boundaries of the forest regime “under certain conditions”.³⁸⁶ According to Melek Mutioğlu Özkesen, this has been a critical step in the privatisation and commodification of forests.³⁸⁷

Turkey faced another fraction in both politics and the management on forests in 1960. A power transition took place in Turkey with the 27 May coup, which ended nearly a decade of DP rule. The coup leaders established a National Unity Committee to govern the country. Shortly thereafter, in 1961, the Committee drafted a new constitution. In response to the privatisation of forests and general amnesties for forest-related crimes, the 1961 Constitution introduced explicit prohibitions on

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 5.

³⁸⁵ Balaban and Fu, ‘Politics of Urban Development and Wildfires in California and Turkey’, 828.

³⁸⁶ Mutioğlu Özkesen, *Toprakları Kapatmak Kamu Arazilerinin Özelleştirilmesi*, 161.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

these practices.³⁸⁸ It reflected a broader intention to revert to statist policies in forest management. Under this Constitution, private enterprises were prohibited from operating in state forests, which were placed under state ownership, protection, and conservation.³⁸⁹

Article 131 of the 1961 Constitution directly addressed the conservation and management of forests. According to this article, the state was granted responsibility and oversight for forest protection. It also stipulated that the ownership, management, and operation of state forests could not be transferred to private enterprises. Another contested issue during the Democrat Party (DP) era was the granting of general amnesties for forest-related crimes. The 1961 Constitution explicitly prohibited such amnesties, along with the use of forests for political propaganda.³⁹⁰ However, the ‘engine’ of politics continued to work. According to Erdönmez and Erol, when Turkish politicians were unable to circumvent the constitutional safeguards protecting forests, they instead sought to change the legal framework. This ambition was realised with the adoption of Law No. 1255 in 1970.³⁹¹

Law No. 1255 amended Article 131 of the 1961 Constitution, weakening its provisions that safeguarded the non-commodity status of forests. On the one hand, this legislation enabled general amnesties for individuals who had illegally occupied forest land prior to 1961.³⁹² On the other hand, it facilitated the reduction of forest boundaries by granting cadastral commissions the authority to determine whether a specific area had scientifically lost its forest status.³⁹³ Ultimately, this law established

³⁸⁸ Erdönmez and Erol, ‘Türkiye’de Ulusal Ormancılık Politikasının Tarihsel Gelişimi Açısından Bir Dönüm Noktası: 1255 Sayılı Yasa’, 195.

³⁸⁹ Ahmet Köksal Coşkun, Atakan Öztürk, and Mustafa Fehmi Türker, ‘Türkiye’de Hükümetlerin Orman Kaynakları Yönetimi ve İşletmeciliğine Yönelik Bazı Uygulamalarının İrdelenmesi (1961-2012 Dönemi)’, *Kastamonu University Journal of Forestry Faculty* 16, no. 1 (2016); Mutioğlu Özkesen, *Toprakları Kapatmak Kamu Arazilerinin Özelleştirilmesi*, 159–60.

³⁹⁰ ‘Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası’, Pub. L. No. 131 (1961).

³⁹¹ Erdönmez and Erol, ‘Türkiye’de Ulusal Ormancılık Politikasının Tarihsel Gelişimi Açısından Bir Dönüm Noktası: 1255 Sayılı Yasa’, 183;195.

³⁹² Balaban and Fu, ‘Politics of Urban Development and Wildfires in California and Turkey’, 825.

³⁹³ Mutioğlu Özkesen, *Toprakları Kapatmak Kamu Arazilerinin Özelleştirilmesi*, 159–60; Balaban and Fu, ‘Politics of Urban Development and Wildfires in California and Turkey’, 825.

a constitutional basis for shrinking forested areas and paved the way for the use of forest land for development purposes.³⁹⁴ Later, the 1982 Constitution further expanded the state's authority to determine, on 'scientific' grounds, whether an area qualified as forested.³⁹⁵ According to Erdönmez and Erol, Law No. 1255 reflects the broader approach of Turkish forestry policy. This perspective ostensibly prioritises human needs in the human–forest dilemma, presenting itself as humanistic. However, in practice, it has caused irreparable damage to forests and the entire ecosystem, including human populations. In this regard, such an approach instrumentalises forests as a means of political gain.³⁹⁶

Subsequent amendments to the Forest Law support the claim that forests are regarded as a tool for political and economic gain. In this context, the authority granted to cadastral commissions to determine certain areas as non-forest has played a pivotal role. This authority depends on the Law no.1744 enacted in 1973, which introduced three sub-clauses to Article 2 of the Forest Law no. 6831. Sub-clause A defined the criteria for areas to be reclassified as non-forest, while Sub-clause B established the scope of lands to be transferred to the Treasury by removing them from forest boundaries. Sub-clause C further expanded this scope to include various agricultural lands.³⁹⁷ Since then, these reclassified non-forested areas have been referred to as '2B Arazileri' [2/B areas], named after the corresponding constitutional clause. According to Balaban and Fu, under this legal framework, approximately 1.22 million hectares of land were excluded from forest boundaries between 1982 and 2002.³⁹⁸

In addition to the 2/B Law, the Forest Law was amended multiple times between 1983 and 2003. These modifications further reinforced the legal basis for future

³⁹⁴ Mutioğlu Özkesen, *Toprakları Kapatmak Kamu Arazilerinin Özelleştirilmesi*, 161; Balaban and Fu, 'Politics of Urban Development and Wildfires in California and Turkey', 825.

³⁹⁵ Balaban and Fu, 'Politics of Urban Development and Wildfires in California and Turkey', 825.

³⁹⁶ Erdönmez and Erol, 'Türkiye'de Ulusal Ormancılık Politikasının Tarihsel Gelişimi Açısından Bir Dönüm Noktası: 1255 Sayılı Yasa', 183.

³⁹⁷ Mutioğlu Özkesen, *Toprakları Kapatmak Kamu Arazilerinin Özelleştirilmesi*, 163–64.

³⁹⁸ Balaban and Fu, 'Politics of Urban Development and Wildfires in California and Turkey', 825.

amnesties.³⁹⁹ From the 1980s onwards, however, degradation of the Forest Law intertwined with neoliberal rationality and the wave of privatisation, which also affected the implementation of the 2/B law. According to Elvan Gülöksüz, the primary motivation behind the amendments to Article 2 gradually shifted towards generating financial resources for the Treasury and expanding areas for capital investment.⁴⁰⁰ This can be read in parallel with the effect of neoliberal transformation in Turkey, as I mentioned in the previous sections. Similarly, Balaban and Fu stress that areas removed from the forest boundary have become part of the growth of construction sector.⁴⁰¹

The 2000s mark another critical transformation for the politics of deforestation in Turkey. A defining aspect of this period has been ever-increasing dominance of neoliberal extractivist policies under the AKP. This form of capital accumulation intensified the shift from etatism to privatisation.⁴⁰² The contradiction between the protection of the forests and the desire to commodify it became much more apparent in this era. While forests have been declared as constitutionally untouchable, commodification has been made possible by the loopholes in the legal system.⁴⁰³ In 2004, Law No. 5177 permitted mining activities in forests, state forests designated for mandatory conservation, and afforestation areas.⁴⁰⁴ In 2005, Law No. 5304 authorised forest cadastre procedures for the benefit of private enterprises.⁴⁰⁵ The most significant consequences of mining permits granted under Law No. 5177 have been observed in forestry. Following this amendment, mining operations expanded considerably, leading to widespread deforestation in affected regions.⁴⁰⁶

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 828.

⁴⁰⁰ Elvan Gülöksüz, 'Ormanda Mülkiyet Hakları Mücadelesi Ve Orman Kanunu'nun 2/B Düzenlemesi', *Ekonomik Yaklaşım* 21, no. 74 (2010): 68.

⁴⁰¹ Balaban and Fu, 'Politics of Urban Development and Wildfires in California and Turkey', 827.

⁴⁰² Zeybek, 'Fennî Ormancılığın Keçiler ve Köylülerle İmtihanı: Sömürge İmparatorluklarından Ulus Devletlere Orman Koruma', 148.

⁴⁰³ Balaban and Fu, 'Politics of Urban Development and Wildfires in California and Turkey', 825.

⁴⁰⁴ 'Maden Kanununda ve Bazı Kanunlarda Değişiklik Yapılmasına İlişkin Kanun', Pub. L. No. 5177 (2004).

⁴⁰⁵ 'Kadastro Kanununda Değişiklik Yapılması Hakkında Kanun', Pub. L. No. 5304 (2005).

⁴⁰⁶ Erdoğan Atmış and H B Günşen, 'Türkiye'de Hükümetlerin Ormancılık Politika ve Uygulamaları Üzerine Eleştirel Bir Değerlendirme-AKP Örneği', *Orman ve Av Dergisi* 2 (2009): 35.

This era also witnessed a change in the form of subsidies granted to forestry. Non-governmental and supranational organisations, such as the World Bank, the Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats [*TEMA*], and certain forest corporations, gained prominence in forest management.⁴⁰⁷ In 2008, a debt agreement was concluded between the World Bank and Turkey under the title “Land Registry and Cadastre Modernisation Project”, providing Turkey with a budget of 200 million USD.⁴⁰⁸ According to Melek Mutioğlu Özkesen, such agreements have played a crucial role in Turkey’s re-evaluation of its properties and natural resources. She further argues that the involvement of international organisations, such as the World Bank, in this process aligns with the neoliberal governance model, which has had a significant impact on forest lands.⁴⁰⁹

With the regulations of the 2/B law, the use of forest property regime for political purposes continued in this era. In this regard, one must mention the Law no.6292 adopted in 2012. With this Law, 2/B areas are allowed to be sold on behalf of the Treasury, or to be allocated to investors of various sectors such as tourism, mining, infrastructure in forms such as leasing, sale, and operation rights. Furthermore, 2/B areas are allowed to be sold to citizens and investors who request, instead of limiting the sale to only forest villagers.⁴¹⁰ Moreover, with the adoption of the Law no.7139 in 2018, the Council of Ministers and the President of Turkey were granted the authority to remove forest areas from the forest regime at their discretion.⁴¹¹ According to Özkesen, these amendments to the 2/B Law have transformed it into a populist strategy and a bargaining tool between political authorities, investors, and

⁴⁰⁷ Zeybek, ‘Fennî Ormancılığın Keçiler ve Köylülerle İmtihani: Sömürge İmparatorluklarından Ulus Devletlere Orman Koruma’, 148.

⁴⁰⁸ The World Bank, ‘Turkey Land Registration and Cadastre Modernization Project’, n.d., <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P106284>.

⁴⁰⁹ Mutioğlu Özkesen, *Toprakları Kapatmak Kamu Arazilerinin Özelleştirilmesi*, 155–56.

⁴¹⁰ ‘Orman Köylülerinin Kalkınmalarının Desteklenmesi Ve Hazine Adına Orman Sınırları Dışına Çıkarılan Yerlerin Değerlendirilmesi İle Hazineye Ait Tarım Arazilerinin Satışı Hakkında Kanun’, Pub. L. No. 6292 (2012).

⁴¹¹ Erdoğan Atmış and Hikmet Batuhan Günşen, *Orman Denince Umursamadınız Ki (!) - Siyasi Partilerin Ormanlık Politikaları Üzerine Değerlendirmeler*, 1st ed. (Ankara: Türkiye Ormanlılar Derneği Yayını, 2023), 23.

rural small-scale commodity producers seeking to resolve property-related disputes.⁴¹²

As a populist political instrument, the AKP's approach to forestry has been reflected in its slogans and rhetoric. The AKP has promoted populist slogans such as, “*her köye bir orman!*” [a forest for every village!] and “*devlet ormancılığından millet ormancılığına geçiyoruz!*” [transitioning from state forestry to national forestry!].⁴¹³ These slogans suggest that the government bases its forestry policies on the principle of sustaining harmonious relationships between forests, forest villagers, and the state. However, in practice, the AKP continues to introduce legal and institutional regulations that facilitate the utilisation of state-owned forest areas—primarily for non-silvicultural purposes such as tourism and mining—as well as the privatisation of state forestry management.⁴¹⁴

3.7. Conclusions

In this chapter, I tried to contextualise environment-security-politics nexus in the case of Turkey. The nexus is based on the understanding that environmental security is a contested concept and that it cannot be fully comprehended without recognising this contested nature. When considering environmental security in the case of Turkey, it becomes apparent that this contested nature stems from the neoliberal turn and the desire for development. The political economy literature clearly highlights that the state's desire toward development jeopardises environmental health and sustainability. Moreover, particularly during the AKP period, this pursuit has become increasingly extractivist and has functioned as a consent mechanism in the Gramscian sense. Although international and domestic processes have contributed to the strengthening of environmental policymaking, institutionalisation, and

⁴¹² Mutioğlu Özkesen, *Toprakları Kapatmak Kamu Arazilerinin Özelleştirilmesi*, 171.

⁴¹³ Atmış and Günşen, ‘Türkiye’de Hükümetlerin Ormancılık Politika ve Uygulamaları Üzerine Eleştirel Bir Değerlendirme-AKP Örneği’, 7; Yücel Çağlar, ‘Ormanlarımız “Dün” Yandı, “Bugün” de Yanıyor ve “Yarın” Da Yanacak’, *Türkiye Ormancılar Derneği Orman ve Av Dergisi* 84, no. 4 (2008): 18.

⁴¹⁴ Çağlar, ‘Ormanlarımız “Dün” Yandı, “Bugün” de Yanıyor ve “Yarın” Da Yanacak’, 18.

awareness, economic security and developmental concerns have consistently taken precedence and have been closely linked to state survival. As a natural consequence of this approach, Turkey has remained laggard in environmental policymaking.

Developmentalist “fetishism”⁴¹⁵ and land rent led to the dysfunction of existing environmental laws and regulations, such as EIA regulations, particularly during the AKP period. This dominant logic of environmental security has shaped much of the research on environmental issues in Turkey. However, what remains lacking, I argue, is a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down, elitist perspective on environmental security. From a top-down perspective, environmental security appears to be a soft security concern, whereas energy and economic security discourses have become more mainstream at the state level. Yet, environmental security is a matter that directly affects the everyday security of ordinary local communities. When examining issues such as deforestation in general and forest fires in particular, it becomes imperative to shift our perspective in order to fully grasp the implications. This necessity calls for moving beyond state- and capital-centric security analyses toward an alternative approach, as I have sought to justify in the previous chapter.

In this chapter, I have sought to contextualise the issue of deforestation and forest fires within the environment-security-politics nexus. First, deforestation has been established as a significant environmental security problem. By demonstrating the relationship between deforestation and the environment, it becomes evident that deforestation constitutes a security issue spanning from the individual to the global level. This argument has been further reinforced by examining the development of international agreements and organisations addressing deforestation. However, I have also argued that incorporating the political dimension into the analysis is essential. Thus, the third pillar of the nexus—the political aspect—becomes indispensable for a more comprehensive understanding of deforestation and forest fires.

The section on the politics of deforestation demonstrates that the issue is deeply political in Turkey. The political economy literature predominantly analyses the

⁴¹⁵ Akbulut and Adaman, ‘The Unbearable Charm of Modernization: Growth Fetishism and the Making of State in Turkey’.

structural violence of neoliberalism on the environment and forests through a capital-centric lens, often assuming the developmentalist priorities of state elites as a given. However, this section highlights that at certain points in history, state elites have implemented robust legal regulations to protect and sustain forests, as seen during the early Republican period and with the adoption of the 1961 Constitution. Moreover, academic elites, such as Prof. Fikret Saatçioğlu and Prof. Nuri İlkmen, have viewed forest villagers as a threat to forest conservation, attributing this to their lack of knowledge. A statement by Nuri İlkmen is particularly insightful in understanding this perspective. According to Nuri İlkmen;⁴¹⁶

“... [Ormanlık alanlardan] köylerin kaldırılmasını programlı şekilde ele alıp düzenlemekte kat’î bir zaruret vardır... Zira bütün fenalıkların ve bütün tehlikelerin mihrakı hep bu noktadadır: [Alan] açma vardır, çünkü köy orman içindedir. Hayvan otlatması vardır, çünkü köy orman içindedir. Orman yangını vardır, çünkü köy orman içindedir. Kaçakçılık vardır, çünkü köy orman içindedir. O hâlde orman suçlarının neticelerini kökünden bertaraf edebilmek için, sebebi kaldırmak lâzımdır.” [... There is an absolute necessity to systematically plan and regulate the removal of villages from forested areas. This necessity arises because all forms of harm and danger originate from this very point: Deforestation occurs because the village is located within the forest. Livestock grazing takes place because the village is within the forest. Forest fires break out because the village is within the forest. Smuggling persists because the village is within the forest. Therefore, in order to eliminate the consequences of forest-related offences at their root, it is essential to remove the underlying cause.]

From this perspective, forest villagers, rather than the developmentalist rush, are framed as the root cause of deforestation. Law No. 3116, enacted in 1937, and the 1961 Constitution reflect the state’s clear commitment to forest protection. Indeed, Nuri İlkmen’s statement can be interpreted as an attempt to securitise forests. This process of securitisation was further reinforced by the establishment of the General Command of Forestry in 1937. However, as this statement illustrates, there exists a persistent tension between the state and society regarding deforestation in Turkey. Historically, this tension emerged following the abandonment of the *cibal-i mübâha* principle and ultimately culminated in the adoption of the 2/B Law. This section demonstrates that the 2/B Law has become central to deforestation politics in Turkey.

⁴¹⁶ İlkmen, Ş.Nuri, (1951), “Orman İşletmeciliğinde Devletçilik Problemi ve Ormanlık Politikamızın Ana Davaları”, in. Orman Davamızın Çeşitli Yönlerine Dair İlmi Görüşler, Türkiye Ormanlılar Cemiyeti, Ankara, p.26, cited in Zeybek, ‘Fennî Ormanlığın Keçiler ve Köylülerle İmtihanı: Sömürge İmparatorluklarından Ulus Devletlere Orman Koruma’, 147.

The politics of deforestation in this context places local communities in a precarious position, threatening both their everyday and ontological security. A key factor in this deadlock is neoliberal transformation. Melek Mutioğlu Özkesen emphasises that neoliberal politics has led to the increasing dominance of capital over states, reshaping the state's organisational approach to land management. As a result, land is being re-commodified, serving as both a source of finance and an investment tool. The commercialisation and privatisation of land have, in turn, paved the way for the dispossession of local communities, undermining their connection to their own territories.⁴¹⁷

The issue of deforestation has evolved into a struggle between the state and society and can be examined through the lens of security studies, particularly in relation to the referent of security and threats to cherished values. Erdoğan Atmış et al. highlight that while, in the past, the state sought to protect forests from the people—as seen in Law No. 3116 and the 1961 Constitution—there is now a perception that the people are attempting to protect forests from the state.⁴¹⁸ This observation by Erdoğan Atmış is particularly relevant in the context of the 2021 forest fires, as it exemplifies the very dilemma I introduced in the opening section of this dissertation—the core problematic of this study. Therefore, in order to better understand and examine state-society relations in this context, it is essential to move beyond the voices of elites and consider perspectives from the other side of the equation. In this dissertation, I address this necessity by comparing the voices of forest villagers and local communities with those of the elites, using the 2021 forest fires as a case study. The subsequent chapters of this dissertation will analyse the issue through the environment-security-politics nexus, while the next chapter will justify the methodological approach and research design of this study.

⁴¹⁷ Mutioğlu Özkesen, *Toprakları Kapatmak Kamu Arazilerinin Özelleştirilmesi*, 231;239.

⁴¹⁸ Atmış, Erdönmez, and Özkazanç, 'Türkiye'de Ormansızlaşma', 175.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

Every dissertation aims at answering a research question or testing hypotheses within a systematic framework. In this dissertation, I presented my research questions in Chapter I and tried to frame a suitable contextual and theoretical framework to deal with those questions. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the systematic framework within which the research questions are addressed. This is a fundamental task of every research design and methodology chapter. Accordingly, this chapter will outline the methodology and research design of the dissertation, which aims to answer the main research questions:

- a) How do the official and vernacular narratives conceptualise and contest security during the 2021 forest fires in Turkey?
- b) What does this divergence (or convergence) in these narratives reveal about broader security dynamics and state-society relations in Turkey?

In this chapter, I begin by discussing the necessity and rationale for a research design chapter in a qualitative study. To do so, I primarily draw on two key sources in critical security studies: Mark Salter and Can Mutlu's edited volume, *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, and Cai Wilkinson's detailed discussion of ethnographic methods in Laura J. Shepherd's *Critical Approaches to Security: An Introduction to Theories and Methods*. In addition to these key texts, however, I have drawn particular inspiration from Zeynep Tuba Sungur's research design chapter in her PhD dissertation, which I greatly admire.⁴¹⁹ Consequently, the

⁴¹⁹ Zeynep Tuba Sungur, 'What Education Builds as Nation in Afghanistan: A Case of Nation-Building' (Middle East Technical University, 2020).

structure of my own research design chapter has been informed by her approach. These works are valuable contributions to critical security research as they demonstrate how a critical study can be conducted while maintaining scientific rigour. Building on these sources, I will present a clear and structured research design strategy, outlining my research paradigm, strategy, methods, and analytical approach. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion on the trustworthiness and limitations of the study, along with a reflection on positionality.

Liam Stanley highlighted that there is no one true way of conducting social science. What is left of it is to fully justify every step of the means and ends of a research process⁴²⁰ without forgetting that seemingly natural assumptions and empirical choices are political as Xavier Guillaume reminded.⁴²¹ With such an awareness, then, I aim to present my research design as a reflexive encounter on “how the research was actually done, why, and with what effects for the resulting interpretation that is presented”⁴²² in terms of my own research process. During the rest of the chapter, I hope to conduct such a reflexive and frank discussion of research design.

4.2. Rationale and Template for a Research Design

Social life is complex. Within this complexity, the role of a social science researcher is either to solve a social problem or to understand the very dynamics of a social phenomenon. However, the complex nature of the social world necessitates rigorous limitations as to the research undertaken. As is the case with every social science dissertation, engaging in such an academic endeavour necessitates defining the scope of the research and making deliberate choices. Moreover, these limitations and choices are not merely technical decisions; they are inherently political. Just as Robert Cox reminds us in his discussion on theorising, knowledge and research are

⁴²⁰ Liam Stanley, ‘Using Focus Groups in Political Science and International Relations’, *Politics* 36, no. 3 (2016): 239.

⁴²¹ Xavier Guillaume, ‘Criticality’, in *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Mark B Salter and Can E Mutlu, 1st ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 29.

⁴²² Cai Wilkinson, ‘On Not Just Finding What You (Thought You) Were Looking For: Reflections on Fieldwork Data and Theory’, in *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*, ed. Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 402.

always produced for someone and for some purpose.⁴²³ A research design, thus, does this job to clearly unveil the reasons behind these choices and justifies the limitation. David De Vaus said that research designs “ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible”.⁴²⁴ However, this does not make the research free of politics or ‘value-free’. The researcher’s reflexivity and positionality inevitably shape the study at every stage. Therefore, the following sections will include a positionality statement to explicitly acknowledge this influence.

Writing a research design is a specific time as Xavier Guillaume argues since it is a time that researcher is confronted with the limitations of his/her research and obliged to return back to the point where s(he) changes the research question, adapts the theory, cases and method.⁴²⁵ It is the character of research design because it is “an on-going and flexible process”, Vicki Squire highlights.⁴²⁶ What happened during this fluctuating and volatile process is valuable in terms of making sense of the choices and limitations of the research process. According to Mark Salter, the large number of limits, failures and mistakes remain silent and unwritten on paper.⁴²⁷ What must be done is to discuss these choices and limitations clearly and frankly. In keeping with this honest framework, a research design conveys to the reader the ontological, epistemological and methodological structure in which the study will be situated and relates this structure to the research question and aim.

In this way, Guillaume argues, research design enables researchers to reflect critically and balance their research aims with the necessary techniques to achieve

⁴²³ Cox, ‘Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory’; Lee Jarvis, ‘Conclusion: The Process, Practice and Ethics of Research’, in *Critical Approaches to Security: An Introduction to Theories and Methods*, ed. Laura J. Shepherd (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 236.

⁴²⁴ David De Vaus, *Research Design in Social Research* (Sage, 2001), 9.

⁴²⁵ Guillaume, ‘Criticality’, 30.

⁴²⁶ Vicki Squire, ‘Attuning to Mess’, in *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Mark B Salter and Can E Mutlu, 1st ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 40.

⁴²⁷ Mark Salter, ‘Introduction’, in *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Mark Salter and Can Mutlu (Routledge, 2013), 9–10.

them.⁴²⁸ However, a critical research design differs from its positivist counterpart. Since critical research does not prioritise solving a social problem but rather seeks to understand it, a critical research design is not merely a system of checks and balances but a reflexive mediation.⁴²⁹ Julianne Cheek elaborates this kind of mediation as consisting of decisions as to how the research itself conceptualised and the kind of contribution the research is intended to in a specific social phenomenon.⁴³⁰ Thus, it requires a reflexive wandering throughout the research process.⁴³¹ During this wandering, the researcher acknowledges a variety of issues, problems and limitations directing the research. Eventually, it becomes a process prioritising “the questioning rather than the answering, the doubt rather than the certainty that comes with an entrenchment in disciplinary practices”.⁴³²

This rationale brings me to finding out the suitable template for my own research design in writing this chapter. During my PhD education, I have been tempted by the appeal of critical security studies. Focusing on marginalised subjects and objects of security, questioning the taken-for-granted assumptions of traditional security approaches, and attractiveness of poetical texts rather than standardised positivist ‘scientific reports’ appealed me most during my education. Critical security studies can be regarded as successful in deepening the knowledge repertoire of scholars regarding how complex the security dimension is and politics work in that dimension. However, as Mark Salter correctly points out, the critical security studies agenda has focused more on being critical and paid less attention to clarity and method.⁴³³

Within this limited attention, I have chosen two works for preparing a research design strategy in a critical security study. As I mentioned above, these are Mark

⁴²⁸ Guillaume, ‘Criticality’, 30.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Julianne Cheek, ‘Research Design’, in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Lisa M Given (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 761.

⁴³¹ Guillaume, ‘Criticality’, 31.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Salter, ‘Introduction’, 1.

Salter and Can Mutlu's *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction* and Cai Wilkinson's detailed elaboration on ethnographic methods in Laura J. Shepherd's *Critical Approaches to Security: An Introduction to Theories and Methods*. Although there are highly influential research design and methodology textbooks in International Relations, I have chosen to rely on these two basically because they are written for those who study in critical security. In essence, they were written for a specific target audience. Therefore, I decided to take these works into consideration rather than a methodology book written for a general audience who study International Relations or social sciences.

On the one hand, Mark Salter's introduction outlines a framework for a rigorous research design based on three main principles: clarity, fit, and reflexivity.⁴³⁴ While clarity involves a process of refining the core research question, fit pertains to the strategic selection and application of the appropriate method for answering it. Finally, reflexivity functions as a form of self-examination, in which the researcher critically reflects on their role within interpretivist methodologies. On the other hand, Cai Wilkinson identifies validity criteria for interpretivist research as a crucial aspect of evaluating a study. Although positivist and interpretivist researchers apply different validity standards, one principle remains constant: the trustworthiness of the research. According to Wilkinson, the key criteria for an interpretivist study to be considered trustworthy are *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*.⁴³⁵ Before applying these criteria to my own research, I will first provide a brief evaluation of them within their original context.

When it comes to a positivist research agenda, *clarity* denotes parsimony or efficiency, says Salter.⁴³⁶ In terms of social sciences, parsimony relies on the idea that the world is built upon laws of symmetry, and thus the role of the researcher is to reflect that reality.⁴³⁷ However, the interpretive research agenda starts with the

⁴³⁴ Mark Salter, 'Research Designs: Introduction', in *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Mark Salter and Can Mutlu (Routledge, 2013), 15.

⁴³⁵ Wilkinson, 'On Not Just Finding What You (Thought You) Were Looking For: Reflections on Fieldwork Data and Theory', 135.

⁴³⁶ Salter, 'Research Designs: Introduction', 16.

⁴³⁷ Seva Gunitsky, 'Rival Visions of Parsimony', *International Studies Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2019): 707.

assumption that the world we live in is messy and complex. In such a different understanding of the world, then, how can an interpretive researcher justify his/her research in terms of clarity? Mark Salter writes that: “[A]n unambiguous research design will clearly set out: the case study or studies under scrutiny, the reason for its selection, and the values at stake in the particular articulation of that relation”.⁴³⁸ In this way, the researcher does not privilege parsimony while identifying the main relations in the question. It also requires the researcher to be self-reflexive about the emotional and affective process of immersion of the research subject, continues Salter. While a positivist research agenda can be precise as to its duration of field research, interpretivist researchers cannot be sure in advance. His/her research period is determined and shaped by institutional factors such as funding or the length of degree programs.⁴³⁹

The next step is to determine which research methods are most suitable, aligning with the criterion of fit. Given the wide range of methods applicable to interpretivist research, the researcher must justify their choice in translating complex realities into comprehensible narratives. The key consideration here is to avoid privileging one method over another without justification.⁴⁴⁰ In my study, methods such as interviews, participant observation, questionnaires, and focus groups initially appeared suitable for addressing my research question. However, I chose to conduct interviews rather than focus groups, as my study seeks to capture individual vernacular perspectives without the influence of group dynamics.

The last step in constructing a clear interpretivist research design is the criterion of *reflexivity*. Vincent Crapanzano defines a reflexive stance in his discussion on the merits of fieldwork as “the need to be critically conscious of what one is doing as one does it.”⁴⁴¹ While Crapanzano’s definition captures the essence of reflexivity,

⁴³⁸ Salter, ‘Research Designs: Introduction’, 16.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁴¹ Vincent Crapanzano, “‘At the Heart of the Discipline’: Critical Reflections on Fieldwork”, in *Emotions in the Field: The Psychology and Anthropology of Fieldwork Experience*, ed. James Davies and Dimitrina Spencer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 56.

Cai Wilkinson cautions that reflexivity is not merely a writing style that involves the use of first-person pronouns and a statement of identity.⁴⁴² Instead, Farhana Sultana offers a more detailed conceptualisation of reflexivity as “reflection on self, process, and representation, and critically examining power relations and politics in the research process, as well as researcher accountability in data collection and interpretation.”⁴⁴³ Building on this, Wilkinson describes reflexivity as an awareness of the co-constitutive nature of the research process and a meditation on one’s thoughts, actions, feelings, and emotions in order to articulate how specific interpretations have been reached.⁴⁴⁴ PhD students are often told to focus solely on the final product of their research rather than the process.⁴⁴⁵ However, documenting the research process is crucial for demonstrating how key methodological choices were made. For example, at the start of my fieldwork, I conducted a pilot study in Bodrum, as I had the opportunity to participate in an educational activity as a staff member at Bodrum+ Institute.⁴⁴⁶ Additionally, I was able to utilise Bodrum+ Institute’s local networks to facilitate my fieldwork and further apply the snowball sampling technique for my interviews.

Such a treatment toward research departs from the positivist attitude and embraces the stance that the researcher’s role in both the conduct of investigation and of interpretation.⁴⁴⁷ Therefore, Mark Salter determines three ways with which the

⁴⁴² Wilkinson, ‘On Not Just Finding What You (Thought You) Were Looking For: Reflections on Fieldwork Data and Theory’, 132.

⁴⁴³ Farhana Sultana, ‘Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research’, *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 6, no. 3 (2007): 376.

⁴⁴⁴ Wilkinson, ‘On Not Just Finding What You (Thought You) Were Looking For: Reflections on Fieldwork Data and Theory’, 132–33.

⁴⁴⁵ Claire Wilkinson, ‘Positioning “Security” and Securing One’s Position: The Researcher’s Role in Investigating “Security” in Kyrgyzstan’, in *Fieldwork in Difficult Environments: Methodology as Boundary Work in Development Research*, ed. Caleb R.L. Wall and Peter P. Mollinga (Berlin and Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2008), 47.

⁴⁴⁶ Bodrum+ Institute is an independent, non-profit institute that organises workshops, roundtables, seminars and conferences in the fields of international relations, politics, cultural and social fields, as well as contemporary issues such as environment, climate, economy and development; creates workspaces for academics to spend their sabbaticals; and conducts national and international projects.

⁴⁴⁷ Salter, ‘Research Designs: Introduction’, 20.

researcher affects the research design: *personal*, *institutional*, and *intellectual* positions. These ways also describe the positionality of the researcher. *Personal* position denotes the researcher's identity, i.e. his/her place within the political and social structures of class, race, gender, nationality etc. People have multiple identities and these identities are fluid, situational and intersubjectively constructed. An identity of the researcher may not be salient or valued at the same degree by the people with whom he/she interacted.⁴⁴⁸ Therefore, those positions have a direct impact on the researcher's access to the participants, and on one's taken-for-granted assumptions.⁴⁴⁹ In relation to my own research, I initially considered conducting additional fieldwork in Greece, which experienced a similar case in 2021. I believed that a comparative study of two similar countries would contribute to the dissertation. However, my lack of proficiency in Greek, limited access to the region, funding constraints, and the time limitations of my PhD research made this infeasible.

Institutional position is also another dynamic that affects the character of research. Academic milieu differs in terms of the conduct, structure, and publication of the research, which also determines the possibility of funding. Mark Salter basically highlights that European, American, and Canadian academies rank and value different kinds of research.⁴⁵⁰ Moreover, I believe that institutional position not only shapes how researchers are perceived within academic circles but also influences how ordinary people view the researcher and their study. During my PhD, I held two different affiliations. On the one hand, I was affiliated with Middle East Technical University (METU), where I pursued my doctoral studies. On the other hand, I was affiliated with Ordu University, where I was employed as a research assistant. These two institutions hold different levels of prestige in Turkey's social and academic landscape. When attempting to connect with gatekeepers or individuals who could facilitate my access to local communities in the region, I observed that my affiliation with METU positively influenced others' perceptions of me. For instance, one of my participants accepted my interview request by saying, "I always have time for METU

⁴⁴⁸ Wilkinson, 'On Not Just Finding What You (Thought You) Were Looking For: Reflections on Fieldwork Data and Theory', 133–34.

⁴⁴⁹ Salter, 'Research Designs: Introduction', 20.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 21.

students; you are all very intelligent.” This perception encouraged participants to approach me and my research more positively, leading them to speak more openly and candidly during interviews.

Finally, *intellectual* position is an expression of “the self-positioning as an expert, observer, student, etc., separate and distinct from the world”.⁴⁵¹ This is related to what Pierre Bourdieu called “the scholastic point of view”. In his piece, Bourdieu argues that the scholastic point of view that the researcher poses alters the way the researcher approaches his/her object of study.⁴⁵² Therefore, Salter warns the researcher that his/her stance should be clear whatever the point of view would be.⁴⁵³

In addition to Salter’s three criteria—clarity, fit, and reflexivity—Cai Wilkinson introduces another crucial criterion in interpretivist research: validity. The criterion of validity determines the trustworthiness of a study. According to Wilkinson, four dimensions of validity are essential for establishing trustworthiness in interpretivist research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.⁴⁵⁴ Although the preceding discussion has emphasised the reflective nature of interpretivist research, the researcher’s interpretations must still be grounded in scientifically acceptable foundations. These four validity criteria serve this purpose. Credibility, therefore, concerns the extent to which interpretations align with the reality of research subjects.⁴⁵⁵ Many researchers justify the credibility of their studies through triangulation, which I will evaluate in relation to my own research later. Transferability refers to the applicability of research findings across different contexts. In positivist research, applicability is understood in terms of generalisability, prioritising aspects of findings that remain consistent across contexts.⁴⁵⁶ However, within the framework of interpretivist research, the focus shifts

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁵² Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The Scholastic Point of View’, *Cultural Anthropology* 5, no. 4 (1990): 380–91.

⁴⁵³ Salter, ‘Research Designs: Introduction’, 22–23.

⁴⁵⁴ Wilkinson, ‘On Not Just Finding What You (Thought You) Were Looking For: Reflections on Fieldwork Data and Theory’, 135.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ David A. Erlandson et al., *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 51.

from generalisable rules to thick description. While thick descriptions may not be directly replicated, interpretivist research can still be replicated in a way that assesses the relevance of previous descriptions within the same context.⁴⁵⁷ Lisa Wedeen argues that since meanings are socially constructed and available, they are replicable. Replicable in the sense that:

“Subsequent researchers can go to the field, and even if they do not talk to the same people, they can nevertheless be made aware of the range of meanings relevant to a particular phenomenon under study, because meanings are socially, not simply individually, accessible”.⁴⁵⁸

In other words, even if the research’s participants change, the interpretation of a particular context can be tested in terms of relevancy by different researchers. This ensures transferability in interpretivist research. Apart from the relevancy of thick descriptions, Erlandson et.al. argues that purposive sampling ensures transferability as well. In contrast to random sampling that can be preferred in a positivist research, purposive sampling seeks to maximise the range of specific information about the context.⁴⁵⁹ Again, purposive sampling can be repeated in the same context in different times and thus the transferability can be sustained.

Dependability refers to the consistency of the inquiry.⁴⁶⁰ In positivist research this means replicability, in the sense that if one boils water in the same condition, in every try one take the same finding: it boils at 100 degrees Celsius. Interpretivist researchers, on the other hand, argue that reality is socially constructed and therefore subject to change. As a result, the focus of the interpretivist researcher shifts towards identifying “trackable variance”—changes that can be attributed to specific contextual dynamics.⁴⁶¹ Confirmability, lastly, concerns the researcher’s impartiality.

⁴⁵⁷ Wilkinson, ‘On Not Just Finding What You (Thought You) Were Looking For: Reflections on Fieldwork Data and Theory’, 135.

⁴⁵⁸ Lisa Wedeen, ‘Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science’, *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (2010): 265.

⁴⁵⁹ Erlandson et al., *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Methods*, 52.

⁴⁶⁰ Erlandson et al., *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Methods*, 52.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.; Wilkinson, ‘On Not Just Finding What You (Thought You) Were Looking For: Reflections on Fieldwork Data and Theory’, 136.

Erlandson et al. emphasise that while positivist researchers seek objectivity to ensure confirmability, interpretivist researchers acknowledge that “objectivity is an illusion and that no methodology can be totally separated from those who have created and selected it.”⁴⁶² In this situation, the interpretive researcher depends on the idea that the data can be tracked to the sources.⁴⁶³ Confirmability in interpretive research admits the role of the researcher in building his/her findings and necessitates apparent reference to the role the researcher played in his/her choices within the process of research.⁴⁶⁴ I will discuss these criteria in relation to my own study in the trustworthiness section below.

In conclusion, both Salter’s criteria—clarity, fit, and reflexivity—and Wilkinson’s validity framework provide the foundation for my research design. The following sections of this chapter will consider these criteria and offer a transparent and structured discussion of my methodological choices, limitations, and justifications for how this dissertation has been conducted. This discussion will include the research paradigm, strategy, methods, data analysis, trustworthiness, and my positionality.

4.3. Research Paradigm: Ontological and Epistemological Basis

Writing a dissertation in social sciences is basically trying to answer a question related to the social world in an acceptable scientific way. As a PhD student, I was engaged in graduate courses to learn how to answer questions in a scientifically acceptable manner. Fundamentally, the theory and research ethics and methods courses were designed to educate us in that manner in my graduate programme. The basic point that I learned from those courses was that every research has a certain ontological and epistemological basis that positions the research and the researcher in a specific relation with the reality with which the research deals. Comprehending ontology and epistemology was not an easy task for me as they are abstract concepts

⁴⁶² Erlandson et al., *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Methods*, 53.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Wilkinson, ‘On Not Just Finding What You (Thought You) Were Looking For: Reflections on Fieldwork Data and Theory’, 136.

and requires philosophical readings. However, Nuno P. Monteiro and Keven G. Ruby's 2009 piece, "IR and the false promise of philosophical foundations" that I encountered during my comprehensive exams was a capsule for me to comprehend philosophical foundations and their relations with my discipline (Table 4.1). Therefore, I rely on their work on describing my ontology and epistemology for the framework of this dissertation.

Table 4.1. Philosophical Foundations Determined by Monterio and Ruby (2009)⁴⁶⁵

	Instrumentalism	Social Constructivism	Scientific Realism
Epistemology	Empiricist	Social	Representationalist
Ontology	Mind-independent observable phenomena	Socially constituted phenomena	All mind-independent phenomena
Inter-relation	Epistemology determines ontology	Meaningless distinction	Ontology determines epistemology
Arbiter of truth	Observation (observable spectrum of reality)	Convention (socially constituted reality)	Observation and inference to the best explanation
Notion of truth	Empirical adequacy	Accepted belief	Correspondence to reality
Goal of science	Utility and reliability	No unifying goal (only particular goals)	Knowledge of reality
Attitude toward scientific progress	Science is progressive	Science is not progressive	Science is progressive
Basic stance	Positivist	Anti-positivist	Post-positivist

Philosophical foundations of a research, according to Monterio and Ruby, are ontological and epistemological starting points for inquiry, i.e. for producing answers and thus, knowledge about the social world. While ontology refers to the question of what the social world is made of, epistemology deals with the study of the nature of knowledge, that is how and to what extent we can know the social world.⁴⁶⁶ As I discussed my position within the meta-theoretical discussion in Chapter II, I will not

⁴⁶⁵ Monteiro and Ruby, 'IR and the False Promise of Philosophical Foundations', 33.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 25.

repeat this issue here. However, a brief echo of my ontological and epistemological choices would help to clarify my theory and method selection.

I accept that the world is socially constructed. This means that social science cannot be value-free, and that there is no objectively right way to answer a question.⁴⁶⁷ This ontological stance leads me to understand security, the subject matter of this dissertation, as a “contested concept” just as I started previous chapters as such. Such a definition of security allows me to think of the “concept with no ‘fixed meaning’ and is constantly redefined and experienced in varying ways by different actors”.⁴⁶⁸ Vernacular security theory is, therefore, appeared as a suitable theoretical framework in my own research since I engage in an inquiry that investigates the semantic construction of security within the context of forest fires in Turkey.

In terms of epistemological stance, then, I depend on interpretivist tradition in social sciences. Interpretivist tradition in social sciences prioritises understanding social phenomena rather than explaining them. Therefore, it pays utmost attention to how social reality is constructed in relation to the meanings people attribute to it. This interpretive stance is also compatible with my research subject since my main research focus is on unveiling non-elite knowledge on a particular social phenomenon and contrasting it with the elite narrative. With this comparison, I aim to investigate different narratives on security.

In sum, I try to understand how the concept of security is perceived and conceptualised within the context of an environmental crisis, specifically the 2021 forest fires in Turkey. I approach security as a socially constructed, historically evolving, and subjective phenomenon, rather than as an objective, ahistorical reality that exists independently “out there”. This perspective necessitates an interpretivist epistemological stance. Building on this foundation, I adopt a qualitative research strategy.

⁴⁶⁷ Stanley, ‘Using Focus Groups in Political Science and International Relations’, 239–40.

⁴⁶⁸ Bhumitra Chakma, ‘Security Perceptions and Practices of the Indigenous People of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh’, *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 49, no. 1–2 (2018): 84.

4.4. Research Strategy: Qualitative Research

In justifying my commitment to qualitative research, I draw on John W. Creswell's book, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Creswell asserts that researchers undertaking qualitative studies must first establish a clear rationale for doing so. He further outlines the fundamental reasons that justify the choice of qualitative inquiry.⁴⁶⁹ Here, I rely on these reasons. Firstly, Creswell argues that the nature of research questions should necessitate a qualitative approach. In qualitative inquiry, he states, research questions typically begin with the adverbs "how" or "what" to explore and understand a topic in depth.⁴⁷⁰ In my situation, I aim to understand whether there are contradictory logics within my case or not. From an outsider's perspective, I observed contradictory narratives surrounding the forest fires during the time of the event. On the one hand, many locals and citizens across the country securitised the issue, criticising the government for failing to take adequate measures. On the other hand, the official narrative asserted that the fires were under control and accused dissidents of attempting to undermine the country's prestige. Given that my research question begins with "how", it aligns with qualitative inquiry, as it seeks to explore the topic in depth. This need for an in-depth examination further reinforces the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach, as emphasised by Creswell.

Creswell also emphasises the importance of studying individuals in their natural setting. This approach necessitates field research and the collection of original data from those who have firsthand experience of the issue.⁴⁷¹ This aspect is particularly relevant to my research, as I primarily rely on vernacular narratives to understand how local communities perceive the issue. To gather this vernacular knowledge, my study necessitates fieldwork, which I will elaborate on in the later sections of this chapter. Additionally, Creswell highlights the role of reflexivity and positionality in qualitative research. He argues that researchers may choose qualitative inquiry due to

⁴⁶⁹ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks: Sage publications, 1998), 17–18.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

their preference for a literary writing style, incorporating the first-person pronoun and departing from the positivist scientific report format.⁴⁷² As I mentioned earlier, one of the aspects that drew me to critical security studies was the appeal of poetic texts. This is also connected to the idea that qualitative research allows for a more interpretive and narrative-driven approach. Creswell further argues that qualitative inquiry enables researchers to position themselves as “active learners” who convey the story from the participants' perspective, rather than as “experts” who impose judgments on them.⁴⁷³

In qualitative research, the researcher becomes an inseparable part of the study. The primary focus is on how people experience a particular issue or event.⁴⁷⁴ Accordingly, the character of qualitative research seems suitable with what my research aims to do. The next step in this research strategy involves conducting fieldwork, which requires the researcher's participation, experiences, and observations. Through the fieldwork process—along with its successes and challenges—both data and analysis are generated on political and social life.⁴⁷⁵ Moreover, adopting qualitative research and an ethnographic approach through fieldwork within a critical security study constitutes a “complementary and potentially powerful pairing”⁴⁷⁶, as Wilkinson stresses. This is where the next section of this chapter deals with: research methods.

4.5. Research Methods: Legwork, Fieldwork, Deskwork

This phase is where the researcher deals with the process of collecting and organising the data. In designing this process, Cai Wilkinson argues that it is possible to identify three phases, although there is no common right way to undertake this process:

⁴⁷² Ibid., 17–18.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 18.

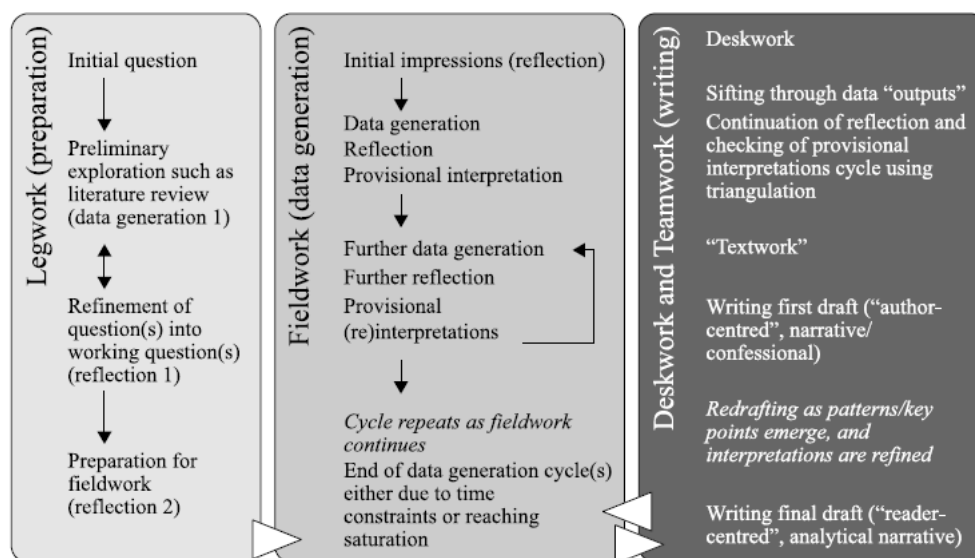
⁴⁷⁴ Jane Agee, ‘Developing Qualitative Research Questions: A Reflective Process’, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 22, no. 4 (2009): 434.

⁴⁷⁵ Chakma, ‘Security Perceptions and Practices of the Indigenous People of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh’, 84.

⁴⁷⁶ Cai Wilkinson, ‘Ethnographic Methods’, in *Critical Approaches to Security: An Introduction to Theories and Methods*, ed. Laura J. Shepherd (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 131.

legwork, fieldwork, deskwork phases (Table 4.2.). Each phase plays a crucial role in producing the analysis. During the legwork phase, the researcher engages in preparation and exploration. The fieldwork phase involves the collection of original data, while the deskwork and textwork phases focus on organising the data and generating the analysis. However, Wilkinson cautions that progress through these phases may not always be linear.⁴⁷⁷ In other words, depending on the limitations and possibilities of access to the sources, the researcher may conduct these phases occasionally.

Table 4.2. The Research Process⁴⁷⁸



The first phase, legwork, begins with the researcher formulating and refining their dissertation or research project and developing the research question. This is followed by a process of refining the question, transforming it into a workable research inquiry. To achieve this, Wilkinson suggests that the researcher should consult experts in the field and/or visit the research site, in addition to conducting a literature review. In this way, the legwork phase serves as the initial cycle in data generation.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 136.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 137.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 136–37.

In my case, I was preparing the proposal for this dissertation during the summer of 2021. Although I dedicated a significant amount of time to developing the proposal after completing my comprehensive examination, I was not yet ready to finalise the research design. The empirical dimension of the study remained unclear, and I struggled to piece together the puzzle. One day, during a casual conversation with a friend, he mentioned that he was going through a difficult time. His family had been severely affected by the recent forest fires, which had dominated national headlines for nearly two weeks. Their home was in jeopardy as the fires approached the city centre, forcing them to evacuate. It was at that moment that I decided to focus on the 2021 forest fires in Turkey as a case study from the perspective of vernacular security. However, establishing the conceptual link between forest fires, deforestation, and security proved challenging. I spent nearly a year refining the conceptual framework on which this nexus could be built. The literature I explored primarily addressed the issue through the lenses of political economy, development, and environmental resistance movements. The security dimension, however, was largely overlooked. A turning point in my legwork phase came when I attended a workshop where I had the opportunity to discuss my research idea, questions, methodology, and design with scholars specialising in security, environmental security, and ethnographic research. From that point onward, I gained clarity and confidence in the design of my study.

When the second phase of fieldwork begins, the researcher engages with “real people in real places” and starts gathering original data. In my data collection process, I needed to collect both official and vernacular narratives, as my research question required a comparative analysis of these perspectives. For the official narrative, I gathered written data on the 2021 forest fires, covering:

- i) Presidential statements, speeches, and interviews
- ii) Statements and speeches by the Director of Communications
- iii) Statements, speeches, and reports released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Interior
- iv) And finally, written answers of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry to parliamentary questions related to the forest fires.

To analyse the official narrative, I collected various documents. First, I gathered speeches, interviews, and press releases by the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. His statements are particularly significant in shaping the official narrative, as the Presidency has become increasingly powerful following Turkey's transition to a presidential system of government, which was adopted through the 16 April 2017 Referendum and has been in effect since 9 July 2018. In this context, I compiled a total of 63 documents, consisting of speeches, interviews, and press releases by President Erdoğan, obtained through an online archive search on the official website of the Presidency. This was followed by 15 documents from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, including interviews, press releases, and written responses to parliamentary questions; 12 documents from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, comprising interviews and press releases; and 2 press releases from the Directorate of Communications. In total, my official narrative dataset consists of 92 documents. All documents are publicly accessible and available through online searches. To identify relevant materials, I used the keyword "forest fires" to search within the archives of each public institution's website. The collected documents were then classified and analysed using MAXQDA software.

To filter the official narrative, I employed a time frame starting from the beginning of the 2021 forest fires on 28 July 2021 and extending until the end of 2023. I obtained this data from the archives of the relevant government organisations' websites. By conducting a content analysis of these written sources, I aimed to extract underlying meanings and conceptualisations within the framework of the tripartite nexus of security, environment, and politics. Another potential method for gathering the official narrative was to conduct elite interviews; however, I chose to rely solely on content analysis of written official data. There were several reasons behind this decision. First, Turkey operates under a presidential system, meaning that decisions made at the top of the hierarchy, including the political language set by the Presidency, are adopted and implemented by policymakers at lower levels. In other words, the narrative established by the President is reproduced by other government officials. The second reason is that elite interviews are highly time- and resource-intensive. Given that my primary theoretical focus is on the vernacular narrative, I prioritised conducting non-elite interviews, which also require significant time and

resources. Consequently, I decided to allocate my efforts toward non-elite interviews rather than engaging with elites.

In the context of vernacular narrative, I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews in fire-affected regions. In fact, there is more than one method that is popular among the scholars who advocate the vernacular approach. According to Lee Jarvis, the literature on vernacular security depends most on the methods such as, focus group and participant observations, in addition to interviews.⁴⁸⁰ While focus groups are more useful in comprehending the group dynamics, semi-structured interviews are helpful in unveiling the individual feelings and conceptualisations. Thus, as I wanted to listen to local people's narratives without being distorted or suppressed by others, I decided to conduct interviews.

After deciding to conduct interviews, the next question concerned the location of the fieldwork. In narrowing down the regions, I relied on statistical data identifying the most affected areas based on the ratio of burnt forest area to total hectare area. According to the 2021 forestry statistics of the General Directorate of Forestry (*Orman Genel Müdürlüğü – OGM*), a total of 139,503 hectares of forest were burned,⁴⁸¹ with fires raging for days across multiple regions, resulting in eight people dead and the evacuation of many residents.⁴⁸² Due to the large-scale impact of these fires – recorded as the largest in the country's history (Table 4.3)-⁴⁸³ the fire-affected districts of Antalya, Muğla, Mersin, Adana and Osmaniye were officially declared “Disaster Areas Affecting General Life” by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (*Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı - AFAD*) in 2021.⁴⁸⁴ The exceptional scale of the 2021 forest fires is evident in these figures.

⁴⁸⁰ Jarvis, ‘Toward a Vernacular Security Studies: Origins, Interlocutors, Contributions, and Challenges’, 121.

⁴⁸¹ Orman Genel Müdürlüğü, ‘Ormancılık İstatistikleri 2021’.

⁴⁸² Joshua Nevett, ‘Turkey Wildfires: Eight Dead as Blazes Sweep through Tourist Resorts’, BBC News, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-58057081>.

⁴⁸³ Gizem Tuna Tuygun, Gülşen İşsever, and Tolga Elbir, ‘Türkiye’de 2021 Yılında Yaşanan Büyük Orman Yangınlarında Yanan Orman Alanlarının ve Yangın Kaynaklı Atmosferik Aerosollerin Uydular ile İzlenmesi’, *DEUFMD* 25, no. 74 (2023): 353.

⁴⁸⁴ Mehmet Tosun, ‘Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Orman Yangınlarından Etkilenen Alanlar “Genel Hayata Etkili Afet Bölgesi” İlan Edildi’, *Anadolu Ajansı*, 31 July 2021.

This extraordinary nature is further validated by forestry statistics from the following year. As shown in Table 4.4, the amount of burnt forest area in 2022 returned to average levels, confirming that the fires of 2021 were an exceptional event.

Table 4.3. Total Number of Burning Forest Areas (Hectare)⁴⁸⁵

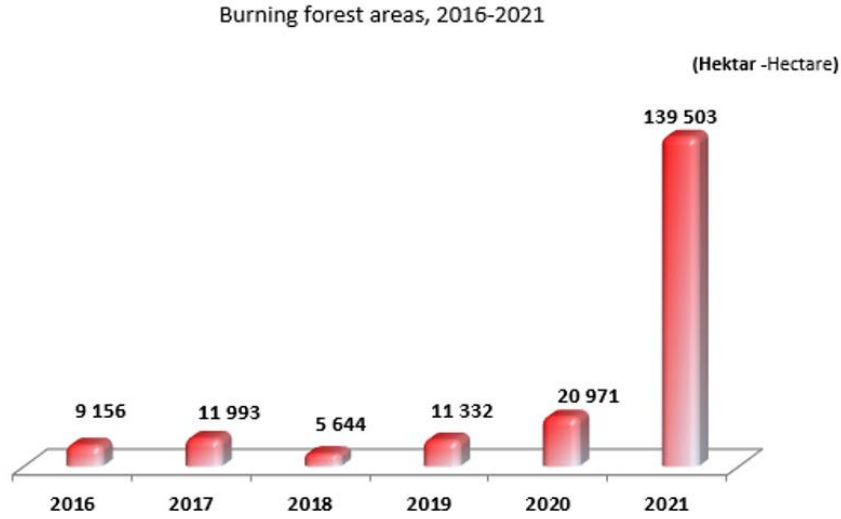
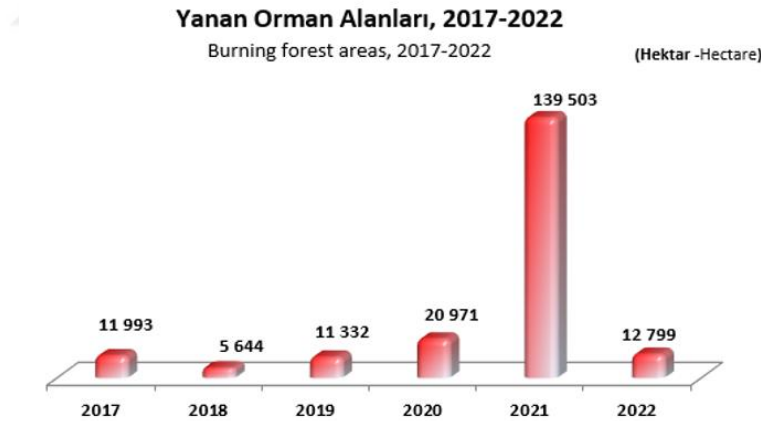


Table 4.4. Total Number of Burning Forest Areas (Hectare) in 2022⁴⁸⁶



Of the total 139,503 hectares affected by the fires, 110,969 hectares were located in the Muğla and Antalya regions (Table 4.5). This means that nearly 79% of the 2021 forest fires occurred in these two regions. Given the scale of destruction in these areas, I decided to narrow the scope of my fieldwork to focus on Muğla and Antalya,

⁴⁸⁵ Orman Genel Müdürlüğü, 'Ormancılık İstatistikleri 2021'.

⁴⁸⁶ Orman Genel Müdürlüğü (General Directorate of Forestry), 'Ormancılık İstatistikleri 2022', 2022.

the two most severely affected regions. Within Muğla, I aimed to reach the districts of Marmaris, Bodrum, Köyceğiz, and Milas, while in Antalya, I focused on Manavgat, Alanya, Akseki, and Gündoğmuş. These districts were among the hardest-hit areas within their respective provinces, making them critical sites for understanding the impact of the fires and the narratives surrounding them.

Table 4.5. The Distribution of Forest Fires by Province in 2021⁴⁸⁷

12.4 İllere göre orman yangınlarının dağılımı, 2021				12.4 İllere göre orman yangınlarının dağılımı, 2021 (devam)			
The distribution of forest fires by province 2021				The distribution of forest fires by province, 2021			
İBBS ⁽¹⁾ - 3. Düzey		Adet Number	Hektar Hectare	İBBS ⁽¹⁾ - 3. Düzey		Adet Number	Hektar Hectare
TR	Türkiye	2793	139503,16	TR723	Yozgat	10	4,14
TR100	İstanbul	52	12,69	TR811	Zonguldak	13	11,40
TR211	Tekirdağ	13	10,73	TR812	Karabük	16	50,68
TR212	Edirne	12	5,17	TR813	Bartın	5	0,41
TR213	Kırklareli	14	17,53	TR821	Kastamonu	61	51,93
TR221	Balkesir	89	117,66	TR822	Çankırı	12	4,14
TR222	Çanakkale	74	103,57	TR823	Sinop	17	9,77
TR310	İzmir	148	672,01	TR831	Samsun	34	34,32
TR321	Aydın	77	1596,51	TR832	Tokat	21	23,50
TR322	Denizli	50	1022,87	TR833	Çorum	20	19,27
TR323	Muğla	296	50602,92	TR834	Amasya	7	4,82
TR331	Manisa	115	153,56	TR901	Trabzon	40	147,04
TR332	Afyonkarahisar	8	0,65	TR902	Ordu	55	81,13
TR333	Kütahya	42	23,62	TR903	Giresun	37	63,01
TR334	Uşak	20	51,50	TR904	Rize	22	41,48
TR411	Bursa	50	22,47	TR905	Artvin	23	24,27
TR412	Eskişehir	9	11,17	TR906	Gümüşhane	5	2,95
TR413	Bilecik	10	13,20	TRA11	Erzurum	17	44,95
TR421	Kocaeli	11	6,10	TRA12	Erzincan	5	3,39
TR422	Sakarya	32	9,59	TRA13	Bayburt	1	2,30
TR423	Düzce	14	10,24	TRA21	Ağrı	-	-
TR424	Bolu	19	17,51	TRA22	Kars	10	7,81
TR425	Yalova	1	0,83	TRA23	Iğdır	1	0,15
TR510	Ankara	29	15,42	TRA24	Ardahan	3	5,69
TR521	Konya	14	8,40	TRB11	Malatya	23	21,11
TR522	Karaman	8	5,09	TRB12	Elazığ	12	34,47
TR611	Antalya	294	60366,56	TRB13	Bingöl	43	134,66
TR612	Isparta	26	1422,86	TRB14	Tunceli	23	2427,12
TR613	Burdur	24	619,71	TRB21	Van	2	0,05
TR621	Adana	126	4919,26	TRB22	Muş	5	20,27
TR622	Mersin	89	9661,20	TRB23	Bitlis	19	119,50
TR631	Hatay	64	334,63	TRB24	Hakkari	16	40,34
TR632	Kahramanmaraş	102	433,32	TRC11	Gaziantep	30	33,28
TR633	Osmaniye	66	3149,79	TRC12	Adıyaman	31	70,59
TR711	Kırıkkale	1	2,90	TRC13	Kilis	4	98,56
TR712	Aksaray	1	4,00	TRC21	Şanlıurfa	24	56,24
TR713	Niğde	3	0,34	TRC22	Dişarbakur	53	101,41
TR714	Nevşehir	2	2,50	TRC31	Mardin	13	33,30
TR715	Kırşehir	3	3,38	TRC32	Batman	7	85,10
TR721	Kayseri	5	101,25	TRC33	Şırnak	25	25,08
TR722	Sivas	5	12,49	TRC34	Sirt	10	18,33
(1) İstatistik Bölge Birimleri Sınıflaması.				(1) İstatistik Bölge Birimleri Sınıflaması.			
(1) Statistical Regions.				(1) Statistical Regions.			

⁴⁸⁷ Orman Genel Müdürlüğü, ‘Ormanlık İstatistikleri 2021’.

I conducted interviews in these regions with adult local residents and forest villagers who had directly experienced the 2021 forest fires in their everyday lives. To ensure that the perspectives gathered reflected long-term engagement with the region, I excluded tourists and seasonal visitors from the scope of the interviews. Before initiating the interviews, my primary objective was to establish contact with gatekeepers in the selected areas, as they played a crucial role in facilitating access to participants and building trust within the local communities. As many qualitative researchers recommend, establishing connections with gatekeepers in the field is essential both for the researcher to access the appropriate participants and for the local community to develop trust in the researcher.⁴⁸⁸ I considered the potential people for gatekeepers as mukhtars⁴⁸⁹ of the region, volunteers of non-governmental organisations operating in the region, researchers working in the universities of the region and the employees of the regional forest management offices. To reach participants, I used the snowball sampling technique.

With regard to the number of interviews targeted, there are various perspectives in the qualitative research literature. Gusterson offers a pessimistic view, suggesting that researchers often struggle to determine when to leave the field. He argues that they typically depart when their funding runs out or their research permits expire.⁴⁹⁰ However, other researchers offer more optimistic perspectives on the question of how many participants are sufficient or when to leave the field. While some provide a specific numerical threshold, others rely on the criterion of saturation. Saturation refers to the point at which successive interviews no longer generate new information or contribute to the production of new codes in qualitative analysis. As I previously mentioned, my research question, aim, and theoretical framework led me to conduct fieldwork. Greg Guest et al. argue that field-oriented studies that do not seek generalisability often rely on non-probabilistic sampling methods, among which

⁴⁸⁸ Hugh Gusterson, 'Ethnographic Research', in *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, ed. Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 96.

⁴⁸⁹ The mukhtar is an elected local government actor of a neighbourhood.

⁴⁹⁰ Gusterson, 'Ethnographic Research', 107.

purposive sampling is the most commonly used.⁴⁹¹ As my research aimed to reach a specific group of people affected by a particular case, a purposive sampling strategy was the most suitable approach. Furthermore, Guest et al. find in their research that the majority of studies they examined using purposive sampling continued until saturation was reached.⁴⁹²

However, Guest et.al. warns that since saturation point does not give a concrete number beforehand, a general benchmark is necessary to estimate when saturation is likely to occur.⁴⁹³ Although there is no consensus on a precise number at which saturation occurs, some scholars identify certain thresholds. For example, while Russel H. Bernard observed that 30-60 interviews were sufficient for ethnographic research,⁴⁹⁴ Janice Morse stated that there should be approximately 30-50 interviews.⁴⁹⁵ In this study, I decided to conclude fieldwork once I reached the saturation point; however, I aimed to conduct no fewer than 40 interviews as a baseline target.

To collect the vernacular narrative dataset, I conducted semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 40 minutes, to capture rich and detailed narratives from local residents. This approach allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences, insecurities, and coping mechanisms. I reached a total of 65 participants. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and all participants were invited to take part on a consensual basis. I obtained the necessary ethical approval for conducting the research from the Ethics Committee of Middle East Technical University, which approved the study on 16 August 2023 under the protocol number 0388-ODTÜİAEK-2023. I conducted the fieldwork with funding

⁴⁹¹ Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce, and Laura Johnson, 'How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability', *Field Methods* 18, no. 1 (2006): 61.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Russell H. Bernard, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC.: Sage, 2013), 166–67.

⁴⁹⁵ Janice M. Morse, 'Designing Funded Qualitative Research', in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna Sessions Lincoln (Sage Publications, 1994), 225.

from the TÜBİTAK 1002-A programme through the 223K933 project. As part of the fieldwork, I conducted 65 face-to-face interviews, with 32 participants in Muğla and 33 in Antalya. After transcribing these interviews, I obtained a vernacular narrative corpus comprising 109,382 words. I have included the interview question framework as an appendix to this dissertation.

Finally, the third phase of *deskwork* and *textwork* implies the analysing and writing part of the research. In this phase, as Wilkinson argues, the researcher reviews the fieldwork process, re-reads interviews and printed sources, and creates the analysis and writes up the research output. Within this process, however, the crucial task for the researcher is to link the analysis to the theory or disciplinary concerns.⁴⁹⁶ In this process, certain tools can help researchers to produce the analysis. In my situation, I organise and analyse all the data with a computer assisted qualitative analysis software, MAXQDA. MAXQDA also has a transcription feature with its latest version. Therefore, I use it to transcribe my interview voice recordings. Finally, this phase includes the analysis of the qualitative data. In this regard, I used Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). The subsequent chapter will take this issue.

4.6. Method of Data Analysis: Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)

Within the scope of this dissertation, I aimed to analyse, compare, and contrast two distinct sets of data in the case study: the official and the vernacular data. In the previous section, I detailed the sources and materials that comprise these two datasets. For the analysis of these data, I relied on Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). The official dataset was already in text format, while the vernacular dataset was converted into text format through the transcription of interviews. Therefore, all the data I engaged with were in textual form. QCA helps researchers to develop “a set of procedures to make inferences from text”⁴⁹⁷, as a research method useful for enlightening the varied interpretations of the context of text data via an organised

⁴⁹⁶ Wilkinson, ‘Ethnographic Methods’, 142.

⁴⁹⁷ Robert Philip Weber, *Basic Content Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Newbury Park CA: Sage Publications, 1990), 9.

classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.⁴⁹⁸ According to Margareth Hermann, the research question should invite content analysis.⁴⁹⁹ Since my research questions require extracting meaning from both official and vernacular narratives, choosing content analysis fits in my research aim and question.

Hsieh and Shannon argue that the content analysis process begins with a comprehensive reading of the entire dataset, similar to reading a novel, to develop a holistic understanding of the material. This initial reading helps to identify general themes embedded within the data. A crucial step in recognising these themes is the derivation of codes. As Hsieh and Shannon emphasise, these codes are extracted directly from the text, as specific words and phrases capture key concepts and ideas. In the next stage, the researcher actively engages with the dataset, incorporating their own identity, reflections, and thoughts by making analytical notes. Once the codes are established, they are categorised into broader themes or categories. These themes or categories are then structured into a more meaningful network of clusters, allowing for a systematic interpretation of the data.⁵⁰⁰ Finally, the interpretation of this network of clusters unveils the analysis. In Chapters V and VI, I will explain the MAXQDA analysis process, and the coding procedures used in the empirical chapters.

4.7. Trustworthiness and Limitations of the Study

In the earlier of this chapter, I have mentioned the criterion of validity which determines the trustworthiness of the research conducted. And in terms of ensuring the trustworthiness, I cited Wilkinson's four points: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*. In order to ensure *credibility* many scholars rely on triangulation. It means the use of more than one method or source of data in order to study a social phenomenon.⁵⁰¹ In addition to using different sources of data to

⁴⁹⁸ Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E Shannon, 'Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis', *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (2005): 1278.

⁴⁹⁹ Margareth G. Hermann, 'Content Analysis', in *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, ed. Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 152.

⁵⁰⁰ Hsieh and Shannon, 'Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis', 1279.

⁵⁰¹ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 392.

check their validity, triangulation also invites “member checks, peer debriefing and the creation of ‘holistic views of the context’ through the use of photographs, documents and other materials”.⁵⁰² Within the scope of this research, I collected data from two different primary sources: for official narrative, presidential statements, speeches and interviews; statements and speeches by the relevant bureaucratic elites; and parliamentary questions and minutes of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye; and for vernacular narrative, semi-structured interviews with local people. In the empirical chapters, I analysed and discussed all these different datasets in relation to each other, as required by my theoretical perspective. I also compared my analysis and findings with secondary sources from the literature review. I conducted data analysis through a continuous back-and-forth process between the raw data and the emerging themes. I refined the coding process in multiple cycles, ensuring that my initial interpretations were consistently re-evaluated.

In order to ensure *transferability*, scholars have pointed out the necessity of thick description. Thick description ensures the transferability of the findings in interpretive research.⁵⁰³ According to Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, thick description refers to the presence of sufficient descriptive material to capture context-specific nuances of meaning. Schwartz-Shea also notes that the thick description works as a certificate of the fact that the researcher was ‘actually’ present on the site.⁵⁰⁴ Within the scope of this research, I focus on certain local conceptualisations and practices without reducing them to simplistic translations or generalisations. Whenever possible, I preserve local expressions, extended interview excerpts, and vivid accounts of day-to-day experiences during the crisis. This commitment to detail helps convey the subjective worlds of participants and officials alike, demonstrating how security concerns play out in practice. As in the case of the “fat-bellied man” metaphor used by local participants to express their distrust of official security personnel, I offer a historical reading that shows that this distrust in state-society

⁵⁰² Wilkinson, ‘Ethnographic Methods’, 135.

⁵⁰³ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*, 246.

⁵⁰⁴ Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, ‘Judging Quality: Evaluative Criteria and Epistemic Communities’, in *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*, ed. Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 132.

relations finds expression in the subconscious thought of “they burnt the forest to build hotels” in some specific cases, while more generally it lies in the politics of forestry management that evolved from the understanding of “cibal-i mübaha”.

Since interpretivist researchers depend on *dependability*, rather than *reliability*,⁵⁰⁵ with regard to this study I focus on seeing the “trackable variance”⁵⁰⁶ through two different case sites, namely Antalya and Muğla provinces. Moreover, my choice of overlapping methods, namely content analysis and semi-structured interviews, and in-depth methodological description as I aimed to do so in this chapter allows dependability. I kept a detailed record of each stage of the research: the rationale for selecting particular sites and participants, the interview guides, and the coding manuals as I will detail in the next chapter. I also transcribed the interview data verbatim and systematically filed in MAXQDA software. Such standardised but flexible procedures help ensure that the findings are traceable and not the product of ad hoc decisions. Finally, *confirmability* refers to that data can be tracked to sources while recognising the researcher’s role during the process of research.⁵⁰⁷ In order to ensure confirmability, I acknowledged and defined positionality statement below as a frank confession of my role during the research process. I regularly consulted with peers and supervisors, who critically examined my emerging findings. These discussions functioned as a form of external auditing, helping me to identify inconsistencies or potential over-interpretations. I had the opportunity to deeply discuss different aspects of my dissertation research and analysis process at international conferences and workshop events.

In researching the contested security discourses surrounding the 2021 forest fires in Turkey, it was imperative to acknowledge my own role and perspective as the researcher. Positionality here refers to the social, cultural, and political standpoint from which I approached the study. Recognising that research is never a neutral act, I sought to make transparent the ways my professional background, cultural

⁵⁰⁵ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*, 246.

⁵⁰⁶ Wilkinson, ‘Ethnographic Methods’, 136.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

affiliations, and personal experiences might shape the inquiry. I realised that my personal connection to this subject was evident from the outset, given the emotional impact the forest fires had on me and how a phone call with a friend prompted my decision to study them. During the early interviews with individuals who had lost their homes and livelihoods, I experienced an intense sense of empathy and sorrow for their hardships. This emotional involvement occasionally caused me to hold back certain questions about their losses. For instance, upon noticing that participants were becoming tearful, I found myself shifting the conversation away from their past losses and instead directing it towards their present circumstances and their outlook on the future.

However, I was mindful to avoid slipping into methodological populism in the process. For instance, although the subconscious belief that “they are burning our forests to build hotels” reflects local anger and highlights a significant tension in state-society relations, I also drew upon ministerial-level statements and academic literature citing constitutional provisions, which indicated that this assumption was unfounded. During the coding phase, I revisited my field notes to see whether particularly harrowing stories—such as families losing their livelihoods or feeling abandoned by authorities—had led me to emphasise some themes over others. I carried out multiple cycles of coding, which helped me identify and mitigate any such tendencies, ensuring that the final thematic structure was guided by participants’ accounts rather than my emotional responses.

Finally, as previously noted, several participants received me quite favourably upon learning that I was a METU student. Because many local residents perceive METU students as particularly intelligent, they tended to welcome me warmly, and a number of interviews took place in a notably sympathetic setting. Moreover, my ‘student’ identity appeared to encourage a supportive attitude among many interviewees. Some participants, noting that their own children were also university students, even became more hospitable during our conversations. However, particularly during my conversations with mukhtars, I observed moments when they hesitated to discuss the political dimension of the issue. Some even expressed concern by saying that they preferred to remain silent, indicating their reluctance to

criticise political matters, especially the ruling party. Such moments may have led to certain insecurities remaining unspoken.

Despite concerted efforts to ensure methodological rigour, this study has certain limitations that merit attention. First, the research design relied heavily on face-to-face interviews, which, although valuable for capturing detailed narratives, can also be shaped by the social desirability bias. Participants might have preferred to offer responses they believed I wanted to hear, especially given that I was an outsider to some communities and perceived as a university student. Another limitation concerns the geographic scope. Although the study included multiple sites, resource and time constraints precluded a wholly comprehensive exploration of every fire-affected region. Moreover, I had initially intended to incorporate a comparative dimension by examining the Greek case and analysing parallel or divergent understandings of forest fires in another national context. However, the same constraints that restricted my fieldwork also made this plan unfeasible, adding another limitation to the study. Finally, given that this is a qualitative, interpretive study, the findings should not be read as generalisable in a statistical sense. Instead, the goal has been to offer an in-depth, contextualised understanding of official and vernacular security narratives as they arose during the 2021 forest fires, with the recognition that other contexts or crises may present different dynamics.

4.8. Conclusion

In this chapter I tried to define clearly my research aim and to adopt a suitable framework and design to deal with that aim. By positioning this study within the broader field of ontology, epistemology and methodology, I aimed to specify its characteristics. It has also addressed trustworthiness, positionality and limitations of the study that shape the parameters of this research. These limitations notwithstanding, the strategies adopted, including multi-cycled coding and sustained engagement with participants, aim to maintain methodological rigour. The subsequent chapters will present the empirical findings and analytical discussions arising from the methodological design outlined thus far.

CHAPTER 5

OFFICIAL NARRATIVE ON 2021 FOREST FIRES: WHAT DOES THE ELITE NARRATIVE TELL US ABOUT SECURITY-ENVIRONMENT-POLITICS?

5.1. Introduction

Here, I shift my focus to the dissertation's empirical dimension. As outlined in the previous chapters, the dissertation primarily deals with two distinct empirical aspects: the 'official elite narratives' and the 'vernacular narratives' concerning the 2021 forest fires in Turkey. This chapter centres on the former. It therefore begins with a brief discussion of the role of narratives in security, posing the question, "Why do we study narratives in security?" as a way of highlighting and justifying the constructed nature of security. I will refer to the notion of 'security as constructed' and the concept of 'narratives of security' to emphasise the importance of narratives in this field. Such narratives bring to the fore the core questions of security, which will form the basis of my analysis of the official narrative in the sections that follow. Next, the chapter clarifies who these official elites are. Although I have already identified the actors whose documents are included in the study in the methodology chapter, I will further explain the roles of these political elites in Turkey. After these conceptual discussions, the chapter turns to its empirical analysis. Drawing on the core questions of security introduced earlier, I will assess what these political elites have said about the forest fires. I expect that these questions will help reveal the referent object, sources of threat, security provider, and proposed measures in the security narrative regarding the forest fires. Finally, I will briefly explore the environmental and political narratives that also became salient during this period of forest fires.

5.2. Construction of Security as a Narrative

Seeing security as constructed builds on critical approaches' recognition that reality is socially constructed. With the intellectual achievement of the constructivist turn in IR, the idea that security is the result of a social construction has been accepted by most scholars. We know that the first pioneering theoretical approach to security as a social construction was initiated by the proponents of Copenhagen School. Just as they stress, it is through language in general and narratives in particular that reality is produced.⁵⁰⁸ That produced reality is something that is not an objective fact. Rather, it is something like a litmus paper through which selves and others are identified. In this way, we intersubjectively legitimise our own existence, security preferences and interests together with 'the other' we position ourselves against.⁵⁰⁹

In that process of construction of meaning, security narratives play an important role. Annick Wibben argues that we humans are both *homo significans* (meaning makers) and *homo fabulans* (story tellers); therefore, narratives shape our social world.⁵¹⁰ As I emphasised above, security narratives do not necessarily fit into objective "realities". Just as Jef Huysmans mentioned that it is not the accuracy of security narratives matter, rather it is the implication of that specific narrative.⁵¹¹ By fabricating true or false narratives, humans organise social relations and make sense of the complex life. Whether we regard security narratives as 'identity creators' or, following Vaughan-Williams, argue that they perform social ontologies, they ultimately shape our social relations.⁵¹²

How, then, do we construct that narrative? Every security narrative has four main pieces of puzzle. By bringing those puzzle pieces together, security narratives are

⁵⁰⁸ Ronald R. Krebs, *Narrative and the Making of US National Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 20.

⁵⁰⁹ McDonald, *Security, the Environment and Emancipation: Contestation over Environmental Change*, 10.

⁵¹⁰ Annick T.R. Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies. A Narrative Approach* (Routledge, 2011), 43.

⁵¹¹ Huysmans, 'Security! What Do You Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier', 232.

⁵¹² Ibid.

constructed. Then it performs social ontologies by identifying whose interests are represented, which threats are referred to, who are in charge in the provision of security and which measures are seen as legitimate. These pieces of puzzles have been solved by answering four main questions. Paul Williams and Matt McDonald defines these four questions as: “*whose security are we referring to?*”, “*what constitutes a threat to security?*”, “*who are the key agents for providing security?*”, and finally, “*what are the key means of realising it?*”.⁵¹³ Elsewhere, Matt McDonald argues that security narratives are a site of contestation and negotiation in which different actors compete to define core values of the particular community.⁵¹⁴ As security narratives are a place of contestation and negotiation, it is possible to infer meaning from these narratives which values win out over others.⁵¹⁵ The character of contestation implies the multiplicity of these values uttered to be “the core” and be secured. This is coherent with the argument that “security means different things to different groups in different contexts” favoured by both Matt McDonald⁵¹⁶ and advocates of vernacular security.⁵¹⁷ The character of negotiation, on the other hand, reminds that all the narratives of security are articulated and debated in the social world, which means that actors make an effort to set forth and find support for the specific security narrative.⁵¹⁸ Therefore, it is through these four pieces of puzzle that security narratives contest and negotiate with each other.

The puzzle begins to build the narrative by identifying a protagonist, a referent object, to be placed at the centre of the social life. The question that reveals this protagonist is the first question in our schema: “*whose security are we referring to?*”.

⁵¹³ Paul D Williams and Matt McDonald, ‘An Introduction to Security Studies’, in *Security Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Paul Williams and Matt McDonald (Routledge, 2018), 5–10; Matt McDonald, *Ecological Security: Climate Change and the Construction of Security* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 19.

⁵¹⁴ McDonald, *Ecological Security: Climate Change and the Construction of Security*, 23–24.

⁵¹⁵ McDonald, *Security, the Environment and Emancipation: Contestation over Environmental Change*, 11.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Bubandt, ‘Vernacular Security: The Politics of Feeling Safe in Global, National and Local Worlds’, 2005, 291.

⁵¹⁸ McDonald, *Security, the Environment and Emancipation: Contestation over Environmental Change*, 15.

For McDonald, it appears as the most important question to be answered since the answer will eventually condition the ways humans perceive the nature of threat, the legitimate measures to deal with it, and the providers of security.⁵¹⁹ From a level of analysis perspective, the referent object can vary from the bottom level to the top, such as respectively individuals, social groups, states, international system, and the planet Earth.⁵²⁰

Every referent object, or protagonist, emerges with a villain, though. Security narratives find that villain with the second main question in our schema: “*what constitutes a threat to security?*”. It is a process of identification of possible sources of insecurity against the survival of that referent object.⁵²¹ Although the term “survival” denotes materialistic well-being, Arnold Wolfers highlighted that survival has also an ideational meaning, which finds itself as the protection of “the cherished values”.⁵²² Uttering the most prior values is a process of identity construction. Identifying threats, thus, is an act of self-promotion against that villain, a declaration of priorities and values that combine “us” and create our imagined community⁵²³ versus “the villain”. Ultimately in security studies, the referent object and the threat co-constitute each other, so that threats are seen as existential. One’s existence depends on other’s annihilation.⁵²⁴

Although the first two questions are qualifying questions that describe the main characters in the security narrative, other questions explain how to achieve security. Achieving security and defeating the threat requires certain conscious effort.⁵²⁵ Therefore, the question “*who are the key agents for providing security?*” bring those

⁵¹⁹ McDonald, *Ecological Security: Climate Change and the Construction of Security*, 55.

⁵²⁰ Williams and McDonald, ‘An Introduction to Security Studies’, 7–8.

⁵²¹ Ibid., 8.

⁵²² Arnold Wolfers, “‘National Security’ as an Ambiguous Symbol”, *Political Science Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (1952): 484.

⁵²³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

⁵²⁴ Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies. A Narrative Approach*, 67.

⁵²⁵ Williams and McDonald, ‘An Introduction to Security Studies’, 9.

who act in such a way in the name of the referent object to light. With this classification, some actors are legitimised as security professionals and are authorised to act extraordinarily, while others are banned in the process of providing security. Finally, since threats are defined as existential, the measures to handle them may be extraordinary.⁵²⁶ Therefore, the last question, “*what are the key means of realising it?*”, unveils the extraordinary emergency measures that those key agents can put into action. These four questions construct the basis for my security analysis of the Turkish official narrative in understanding how official elite narrative defined and conceptualised in the 2021 forest fires. Moreover, these four core questions frame my codebook deductively, which I will elaborate in the section below. In the environmental and political narratives, I use deductive and inductive coding strategies together. While my deductive coding comes from the literature, inductive coding is based on the textual material that I collected. Before moving into the analysis, however, I will briefly explain what the term “elites” means and who are these elites that I take their narrative into consideration.

5.3. Defining the Elites in Turkish Official Narrative Regarding 2021 Forest Fires

Defining the concept of “elite” is not an easy task. Researchers define elites as those “...who get the most of what there is to get”⁵²⁷; as “...holders of high positions in a given society”⁵²⁸; and as “... a social group within the societal hierarchy that claims and/or is accorded power, prestige, or command over others on the basis of a number of criteria and aims to preserve and entrench its status...”⁵²⁹ However, there are not only one type or group of elites in a given society. As Harold D. Lasswell et.al. argue, the groups of elites vary according to the values they are ascribed to. In

⁵²⁶ Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 21.

⁵²⁷ Dankwart A Rustow, ‘The Study of Elites: Who’s Who, When, and How’, *World Politics* 18, no. 4 (1966): 690.

⁵²⁸ Harold D. Lasswell, Daniel Lerner, and C.Easton Rothwell, ‘The Elite Concept’, in *Political Elites in a Democracy*, ed. Peter Bachrach, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1971), 14.

⁵²⁹ Tijo Salverda and Jon Abbink, ‘Introduction: An Anthropological Perspective on Elite Power and the Cultural Politics of Elites’, in *The Anthropology of Elites: Power, Culture, and the Complexities of Distinction*, ed. Jon Abbink and Tijo Salverda (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 5.

addition to the political elites who are associated with power and are in charge of a government, there are also elite groups related to wealth, respect, and knowledge.⁵³⁰ But political scientists and sociologists tend to characterise elites as individuals who hold influential roles within decision-making processes both in public and private sectors.⁵³¹ Therefore in my case, I depend on political elites who are in charge of governing security policies in Turkey and has the power to securitise.

Since political elites are associated with a group of people who manage and organise government,⁵³² I decided to filter the official narrative with the most influential political elites. In Turkey, the government has been controlled by the AKP since the year 2002. And the AKP has been ruled by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan since that date. Erdoğan ruled the cabinet between 2003 – 2014 as the prime minister. As a result of a constitutional amendment in 2007 to allow the President to be elected by the people instead of the parliament, he was elected as President of Turkey in the referendum in 2014. In December 2016, the AKP submitted another constitutional amendment proposal for a more radical change in the regime type of Turkey.⁵³³ The proposal anticipated a “‘Turkish – Type’ Presidential System”⁵³⁴, empowering the executive power, the president, and reducing the control of parliament while abolishing the office of prime minister. The amendment proposal offered the role of presidentship as both head of the state and head of the executive. Directly elected by the people, the president had the power to design the executive by appointing the cabinet of ministers and to affect the judiciary by appointing a great portion of high judiciary without any form of accountability to parliament.⁵³⁵ The proposal also authorises the

⁵³⁰ Lasswell, Lerner, and Rothwell, ‘The Elite Concept’, 14.

⁵³¹ Huibert Schijf, ‘Researching Elites: Old and New Perspectives’, in *The Anthropology of Elites: Power, Culture, and the Complexities of Distinction*, ed. Jon Abbink and Tijo Salverda (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 30.

⁵³² Luis Garrido Vergara, ‘Elites, Political Elites and Social Change in Modern Societies’, *Revista de Sociología*, no. 28 (2013): 33.

⁵³³ S Erdem Aytaç, Ali Çarkoğlu, and Kerem Yıldırım, ‘Taking Sides: Determinants of Support for a Presidential System in Turkey’, in *The AKP Since Gezi Park* (Routledge, 2020), 1.

⁵³⁴ Nikos Moudouros, ‘The ‘Turkish-Type’ Presidential System: An Imperial Civilisational Restoration?’, *Turkish Historical Review* 13, no. 1–2 (2022): 157–82.

⁵³⁵ Aytaç, Çarkoğlu, and Yıldırım, ‘Taking Sides: Determinants of Support for a Presidential System in Turkey’, 1.

President to issue decree-laws and to declare a state of emergency. With these amendments, a significant shift in political power from parliament to the presidency, from a collective to a single individual, was to be made possible.⁵³⁶

With the referendum on April 16, 2017, the presidential government system was adopted. According to Aytaç et.al., such a shift in power received a strong support from the ruling party, the AKP, and particularly from Erdoğan. Erdoğan advocated that the presidential system would strengthen political stability of the country and promote an efficient government, which for himself is essential for economic progress. On the other hand, however, opposition parties strongly opposed such a shift in power, saying that it paves the way for an autocratic Erdoğan rule.⁵³⁷

At the end of the process, Erdoğan has been elected as the President in the new “Turkish – Type’ Presidential System” on June 24, 2018, and on May 28, 2023, consecutively. This is why Erdoğan is the most important actor in determining the official narrative in this study with all the political power he has. Out of 92 documents, 63 of them belong to Erdoğan’s speeches, interviews and press releases. However, in order to ensure triangulation of the official data set, I also collected specific ministers’ documents as well.

Therefore, I focused on the ministers who were directly responsible with the issue, such as Bekir Pakdemirli who was, then, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Süleyman Soylu who was, then, the Minister of Internal Affairs, to whom AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) is affiliated. Apart from these, I also found written answers to parliamentary questions asked by certain members of parliament and answered by the relevant Minister. Despite my search, I could not find any speech, interview, or press releases from the Military elites regarding forest fires in 2021. In conclusion, these elites that I tried to justify above constitute the official narrative in my study. From now on, I will evaluate the coding and analysis process of the official narrative.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 2.

5.4. Qualitative Content Analysis of the Official Narrative

5.4.1. Coding Strategy

Many researchers stated that the development of coding frame is the most important thing when starting a content analysis⁵³⁸, since it mainly determines the trustworthiness of the analysis.⁵³⁹ In order to develop such a consistent framework, there are certain steps to be followed. According to Peter A.J. Stevens, research question alignment is the most important step to create a coding frame. Defining the research question and developing an idea on the aspects of the phenomenon I would like to focus, thus, is the first step in this section. Following steps are justifying the selection of sample of documents, defining the code categories, conducting an initial coding, conducting the main coding phase, and reporting the results.⁵⁴⁰

I formulated my research questions as follow: *How do the official and vernacular narratives conceptualise and contest security during the 2021 forest fires in Turkey?* and *What does this divergence (or convergence) in these narratives reveal about broader security dynamics and state-society relations in Turkey?* These questions urge me to understand the different ways in which forest fires of 2021 are understood and conceptualised in two different languages: official/elite and vernacular/non-elite. Regarding security narrative, I aim to understand which different referent objects, sources of threats, security professionals and measures in the name of security are prioritised. The result of this prioritisation or marginalisation shows the political character of security. Therefore, with a content analysis I aim to unveil this prioritisation in both official and vernacular languages. Moreover, since this study adopts a vernacular approach to the phenomenon, I normatively aim to unveil what local people say about security, which I believe is how this study contributes most to the literature. By unveiling the vernacular narrative, I aim to understand if the

⁵³⁸ Margrit Schreier, 'Ways of Doing Qualitative Content Analysis: Disentangling Terms and Terminologies', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 15, no. 1 (2014).

⁵³⁹ Hsieh and Shannon, 'Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis'.

⁵⁴⁰ Charlotte Maene, 'Qualitative Content Analysis: A Practical Introduction', in *Qualitative Data Analysis: Key Approaches*, ed. Peter A.J. Stevens (Sage Publications, 2023), 241–42.

bottom-up narrative reproduces or challenges the top-down narrative and, if it challenges, in what ways this contestation shows up. In terms of environmental narrative, I focus on the meaning of environment, the conceptualisation of it, the perceived drivers of deforestation. And regarding the political narrative, I take OGM as the main security professional and focus on the political debate around it.

The second step is the clarification of sampling the documents to be analysed. I have found all the documents by using the keyword “forest fires” [orman yangınları] in the archives of the relevant public institutions’ website. I also used a specific time period to search these documents. The time period starts from the beginning of the forest fires in 2021, 28 July 2021, until the end of 2023. Since I have reached this data from the archives of the websites of the relevant government organisations, the data are open to public. Other researchers can reach these official data as well. In this way, openness of the data enhances the trustworthiness of the analysis. The list of the official data documents is below.

Table 5.1. List of the Documents

Group	Document Name	Document Date
Presidency	“Deprem bölgesini oradaki vatandaşlarımızla dayanışma içinde ayağa kaldıracamız” [“We will revive the earthquake zone in solidarity with our citizens there”]	01.03.2023
Presidency	Hırvatistan Cumhurbaşkanı Zoran Milanović ile Telefon Görüşmesi [Telephone Conversation with Croatian President Zoran Milanovic]	02.08.2021
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, orman yangını söndürme uçakları ve helikopterleri teslim törenine katıldı [President Erdoğan attended the delivery ceremony of forest firefighting planes and helicopters]	03.05.2023
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Bulgaristan Cumhurbaşkanı Rumen Radev ile bir telefon görüşmesi gerçekleştirdi [President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held a telephone conversation with Bulgarian President Rumen Radev]	03.08.2021
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanlığı Sözcüsü Büyükelçi İbrahim Kalın, ABD Ulusal Güvenlik Danışmanı Jake Sullivan ile Telefon Görüşmesi Gerçekleştirdi [Presidential Spokesperson Ambassador İbrahim Kalın Had a Phone Conversation with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan]	03.08.2021
Presidency	A Haber Ortak Yayını “Başkan Erdoğan ile Gündem Özel” [A News Joint Broadcasting “Special Agenda with President Erdoğan”]	04.08.2021
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, A Haber-ATV özel yayımına katıldı [President Erdoğan participated in the A News-ATV special broadcast]	04.08.2021

Table 5.1. (continued)

Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Rusya Federasyonu Devlet Başkanı Putin ile bir araya geldi [President Erdogan met with Russian Federation President Putin]	04.09.2023
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, TVNET yayınına katıldı [President Erdoğan participated in TVNET broadcast]	05.05.2023
Presidency	"TV NET "Cumhurbaşkanı Özel Yayını" ["TV NET "Special Broadcast with President"]	05.05.2023
Presidency	Dünya Çevre Günü Mesajı [World Environment Day Message]	05.06.2021
Presidency	Dünya Çevre Günü Mesajı [World Environment Day Message]	05.06.2022
Presidency	"Yeşil vatanı korumak için cansiperane mücadelemiz devam edecektir" ["Our selfless struggle to protect the green homeland will continue"]	06.08.2021
Presidency	"Ülkemizin su kaynaklarının tek bir damlasının dahi israfına tahammülümüz yoktur" ["We have no tolerance for even a single drop of our country's water resources to be wasted"]	06.11.2021
Presidency	Ilısu Prof. Dr. Veysel Eroğlu Barajı ve HES Açılış Töreni'nde Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech at the Ilısu Prof. Dr. Veysel Eroğlu Dam and HEPP Opening Ceremony]	06.11.2021
Presidency	"Teknolojinin verdiği imkânlarla hem altyapımızı güçlendirmeye hem afet müdahale sistemimizi geliştirmeye devam edeceğiz" ["We will continue to strengthen our infrastructure and develop our disaster response system with the opportunities provided by technology."]	07.01.2023
Presidency	Türkiye-Sırbistan İş Forumu'nda Yaptığı Konuşma [His Speech at the Türkiye-Serbia Business Forum]	07.09.2022
Presidency	Türkiye Çevre Haftası Münasebetiyle 9 Millet Bahçesi Açılış Töreni'nde Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech at the Opening Ceremony of 9 National Gardens on the Occasion of Türkiye Environment Week]	08.06.2023
Presidency	Sıfır Atık Film Yarışması Ödül Töreninde Yaptıkları Konuşma [Their Speech at the Zero Waste Film Competition Award Ceremony]	08.09.2021
Presidency	"Türkiye, Balkanlar'da yaşanan tüm gelişmeleri yakından izlemekte ve bu bağlamda gereken katkıları sunmaktadır" ["Turkey closely follows all developments in the Balkans and provides the necessary contributions in this context"]	08.09.2022
Presidency	İstanbul Çevre Dostu Şehirler Ödül Töreninde Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech at the Istanbul Eco-Friendly Cities Award Ceremony]	09.12.2021
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Cibuti Cumhurbaşkanı İsmail Ömer Guelleh ile bir telefon görüşmesi gerçekleştirdi [President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held a telephone conversation with Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh]	10.08.2021
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Gürcistan Cumhurbaşkanı Salome Zurbishvili ile bir telefon görüşmesi gerçekleştirdi [President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held a telephone conversation with Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili]	10.08.2021
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Nijerya Cumhurbaşkanı Muhammed Buhari ile bir telefon görüşmesi gerçekleştirdi [President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held a telephone conversation with Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari]	10.08.2021
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Senegal Cumhurbaşkanı Macky Sall ile bir telefon görüşmesi gerçekleştirdi [President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held a telephone conversation with Senegalese President Macky Sall]	10.08.2021

Table 5.1. (continued)

Presidency	“Rusya-Ukrayna savaşını sonlandırmak için yoğun çaba harcıyoruz” [“We are making great efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war”]	10.09.2023
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, CNN TÜRK-Kanal D özel yayınına katıldı [President Erdoğan participated in the CNN TURK-Kanal D special broadcast]	11.08.2021
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Afganistan Cumhurbaşkanı Eşref Gani ile bir telefon görüşmesi gerçekleştirdi [President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held a telephone conversation with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani]	11.08.2021
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Togo Cumhurbaşkanı Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe ile bir telefon görüşmesi gerçekleştirdi [President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held a telephone conversation with Togolese President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe]	11.08.2021
Presidency	Kanal D - CNN Türk Cumhurbaşkanı Özel Yayını [Channel D - CNN Turk Presidential Special Broadcast]	11.08.2021
Presidency	“Daha yeşil bir Türkiye hedefiyle, son 19 yıldır Cumhuriyet tarihinin en büyük ağaçlandırma seferberliğini yürütüyoruz” [“With the aim of a greener Türkiye, we have been carrying out the largest afforestation campaign in the history of the Republic for the last 19 years”]	11.11.2021
Presidency	Milli Ağaçlandırma Günü Fidan Dikim Töreni'nde Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech at the National Afforestation Day Sapling Planting Ceremony]	11.11.2021
Presidency	“21 yılda her alanda olduğu gibi tarım ve sulama alanında da tarihi nitelikte adımlar attık” [“In 21 years, we have taken historic steps in the field of agriculture and irrigation, as in every field.”]	11.12.2023
Presidency	DSİ Tarafından Tamamlanan 369 Adet Tesisin Toplu Açılış Töreni'nde Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech at the Mass Opening Ceremony of 369 Facilities Completed by DSI]	11.12.2023
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, televizyon kanalları ortak yayınına katıldı [President Erdoğan participated in the joint broadcast of television channels]	12.05.2023
Presidency	“2021’de ihracatımızı 200 milyar doların üzerine çıkartarak tüm zamanların rekorunu kıracağız” [“We will break an all-time record by increasing our exports to over 200 billion dollars in 2021”]	12.07.2021
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Litvanya Cumhurbaşkanı Gitanas Nausėda ile bir telefon görüşmesi gerçekleştirdi [President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held a telephone conversation with Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda]	12.08.2021
Presidency	“Sel felaketinin izlerini süratle silerek, yaraları sararak bu günleri en kısa sürede geride bırakacağız” [“We will quickly erase the traces of the flood disaster and heal the wounds and leave these days behind as soon as possible”]	13.08.2021
Presidency	Emine Erdoğan, Kasımpaşa Oya Kayacık Çocuk Evleri Sitesinin Açılışına Katıldı [Emine Erdoğan Attended the Opening of Kasımpaşa Oya Kayacık Children's Homes Site]	13.08.2021
Presidency	Kastamonu Bozkurt'ta Halka Hitaben Yaptıkları Konuşma [Their Speech to the Public in Kastamonu Bozkurt]	13.08.2021
Presidency	KANAL 7 Ortak Yayını “Cumhurbaşkanı Gündem Özel [KANAL 7 Joint Broadcast “President Agenda Special]	18.08.2021

Table 5.1. (continued)

Presidency	“Her alanda huzurla hayatımızı sürdürebilmemiz, hepimizin aşı olmasına ve aşılarını tamamlamasına bağlıdır” [“Our ability to continue our lives in peace in every area depends on all of us being vaccinated and completing our vaccinations.”]	19.08.2021
Presidency	Kabine Toplantısı’nın Ardından Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech After the Cabinet Meeting]	19.08.2021
Presidency	Yunanistan Başbakanı Kiriakos Mitsotakis ile Telefon Görüşmesi [Telephone Conversation with Greek Prime Minister Kiriakos Mitsotakis]	20.08.2021
Presidency	Anadolu Ajansı Uluslararası Çevre Forumu’nda Yaptıkları Konuşma [Their Speech at the Anadolu Agency International Environment Forum]	20.10.2022
Presidency	“BM Barış Gücü askerlerinin KKTC’deki müdahalesi asla kabul edilebilir bir durum değildir” [“The intervention of UN peacekeepers in the TRNC is never an acceptable situation”]	21.08.2023
Presidency	Kabine Toplantısı’nın Ardından Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech After the Cabinet Meeting]	21.08.2023
Presidency	“Çevreye Duyarlı Sürdürülebilir Ekonomi ve İş Kadınlarının Rolü Konferansında Yaptıkları Konuşma” [“Speech at the Conference on Environmentally Sensitive Sustainable Economy and the Role of Businesswomen”]	21.09.2021
Presidency	BM 76. Genel Kurulu’nda Yaptıkları Konuşma [Their Speech at the 76th UN General Assembly]	21.09.2021
Presidency	Ukrayna Devlet Başkanı Volodimir Zelenski ile Telefon Görüşmesi [Telephone Conversation with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky]	22.08.2021
Presidency	“Medeniyetimizin en önemli taşıyıcısı olarak gördüğümüz şehirlerimizi çok büyük yatırımlarla dönüştürdük, güçlendirdik” [“We have transformed and strengthened our cities, which we see as the most important carriers of our civilisation, with huge investments”]	23.12.2021
Presidency	Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Marmaris’teki Yangın Koordinasyon Merkezi’ni Ziyaret Etti [President Erdoğan Visited the Fire Coordination Center in Marmaris]	24.06.2022
Presidency	“Türkiye’yi hedefleriyle buluşturma mücadelemiz hız kesmeden sürüyor” [“Our struggle to bring Turkey together with its goals continues without slowing down”]	24.07.2023
Presidency	Kabine Toplantısı’nın Ardından Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech After the Cabinet Meeting]	24.07.2023
Presidency	“Planlı, programlı, geçmişe sahip çıkan, geleceği kucaklayan şehircilik modellerine ve uygulamalarına ihtiyacımız var” [“We need urban planning models and practices that are planned, programmed, that embrace the past and the future.”]	24.08.2021
Presidency	“Türkiye, bölgesinde ve dünyada egemenlik haklarını gerçek anlamda kullanabilen az sayıdaki ülkeden biridir” [“Türkiye is one of the few countries in the region and in the world that can truly exercise its sovereign rights”]	24.08.2021
Presidency	"Orman yangınlarından etkilenen hiçbir vatandaşımızı mağdur etmeyeceğiz" [“We will not victimize any of our citizens affected by forest fires”]	30.07.2021
Presidency	“Milletimizi yüksek enflasyondan koruyacak adımları birer birer atıyoruz” [“We are taking steps one by one to protect our nation from high inflation”]	31.01.2022

Table 5.1. (continued)

Presidency	“Devletimiz yangınların söndürülmesi, hasarların tazmini, zarar gören yerlerin yeniden ihyası için çalışmaktadır” [“Our state is working to extinguish fires, compensate for damages, and revive damaged areas.”]	31.07.2021
Presidency	“Türkiye, bölgesinin en güçlü orman yangınlarıyla mücadele altyapısına sahip ülkesidir” [“Türkiye has the strongest forest fire-fighting infrastructure in its region”]	31.07.2021
Presidency	Antalya	31.07.2021
Presidency	Marmaris'te Halka Hitaben Yaptıkları Konuşma [Speech to the Public in Marmaris]	31.07.2021
Presidency	Muğla	31.07.2021
Min. of the Interior	Ülke Geneline Devam Eden Orman Yangınları Hk [About the Forest Fires Continuing Throughout the Country]	29.07.2021
Min. of the Interior	Ülke Geneline Devam Eden Orman Yangınları Hk.-2 [About the Forest Fires Continuing Throughout the Country-2]	30.07.2021
Min. of the Interior	Yangın Bölgelerinde Yürütülen Nakdi Yardım, Barınma ve Beslenme Çalışmaları [Cash Aid, Shelter and Nutrition Works Conducted in Fire Zones]	3.08.2021
Min. of the Interior	Bakanımız Sn. Soylu İle Tarım ve Orman Bakanımız Sn. Pakdemirli Yangınlara İlişkin Açıklamalarda Bulundu [Minister Mr. Soylu and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Mr. Pakdemirli Made Statements Regarding the Fires]	3.08.2021
Min. of the Interior	Bakanımız Sn. Soylu: Şu Ana Kadar 966 Milyon Lira Yardım Toplandı [Minister Mr. Soylu: 966 Million Liras of Aid Has Been Collected So Far]	3.10.2021
Min. of the Interior	Bakanımız Sn. Soylu Hak-İş Konfederasyonu HAK Arama ve Kurtarma/Umut Timi Kurulması Projesi Kapanış Programına Katıldı [Minister Mr. Soylu Participated in the Closing Program of the Hak-İş Confederation HAK Search and Rescue/Hope Team Establishment Project]	15.12.2021
Min. of the Interior	Terör Örgütü PKK/KCK'ya Darbe [Severe Blow to the Terrorist Organisation PKK/KCK]	11.06.2022
Min. of the Interior	Bakanımız Sn. Soylu: Herkes Bir Tek Ağacın Kurtarılması İçin Çaba Sarf Ediyor [Minister Mr. Soylu: Everyone is Making Efforts to Save a Single Tree]	22.06.2022
Min. of the Interior	Bakanımız Sn. Soylu: Ormandaki Arkadaşlarımız İlk Dakikalarda Yangına Dünya Standardının Üzerinde Müdahale Ettiler [Minister Mr. Soylu: Our Friends in the Forest Intervened in the Fire Above World Standards in the First Minutes]	25.06.2022
Min. of the Interior	AFAD Başkanlığı'ndan Orman Yangınlarına Karşı Alınacak Tedbirleri Genelgesi [Circular from AFAD Presidency on Precautions to be Taken Against Forest Fires]	21.07.2022
Min. of the Interior	Bakanımız Sn. Süleyman Soylu Anadolu Soruyor Programında Gündeme İlişkin Soruları Yanıtladı [Minister Mr. Süleyman Soylu Answered Questions Regarding the Agenda in the Anadolu Asks Program]	13.10.2022
Min. of the Interior	Bakanımız Sn. Soylu: Afetle Mücadele Bir Vatan Savunmasıdır [Minister Mr. Soylu: Fighting Disasters is a Homeland Defense]	5.12.2022
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Bakan Pakdemirli; “31 Yangın Kontrol Altında, 10 Yangında Çalışmalar Devam Ediyor [Minister Pakdemirli: “31 Fires Under Control, Work Continues in 10 Fires]	29.07.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Bakan Pakdemirli Manavgat'taki Yangına Dair Açıklamalarda Bulundu [Minister Pakdemirli Made Statements Regarding the Fire in Manavgat]	29.07.2021

Table 5.1. (continued)

Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Pakdemirli; “Yangınların 57’si Kontrol Altında” [Pakdemirli; “57 of the Fires Are Under Control”]	30.07.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Bakan Pakdemirli: Son 5 Günde 132 Yangından 125’ini Kontrol Altına Aldık, 7’si Devam Ediyor [Minister Pakdemirli: We Have Controlled 125 of 132 Fires in the Last 5 Days, 7 Are Still Continuing]	2.08.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Pakdemirli; “44 İlde Meydana Gelen 197 Adet Yangının 185’i Kontrol Altında [Pakdemirli; “185 of 197 Fires Occurring in 44 Provinces Are Under Control]	6.08.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Bakan Pakdemirli: 47 İlde Çıkan 223 Orman Yangınının 217’si Kontrol Altında [Minister Pakdemirli: 217 of 223 Forest Fires in 47 Provinces Under Control]	7.08.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Bakan Pakdemirli Marmaris’te Koordinasyon Toplantısında Konuştu [Minister Pakdemirli Speaks at Coordination Meeting in Marmaris]	9.08.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Bakan Pakdemirli: 53 İlde Çıkan 275 Orman Yangınının 272’sini Kontrol Altına Aldık [Minister Pakdemirli: We have brought 272 of the 275 forest fires that broke out in 53 provinces under control]	10.08.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Bakan Pakdemirli Kastamonu, Bartın Ve Sinop’ta Meydana Gelen Doğal Afetleri Ve Yangınlardaki Son Durumu Değerlendirdi [Minister Pakdemirli Evaluated the Latest Situation in Natural Disasters and Fires in Kastamonu, Bartın and Sinop]	11.08.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Bakan Pakdemirli: Afette Aziz Milletimizle Ormanlarımız İçin Tek Yürek Olduk.Tüm Yangınları Kontrol Altına Aldık. [Minister Pakdemirli: We stood together with our beloved nation for our forests during the disaster. We brought all the fires under control.]	12.08.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Bakan Pakdemirli: 252 Milyon Fidani Yıl Bitmeden Dikeceğiz [Minister Pakdemirli: We Will Plant 252 Million Saplings Before the End of the Year]	13.08.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Written Answer to Parliamentary Question (7/48972)	17.08.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Written Answer to Parliamentary Question (7/48970)	17.08.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Written Answer to Parliamentary Question (7/51004)	22.09.2021
Min. of Agriculture and Forestry	Kamuoyunda Gündeme Gelen İddialar ve Gerçekler [Allegations and Facts on the Public Agenda]	September 2023
Directorate of Communications	Fahrettin Altun: Sözde yardım kampanyası devletimizi aciz göstermek için başlatılmıştır [Fahrettin Altun: The so-called aid campaign was started to show our state as helpless] <i>taken from</i> TRTHaber	2.08.2021
Directorate of Communications	İletişim Başkanı Altun: “38 ilimizde hemen hemen eş zamanlı olarak başlayan 174 yangının 160’ı kontrol altına alındı ve söndürüldü” [Communications Director Altun: “160 of the 174 fires that broke out almost simultaneously in our 38 provinces were brought under control and extinguished.”]	3.08.2021

The next step in my coding strategy is to define the code categories and to provide the coding frame. In order to develop a codebook, I depend on an approach, what Johnny Saldana calls a hybrid coding strategy.⁵⁴¹ Hybrid coding strategy mainly invites both deductive and inductive coding methods together. While deductive coding can be inferred from a predetermined theory or research, inductive coding is completely based on the original textual data itself.⁵⁴² In order to determine a deductive coding frame, I will rely on the tripartite nexus that I tried to justify in Chapter III. For the *security* pillar of the nexus, I predetermined four core security questions as a basis for constructing a security narrative. These questions construct the base of my deductive coding frame for the security part. For the *environment* pillar of the nexus, I mainly pay attention to the meaning attributed to the environment and the perceived drivers of deforestation in Turkey. Therefore, I take my deductive codes from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment's *Synthesis and Forest and Woodland Systems* reports and from the literature on drivers of deforestation that I elaborated in Chapter III for evaluating the meaning of forests and the drivers of deforestation.

On the other hand, however, I aim to make the coding strategy open to unveil possible alternative insights. Emergent and data-driven (inductive) coding makes such a movement possible. Therefore, I also tried to utilise inductive coding strategy. My inductive coding emerges from reading the textual data that I collected. Inductive coding strategy allowed me to infer codes apart from the deductive framework. Therefore, for the *politics* pillar of the nexus, I mainly derive my codes from the textual material I collected. Throughout my readings of the material, which is the first cycle of coding, I saw that the debates around OGM and its structure and policies regarding forests became the main point of concern regarding the politics of deforestation in Turkey.

With this hybrid strategy, I try to analyse how official and vernacular narratives construct security, environment and political narratives regarding forest fires of 2021

⁵⁴¹ Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2016), 75.

⁵⁴² Maene, 'Qualitative Content Analysis: A Practical Introduction', 241.

respectively. Are their main referent objects differing? Which sources of threats they prioritise? How can security be assured? How is the environment conceptualised and valued? How is the OGM debated during the forest fires? Such questions will basically be the ones that I aim to find an answer. Since Saldana encourages researchers to invent their own coding methods and data analytic processes,⁵⁴³ I argue that this hybrid coding strategy is coherent with my research purposes. My codebook for the official narrative is below.

Table 5.2. Codebook

Code Category	Code Definition
Security	
➤ Whose Security is at Stake? ○ Individual ○ Society ○ State ○ Planet Earth ➤ Sources of Threat ○ Voluntary ○ Involuntary ○ Unknown ➤ Who is in Charge? ○ State officers ○ Volunteers ○ Citizens ➤ Measures and Tools ○ Legitimate ○ Extraordinary	Code aims to cover referent object regarding the forest fires. All sub-codes come from the literature. Code aims to cover the perceived threat that is behind the fires. The literature categorised the reasons of forest fires into three groups. Elaboration of these reasons can be found in Chapter III. Code aims to unveil who is highlighted as the main (and legitimate) actor in dealing with the fires. Sub-codes come both from literature and readings of the data. Code aims to show the actions taken in the name of security and the ways with which the problem is dealt.
Environment	
➤ Meaning of Forests ○ Resource ○ Ecological ○ Biospheric ○ Amenities ○ Social ➤ Deforestation ○ Proximate/Direct ▪ Neoliberal Development ▪ Forest Fires ▪ Sacralisation ○ Underlying/Indirect ▪ Climate Change ▪ Changes (socio-political etc.)	Code aims to highlight how the forests is conceptualised. All sub-codes come from the literature which is elaborated in Chapter III. Code aims to show the perceived drivers of deforestation in Turkey. All sub-codes come from the literature that I elaborated in Chapter III.

⁵⁴³ Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 74.

Table 5.2. (continued)

Politics	
➤ OGM	Code aims to show how the OGM, which is the key institution in the management of forests, is politicised throughout the fires and in what ways. Sub-codes come from reading the textual material.
○ Overttechnicalisation	
○ Management	
○ Reforestation	
○ Forest Lands	
➤ Post-Fire Changes	Code aims to show the everyday ordinary dimension that is affected directly by the fires. Sub-code comes from the reading of the textual material.
○ Ontological (In)security	
➤ Accusations	Accusation code aims to shed light who blame whom during the fires.

Ensuring the reliability of codes is a central concern in qualitative analyses using human coders. Most of the researchers ensure the reliability of codes by the method of inter-coder reliability. Inter-coder reliability is a method assessing the consistency of the codes in a content analysis by checking a sample of coded documents with multiple coders.⁵⁴⁴ There are many formulas of calculating the consistency of the codes, such as Krippendorff's alpha, Cohen's kappa, Scotti's pi and Holsti's method.⁵⁴⁵ However, since most of my codes come from the literature, I did not employ inter-coder reliability. Instead, I utilised a method of reliability called *stability*. According to Klaus Krippendorff, stability depends on the repetitive testing of the codes by the researcher to "the degree to which a process is unchanging over time".⁵⁴⁶ In this method of reliability, the researcher recodes the same data after a certain time has passed.⁵⁴⁷ First cycle and second cycle coding serve this test-retest condition, which Krippendorff highlighted. However, since stability heavily relies on the researcher's decision-making processes, Krippendorff argues that it is the weakest reliability measure in content analysis.⁵⁴⁸ Nevertheless, my dissertation

⁵⁴⁴ Kimberly A. Neuendorf, 'Reliability for Content Analysis', in *Media Messages and PPublic Health: A Decisions Approach to Content Analysis*, ed. Amy B. Jordan et al., 1st ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 67.

⁵⁴⁵ Anton Oleinik et al., 'On the Choice of Measures of Reliability and Validity in the Content-Analysis of Texts', *Quality & Quantity* 48, no. 5 (2014): 2703–18.

⁵⁴⁶ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Sage Publications, 2018), 280.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

embraces reflexivity and the researcher's interpretation as its epistemological stance. Finally, the below sections will present the reporting of the analysis.

5.4.2. Reporting of the Analysis

After the first and second cycle coding, I have completed my coding process with a total of 868 codes. As I said above, I have started coding with the deductive codebook frame that I illustrated in Figure 2. During the coding process, I have also utilised inductive coding that mainly comes from the textual material. Some sub-codes of involuntary and voluntary threats, extraordinary and legitimate measures, and accusations for example, come basically from the textual data. I decided to distribute sub-codes of extraordinary and legitimate emergency measures according to their extremeness. As an interpretive act of coding, I decided whether the specific code brings an extreme situation or not in the final analysis. For example, I decided to situate "evacuation" sub-code as an extraordinary measure since it directly changes the living conditions of citizens without their will during the forest fires. However, I situate sub-codes of "house building", "subvention", "fire safety road", or "equipment", for example, as legitimate measures since they are basically defined and regulated already long before the forest fires. With "The Law on Measures to be Taken and Aids to be Provided due to Disasters Affecting Public Life" dated in 1959,⁵⁴⁹ Turkey regulated legally the ways she can take measures in such times. Therefore, these measures are seen as part of the understanding of "social state". The final template of my codebook is below with their specific frequencies.

Table 5.3. Final Template of Codebook with Frequencies

1 Security	
1.1 Who is in charge?	
1.1.1 Citizens	10
1.1.2 Volunteers	7
1.1.3 State Officers	93

⁵⁴⁹ 'Umumi Hayata Müessir Afetler Dolayisiyle Alinacak Tedbirlerle Yapilacak Yardimlara Dair Kanun', Pub. L. No. 7269 (1959).

Table 5.3. (continued)

1.2 Whose Security is at Stake?	
1.2.1 Planet Earth/Ecology	24
1.2.2 Society	5
1.2.3 Individual	16
1.2.4 State	11
1.3 Sources of Threat	
1.3.1 Unknown	7
1.3.2 Involuntary	
1.3.2.1 Human Irresponsibility	10
1.3.2.2 Geographic Conditions	3
1.3.2.3 Weather Conditions	12
1.3.2.4 Electric line	1
1.3.2.5 Global Warming	27
1.3.3 Voluntary	
1.3.3.1 Pyro-Terrorism	13
1.4 Measures and Tools	
1.4.1 Extraordinary	
1.4.1.1 Evacuation	14
1.4.1.2 Forbidden Area	1
1.4.1.3 Death Penalty	4
1.4.2 Legitimate	
1.4.2.1 Development Project	3
1.4.2.2 Foreign Aid	29
1.4.2.3 Solidarity	23
1.4.2.3.1 International Solidarity	26
1.4.2.4 Container and food	5
1.4.2.5 House building	20
1.4.2.6 Subvention	34
1.4.2.7 Fire Safety Road	3
1.4.2.8 Equipment	40
1.4.2.9 Top-down Surveillance	3
2 Environment	

Table 5.3. (continued)

2.1 Deforestation	
2.1.1 Underlying/Indirect	
2.1.1.1 Changes (socio-political etc.)	11
2.1.1.2 Climate Change	31
2.1.2 Proximate/Direct	
2.1.2.1 Sacralisation	30
2.1.2.2 Forest Fires	18
2.1.2.3 Neoliberal Development	19
2.2 Meaning of Forests	
2.2.1 Nation building/Forests as nation	17
2.2.2 Social / Millet Bahçesi	16
2.2.3 Amenities	6
2.2.4 Biospheric	1
2.2.5 Ecological	1
2.2.6 Resource	3
3 Politics	
3.1 Accusations	
3.1.1 Coordination among Institutions	8
3.1.2 Opposition	55
3.1.3 #HelpTurkey	11
3.1.4 Social Media	30
3.2 Post-Fire Changes	
3.2.1 Ontological (In)security	24
3.3 OGM	
3.3.1 Forest Lands - Relations with Forest Villagers	19
3.3.2 Reforestation	61
3.3.3 Overtechnicalisation	29
3.3.4 Management	34
TOTAL	868

Table 5.4. Code Matrix Scanner

	Dir. of Communic.	Minister Interior	Min. Agri. and Forestry	President	TOTAL
Citizens	0	1	0	9	10
Volunteers	0	2	2	3	7
State Officers	6	17	28	42	93
Planet Earth/Ecology	0	2	3	19	24
Society	0	0	4	1	5
Individual	0	4	3	9	16
State	2	0	3	6	11
Unknown	0	0	3	4	7
Human Irresponsibility	0	0	1	9	10
Geographic Conditions	0	0	3	0	3
Weather Conditions	0	0	9	3	12
Electric line	0	0	1	0	1
Global Warming	0	2	6	19	27
Pyro-Terrorism	0	2	0	11	13
Evacuation	0	6	4	4	14
Forbidden Area	0	1	0	0	1
Death Penalty	0	0	0	4	4
Development Project	0	0	2	1	3
Foreign Aid	0	1	8	20	29
Solidarity	0	3	0	20	23
International Solidarity	0	0	1	25	26
Container and food	2	3	0	0	5
House building	1	0	0	19	20
Subvention	1	3	10	20	34
Fire Safety Road	0	1	2	0	3
Equipment	0	4	7	29	40
Top-down Surveillance	0	1	1	1	3
Changes (socio- political etc.)	0	0	1	10	11
Climate Change	0	1	3	27	31
Sacralisation	0	0	1	29	30
Forest Fires	0	1	3	14	18
Neoliberal Development	0	0	3	16	19
Nation building/Forests as nat.	1	2	3	11	17
Social / Millet Bahçesi	0	0	2	14	16
Amenities	0	0	1	5	6
Biospheric	0	0	0	1	1
Ecological	0	0	0	1	1

Table 5.4. (continued)

Resource	0	0	1	2	3
Coordination among Inst.	0	0	2	6	8
Opposition	0	6	5	44	55
#HelpTurkey	3	1	0	7	11
Social Media	3	4	4	19	30
Ontological (In)security	0	0	7	17	24
Forest Lands - Relat...	0	0	9	10	19
Reforestation	0	0	23	38	61
Overtechnicalisation	0	2	12	15	29
Management	2	1	11	20	34
TOTAL	21	71	192	585	868

Code Matrix Scanner gives an idea as to the intensity of the distribution of codes in the document groups. As can be seen in the matrix, I divided my official narrative data set into four groups of documents, namely Directorate of Communications, Minister of Interior, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, and Presidency. Indeed, these four groups of documents represents four key government elite respectively, Fahrettin Altun, Süleyman Soylu, Bekir Pakdemirli, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan since most of the documents are the speeches or interviews of these persons. Therefore, matrix shows how many times each code is highlighted by these persons. It is important to note, again, that the quantity of documents is not equal and thus Erdoğan's voice dominates the narrative. Following sections unveil my analysis for each theme, namely security, environment, politics. I do this by using MAXQDA's one of the four main windows, which is the "Retrieved Segments". I, first, activate the relevant codes and then recall these codes from the documents. Then, I interpret the retrieved segments in their own.

5.4.3. Who is in charge?

The question of "*who is in charge?*" denotes "who counts as a security 'expert'"⁵⁵⁰, meaning that the prioritised actors who are responsible for ensuring security. It is one of the main questions of every scholarly investigation of security. In the official narrative, "state officers" is the one with the highest frequency (93) among other

⁵⁵⁰ Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, 223.

codes (citizens: 10; volunteers: 7) under the question of “*who is in charge?*”. It appears that in the official narrative, state officers (foresters in specific but the Turkish state in subtext) are seen as the key actor in dealing with the fires. Indeed, it is not surprising that government elites acknowledge the position of state officers in dealing with the security issue. It is the traditional security point of view that legitimises state officers as the providers of security and citizens as the consumers of security. Such an utterance positions local people (citizens) as passive security consumer. Examples of such an utterance by the Minister of Interior and the President follow respectively:

“Vatandaş, bu gayretimizi görüyor, devletin tüm kurumlarının gayretini görüyor. Bize de her gittiğimiz yerde teşekkür ediyor. İnşallah yangınları en kısa sürede söndüreceğiz.” [People see our efforts, they see the efforts of all state institutions. They thank us wherever we go. Insallah, we will extinguish the fires as soon as possible.]⁵⁵¹

“Şimdi vatandaşlarımızı bir defa hiçbir zaman biz kimsesiz bırakmadık, tabii bu bir güven getiriyor, benim diyor devletim var, dolayısıyla devletim beni asla açığa bırakmaz.” [We have never left our citizens orphaned, of course this brings confidence. They say I have my state, she will never leave me alone.]⁵⁵²

With this basic viewpoint, government elite reproduces their *raison d’etre*. However, there are two themes in which this *raison d’etre* is reproduced, which is worth mentioning. First theme is *the highlight of success and control* during the conduct of security operation. All the actors whose data are analysed stress how the government dealt successfully with the issue. In other words, the success and control subtext in the official data covers the deficiencies of the conduct of security and the sound of insecurity of local people. With this subtext, government elites tell citizens how the conduct of the security operation is successful and promises to recover the losses regardless of the size of the damage. The official narrative reproduces this subtext by justifying it with both domestic and international correlates. On the one hand, it does this domestically by underlying how the relevant ministers are

⁵⁵¹ T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, ‘Bakanımız Sn. Soylu İle Tarım ve Orman Bakanımız Sn. Pakdemirli Yangınlara İlişkin Açıklamalarda Bulundu’, 2021, <https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-soylu-ile-tarim-ve-orman-bakanimiz-sn-pakdemirli-yaninglara-iliskin-aciklamalarda-bulundu>.

⁵⁵² Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘A Haber Ortak Yayını “Başkan Erdoğan İle Gündem Özel”’, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/mulakatlar/1709/128921/a-haber-ortak-yayini-baskan-erdogan-ile-gundem-ozel->.

ubiquitously on the field; how the country developed its material capabilities both in dealing with crises and in reconstruction during the AKP era; and how the relevant officers are fighting with all their hearts.

“Türkiye'nin, mevcut kapasitesi ile afet yönetiminde dünyadaki en önemli aktörlerden birisi haline yükseldiğini anlatan Bakanımız Sn. Soylu, "Bundan 23 yıl önce afette kendi ülkesinin vatandaşına çare olamayan Türkiye, bugün arka arkaya gelen afetlere karşı aciz kalmayan, 'nerede bu devlet' dedirtmeyen, afet anı ve sonrasını yöneten bir ülke." dedi.” [Saying that Turkey has become one of the most important actors in the world in disaster management, Minister Mr. Soylu told: “Turkey, which could not provide remedy to its own citizens in disasters 23 years ago, is today a country that does not remain helpless in the face of successive disasters and does not make people say ‘where is this state’”.]⁵⁵³

On the other hand, official narrative does this by comparing how Turkey has been successful in comparison with other countries that faced with forest fires at the same time, such as the USA, Russian Federation, and certain European states. Especially President Erdoğan acknowledges the relatively quick recovery of Turkey from the fires although citizens of strong countries such as the USA cry out in fires.⁵⁵⁴ This subtext finds itself in the social media campaign conducted against “#HelpTurkey” during the fires. While many social media users and the opposition pay attention to the deficiencies of the government in dealing with fires, especially in terms of material incapacities such as the lack of helicopters and aerial firefighting vehicles, government elite and the supporters of the government started “#StrongTürkiye” campaign. However, “Foreign Aid” code unveils that Turkey benefitted a good amount of foreign aid in terms of material capabilities from different countries. Read in this way, arguments of the government elites lead to questions as to how prepared Turkey is to deal with the fires.

The second theme which is worth mentioning is about the context in which the conduct of security narrative is situated. Fighting against forest fires and the efforts

⁵⁵³ T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, ‘Bakanımız Sn. Soylu: Afetle Mücadele Bir Vatan Savunmasıdır’, 2022, <https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-soylu-afetle-mucadele-bir-vatan-savunmasidir>.

⁵⁵⁴ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “‘Sel Felaketinin İzlerini Süratle Silerek, Yaraları Sararak Bu Günleri En Kısa Sürede Geride Bırakacağız’”, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/128970/-sel-felaketinin-izlerini-suratle-silerek-yaralari-sararak-bu-gunleri-en-kisa-surede-geride-birakacagiz->.

of dealing with the issue is uttered as “*defending the homeland*”.⁵⁵⁵ Such a conceptualisation has implications in certain ways. Firstly, it makes easier to suppress opposition and critical voices that question the deficiencies and negligence of the government in public opinion. Opponents have been marginalised and accused of “adding fuel to the fire”. The main actor to which this accusation is directed is the main opposition party in Turkey, which is the CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – *Republican People’s Party*). An example of such an utterance by Erdoğan is below:

“Zaten Kılıçdaroğlu’nun yalandan başka bir sıfatı da yoktur. Böyle bir zamanda muhalefet ‘Acaba iktidara nasıl yardımcı olacağız?’ bunu düşünmesi gerekirken, bunu düşünmeyip tam aksine acaba yangına nasıl körükle gideriz bu işi yapıyorlar. Bunların yaptığı iş yangına körükle gitmek. Yani bunların eline bir körük daha verseniz, inanın ‘Ne yapıyorsun?’ demez. Onu da alır onunla beraber yangına gider.” [Anyway, Kılıçdaroğlu has no qualifications other than lying. At a time like this, although the opposition should have been thought ‘How can we help the government?’, they are not thinking about this. On the contrary, they think how we can add fuel to the fire. What they are doing is exactly adding fuel to the fire. I mean, if you put another bellows in their hands, believe me, they would not say ‘What are you doing?’. They will take it and go to the fire with it.]⁵⁵⁶

Secondly, this utterance positions the officers of OGM as “heroes” who sacrifice their lives for their country. Forests become the green homeland; forestry officers become soldiers; and if they die, they are honoured as martyrs. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry says that “after the military and the police, the forestry institution is one of the institutions that has the highest number of martyrs”.⁵⁵⁷ Thirdly, such an utterance helps governing elite to consolidate the citizens. “Solidarity” code highlighted by Erdoğan and Soylu appears as one of the most mentioned legitimate measures to deal with the issue, which I will elaborate later. Finally, such an utterance appoints a supra-political character to the struggle against forest fires. This is confirmed by the “Overtechnicalisation” code. Highlighting the struggle as a “technical job” de-politicises the issue which, again, functions as marginalising the critical voices.

⁵⁵⁵ T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, ‘Bakanımız Sn. Soylu: Afetle Mücadele Bir Vatan Savunmasıdır’.

⁵⁵⁶ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “‘Yeşil Vatanı Korumak İçin Cansiperane Mücadelemiz Devam Edecektir’”.

⁵⁵⁷ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Bakan Pakdemirli: Son 5 Günde 132 Yangından 125’ini Kontrol Atına Aldık, 7’si Devam Ediyor’, 2021, <https://www.tarimorman.gov.tr/Haber/5060/Bakan-Pakdemirli-Son-5-Gunde-132-Yangindan-125ini-Kontrol-Atina-Aldik-7si-Devam-Ediyor>.

5.4.4. Whose Security is at Stake?

As I quoted McDonald above, referent object conditions the way we perceive the nature of threat, the legitimate measures to deal with it, and the providers of security. When it comes to identifying referent object within the framework of forest fires, Planet Earth/Ecology appears as the code with the highest frequency. The code “Individual” has the second highest frequency; however, the major reason for this is the regular expressed damage assessment reports which includes how many people have been affected by the fires. State appears as the third most highlighted referent object in the documents. However, what is important to note here is that “state” is uttered as a referent object due to the need to protect it from the planetary changes. Therefore, it is again the balance of nature and ecology that is seen in danger. The two-sided relationship between climate change and deforestation is also acknowledged. Forest fires are seen as both a cause and a consequence of climate change. President Erdoğan says:

“Dünyadan eksilen her bir ağaç ya da tek damla su, gittikçe zorlaşan yaşam koşulları demektir. Bu anlamda iklim değişikliği, tüm toplumların ortak hareket etmesini gerektiren küresel bir krizdir.” [Every single or drop of water lost from the earth means increasingly difficult conditions. In this sense, climate change is a global crisis that requires collective action by all societies.]⁵⁵⁸

“Bir tarafta yanan devasa büyüklükteki orman alanları diğer tarafta yaşanan sel baskınları öteki tarafta süren kuraklık gibi değişen meteorolojik olaylar bize tabiatın ikazlarıdır.” [Changing meteorological events, such as huge areas of forests burning on one side, floods on the other and droughts on the other, are nature's warnings to us.]⁵⁵⁹

What is remarkable here is the stress that humankind is seen as both obliged to protect the nature and defined as the perpetrator damaging the Planet. Responsibility to protect the nature is attributed to a divine duty, a must ordered by the divine authority. In Erdoğan’s words:

⁵⁵⁸ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Çevreye Duyarlı Sürdürülebilir Ekonomi Ve İş Kadınlarının Rolü” Konferansında Yaptıkları Konuşma’, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/362/130678/-cevreye-duyarli-surdurulebilir-ekonomi-ve-is-kadınlarının-rolu-konferansında-yaptıkları-konuşma>.

⁵⁵⁹ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Daha Yeşil Bir Türkiye Hedefiyle, Son 19 Yıldır Cumhuriyet Tarihinin En Büyük Ağaçlandırma Seferberliğini Yürütüyoruz”, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/133431/-daha-yesil-bir-turkiye-hedefiyle-son-19-yildir-cumhuriyet-tarihinin-en-buyuk-agaclandirma-seferberligini-yurutuyoruz->.

“Tabiat, ilahi bir tecelli olarak insanlara emanet edilmiş canlı bir varlıktır.” [Nature is a living being entrusted to humans as a divine manifestation.]⁵⁶⁰

Moreover, this divine duty finds itself in the utterance of the policy of reforestation in Turkey. As I will elaborate later, policy of reforestation in Turkey is attributed to this holy duty. Conducting as a national campaign “Geleceğe Nefes” [Breath for the Future], Erdoğan justifies the policy of reforestation with the hadith of Prophet Muhammad:

“İklim krizinin gündemde giderek daha çok yer edindiği bir dönemde fidan dikerek "geleceğe bir nefes bırakan" herkese teşekkür eden Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, sözlerini şöyle sürdürdü: "Bizler, 'Yarın kıyametin kopacağını bilseniz bile elinizdeki fidanı dikiğiniz' düsturuna sahip bir medeniyetin mensuplarıyız.” [President Erdoğan thanked everyone who "left a breath for the future" by planting saplings at a time when the climate crisis is increasingly on the agenda, and continued his words as follows: "We are members of a civilisation with the motto 'Plant the sapling in your hand even if you know that the apocalypse will break tomorrow'.]⁵⁶¹

On the other hand, humankind is also seen as the perpetrator of disturbing the balance of nature. “Humankind’s ruthless exploitation of nature”⁵⁶² says Erdoğan is the main reason for the disruption of the order in nature. Neoliberal development policies, rent seeking and consumerist societal behaviour can be thought as the main drivers of this exploitation. Therefore, taking all this into consideration, it is normal to expect the perceived sources of threat and measures to be taken accordingly such as global warming as the nature of threat and mitigation and adaptation efforts as measures. However, when it comes to evaluate the sources of threat and measures, official narrative features interesting points.

5.4.5. Sources of Threat

As I mentioned in Chapter III, studies that have been conducted as to forest fires in Turkey accept that the great majority of forest fires are caused by people-induced

⁵⁶⁰ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘Dünya Çevre Günü Mesajı’, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/basin-aciklamalari/365/128163/dunya-cevre-gunu-mesaji>.

⁵⁶¹ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Daha Yeşil Bir Türkiye Hedefiyle, Son 19 Yıldır Cumhuriyet Tarihinin En Büyük Ağaçlandırma Seferberliğini Yürütüyoruz”.

⁵⁶² Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “21 Yılda Her Alanda Olduğu Gibi Tarım ve Sulama Alanında Da Tarihî Nitelikte Adımlar Attık”, 2023, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/150510/-21-yilda-her-alanda-oldugu-gibi-tarim-ve-sulama-alaninda-da-tarih-nitelikte-adimlar-attik->.

factors. The literature divides the sources of threat regarding forest fires into three groups: unknown, voluntary and involuntary. Therefore, here, I conducted coding according to these three groups. Code frequencies show that the mostly referred code defining the sources of forest fires is “Global Warming” (27). This is compatible with the results that appeared in the question “Whose Security at Stake?” above. However, it is also interesting that the second mostly referred code is “Pyro-Terrorism” (13). It seems contradictory while on the one hand seeing the global warming and related extreme weather conditions, and on the other hand a direct and politically motivated act of violence as the cause of fires. Moreover, another interesting point is while the Minister of Interior refers only to “Pyro-Terrorism” (2) and “Global Warming” (2), the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has never referred to “Pyro-Terrorism” (see. Figure 4). In Erdoğan’s words, however, “Pyro-Terrorism” and “Human Irresponsibility” take a good part along with global warming as the sources of threat. On the contrary, when the forestry statistics in 2021 released by the OGM is evaluated, it is seen that only 110 out of 2793 fires have been associated with intentional/voluntary threats, such as pyro-terrorism.⁵⁶³ Considering together, it can be said that the source of threat becomes a topic of confusion. Amidst all this confusion, the narrative that global warming is at the source of threat implies us that other “powerful” countries are also struggling with fires and emphasises that Turkey is still less affected by the issue.

Sn. Pakdemirli, "Bu yangınlar normal mi? Neden bu kadar yangın oluyor? Bu akut durum sadece ülkemizde mi yoksa başka ülkelerde de yaşanıyor mu?" sorularına dair genel bilgi vermek istediğini dile getirerek sözlerini şöyle sürdürdü: "Amerika'da, elbette bizden büyük ama, 1,36 milyon hektar alan yanmıştır. Bu, bizim ormanlık alanımızın aşağı yukarı 20'de 1'inden biraz daha fazladır. (...) Yani küresel sıcaklık ve kuraklıkla beraber tüm dünyada küresel anlamda ciddi bir yangın riski var. Rusya'da, Sibirya yılbaşından beri en az 1,88 milyon hektar orman alanı yangınlarda zarar gördü." Gerçekten akut bir dönem yaşandığını vurgulayan Sn. Pakdemirli, "Sadece Türkiye'nin başında olan bir musibet değil, yangınlarla uğraşmak. Tüm dünya yangınlarla uğraşiyor. Biz de uğraşyoruz, uğraşmaya devam edeceğiz".... [In order to answer the questions “Are these fires normal?”, “Why are there so many fires?”, “Is this acute situation only in our country or is it also happening in other countries?”, Mr. Pakdemirli said: “In the USA, of course it is bigger than us, but 1.36 million hectares have burned. This is a little more than 1 in 20 of our forest area. (...) In other words, with global heat and drought, there is a serious global fire risk all over the world. In Russia, Siberia, at least 1.88 million hectares of forest area have been damaged by fires since the beginning of the year.” Emphasizing that this

⁵⁶³ Orman Genel Müdürlüğü, ‘Ormancılık İstatistikleri 2021’.

is indeed an acute period, Mr. Pakdemirli continued: "Dealing with fires is not just a plague that Turkey is facing. The whole world is dealing with fires. We are also dealing with it and we will continue to do so."⁵⁶⁴

The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, also, emulates the struggle against fires to “fighting against 15 countries”, stating that “neither airplanes and tanks nor personnel are enough for such a war”.⁵⁶⁵ Such an excuse functions as a debunker for the accusations regarding the deficiency and negligence of the government by highlighting how enormous the security threat is.

Pyro-Terrorism, on the other hand, is uttered as another important source of threat by the government elite. A statement by Erdoğan, for example, delivers such a narrative:

“Geçen yıl terör örgütü elebaşlarının ormanları yakma talimatı vermesinin ardından ülkedeki orman yangını alanının iki katına çıktığını anımsatan Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, bu yangınların bir kısmının da benzer bir talimatla başlatılmış olma ihtimalini göz ardı etmediklerini söyledi.” [Reminding that the area of forest fires in the country doubled last year after terrorist organisation ringleaders gave instructions to burn forests, President Erdoğan said that they do not rule out the possibility that some of these fires were started with a similar instruction.]⁵⁶⁶

“Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatımızın verdiği bilgiler var, Emniyet İstihbarat’ın verdiği bu noktada bilgiler var. Ama şunu biliyoruz ki bunlar arasında ailesinde terör örgütü iltisaklı kişiler de var. Terör örgütünün sicilinde geçmişte orman yangınları olduğunu biliyoruz, geçen yıl biliyorsunuz Hatay’da bunları yaşadık ve bu Hatay’da yaşadıklarımızın içinde nitekim teröristler de çıktı.” [We have the information provided by our National Intelligence Agency, and by Police Intelligence at this point. In addition, we know that there are also people whose families have connections with the terrorist organisation. We know that the organisation has a record of forest fires in the past, you know we experienced these in Hatay last year, and what we experienced in there actually included terrorists.]⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁴ T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, ‘Bakanımız Sn. Soylu İle Tarım ve Orman Bakanımız Sn. Pakdemirli Yangınlara İlişkin Açıklamalarda Bulundu’.

⁵⁶⁵ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Bakan Pakdemirli Marmaris’te Koordinasyon Toplantısında Konuştu’, 2021, <https://www.tarimorman.gov.tr/Haber/5065/Bakan-Pakdemirli-Marmariste-Koordinasyon-Toplantisinda-Konustu>.

⁵⁶⁶ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Devletimiz Yangınların Söndürülmesi, Hasarların Tazmini, Zarar Gören Yerlerin Yeniden İhyası İçin Çalışmaktadır”, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/128856/-devletimiz-yanginlarin-sondurulmesi-hasarlarin-tazmini-zarar-goren-yerlerin-yeniden-ihyasi-icin-calismaktadir->.

⁵⁶⁷ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘Kanal D - CNN Türk Cumhurbaşkanı Özel Yayını’, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/mulakatlar/1709/128960/kanal-d-cnn-turk-cumhurbaskani-ozel-yayini->.

Indeed, a group called “Children of Fire Initiative”, believed to be affiliated with the terrorist organisation Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), claimed responsibility for the forest fires in 2020.⁵⁶⁸ Reminding the forest fires of Hatay in 2020, Erdoğan reproduces the threat identity of PKK, and thus forest fires become a site of counterterrorism. However, his narrative focuses mostly on suspicions instead of concrete evidence. In response to a question on whether there is concrete evidence of the cause of fires, Erdoğan’s answer indicates that a thorough investigation is underway. Throughout my analysis on the official narrative, such an ambiguousness dominates the narrative on the sources of threat regarding the fires. This ambiguousness creates a kind of “*information gap*”⁵⁶⁹ about the perpetrator. Information gaps which can be defined simply as the absence of knowledge about what is happening have an important place in the social construction of anxiety and fear.⁵⁷⁰ Therefore, I will address these information gaps in the vernacular narrative as well.

5.4.6. Measures and Tools

The last question in my framework of security narrative was “*what are the key means of realising it?*” The question can help understanding the types of legitimate and extraordinary emergency measures conducted in the name of ensuring security. Above, I explained the rationale of my operationalisation of sub-codes. When I decide about the extremity of the relevant emergency measure, I consider if that measure is already mentioned in a law. For example, some measures have been mentioned in “The Law on Measures to be Taken and Aids to be Provided due to Disasters Affecting Public Life”, adopted in 1959. Although evacuation of a community in disaster areas is also regulated under specific conditions in the law, this is subject to approval by Presidential Decree after being reviewed by a committee to be established by representatives of relevant ministries (Article 16).

⁵⁶⁸ Kamil Yılmaz, ‘Claiming and Glorifying Environmental Terrorism Online: The Case of PKK’s “Children of Fire Initiative”’, Global Network on Extremism & Technology, 2020, <https://gnet-research.org/2020/12/15/claiming-and-glorifying-environmental-terrorism-online-the-case-of-pkks-children-of-fire-initiative/>.

⁵⁶⁹ Vaughan-Williams, *Vernacular Border Security: Citizens’ Narratives of Europe’s Migration Crisis*, 122–30.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 122–23.

However, I also considered whether the specific emergency measure reproduces an extreme situation to the normal daily lives of citizens. Therefore, I decided to situate “evacuation” sub-code as an extraordinary measure since it directly changes the living conditions of citizens without their will during the forest fires. Therefore, measures mentioned in the law are seen as part of the understanding of “social state”, and thus I collected them under the code of legitimate emergency measures. Evacuation, death penalty and prohibitions felt under the extraordinary measures.

Regarding the extraordinary emergency measures, “evacuation” (14) is the most prioritised emergency measure in the official narrative, followed by death penalty (4) which is abolished in 2004 in Turkey and still not in force. Evacuation has been conducted as the main security measure by the governing elite. The security bureaucracy has decided to implement evacuation as soon as the fires threaten residential areas. Police, gendarmerie, and Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency have been uttered as the authorised security professionals.⁵⁷¹ As a precautionary measure, evacuation prevented civilians from entering the fire zone, thus leaving the task of ensuring security exclusively to professionals. However, this approach has been widely criticised by the vernacular narrative.

Uttering “death penalty”, on the other hand, is an interesting point since it was abolished in 2004. As can be seen in the Code Matrix Scanner, Erdoğan is the only authority uttering death penalty as a deterrent law. Indeed, Erdoğan’s reference does not come from vacuum. With the amendment brought to the Forest Law No. 6831 by Law No. 4114 in 1995, the penalties for forest fires were increased. For the first time, “heavy imprisonment for life” and “death penalty” were also applied to forest crimes. According to the amendment, if the act of burning forest results in death, the perpetrator will be sentenced to “heavy imprisonment for life”. If the crime of burning forest is committed for terrorist purposes, the perpetrator will be punished with the death penalty.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷¹ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Bakan Pakdemirli; “31 Yangın Kontrol Altında, 10 Yangında Çalışmalar Devam Ediyor”’, 2021, <https://www.tarimorman.gov.tr/Haber/5056/Bakan-Pakdemirli-31-Yangin-Kontrol-Altinda-10-Yanginda-Calismalar-Devam-Ediyor>.

⁵⁷² Yusuf Güneş, ‘Orman Suçlarının Ceza Hukuku Açısından İncelenmesi’, *Journal of the Faculty of Forestry Istanbul University* 54, no. 1 (2004): 146.

Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, şöyle konuştu: "Ben de aynı kanaatteyim, caydırıcı bir ceza [orman yangını suçlarıyla ilgili]. Ben de diyorum ki ucu nereye dayanıyor idama mı, idam olmalı. Sultan Fatih ne diyor, 'Ormanlarımdan bir ağaç kesenin boynun vururum' diyor. Bu iş o kadar önemli. Canım canım bütün ormanları yakıyoruz. Sadece ormanlar mı? Bütün haşerat, hayvanlar hepsi bu ormanlarla beraber ne oluyor, onlar da yanıyor. [President Erdoğan spoke as follows: "I also share the same opinion, there should be a deterrent punishment [regarding forest crimes]. I also say, where does it lead to, the death penalty? It should be the death penalty. What did Mehmed the Conqueror say, "I will cut off the neck of anyone who cuts down a tree from my forests." This matter is that important. All the beloved forests are burning. Is it just the forests? All the insects and animals, they are also burning alive."}]⁵⁷³

However, the reintroduction of the death penalty has been one of the arguments Erdoğan had used before on various issues, such as the failed coup attempt in 2016 and in cases of homicides of women during which the public tension is peaked. Moreover, he reminds that such a reintroduction requires a constitutional change.⁵⁷⁴ Although the discourse of death penalty may be a populist political trump card for the most-awaited constitutional change for Erdoğan, it demonstrates how existential the threat is. From Mehmet the Conqueror's words about forests to the introduction of the death penalty for forest crimes during the Republican era, forest fires have been considered a vital issue which can always bring extraordinary measures into force.

In terms of legitimate emergency measures, several different measures are prioritised. The issue of "Foreign Aid" is one of them. The discussions revolving around foreign aid during forest fires should also be considered as an extension of the debate over "#HelpTurkey" campaign. While having securitised #HelpTurkey campaign by claiming that it portrayed Turkey as helpless and in need of assistance, the Ministers and Erdoğan simultaneously declared that they requested assistance from different countries. Countries such as Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia, Croatia, Spain, Ukraine are especially highlighted by Erdoğan as demonstrating solidarity in the best

⁵⁷³ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 'Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Marmaris'teki Yangın Koordinasyon Merkezi'ni Ziyaret Etti', 2022, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/138490/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-marmaris-teki-yangin-koordinasyon-merkezi-ni-ziyaret-etti>.

⁵⁷⁴ TRT Haber, 'Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: İdam Konusu Gündeme Gelebilir ve Tartışmaya Açılabilir', 2022, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-idam-konusu-gundeme-gelebilir-ve-tartismaya-acilabilir-691926.html>.

way possible.⁵⁷⁵ Erdoğan also stated that he requested aid from Russia while they were also struggling with fires.

“Mesela Rusya yanarken ben Sayın Putin’le görüştüm, sağ olsun üç tane uçak bize o haldeyken gönderdi ve 4 tane de helikopter bu noktada yine gönderdi ve onlar da bizim şu andaki bu çalışmaların içerisinde yer alıyor.” [For example, I asked Mr. Putin while Russia was burning, thank God he sent three planes to us in that situation and four helicopters later now, and these planes and helicopters are also taking part in our current work.]⁵⁷⁶

In other words, these statements confirm that Turkey had a lack of equipment for firefighting and was in need of foreign aid. Although #HelpTurkey campaign message had the similar semantic function, governing elites securitised the campaign which I will elaborate later in politics narrative. What is paradoxical here is that #HelpTurkey is securitised as a disinformation operation designed to show Turkey as poor and in need of protection.⁵⁷⁷ However, the highlights of the codes of Foreign Aid and International Solidarity show that Turkey asked for help officially. President Erdoğan himself thanks the countries which sent support to Turkey during fires and mentions the importance of the international cooperation in these times.⁵⁷⁸ Moreover, President Erdoğan called for a fund drive to relief the fire and flood victims’ losses. The Minister of Interior’s quotation below shows the amount of fund drive collected by the donators.

“Şurada çok büyük bir kampanya yapmamamıza rağmen, yani sel meselesinde ve yangın meselesinde tam tamına şu ana kadar 966 milyon lira bir yardım toplandı, Sayın Cumhurbaşkanımızın bir çağrısıyla 966 milyon, yaklaşık Kuveyt’in de göndereceği bir 5 milyon dolar var onla beraber 1 milyar yani 1 katrilyonun üzerine çıkan bir yardım kampanyasıyla inşallah hem devletimizin, milletimizin yaralarını hem vatandaşımız, milletimizin yaralarını sarma konusunda el birliğiyle bir hareketlilik ortaya koydu.” [Although we did not conduct a big fund drive, exactly 966 million liras of fund have been collected so far for the flood and fire issue. 966 million with just a call from our President, approximately 5 million dollars will be sent by Kuwait, together with that, with an aid campaign that will exceed 1 billion.

⁵⁷⁵ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘Kanal D - CNN Türk Cumhurbaşkanı Özel Yayını’.

⁵⁷⁶ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘A Haber Ortak Yayını “Başkan Erdoğan ile Gündem Özel”’.

⁵⁷⁷ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Yeşil Vatanı Korumak İçin Cansiperane Mücadelemiz Devam Edecektir”.

⁵⁷⁸ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Daha Yeşil Bir Türkiye Hedefiyle, Son 19 Yıldır Cumhuriyet Tarihinin En Büyük Ağaçlandırma Seferberliğini Yürütüyoruz”.

God willing, we have shown a joint action in healing the wounds of both our state and our nation, and our citizens.]⁵⁷⁹

I argue that by securitising the #HelpTurkey campaign, governing elites are attempting to securitise the opposition and the dissident voices. Moreover, my reading of Foreign Aid code shows that there is actually a distinction regarding asking help. While asking and accepting help officially is not problematised and promoted in terms of developing international solidarity, people's demand of asking help is securitised as it diminishes the prestige of the state. Governing elite wants to control over who can ask help. As a complementary move to this, my reading of the code of "Solidarity" reveals governing elites' attempt to consolidate the mass. Erdoğan highlights the importance of being united in such disaster times. Therefore, actions such as #HelpTurkey, and more generally all dissident and interrogant voices, are also securitised since they are also threatening the unity of the nation. Suppressing such dissenting voices helps consolidating the mass, turning the direction from critics to the disaster itself.

"Bizi üzen nedir biliyor musunuz? Böyle bir zamanda bir olmamız lazım, beraber olmamız lazım, iri olmamız lazım, diri olmamız lazım, kardeş olmamız lazım, milletçe bu milleti ayağa kaldırmamız lazım ama onlar bakıyorsunuz hâlâ gelip 'Erdoğan'a ben nasıl vurayım da ona bir yerden yara vereyim' dertleri bu. Yara veremezsin, biz bu milletle beraberiz, milletimizle beraber bu yola devam edeceğiz. Allah'ın izniyle biz bir ölür, bin diriliriz, aşıyoruz aşacağız işte." [Do you know what makes us sad? At a time like this, we need to be united, we need to be together, we need to be strong, we need to be alive, we need to be brothers and sisters, we need to get this nation on its feet, but you see that they [dissidents] still come and say, 'How can I hit Erdoğan and hurt him?' This is their concern. You cannot hurt us, we are with this nation, we will continue this path together with our nation. With God's permission, we die once and resurrect a thousand times, we are overcoming and we will overcome.]⁵⁸⁰

Another directly related topic of debate during fires was about "Equipment" and the debate around the planes of Turkish Aeronautical Association (*Türk Hava Kurumu* – THK). Minister of Agriculture and Forestry highlighted in most of his speeches that all the vehicles and equipment that can be used in firefighting would be used in

⁵⁷⁹ T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, 'Bakanımız Sn. Soyulu: Şu Ana Kadar 966 Milyon Lira Yardım Toplandı', 2021, <https://icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-soyulu-su-ana-kadar-966-milyon-lira-yardim-toplandi>.

⁵⁸⁰ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, "'Sel Felaketinin İzlerini Süratle Silerek, Yaraları Sararak Bu Günleri En Kısa Sürede Geride Bırakacağız'".

maximum.⁵⁸¹ Accordingly, street sprinklers and fire trucks from other provinces were sent to the fire zone. Most of the documents of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry highlights the numbers of vehicles and personnels at duty. The importance of “numbers” in critical security studies has been increasingly studied and recognised. While numbers have a function in determining the scale of threats or in governing threats with algorithms,⁵⁸² they can also function as signalling the political determination in addressing security threats.⁵⁸³ Therefore, addressing the increasing numbers of vehicles and personnels at duty shows how governing elites are determined to handle firefighting. Minister Pakdemirli’s below quotation, for example, posits such a determination:

“Risk yönetimi çerçevesinde artan yangınlara karşı yine hava ve kara müdahale araçlarını hızla artırdık. Örneğin 28 Temmuz’da 49 yangına envanterimizdeki 1 uçak, 21 helikopter ve 206 arazözle müdahale ederken 31 Temmuz’da 107’ye ulaşan yangınlara da 6 uçak, 36 helikopter, 736 arazözle müdahale ettik. 4 Ağustos’tan sonra da 16 uçak, 56 helikopter, 850 arazöz ve su tankeriyle de etkin müdahalemize devam ediyoruz.” [Within the framework of risk management, we have rapidly increased our air and land response vehicles against increasing fires. For example, on July 28, we responded to 49 fires with 1 aircraft, 21 helicopters and 206 street sprinkles in our inventory, while on July 31, we responded to the fires that reached 107 with 6 aircraft, 36 helicopters and 736 street sprinkles. After August 4, we continue our effective response with 16 aircraft, 56 helicopters, 850 street sprinkles and water tankers.]⁵⁸⁴

However, in the very beginning of forest fires, the lack of aircraft and helicopters and the incapability of the ones in the THK inventory were among the subjects of heavy criticism. One of the written parliamentary questions asked by a CHP member of parliament inquiries the failure of the OGM in firefighting and the situation of the planes in THK inventory.⁵⁸⁵ In the question, the Ministry and OGM are accused of

⁵⁸¹ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Bakan Pakdemirli: Son 5 Günde 132 Yangından 125’ini Kontrol Atına Aldık, 7’si Devam Ediyor’.

⁵⁸² Louise Amoore and Rita Raley, ‘Securing with Algorithms: Knowledge, Decision, Sovereignty’, *Security Dialogue* 48, no. 1 (2017): 3–10.

⁵⁸³ Lee Jarvis, ‘Counting Security in the Vernacular: Quantification Rhetoric in “Everyday”(in) Security Discourse’, *International Political Sociology* 17, no. 3 (2023): 5.

⁵⁸⁴ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Pakdemirli; “44 İlde Meydana Gelen 197 Adet Yangının 185’i Kontrol Altında”’, 2021, <https://www.tarimorman.gov.tr/Haber/5062/Pakdemirli-44-Ilde-Meydana-Gelen-197-Adet-Yanginin-185i-Kontrol-Altinda>.

not being adequately prepared for fires and of not using public resources correctly. Responding to this question, Minister Mr. Pakdemirli reminds that THK is not an institution affiliated to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry⁵⁸⁶ and argues that planes in THK inventory “is not capable of flying, and even if it flies, it is not capable of performing”.⁵⁸⁷ President Erdoğan, on the other hand, makes a harsher criticism of THK. Below, a direct quote shows how Erdoğan turns the debate into a corruption issue. Indeed, his criticism transcends the corrupt structure of THK and directly associates this corruption to the CHP. It is, for Erdoğan, the “CHP mentality” that allows this corruption of the association that he links with the CHP. Thus, “CHP mentality”, in Erdoğan’s utterance, becomes a threat.

“Birkaç yıl önce kurumun elindeki uçakların yetersiz olduğunu, Türk Hava Kurumu’nun mezarlığa döndüğünü ve mevcut yapısıyla bir yere varılmayacağını söylemişim ben, çünkü orayı bir ziyaretimde hâli gördüm. Türk Hava Kurumu yetkilileri gerekli adımları atmadığı gibi, çalışır durumdaki uçakların da bakımını yaptırmayarak, hepsini adeta çürümeye terk etmişler. Peki, o dönemde de kurumun arkasında kim vardı? CHP zihniyeti vardı ve böyle bir adım atmadılar. Şimdi çıkmış Türk Hava Kurumu’nu çalıştırmıyor, diyorlar. Türk Hava Kurumu’nu çalışamaz hale getiren sizsiniz. Kurumun finansal sıkıntısı sebebiyle bu bakım ve onarım ihtiyacı giderilemediği için uçaklar hâlihazırda bile uçuşa elverişli değil. Ve çok daha açık, net konuşuyorum, kurumun içine düştüğü durumu kurumu bu hale getirenlerin kara propagandalarıyla hükümete yöneltme çabalarını doğrusu ben hayretle izliyorum, dürüst olun, samimi olun. Ve geçmişine baktığımız zaman Türk Hava Kurumu’nun, orada zaten CHP zihniyetini göreceksiniz.” [A few years ago, I said that aircrafts in the inventory were insufficient, that THK had turned into a graveyard and that it would not get anywhere with its current structure, because I saw its situation during a visit there. THK officials did not take the necessary steps and left all of the aircrafts to rot. Who was behind the association at that time? It was the CHP mentality. Now, they are saying that we do not let THK works. Indeed, they are the ones who made THK dysfunctional. Since the maintenance and repair needs of the association could not be met due to its financial difficulties, aircrafts are not currently ready to duty. And more clearly, I am watching with astonishment the situation that the association has found itself in and the efforts of those who brought the association to this situation to direct it towards the government with their black

⁵⁸⁵ ‘Parliamentary Question’, TBMM, 2021, <https://cdn.tbmm.gov.tr/KKBSPublicFile/D27/Y4/T7/WebOnergeMetni/a0accdc3-a205-40c3-9de4-c198fee15a5a.pdf>.

⁵⁸⁶ ‘Written Answer to Parliamentary Question’, TBMM, 2021, <https://cdn.tbmm.gov.tr/KKBSPublicFile/D27/Y4/T7/WebOnergeMetni/49846b94-c65a-4d62-a12e-302cd573a528.pdf>.

⁵⁸⁷ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Bakan Pakdemirli: 53 İlde Çıkan 275 Orman Yangınının 272’sini Kontrol Altına Aldık’, 2021, <https://www.tarimorman.gov.tr/Haber/5067/Bakan-Pakdemirli-53-Ilde-Cikan-275-Orman-Yangininin-272sini-Kontrol-Altina-Aldik>.

propaganda. Be honest, be sincere. And when we look at its past, you will see the CHP mentality there at THK.]⁵⁸⁸

House building and subventions are among the most prioritised post-fire rebuilding measures anticipated by the governing elite. Construction has been uttered as one of the proudest achievements of the AKP's political history. Erdoğan links construction with power. In terms of dealing with the bitter effects of fires, Erdoğan stressed his belief in a rapid rebuilding through Governmental Mass Housing Administration (*Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı* - TOKİ) which operated under the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change. Indeed, rapid rebuilding and the number of subventions become an international indicator of a powerful state in Erdoğan's words:

“Avrupa'daki bazı şehirlerde yaşanan sel felaketlerinde ortaya çıkan altyapı ve üstyapı kayıpları yıllardır hâlâ telafi edilememişken, biz birkaç haftada arama-kurtarma, birkaç ayda yıkıntıların kaldırılması, bir yılda da yeni konut ve iş yerlerinin inşası çalışmalarını tamamlayabilen bir yönetim sergiliyoruz.” [While the infrastructure and superstructure losses incurred in flood disasters in some cities in Europe have not been compensated for years, we are exhibiting a management that can complete search and rescue operations in a few weeks, removal of debris in a few months, and construction of new housing and workplaces in a year.]⁵⁸⁹

Two points deserve attention here. The first is about elites' belief that rapid rebuilding will bring normalise the post-fire ontological insecurity of the disaster victims. Indeed, Mayor of Gündoğmuş, for example, argued that “citizens that have old houses will say, ‘I wish our house had burnt down, too’”⁵⁹⁰, reminding how TOKİ will build pretty houses with a mortgage system. Two years after the fires, Erdoğan presented the keys of the completed houses to the villagers in a ceremony and said when the images of the new houses are shown in the screen “you see the beauty of these houses. We made a promise, we kept our promises to our brothers from Manavgat, we are happy about this because the AKP government keep its

⁵⁸⁸ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘Kanal D - CNN Türk Cumhurbaşkanı Özel Yayını’.

⁵⁸⁹ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “‘Milletimizi Yüksek Enflasyondan Korumak Adımları Birer Birer Atıyoruz’”, 2022, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/135540/-milletimizi-yuksekenflasyondan-koruyacak-adimlari-birer-birer-atiyoruz->.

⁵⁹⁰ Cumhuriyet, ‘AKP’li Belediye Başkanından Skandal Açıklama: “Vatandaş Keşke Bizim de Evimiz Yansaydı Diyecek”’, 2021, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/akpli-belediye-baskani-skandal-aciklama-vatandas-keske-bizim-de-evimiz-yansaydi-diyecek-1857399>.

promises.”⁵⁹¹ The official narrative argues that completion of new houses makes local people forget their lost ones and in that regard house building is seen as a success.

The second point unveils a much deeper function of house building in governing elites’ thinking. Erdoğan highlights in the same ceremony that these new houses reflect the “change in architectural mentality” in Turkey.⁵⁹² It can be said that governing elites interpret the post-disaster construction activities as an urban transformation project as well. Therefore, these post-fire houses are described as prototypes of the big project. Erdoğan later defines the main idea of this change in architectural mentality as horizontal instead of vertical building that is suitable for the environment in which the building is placed.⁵⁹³ By conducting such an architectural mentality change in the fire-affected villages, governing elites transforms the everyday spaces of local people without consulting the people live in there.

The last point in *measures and tools* is the narrative of technologisation during firefighting. I will evaluate this in more detail in the reading of “Overtechnicalisation” code. However, the point here is the governing elites’ stress on the use of top-down surveillance measures in providing security. Top-down surveillance is a common and known method of security measure in firefighting. However, the stress here is that it is becoming increasingly high-tech by taking drones and unmanned aerial vehicles into the inventory of OGM.⁵⁹⁴ It is believed that with the measure of top-down surveillance coupled with high-tech vehicles, instant intervention capacity of Turkey in firefighting would be accelerated.

⁵⁹¹ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “‘Teknolojinin Verdiği İmkânlarla Hem Altyapımızı Güçlendirmeye Hem Afet Müdahale Sistemimizi Geliştirmeye Devam Edeceğiz’”, 2023, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/142448/-teknolojinin-verdigi-imb-nlarla-hem-altyapimizi-guclendirmeye-hem-afet-mudahale-sistemimizi-gelistirmeye-devam-edecegiz->.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘KANAL 7 Ortak Yayını “Cumhurbaşkanı Gündem Özel”’, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/mulakatlar/1709/130071/kanal-7-ortak-yayini-cumhurbaskani-gundem-ozel->.

⁵⁹⁴ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “‘Daha Yeşil Bir Türkiye Hedefiyle, Son 19 Yıldır Cumhuriyet Tarihinin En Büyük Ağaçlandırma Seferberliğini Yürütüyoruz’”.

5.4.7. Drivers of Deforestation

This section turns the focus of narrative from security to environment within the framework of 2021 forest fires in Turkey. In understanding the environmental narrative, I take two broad themes, namely the drivers of deforestation and the meaning of environment. The main purpose of this section is to understand how governing elites present a narrative about the environment, in the context of the 2021 forest fires.

When it comes to identifying the underlying drivers of deforestation, official narrative prioritises the harmful effects of climate change. Indeed, climate change is interpreted as a consequence of the Anthropocene era by Erdoğan. Erdoğan mentioned the deteriorated relationship between humanity and nature in several different documents. Rapid technological and industrial developments, says Erdoğan, are the main dynamics that have altered the way humans interacted with the nature.⁵⁹⁵ However, this recognition does not yield a self-criticism. Instead, Erdoğan adopts a post-colonial mindset and argues that:

“Ülkemizin iklim değişikliğinin sebebi olarak gösterilen insan ürünü sorunlarda neredeyse hiçbir payı yoktur. Buna rağmen iklim değişikliğiyle mücadele çerçevesinde atılan uluslararası adımların tamamında yer aldık, taraf olduk, yükümlülüklerimizi harfiyen yerine getirdik, getiriyoruz.” [Our country has almost no share in the man-made problems that are shown as the cause of climate change. Despite this, we have taken part in all international collaborations conducted within the framework of combating climate change, we have been a party to them, we have fulfilled all of our obligations, and we continue to do so.]⁵⁹⁶

Moreover, President Erdoğan remarks the disadvantageous position of Turkey being in the Mediterranean basin which is among the regions most affected by climate change. In addition to being in this region, Erdoğan adds, 54 percent of the Turkey’s forests consist of areas susceptible to forest fires.⁵⁹⁷ Stating that they have started the

⁵⁹⁵ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘Dünya Çevre Günü Mesajı’.

⁵⁹⁶ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “BM Barış Gücü Askerlerinin KKTC’deki Müdahalesi Asla Kabul Edilebilir Bir Durum Değildir”, 2023, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/149086/-bm-baris-gucu-askerlerinin-kktc-deki-mudahalesi-asla-kabul-edilebilir-bir-durum-degildir->.

⁵⁹⁷ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Daha Yeşil Bir Türkiye Hedefiyle, Son 19 Yıldır Cumhuriyet Tarihinin En Büyük Ağaçlandırma Seferberliğini Yürütüyoruz”.

“green development revolution” for the 2053 targets within the scope of the Paris Climate Agreement, Erdoğan places reforestation efforts at the centre of this revolution.⁵⁹⁸ Reforestation, thus, become an important topic within the framework of struggling with deforestation. Thus, it shows that Turkey takes the zero-emissions obligations and goals framed by the Paris Agreement seriously. Reforestation is seen as the basic measure to sustain these obligation and goals. Reminding these obligations, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry highlights also the reports of IPCC remarking the importance of Paris agreement and emphasises that the Ministry revise the Fire Fighting Action Plan based on these reports.⁵⁹⁹

Regarding the proximate/direct drivers of deforestation, on the other hand, governing elite priorities the forest fires as the most proximate drive of deforestation. Erdoğan argues that “another danger that awaits our world is that forests, which are among the most important carbon sinks, are being destroyed both by land use and by fires.”⁶⁰⁰ However, sacralisation of fires and the debate around neoliberal development which affects land use appear important points in the official narrative that have to be mentioned. By the code of “sacralisation”, I depend on Pinar Bilgin’s earlier works on the conceptualisation of sacralisation. Bilgin defines sacralisation as “a process of rendering things ‘sacred’, to move them beyond everyday political deliberation...”⁶⁰¹ Although the context in which Bilgin use the concept differs, here I use sacralisation as the fact that governing elite’s description of the fires as a disaster coming from the God’s will. It, then, I argue functions as depoliticising the issue. It does so by turning the focus from critiques about the incompetence of the government to consolidation of people by attributing incompetence to the magnitude of the natural disaster. While the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry argues that Turkey is struggling with an

⁵⁹⁸ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘Milli Ağaçlandırma Günü Fidan Dikim Töreni’nde Yaptıkları Konuşma’, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/133453/milli-agaclandirma-gunu-fidan-dikim-toreni-nde-yaptiklari-konusma>.

⁵⁹⁹ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Pakdemirli; “44 İlde Meydana Gelen 197 Adet Yangının 185’i Kontrol Altında”’; T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Bakan Pakdemirli: 53 İlde Çıkan 275 Orman Yangınının 272’sini Kontrol Altına Aldık’.

⁶⁰⁰ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘BM 76. Genel Kurulu’nda Yaptıkları Konuşma’, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/130649/bm-76-genel-kurulu-nda-yaptiklari-konusma>.

⁶⁰¹ Pinar Bilgin, ‘Sacralisation: Defying the Politicisation of Security in Turkey’, *European Review of International Studies* 5, no. 3 (2018): 99.

unprecedented acute event,⁶⁰² Erdoğan highlights the importance of being a nation in such disaster times.

“Böylesine bir felaketi dahi istismar edenlere rağmen milletimizle birlikte bu büyük afetin üstesinden gelmeyi başardık.” [Despite those who exploited such a disaster, we managed to overcome this major disaster together with our nation.]⁶⁰³

Moreover, in certain cases, Erdoğan refers to the understanding of *imtihan* [test] in Islam. *İmtihan* refers to the verse in Quran saying that Allah “created humans ... in order to test them” (76:2). Disasters or any other disadvantages that humans experience are supposed to be tests by the God, in other words. Therefore, Erdoğan defines forest fires in certain contexts as “test”, that transcends beyond human capability to deal with.

“Coğrafyamızdaki imtihanlarımızdan biri de tabii afetlerle oldu, hâlâ oluyor. Yangınlar, seller, heyelanlar, kuraklık ve en önemlisi deprem afetleri ülkemizin dört bir yanında ciddi hasarlara yol açıyor.” [One of our tests in our geography was and still is with natural disasters. Fires, floods, landslides, droughts and most importantly earthquakes cause serious damage all around our country.]⁶⁰⁴

On the other hand, the debate around neoliberal development which affects land use was another point during the forest fires in terms of deforestation. The debate primarily arises from concerns that, following forest fires in Turkey—particularly in tourism-developed regions—burned areas will be repurposed for hotel construction. The background of these discussions depends on the Tourism Incentive Law, which came into force in 1982. During the term of Turgut Özal, who served as Prime Minister between 1983-1989 and as President between 1989-1993, tourism policies gained momentum. During his term, a significant development was seen in the tourism sector, starting from the Mediterranean Region, and the lands of many

⁶⁰² T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Pakdemirli; “44 İlde Meydana Gelen 197 Adet Yangının 185’i Kontrol Altında”’.

⁶⁰³ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “‘Her Alanda Huzurla Hayatımızı Sürdürebilmemiz, Hepimizin Aşısı Olmasına ve Aşılarını Tamamlamasına Bağlıdır’”, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/130066/-her-alanda-huzurla-hayatimizi-surdurebilmemiz-hepimizin-asi-olmasına-ve-asılarını-tamamlamasına-bağlıdır->.

⁶⁰⁴ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “‘Türkiye’yi Hedefleriyle Buluşturma Mücadelemiz Hız Kesmeden Sürüyor’”, 2023, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/147882/-türkiye-yi-hedefleriyle-bulusturma-mucadelemiz-hiz-kesmeden-suruyor->.

regions were allocated to touristic construction within the legal framework of Tourism Incentive Law.⁶⁰⁵ Despite this, however, Forest Law No. 6831 protects forest areas from such allocations. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry reminded this legal framework on several occasions against the rumours saying that burned areas will be allocated to touristic hotel construction.

“Bu istisnalar (belirli istisnalar ile orman alanlarının turizme tahsisi) içerisinde rahmetli Özal’dan beri 40 yıldır olan bir konu. Eğer, bir turizm alanı tahsis edilecekse zaten tahsis edilir. Bunun şekil ve şartı vardır, orası turizm alanı ise oraya otel yapılır, değilse yapılamaz.” [These exceptions (allocation of forest areas to tourism with certain exceptions) have been an issue for 40 years since the late Özal. If a tourism area is to be allocated, it is allocated anyway. There are conditions and forms for this, if it is a tourism area, a hotel can be built there, if not, it cannot be built.]⁶⁰⁶

“(Orman alanlarının turizme tahsis edilmesi için) Ormanların yakılmasına ihtiyaç yoktur. Bu anlamda bunu da tekrar hatırlatmış olalım. Lütfen bu konuyu istismar etmeyelim.” [There is no need to burn forests (in order to allocate forest areas to tourism). In this sense, let us remind you of this again. Please do not exploit this issue.]⁶⁰⁷

In other words, with the above quotations, the Minister clearly argues that the rumours depend on exploitative statements and have no reality within the legal framework. By doing that, the basis of the social construction of this fear is based on opposition to the government and is produced by “some environmentalists” and “dissidents”. However, it becomes clear when it comes to evaluate some of Erdoğan’s statements which may cause this fear to be reproduced. Especially in the context of the development-environmental security dilemma, there is no compromise on developmental goals although Erdoğan emphasises the importance of sustainability.

“Türkiye’nin kaynaklarını, Türk milletinin emrine verme gayretlerimizin çevreci maskesi takan marjinaler tarafından engellenmesine müsaade etmeyeceğiz. Herkes bilmelidir ki, başka ülkelere hak olan Türkiye’ye lüks değildir. Yer altı ve yer üstü

⁶⁰⁵ Güneş Yıldız Eldemir, ‘Turgut Özal Dönemi Kültür ve Turizm Politikaları (1983-1993)’, *Tarihin Peşinde: Uluslararası Tarih ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, no. 26 (2021): 153–54.

⁶⁰⁶ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Bakan Pakdemirli: Son 5 Günde 132 Yangından 125’ini Kontrol Atına Aldık, 7’si Devam Ediyor’.

⁶⁰⁷ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Pakdemirli; “Yangınların 57’si Kontrol Altında”’, 2021, <https://www.tarimorman.gov.tr/Haber/5057/Pakdemirli-Yanginlarin-57si-Kontrol-Altinda>.

zenginliklerimizi elbette sorumlu bir anlayışla ama mutlaka ekonomiye kazandırmamız gerekiyor. Bunun için madenimiz varsa ortaya çıkaracağız, petrolümüz, doğal gazımız varsa keşfedeceğiz, su kaynaklarımız varsa bunları farklı alanlarda değerlendireceğiz. Rüzgâr ve güneş enerjisinden azami derecede istifade edeceğiz. Türkiye Yüzyılı'nın inşası mücadelemizde ne gerekiyorsa onu yapacak, tam bağımsız Türkiye hayalimize gölge düşürmeyeceğiz.” [We will not allow our efforts to place Turkey's resources at the disposal of the Turkish nation to be hindered by marginals wearing environmentalist masks. Everyone should know that what is rightfully theirs for other countries is not a luxury for Turkey. We must, of course, contribute our underground and aboveground resources to the economy with a responsible approach, but without fail. For this, if we have mines, we will uncover them; if we have oil or natural gas, we will explore them; if we have water resources, we will evaluate them in different areas. We will make maximum use of wind and solar energy. We will do whatever is necessary in our struggle to build the Turkish Century and we will not cast a shadow on our dream of a fully independent Turkey.]⁶⁰⁸

5.4.8. Meaning of Forests

In the official narrative, forests are equivalent to the nation and are conceptualised as the “green homeland”. With such a narrative, forests are directly defined as reference objects and any kind of threats to them are securitised. In addition, state officers who are responsible for protecting the forests and AFAD volunteers are defined as soldiers (*Mehmetçik*⁶⁰⁹) defending the homeland. For example, the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry say that:

“Afetle Mücadele Bir Vatan Savunmasıdır. ... AFAD gönüllülerimiz de işte bu müdafaanın erleridir, Mehmetçikleridir.” [Fighting against disasters is a defence of the homeland. ... Our AFAD volunteers are the soldiers of this defence.]⁶¹⁰

“Orman işçilerimiz, kahraman Mehmetçiğimiz, polisimiz gibi korkusuz bir şekilde vatan savunması için gözlerini kırpmadan alevlerin üzerine koşuyorlar. 1923'ten bugüne kadar canlarını feda eden 125 orman şehidimize Allah'tan rahmet diliyorum.” [Our forest workers, like our heroic soldiers and police, fearlessly run towards the flames to defend the homeland without blinking an eye. I pray to God to have mercy on our 125 forest martyrs who have sacrificed their lives since 1923.]⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁸ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “21 Yılda Her Alanda Olduğu Gibi Tarım ve Sulama Alanında Da Tarihi Nitelikte Adımlar Attık”.

⁶⁰⁹ A term that has traditionally been used to define Turkish soldiers.

⁶¹⁰ T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, ‘Bakanımız Sn. Soyulu: Afetle Mücadele Bir Vatan Savunmasıdır’.

⁶¹¹ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Bakan Pakdemirli: “Afette Aziz Milletimizle Ormanlarımız İçin Tek Yürek Olduk. Tüm Yangınları Kontrol Altına Aldık”’, 2021, <https://www.tarimorman.gov.tr/Haber/5069/Bakan-Pakdemirli-Afette-Aziz-Milletimizle-Ormanlarimiz-Icin-Tek-Yurek-Olduk-Tum-Yanginlari-Kontrol-Altina-Aldik>.

Such an utterance makes the issue militarised. It also functions to depoliticise the issue, making it a topic of above politics. Erdoğan also says that “... this is definitely not a matter that can be politicised”.⁶¹² In this way, it can be concluded that the official narrative serves to marginalise the opposition on the issue and consolidate public opinion around the government by portraying the issue as a national issue.

The understanding of “green homeland” and the duty to serve it is also used as a justification for the construction of *Millet Bahçeleri* [National Gardens] as a project of the AKP to redesign the public sphere. There is a growing literature on how the political power shapes and transforms the public sphere via national garden projects. For example, one study argues that although national gardens have been presented as a part of the green transformation of urban spaces by the AKP, they are populist political discourses and reflect the political polarisation in Turkey as to public sphere.⁶¹³ Erdoğan expressed that the projects were among the election promises in 2018 and 2019 and that were envisaged as spheres of socialisation as their main function.

“Millet bahçelerimiz hem 2018 genel seçimleri hem de 2019 mahallî idareler seçimlerindeki en önemli projemizdi.” [Our public gardens were the most important project of us in both the 2018 general elections and the 2019 local elections.]⁶¹⁴

“Bu millet bahçelerimizden her biri yeşil alanları, tesisleri, yürüyüş ve bisiklet yolları, spor sahaları ve sundukları diğer imkânlarla gerçekten göz kamaştıran projelerdir. Biz millet bahçeleriyle şehirlerimize, insanımızın nefes alabileceği yeşil alanlar kazandırmakla kalmıyoruz, aynı zamanda günümüzde çocuklardan yaşlılara, gençlerden çalışanlara kadar farklı toplum kesimlerinin sosyal ihtiyaçlarını da karşılıyoruz. Pek çok kültür-sanat etkinliğinin de düzenlendiği millet bahçelerimiz, bu yönleriyle büyük bir boşluğu doldurmaktadır.” [Each of these national gardens are truly dazzling projects with their green areas, facilities, walking and cycling paths, sports fields and other opportunities they offer. With national gardens, we not only provide our cities with green areas where our people can breathe, but we also meet the social needs of different segments of society, from children to the elderly,

⁶¹² Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “‘Türkiye, Bölgesinin En Güçlü Orman Yangınlarıyla Mücadele Altyapısına Sahip Ülkesidir’”, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/128861/-turkiye-bolgesinin-en-guclu-orman-yanginlariyla-mucadele-altyapisina-sahip-ulkesidir->.

⁶¹³ Mesut Yücebaş and Semiray Yücebaş, ‘İki Millet Bir Bahçe: ‘Millet Bahçeleri’ Haberlerinde Farklı Millet Tanımları’, *Kültür ve İletişim* 25, no. 49 (2022): 182–209.

⁶¹⁴ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “‘Medeniyetimizin En Önemli Taşıyıcısı Olarak Gördüğümüz Şehirlerimizi Çok Büyük Yatırımlarla Dönüştürdük, Güçlendirdik’”, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/134083/-medeniyetimizin-en-onemli-tasiyicisi-olarak-gordugumuz-sehirlerimizi-cok-buyuk-yatirimlarla-donusturduk-guclendirdik->.

from young people to workers. Our national gardens, where many cultural and art events are held, fill a big gap in these aspects.]⁶¹⁵

While Erdoğan envisages a green transformation with national garden projects, some studies criticise that these projects might have ecologically harmful effects, especially in certain natural sites such as Salda lake.⁶¹⁶ However, Erdoğan interprets environmentalist criticism as a pressure mechanism on the government and an attempt to impose a dissident political agenda through this mechanism.

“Bizim dünya görüşümüzün özünde tabiatı ve kâinatı bir emanet olarak görmek vardır. ... Bize düşen, çevrecilik adına siyasi ajandalarını dayatmaya çalışanların baskılarına boyun eğmeden emanete hakkıyla sahip çıkmaktır. Bizim görevimiz, orman varlığımızı daha artırarak geleceğe nefes olmaktır. Millet bahçeleriyle şehirlerimizde yeşil vahalar oluşturmaktır. Türkiye’yi nerede olursa olsun 81 vilayetimizin her birini yemyeşil hale getirene kadar durmadan, dinlenmeden çalışacağız.” [At the core of our worldview is seeing nature and the universe entrusted to us. ... Our duty is to protect the trust without bowing to the pressures of those who try to impose their political agendas in the name of environmentalism. Our duty is to breathe new life into the future by increasing our forest assets. Our duty is to create green oases in our cities with national gardens. We will work tirelessly and without rest until we turn every one of our 81 provinces, wherever they are, into greenery.]⁶¹⁷

Erdoğan, who interprets nature and the universe as a trust given to humanity, considers it as a sacred duty to increase the number of green areas to protect this trust. Therefore, these national garden projects and reforestation policies are, in a way, sacralised and justified.

5.4.9. Accusations

Lastly, in this section, I now turn the focus of narrative from environment to the politics within the framework of 2021 forest fires in Turkey. As we have seen in

⁶¹⁵ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘Türkiye Çevre Haftası Münasebetiyle 9 Millet Bahçesi Açılış Töreni’nde Yaptıkları Konuşma’, 2023, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/147426/turkiye-cevre-haftasi-munasebetiyle-9-millet-bahcesi-acilis-toreni-nde-yaptiklari-konusma>.

⁶¹⁶ Meriç Kırmızı, ‘Millet Bahçelerinin Çeşitli Boyutları: Jane Jacobs Bu Projeye Ne Derdi?’, *Planlama Dergisi* 31, no. 2 (2021): 164–69; Serdar Ceylan and İhsan Bulut, ‘Salda Gölü Özel Çevre Koruma Bölgesinde Turizm Baskısı, Koruma ve Sürdürülebilirlik’, *Türk Coğrafya Dergisi*, no. 73 (2019): 79–89.

⁶¹⁷ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘Türkiye Çevre Haftası Münasebetiyle 9 Millet Bahçesi Açılış Töreni’nde Yaptıkları Konuşma’.

small examples under the above headings, how forest fires are discussed and dealt with in public stands out as an important political issue. In this matter of political narrative, the accusations of the governing elite have a crucial place. In this regard, my reading shows that there is a three-staged securitisation move within the accusations in the context of forest fires.

The first is the problematisation of coordination among institutions, especially between local and central governments. The official narrative tends to blame the local governments by presenting a narrative that they are not doing their job. Accusations basically arise from the issue of the boundaries of authority between local government and the central government. Central government officials claim that municipalities are primarily responsible for ensuring security in residential areas, but they emphasise that they are inadequate in this regard and accuse municipalities of not doing their jobs. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry's words echo such accusations below.

“Dün de söyledim, yerleşim yerlerinin normal şartlar altında güvenlik altına alınması belediyelerimizin işi. Ama belediyelerimizin de bundan sonra ‘şu binada yangın çıktı, buraya bir itfaiye gönderelim söndürelim’ ötesinde, özellikle ormana yakın belediyelerimizin de bunların tahkimatı konusunda da yine ormanla (OGM ile) iş birliği içerisinde bu konuda ileriye yönelik mutlaka tedbir alınması gerekir diye düşünüyorum.” [I said it yesterday, it is the job of our municipalities to secure residential areas under normal conditions. But I think that our municipalities should definitely take precautions in the future, especially in municipalities close to forest areas, in cooperation with the forest (OGM) regarding their fortification, beyond just saying, ‘there is a fire in this building, let’s send a fire truck here and put it out.’]⁶¹⁸

On the other hand, Erdoğan directly mentions the boundaries of authority between the local government and the central government and questions what these municipalities did in terms of firefighting.

“Fakat ben burada bir şeyi açıklamak istiyorum. Devlet olarak bizim görevimiz nedir? Devlet olarak bizim görevimiz; birinci derecede tarım, hayvan, ormancılık, yani bütün bu ormanların bakımı, ormanların bu noktadaki ıslahı ve Allah göstermesin işte bu tür yangınlar olduğu zaman bu ormanların bu noktada söndürülmesi vesaire bunlar birinci derecede bizim sorumluluğumuz. Ama yerleşim bölgelerine geldiğimiz zaman, yerleşim bölgelerindeki bu tür yangın vesairelerin

⁶¹⁸ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Bakan Pakdemirli: Son 5 Günde 132 Yangından 125’ini Kontrol Atına Aldık, 7’si Devam Ediyor’.

sorumluluğu kimin? O da oradaki büyükşehir belediyelerinin sorumluluğundadır. Şimdi burada da bakıyorsunuz bir taraftan ilk Antalya, Antalya Büyükşehir Belediyesi Antalya'daki birinci derecede şehir merkezinde bu işin sorumlusudur. Muğla, Muğla Büyükşehir Belediyesi birinci derecede Muğla şehri büyükşehir olarak söylüyorum onun sorumluluğundadır, yani ben buradan sorumlu değilim, diyemez. Bunlar, hayır bizim burada sorumluluğumuz yok diyemezler, açsınlar yerel yönetimlerle ilgili yasayı iyice incelesinler. Ve onlar burada acaba ne tür bir imkan seferber ettiler, ne yaptılar, şu an itibarıyla ne yapıyorlar. Biz devlet olarak ormanda bu mücadelemizi sürdürüyoruz, 8 şehidimiz var. Ve bu 8 şehidimiz bu Orman Teşkilatımızda olan şehitlerimizdir. Ama hiçbir yerden biz kaçma noktasına gitmedik, gerçek neyse bu gerçeği söyledik.” [But I want to explain something here. What is our duty as a state? Our duty as a state is primarily agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, in other words, the maintenance of all these forests, the rehabilitation of the forests at this point and, God forbid, when there are such fires, the extinguishing of these forests at this point, etc., these are our primary responsibilities. However, when it comes to residential areas, who is responsible for such fires etc. in residential areas? It is the responsibility of the metropolitan municipalities there. Now you see here too, on the one hand, Antalya, Antalya Metropolitan Municipality is primarily responsible for this work in the city center of Antalya. Muğla, Muğla Metropolitan Municipality is primarily responsible for such work. That is, Muğla Metropolitan Municipality cannot say that we are not responsible for this place. Let them open and examine the law on local governments thoroughly. And I wonder what kind of means they have mobilized here, what they have done, what they are doing right now. As the central government, we continue this struggle in the forest, we have 8 martyrs. And these 8 martyrs are our martyrs in this General Directorate of Forestry. We did not run away from anywhere, we told the truth whatever it was.]⁶¹⁹

Indeed, the municipalities that Erdoğan mentioned are ruled by the CHP. Therefore, while the accusations are directed towards the opposition party, political credit is attributed to the government, especially through forest martyrs.

Secondly, the debate about the coordination among institutions regarding the forest fires has been expanded to a larger political area between the government and the opposition. The main argument of this greater narrative is about how the opposition is corrupt, dysfunctional and based on a “politics of lie”. Below quotations show how different actors from the governing elite securitise the opposition based on a “*politics of lie*”.

“Yalan ve iftiradan kaynaklanan bir siyaseti hiç siyaset yapılmaması gereken bir alana taşımayı marifet sayanlar bugün Türkiye’de siyaseti de muhalefeti de nitelsiz hale getirmek için çaba sarf ediyorlar. Biz buna müsaade etmeyeceğiz.” [Those who

⁶¹⁹ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘A Haber Ortak Yayını “Başkan Erdoğan ile Gündem Özel”’.

consider it a feat to carry a politics based on lies and slander to an area where politics should not be done at all are making efforts to degrade both politics and the opposition in Turkey today. We will not allow this.]⁶²⁰

“Türk siyaseti maalesef muhalefetsiz bir siyasettir. Az önce söyledim ya, yani Türkiye’de muhalefetin terörü esiyor, bunu bir kenara koymak mümkün değil. Şimdi bizim ben bir şeyi daha bu aralarda söyledim; nedir o? Yalan terörü dedim. Şimdi yalan terörü Türkiye’de var mı? Var. Kim yapıyor bu işi? Muhalefet yapıyor. Acayip bir şekilde, adına birileri de tabii algı operasyonu diyorlar, bunun adı aslında yalan tehdididir ve bu yalan terörüdür.” [Unfortunately, Turkish politics do not have an opposition. As I said earlier, the terror of the opposition is raging in Turkey, it is impossible to put it aside. Now, I have said something else recently; what is it? I said terror of lie. Now, is there a terror of lie in Turkey? There is. Who is doing this? The opposition is doing it. Strangely, some people call it a perception operation, this is actually a threat of lie and a terror of lie.]⁶²¹

Erdoğan securitises the opposition as a threat, conducting a politics of lie which is actually a politics of terror, according to him. Moreover, he takes the opposition in a broader sense, not only consisting of the CHP but also including certain dissident groups, such as the “initiative of artists”. Below is an example of how Erdoğan marginalises the group of “initiative of artists”.

“Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, yangınların kontrolü sürecinde kendilerine, "sanatçılar girişimi" adını veren oluşumun Cumhurbaşkanlığı Hükûmet Sistemi'ni hedef alan açıklamalarını nasıl değerlendirdiği yönündeki soruya, şu cevabı verdi: "Bir kulağımdan giriyor, öbür kulağımdan çıkıyor. Onların meslekleri sanat. Hangi sanatsa sanatlarını icra etsinler. ... Ama kalkıp da erken seçilmiş, yok bilmem işte şu andaki başkanlık sistemi doğru değilmiş. Bırak, o iş bizim işimiz. ... Ama kalkıp da bu işlere burnunu sokma, o iş bizim işimiz.” [President Erdoğan gave the following answer to a question about how he evaluated the statements targeting the Presidential System of Government made by the group that called itself the ‘initiative of artists’ during the firefighting process: ‘It goes in one ear and out the other. Their profession is art. Let them practice their art, whatever it is. ... But they talk about early elections, about that the current presidential system is not right, etc. Leave it, that's our job. ... But do not get involved in these matters, that's our business.’]⁶²²

⁶²⁰ T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, ‘Bakanımız Sn. Soylu: Ormandaki Arkadaşlarımız İlk Dakikalarda Yangına Dünya Standardının Üzerinde Müdahale Ettiler’, 2022, <https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-soylu-ormandaki-arkadaslarimiz-ilk-dakikalarda-yangina-dunya-standardinin-uzerinde-mudahale-ettiler>.

⁶²¹ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘A Haber Ortak Yayını “Başkan Erdoğan ile Gündem Özel”’.

⁶²² Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, CNN TÜRK-Kanal D Özel Yayınına Katıldı’, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/128942/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-cnn-turk-kanal-d-ozel-yayinina-katildi>.

This securitisation move includes also the counter-arguments regarding the “Help Turkey” social media campaign. As an answer to the latest declaration of National Security Council that have defined disinformation campaigns as national security issues, Erdoğan combines Help Turkey campaign with what he mentions as terror of lie of the main opposition and dissidents.⁶²³ The official narrative reads the #HelpTurkey campaign as a deliberate message aimed at portraying the state as weak and incapable.⁶²⁴ “#StrongTürkiye” social media campaign, on the other hand, appeared as a counter-move, with a stress that the state has the capability to struggle with the fires.

Finally, as the third point, there is another securitisation movement within the accusations. After the opposition is situated as “the other” and has been securitised, it is defined as “the mentality that hopes for the disaster of its own country and nation”.⁶²⁵ This ideational securitisation approach, which standardises all opposition as a corrupt mentality, carries the polarisation in the social sphere to an area of a struggle for cultural hegemony. Moreover, this rhetoric has essentially seen as part of a struggle leading up to the 2023 general elections. In his speech at the AKP Extended Provincial Chairs Meeting, on August 24, 2021, Erdoğan stresses the importance of the general elections in 2023, which he contextualised as a fight against the terror of lies.

“AK Parti teşkilatından, her şehirde, her ilçede, her mahallede, her köyde bugüne kadar yaptıkları hizmetlerin yanında, afetlerde ortaya koydukları güçlü iradeyi de millete anlatmalarını istediğini beliren Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, şöyle devam etti: “Arkadaşlar, hizmeti yapmak başka bir şey. Ama bunları millete mal etmek başka bir şey. Bakın Kızılay’ımız bir taraftan çalıştı, onun yanında AFAD’ımız yoğun bir şekilde çalıştı. Giyim, kuşam hiçbir şey eksik kalmasın istedik. Bütün bunları, anında halletmenin gayreti içerisinde olduk. Çünkü biz halkımıza, vatandaşlarımıza bunu aratmayacaktık. Sağ olsun aratmadılar. ... Bizim gerçekleri göstermediğimiz, kendi

⁶²³ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Yeşil Vatanı Korumak İçin Cansiperane Mücadelemiz Devam Edecektir”.

⁶²⁴ TRT Haber, ‘Fahrettin Altun: Amaç Devletimizi Zayıf Göstermek’, 2021, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/fahrettin-altun-amac-devletimizi-zayif-gostermek-599102.html>.

⁶²⁵ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Türkiye, Bölgesinde ve Dünyada Egemenlik Haklarını Gerçek Anlamda Kullanabilen Az Sayıdaki Ülkeden Biridir”, 2021, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/130124/-turkiye-bolgesinde-ve-dunyada-egemenlik-haklarini-gercek-anlamda-kullanabilen-az-sayidaki-ulkeden-biridir->.

yaptıklarımızı anlatmadığımız her yerde karşımızdakilerin yalanlarının, iftiralarının, çarpıtmalarının kök salacağını unutmamalıyız. Her fırsatta 2023’ün önemini işaret etmemizin sebebi işte budur. Türkiye’yi, kendi ülkesinin ve milletin felaketinden medet uman bir zihniyetin eline bırakamayız. Böyle bir vebali, böyle bir sorumluluğu üstlenebilecek hiçbir arkadaşımın olmadığına inanıyorum. Bunun için 2023 Haziranı’na kadar gece gündüz çalışmamız gerekiyor. Önce kendi içimizde birliğimizi, beraberliğimizi, kardeşliğimizi güçlendirmeli, buradan aldığımız enerjiyle, milletimizin tamamının gönlünü kazanacak şekilde hep sahada olmalıyız.” [Stating that he wanted the AK Party organisation to tell the nation about the services they have provided in every city, every district, every neighbourhood and every village, as well as the strong will they have shown during disasters, President Erdoğan continued as follows: “Friends, providing service is something else. But making these things public is something else. Look, our Red Crescent worked on one side, and our AFAD worked intensively alongside it. We wanted nothing to be left out in terms of clothing. We tried to resolve all of these immediately. Because we were not going to make our people, our citizens look for this. Thank God, they did not. ... We must not forget that wherever we fail to show the truth and explain our own actions, the lies, slander and distortions of those against us will take root. This is why we point out the importance of 2023 at every opportunity. We cannot leave Turkey in the hands of a mentality that seeks refuge in the disaster of its own country and nation. I believe that I have no friend who can undertake such a responsibility and a burden like this. For this, we need to work day and night until June 2023. First of all, we must strengthen our unity, solidarity and brotherhood within ourselves, and with the energy we receive from here, we must always be on the field in a way that will win the hearts of our entire nation.”]⁶²⁶

Therefore, I argue that the main political motivation of the accusations of the official narrative was to avoid making the government look incapable and to prepare for the 2023 elections with a good reputation. It was, thus, important for the government to be seen as having gained credit by demonstrating a successful management in a disaster such as 2021 forest fires.

5.4.10. Post-Fire Changes

With the reading of code “post-fire changes”, my aim is to understand how the official narrative envisages the changes and possible transformations of the regions affected by forest fires. Thoughts on how the community will return to its routine and normalise are important in terms of rebuilding the imagined community. In this regard, my reading of the official narrative unveils the belief that the return to routine will be possible through financial aid, subventions and rapid reconstruction, which will remedy ontological insecurity of the local people. Just as the quotation from the

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

Mayor of Gündoğmuş above, claiming that citizens would say “I wish my house had burned down too”, implies, Erdoğan argues that “With their design, materials and surroundings, the houses are really beautiful works that every citizen would like to own.”.⁶²⁷ Similarly stating that they will also compensate the losses of villagers engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry, Erdoğan said that issues such as agricultural activity, production and the livelihood of local people can be quickly replaced with these subsidies.⁶²⁸ In other words, the official narrative offers a material solution to the ontological insecurities of local people affected by the fires.

5.4.11. General Directorate of Forestry (OGM)

Lastly, in this section, I focus on the OGM which is the main institution responsible for the management of forests in Turkey. In this context, the OGM and the forestry personnel can be thought as security professionals that are authorised to ensure security. The focus of this section is to identify the political themes in which this institution, which is the main actor in the issue, comes to the fore in the official narrative. In this regard, there are three main themes worth mentioning.

The first theme appeared is the highlight of technicalisation. The official narrative highlights that firefighting is merely a technical job that can be carried out by the professionals.⁶²⁹ Moreover, the technical characteristic of firefighting is supported by the use of high technology vessels during firefighting and in the process of surveillance of forests, such as by the use of drones. Indeed, it is not surprising that security professionals emphasise the technical nature of the job and the use of high-tech vessels during firefighting. The following words of the Minister of Forestry took the issue one step further and emphasised that Turkey is a pioneer in the international arena in the use of military drones in forest fires.

⁶²⁷ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Teknolojinin Verdiği İmkânlarla Hem Altyapımızı Güçlendirmeye Hem Afet Müdahale Sistemimizi Geliştirmeye Devam Edeceğiz”.

⁶²⁸ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘A Haber Ortak Yayını “Başkan Erdoğan ile Gündem Özel”’.

⁶²⁹ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Bakan Pakdemirli: 47 İlde Çıkan 223 Orman Yangınının 217’si Kontrol Altında’, 2021, <https://www.tarimorman.gov.tr/Haber/5064/Bakan-Pakdemirli-47-Ilde-Cikan-223-Orman-Yangininin-217si-Kontrol-Altinda>.

“Bu yine kamuoyunda pek konuşulmayan bir konu ama orman yangınlarıyla mücadelede askeri İHA'ların kullanılması konusu, Türkiye'nin ele aldığı ve dünyada bir görüşe göre birinci, bir görüşe göre ikinci. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nden sonra ikinci olduğumuzu kabul edelim. Hiçbir ülkede kullanılmıyor ve özellikle birçok ülkeden gelenler de, Kanada'dan eğitime gelen bir ekip 'Neler yapıyorsunuz?' diye sordu. Şunlar, şunlar, bir de İHA var dedik. İHA'ları gördükten sonra burada çalıştırdığınız program, modelleme, yangın tahminleme, yangınla alakalı simülasyonları gördükten sonra 'Bizim size söyleyecek ek bir şeyimiz yok.' dediler.” [Again, this is a topic that is not talked about much in public, but the use of military drones in combating forest fires is an issue that Turkey is dealing with, and according to one view, it is the first in the world, and according to another view, the second. Let's accept that we are second only to the United States of America. It is not used in any other country, and especially a team from Canada who came for training asked, "What do you do? 'We use drones', we said. After seeing the drones, the program we run here, the modeling, fire prediction, fire-related simulations, they said, 'We have nothing additional to tell you.]"⁶³⁰

However, what is interesting here is the implication that security professionals using these high-tech vessels have the total control and knowledge on the problem. This attitude is coupled with the narrative that forestry organisation is considered one of the best in the world and is glorified as one of the organisations that fight fires most quickly and effectively.⁶³¹ This understanding reproduces the traditional way of thinking that takes professionals as the sole security providers and individuals as security consumers. However, next chapter will evaluate how local people disrupt and challenge this technicalisation narrative by calling into question its efficiency. Over-technicalisation tends to ignore indigenous knowledge during firefighting. One of the most emphasised issues in the local narrative is that, although it was right to evacuate local people to prevent loss of life, ignoring the knowledge of the local people who knew the area better was one of the factors that contributed to the prolonged inability to extinguish the fire.

Another theme is about the relationship between forest villagers and the forestry personnel, in other words the security professionals. As I will elaborate on in the next chapter, there is a traumatic relationship between forest villagers and forestry personnel. In Chapter III, my readings showed that the background of this trauma

⁶³⁰ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Pakdemirli; “44 İlde Meydana Gelen 197 Adet Yangının 185’i Kontrol Altında”’.

⁶³¹ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “‘Devletimiz Yangınların Söndürülmesi, Hasarların Tazmini, Zarar Gören Yerlerin Yeniden İhyası İçin Çalışmaktadır”’.

goes back to the late Ottoman period, with the abandonment of the understanding of *cibal-i mübaha*, and lately the 2/B law, which allows forest areas to be sold. The trauma shows itself during forest fires as allegations arguing that “forest area is being burned to build a hotel”. The official narrative responds to this allegation by recalling Article 169 of the Constitution, which states that burned forest areas will be reforested.

“Yanan yerlerin tekrar ağaçlandırılacağına dikkati çeken Pakdemirli, "Anayasa'nın 169. maddesi uyarınca yanan alanlar tekrar ağaçlandırılır ve başka amaçla kullanılamaz. Yangınlar söğütlduktan sonra en kısa sürede hasar tespiti yapılacak, yanan ağa lar en kısa zamanda sahadan  kartılacak ve ilk ya murdan sonra fidan dikimi ba layacak." diye konu tu.” [Pakdemirli, who drew attention to the fact that the burned areas will be reforested, said, "According to Article 169 of the Constitution, burned areas will be reforested and cannot be used for any other purpose. After the fires cool down, damage assessment will be made as soon as possible, burned trees will be removed from the field as soon as possible and sapling planting will begin after the first rain."]⁶³²

“Bir di er konu, yani ormanlar yansın, buralarda biz beton yı ını binalar in a edelim; ha a. Ya benim her zaman Belediye Ba kanlı ımdan bu yana biliyorsunuz ben dikey mimariye kar ı oldu unu s yleyen, bunu savunan bir insanım. Betona nasıl olur da ben sahip  ıkarım? B yle bir  ey kesinlikle bir defa s z konusu de il. Yine bunlar ispatı gerektiren bir  ey, ispat etsin, s ylesin, nerede, nasıl?” [Another issue, that is, let the forests burn, let us build concrete stacked buildings here; God forbid. As you know, I have always been a person who has said that I am against vertical architecture and defended it since I was the mayor. How can I support concrete building? Such a thing is definitely out of the question. Again, these are things that require proof, let them prove it, let them say it, where and how?]⁶³³

Erdo an both attributes these allegations to the opposition party’s terror of lie and gives his party the political credit by reminding the reforestation numbers within the past 19 years of AKP rule.

“Bizim 19 yıllık iktidar d nemimizde bakın yapmı  oldu umuz ağa  dikimi 5,5 milyar adettir, 5,5 milyar, bunu bizim iktidarımız yaptı ve h l  da aynı kararlılıkla yolumuza devam ediyoruz. Yani vatandaşlar bu Bay Kemal’in yalanlarına itibar etmesin. Yanan ormanlarımız k llerinden yeniden do acak, bu alanlar en verimli  ekilde ağa landırılacak, yeniden orman olacak. Bunların ilgililerine sorun, siz ne kadar ağa  diktiniz ya, sizin belediyeleriniz ne kadar ağa  dikti, bize bunun cevabını verin deyin.” [During our 19 years in power, look, we have planted 5.5 billion trees,

⁶³² T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlı ı, ‘Pakdemirli; “44 İlde Meydana Gelen 197 Adet Yangının 185’i Kontrol Altında”’.

⁶³³ T rkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlı ı, ‘A Haber Ortak Yayını “Ba kan Erdo an Ile G ndem  zel”’.

5.5 billion, our government did this and we continue on our path with the same determination. In other words, citizens should not believe Mr. Kemal's (opposition party leader) lies. Our burned forests will rise from their ashes, these areas will be reforested in the most efficient way, they will become forests again. Ask them (the opposition members), how many trees did you plant, how many trees did your municipalities plant, give us the answer to this, tell them.]⁶³⁴

Reforestation policies, therefore, occupy an important place in AKP's agenda both in terms of state-society relations and its obligations regarding sustainability. However, before moving into reforestation, there is another important point regarding the forest villagers. Forest villagers state in the vernacular data set that they play an important role in protecting the forest because they see the forest as their home. Indeed, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry acknowledges this by stressing the crucial role forest villagers did for the protection of the forest areas.

“Orman köylülerinin mutlaka daha fazla desteklenmesi gerektiğini vurgulayan Pakdemirli, ‘Ormana daha fazla nasıl sahip çıkarız? Orman köylümüzün ormanla birlikte iç içe yaşarken daha fazla gelir, daha fazla ormanı sahiplenme konusunda da bazı adımlar atabileceğimizi söylemek istiyorum.’ dedi.” [Emphasizing that forest villagers must definitely be supported more, Pakdemirli said, ‘How can we take more care of the forest? I would like to say that we can also take some steps to ensure that our forest villagers have more income and more ownership of the forest while living together with the forest.’]⁶³⁵

However, when it comes to improving the living conditions of forest villagers, it becomes clear that the government elite aims to develop the forest villagers through loans and grants. Erdoğan, for example, states that in order to increase the income and welfare of forest villagers, government provided 4 billion liras of credit and grant support to 252,000 families living in forest villages and removed interests from loans, specifically designed for forest villagers.⁶³⁶ Far from solving the property problems of forest villagers, this approach only results in the forest villagers being indebted with a neoliberal understanding. As I cited in Chapter III, the arguments of Melek Mutioğlu Özkesen's study shed light on this issue, together with the TOKI-led house building and subvention policies of the AKP. Özkesen interprets the

⁶³⁴ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘Kanal D - CNN Türk Cumhurbaşkanı Özel Yayını’.

⁶³⁵ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Pakdemirli; “44 İlde Meydana Gelen 197 Adet Yangının 185’i Kontrol Altında”’.

⁶³⁶ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Daha Yeşil Bir Türkiye Hedefiyle, Son 19 Yıldır Cumhuriyet Tarihinin En Büyük Ağaçlandırma Seferberliğini Yürütüyoruz”.

redistribution of land for various projects in the name of political, economic and ideological reproduction of power, while dispossessing the people through indebtedness or direct displacement and making them dependent on market conditions within the framework of primitive accumulation mechanisms.⁶³⁷

The last theme is about reforestation/afforestation policies. Reforestation policies and records of sapling planting are used as a legitimating indicator of how much the government cares about forests, but they also serve the idea of transforming public space through national garden projects, I mentioned above. Planting saplings has been a source of pride for the government. In fact, these activities have been declared a national day to be celebrated every November the 11th. In addition, a national campaign called “Breath for the Future” has been launched to encourage afforestation. Reforestation/afforestation policies appear important especially in terms of fighting against climate change as well. Making an international comparison, Erdoğan stated that they are carrying out the largest afforestation campaign in the history of the Republic and highlighted Turkey’s pioneering role in this field. This campaign is attributed to Turkey’s responsibilities in the international struggle against climate change, as stated by Erdoğan.⁶³⁸ It can therefore be argued that the official narrative sees reforestation activities as a mitigation policy in the fight against climate change.

The following quote from Erdoğan expresses how much importance the AKP gave to reforestation/afforestation activities throughout the history of the Republic, while also showing it as evidence that they did not sacrifice trees for rent or profit.

“Daha yeşil bir Türkiye hedefiyle, son 19 yıldır Cumhuriyet tarihinin en büyük ağaçlandırma seferberliğini yürütüyoruz. Dünyada orman varlığı azalırken, ülkemiz orman varlığını artıran sınırlı sayıdaki ülkeden biri olmuştur. Son 19 yılda, önceki 57 yılda yapılan ağaçlandırmanın bir buçuk katına ulaşarak, 5,5 milyar fidanı toprakla buluşturduk.” [With the goal of a greener Turkey, we have been carrying out the largest afforestation campaign in the history of the Republic for the last 19 years. While forests are decreasing in the world, our country has become one of the few countries that have increased its forest assets. In the last 19 years, we have reached

⁶³⁷ Mutioğlu Özkesen, *Toprakları Kapatmak Kamu Arazilerinin Özelleştirilmesi*, 208.

⁶³⁸ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “‘Daha Yeşil Bir Türkiye Hedefiyle, Son 19 Yıldır Cumhuriyet Tarihinin En Büyük Ağaçlandırma Seferberliğini Yürütüyoruz’”.

one and a half times the afforestation done in the previous 57 years, and we have planted 5.5 billion saplings.]⁶³⁹

The narrative that “we have carried out the largest afforestation activity in the history of the Republic” is essentially a reassurance. This reassurance can be read as a sedative cure to alleviate the traumatic fear of “they will build hotels in our forests” within people’s mind that I mentioned earlier. Erdoğan repeats this sedative narrative in his many different statements.

“Bugüne kadar 5,5 milyar fidanı, ağacı toprakla buluşturmuş, ülkesinin orman alanını 2 milyon hektar artırmış bir hükûmetiz. Yanan yerleri en kısa sürede yeniden ağaçlandıracağımızdan da kimsenin şüphesi olmasın.” [We are a government that has planted 5.5 billion saplings and trees and increased the forest area of our country by 2 million hectares. No one should doubt that we will reforest the burnt areas as soon as possible.]⁶⁴⁰

“Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, 19 yılda 5 milyon 400 bin ağaç diktiklerini hatırlatarak, şimdi bunun katbekat fazlasını dikmek suretiyle Türkiye’yi “ormanlar ülkesi” hâline getireceklerini söyledi.” [Reminding that they had planted 5 million 400 thousand trees in 19 years, President Erdoğan said that they would now make Turkey a “land of forests” by planting many times more trees.]⁶⁴¹

“Şimdi bu yanan yerler böyle kel mi kalacak? La teşbih, haşa...” [Will these burned areas remain bald like this now? God forbid, never...] ⁶⁴²

Briefly, although these statements show governing elite’s desire in reforestation, it can also be read as populist political sedatives for local people who have a traumatic subconscious fear of land rent, whether it bases on conspiracies or dissidence. Vernacular narratives, thus, can unveil us alternative conceptualisations, disrupt official narrative, or maybe reproduce it.

5.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the official narrative presents the state officers as the providers of security, calling them as heroes and acknowledging their total control and success

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Her Alanda Huzurla Hayatımızı Sürdürebilmemiz, Hepimizin Aşî Olmasına ve Aşîlarını Tamamlamasına Bağlıdır”.

⁶⁴¹ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, “Türkiye, Bölgesinin En Güçlü Orman Yangınlarıyla Mücadele Altyapısına Sahip Ülkesidir”.

⁶⁴² Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, ‘A Haber Ortak Yayını “Başkan Erdoğan İle Gündem Özel”’.

during the fires. OGM as the main security actor in this regard stresses its high-tech conduct of security and its superiority in comparison to many other states. The narrative also reproduces the traditional distinction between security providers and security consumers. As forests are called as “the green homeland”, defending the homeland narrative, in a way, militarises the struggle against fires, and gives the topic a supra-political character. This helps in suppressing the dissident voices and securitising and denationalisation the opposition. Moreover, three-staged securitisation move embedded in the political narrative contributes the othering of the opposition. This is also valid in the securitisation of #HelpTurkey campaign. However, when it comes to identifying the sources of threat, namely the perpetrator of forest fires in 2021, an ambiguousness dominates the official narrative. This ambiguousness creates “information gaps”, which allow socially constructed fears and anxieties to rise. Such an anxiety comes to light when it comes to the relationship between forest villagers and forestry personnel in the allegation that “they will build hotels in our forests”.

Planet/Ecology is uttered as the main referent object by acknowledging the climate change as the main driver of deforestation. However, while questioning the anthropocentric causes of climate change, it does not yield a self-criticism. The responsibility of the climate change is attributed to the developed countries. Reforestation/afforestation policies and the records of saplings planted are seen as the signs of government’s environmentalism. However, many critical scholars draw attention to the AKP’s problematic relations with the forest villagers and local people. Some policies uttered as “green transformation” and “environment-friendly”, such as house-building and national garden projects have been interpreted as redistribution of land and public spheres for political, economic and ideological reproduction of the power.

CHAPTER 6

VERNACULAR NARRATIVE ON 2021 FOREST FIRES: HOW ORDINARY PEOPLE CONCEPTUALISE SECURITY-ENVIRONMENT-POLITICS?

6.1. Introduction

This chapter unveils the second empirical dimension of the dissertation. This is where I will evaluate the vernacular narrative aspect of the issue. In order to do that, I have conducted MAXQDA assisted qualitative content analysis of the interview data. As I detailed the process of data collection in Chapter IV, I do not repeat here. Rather, I aim to define the “vernacular” in its academic and theoretical context and to highlight the importance of the vernacular narrative for this dissertation. Then, the chapter will outline the coding process and present the results of my coding of the vernacular dataset. Finally, it will present the analysis, which I will frame as a contrasting narrative to the official one.

6.2. Defining and contextualising the “Vernacular” in Vernacular Narrative Regarding 2021 Forest Fires

In the previous chapter, I tried to justify who are these official elites that I rely on. Therefore, I argue that a similar effort is a must here as well. Since I have previously examined the value and theoretical arguments of vernacular security studies, I will not reiterate those discussions here. Instead, after defining the meaning of ‘vernacular’, I will focus on explaining whom I consider representing the vernacular in the context of my study. Nick Vaughan-Williams does such a quest in his work and finds out that the etymology of the concept lies in Houston A. Baker’s 1984 work on blues and Afro-American literature. Defining the concept of vernacular as

“a slave born on his master’s estate”⁶⁴³, Baker takes blues as a periphery to the cultural geographies of the United States and uses this subject position to recover the vernacular vocabularies and local experiences of Black citizens to analyse US culture.⁶⁴⁴ Later, Thomas McLaughlin defines vernacular people as “those who lack cultural power – reminding what Foucault uses the term “subjugated knowledge”⁶⁴⁵- and who speak a critical language grounded in local concerns, not the language spoken by academic knowledge-elites”.⁶⁴⁶ To my knowledge, Foucault’s concept of subjugated knowledge gives the best conceptual framework for the study of the vernacular. It is, thus, necessary to return to Foucault’s thoughts here on subjugated knowledges.

In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Foucault criticises theories he called as global and totalitarian. These theories, Foucault argues, have several significant effects in power-knowledge nexus, such as creating a hierarchy of knowledge, suppressing of localised knowledges, imposing homogenised way of understanding, etc. These effects function in a way that devaluating local knowledge and make labelling them as unscientific.⁶⁴⁷ In Foucault’s research agenda, these subjugated knowledges appeared as psychiatric patients in his book *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Focusing on what psychiatry does, Foucault produced a critique of how knowledge systems exclude certain subjects.⁶⁴⁸ Such a critique leads Foucault to highlight the importance of recovering and rediscovering subjugated knowledges. Subjugated knowledges include knowledge that has been marginalised by this

⁶⁴³ Houston A Baker, *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), 2.

⁶⁴⁴ Vaughan-Williams, *Vernacular Border Security: Citizens’ Narratives of Europe’s Migration Crisis*, 8.

⁶⁴⁵ M Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

⁶⁴⁶ Thomas McLaughlin, *Street Smarts and Critical Theory: Listening to the Vernacular* (Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 5–6.

⁶⁴⁷ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, 81–83.

⁶⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).

totalitarian way of thinking. Based on such a conceptualisation McLaughlin concludes, a focus on the “vernacular” shows basically two characteristics. One is a conscious choice of a language relying on an abandonment of “scientific”/technical, and instead an adoption of a language and analytical strategy appropriate to their own concerns. And secondly, such a choice would lead to quest for fundamentally local issues.⁶⁴⁹

These conceptualisations pointed out by Foucault and McLaughlin point to the process of “exclusion” of local knowledge in the history of science. In her study, Diane Goldstein historically traces how vernacular knowledge emerged from a process of marginalisation in the history of science. She notes that ordinary people remained marginalised in the history of science by the nineteenth century when expert knowledge marked as the exclusive domain of knowledge and legitimised by the state. However, Goldstein emphasised that this trend started to break down in the 1950s, and that the importance of the knowledge of ordinary people began to be recognised, especially by academics working in fields such as social movements, ethno-semantics and traditional ecology. The 1990s and 2000s brought a complete transformation in this trend. With Goldstein's examples, tackling global crises such as Chernobyl, toxic waste crises and climate change have demonstrated the inadequacy of elite knowledge and the importance of incorporating lay expertise.⁶⁵⁰ More recently, the popularity of vernacular knowledge is based on the “everyday turn” in critical security studies and the curiosity to understand how actions taken in the name of security are experienced on the ground by different people and audiences and how they find expression in the everyday flow of social life.

This relative new quest in critical security studies basically argues that “scientific” assessments of security depoliticises it.⁶⁵¹ Supporters of everyday and vernacular turn, thus, criticise that these “scientific” analyses of security privileged the

⁶⁴⁹ McLaughlin, *Street Smarts and Critical Theory: Listening to the Vernacular*, 5–6.

⁶⁵⁰ Diane Goldstein, ‘Vernacular Turns: Narrative, Local Knowledge, and the Changed Context of Folklore’, *The Journal of American Folklore* 128, no. 508 (2015): 127–28.

⁶⁵¹ Vaughan-Williams and Stevens, ‘Vernacular Theories of Everyday (in) Security: The Disruptive Potential of Non-Elite Knowledge’, 41.

narratives and acts of elites. The very political implication of such a stance has made “the views, cultural repertoires of knowledge and testimonies of the political subject of (in)security” suppressed.⁶⁵² Concentrating on non-elite knowledge, the vernacular perspective of security highlights the security concerns of “end-users”, not the providers.⁶⁵³ I believe that such a normative stance is valuable and necessary for this dissertation.

Who can be considered as vernacular people in the context of this dissertation study, then? In the context of this dissertation, I take the “vernacular” as the voices of local people, who have no direct access to influence decision-making processes, residing in the areas most affected by the 2021 forest fires. In my case, these areas were Antalya and Muğla provinces, as I justified in Chapter IV. Moreover, I consider these people as the vernaculars of these regions, not only because they are geographically located in these areas, but also because they are socially, economically, and emotionally connected to the forest. Since most of my fieldwork participants consist of forest villagers, the forest plays an important role in their livelihoods, culture and environment. They also stand out as people who directly experience the effects of the fires, who are affected by official policies, and who re-experience all of this in their daily lives. Trying to be aware of whose voices I was listening to throughout the fieldwork was an important requirement to reach the vernacular. Therefore, when my gatekeepers want to put me in touch with a member of parliament who has considerable knowledge on the subject, I chose not to consider his/her narrative as vernacular.

The vernacular narrative that I will analyse in this chapter below will serve this normative stance. Since vernacular narratives are not only a different type of knowledge, but also a space for resistance, it will allow for the compare and contestation between the official and vernacular narratives that this thesis seeks to make. As the analysis section reveals, the vernacular narrative will show how public experiences and narratives of forest fires challenge official narratives and how such

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Bruce Baker and Manu Lekunze, ‘The Character and Value of Vernacular Security: The Case of South West Cameroon’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 37, no. 2–3 (2019): 208–9.

narratives offer an alternative view of public understanding of security, environment and politics. By examining these narratives, this chapter aims to uncover how vernacular knowledge contribute to a broader understanding of security, environment, and politics regarding forest fires in 2021.

6.3. Qualitative Content Analysis of the Vernacular Narrative

6.3.1. Coding Strategy

The coding strategy for analysing the vernacular narrative builds upon the framework established in the previous chapter. Accordingly, I apply the same coding logic here, ensuring consistency across the analysis. As argued in the earlier chapter, I draw upon the “security as construction” perspective developed by Paul Williams and Matt McDonald to guide the coding process for the security narrative. This framework is structured around four central questions that define the code categories: “Whose security are we referring to?”, “What constitutes a threat to security?”, “Who are the key agents responsible for providing security?”, and “What are the primary means of achieving it?”. While these questions form the basis for the code categories, I employed a hybrid coding strategy for identifying and refining the individual codes within these categories.

In order to determine the individual codes for the security narrative, I combined deductive codes from the literature with inductive reading of the written text from my interview data. This hybrid approach builds on the coding framework outlined in the previous chapter, where I relied on Johnny Saldana’s coding manual. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Saldana states that in the coding process, the researcher should be free to develop his/her own coding methods or adapt existing methods to suit his/her research.⁶⁵⁴ Encouraged by this approach, in the deductive part of the coding for the *security narrative*, I depended on the “levels of analysis” framework provided by the literature, starting from individuals at the micro level and extending to planet earth at the macro level. Simultaneously, I incorporated inductive

⁶⁵⁴ Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 74.

codes derived directly from my two-cycled reading of the textual material from my interview transcripts, ensuring that emergent codes and perspectives of the local people were captured. For example, such a coding strategy allowed me to interpret that the individual referent object in the micro-level, which appeared homogeneous, was differentiated in the eyes of the local people and the subject of “forest villagers” were prioritised.

For the *environmental narrative*, I continue here to adopt a deductive coding strategy, drawing on insights from the relevant literature, as I did in the previous chapter. For understanding how local people conceptualise the environment, I structured the codes around two key themes: the meaning of forests and the drivers of deforestation. By the first theme, I aim to understand how local people perceive the forest. My deductive codes come from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment’s *Forest and Woodland Systems* report, which I cited in Chapter III. Since the report outlines five major classes of forest services as ecological, social, amenities, resource, and biospheric, I aim to understand local people’s conceptualisation of the forest through these five main codes. With the second theme, I aim to unveil the perceived drivers of deforestation in Antalya and Muğla. Similarly, my deductive codes come from scholarly works on the drivers of deforestation that I elaborated in Chapter III. As the literature divides the drivers of deforestation into two categories, I structured the codes around these themes, namely proximate/direct and underlying/indirect.

For the *political narrative*, I utilised inductive coding strategy just as I did in the official narrative, enabling the themes to come directly out of the interview data. Inductive coding allowed me to realise the disruptive power of the vernacular regarding the official narrative on the 2021 forest fires. Three main themes emerged after the two-cycled coding process: the problematic nature of forest-peasant relations, disruptive potential of vernacular knowledge which unveils criticisms of certain state policies, and vernacular perceptions of post-fire ontological insecurities. The first theme reveals underlying fractures in the relationship between the state and forest villagers. In the second theme, the vernacular narrative debates the negative effects of privatisation of logging on their way of life. Finally, the third theme

focuses on forest villagers' relations with the forestry personnel in a more micro-level. With an inductive coding to interview data, I argue that vernacular voices reflect the political character of insecurity and the lived experience and concerns of those directly impacted by the forest fires.

Table 6.1. Final Template of Codebook with Frequencies

1 Security Narrative	0
1.1 Who is in Charge?	0
1.1.1 State	5
1.1.2 Municipalities	7
1.1.3 Forestry Chef / Personnel	7
1.1.4 Forest Villagers (Köylüler)	104
1.1.5 Volunteers (Yurttaşlar)	5
1.2 Whose Security is at Stake?	0
1.2.1 Ecosystem and Climate	48
1.2.2 State	0
1.2.3 Society (the village)	5
1.2.4 Individual (Forest Villagers)	67
1.3 Sources of Threat	0
1.3.1 Voluntary	0
1.3.1.1 Political Will	21
1.3.1.2 Voluntary - Multiple Starting	4
1.3.1.3 Arson	28
1.3.1.4 Terror - Atesin Cocukları (PKK)	11
1.3.1.5 Greece	1
1.3.1.6 Rent - Hotel Mining	26
1.3.1.7 Forest Villagers	9
1.3.2 Involuntary	0
1.3.2.1 Stubble burning (Anız Yakma)	2
1.3.2.2 Human Induced - Picnic	3
1.3.2.3 Pine Tree Characteristic	9

Table 6.1. (continued)

1.3.2.4 Involuntary - Grass	3
1.3.2.5 Human Induced - Waste	5
1.3.2.6 Human Induced - Cigarattes	4
1.3.2.7 Global Warming	5
1.3.2.8 Human Induced Negligence	19
1.3.2.9 Natural Disasters	3
1.3.2.10 Electric	26
1.3.3 Unknown	25
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Following sections incorporate my analysis of the vernacular narrative for each theme, namely security, environment and politics. I will start with the security narrative, which will be followed by the environmental and political narratives respectively.

6.3.2. Who is in charge?

This question is important in the security narrative as it identifies the authority or expert in charge of ensuring security. Thus, the theme “who is in charge?” unveils perceptions of authority, responsibility and capability within the vernacular narrative. Interview data coded under this theme gives a unified perspective on who were in charge during the fires. As the frequencies show only a few respondents acknowledge the role of the state during the fires, saying that the state used all its resources. There are also a few respondents reveal alternative security actors, such as the municipalities, forestry personnel, and volunteers. Although there is little emphasis on these security actors, this is important because the vernacular narrative has the potential to reveal alternative actors. Among these alternative security actors, however, “forest villagers” have been the most cited actor in the interview data.

A close reading of the coded segments with “forest villagers” allowed me to unveil certain overarching themes about the question of “who is in charge?”. One of the themes is that *forest villagers see themselves as the organic security providers of the*

forests. Forest villagers from different districts often acknowledged themselves as the organic guardians of the forests, describing their relationship with the forest lands as extremely embraced with their livelihood, way of life, and identity. Certain direct quotations⁶⁵⁵ show such a connection:

“Çünkü ormanı zaten koruyan vatandaş. Şimdi buradaki vatandaş buranın yanmasını ister mi? Yaşam yeri onun burası...”[Because it is the citizens who protect the forest. Now, does the citizens here want this place to burn down? This is his/her place to live...] (Köyceğiz Pınar Male 5 Age 37)

“Dedim ya, ormancı ormanı korumaz, köylü korur yaşadığı ortamı. Neden? Dal kesecek mesela, dibinden kesmez; budar. Dallarını budar çünkü seneye tekrar filize ihtiyacı var.” [As I said, foresters don't protect the forest, villagers protect their environment. Why? For example, when he cuts a branch, he doesn't cut it at the base; he prunes it. He prunes the branches because he needs sprouts again next year.] (Köyceğiz Ulucami Male 2 Age 58)

“Orman vatandaşın, yani devletin değil oradaki orman. Ben zaten yararlanıyorum ormandan. Devletten çok vatandaş olarak bizim kendimizin koruması lazım.” [The forest is the citizen's forest, not the state's. I already benefit from the forest. We need to protect it ourselves as citizens rather than the state.] (Akseki Hocaköy Male 1 Age 61)

“Orman bizim burada yaşayanların ormanı. Ben korumalıyım. Ben dediğim, buranın halkı. Beni olayın içine sokmaları lazım, yasalar ... ondan sonra yönetim, kamu... Yani, beni yok saymaması lazım, o ormanın korunması için.” [The forest is ours, for the people who live here. I have to protect it. With I, I mean the people living here. They need to get me involved, the laws ... then the administration, the public... I mean, they should not ignore me, to protect that forest.] (Milas Merkez Male 5 Age 69)

“Ha şunu da ekleyelim, ormanı en son halk korudu. Aşağı sahile inmesini en sonunda vatandaş önledi. Yangını hep halk önledi zaten. Hatta Güzelbağ boşalsın diye emir geldi ama kimse gitmedi. Yaşlılar korkaklar gitti en son. Özellikle de bayanlar çalıştı yangını söndürmek için. Yangınları orman işletmesi değil vatandaş önledi, bunu not düşelim.” [And let's add that the people were the last to protect the forest. It was the citizens who finally prevented it from going down to the coast. The people always prevent the fire. There was even an order to evacuate Güzelbağ, but no one left. The old and the cowards went last. Especially women worked hard to extinguish the fire. Citizens, not the forest management, prevented the fires, let's note this.] (Alanya Güzelbağ Male 7 Age 50)

One respondent from Bodrum (Pınarlıbelen) explains directly why forest villagers engage in providing security. Her quotation shows their deeply intertwined relationship with the forests:

⁶⁵⁵ I conducted interviews in Turkish. Then, I translated them into English, ensuring they remained faithful to the original context. I also made minor adjustments to improve their readability. I used the following format in citations: (Province – Village – Participant – Age).

“Çünkü o ormanın içinde bizim zeytin ağaçlarımız var. Biz yağımızı, zeytinimizi, her şeyi orada yapıyoruz. Orada yangın çıktığı zaman zaten bizim zeytinlerimiz yanacak, evimiz yanacak. Yani bizim hayatımız gidiyor yani biter.” [Because we have olive trees in that forest. We make our oil, olives, everything there. If there is a fire there, our olives would burn, our house would burn. So, our life would be over.] (Bodrum Pınarlibelen Female 2&3 Ages 34&30)

The fact that forest villagers establish such a connection between themselves, and the forest brings us back to the phenomenon of *cibal-i mübâha* that I mentioned in Chapter III. Just as I highlighted in there, understanding of *cibal-i mübâha* denotes the free use of forests for the people living in nearby. These people not only utilized the forest for their livelihoods but also saw themselves as actors in its protection and took ownership of it. This was important since forests were the main source of livelihood for most of the forest villagers. However, the historical transformation in the understanding of *cibal-i mübâha*, which I evaluated in Chapter III, brought about a question of ownership of forest lands between the state and society. That this issue is still controversial today can be inferred from my interview data and from what local people say, which the political narrative will also show clues about this issue. What is important for the current theme, however, is the inference that the understanding of *cibal-i mübâha* still resonates with forest villagers and that this understanding gives them a role as the *organic security providers* of the forest. Such a perspective reconceptualises security as a communal and intimately personal endeavour, based in the lived experiences of those directly affected by the existential threat. Moreover, it challenges the traditional divide between citizens as security end-users and the state as the security provider. Indeed, as I will discuss in the political narrative section, local people seriously questioned the role of forestry personnel as security providers.

“Köylüler önlediler (*yangını*), yakın olan köylüler. O ateşi önlediler fakat burada hiç arazöz, polis efendim, jandarma, hiç orman ekibi yoktu. Çünkü hep Manavgat’taydı. Sonra bizim köylülerin yanına tekrar ekipler geliyor. Ekipler diyor ki, ‘yanarsınız kaçın buradan’. Adamlar diyor ki, ‘kardeşim biz ateşi kontrol altına aldık; sen de bir su sık yangın çıkmasın’. Onlar oturuyor, yorgun ya!” [The villagers who were neighbour prevented it (*the fire*). They prevented that fire, but there were no land vehicles, no police, no gendarmerie, no forestry team. Because they were all in Manavgat. Then the forestry teams came to our village. The team says, ‘you will get burnt, run away from here’. Our people say, ‘brother, we have the fire under control; you spray water to prevent a bigger fire’. But they are sitting, they are tired!] (Gündoğmuş Senir Male 2 Age 71)

This vernacular perspective challenges and eventually disrupts the official narrative based on the value of local knowledge over technical one. The official narrative promotes the success and control of the state officers and elevating them as heroic defenders of the homeland. However, vernacular narrative challenges and disrupts this narrative and underlines the insufficiency of the security professionals who do not feel a sense of belonging to the region and the significance of local knowledge for providing security. This brings the second theme to the fore in my analysis, namely *the lack of local knowledge and belonging to the region of official security professionals*. The issue of lack of knowledge, especially denotes the problem of “information gaps”, as Vaughan-Williams indicated in his work.⁶⁵⁶ Below, direct quotations show the local people’s belief that officers lack local knowledge.

“Yabancı adam buraya geldiği zaman destek değil, köstek oluyor yani. Şimdi mesela bir tane arazöz geliyor Fethiye'nin Seydikemer'inden. Adam burada aracın nereye gideceğini bilmiyor, ... boşu boşuna mazot yakıyor.” [When a foreigner comes here, he becomes a hindrance, not a support. Now, for example, a sprinkler comes from Seydikemer in Fethiye. The man doesn't know where to go, ... he consumess diesel for nothing. (Köyceğiz Pınar Male 5 Age 37)]

“Yani şimdi, esen rüzgarın yönünü sen burada yaşıyorsan sen bilirsin. Ben bilirim, istediğin kadar oku, mühendis ol, bilemez. O rüzgarı yaşlılar bilir ve yaşayanlar bilir. Yabancılar bilemez. Şimdi mesela ben evimde hangi rüzgar istiyorsa oranın penceresini kapatırım. O yüzden yangına müdahalede rüzgarı yönetmek de önemli ve bazı uzmanlar bunu bilmiyor. Bu da köyün kendi halkıyla olabilecek bir şey, köyün kendi halkından buranın özgün bilgisini almanız lazım. Şimdi sadece buranın itfaiyecisi yoktu burada, Türkiye'nin her yerinden insanlar geldi, İzmir'den Ankara'dan geldi. Atıyorum, Ankara'daki bir itfaiyeci senin Manavgat Dikmen'inin neresini bilir? Hiçbirini bilmez, bu adama hangi koordinat verildiyse oraya gitmek zorunda.” [So now, if you live here, you know the direction of the wind. I know, you can study as much as you want, you can be an engineer, but you cannot know. That wind is known by the people living here. Foreigners cannot know. For example, I close the window of my house wherever the wind comes from. Therefore, it is also important to manage the wind in fire intervention and some experts do not know this. This is something that can be done with the people of the village, you need to get the unique knowledge of this place from the people of the village. Now there were not only firefighters from here, but people also came from all over Turkey, from İzmir to Ankara. For example, what part of Manavgat's Dikmen district can a firefighter in Ankara know? He does not know anywhere. He must go wherever the coordinates are given to him.] (Manavgat Dikmen Male 7 Age 36)]

“Yangın söndürme ekibine alınan insanlar o bölgenin insanları olmalı. Şimdi bugün Dim vadisinde 12 mahalle var. Ben 12 mahallenin de arazisinin yüzde 60'ını bilirim. Ve benim mahallemdeki insanlar da o mahallenin yüzde 60'ının arazisinin

⁶⁵⁶ Vaughan-Williams, *Vernacular Border Security: Citizens' Narratives of Europe's Migration Crisis*.

koşullarını bilir. Ama Manavgat'tan gelen bir arkadaş o vadinin ne deresini bilir ne inip çıkma yerini bilir. Köyün karşısında müdürlerle tartıştık. Kavga ettik. Buradan aşağı çekelim hortumu diyor. Bak müdürüm diyorum, buradan inilmez ya. Çünkü o haritadan bakıyor. Bak şuradan şöyle iner diyor. Ya hadi inin dedim ya. Sabahleyin baktı, 'ya muhtarım...' dedi, 'senin dediğine geldik'." [The people recruited to the firefighting team should be from that region. Now today there are 12 neighborhoods in Dim valley. I know 60 percent of the land of all 12 neighborhoods. And the people in my neighborhood know the conditions of the land of 60 percent of that neighborhood. But a foreigner from Manavgat does not know the creek of that valley, nor does he know where to go up and down. We argued with the managers across the village. We fought. He says let's pull the hose down from here. I say, "Look, manager, you can't go down from here. Because he is looking at the map. He says, "Look, it goes down this way. I said, come on, let's try then. In the morning, he looked at me and said, "Mukhtar, we've come to what you said, you were right".] (Alanya Üzümlü Male 2 Age 55)

The vernacular narrative essentially revealed - as the following quote will show - the existence of alternative security actors such as hunters and shepherds to provide security in the village. As I will discuss later, the failure to utilize these alternative security providers and the denial of access to these people through the evacuation policy has been one of the main criticisms of the official security providers.

"Şimdi hocam, bizim dağlarımızda avcı yaşar, avcı gezer. Bak, en önemlisi bu dağlarda yangın olduğu zaman bana göre orman işletmenin avcı ve çobanları bulması lazım, bu köyü bilen insanları bulması lazım. Niye? Şimdi, bu rüzgar böyle esiyor. Rüzgar şuraya çıktığın zaman başka tarafa esiyor. Bunu ben biliyorum ama siz bilmezsiniz. Bunu gelen şef, mühendis bunları bilmez. Şimdi, Konya'dan ekip gelmiş ne bileyim Isparta'nın ekibi gelmiş bu adam bilmez ki bunu. O yangının içinde kalıyor zaten yanılmıyorsa Ahmetler'de 3 tane mi 2 tane mi orman şehidi verildi o zaman. Hani bunlar hep bilinçsizlikten, köylüyü boşalttılar köylerden. Tamam tahliye etsin ama işe yarayacak olan, dağa gidebilecek olan, arazi bilen insanları kendi elinde tutsun, değerlendirsın. Kitaptan okumayla olmaz hocam yanlış anlamayın. Burada yaşayan, doğadaki insanlar daha iyi bilir." [Now, hunters live in our mountains, hunters travel around here. Look, the most important thing is that when there is a fire in these mountains, in my opinion, the forestry administration should find hunters and shepherds, they should find people who know this village. Why? Now, this is how the wind blows. When you go up there, the wind blows the other way. I know this, but you don't. The chief or forest engineer who comes here doesn't know these things. A team coming from Konya or, let's say Isparta, they don't know this. If I am not mistaken, there were 3 or 2 forest martyrs in Ahmetler at that time. You know, these are all due to lack of awareness, they evacuated the villagers from the villages. OK, let them evacuate, but let them keep and utilize the people who will be useful, who can go to the mountains, who know the terrain. You can't just read from a book, don't get me wrong. People living here, people in nature know better.] (Akseki Kepez Male3 Age 31)

Finally, there is an issue of belonging in providing security, according to the vernacular narrative. While the official narrative promotes how heroic and

nationalistic the struggle of the state officers, vernacular narrative unveils a problem of belonging among those officers. It was frequently stated that state officers who are local to that region work hard, but officers who are not from that region are afraid to put themselves at risk. This has led to the questioning of whether security is in fact a “technical” job and how “professional” a security professional is. Obviously, this questioning will pave the way for more theoretical studies on the professionalism of security. However, in this case, it is fair to say that this problem fuels local people’s distrust of state officers.

“Bu devlet memurları hep geri durdu. Hiç müdahale edilmedi. Daha ziyade bölgeyi bilmeyen korkuyor. Bölgeyi bilenler faydalı oldu bize. Canını ortaya koydu. Mezarlığın orada çok büyük yangın vardı mesela. Adam arazözü döndüyor mesela oradan, “nereye gidiyorsun kardeşim” dedi bizim yerli ekip. Dedi ki “yanacağız”. “Hayır, gitmeyeceksin” dedi bizim buralı ekip. Döndürdü diğer ekipleri ve arazöz şöförlerini. Bizim kendi halkımız döndürdü. Bir de yabancı ekip şunu düşünüyor. Ya bana ne yanarsa... Ben yanmayayım. Korkuyor çekiniyor yangından. Benim memleketim Eskişehir diyor.” [These officers always stood back. There was no intervention. Rather, those who do not know the region are afraid from intervening. Those who knew the region were useful to us. They put their lives on the line. For example, there was a very big fire near the cemetery. For example, a man was returning the sprinkle from there, “where are you going, brother?” our local team said. He said, “We’re going to burn”. “No, you’re not going,” said our local team. They turned the other teams and the drivers of the sprinkles. Our own people turned them around. A foreign team also thinks about this. I don’t care about the fire... Let me protect myself. He is afraid of fire. He says Eskişehir is my hometown.] (Alanya Güzelbağ Male 4 Age 51).

Therefore, vernacular narrative promotes forest villagers as the answer to the question of “who is in charge?”, just as a respondent tells:

“Müthiş bir devlete karşı hayal kırıklığı yaşandı. Yani söndürürdü, yani nasıl sönmez? O iş bana düştü noktasına geldi burada yaşayan insanlar.” [There was a tremendous disillusionment with the state. I mean, it would have extinguished it, I mean, how could it not be extinguished? People living here came to the point that it was up to me now.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58).

6.3.3. Whose security is at stake?

“Bu Ülke 1938’de Mavisini 2021’de Yeşilini Kaybetti.” [“This country lost its blue in 1938 and its green in 2021.”] (Bodrum September 2, 2023). This sentence was written on a signboard in the garden of a restaurant in Bodrum, while we were looking for lunch during the pilot part of my fieldwork (Figure 6.1). As soon as I

took the photo of the signboard, I remembered my graduate courses on security, defining the concept as the alleviation of threats to cherished values.⁶⁵⁷ This means, I thought, that forests, which are symbolised by green, are as cherished as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the country, which is symbolised by blue – referring to his eye color- by the local people. Just as 1938, the year Atatürk lost his life, was a year of mourning for the nation, 2021 is equally a year of mourning for local people.



Figure 6.1. Cherished Values

When it comes to the question “whose security is at stake?”, my coding uncovers two distinct but interconnected referent objects regarding the 2021 forest fires: the ecosystem and climate and forest villagers. As I argued above, forest villagers are deeply intertwined with the environment they live in not only materially but also immaterially. Since they are engaged in such a multifaceted relationship, perceived referent objects can also vary. My coding, and the themes I extracted from it, respond to this multifaceted relationship. There are three overarching themes - three disruptions-, denoting whose security at stake and in what ways. The first theme is directly related to *the disruption of the ecosystem*. The security of the ecosystem emerged as a main issue in the vernacular narrative, highlighting the negative effects of the fires on biodiversity and natural environment. Since forests act as an area that

⁶⁵⁷ Williams and McDonald, ‘An Introduction to Security Studies’, 1.

both regulates the climate and establishes ecosystem balance by hosting wild animals, vernacular narrative emphasised that the destruction of the forest causes both ecosystem and climate balance to be disrupted. With the deterioration of the ecosystem balance in forest areas, the vernacular narrative highlighted the descent of animals into the city and the problems this would create, especially the pigs and wild boars. This problem is especially evident in Marmaris. In fact, this situation reveals how biodiversity loss disrupts not only the ecological balance, but also human-animal interaction and creates unforeseen difficulties for local communities.

“Çok önemli bir ekosistem ve doğanın ya da yaşamın döngüsünde vazgeçilmez major noktalardan bir tanesi. Hem canlılığın devamında oksijen temini ve içerisinde bulundurduğu biyoçeşitlilik. Yani biri olmadığı zaman müthiş bir denge yıkımı. Ki biz o orman yangınları sonrasında hayvanların ne kadar yersiz yurtsuz kaldıklarını ve ne kadar yaşam alanlarına doğru evcil olmadıkları halde kent içine doğru dahil olmaya başladıklarını gördük.” [It is a very important ecosystem and one of the indispensable major points in the cycle of nature or life. Both the supply of oxygen for the continuation of life and the biodiversity it contains. So, when one of them is missing, it is a great destruction of balance. After the forest fires, we saw how displaced the animals were and how they started to be included in the urban areas even though they were not domesticated.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

“Domuzlar mesela şimdi tamamen aşağıya indi, evlerin arasında dolaşıyor. Neye alışmış, mesela kedi mamasına alışmış domuz. Biliyorsun bizim insanımız da kendi aç kalır hayvanı besler...” [Pigs, for example, are now completely down there, wandering between houses. They got the pig used to eating cat food. You know, our people feed the animals if they themselves are hungry...] (Marmaris Turunç Male 3 Age 52)

“Şimdi şey konusuna gelebiliriz, yaban domuzları. O da bir güvenlik tehdidi. Domuzlar neye alıştı? Bizim yumuşak yerimizden yakaladılar. Vah vah! İşte domuzcuklar aç kaldı, şunları besleyelim. Ablam evinde yapmış yemeğini, basmış salçayı zeytinyağını bilmem neyi onu hayvana veriyor, hayvan bunu yiyor löp löp. Bak domuz her şeyi yer ama domuz her şeyi yememelidir. Bu sefer ne olacak? Domuzların uzun vadede genetiğini etkileyecek. Domuzla ilgili yine hastalıklar gelişecek beslenmeden ötürü. Bunlar da bu sefer bize bulaşacak.” [Now we can come to the issue of wild boars. That's a security threat too. What have the pigs gotten used to? They've got our soft spot. Oh, dear! Here, the piglets are hungry, let's feed them. My sister cooked her food at home, she made tomato paste, olive oil, I don't know what, and gave it to the animal, and the animal ate it, slurp by slurp. Look, a pig will eat anything, but a pig shouldn't eat everything. What will happen this time? It will affect the genetics of pigs in the long run. Pig-related diseases will develop again due to nutrition. And this time they will infect us.] (Marmaris İçmeler Male 2 Age 41)

Respondents also believe that forest fires have a climate-altering effect on their region. These narratives connect local experiences to broader global phenomena by

framing forest fires as boosters of climate change and emphasising the interaction between local and global security threats.

“İklim değışikliğı var tabii ki canım, bahar kalktı ortadan. Hissettik mesela bu sene hiç kar düşmedi.” [Of course there is climate change, spring has disappeared. We felt it, for example, there was no snow this year.] (Manavgat Aşağıhisar Male 5 Age 61)

“Mesela biz yangından önce klimayı hiç çalıştırmazdık ama yangından sonra çok kötü iklim değışti.” [For example, before the fire we never used to run the air conditioner, but after the fire the climate changed very badly.] (Manavgat Dikmen Male 7 Age 36)

“Yangınlar sonucunda Muğla'nın orman potansiyelinin %5 ile %7 arasında azaldığı söyleniyor. Dolayısıyla bu da bizim iklimimize etki ediyor Yani ne oluyor yazlar sıcak geçiyor. Yani bu her orman yangını sonucu yanan ormanlık alan Muğla'nın ikliminde olumsuz yönde değışikliğe yol açıyor.” [It is said that Muğla's forest potential has decreased by between 5% and 7% because of the fires. Therefore, this affects our climate, so what happens is that summers are hot. In other words, every forest area burned because of a forest fire causes a negative change in Muğla's climate.] (Milas Merkez Male 6 Age 69)

Moreover, forest fires have destroyed the habitat within it. For example, the habitat loss most emphasised by the respondents was for bees. Since beekeeping is a very important source of livelihood for the region, forest fires have also severely disrupted the beekeeping sector. This issue connects us precisely to my second theme – disruption-, namely *the disruption of the livelihood*. As I mentioned above, forest villagers and their environment are deeply intertwined with each other. Economic ties are an important aspect of this relationship. Many local people, most of them are villagers, made their living from forests and engaged in activities such as farming, beekeeping and olive growing. The destruction of these resources by forest fires has left the local population economically vulnerable. This also explains why my coding uncovers two referent objects. When the ecosystem and climate are in danger, it means that forest villagers whose livelihoods depend heavily on their environment are also in danger.

“Orman yaşamın ta kendisi. Orman olmasa hiçbir şekilde burada yaşam olmaz, mümkün değil. Çünkü tarım olmaz. Çünkü orman olmazsa arı olmaz. Yani buradaki en önemli şeylerden bir tanesi arıcılık.” [The forest is life itself. Without the forest, there would be no life here, it is not possible. Because there would be no agriculture. Because without the forest there would be no bees. One of the most important things here is beekeeping.] (Köyceğiz Gökova Female 2 Age 34)

“Özellikle Osmaniye halkının %100’ü baldan geçinir. Turunç’un da %50’si turizm, %50’si ormandan arıcılıktan geçinir. Ama mesela şu anda Turunç’ta 5 aile falan kaldı. Osmaniye’de de %40 arıcı kaldı; %60’ı belediyede ve kurumlarda çalışıyor şu anda işçi olarak.” [Especially 100% of the people of Osmaniye make a living by selling honey. 50% of Turunç also makes a living from tourism, 50% from beekeeping from the forest. But for example, there are about 5 families left in Turunç right now. There are also 40% beekeepers left in Osmaniye;60% of them are currently working in municipalities and institutions as workers.] (Marmaris Turunç Male 3 Age 52)

“İnsanların, nasıl diyim sana, bütün gelir kaynağı, bütün inancı güvenci yani hiç bir şeyi kalmadı ki. Bizim bile 5 tane zeytinliğimiz vardı; bir tek ağaç kalmadı. 1 ton yağ alıyorduk, 1 bidon yağa muhtaç kaldım.” [People have, how can I put it to you, all their sources of income, all their faith, all their security, they have nothing left. Even we had 5 olive groves; not a single tree is left. We used to buy 1 ton of oil, now I am in need of 1 can of oil.] (Milas Türkevleri Female2 Age 52).

Local people and the environment in which they live have such a complex relationship that the fires have put them in a state of anxiety, not only materially but also socially and psychologically. This leads me to my third and final theme – disruption- here, *the disruption of the everyday space*. The psychological toll of the fires was another theme, with respondents describing feelings of grief, loss and change of their everyday spaces. The vernacular narrative, which equates the burning of houses with the loss of their memories, has stated that in addition to this pain, psychological and social effects such as the change of the location of their houses and the destruction of their everyday spaces are still ongoing.

“Evlerin yanması ne biliyor musun? Senin bebekliğın, senin çocukluğun, anıların, duyguların, düşüncelerin... Hatıraların, her şey... Geçmişin tamamen yok oluyor. Her şey ya... Fotoğrafın bile yok. Hani hep çocukluğundan beri sakladığın bir kaç oyuncağın olur ya, herkesin vardır, onlar yok...” [You know what burning houses are? Your babyhood, your childhood, your memories, your feelings, your thoughts... Your memories, everything... Your past is completely gone. Everything... Not even your photograph. You know how you always have a few toys that you’ve kept since you were a child, everyone has them, they’re gone...] (Manavgat Kalemler Male 2 Age 37)

“Bu yangın bizim doğamızı çok değiştirdi, doğamızı bozdu, anılarımız kayboldu. Yani gittiğimiz dağlarda, çeşmenin başında ağaçlar vardı. 300, 500 senelik zeytin ağaçlarımız vardı; tarihi ağaçlarımız vardı, bunlar komple yandı gitti. O ağaçlar atalarımızdan kalmıştı.” [This fire changed our nature a lot, spoiled our nature, our memories were lost. I mean, in the mountains where we went, in the water fountains, there were trees. We had olive trees that were 300, 500 years old; we had historical trees, they were completely burnt down. Those trees were left by our ancestors.] (Akseki Kepez Male3 Age 31)

6.3.4. Sources of Threat

This question defines the perceived source of threat, in my specific case who or what caused forest fires. The literature divides the causes of forest fires into three category, namely voluntary, involuntary and unknown. Therefore, my coding includes these three categories. A close reading of these shows that the source of threat becomes a topic of confusion in the vernacular narrative just as in the official one. Nearly all respondents from different sites emphasised this uncertainty. This confusion leads to a wide range of perceptions of the character of the threat. Some respondents stayed more cautious and stated that the nature of threat remained unknown and that no perpetrator had been identified by the authorities.

“Başlama nedenini bilmiyoruz. Resmi yetkililer tarafından da söylenmedi bir şey.”
[We don't know why it started. Nothing has been said by the official authorities either.] (Milas Akçakaya Male2 Age 55)

This uncertainty can generate various perceptions among the local people about the intentional and unintentional causes of the fire. However, despite this uncertainty, local people believe that the cause of fires is mostly human-caused, as the literature confirms. The following quote expresses this directly:

“Bir neden çıkmadı ama bize göre insan kaynaklı diye düşündük. Kastidir veya değildir. Ama insandan çıktığı yüzde 99. Burası tamamen insandan çıkma. Ama bilinçli ama bilinçsiz, o konuda yorum yapma şansımız yok.” [We couldn't find a reason, but we thought it was human-caused. It may or may not be intentional. But, it is human-caused. It's 99 percent human-caused. This place is completely human-caused. Conscious or unconscious, we have no chance to comment on that.] (Alanya Üzümlü Male 2 Age 55)

Once unknown causes are excluded and the consensus points to the human factor, it remains to determine whether it was intentional or unintentional. Answers to the sources of threat require constructions of “other” in the security narrative. However, it is noticeable that the construction of the other here is very diverse. I argue that it depends on the confusion as I highlighted above. A categorisation of the many sources of threats revealed that in the unintentional category, vernacular narrative emphasised human-induced causes such as negligence, waste, and uncontrolled stubble burning, as well as old and poorly maintained electrical lines. When it comes to

the intentional category, local people reveal its traumatic subconscious, unravelling the belief that failed government policies are deliberate, the fear that burned forest areas will be allocated for hotels or mining land, and its suspicion of PKK terrorist organisation. Considering all these human-induced threat perceptions together, I argue that the vernacular narrative emphasises that the threat comes from outsiders to the region by highlighting the theme of “*no one burns down their own place.*”

In terms of human negligence part, most of the respondents stated that foreigners, especially the tourists, do not have sensitivity to protect the area and keep it clean. As the quotations below show, they particularly complained about the ease with which foreigners can enter forest lands and emphasised the need to develop a control mechanism for this. This led to the development of the bottom-up security surveillance mechanism, which I will discuss later.

“Bir tek bu bölgede değil, yazın burası hallaç pamuğu gibi kimin eli kimin cebinde belli değil. Yangını doğuran da bu zaten. Buralar yazın doluyor ve ormana kadar insan konvoyu oluşuyor. Bu kadar kontrolsüz olmaz.” [Not just in this area, but during the summer, this place is a complete mess—it's impossible to tell who's doing what with whom. This is what causes fires. These areas fill up in summer and there is a convoy of people all the way to the forest. It cannot be this out of control.] (Marmaris İçmeler Male 2 Age 41)

“Şimdi şöyle, bizim burada yaşayanlar böyle bir şey yapmaz ama buraya dışarıdan çok gelen oluyor. Yazın turizm bölgesiyiz biz, yazın binlerce kişi geliyor buraya. Ve insanlar tabii ki o şehir trafiğinden şehir görüntüsünden bıktığından müsait buldukları her su başında her yerde piknik yapıyorlar. Dolayısıyla çöplerini orada bırakıyorlar.” [Now, the people who live here would not do such a thing, but there are many people coming here from outside. We are a tourism region in summer, thousands of people come here in summer. And of course, people are tired of the city traffic and the appearance of the city, so they have picnics at every water point they find available. Therefore, they leave their garbage there.] (Köyceğiz Pınar Male 5 Age 37)

Those who attributed the cause of the fire to electric lines were especially emphasised in the villages of Alanya (Bayırkozağacı and Bayır). The securitised issue in this regard was that the private electrical distribution company owned the electricity lines and that this company did not renew the electricity poles in villages with low population density due to maintenance costs.

“İşte, mesela kendiniz de görüyorsunuz. 1979'da gelmiş bu direkler. Başka da yapılmadı zaten. Biz bu direkleri yer altından talep ettik ama bir türlü

gerçekleşmedi.” [Here, for example, you can see for yourself. These poles arrived in 1979. No more were built anyway. We demanded that these poles be built underground, but we could not realize it.] (Alanya Güzelbağ Male 4 Age 51)

“Elektrikten çıktı. başka bir neden olmadı. Dilekçe verdim 2023’te. Planlarımıza göre önümüzdeki yıllarda yapılacağı cevabını verdiler hep. Cimer’e de yazdım. Önümüzdeki yıllar diyor tarih vermiyor. Sağlam bir tane direk yok. Yangın riski yüzde 500. Bunun yenilenmesi gerekiyor. Burası küçük bir köy olduğundan maliyet fazla çıkacak diye büyük köylere yapıyorlar. Ama yangın da böyle yerlerden çıkıyor. Orman da gidiyor köy de gidiyor yani.” [It was the electricity. There was no other reason. I submitted petitions in 2023. They always answered that it would be done in the coming years according to our plans. I also wrote to Cimer- Presidential Communication Centre-. They say next years, they do not give a date. There is not a single reliable pole. The fire risk is 500 percent. These poles need to be renewed. Since this is a small village, they build reliable poles in big villages because of the cost. But fires come from such places. The forest would be destroyed and also the village if there is a fire.] (Alanya Bayırkozağacı Male 5 Age 46)

Indeed, it was stated that this situation created a serious feeling of insecurity among the villagers:

“Biz her gece burada hep tedirgin yatarız elektrik telinden yangın çıkar diye. Elektriği keserim trafodan, ııksız duralım ama evsiz olmaz diye.” [We always sleep here every night, worried that there will be a fire from the electric wire. I cut the electricity from the transformer; we can live without lights, but we cannot be without a home.] (Alanya Bayırkozağacı Male 5 Age 46)

On the other hands, when it comes to voluntary threats, there seems to be a public suspicion that the failure of the government and forestry personnel to extinguish the fires was deliberate. It is precisely at this point that some of the traumatic subconscious thoughts of the local people come to the surface. The first of these traumatic subconscious thoughts is the public’s belief that the failure to put out the fires was deliberately engineered by the government. In fact, the government witnessed a very similar criticism in another context 2 years after the fires, in the earthquake disaster of 2023. In the earthquake disaster, local people criticised the government for not only abandoning them during the disaster, but also for not immediately deploying security professionals such as the military. Furthermore, one of the most criticised issues was that the personnel in the fire zone did not intervene in the fire in front of their eyes, saying “we did not receive orders”. It was even reported that some personnel were beaten by villagers for this reason. It can be stated that the issue of waiting for orders from the higher administration to intervene in the fire fuelled the public’s belief that the fire was deliberately set.

“Fakat siyasi irade bu yangıya göz yumdu. Bunu çok somut olarak şöyle söyleyeyim. 6 gün ya polis olmaz mı arkadaş hadi uçağı geçtim. Hadi jandarmayı geçtim ya bir polis olmaz mı? Bu kadar büyük bir deniz kuvvetleri var burada, gemisi var, yangın söndürme şeyleri var ... yerinden kalkmaz mı? Duyduğumuza göre çıkmamaları konusunda emir gelmiş o askerlere. Kimileri yıllık izinlerini alarak geldiler ve yangında çalıştılar. Bunları birebir deneyimledik. Yani o iktidar neyse erk neyse yangıya göz yumdu.” [But the political will turned a blind eye to this forest fire. Let me put it very concretely. For 6 days, can't there be a police, let alone the airplane, let alone the gendarmerie, can't there be a police? There is such a big naval force here, there are ships, there are fire extinguishers ... can't they get up? We heard that those soldiers were ordered not to leave. Some of them took their annual leave and came and worked on to extinguish the fire. We experienced these things first hand. I mean, whatever the power, whatever the authority was, it turned a blind eye to the fire.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

“Ben 55-56 yaşındayım. Çok yangın yanardı biz yangını bir günde söndürürdük. Kazma kürek ile giderdik. Bolu'dan falan personel geldi ama burada yangın sönmedi. Burada bir uyumsuzluk var, bile bile yandı. Bak, biz kazma kürek diyorum, kendi elimizle kazıyorduk toprakla bastırıyorduk azıcık çember altına alıyorduk. Abi nereden baksan 5.000 personel diyeyim, fazla da, hepsinde itfaiyesi var, arazözler burada o araçlar marketin önünde yatıyor, yangına gitmiyor. 500 asker var orada yangına gitmiyor. Bile bile yaktılar. Mesela yangın 50 metre arkada, asfalttayız, itfaiyeciler telefon elinde oyun oynuyor. Hatta bizim köyün gençleri dövdü, su sıkıyor diye. Adam telefonla oynuyor, seslendik “arkadaşım şu ateşi püskürt asfalta gelmesin asfalttan bu tarafa geçerse köy yanacak”. “Emir yok” diyor. Bak, “emir yok” diyor.” [I am 55-56 years old. We used to put out fires in a day. We used to go with pickaxes and shovels. Personnel came from around the country, but the fire could not be extinguished here. It burned on purpose. Look, we were digging with our own hands, pressing it down with soil, circling it a little bit. Brother, let's say 5,000 personnel, more than that, they all had fire brigades, all-terrain vehicles were here, those vehicles were lying in front of the market, they did not go to the fire. There were 500 soldiers there, they did not go to the fire. They burned it on purpose. For example, the fire was 50 meters behind us, we were on the asphalt, the firefighters were playing on their phones. He was even beaten by the youth of our village for not spraying water. The man was playing on the phone, I shouted “my friend, spray this fire so that it doesn't come to the asphalt, if it passes from the asphalt to this side, the village will burn”. He says “there are no orders”. Look, he says “there are no orders”.] (Milas Fesleğen Male 8 Age 55)

Some respondents were quite certain that the government had failed to extinguish the fires, which created a perception that the failure to extinguish the fires was deliberate:

“Şimdi Onur’cuğum, sen buraya Bucakşeyhler Mahallesi'nden geldin. Biz seni tanımıyoruz, burada bizimle konuşuyorsun. Biz bir şeyler söyledik, geldiğin yerdeki insanları da tanımıyoruz; onlar da bir şeyler söyledi. Ama benim söylediğim şeylerle orada gittiğin insanların da konuştukları hemen hemen aynıdır. Sen, eğer, bu tezde yazabiliyorsan, en önemli unsuru söylüyorum sana ama bak yazabiliyorsan. Yani biz söylemekten çekinmiyoruz, sen yazabilir misin bilmiyorum? “Bile isteye buralar yakıldı ve bile isteye devlet müdahale etmedi”. [Now Onur, you came here from the

Bucakşeyhler neighborhood. We don't know you, you are talking to us here. We said some things, we don't know the people where you came from; they said some things too. But what I said and what the people you went there said are almost the same. If you can write in this dissertation, I am telling you the most important element, but if you can write it. I mean, we don't hesitate to say it, I don't know if you can write it. “These places were burnt down intentionally and the state did not intervene intentionally”.] (Manavgat Oymapınar Male 9 Age 70)

Although exploring the background of this is a subject for another study, it seems to me that this frustrated narrative points to certain fault lines in state-society relations. Lack of communication can be one of the most important factors that stimulate these fault lines. As I highlighted in the previous section, the official narrative has already emphasised the success of the security operation and securitised critical voices. But this top-down success story does not resonate with local people on the ground. This, combined with various traumatic subconscious thoughts can lead to the production of perceptions that directly implicate the government, as seen in the quote above. I argue that it is important at this point for the government to clearly explain to the public the reasons for the inadequacy or shortcomings in firefighting. For example, when I asked a respondent from Köyceğiz for his opinion on the delay of fire-fighting helicopters, she explained the working principle of the fire-fighting helicopters and explained that it cannot take off before 6 minutes. Since she was aware of this issue, the delay was not an issue of criticism for that respondent. (Köyceğiz Gökova Female 2 Age 34)

One of the traumatic subconscious thoughts is about local people's belief that forest lands will be sacrificed to extractive development policies of the government, referring that the forest will be allocated to hotel and mining construction. The subconscious that the burned areas will be opened to rent-seeking lies both in the privatisation policies that have been in place since the Turgut Özal era and especially in the construction-based development strategy of the AKP in the last 20 years.

“Ama son 20 yılda çıkan yangınların bilinçli çıkarıldığını, rant amaçlı olduğunu ve yanan yerlere turistik tesis yapma amaçlı olduğunu düşünüyorum. Ve bu, 2021'deki çıkan yangında helikopterlerle müdahale edilmemesinin nedeni budur. Şimdi o tarihe kadar Türk hava kurumu uçakları yangını söndürüyordu da o tarihte mi bunların hepsi arızalandı? Yani bu bilinçle yapılan bir şeydir başka açıklaması yok.” [But I think that the fires in the last 20 years have been deliberately set, for rent-seeking purposes and to build touristic facilities in the burnt areas. And this is the reason why helicopters did not intervene in the fires in 2021. Now, until that date, the planes of

the Turkish Aeronautical Association were extinguishing the fire, but did they all malfunction at that time? Therefore, this is something done consciously, there is no other explanation.] (Milas Merkez Male 6 Age 69)

“Bodrum mesela bize yakın, Bodrum'da arkadaşlarımız da, var sosyal medya gruplarımız da var. Bir yerde yangın haberi gördüğümde altına atılan ilk yorum, “Kim bilir hangi zengin otel yapacak?” oluyor. Bak, ilk yorum bu oluyor mesela. Herkes bunun bilincinde.” [For example, Bodrum is close to us, we have friends in Bodrum, we have social media groups. When I see news of forest fire in somewhere, the first comment is, “Who knows which rich person is going to build a hotel?” Look, this is the first comment. Everyone is aware of this.] (Milas Tuzabat Female 3 Age 47)

“Titanik Otel’in yeri mesela cetvel ile çizilmiş gibi yandı. Turizm geliri artınca Türkiye’de otel yapacak yer kalmadı.” [The site of the Titanic Hotel, for example, burned down like it was drawn with a ruler. As tourism revenues increased, there is no place to build hotels in Turkey.] (Bodrum Mumcular Male 3 Age 44)

Finally, some respondents stated that the PKK terrorist organisation started the fires. What led most of the participants to think this way is the fact that the fires break out simultaneously in several different locations. The fact that the fire started simultaneously in multiple locations has led to the interpretation that this was a form of organised violence, and therefore a terrorist attack.

“Bana göre, PKK’lıların falan yaktığını söylüyorlar, genellikle öyle yani. Öyle de oldu yani. Yoksa aynı anda yangın çıkamaz yani. Biz daha önce yangın gördük ama yani öylesini görmedik. Aynı anda burada çıkıyor, bir duyuyoruz taa öteki tarafta Gündoğmuş’un köyüne nasıl gidiyor?” [In my opinion, they say PKK militants burned it down, that's what they usually say. I think that's what happened. Otherwise, fires cannot break out simultaneously. We've seen fires before, but we've never seen one like that. It starts here at the same time, we hear about it, but how does it get to the village in Gündoğmuş on the other side?] (Gündoğmuş Rasihkaplan Male 1 Age 50)

“Çünkü biz bu bölgeleri iyi biliyoruz. Yangının bir yerden diğerine geçmesi bile manidar. Yani nasıl söyleyeyim ben sana, bizim Oymapınar köyünden Saraçlı tarafına yangın geçiyor hiç olmayacağı şekilde.” [Because we know these areas well. Even the fact that the fire moves from one place to another is meaningful. I mean, how can I tell you, the fire passes from Oymapınar village to Saraçlı side in a way that it would never happen.] (Manavgat Aşağıpazarcı Male 4 Age 50)

Taken together, in the context of intentional threats, vernacular narrative revealed a deep scepticism of the local population towards political power as well as external actors, while in the context of unintentional threats, it revealed the interaction of human and infrastructural factors. While the analysis shows that threats are mostly rooted in human agency, the socio-political and economic dynamics of it are

complex and multi-dimensional. The vernacular narrative shows the necessity of both immediate interventions and long-term regulations to develop resistance against both human-induced and more structural threats.

6.3.5. Measures and Tools

The analysis of “Measures and Tools” in the vernacular narrative offers a disruptive potential to the official policies of ensuring security. The vernacular narrative does this by emphasising the importance of community-based practices and local knowledge, and in particular the shortcomings in firefighting infrastructure and the critique of evacuation policy. Indeed, this is because the two narratives rely on different epistemic and methodological ways to achieve security. On the one hand, the official narrative’s measures and tools are based on drones, high-tech devices and technical knowledge, while the local narrative is based on the long-standing practical knowledge of the villagers, using more primitive equipment. Therefore, two themes deserve attention here, namely *the shortcomings of the OGM infrastructure and the critical role of community-based practices and local knowledge*.

Although the official narrative emphasises that there are no deficiencies in the field, the vernacular narrative believes that there are serious deficiencies in the OGM’s firefighting infrastructure. Interviews with local people revealed that this perception is attributed to different dynamics. First and foremost, there is a strong belief among the local population that there is a lack of airplanes or helicopters to deal with the fires. Despite Minister Pakdemirli’s explanation of the rationale for not keeping airplanes or helicopters permanently in the inventory, but renting them when they are needed⁶⁵⁸, local people have criticised the lack of aircraft in the inventory. This shows that the security elite is unable to explain the rationality of its policies to the public, causing the aforementioned information gaps.

“Onun haricinde helikopterlerimiz yok. Biz orman bölgesiyiz kardeşim! Sen 10 tane veya 100 tane memur alacağına veya arazöz alacağına, helikopter al. Bizim söndürmemiz yukarıda önemli. Aşağıdan zaten canla başla vatandaş o mücadeleyi

⁶⁵⁸ T.C. Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, ‘Bakan Pakdemirli: 53 İlde Çıkan 275 Orman Yangınının 272’sini Kontrol Altına Aldık’.

koşturuyorlar. Hava ekipmanı eksik. Ya ben niye yurt dışından yardımla getirtiyorum, benim param yok mu?” [Other than that, we don't have helicopters. We are a forest region, brother! Instead of hiring 10 or 100 officers or sprinklers, buy helicopters. Extinguishing the fire from above is important. Citizens are already working hard to fight from below. We do not have enough air equipment. Why do I have to get help from abroad, don't I have money?] (Köyceğiz Yeni Female 1 Age 50)

Another mostly cited lack of infrastructure is about the fire safety roads. Emphasising the critical role of fire safety roads in firefighting, the vernacular narrative shows, again, an example of information gap here. While a few knowledgeable respondents emphasised that the opening of fire safety roads are hampered by legal restrictions, such as property or environmental protection law, the majority saw it as negligence on the part of the forestry organisation.

“Bizim orman yolu olmadığı için çoğu yerlere müdahale edemediler.” [They could not intervene in many places because we do not have a fire safety road.] (Marmaris Armutalan Female 2 Age 40)

“Yani bence yangın şeritleri, bazı yerlerde görüyoruz mesela bu dağlarda hiç yok. Yangın şeridi olması lazım. Yangın şeridi hem yangının büyümesini engelleyebilir hem de ulaşımı rahatlatılabilir. Yangın şeritleri yapılmalı bence.” [I think fire safety roads, we see in some places, for example in these mountains there are none. There should be fire safety roads. They can both prevent the fire from growing and ease transportation. I think they should be built.] (Köyceğiz Yeşilköy Male 3 Age 42)

A respondent who is familiar with the problem faced by the OGM in opening fire safety roads mentioned one of these legal obstacles, especially the ownership problem, cause difficulties in opening these roads:

“Şimdi bu şerit açarken bazı kanuni problemlerle karşılaşıyor. Mesela nedir? Bir köyün korunması için bir bölge şerit açılması lazım. Hop birinin orada tarlası var. Ormanlaşmış arazisi var. Şimdi biz mesela buradan bakınca bir yeri orman gibi görüyoruz. Halbuki orası bir kişinin tapulu malı oluyor. Adam diyor ki yapamazsın, burası benim tapulu arazim çünkü ne olacak o zaman kamulaşacak adamın arazisi. Bazen arkeolojik sit alanına denk gelebiliyor. İzin gerekiyor. E olamıyor tabii, açamazsın diyor adam. Her yere bu kadar problemsiz hadi açayım deyip açamıyorlar maalesef.” [Now, some legal problems are encountered while opening these roads. For example, what is it? For the protection of a village, a road needs to be opened. Someone has a field there. For example, when we look from here, we see a place as a forest. However, it is the property of a person. The man says you can't, this is my private land because what will happen then, his land will be expropriated. Sometimes it may coincide with an archaeological site. Permission is needed. Of course you can't, the man says you can't open it. Unfortunately, they cannot open everywhere without such a problem.] (Köyceğiz Gökova Female 2 Age 34)

The second theme is *the critical role of community-based practices and local knowledge*. By highlighting the disregard of practical knowledge based on long-term community experiences, this theme essentially unearths local people's own authentic security provision mechanisms. In this way, it especially challenges and disrupts the evacuation policy of the official elite, unveils its alternative bottom-up surveillance mechanism, and ordinary everyday acts of measures and tools. As I stressed above, local knowledge is something that is appreciated by the vernacular narrative in firefighting. Just as forest villagers see themselves as the organic security provider, they acknowledge that the OGM should be in cooperation with the local people since they perceive themselves have the practical ability to manage the forest fires.

“Ormanla köylünün bağıını kopartmayacaksın çünkü ikisi birbirini sigortası.” [You will not break the bond between the forest and the villagers because the two are insurance for each other.] (Marmaris İçmeler Male 2 Age 41)

“Bence yasaklar çok orman konusunda. Yani orman köylüsü sürecin içinde olmalı. Orman köylüsüne orman teslim edilmeli ama orman (genel müdürlüğü) köylüye o yetkiyi tanımıyor.” [I think there are too many prohibitions on forestry. The forest villagers should be involved in the process. The forest should be handed over to the forest villagers, but the forest (general directorate) does not give that authority to the villagers.] (Köyceğiz Gelişim Male 1 Age 55)

“Orman köylüleri orman yangınıını söndürebilecek profesyonel demeyeyim, o okulu okumamış ama pratikten o doğada yaşadıkları için ehil insanlar bana göre.” [I don't want to say that forest villagers are professionals who can extinguish forest fires, but I think they are competent people because they have lived in nature.] (Röportaj 28 Köyceğiz Yeni Female 1 Age 50)

However, what we have seen during the forest fires of 2021 is that this possibility of cooperation has been broken by the evacuation policy. In fact, it has been frequently reported that people who complied with the evacuation policy lost their homes, but that there were people who defied the evacuation order and remained in the village hiding from the gendarmerie, protecting their homes from the fire. This reveals a deep sense of distrust of the official authority and security provider.

“Bak bizim köyümüzün gençlerini salsaydık, orman (işletme müdürlüğü) olmasaydı; biz bu köyü yakmazdık. Gerçek söylüyorum yakmazdık.” [Look, if we had let the youth of our village go, if there had been no forest (the directorate), we wouldn't have burned down this village, I'm telling you the truth, we wouldn't have burned it down.] (Gündoğmuş Senir Male 2 Age 71)

“Son olarak ekleyeceğim bir şey var o da şu, insanları evlerinden yerlerinden kovmasalardı insanlar kendi müdahalesi ile çok şey kurtarırdı. Benim bizzat iki tane kardeşim kendi mücadelesi ile kurtardı. Mesela, Ahmetler köyünde insanlar köyünü boşaltmadı ve köylerini kurtardılar.” [The last thing I would add is that if they had not kicked people out of their homes, people would have saved a lot with their own intervention. Two of my own brothers saved their villages with their own struggle. For example, in the village of Ahmetler, people did not evacuate their villages and saved their villages.] (Manavgat Aşağıpazarcı Male 4 Age 5)

Emphasising the inadequacy of state officers equipped with technical knowledge, local people invent certain community-based practices to ensure security in their own way. One of these ordinary and everyday actions has been the placement of water jerry cans in easily accessible areas such as roadsides during the summer months when the risk of fire is high. Placing water jerry cans on the roads show that the threat of forest fire has become mundane for local people.

Another type of everyday actions has been the bottom-up surveillance mechanism developed by local people. In line with other narratives of security - local people's ownership of the forest and seeing themselves as organic security providers - the bottom-up surveillance mechanism established by villagers is one of the most emphasised measures in ensuring security for forests. In addition to the OGM's top-down surveillance with forest watchtowers and photo-traps, this kind of bottom-up surveillance mechanism, in which local people organise themselves through various means of communication, constitutes an alternative to state-centered measure and tools. For example, as one participant states in the third quote below, they agreed on the act of firing a gun as a unique form of communication to announce the fires to the whole village.

“Biz yaz dönemi olduğundan beri gece nerede bir ışık var, nerede bir araç geçiyor, ... artık şüpheleniyoruz. Bir ışık görsek, direkt muhtarımızı arıyoruz, jandarmayı arıyoruz. Muhtarımızın oğlu gençti, o arkadaşlarıyla artık nöbet tutmaya başladılar. WhatsApp grupları oluşturdular hatta. Bir bakıma kendimizi korumaya çalışıyorduk, önümüz orman arkamız orman çünkü.” [Since it is summer, we are now suspicious wherever there is a light at night, wherever a vehicle passes by. If we see a light, we directly call our mukhtar, we call the gendarmerie. Our mukhtar's son was young, he and his friends started keeping watch. They even created WhatsApp groups. In a way we were trying to protect ourselves, because in front of us is the forest and behind us is the forest.] (Milas Tuzabat Female 3 Age 47)

“Mesela genç topluluğumuz her an teyakkuz halindedir. Örnek veriyorum, orman yoluna herhangi bir araç, traktör, motosiklet gittiğinde birisi bunu elbette görüyor ve

hemen gruplardan haberleşiyoruz. Ve hemen arkasından gidip kim olduğuna bakıyoruz.” [For example, our youth community is always on alert. For example, when a vehicle, a tractor, a motorcycle goes on the forest road, someone of course sees it and we immediately communicate with the groups. And we immediately go after them to see who it is.] (Bodrum Mumcular Male 1 Age 31)

“Gece haberi olan olur olmayan olur diye silah attık, silahın sesine insanlar uyanır diye. Burada bizim gece gece silah atıldığında yangın var anlamına gelir. Silahla haber verimiz genelde. Burada silah atmak yangın var demektir bizim köylerimizde gece. Bunu da genelde burada yaşayan insanlar hep bilir.” [We fired a gun at night, in case people woke up to the sound of the gun. Here, when a gun is fired at night, it means there is a forest fire. We usually give the news with a gun. Shooting a gun here means there is a fire at night in our villages. This is also generally known by the people living here.] (Akseki Kepez Male3 Age 31)

Cleaning the slash in the forest is also among the regular daily activities of the forest villagers mentioned by the local people. With the bottom cleaning in the forest, dry grasses that may cause fire are both removed from the forest and the villagers meet their needs with these grasses.

“Bir köylü şunu söylemişti bana. ‘Bizim buralarda yangın olmaz dikkat ediyor musun?’ demişti. ‘Niye?’ dedim. ‘Çünkü biz dip temizliğini yaparız’ demişti. Orman köylüsünü ormandan çıkardığınız zaman dip örtü temizliğini yapmazsınız; o da yangında çıra koyup yakmak kadar hızlı yayılıma neden olur.” [A villager once told me, ‘Do you notice that there are no fires here?’ I said, ‘Why?’ He said, ‘Because we do the bottom cleaning’. When you remove the forest villagers from the forest, you do not do the bottom cover cleaning, which causes a fire to spread as fast as putting kindling in the fire.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

While the role of such daily actions in preventing fires was emphasised, another noteworthy issue was the emphasis on the villagers’ first response to the fire with the vehicles they used daily. For example, they stated that they discovered a way of first intervention in the form of a fire brigade hose by filling water into the spraying pumps that they use for agricultural spraying.

“Bir de halk, kendi güvenliğini sağlamak için bizim ziraat için kullandığımız araçların arkasına takılan ilaç makinelerimiz vardır, püskürtmeli, biz onlara su doldurarak tamamen kendi imkanlarımızla evlerimizi hayvanlarımızı falan korumaya çalıştık.” [We also have spraying machines that are attached to the back of the vehicles we use for agriculture. We tried to protect our houses, animals, etc. with our own means by filling these machines with water to ensure our own safety.] (Manavgat Oymapınar Male 9 Age 70)

“Bizim burada köylerde küçük traktöre takılan tankerlerimiz var, basınçlı. Hemen gidiyoruz, onunla müdahale edebiliyoruz.” [Here in the villages, we have small

tractor-mounted tankers, pressurised. We can go immediately and intervene with it.] (Köyceğiz Ağa Male 4 Age 35)

“Sırtımızda ilaç motorlarıyla, ilaç attığımız pompalarla, su getirdik. Ondan herkes omuzladı.” [We brought water on our backs with spraying engines and pumps, and everyone shouldered it.] (Akseki Kepez Male3 Age 31)

In conclusion, the vernacular narrative of “Measures and Tools” emphasise the limitations of the official security providers and unveils the value of community-based practices and local knowledge in firefighting. To ensure a more efficient security policy on forests, inclusion of local knowledge and experience, traditional practices, and bottom-up surveillance should not be disregarded by the security elite.

6.3.6. Meaning of Forests

“Meaning of Forests” is the first category of the environmental narrative regarding the forest fires in 2021. It basically reveals the significance of forests for the local people. Two of the most recurring and intensely emphasised codes appear here as “Resource”, seeing the forests as the building block of livelihoods, and “Biospheric”, acknowledging the forests’ environmental value for the local people. Together these two perspectives yield a complex meaning of forests in the general theme of “*the forest is our livelihood and oxygen*”. In other words, forests are perceived not only as vital components of life and the ecosystem balance but also as economic assets for local people. In this way, the vernacular description of forests departs significantly from that of the official one. While the official narrative idealises forests as the “green homeland” in an abstract, nationalist context, the vernacular narrative frames forests as a tangible source of life economically and biologically on a personal and local level. Some respondents focus more on the biospheric meaning of the forests such as:

“Orman olmazsa yaşam olur mu ya.” [Without the forest, there is no life.] (Marmaris Turunç Male 3 Age 52)

“Orman köylüsü için yaşam. Önce bir kere oksijenle başlayacağız.” [Life for the forest villagers. First, we will start with oxygen.] (Köyceğiz Ulucami Male 2 Age 58)

However, the economic value of forests has also been emphasised in the local narrative. This aspect shows the explicit economic dependency that shape their daily

lives and routines. By serving as a basin for various economic activities, such as beekeeping, farming, and logging, forests have also been considered as a national asset by the vernacular narrative. In fact, forests sustain not only the livelihood of forest villagers on an individual basis, but also an entire local economy, especially in the case of Marmaris with the production of pine honey. Finally, the destruction of the habitat of the forests has also created a security problem, such as wild animals coming into the city as I quoted above. This emphasises the stabilizing role of forests for sustainable biodiversity and therefore situates forests as an indispensable element of environmental security.

“Zaten bizim köylerimizin çoğu orman köyüdür, gelirlerini ormandan elde ederler.” [In fact, most of our villages are forest villages, they derive their income from the forest.] (Köyceğiz Gelişim Male 1 Age 55)

“Orman milli servet.” [Forest is a national wealth.] (Köyceğiz Yeşilköy Male 3 Age 42)

“Şimdi özellikle balcılık Marmaris'te çok etkilendi. Yani buranın çam balı, coğrafi işaretli ve çok önemli ancak orman varlığını kaybetti. Basra böceğini kaybetmek buradaki balcılığın çok sınırlı bir alanda yürütülmesine neden oldu. Çok az bir alanda kaldı. Ne Turgut ne de Bayır'da balcılık yapılamıyor artık. Ve artık çam balı yok çiçek balı yapıyorlar.” [Now especially beekeeping has been severely affected in Marmaris. In other words, the pine honey here, which is geographically marked and very important, has lost its forest existence. The loss of the *Marchalina hellenica* has caused the honey farming here to be carried out in a very limited area. It remained in a very small area. Neither Turgut nor Bayır can do honey farming anymore. And they no longer make pine honey but flower honey.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

“Orman bizim her şeyimiz. Orman olmasa biz yoğuz. Dağın başında yaşayan insanlar olarak geçim kaynağımıza da katkısı var. Çünkü hayvanlarımızın yiyeceği orman, suyumuzun geldiği noktalar orman, ayrıca kesiminden dikiminden de faydalanıyoruz.” [The forest is everything. We would not exist without the forest. As people living at the top of the mountain, it also contributes to our livelihood. Because the forest is the food for our animals, the forest is where our water comes from, and we also benefit from its cutting and planting.] (Alanya Üzümlü Male 2 Age 55)

The vernacular narrative of “Meaning of Forests” demonstrates how local people conceptualise forests as integral to their livelihoods and environmental security. The fact that the interview data highlights both “Resource” and “Biospheric” dimensions indicates the multiple threats posed by deforestation, from economic impoverishment to ecological imbalance.

6.3.7. Drivers of Deforestation

In the environmental narrative, “Drivers of Deforestation” denotes factors that directly or indirectly contribute to the degradation of forest ecosystems. Just as I elaborated in Chapter III, these drivers involve a variety of both human and systemic effects, from immediate effects such as land clearing for developmental purposes or wider institutional and socio-economic changes in the region, bringing an oppressive structure on forest lands, such as the migration waves. By highlighting “*the forest not as an asset to be protected but as a timber to be commodified and sold*”, as a central theme, the vernacular narrative provides insights into how local people perceive these drivers.

In terms of direct/proximate drivers, the prominent perception of the local people convicts the allocation of forest lands for tourism and construction. In this regard, they criticise the extractive development model of the AKP government, and state that it gives permission to these companies without considering the nature. On the other hand, the fact that environmental activists and local people have been subjected to violence by law enforcement officers during their protests in Marmaris or in Akbelen forests fuels their concern.

“Mesela Marmaris'te Kızılbük diye bir yer var milli park sınırları içerisinde. Simpaş korkunç bir yüksek katlı devre mülk inşaatına orada başlayabildiği için ve insanlar bunu bildiği için milyonlarca kez protestolar yaptılar. Oranın inşaatının durdurulmasıyla ilgili bir sonuca varılamadığı için de tabii ki doğal olarak insanlar bu şüpheyi besliyor ve dile getiriyorlar. Çünkü Bodrum'da örneğini çok gördük. Yani Bodrum'da Güvercinlik'te bütün oralar yanıyor ve üstüne otel yapılıyor.” [For example, there is a place called Kızılbük in Marmaris within the borders of the national park. Since Simpaş (a real estate company) was able to start a horrible high-rise construction there and people knew about it, they protested millions of times. Since no conclusion has been reached about stopping the construction there, of course, people naturally nurture and express this suspicion. Because we have seen many examples in Bodrum. In other words, in Güvercinlik in Bodrum, areas are burning, and a hotel is being built on top of it.] (Köyceğiz Gökova Female 2 Age 34)

“Halkın bilinç altında mı var yoksa yaşadıklarından öğrendiği bir şey mi var demek lazım. Burada hemen sizi Akbelen ormanına götürürüm. Sizin hiç aklınıza gelir miydi verimsiz bir kömür yatağı, kapatılması gereken bir termik santral için binlerce ağaç kesilecek.” [It is necessary to say whether it is in the people's subconscious or whether there is something they have learnt from their experiences. Here I will take you to Akbelen forest. Would you ever think that thousands of trees would be cut

down for an inefficient coal bed, a thermal power plant that should be closed down?]
(Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

While the context changes, the basic proximate driving force usually remains the same. In Milas, there is more criticism of the opening of forested land for mining and the construction of wind turbines, while in Bodrum the focus of criticism emphasises the allocation of land for hotels and the construction of luxury villas. One respondent expresses how much the forests of Muğla province are endangered by mining exploration licences as follows:

“Bu maden ocaklarına ruhsat veren kurum Çevre, Şehircilik ve İklim Değişikliği Bakanlığı. Şimdi bunlar tabii hükümete bağlı. Hükümetin şu andaki politikaları da rant ekonomisine dayalı. Muğla'nın %59'u maden arama ve işletme ruhsatına sahip. Bu oran Milas'ta biraz daha fazla, mesela bu %70'lere kadar dayanıyor. Dolayısıyla buralarda birçok büyük sermaye firmasının fabrikaları var. Dolayısıyla bunların yarattığı çevre kısıımı var. Burada bir denetim mekanizması yok. Mesela kolaylıkla ÇET verebiliyor. İşte mesela 25 hektar üstünde ÇET raporu alma gereği var. Burada hile yapılıyor. Adam 25 hektar almıyor da 24.9 için başvuru yapıyor ÇET'ten muaf olmak için. En fazla maden arama ruhsatı veren hükümet de zaten AK Parti iktidarı. Cumhuriyet tarihinin belki de en fazla ruhsat verdiği iktidarı bu iktidar.” [The Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change is the institution that licences these mines. Now, of course, these are under the government. The current policies of the government are based on rent economy. 59% of Muğla has mining exploration and operation licences. This rate is slightly higher in Milas, for example up to 70 per cent. Therefore, many big capital firms have factories in these areas. Therefore, there is environmental destruction created by them. There is no control mechanism here. For example, they can easily give an EIA. For example, there is a need to obtain an EIA report on 25 hectares. There is cheating here. The man does not buy 25 hectares but applies for 24.9 hectares to be exempt from EIA. The AKP is the government that has granted the highest number of mining exploration licences. This government is perhaps the government that has granted the highest number of licences in the history of the Republic.] (Milas Merkez Male 6 Age 69)

However, it appears that it is not only the capitalist order, politicians or corporations, but also the greed for quick enrichment of the local people itself caused deforestation. I have been told a recurrent story by various respondents that implied this greed. In the past, when inheritance was distributed, girls used to inherit the land on the coastal areas, which were not considered valuable, and boys used to inherit the mountainous and hillside areas, where agricultural land was available and therefore considered valuable. However, with the arrival of tourism, when the coastal areas became valuable, grooms and daughters became rich, while the places left to men became worthless. I have encountered with this story throughout my fieldwork as a

narrative that justifies the commodification of forested areas on a local scale. Below quotes highlights how forest areas have been commodified by not only capital owners and politicians but also the local people themselves.

“Tabii sahilleri kızlara vermişler, sahillerde eskiden dut varmış. Kız çocukları oradan işte ekmek parası çıkarsın diye. Dağları da oğlana vermişler. Ama tabii zaman geçtikte sahiller değerleniyor. Damatlar zengin oldu tabii.” [Of course, they gave the beaches to girls, there used to be mulberries on the beaches. So that girls could earn a living from there. They gave the mountains to the boy. But of course, as time passes, the beaches become valuable. Of course, the grooms became rich.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 1 Age 56)

Another respondent explained this situation in more detail as follows:

“Nedenini söyleyeyim. Önceden tarım yapıldığı için, her tarlada bir kuyu vardır, su kuyusu. Deniz seviyesindeki su tuzlu su olduğu için de deniz kenarı tarıma elverişli değil. Yani domates yapsan yamuk yumuk çıkar; bugday eksen ekemezsin çünkü tuzlu su onu ne kadar besleyebilir ki. Ama yamaçtakilerin kuyuları normal seviyede su olduğu için toprağı da ona göre farklı. Böylelikle işe yaramayan yerleri kızlara vermişler. Oğlanlar eksin biçsin diye de yamaçları vermişler. O yüzden bütün damatlar zengin çünkü değerlendirildi turizm gelince deniz kıyıları.” [I will tell you why. Because agriculture was the main occupation back then, there was a water-well in every field. Since the water at sea level is salty, the seaside is not suitable for agriculture. In other words, if you grow tomatoes, they will grow crooked; you cannot plant wheat because salty water cannot nourish it. But since the wells on the hillside have normal water, the soil is different accordingly. So, they gave the useless land to the girls. And they gave the hillsides for the boys to cultivate. That's why all the brothers-in-law become rich because the seacoasts have become valuable with tourism.] (Bodrum Kumbahçe Female 4 Age 43)

Lastly, privatisation of logging is also identified as another important direct driver. The corporatisation of logging basically means both the transfer of this work, which was previously carried out by villagers through cooperatives, to companies and paved the way for companies to cut large amounts of trees for profit. For many villagers, this also means the loss of employment. While logging is banned for villagers and in many places the closure of village cooperatives also means that the village is deprived of the income from logging.

“Şimdi ihale ile geliyor şirket dikili alıyor dağı. Burada hiçbir şey kalmıyor tabii. Sana ben bir şey diyeyim mi? Bizim dağımızdan belki milyonlarca ağaç kesildi. ... Mesela 7-8 müteahhit bu dağı aldılar. Kestirdiler, şey ettiler, köylüye hiçbir faydası oldu mu olmadı. Üç kuruş faydası olmadı.” [Now, a company comes with a tender and buys the mountain. Of course, there's nothing left here. Shall I tell you something? Maybe millions of trees were cut down from our mountain. ... For

example, 7-8 contractors bought this mountain. They cut it down, but it didn't do anything for the villagers. Not a penny of benefit.] (Akseki Kepezbelen Male2 Age 55)

In terms of indirect/underlying drivers, the prominent perception of the local people highlights how migration change the region. It has been stated that there is a serious pressure on forests due to the increase in zoning and construction in the city with excessive population growth. It has been emphasised by local people that the COVID pandemic caused a significant jump in this population growth since these regions offer living spaces where people can leave social distance from crowded city life.

“Şimdi çocukken mesela şu alan komple kumsaldı, insan eliyle neler değişti. Buranın toplamda 85 hane nüfusu vardı. Şu anda abartısız söylüyorum son yapılaşmalarla beraber 7.000'in üstünde daire var. 40 senede 85 haneden 7000 haneye çıktı. İngilizler de var yaklaşık bir 170-180 İngiliz aile de buraya yerleşti, ev aldılar. Müthiş bir göç oldu. Benim zamanımda komple ekim dikim arazisiydi bu düzlük alan.” [Now, when I was a child, for example, this area was completely sandy, how much has changed by human hands. This place had a total population of 85 households. Now, I am not exaggerating, there are over 7,000 houses with the latest constructions. In 40 years, it went from 85 households to 7,000 households. There are also the British, about 170-180 British families settled here and bought houses. There has been a massive migration. In my time, this flat area was completely cultivated land.] (Marmaris Turunç Male 3 Age 52)

“Göç almasıyla beraber burada bir yapılaşma ve inşaat oldu. Tabii ki doğasını da bozuyor haliyle.” [With the migration, there has been a building and construction here. Of course, it also spoils its nature.] (Köyceğiz Yeşilköy Male 3 Age 42)

“Özellikle pandemiden sonra bu bölge çok fazla göç aldı. İnsanlar buraya geldi. Dengesiz bir büyümeye neden oldu. ... Doğası bozuluyor dolayısıyla.” [Especially after the pandemic, this region received a massive migration. People came here. It has caused unbalanced growth. ... The nature is being degraded.] (Köyceğiz Gelişim Male 1 Age 55)

Finally, these narratives show that the commodification of forests creates an oppressive structure on forests in these regions. Whether through proximate actions such as allocation of land to tourism, mining or construction, or underlying effects, such as increasing migration, forests are becoming valued for their economic potential rather than their ecological function.

6.3.8. The Problematic Nature of Forest-Peasant Relations

Finally, in this part of the dissertation, I focus on the political narrative of the subject. The political narrative in the vernacular data on the forest fires in 2021 reveals two

interconnected dimensions that shape local perceptions of forest-peasant relations and the disruptive character of vernacular knowledge. As a result of my coding, I will evaluate these dimensions one by one in this section and emphasise their prominent themes. Taking these two dimensions together -*forest-peasant relations* and *the disruptive potential of vernacular knowledge*-, I will try to address the issues around which the political narrative on the 2021 forest fires is shaped. Political narrative of the 2021 forest fires will highlight the debates around the OGM, the government, and official policies on dealing with during and after the fires.

The relations between the forest and peasants denotes a more structural and long-standing tensions between local people (mostly forest villagers) and the forest. By “forest”, respondents imply the institutional authority that governs forests which is the OGM and its professionals, namely the forestry personnel. The recurrent and overarching theme here as the root of this problematic nature of forest-peasant relations appears as *the struggle for ownership over the forests*. The fact that the local people still internalise and maintain the understanding of cibal-i mübâha, whereas the forestry personnel have power over forests as an apparatus of the central authority has led to the emergence of conflicts between the villagers and the OGM. This conflict situation is generally caused by economic factors. Privatisation of forest-related economic activities such as logging and reforestation and the abandonment of cibal-i mübâha which restricts forest villagers’ use of forest resources for their basic needs put local people in economically difficult position.

Firstly, the privatisation of logging and the imposition of prohibitions on the use of forest are said to limit peasants’ access to forest resources. In the post-fire process, it is stated that the tendering of logging to large companies reduced the economic benefits of the villagers. While logging used to be done through village cooperatives in the past, today, with the closure of many cooperatives in the region, the village has become unable to generate income from logging.

“Burada eskiden bizim kooperatif vardı. Kooperatifler yapardı bu işi. Burada bizim ahali keserdi, [orman] işletmeye teslim ederdi. Orman da ihaleye çıkar satardı. Şimdi bak sayayım sana kimler kazanıyordu. Kesimci kazanıyordu. Kamyoncu kazanıyordu. Kamyoncu üç tane eleman çalıştırıyordu yanında. Depoya getirip döküyordu. Depoya döktükten sonra istif eden insanlar vardı; onlar kazanıyordu. Bu

sefer tüccar geliyordu ihale oluyordu, belediye de kazanıyordu burdan. 10 yerden para dönüyordu. Ama şimdi ne oluyor? Adam [şirket] alıyor. Kazanan sayısı azaldı.” [We used to have cooperative here. Cooperative used to do this work. Here, our locals would cut it and deliver it to the [forest] management. The forest would sell it via a tender. Now let me tell you who used to win. The cutters used to win. The lorry driver made money. The lorry driver had three employees. He would bring it to the warehouse and dump it. There were people who would stack it after pouring it into the warehouse; they were the winners. This time, the trader would come, there would be a tender, and the municipality would also earn from it. Money was coming from 10 places. But what happens now? The man [company] buys it. The number of winners has decreased.] (Gündoğmuş Rasihkaplan Male 3 Age 43)

“Şimdi şirketlere ihale yapıyorlar, büyük şirketlere. Her şey zengine gidiyor artık. Ormandan hiçbir şey kazanamıyoruz. Bu yangın oldu, bak, komple yabancılar kesti gitti. Ne köylüden bir dikili ağaç alıp kesebilen oldu ne de bir kesime gidebilen oldu. Adam kendi ekibini getiriyor, dağı kesip geçiyor. Bizim yollarımızın bozulduğu kaldı. Bizim yollarımızı bozdular patladılar o kamyonlarla.” [Now they give tenders to companies, big companies. Everything goes to the rich now. We can’t earn anything from the forest. This fire happened, look, it was completely cut down by foreigners. No one from the villagers was able to take a planted tree and cut it down, nor was anyone able to go to a cutting site. The man brings his own team and cuts the mountain. Our roads were left to deteriorate. They ruined our roads with those lorries.] (Akseki Kepez Male3 Age 31)

Secondly, local people still adhere to the understanding of cibal-i mübâha; therefore, they believe that they have the right to use the forest for their life needs. On the other hand, however, there are also forestry personnel who are assigned and empowered by the central authority to protect the forest according to the laws. The vernacular narrative, however, reveals that the relationship between villagers and forestry personnel has not always been smooth and peaceful. Since the understanding of cibal-i mübâha encouraged the villagers to make free use of the forests, today’s villagers still tend to own the forest lands that their ancestors cultivated. Over time, a sense of ownership has prevailed against the lands that have been cultivated since their ancestors. Below quotations directly show the understanding of cibal-i mübâha in determining the relations between forest (the OGM) and the local people.

“Ormancı, en basiti şuradan taşı niye aldınız diyor. Karşıdan taşı niye aldınız? Ormancı taşı aldığımız yer bize ait diyor, haritadan baktım sen orman sınırına girmişsin diyor. O zaman sen de taşlarını çek yukarıya! Yani kepçeyle oradan taş aldığımızı laf ediyor. Biz bunun ticaretini yapmıyoruz. Bahçe yaptık; temel ihtiyaçlarımızı yaptık. Ağacını almadık sadece taş aldık. Orman köylüsü eskiden güz geldiği zaman dağdan kendi odununu toplar getirirdi. Şimdi parayla alıyoruz. Orman köylüsünün ormandan faydalanması lazım. Sonuçta bu ormanı biz bekliyoruz.” [A member of the forestry staff asked, ‘Why did you remove stones from that location?’ He then said, ‘The place from which you took the stone is part of the forest, and you

have entered its boundary. We have verified this.’ In response, I said that ‘then you move your stones up!’ I mean, he is objecting to our removal of stones from the area with a digger. We did not engage in any commercial exchange. We just created a garden to fulfil our basic needs. In the past, forest villagers used to collect their own firewood from the mountains in autumn. Now, however, we must purchase it. Forest villagers need to benefit from the forest. After all, we are waiting for this forest.] (Akseki Kepez Male3 Age 31)

“Zaten kendi arazimizde bile orman işletme bazı şeylere izin vermiyor. Yani, ormanın kenarında fundalık boş çalılık var diyelim. Hani adam orayı açayım, bir şeyler ekeyim, ceviz meviz ekeyim dese hemen hakkında tutanaklar tutuluyor. Eskiden dedelerimiz zeytin dikmişler, ceviz dikmişler, ne bileyim incir dikmişler ama şimdiki zihniyetle eski zihniyet arasında çok fark var. Şimdi bizi yasak yasak diyerek bir arazinin içine sıkıştırıyor. Yasakla yönetilmeye çalışıyoruz.” [The forestry personnel won’t even let us do some things on our own land. Let’s say there’s a bit of scrubby, empty brush right on the forest’s edge—if someone wants to clear it and plant something there, maybe walnuts or whatever, they immediately write you up. Back in the day, our grandfathers planted olives, walnuts, or, figs—but the mindset now is totally different from what it used to be. Now they’re basically boxing us in and saying ‘no’ to everything. They’re trying to run things by just banning stuff.] (Milas Tuzabat Male 7 Age 54)

Problems and conflicts arise between the villagers’ belief that they have the right to free use of the forest and the forestry personnel who are authorised and even armed to protect it. Tensions can arise when a villager who tries to meet his/her needs by violating the forest boundary is reported by the forestry personnel. This situation was considered as a property problem by one participant as:

“Mesela bir tane ağaca zarar verdiğinde cezası olur ama burada öyle bir durum yok. Tabii burada mülkiyet sorunu var köylünün. Pınar mahallesi olarak mülkiyet sorunu var %80’inde. Genellikle ormanla karşı karşıya kalıyor insanlarımız burada mülkiyet sorunundan kaynaklı olarak.” [For example, normally if you hurt just one tree, there would be a penalty, but that’s not really the case here. See, the villagers have this huge property issue. In Pınar village, something like 80% of the people deal with it. Because of that, our people here keep running into problems with the forestry authorities.] (Köyceğiz Pınar Male 5 Age 37)

Finally, respondents highlighted that certain mediatory methods are required to make this relationship smooth. Therefore, the key for an unproblematic relationship appears as toleration. When forestry personnels are understanding in meeting the basic needs of villagers and allow them to benefit from the forest, the relations are maintained in peace.

“Ormancı bizi idare ediyorsa biz ormanı zaten yıllardır idare ediyoruz.” [If forestry personnel tolerate us, we have been tolerating them for years.] (Milas Fesleğen Male 8 Age 55)

In fact, to acknowledge villagers' need for firewood and keep their cutting under control, the OGM lets villagers whose land borders the forest gather firewood on a specific day each year. They're allowed to do this as long as they follow certain rules, such as not cutting down certain types of trees. Locally, this day is known as 'the day smoke rose' day.

"Burada 'duman tüttü' diye bir şey var. Her köye bir hafta sonu verir [OGM]. Ağaçları işaretler. Mesela, yaşlı ağaçların ya da genç ağaçların büyümesine engel olan ağaçların kesimine izin verir." ["Here, we have got this thing called 'the day smoke rose.' The forestry personnel give each village a weekend for it. They go around and mark the trees—like, they'll say it's okay to cut down the older ones or the ones that prevent younger trees from growing."] (Köyceğiz Gökova Female 2 Age 34)

"Köylerde eski insanların bir duman tüttü lafı vardır. Duman tüttü derler; kışın onun belli bir ücreti vardır onu yatırırın. Geçen yıl 60 TL idi mesela. Kuru, yıkılmış odunlardan köylülere kışlık yakacağını temin etmesi için izin veriyorlar o para karşılığında." ["In the villages, the old folks have this saying, 'the day smoke rose.' They say that in the winter, and you have got to pay a certain fee—like last year it was 60 lira, for example. When you pay up, they let you take dry, fallen wood so you have got fuel for the winter."] (Milas Tuzabat Male 7 Age 54)

On the other hand, however, it was stated in interviews that when this understanding is not shown, local people also engage in bribery with forestry personnel. This shows that the relationship between forestry personnel and villagers can sometimes be misused.

"Ya şöyle buradaki ilişki bazen köşe kapmaca gibi oluyor. Normalde mesela ormandan odun kesmek yasak veya av yasak. Ya biliyorsun ülkede şartları, ormancı yakalarsa affetmez. Ya da adamı beslersin yemlersin ormancıyı. Seni görmezden gelir." [Look, sometimes dealing with this stuff is like playing cat and mouse. Normally, cutting wood or hunting in the forest is illegal. You know how it is here—if the forestry personnel catch you, he will not go easy on you. Or you can butter him up, feed him, and then he will just pretend he did not see a thing.] (Marmaris İçmeler Male 2 Age 41)

Briefly, the problematic nature of forest-peasant relations shows a struggle between forestry personnel and local people. The dissolution of cooperatives in certain villages, the introduction of a tender-based system in forestry operations, and the associated restrictions preventing villagers from freely utilising forest resources to meet their needs have collectively led to increased economic insecurity among the local population. All these can be read as reflections of a struggle for ownership over forests in a broader context.

6.3.9. Disruptive Potential of Vernacular Narrative

This section brings to the forefront the challenging issues of how local people's perceptions assess the authorities' firefighting and recovery policies during and after the 2021 forest fires. As a result of my coding of the interview data, I argue that two main points need to be emphasised in this section: criticisms of the authorities' policies regarding firefighting and recovery, and the perceived reasons of shortcomings of the security professionals (the OGM). With its critiques on these two points, the vernacular narrative poses a critical challenge to the official narrative in the political dimension of the debate on the 2021 forest fires. The vernacular narrative shows its potential to disrupt the official narrative by revealing its critiques of the security bureaucracy and professionals.

I will evaluate the criticism of policies around four main headlines – four major points of critique of the local people during and after of forest fires: evacuation policy as the main immediate measure, reforestation policy as recovering the forest, house building and subventions as policies to bring local people back to the normal. As I mentioned in the security narrative, the *evacuation policy* was often criticised by the local population and even during the fires, many people disobeyed the policy and remained in the area, hiding from the authorities. Moreover, the narratives that those who did not comply with the policy saved their houses from the fire, while those who complied with it had their houses burnt down, reinforced the perception that the policy was a total failure. As often emphasised in the interviews, it was emotionally difficult for many locals to comply with the evacuation order and leave the village, handing over their living space and homes to professionals.

“Jandarma der, köyü boşaltın! Ben nasıl boşaltabilirim ya kimse mülkiyetini terk edemez.” [The gendarmerie says, ‘Empty the village!’ But how am I supposed to do that? Nobody’s just going to give up their own property.] (Marmaris Turunç Male 3 Age 52)

“Yangın başladığı an biz köylü olarak böyle delicesine yangına girmek istedik.” [As soon as the fire started, we villagers wanted to go right in the fires like crazy.] (Köyceğiz Ağla Male 4 Age 35)

“Bazıları terk etti, kaçtı gitti. Onlar evini barkını terk ettiği için evleri yandı. Aslında gitmeseler kimsenin evi yanmazdı. Ama evlerini bıraktıkları için evleri yandı.”

[Some of them left, ran away. Their houses burnt down because they left their homes. Actually, no one's house would have burnt down if they had not left. But their houses burnt down because they left their homes.] (Alanya Güzelbağ Male 4 Age 51)

Ties to the region (belonging, identity, economic, etc.) can be considered as a reason why local people did not comply with this policy. Moreover, the fact that security professionals who are foreign to the region do not feel such a sense of belonging has led to a sense of distrust towards security providers and authority.

“Son olarak şunu söyleyeyim, köylü neden köyden çıkmadı biliyor musun? Köylü bu devletin itfaiyesine güvenmediği için çıkmadı. Güvenseydik biz bırakırdık, gözümüz kapalı ayrılırdık. Ama benim devletimin çalışanı, itfaiyeci, müdahale etmiyorsa niye çıksın bu insanlar? İtfaiyeye güvenmiyorlar.” [Let me tell you something: Do you know why the villagers did not leave? It's because they did not trust the government's firefighters. If we trusted them, we would have left without a second. But if the firefighters—our own state employees—do not step in, why would these people go? They just do not trust the fire brigade.”] (Manavgat Yaylaalan Male 10 Age 60)

Resistance to the evacuation policy was the first reaction and challenge of the local population to the official security professional; it aroused the feeling that the people themselves would be better able to provide security and fostered distrust of the security professional.

Regarding *reforestation policy*, I mentioned how the official narrative highlights reforestation policies and records of sapling planting as a legitimating indicator of how much the government cares about forests. Moreover, Erdoğan stressed the government's desire in reforestation of the areas burnt. However, local people believe that the reforestation policy is not efficient and that the best way to restore the forest ecosystem is to leave nature alone. In other words, vernacular narrative argued that the elites' policy of rapidly reforesting burnt areas in a mobilisation mode is not correct. Instead, locals proposed to leave the burnt trees in the ground and allow nature to regenerate itself. In other words, they understand reforestation based on the absence of human intervention in nature.

“Mesela bana kalsaydı doğayı hiç ellemeden bırakırdım. Çünkü o kendisini takviye eder diyorlar. Doğa ile oynuyorlar. Doğayı kendi haline bırakacaksın.” [If it were up to me, I would just leave nature alone. They say it can take care of itself, right? But

people keep messing with it. You must let nature be.] (Manavgat Aydınevler Male 11 Age 70)

“(Ormanı) koruyu versinler aslında ağaç kendiliğinden çıkar.” [If they would just protect it (the forest), the trees would pretty much grow back on their own.] (Manavgat Oymapınar Male 9 Age 70)

There were even participants who stated that forest engineers were of the same opinion on this issue. Moreover, a participant who attributed the fact that the burnt trees were not left in the forest but wanted to be sold immediately to rent-seeking behavior, stated that what should be done in the Marmaris example is to reduce human intervention in nature as follows:

“Bilim insanları şöyle diyor: Eğer bir yerde tohum markası yoksa orada ağaç dikimine gidilebilir. Ancak tohum markası az olan bölgelerde dokuya karışmamak ve habitatın kendi olağan sirkülasyonunda doğal yollarla var olması sağlamak gerekir. Ama baktığınızda Marmaris'te göreceksiniz, o kadar hoyratça yapıldı ki bu iş... Yani ne yapılmalıydı, yanan ağaçları hemen böceklenecek diye bir an önce kaldırıp satmaya çalışıyorlar ama ekonomik değeri düştüğü için yapıyorlar bunu. Yine maddi bakış var. Oysa yapılması gereken neydi? Hadi kestiniz diyelim onda da yok bir problem. Paranızı da kazanın lanet olsun! Ama yapmaları gereken şeydi. Ağacın köklerini alıp, dallarını toprağın üstüne bir bariyer olarak sermekti ki erozyon olmasın ya da orada kuşlara yuva olsun. Yeni gelecek mikroorganizmalara bir yaşam alanı yaratsın. Böyelce birbirlerini çoğaltarak bir ekosistem gelişsin. Yapılmadı...” [“Scientists say that if a spot does not have any seed traces left, you can go ahead and plant trees there. But if there are still some seeds around, you’re supposed to leave it alone, let the habitat recover on its own. Now, if you look at what happened in Marmaris, they handled it so roughly. What did they do? They rushed to clear out the burnt trees right away, claiming they would get infested with bugs. But really, it’s because the wood’s value dropped—again, it’s all about money. What should they have done? Okay, fine, you cut the trees. No big deal—make your money, whatever! But what they really needed to do was pull out the roots and spread the branches on the soil like a barrier, so there wouldn’t be erosion and birds could build nests. That way, new microorganisms would have a place to thrive, and a whole ecosystem could grow back. But they just did not do it...”] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

In fact, the statements of some forest engineers and the findings of scientific studies also support the local people’s view on forest restoration. For example, Cihan Erdönmez states that minimising human action in burnt areas - that is, “leaving the forests alone” - would yield more beneficial results than reforestation activities.⁶⁵⁹ Similarly, Elias Tziritis, a forest fire expert at the World Wildlife Fund (WWF),

⁶⁵⁹ Lale Elmacıoğlu, ‘Doç. Dr. Erdönmez: Ormanları Kendi Haline Bırakmak Ağaçlandırmadan Daha Faydalı Olur’, Independent Türkçe, 2021, <https://www.indytrk.com/node/394266/cevre/doç-dr-erdönmez-ormanları-kendi-haline-bırakmak-ağaçlandırmadan-daha-faydalı-olur>.

argues that forest fires are part of the rehabilitation mechanism of the Mediterranean forest ecosystem and that nature will renew itself.⁶⁶⁰ In support of expert statements in this direction, it is also suggested in academic studies to expect natural processes to regenerate themselves by limiting human activities in natural environments that have been destroyed for various reasons.⁶⁶¹ Briefly, vernacular narrative unveils a resistance to the official narrative on the policy of reforestation, while seeking more inclusive and scientifically sound practices to achieve sustainable forest recovery. It emphasises a perceived failure to adapt reforestation policies with the ecological realities and scientific expertise.

As I elaborated in the previous chapter, *house building policy* is seen as one of the most cited post-fire rebuilding measures by the official narrative. Moreover, it was promoted as one of the materialistic methods for the normalisation of fire victims. Another function of this policy was expressed as a part of the transformation of architectural mentality and was presented as a prototype of horizontal architecture, which was considered to be the most appropriate for the environment in the villages. However, when I engage with the interview data, I argue that there are certain major points that refute and challenge the official narrative.

The first point shows how the official narrative's rebuilding and recovery is a deception. Rather than healing the material and psychological wounds of the local people, house building policy brings more insecurity and uncertainty. Moreover, this insecurity is not of a single type but includes different types of insecurity. Many respondents unveiled economic and ontological insecurity caused by the implication of house building policy. Economically, the financial regulations for new houses were cited as an important source of stress and uncertainty for the local people.

“Şu anda devlet bizden ne kadar ücret alacak ne alacak onu bilmiyoruz. 18 yıl ödemeli diyerek yaptılar. Bununla alakalı bir bilgilendirme hiç yok şu anda.” [Right now, we have got no idea how much the government is going to charge us or what

⁶⁶⁰ Bethany Bell, ‘Greeks Fear Megafires Could Be New Normal for Med’, BBC News, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59075043>.

⁶⁶¹ Nedim Kemer, ‘Orman Yangınları ve Sonrası: Orman Ekosistem Restorasyonu’, *Avrupa Bilim ve Teknoloji Dergisi*, no. 33 (2022): 374.

for. They said we would pay it off over 18 years, but we have not got any information on it at all.] (Manavgat Kalemler Male12 Age 55)

“Evler konusunda mesela nasıl ödeme planı yapılacağı belli değil. Bazı insanlar girmede bu işe. 0 faiz mi olacağı falan belli değil. Ödeyemem diye girmede bazı insanlar.” [Regarding these houses, nobody really knows how we are supposed to pay for them. Some people did not even sign up. It’s not clear if it’s going to be zero interest or what. People just said, ‘I cannot pay that,’ and decided not to involve.] (Manavgat Oymapınar Male 9 Age 70)

On the side of ontological insecurity, vernacular narrative recurrently stated that the newly built houses and the ‘new’ everyday space, which the political elites presented as a prototype of an ‘exemplary village’, were not suitable for sustaining traditional way of village life. Moreover, the fact that these houses were not built in the places of the old houses that were burnt down, but on the treasury lands that were deemed suitable, moved the everyday space of the villagers to a different place from the old ones they were used to.

“Şimdi bir de şöyle bir şey var. Köy yerlerini biliyorsun yani köy yerleri dedigin ayrı ayrı olur çünkü hayvancılık yapılacak. Yanan yerlerin hepsine TOKİ bitişik binalar yaptı. Yani köy hayatını bitirmiş oldular. TOKİ hep site tarzında evler yaptı. Bu da çok fazla köy yaşamına uygun değil. Çünkü köy evleri dediğin aralıklı olur. Çünkü herkesin daha rahat edebilmesi için. Bir de evleri eski evlerinden başka yerlere yaptılar çünkü hisseli tapu var çoğu insanda. Zaten köylüde tek tapu nerede gezer? Ya adamın tek tapusu yoktu ya da kardeşleri imza vermedi evini başka yerlere TOKİ yaptı. Hazine yerlerine yaptılar.” [“Here’s another thing: you know how village houses are usually spread out, right? That’s because people do animal farming and need space. But after the fires, TOKİ came in and built these attached houses in all the burnt areas, basically killing off the village lifestyle. They put up these apartment-style blocks, which really isn’t suitable for village life at all. I mean, normally village houses are spaced apart so everyone can have a bit of breathing room. Then there’s the fact that they built the houses in different spots, not where the old ones used to be, because most folks here have shared deeds. You don’t really see single-owner deeds in the village. Either a person didn’t have one at all, or their siblings wouldn’t sign off, so TOKİ ended up building the houses somewhere else—usually on state-owned land.” (Manavgat Örnek Female 1 Age 42)

“Vallahi şu anda memnun değiliz. Evler çok küçük ve yapılış şekli görünüş olarak çok güzel ama kullanım tarzı yok. Yapılan evler tatilci evi gibi... Bak, site şeklinde. Köyde bu şekilde bir yaşam tarzı çok zor. Köy doğasına uygun değil. Biz geniş alanda yaşamak zorundayız ve geniş yerde durmak zorundayız. Benim evimin olduğu yerde tek evdim ben, şimdi burada site şeklinde oturuyorum. Arkada traktöre mesela, işte gördüğün gibi, yerim yok. Hep yolda sokakta kaldı.” [Honestly, we are not happy. The houses are tiny. They look nice, but they are not practical at all. They are like summer houses. Look, they have built them all packed together, like a little complex. That’s really tough to live in out here in a village. It does not fit the traditional village life. We need space—big, open space. I used to have my own

place by itself, but now I'm stuck in this complex. I have got nowhere to park my tractor in the back; it's basically stuck out in the street.] (Manavgat Kalemler Male12 Age 55)

“Çoğu insanın evi vardı mesela buraya sığmaz dediler veya buraya olmaz dediler. Aldılar başka yere taşıdılar. Evler yazlıkçı evi gibi. Köyde yaşayan insanın tavuğu olacak; yumurtasından faydalanacak; ineği keçisi olacak; sütünden yoğurdundan faydalanacak; gübresinden faydalanacak. Şimdi hayvanın kaçacak (dolaşacak) bir yeri yok. Aynen yazlık siteler gibi yaptılar. Ahırını vesaire koymaya yerin yok.” [A lot of people already had homes, but they were told, ‘This one is too big for here,’ or ‘It will not fit,’ and then they got moved the houses somewhere else. The new houses look like summer houses. In a village, people keep chickens for eggs, cows or goats for milk and yoghurt—even the fertiliser. Now there's nowhere for the animals to wander around. They built it all like a summer housing complex. You don't even have space for a barn or anything.] (Akseki Kepez Male3 Age 31)

Above quotations reveals that the top-down and one-size-fits-all approach of the official narrative overlooks the practical and traditional needs of the local population. In particular, it is fair to say that the fact that new houses were not built on the old sites caused a sense of displacement and alienation among the local people.

Finally, I will mention the *criticism of subventions* within the criticism of official policies. The vernacular narrative reveals that there are several shortcomings regarding the official's conduct of subventions. The first point to be emphasised in this regard is that it is the citizens, not the government, that provides aid. Many participants stated that although most of the aid comes mainly from citizens, the government acts as if it has provided them. Moreover, the perception that the government is in a state of weakness was expressed by one participant as follows:

“Sana bir şey söyleyeceğim bak devlet değil millet çok büyük yardım yaptı. Duyarlı insanlar... Tamam mı? Manavgat Belediyesi'nde yardım malzemesini biz koyacak yer bulamadık. Her yerden yardım geldi, Kıbrıs'tan bile tır geldi. Bana devlet ne verdi biliyor musun? Devlet de vermedi. Kepez'den bir adam gitmiş buzdolabı almış. Hayırsever... Sadece bir buzdolabı verdiler. Onu da devlet değil şahıs verdi. Devletin niye bu kadar aciz kaldığını çözemeyiz işte onu çözemeyiz. Zaten onu çözebilsek iş kurtulacak.” [Let me tell you something: it was not the government; it was the people who really stepped up with tons of help. Caring people, you know? Over at the Manavgat Municipality, we could not even find room for all the supplies that came in—help arrived from everywhere, even a truck from Northern Cyprus. Do you know what the government gave me? Only one fridge. Indeed, it did not come from them. It was a man from Kepez who bought me a fridge—a private donor. That's all I got. And it was not from the government, it was just one person. We cannot figure out why the government remained so powerless. We just cannot. If we could, we might fix this mess.] (Akseki Kepezbelen Male2 Age 55)

“Şimdi halk çok güzel yardım etti. devlet bunlarla övündü. Traktörü vatandaş verdi; firma sahipleri verdi; devlet ben verdim dedi. Beyaz eşyayı firma sahipleri Verdi; devlet ben verdim dedi.” [People provided significant assistance, but the government then took credit. Citizens donated tractors; business owners contributed as well. Yet the government claimed, ‘We gave them.’ The same happened with white appliances—business owners supplied them, but the government said, ‘We gave them.’] (Akseki Kepez Male3 Age 31)

“Bu konuda (*traktör hibeleri*) işte Türkiye’de pazarında yer alan Çimosan ve New Holland marka traktörlerle bir kampanya başlatıldı. Onlar (*firmalar*) hibe ettiler traktörleri devlete, devlet de sağ olsun çiftçimize üreticimize burada gerekeni yaptı.” [In this matter (*tractor donations*), they started a campaign with those Çimosan and New Holland brands you see in Turkey. The companies donated the tractors to the government, and then the government, well, they made sure our farmers and producers got what they needed.] (Manavgat Kalemler Male 3 Age 30)

Considering the direct quotations above, I infer that there is in fact an underlying populist political motivation regarding the conduct of subventions. In fact, it can be deduced from the following quotations that this political motivation is evident not only in the members of the government but also in the members of the opposition party. One respondent stated the following, especially about the construction of houses:

“Şöyle bir şey yaşadık Cumhurbaşkanı’nın geldiği zaman... Osmaniye köyünde AKP’ye yakın bir köylünün evi hızlıca yapıldı. Cumhurbaşkanı geldiğinde anahtarı teslim edildi. Kılıçdaroğlu geldiğinde CHP’ye yakın birinin evi hızlıca yapıldı. Anahtarı teslim edildi. Sonra köylü birbirine düştü. Yani bırakın bir barış getirmeyi yarılmalari arttırıcı ve gerçekten sorunu çözmeyen bir yöntem izlediler; popüler politikanın aleti oldular.” [We had this situation when the President visited. In Osmaniye Village, they rushed to build a house for a villager who was close to the AKP. As soon as the President arrived, they handed over the keys. Then, when Kılıçdaroğlu came, they did the same for someone close to the CHP—another house, another set of keys. After that, the villagers started turning on each other. Instead of bringing peace, it just made things more divided and did not really solve the problem. They basically turned it into a tool for showy, populist politics.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

“Hükümete yakın olanlara hükümet yardımcı oldu; belediyeye yakın olanlara CHP belediyesi yardımcı oldu.” [Those who were close to the government got help from the government, and those who were close to the municipality got help from the CHP-run municipality.] (Marmaris İçmeler Male 2 Age 41)

Another criticism raised by the local people about the subventions was failures of organisation and unfair distribution of aid. Participants underlined serious organisational problems in the distribution of aid, lack of proper assessment of the victims to be assisted, and a lack of oversight in aid distribution processes, which

allowed for abuses. Aid is often distributed haphazardly or to those with connections to the authorities, rather than according to verified need.

“Gelen yardımlarda kurumlara güven olmadığı için disiplinli bir şekilde teslim edilmedi. Herkes kendi dağıtmaya çalışınca da kimisi az aldı kimisi ise satacak kadar yardım aldı.” [The incoming aid was not delivered in a disciplined manner as there was no trust in the institutions. When everyone tried to distribute it on their own, some people received little aid, and some received enough to sell.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

“Yardım şehir merkezlerinde kaldı Manavgat’ta. Esas yardım belki sahiplerine ulaştırılmadı. Gidebilen aldı yani, bu köyler mağdur oldu. Kim ihtiyaç sahibiydi bu tam tespit edilip verilmedi. Manavgat yardım toplama merkezlerine varabilen onu kaptı gitti yani. Ama benim köyüm Manavgat’a 80 kilometreydi.” [Aid remained in city centres in Manavgat. Maybe the aid could not be delivered to its real owners. Those who were able to get there received it, so these villages suffered. Who was in need was not identified and given. Those who could reach the Manavgat aid collection centres grabbed it. But my village was 80 kilometres from Manavgat.] (Akseki Hocaköy Male1 Age 61)

“Rastgele dağıtıldı. Zenginlere verildi; fakirler hiç yardım almadı. Adaletsiz bir dağıtım oldu. Arazisinin sayısını bilmeyen insanlara yardım gitti. Siz çalışmanızın sunumunu yaparken de Türkevleri Mahallesi olarak yazarsanız, gerçekten mağdur olduk; sesimizi duyurun lütfen bize yardım etsinler.” [It was distributed randomly. It was given to the rich; the poor received no help at all. It was an unfair distribution. People who did not know the number of their land received aid. When you present your study, please mention Türkevleri Neighbourhood as victims of this uneven distribution. Make our voices heard, please let them help us.] (Milas Türkevleri Female 2 Age 52)

Distrust in institutions was also mentioned as a factor undermining the organisation of aid.

“Yani düşünsenize bir yurttaş olarak size yardım geliyor Türkiye’nin bir yerlerinden. Ve siz bunu Kızılay’dan kaçırmak zorunda kalıyorsunuz. Oysa neyi bilirdik biz? Kızılay bu anlar için vardır ve ihtiyaç olan yerlere ihtiyaç duyulan miktar kadar götürürdü. Olmadı, bir stokçuluk oldu. Bunu aynı şekilde belediyeler için de söyleyebilirim.” [I mean, imagine that as a citizen you receive aid from somewhere in Turkey. And you have to smuggle it out of the Turkish Red Crescent. But what did we know? Turkish Red Crescent exists for these moments and used to take as much as needed to the places in need. It did not happen, there was hoarding. I can say the same for municipalities.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

This lack of organisation leads to chaos and rent seeking among the local people itself, leading to unethical behaviours. Respondents argued that while some people could not reach aids, some exaggerated or fabricated the degree of their damage and received aid that exceeding their actual damages. The absence of rigorous damage

assessment and thorough examination of the distribution caused frustration among the locals and wasted resources. In other words, both lack of control and organisation and the opportunistic behaviours of some local people created a sense of exploitation of the crisis.

“İşte rant peşinde olanlar para ve yer kazandı.” [Rent-seekers gained money and land.] (Manavgat Aydınevler Male 11 Age 70)

“Adamın bir konteyneri vardı arazisinde. Yangından sonra konteynerin yanık halini göstererek evim yandı diye yazdırmış. O anda gelen memurlar da bilmediği için, şimdi villa tarzı iki katlı evi var o adamın. Bunu gösterebilirim bile. Hatta adama ‘vicdanın rahat mı’ diye sordum. ‘Kamunun hakkını kendine geçiriyorsun’ dedim. ‘Devletin malı deniz’ dedi bana bu kadar.” [The man had a container on his land. After the fire, he showed the burnt state of the container and wrote that his house was burnt. Since the officers who came at that time did not know, that man now has a villa-style two-storey house. I can even show this. I even asked the man, ‘Are your conscience clear?’ I said, ‘You are taking the public’s right for yourself.’ He said, ‘The state has abundant resources like the sea,’ and that was it.] (Marmaris Turunç Male 3 Age 52)

“Bak bir yanan on aldı, on yanan bir aldı. Haksızlık çok oldu. Hiçbir şeyi olmayan, benim her şeyim yandı dedi aldı. Kaymakama ilettim bu dengesizlik durumlarını. ‘Halka inanmak zorundayız’ dedi. Yani devlet gelip de yerinde tespit etmedi aslında zararı. Köşeyi döndüler evladım. Benim gibi gariban kesin bakarken uyanıklar köşeyi döndü. Bak sana diyorum ki %90’ı beyaz eşya dükkânı açacak seviyede yardım aldı.” [Look, someone who lost one item received assistance for ten, and someone who lost ten only received help for one. There has been a lot of injustice. Even those who had nothing said, ‘Everything I had burnt down’. I reported these imbalances to the governor, and he said, ‘We have to trust the people.’ So, the government did not actually assess the damage on the ground. People like me, who are struggling, were overlooked while those who were more resourceful managed to bypass the problems. I’m telling you, about 90% of the assistance was sufficient to open an appliance store.] (Manavgat Yaylaalan Male 10 Age 60)

“Bir de yangın olmayan yerden para alanlar oldu. Yazdırdı ismini zarar gördüm diye.” [And there were those who took money from where there was no fire. He printed his name as victim.] (Alanya Güzelbağ Male 4 Age 51)

The idea that the crisis has not only losers but also winners with these rent-seeking initiatives can be considered as actions that will disrupt social cohesion and create new fault lines both within state-society and intra-society relations. Eventually, it will create cycles and distrust and insecurity.

“Bu işte kesesini dolduranlar da çok oldu, rant alan oldu. En nihayetinde ‘ateş düştüğü yeri yaktı’. Zor kanaat geçinen bir insan şimdi ayak ayak üstüne atıp benim çocuğumu çocuğumu evlendirecek param var demeye başladı. Yangın birilerini

zenginleştirdi ve birilerini de etkiledi işte.” [A significant number of individuals have profited from this situation. Ultimately, ‘fire burned where it fell’. Someone who was previously struggling to make ends meet is now claiming to have enough money to support their children’s marriages. The fire has made some people wealthy while adversely affecting others.] (Manavgat Dikmen Male 7 Age 36)

All these critiques reveal how the vernacular and official narratives differ on four key policies that contribute to ensuring security and returning to normalcy in the 2021 forest fires. The second issue I will address in the section on the disruptive potential of the vernacular narrative is the reasons for the perceived shortcomings of the security professional. I collected these reasons for the perceived shortcomings in ensuring security under three category, namely inter-institutional conflicts, geographical hardship, and inadequacies of the OGM.

Inter-institutional conflicts and a lack of coordination between central and local authorities appear as a source of shortcoming in ensuring security. Rather than cooperating effectively and fighting together during forest fires, institutions prioritised their mandates, leading to delays, confusion, and ineffective response during firefighting missions. This conflict and lack of coordination has significantly prevented effective crisis management. In particular, the phrase “that’s the saddest thing” in the third quotation below implies that the local people become the losers of this competition. This has called into question the traditionally accepted image of institutions and state officers as security providers. I argue that the problems of authority of institutions and state officers and their being stuck in the hierarchical ordering mechanism undermine public trust in these actors.

“Ben mesela şunu da duydum. Orman araçları mesela geçiyor, ev az bir şey tutuşmuş. Şuraya az biraz su tutsalar ev yanmaktan kurtulacak. Ama orman aracı su tutmuyor. Diyorlarmış ki oraya itfaiyenin sıkması lazım. Ev orası. İtfaiye geliyor, itfaiyeye sık diyorlar, itfaiye diyor ki oraya ormanın sıkması lazım.” [Take this for example, I heard that forestry vehicles were passing by when a house caught a bit of fire. If they had just sprayed a little water there, the house could have been saved from burning down. But the forestry vehicle did not spray water. They were saying, ‘the fire brigade needs to spray over there. We cannot intervene in the house.’ When the fire brigade arrives, and the people tells them to spray, the fire brigade says ‘the forestry should handle it’.] (Manavgat Örnek Female 1 Age 42)

“Ha bir de şey çatışması oldu mesela, şehrin yangın güvenliği Büyükşehir Belediyesi’nden sorumlu. Büyükşehir Belediyesi’nin itfaiyesi geldi, ‘ben ormana girmem, şehirdekileri savunurum’ dedi. Ama aslında yanlış bir düşünce bu. Oradaki

yangın yetki bölgesinde olmasa bile etki bölgesindeydi. Yani etki alanına müdahale etmezsen yetki alanına gelir o yangın. Yani uzaktan savunmak varken onlar defans savunması yaptı. Defansa geldikleri zaman gol yiyorsun gol yedik burada.” [There was also this conflict. For example, the city’s fire safety is handled by the Metropolitan Municipality. So, the city’s fire brigade showed up and said, ‘I’m not going into the forest, I’m here to protect the people in the city’. But honestly, that’s the wrong way to think about it. Even if the fire was not in their authority zone, it was still affecting our area. So, if you don’t step in where it’s impacting, the fire just moves into their authority zone. Instead of handling it from afar, they went on the defensive. When they tried to defend, it was like we were the ones taking the hits—we ended up conceding goals here.] (Marmaris İçmeler Male 2 Age 41)

“Ve bizim en çok canımızı acıtan şeylerden biri şuydu. Kurumların, yerel ya da mülki idareler, birbirleriyle koordinasyon merkezinde dayanışma içerisinde yürüyeceklerine rekabetini gördük ve bu en acı şeydi.” [One of the things that hurt us the most was seeing the institutions and local authorities competing with each other at the coordination center instead of working together. That’s the saddest thing.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

Geographical hardship and the intensity of fires appears as a cause of shortcoming as well. In particular, the simultaneous occurrence of fires in different places has been stated as a factor that increases the size of the security threat. The multiplicity of fires has made issues such as lack of equipment and organisation more visible and difficult to compensate. However, more importantly, the difficult geography of the region has also revealed the lack of security professionals’ familiarity with the region. This again led to the emphasis in the previous narratives that local knowledge and experience should be used in tandem with technical knowledge and should not be ignored.

“Şöyle söyleyeyim yangının aynı anda farklı noktalarda çıkması müdahaleyi bölgesel olarak değiştirdi. Yani bir İçmeler’de çıktı; sonra başka bir mevkide çıktı. Yani bunların farklı yerlerde çıkması ve ekiplerin de tam olarak koordine olamaması...” [Let me put it this way, the fact that the fire broke out in different locations at the same time changed the response regionally. In other words, it was found in İçmeler; then it was found in another location. So, the fact that these fires broke out in different places and the teams could not fully coordinate...] (Marmaris Çıldır Male 1 Age 60)

“O zamanki talihsizlik yangın mevsimi olması ve birçok yerde yangın olması. Devlet hepsine aynı anda yetişemedi.” [The misfortune at that time was that it was the fire season and there were fires in many places. The state could not reach them all at the same time.] (Gündoğmus Rasihkaplan Male 4 Age 45)

“Bana göre bölgeyi bilmemekten kaynaklanıyor. Bu kurumların yapacağı işlem, bu arazileri bilen insanlardan faydalanmak. Tamam yaşlılarımızı çıkaralım, götürelim, onları düşünmeyelim burada kaldı diye ama dağda avcılık yapmış çobanlık yapmış

insanlardan faydalanalım. Bunlardan destek alması lazım bunların bilgisine başvurması lazım.” [In my opinion, it is due to not knowing the region. What these organisations should do is to make use of people who know these lands. OK, let’s take our old people out, let’s take them away, let’s not think about them because they stayed here, but let’s make use of people who have hunted and shepherded in the mountains. We need to get support from them, we need to consult their knowledge.] (Akseki Kepez Male3 Age 31)

The last category unveils the critiques of the OGM, showing the rottenness of the organisation. It reveals how the vernacular narrative perceives shortcomings of the OGM, proposing a challenge to the perfectionist picture released by the official narrative. These critiques mainly point to the problems of material insufficiency, unpreparedness in crisis management, and lack of meritocracy within the OGM.

A significant portion of the interview data reveals the insufficient numbers of aerial vehicles in firefighting including helicopters and planes. This emphasis of the vernacular narrative is particularly important in making sense of the social media debate between #HelpTurkey and #StrongTürkiye. Many respondents criticised reliance on foreign equipment aids and firefighter teams, which was the key message of the #HelpTurkey campaign. There is widespread belief that existing resources are insufficient considering the size of the fires. Despite the mobilisation of all available resources, the lack of foresight and planning in resource deployment and preparedness prior to fires has been a source concern.

“Helikopter yetersizliği çok fazlaydı. Uçak ve helikopter yetersizliği...” [There were not enough helicopters. We were really short on both planes and helicopters...] (Bodrum Mumcular Male 1 Age 31)

“Yoktu uçak falan. Yangın kendisi söndü yanacak yer kalmadığı için! Orman bittiği için söndü.” [There were no planes or anything. The fire just ended on its own since there was nothing left to burn! It went out because the forest was completely gone.] (Manavgat Yaylaalan Male 10 Age 60)

“Bir kere malzeme eksikliğimiz vardı; söndürme yetersizdi; ekipman eksikliğimiz vardı. Karşıda oda büyüklüğünde yerde başlamıştı. Bir helikopter gelmediği için dönüm dönüm orman yandı.” [First, we did not have enough supplies—the firefighting was weak and we were missing equipment. The fire had started in about the size of a room. Since no helicopter came, the forest kept burning acre by acre.] (Köyceğiz Yeni Female 1 Age 50)

“Evet, eldeki bütün imkanlar seferber edildi mi? Edildi. Ama o imkanlar azdı. Yani imkanların daha çok olması gerekiyordu. Bizde şey oluyor, bir afet oluyor,

görüyoruz ne olduğunu ona göre imkanlarımızı arttırıyoruz. Aslında bunu önceden yapmamız gerekiyor. Yani görmeyi beklemeden yapmamız gerekiyor.” [Yeah, we used up all the resources we had, but there just were not enough. We really needed more. Usually, when a disaster hits, we see what’s going on and then try to get more resources based on that. But honestly, we should be prepared ahead of time. We need to act before things get bad.] (Gökova Female 2 Age 34)

Implying that security cannot be ensured only with the capacity of the OGM without the support of citizens, one respondent highlights the importance of the aid collected from citizens:

“Kaç yıllık kurumsunuz patlak hortum ne demek dedim ya! Siz kaç yıllık kurum olarak nasıl sivil inisiyatiften hortum istersiniz? Depolarınızda bu malzemelerinizi nasıl güncel ve sağlıklı çalışır halde tutmazsınız? Bütün malzemeleriniz sapır sapır dökülmüyor muydu? Eğer yurttaşlardan gelen o yardım malzemeleri olmasaydı, ormanın sahip olduğu kaynaklarla gerçekten yapılamazdı.” [How long have you been around? What do you mean by a broken hose! How can you expect hoses from civilians when you are such an old institution? Why aren’t you keeping your equipment updated and in good working shape in your depots? Isn’t all your gear falling apart? If it were not for the supplies coming from the citizens, we really could not have managed with just the forest’s own resources.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

This quotation can also be expressed as an indicator of distrust towards the institution and the belief that the institution is corrupt. This insecurity and the belief that the institution expected to provide security was incapable of doing so led the people to take the initiative directly into their own hands and to call for foreign aid with #HelpTurkey on social media. When I recalled the official narrative’s accusations about #HelpTurkey calls, one participant responded as follows:

“Yok ya ne demek... Benim gözlemlediğim kadarıyla onlar art niyetli insanlar değil ki. Faydalı oldular. Çağrı yapmak niye zayıflık olsun ya! Yani bu sosyal medyadaki global help çağrılarına söyleniyorsun ama bir yerlerden uçak aldık, dışarıdan uçak aldık. Onlar ayıpladı mı bizi o zaman? O adamın çağrı yapması mı ayıp oluyor yani? Değil mi?” [No, what are you talking about... From what I’ve seen, they are not bad people. They actually helped out. Why should asking for help be seen as a weakness? I mean, you are lamenting to these global help calls on social media, but we got planes from somewhere else, from outside. Did they shame us for that? Is it a shame for someone to ask for help? Right?] (Milas Bozalan Male3 Age 62)

The above quote can be read as an example of problematising the official narrative’s approach, which accuses the #HelpTurkey campaign for incapacitating the state. Another participant deepens this problematisation and associates damaging the

reputation of the state not with asking for help but with concealing the security provider's failure to perform its role.

“İtibar kaybı 12 gün boyunca yangına müdahale edememektir; onu söndürememektir. Olması gereken, iktidarın objektif bir analiz yapması ve temin yolu varsa da, temin yoluna gitmesidir. Bu, afet anlarında birçok ülkede gördüğümüz bir dayanışma modelidir. Ama siz eğer uçakları siyasi bir amaçla işlevsiz hale getiriyor ve bir kayırmacayla kiralama yöntemine gidiyorsanız; ve bunlar da standardın altında kalıyorsa, ayıbınızı gizlemek istersiniz. Dolayısıyla, bize bu (#HelpTurkey) itibar kaybı olarak geçmedi; ayıbın gizlenmesi girişimi olarak geçti. Yurt dışından gelecek yardımları, hangi şeyle bilmiyorum, bir kibirle reddedişler falan... Yani bunların halkta hiçbir zaman karşılığı olmadı. Çünkü biz ne kadar döküldüğümüzü görüyorduk. Yanıyoruz ve siz neyi amaçlıyorsunuz bilmiyorum; çünkü hiçbir mantığa sığdıramıyorum bunu. Dışarıdan gelecek yardımı kabul etmiyorsunuz.” [Losing our reputation is not being able to tackle the fire for 12 days or put it out. What should have happened is the government conduct an objective analysis and go after resources if they can. That's the kind of solidarity you see in many countries during disasters. But if you are making planes unusable for political reasons and going through favoritism and shady leasing deals, and those do not meet the standards, you just want to hide your mess. So, for us, this (#HelpTurkey) was not feel like a loss of reputation; it felt like an attempt to cover up the shame. They are rejecting the help coming from abroad with all sorts of excuses, like arrogance and stuff... Basically, it never ended up helping the people. We could see ourselves falling apart. We are burning up, and I have no idea what you are trying to achieve because it just does not make any sense to me. You are not accepting the help that's coming from abroad.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 3 Age 58)

Another group of critique reveals the OGM's inability in crisis management during the fires and lack of preparedness before the fires. The following quotations reveal the view that OGM is inattentive before the fires and insufficient in making preventive preparations against a possible fire.

“Eskiden orman içindeki pürçükler temizlenirdi. Şimdi yangına bu pürçüklerin temizlenmemesi neden oldu. Ormancı genel olarak ilgisiz.” [In the past, the forest used to be cleared of slash. Now the fire was caused by not clearing the slash. Forestry personnel is generally inattentive.] (Marmaris Siteler Female 1 Age 56)

“Ben hiçbir şekilde ormanın (OGM) ilgilendiğini düşünmüyorum. Burada mesela, ‘Sorgun Çamlığı’ var. Ormanın ilgilendiğini düşünmüyorum. Orman alanlarındaki yangınları önlemek için temizlenmesi gerekiyor içinin ama burada hiçbir faaliyetin olduğunu görmedik. Bu bir ihmalkarlık.” [I do not think that the forest (OGM) is interested in any way. Here, for example, there is the ‘Sorgun Pine Forest’. I do not think the forest is interested in it. It needs to be cleaned to prevent fires in forest areas, but we have not seen any activity here. This is negligence.] (Manavgat Aşağıpazarcı Male 4 Age 50)

Participants also emphasised that the simultaneous outbreak of fires at more than one point during the fire could not be managed well operationally.

“Marmaris’te 10 itfaiye varsa 5’i Manavgat’taydı zaten. Bütün komşu illerden yardım Manavgat’a geniş çaplı söndürme çalışmasına gidince burada (*Marmaris’te*) hazırlıksız yakalandık bu yangına. Yani devlet biraz hazırlıksız gibiydi bu işlere.” [If there were 10 fire brigades in Marmaris, 5 of them were already in Manavgat. When help from all neighbouring provinces went to Manavgat for large-scale extinguishing work, we were caught unprepared for this fire here (in Marmaris). In other words, the state seemed a little unprepared for these things.] (Marmaris Turunç Male 3 Age 52)

Finally, the last group of critique reflects a perceived problem of meritocracy within the institution. The deployment of forestry personnel who are not familiar with the local geography has reinforced the belief among local people that the personnel cannot be effective. Foreigner security professionals, including chiefs and firefighters, were described as inefficient and hesitant to dedication to firefighting, lacking the local knowledge necessary to make quick decisions. Again, this reveals a perceived problem of belonging and dedication to the hometown in firefighting. On the other hand, it was stated that the teams from that village worked as if sacrificing themselves to save the village. In other words, although the official narrative emphasises that all forestry personnel worked hard, the vernacular narrative highlights actually personnels who are from that village work hard. In this way, vernacular narrative highlights the importance of belonging among the security professionals in ensuring security.

“Bazı ekipler zor yere gelince yangından kaçıyor gibi davranıyordu, can korkusu gibi... Küçük bir şeyden bile korkuyorlardı bazen. Bir de koordinasyon olmuyordu her taraf karışmış oluyordu. Ne olacağı belli olmuyordu.” [When some teams came to a difficult place, they acted as if they were running away from a fire, like fear for their lives... Sometimes they were afraid of even a small thing. Also, there was no coordination, everything was confused. You never knew what was going to happen.] (Alanya Güzelbağ Male 6 Age 28)

“Bir de şöyle bir şansımız var. Yangın ekiplerinin bir kısmının buralı olmasından ötürü bu bölgeyi bildiklerinden, yabancıların bazı itfaiye şöforlerinin kaç... yani yanmayalım diye bırakmalarına rağmen onlar canıyla başıyla mücadele ettiler. Onların (*o köyden olanların*) çok büyük başarısı var. Bu devlet memurları hep geri durdu. Daha ziyade bölgeyi bilmeyen korkuyor. Bölgeyi bilenler faydalı oldu bize. Canını ortaya koydu. Bir de yabancı ekip şunu düşünüyor. Ya bana ne yatarsa... Ben yanmayayım. Korkuyor çekiniyor yangından. Yangını gördüler biz yanacağız dediler ya. Ben niye kaçmadım?” [We were lucky. Since some of the fire brigades were from this region, they fought with their lives, even though some of the foreign firefighters run aw... -I mean- left the fire brigade so that we would not get burnt. They (*the ones from the village*) have a great success. Foreign state officers always held back. Those who do not know the region were afraid. Those who knew the region were useful to us. They put their lives on the line. And the foreign team

thought this: ‘I do not care if it burns... I should not get burnt’. They were afraid of the fire. They saw the fire and said we would get burnt. Why did not I run away?]

(Alanya Güzelbağ Male 4 Age 51)

“Yani aslında yöneticilerin bu yöreyi bilmemesi esas sorun. Pratik ve okumak farklı oluyor abi.” [In other words, the main problem is that the managers don’t know this region. Practising and reading are different.] (Köyceğiz Ulucami Male 2 Age 58)

“Adam doğudan gelmiş misal, ama adam o köyü bilmiyor, nereye gittiğini bilmiyor.” [For example, a man comes from the east of Türkiye, but he does not know the village and has no idea where he is heading.] (Gündoğmuş Rasihkaplan Male 1 Age 50)

“Şimdi ormanda şefler var. Yani birini biliyorum ben mesela komşum, bir sıkıntım yok, iyi bir kadın ama buralı değil. Karadeniz’den ve bu bölgeyi tanımıyor, ormanları bilmiyor, köylerin orman yollarını bilmiyor. Ormandaki çalışan arazözleri süren personel de dahil, kepçeyi süren personel de dahil, çoğu bu bölgenin insanı değil. Ormanın personeli, yani yangın söndürmeye giden araç, şey soruyormuş eşime, ‘ormana nereden gireceğim, yol nerede?’ Yani durum o kadar vahim. Aslında herkes kendi bölgesinde çalışsa belki yangınlar bu boyuta gelmez. Çünkü Bayır köyünden veya Mazı köyünden bir adam olsaydı yani o bölgedeki ormanlara, orman yollarına hakim biri daha iyi olurdu. En büyük sıkıntılardan biri de buydu. Ama onu da kabul etmiyorlar asla.” [There are chiefs in the forest. I know one—my neighbour, for example. She’s a good woman, no issues, but she’s not from around here. She’s from the Black Sea region and does not know this area, the forests, or the forest roads. Most of the staff working here, including those handling the vehicles, are not from this region. The forest crew, like the fire-fighting teams, were asking my husband things like, ‘Where should we enter the forest? Where’s the road?’ The situation is that bad. Honestly, if everyone worked in their own area, maybe the fires would not get this out of hand. If someone from Bayır village or Mazı village, someone who knows the local forests and roads, had been in charge, it would have been better. That was one of the biggest problems. But they never accept that.]

Bodrum Pınarlıbelen Female 2&3 Ages 34&30

The above-mentioned opinions of the local people can be concretised with two descriptions related to the forest personnel and the functioning of the institution. The first description connects a linkage between the physical appearances of the forestry personnel and their merit and ability. Criticising the personnel as being ‘fat and bellied man’, local people reflect their distrust in them in providing security and efficiency in firefighting. In this way, vernacular narrative unveils its subconscious about how a security professional should be. They perceive that security personnel must be fit in body shape. However, those forestry personnel are depicted as inefficient as fat and bellied man.

“Bizim ekiplerimizde 130 kiloluk adam var. Arabaya binemiyor inan! Nasıl etkili olacak?” [We’ve got a 130kg man in our squad. He cannot get even in a car! How will he be effective?] (Marmaris Turunç Male 3 Age 52)

“Mesela hükümet Akut’u çok küstürdü. Zamanında Akut normalde çok güzel işler yapan bir ekipti. Bildiğim kadarıyla 3-4 kişi anca maaş alıyordu, gerisi hep gönüllüydü. Bir getiri beklentisi yok, yani vatan sevgisidir bu. Afad’ı çıkardı mesela hükümet Akut’a karşı. Afad’takileri de biliyorum yani hepsi mesela kocaman göbekli, ne yapabilir o kapasitesi yok! Ama Akut’takilerin çoğu zaten dağcıydı.” [For example, the government has offended Akut a lot. At the time, Akut was a team that normally did very good work. As far as I know, 3-4 people were barely paid, the rest were all volunteers. There is no expectation of a return, that is, this is patriotic love. For example, the government took out Afad against Akut. I know the people in Afad, for example, they all have big bellies, they do not have the capacity to do what they can do! But most of the people in Akut were already mountaineers.] (Marmaris İçmeler Male 2 Age 41)

Second description reflects the forestry personnel’s adherence to bureaucratic protocols. Respondents highlighted the visual description of forestry personnels sitting in sprinklers and waiting executive orders while being busy with their mobile phones in their hands in the middle of the fire. This rigid adherence to the protocols was defined as a structural failure that disable the urgency of the response.

“Adamlar telefon elinde oyun oynuyor hatta bizim köyün gençleri dövdü su sıkıyor diye. Adam telefonla oynuyor! Arkadaşım, şu ateşi püskürt asfalta gelmesin asfalttan beri yana geçerse köy yanacak diyoruz. Emir yok diyor. Bak, Emir yok diyor!” [The men were playing games on their mobile phones and even beaten by the youth of our village for not spraying water. He’s playing on the phone! My friend, we tell him to spray the fire so that it does not come to the asphalt, if he crosses the asphalt, the village will burn. He says there are no orders. Look, he says there are no orders!] (Milas Fesleğen Male 8 Age 55)

“Biz yangın Bozalan’dan Akçakaya sınırına yaklaşırken arazöz şoförünün 1 saat, emir gelmediği için, 1 saat aracın içinde oturduğunu biliyoruz. 1 Saat bana emir gelmedi diye bekledi. O arada yangın yanıyor. Arazöz güvenli bir alanda 1 saat bekledi, müdahale edebilirdi aslında ama etmedi.” [We know that when the fire was approaching the Akçakaya border from Bozalan, the driver of the sprinkler sat in the vehicle for 1 hour because he did not receive orders. He waited for 1 hour because he did not receive orders. In the meantime, the fire was moving. The sprinkler waited for 1 hour in a safe area, it could have intervened but it did not.] (Milas Gürceğiz Male1 Age 37)

“Vallahi ormancılar emir gelmedikten sonra su sıkıyorlardı. Emre bağlıydı. Vallahi fazla da müdahale etmediler zaten yangınlara.” [In truth, the foresters did not spray water unless they were ordered to. It depended on the order. They did not intervene much in the fires anyway.] (Milas Bozalan Male3 Age 62 and Milas Alatepe Male 4 Age 60)

6.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the vernacular narrative presents forest villagers as organic security providers, unveiling their survival-type deep relationship with their environment.

This complex intertwined relationship between forests and the villagers helps the people to establish a natural bond of belonging with their environment. This bond of belonging is not only a socio-cultural bond, but also an economic bond, especially since the source of the vital needs and income of the forest villagers is also met from the forest. Therefore, it increases the dependence of the villagers on the forest. The people's attribution of the role of organic security provider can be seen as a reflection of the fact that they still have a *cibal-i mübâha* mentality - the prioritisation of forest use and thus the role of protection. This approach naturally challenges the traditional divide between citizens as security end-users and the state as the security provider.

Since such a challenge to the role attributed to the state has come, its legitimisation has been achieved by foregrounding the value of local knowledge over technical one. While highlighting alternative actors such as hunters and shepherds has emphasised the importance of having authentic knowledge of the region, it has also caused the traditional security professional to be viewed with scepticism due to their unfamiliarity with the region. Moreover, vernacular narrative exposes certain primitive community-based practices and bottom-up surveillance mechanisms as measures and tool to conduct security.

The complexity of the bond results in complex feelings of insecurity as well. Therefore, the insecurity is described by the vernacular narrative with three inter-related disruptions, ecosystemic, economic, and ontologic. In this way, it provides a thick description of insecurity by revealing layered and deep insecurities of the people rather than publishing superficial damage assessment reports as the official narrative did.

As I elaborated in the official narrative, the ambiguousness in identifying the sources of threat creates information gaps, and eventually, leads to certain constructions of fears with the help of traumatic subconscious thoughts of local people. These thoughts help growing distrust between state-society relations. Vernacular narrative reveals deep scepticism towards political power as well as external actors.

Rather than climatic changes as the main driver of deforestation as the official narrative priorities, the vernacular narrative unveils political economy of the environment as the main driver of deforestation. It is where the main contestation takes place over the forest since the vernacular narrative highlights how the government policies prioritising extractive development and commodification of forests. Finally, in the political narrative, the local people's accounts reveal the problematic nature of the relations between the OGM and the villagers, and that this is part of the forest use and ownership problems created by the forest regime that has been in place since the *cibal-i mûbâha* understanding. Disruptive potential of vernacular narratives has been approved in this case since it challenges four key policies of the government and unveils its critique of security bureaucracy and professions. Issues such as lack of belonging and meritocracy among the forestry personnel have caused local people to question the professionalism of security professionals. The physical appearance of the security professionals, who were depicted as 'fat-bellied men', and their inability to take initiative without taking orders by strictly adhering to bureaucratic procedures questioned the merit of the officers in the public perception.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

7.1. Introduction

I started this dissertation reminding the well-known saying in Turkey, fire burns where it falls. After conducting a fieldwork, talking to people who has been affected by the fires in their everyday life, and reading the statements of the officials, this saying started to make much more sense to me. In security language, fire burns where it falls denotes the contextual character of security as a social construction. Just as vernacular security argues, “security is conceptualised and politically practised differently in different places and at different times”.⁶⁶² However, it also implies that we cannot truly comprehend pain and grief until we encounter those who experience it directly. Therefore, my dissertation aimed to investigate how local people feels about the 2021 forest fires and to investigate whether these feelings and perceptions converges or diverges with the official narrative. In other words, was the framework presented by the official narrative adopted by the local people living in the areas where the fire actually fell? Building upon the findings of the previous chapters, this concluding discussion reaffirms the two main research questions that have guided this study:

- a) How do the official and vernacular narratives conceptualise and contest security during the 2021 forest fires in Turkey?
- b) What does this divergence (or convergence) in these narratives reveal about broader security dynamics and state-society relations in Turkey?

Throughout this dissertation, I have examined the historical and conceptual foundations of environmental security within Turkish case, focusing on the

⁶⁶² Bubandt, ‘Vernacular Security: The Politics of Feeling Safe in Global, National and Local Worlds’, 2005, 291.

framework of deforestation and forest fires. In this context, I have analysed the competing narratives surrounding the 2021 forest fires in Turkey. By situating these narratives within a critical security framework, the dissertation has illuminated the ways in which both official discourses and local voices construct, appropriate, and challenge the meaning of security. Crucially, this approach has demonstrated that security is not monolithic and policy elites' exclusive domain but also emerges through everyday life and community practices at the local level. The empirical chapters have demonstrated contradictions between official government narratives that stress top-down action and local societies that advocate adaptive, participatory fire management. In this final chapter, I aim to synthesise these findings to offer an integrated discussion on the way contending security narratives interact with broader security dynamics and state-society interactions in Turkey, and with the utility of vernacular security theory. In conclusion, this chapter aims to synthesise the main arguments of the thesis and to provide room for broader discussion for understanding the nexus between environment, security and politics in Turkey.

7.2. Synthesis of Two Narratives: Divergences and Convergences

In this section, which seeks to answer the first main research question of the thesis, namely how the security narrative about the 2021 forest fires is shaped in official and vernacular narratives, I will try to synthesise the findings separately in the tripartite nexus of security, environment and politics. Examining these narratives together provides not only an integrated perspective on how the 2021 forest fires become entangled in security language, but also a deeper understanding of how local people and state authorities negotiate meaning and authority in the face of this crisis. I will address security, environmental and political narratives respectively.

The 2021 forest fires are a concrete case study from Turkey that reveals different understandings of security and embodies the intertwined nature of security-environment-politics nexus. The interplay between the official narrative and the vernacular narrative reflects the tension between the state's attempt to consolidate its legitimacy and the survival strategies of local communities. This tension shows significant divergences in certain main points and constructions of authority and

responsibility, although both sides depict fires as a serious security problem. Whereas the official narrative positions the fires as a major destructive manifestation of climate crisis, or sometimes an example of pyro-terrorism, and declares the state as the primary security provider, the vernacular narrative foregrounds its own everyday practices, local knowledge and sense of belonging, and emphasises villagers and local actors as the ‘organic security providers’. Thus, the issue becomes a complex security narrative with both technical and socio-political dimensions. In this framework, each of the four security questions – ‘who is in charge’, ‘whose security is at stake’, ‘what is the sources of threat’, and ‘what are the key measures and tools’- requires comparative analysis, revealing the convergences and divergences in official and vernacular narratives more clearly.

The question of ‘who is in charge’ emerges as one of the most obvious areas of divergence between the official and vernacular narratives. The official narrative argues that the government authorities (relevant ministry personnel) and authorised state officers, especially the forestry personnel, are the main legitimate authority to tackle forest fires. Here, the technical expertise and institutional capacity of the central government is emphasised, and the idea that it is not possible to act independently of the state in firefighting is reproduced. In this perspective, citizens are positioned as ‘passive consumers of security’, and with a discourse identifying firefighting with a kind of ‘homeland defence’, it is argued that the conduct of security is monopolised by the state. This discourse is further strengthened with the highlight of ‘success and control’ uttered by the official elites in their daily press releases. However, the government’s resort to foreign aid draws attention to a situation that weakens the thesis that the official security professional is an omnipotent and complete actor. On the other hand, the vernacular narrative gives a completely different answer to the question of ‘who is in charge’, presenting forest villagers and local actors as “organic security providers”. Local people believe that their own experience and sense of belonging to the region are decisive in extinguishing the fires. In this perspective, it is claimed that state officials are not familiar with the geographical and authentic conditions of the region, act with a top-down approach and reduce firefighting to a merely technical level. According to the vernacular narrative, the survival-based bond that forest villagers establish with the

forest leads them to embrace the forest as ‘partners in destiny’ and this sense of belonging creates the power to respond to fires with a speed and motivation that official authorities cannot possess.

The question of ‘whose security is at stake’ points to both the ecological and social dimensions of the issue and embodies important points of convergences and divergences between the official and vernacular narrative. At first glance, the official narrative emphasises the ‘protection of nature’ and presents the ‘safety of the planet’ and ‘national security’ intertwined. Climate change-induced disasters are formulated as a threat to the existence of the state, and therefore the burning of forests is interpreted as an attack on the country’s ‘green homeland’ identity. Within this official framework, the metaphor of ‘homeland defence’ is extended and foresters are heroised just as soldiers or police officers. However, the vernacular narrative sees the security of forest villagers and local people together with the local ecosystem under direct threat. In this perspective, economic and emotional losses are at the forefront. The loss of income experienced by those who make a living from beekeeping, the destruction of social memory and personal memories with the burning of houses, and the descent of wild animals in the region to urban centres in search of new habitats show that the local community is affected by the fires not only as ‘loss of ecosystem’ but also as ‘loss of habitat’. Therefore, the vernacular narrative partially agrees with the official discourse’s global framing of the issue of ‘national security’, but it also strongly voices the marginalised security concerns of local communities. In this way, the vernacular narrative renders visible concerns that have gone unheard or ignored and expands the answer to the question of ‘whose security’, suggesting a multi-layered universe of security that includes non-human beings.

The issue of ‘sources of threat’ contains unique constructs and dilemmas in both narratives. At the point of identifying the threat, the common point of both narratives is uncertainty. Both the vernacular narrative and the official narrative have difficulties in concretely linking the causes of the fires to a point. The official narrative explains the causes of forest fires primarily within the framework of climate change and global warming and reinforces this with concepts such as ‘pyro-terrorism’, presenting the fires as sabotage by external or internal forces that aim at

Turkey's stability. According to this narrative, it is emphasised that the USA and Russia have also experienced major fires, and it is stated that the problem at hand is a global ecological crisis, and Turkey is not exempt from this crisis. The possibility of terrorist organisations burning down forests is highlighted especially in political discourses, but this claim contradicts by statistical data, revealing that the number of terrorism-related fires is very low. This situation shows that the threat construction created by the official narrative sometimes contradicts the data and creates an 'information gap' in the public sphere.

The vernacular narrative, on the other hand, emphasises state negligence or rent-oriented policies as possible sources of threat in this picture of uncertainty. According to the vernacular narrative, there may be power centres that intentionally burn forests to build hotels, or long-unresolved infrastructure problems, such as overly old electric lines, may be the main source of the fires. At this point, different 'traumatic' memories based on local political histories come into play. Narratives such as "who knows which rich person is going to build a hotel" present a much more sceptical and fragmented picture of the cause of the fires, transcending the framework constructed by the state. Although constitutional regulations prohibit the opening of burnt forest areas for construction, in the collective memory of local people, some past events and rent processes keep these concerns alive. Thus, while the perception of threat appears more 'external' in the official narrative (ranging from the climate crisis to terrorist organisations), the vernacular narrative emphasises that the root of the problems may be related to local and systemic negligence, past political tensions or direct strategic negligence of the state.

Defining the prioritised 'measures and tools' is another critical area of discussion in terms of showing how security narratives are shaped in practice. The official narrative describes forest fire response as a centralised issue requiring technical expertise. The emphasis on high technology, aerial interventions, quantifiable personnel numbers and the speed of post-disaster 'reconstruction' policy attempts to prove that the state is a strong and effective security provider. Evacuation practices are promoted as an example of a 'professional' approach that tries to show that the loss of life in fires is minimised by the rapid removal of the inhabitants of the area at

risk. Nevertheless, the official confirmation of the state's acceptance of foreign aid paved the way for the clash between the '#HelpTurkey' and '#StrongTürkiye' campaigns in the public opinion and led to the politicisation of the issue of 'asking for help'. In the official narrative, international aid is celebrated as a symbol of 'solidarity'; however, when the public calls for help, it is framed as a threat, justified and securitised as an indication of state incapacity.

In addition to top-down and technical solutions, the vernacular narrative argues that local knowledge and experience are vital in firefighting. It is claimed that actors who know the region well, such as forest villagers, shepherds and hunters, are more competent in predicting the rate of fire spread and risky areas. Practices such as firing gunshots to raise the alarm, placing water jerry cans along roadsides, and establishing bottom-up surveillance mechanisms and information networks via WhatsApp groups illustrate the strength of locally emerging, authentic methods. Reacting to the 'evacuation' measure imposed by the authorities, local people tried to control the fires with their own methods instead of leaving their villages. Even some interview participants expressed their prejudices about the evacuation policy, claiming that "their houses burnt down because they left their homes". This calls into question the state's approach of portraying local communities as 'passive victims who need to be evacuated in a crisis'. On the other hand, new house projects promised by TOKI are perceived as a top-down intervention of the state in the physical and social fabric of village life, reinforcing the sense of insecurity at the local level. It is thought that the needs and demands of the villagers are not sufficiently taken into account in these interventions, and therefore 'house building' projects are perceived as a strategy that transforms the everyday life of the local people. In fact, the official narrative has presented house building projects as prototypes of the transformation of the architectural mentality in rural areas. Therefore, the villages transformed with this new architectural mentality can be seen as a reflection of the model village project of the government.

Categorising the four main security questions in this way, it is possible to define certain points of convergences and divergences between the official and vernacular narratives. The points of convergence are mostly centred on the destructive nature of

the fires. Both narratives agree that forest fires are a major security threat, affecting natural life, economic activities, and social order. Although both narratives also share the idea that global climate change has increased the frequency and severity of forest fires, the vernacular narrative reveals more strikingly how this change is experienced locally. The points of divergence are primarily about the security provider, the role and the value of local people and knowledge in firefighting and sources of threats.

One of the major points to be mentioned here is that forest fires are not a disaster that should be managed solely by technical methods, because forest fires can also be shaped as a security issue with social, political and economic dimensions. While the official narrative nationalises firefighting as a political tool to reinforce the legitimacy of the government, it transforms the protection of forests into a matter of national identity through the discourse of the ‘green homeland’. This nationalisation strategy has the potential to marginalise and silence the opposition and critical voices through accusations of terrorism and representations of ‘homeland defence’. The vernacular narrative, on the other hand, argues that the central government alone cannot ensure security, pointing out that forests are not only a key element of the ecological balance in the country, but also of the identity and livelihoods of local people. This local perspective describes security as a multidimensional social responsibility, defending the idea that the animals that are part of the ecosystem, all living creatures in the forest, and even the memories and ontological security of the villagers should also be protected.

Questions such as who is responsible for security, whose security is at stake, from which sources threats arise and with which measures to respond to these threats are the main points where both the official and vernacular narratives feed their own discourses of political legitimacy. The fact that the official narrative highlights the ‘#StrongTürkiye’ campaign despite the need for foreign aid and labels the local people’s demand for aid as a security problem shows how the fear of damaging the image of the state is transformed into politics. The “organic security provider” position of the vernacular narrative can be read both as a reflection of the survival practices of forest villagers for centuries and as an expression of the desire to create a critical position against the state. This position is also related to the historical

transformation of forest regime and policies in Turkey. Legal and institutional arrangements that distance the forest villagers from the forest have created fault lines between the local people and the state for many years. I will address these fault lines in the political narrative of this section. In conclusion, the presentation of the 2021 forest fires in official and vernacular narratives suggests different security imaginations for the same phenomenon.

The environmental narrative that I focus on in terms of the meaning of forests and the drivers of deforestation also has certain divergences and convergences. The nationalisation of the environment by the authorities with the narrative of ‘green homeland’ and the institutional campaigns carried out within this framework construct a discourse that identifies the protection of nature with the preservation of national identity. This discourse allows those in power to strengthen their responsibility for the country in the face of ecological disasters and to legitimise environmental policies with a sense of patriotism. Moreover, such a discourse situates environmental policies above politics. At the same time, the official narrative looks for the source of environmental problems in global climate crises, historical responsibility of industrialised countries or ‘natural disasters’. This approach portrays Turkey as a victim of these structural challenges of environmental insecurities. In this official narrative, although climate change is included as a background factor, there is little room for direct criticism of Turkey’s economic policies or internal dynamics. In international processes related to global climate change, the main responsibility is left to the developed industrialised Western countries; even for this reason, Turkey binds itself to these agreements under ‘special circumstances’. Reforestation/afforestation campaigns and large-scale tree planting mobilisations foreground the state as an absolute power that can regenerate the environment. Here, successful management is defined through the quantities of planted saplings measured in numbers, ‘rapid response’ and ‘reconstruction’ moves after disasters. These moves are sometimes presented with religious references, calls for national solidarity and references to the global ‘clean energy’ agenda, strengthening the claim that the state is environmentally sensitive and is an actor that both protects and restores nature.

When this picture of the official narrative is confronted with the vernacular narrative, a clear contradiction emerges. Local people, who see the forest and the natural environment not as a symbol, but as spaces on which economic, social and cultural existence directly depends, feel a great sense of insecurity in the face of fires and environmental destruction in general. For those who make a living from beekeeping, forest fires mean not only the loss of ecological diversity but also the collapse of livelihood. The loss of olive trees, plant species indigenous to the region or the natural texture that has been preserved for centuries signifies an irreparable rupture in the eyes of local people. The tree planting mobilisations carried out by the government are seen as insufficient, especially on the grounds that new saplings cannot easily replace the old trees. At this point, the vernacular narrative conceptualises the environment as an ecosystem that can only be understood through the ecological and cultural integrity that has been formed over many generations.

These two approaches have similar concerns about the environment but are based on different motives and expectations. According to the official narrative, nature is sometimes presented as an asset that can be used as needed for development. In the vernacular narrative, on the other hand, nature is a sphere of existence integrated with human beings; the destruction of forests means not only physical loss, but also the loss of human memory and identity. This situation brings about the lack of transparency of environmental policies on the ground of public debate. Critical voices in this direction are marginalised as “marginals wearing environmentalist masks”.

These contradictory attitudes, which explain the meanings attributed to forests, also give rise to different assumptions about the drivers of deforestation. The official narrative points to climate change as the main drivers of deforestation. In particular, it is often emphasised that extreme weather events triggered by global warming increase the number and severity of fires. In some official documents large-scale forest fires, such as the 2021 fire, define as natural disasters as a ‘fate’ or ‘divine test’ in some contexts, relegate the discussion of human or institutional negligence to the background. This paves the way for deforestation to be perceived as an ‘exogenous’ and ‘natural’ process, independent of state policies. Reforestation and environmental

projects are presented within this narrative as proof of both Turkey's national effort and its assumption of environmental responsibility despite its victimisation.

In the vernacular narrative, the main drivers of deforestation are defined as neoliberal development models and migration movements. Rumours of forest fires being deliberately set for touristic facilities show that rent and interest-oriented approaches have created a deep distrust in local memory. These allegations are seen as 'opposition propaganda' or 'speculation' by the official authorities. However, local people take these speculations seriously because of concrete examples such as the expansion of mines in some areas, the construction of large hotel complexes, or the allocation of forest land in favour of high-revenue tourism projects. Moreover, privatisation of logging activities and the end of cooperativism in certain villages lead in many places to a de facto restriction of local people's access to the forest ecosystem. This transformation creates a serious rupture between forest villagers and the forest not only economically but also culturally. The vernacular narrative thus unveils that the loss of the forest is not only part of a global tragedy or climate crisis, but also the result of domestic rent-seeking and politics. What is striking, however, is that as the stories of 'tourism came, brothers-in-law got rich' show, rent-seeking is not only a matter of capital and government, but also of local people.

The convergences between the official and vernacular narratives are embodied in the fact that both sides see forests as important and in need of protection. There is a consensus that large fires are an ecological disaster, directly affect social life and threaten future generations. However, this common ground is replaced by a confrontational ground when it comes to the source of the problem and solutions. The divergence on the meanings of forest, how to compensate for its loss and the dynamics that actually trigger deforestation points to the deep political dimensions of environmental policies. As a result, the official narrative's claim to defend the 'green homeland' and the local narrative's claim to defend forests as an integral part of daily life, cultural identity and livelihood embody a tension arising from the different political meanings of the same demand for protection. This tension is also evident in the issue of deforestation, where the government presents global climate change as the main cause, while the local narrative presents rent and developmental projects as

the main driver. This difference between the two narratives proves that forests are not only an ecosystem but also a site of social and political struggle, as Peter Dauvergne puts it.

The 2021 forest fires have created tensions in Turkish politics, constructing a political narrative that diverges markedly between official and vernacular narratives. On the one hand, there is the government's narrative on the securitisation of opposition municipalities on the grounds that they do not cooperate in their areas of responsibility and that the opposition party produces 'terror of lie'. On the other hand, there is the critical story told by local communities and forest villagers. These two narratives significantly widen the scope of political debates around the fires.

Essentially, what both narratives have in common is that they reveal the political dimension of fires. Both narratives emphasise that issues such as the management of fires, the responsibilities of authorities and response capacity are not only technical but also political. On the other hand, both narratives recognise that the 2021 forest fires have reached a crisis dimension. As I have stated in the categories above, the official narrative imagines fires as a kind of 'homeland defence' and argues that the state responded accordingly with all its means. The vernacular narrative, by contrast, contends that the crisis escalated due to deficiencies in the official authorities' intervention and organisation. However, the point at which the two narratives diverge marks a shift towards a political dimension.

The context in which the political dimension of the issue is discussed is generally characterised by the debate between the government and the opposition over jurisdictional conflicts, crisis management, the role of local people and the consequences of policies during and after the fires. The official narrative securitises municipalities, the opposition and the 'HelpTurkey' social media campaign in firefighting. The opposition is allegedly engaged in 'politics of lies' and 'wants to create the perception that Turkey is weak'. I argue that the official narrative's securitisation of the opposition, which started at the local level with the insufficiency of the municipalities managed by the opposition in responding to the fires, first

problematised the main opposition party and then turned into a conflict of cultural hegemony by creating a certain opposition segment as the ‘CHP mentality’.

The vernacular narrative, on the other hand, reveals a more historical and sociological explanation and shares the problematic nature of the relationship between the OGM and forest villagers. Accordingly, it is stated that there are actually fault lines in forest management in the process that has evolved from the understanding of ‘cibal-i mübaha’ from the late Ottoman period to the present day to a structure in which the state controls forest ownership more tightly. In particular, privatisation of logging and ownership issues within forest areas are already controversial issues between the OGM and villagers and can create tensions between the two actors. These tensions can sometimes be resolved by forestry personnel turning a blind eye to villagers’ fulfilment of their needs from the forest; sometimes by villagers entering into a bribery relationship with forestry personnel; and sometimes by villagers fulfilling their needs from the forest in a controlled manner on designated days such as “the day smoke rose” [*duman tüttü günü*]. However, conflict could be inevitable due to the mechanisms underlying these relations in the triangle of the OGM, villagers and forestry personnel.

During the 2021 forest fires, this conflict can be seen especially when it comes to the policies implemented during and after the fires. I have already mentioned how the evacuation policy brings this conflictual relationship to the agenda in the section on the security narrative. Apart from this, important policies during and after the fires, especially for the elimination of insecurity and return to normalcy, are housebuilding and subvention. Subvention policy is also very prominent in the official narrative, and it is emphasised that the losses of the fire victims will be compensated quickly. However, the vernacular narrative reveals problems especially in the organisation of the distribution of aid and criticises the fact that the aid did not reach those who really needed it. The lack of organisation during the distribution of aid has led to chaos and created rent-seeking attempts among local people. On the other hand, another issue frequently emphasised in the interviews is that most of the aid that government officials praise comes from donors. This reveals the underlying populist political motivation of the subvention policy. In fact, the vernacular narrative

revealed that not only the government but also the main opposition party officials were competing to appear at the forefront of subvention policy.

The house building policy also appears in the official narrative as one of the most important instruments of the rapid return to normalisation. The delivery of the completed houses is done with ceremonies; and in these ceremonies, the beauty of the exterior appearance of the houses is emphasised. Both subventions and house building policies reveal that material policies will provide a solution for the return to normality. On the other hand, in some documents containing Erdoğan's discourses, the new houses to be built after the fires are also presented as a prototype for the transformation of the architectural mentality. Therefore, this represents a transformation of the village space through top-down policies. As a matter of fact, the houses built are uniform and similar to each other. In addition, it was also stated that after the fires, some villagers' houses could not be built in the old place due to property problems and were built on treasury lands. Therefore, this situation caused the houses to be built in a housing estate style, that is, as a mass housing project.

The vernacular narrative, on the other hand, revealed that this policy presented new insecurities and uncertainties rather than helping to normalise the local communities. The vernacular narrative claims that the houses were not suitable for village life, that villagers were spatially displaced and that the process was used as a populist tool. The emphasis that the new space imposed by the government in a top-down manner does not fit the village life they are used to can be considered as an indicator of the ontological insecurity experienced by the local people. Economically, most of the interviewees complained about the uncertainty regarding the repayment of the houses.

As a result, the image of a strong crisis manager presented by the official narrative is refuted by the vernacular narrative. The failure to involve local people in the fire governance process further undermined trust in the state security bureaucracy and reinforced the idea that citizens should determine their own destiny. The vernacular narrative offers important insights into how top-down policies cause localised problems. While the official narrative suggests that post-fire normalisation will be

achieved through material policies, the vernacular narrative reveals the socio-political consequences of the trauma caused by the fires by revealing the existence of structural problems such as social and economic insecurity and spatial alienation.

7.3. Conversations with the Broader Literature

This section aims to relate the findings synthesised in the previous section to the existing theoretical literature. Drawing on works on forest fire governance – that I elaborated in Chapter I- and theoretical debates in vernacular security – that I examined in Chapter II-, I will discuss what the findings of the thesis mean in the wider context. In this way, it will be possible to situate the diversity of the two distinct narratives in the thesis, ranging from everyday practices to official narratives of security, within critical security studies and forest fire governance literature. This dialogue with the literature will both strengthen the theoretical underpinnings of the data and reveal where the differences between official and vernacular narratives raise new questions or contributions to the existing theoretical framework. Moreover, such a dialogue has the potential to make visible certain aspects of the state-society relations in Turkey in the context of forest fires.

7.3.1. Contribution to the Forest Fire Governance Literature

The literature on forest fire governance suggests that large-scale fires involve complex socio-ecological processes that cannot be solved by technical interventions alone. Many scholars argue that understanding and dealing with forest fires requires holistic approaches considering elements such as governance failures, increasing climatic changes and deeply rooted socio-ecological processes together.⁶⁶³ In this framework, “community-based, participatory and adaptive” strategies come to the fore instead of traditional, “fire suppression-dominated” strategies.⁶⁶⁴ The tensions

⁶⁶³ Miller et al., ‘Re-Envisioning Wildland Fire Governance: Addressing the Transboundary, Uncertain, and Contested Aspects of Wildfire’; Moritz et al., ‘Learning to Coexist with Wildfire’; Schoennagel et al., ‘Adapt to More Wildfire in Western North American Forests as Climate Changes’.

⁶⁶⁴ Calkin, Thompson, and Finney, ‘Negative Consequences of Positive Feedbacks in US Wildfire Management’; Pismel et al., ‘Wildfire Governance in a Tri-National Frontier of Southwestern Amazonia: Capacities and Vulnerabilities’; Schoennagel et al., ‘Adapt to More Wildfire in Western

between official and vernacular narratives allow us to see precisely where these models of governance overlap and contradict. Therefore, this dissertation provides to this debate with a unique case study from Turkey within the framework of the 2021 forest fires.

The official narrative's framing of fires as a "homeland defence" implies that dealing with forest fires is a "zero-sum game". In this sense, the official narrative's understanding is closer to the traditional understanding of fire governance focused on fire suppression-dominated strategies. Moreover, as Calkin et al.'s study in the context of USA argues that such aggressive forest fire suppression policies are costly and may ignite even bigger fires.⁶⁶⁵ At the same time, the fact that the official narrative seeks to tackle fires only with the security professional eliminates other actors that can be useful in forest fire governance. Such an approach hinders the development of participatory and community-based approaches to forest fire governance. Even though state institutions claim to be "in control of everything", the opposite may be the case, as the vernacular data frequently indicates. Consequently, Essen et al. argues that top-down and expert-dominated approaches fail to capture forest fires' complexity.⁶⁶⁶ It is obvious that more participatory strategies are necessary to capture this complexity in dealing with forest fires.

On the other hand, the vernacular narrative emphasises the local people's practice of living with forests and their unique knowledge of the region. The capacity of villagers, shepherds and hunters who know the geographical features of the region well to respond quickly to fires and develop alternative methods intersects with adaptive, community-based and participatory governance models in the literature on forest fire governance. According to the vernacular narrative, hunters and shepherds know where and when the wind blow in their area; villagers know where to lay fire

North American Forests as Climate Changes'; Steelman, 'US Wildfire Governance as Social-Ecological Problem'.

⁶⁶⁵ Calkin, Thompson, and Finney, 'Negative Consequences of Positive Feedbacks in US Wildfire Management', 2–3.

⁶⁶⁶ Essen et al., 'Improving Wildfire Management Outcomes: Shifting the Paradigm of Wildfire from Simple to Complex Risk', 910.

hoses or shortcuts in the forest area; they establish bottom-up surveillance mechanisms and organise through WhatsApp to prevent fires; when a fire breaks out, they inform their neighbours by firing guns; and when necessary, they use various agricultural tools as hoses to provide first response to the fires until the arrival of official fire teams. They do this completely voluntarily because the place where they live have become part of their survival.

Accordingly, local people, as “organic security providers”, often play an important role in early detection of fires, controlling them when they are small in scale, or sheltering critical areas. The literature emphasises that this participatory approach is not only a technical contribution, but also an aspect that strengthens social legitimacy.⁶⁶⁷ The inclusion of communities that directly interact with the forest ecosystem is also critical for maintaining social ties and a sense of belonging.

In Chapter I, I mentioned that there are studies in the literature that investigate the vital role of local communities in fire governance in different contexts. For example, in China, Canada, and Spain, preventive measures such as small-scale prescribed burns and forest thinning were found to be implemented by local stakeholders. At this point, Indigenous Fire Management (IFM) practices, as an important concept standing out in the literature, allows us to establish a connection with the findings of the thesis. For centuries, indigenous communities in different geographies have managed forest fires as a cultural and ecological cycle, maintaining the balance of the ecosystem through methods such as controlled burns or seasonal monitoring.⁶⁶⁸ The literature shows that suppression strategies that completely exclude this ancient knowledge led to large and destructive fires in the long term. However, the IFM experience tells us that the sense of ‘vital connection’ and ‘common destiny’ that local communities have towards the forest is a source of motivation to deal with fires. It is recognised that this is not only a practical benefit, but also an effective approach in terms of ecological sustainability and social solidarity.

⁶⁶⁷ Kirschner, Clark, and Boustras, ‘Governing Wildfires: Toward a Systematic Analytical Framework’.

⁶⁶⁸ Nikolakis and Roberts, ‘Wildfire Governance in a Changing World: Insights for Policy Learning and Policy Transfer’, 144.

In my findings, the villagers' sense of belonging to their region, their survival type bond with the forest, and their unique knowledge provide examples close to the "community-based management" practices conceptualised in the IFM concept and in the forest fires governance literature. The vernacular narrative showed that many participants were able to intervene with their own unique methods (e.g. keeping water jerry cans ready or traditional methods for communication) and thus developed a vulnerability reduction mechanism at the local level.

In this way, the value of IFM concept and studies in the forest fire governance literature help to place the findings of the dissertation in a broader context. The monocentric and fire suppression-dominated approach of the official narrative can be seen inefficient. The role of local actors as "organic security providers" needs to be taken seriously and local strategies need to be blended with the institutional capacity of the state. In the absence of this, local communities are pushed into the position of "passive victims or security end-users".

Today, forest villagers and local people see themselves as living in close contact with the forest, benefitting from its blessings and assuming its responsibilities. The heritage of *cibal-i mübaha* reinforces this idea. The fact that the local people still bear traces of the *cibal-i mübaha* understanding also leads to the revival of the long-standing tension in state-society relations over forest regime and ownership. The impact of the neoliberal transformation, which is frequently emphasised in the political economy literature, on this tension is also confirmed here by the picture presented by the vernacular narrative. It is precisely within this contradictory framework that the IFM or community-based forest fire governance model can offer a different alternative to these tensions. Because this model not only recognises the ties of local communities with the forest but also relies on their knowledge and support for forest conversation. Thus, as a contemporary reflection of the understanding of *cibal-i mübaha*, local people's claim that "you will not break the bond between the forest and the villagers because the two are insurance for each other" can be institutionalised under community-based governance model and contribute to both the reduction of fire risk and the restoration of the fragile relationship between the state and the forest villagers in the long term.

As a result, the divergences between official and vernacular narratives allow us to rethink the participatory, community-based strategies to forest fires governance literature. This literature reminds us that it is incomplete to interpret fire risk only as ecological or climate-based and that we should instead advocate for a governance model that is compatible with ecological, institutional, and social aspects. This attitude also justifies the work of Peter Dauvergne, who argues that deforestation has a political driver and that the fight against deforestation will be insufficient without understanding this political driver.⁶⁶⁹ The vernacular data of the dissertation contains examples that contribute to these arguments. Therefore, I argue that Turkey's 2021 forest fire experience is an empirical contribution to these discussions and that discussions on forest fire governance in Turkey should also be revived along this axis.

7.3.2. Contribution to the Vernacular Security Studies Literature

Vernacular security studies offer a framework that overturns largely state-centred or elite-oriented approaches to security by examining the concept of security through its meanings produced in everyday language. In this literature, the lived experiences, historical collective memories, and symbolic practices of communities come to the fore. Therefore, security is transformed from a discourse imposed from above into a dynamic phenomenon that is constructed and reproduced at the local level. The findings of the dissertation confirm many of the basic assumptions of vernacular security and bring insights where the official and vernacular narratives on the 2021 forest fires diverges. In this way, I argue that this dissertation contributes to the vernacular security theory as an original empirical example that adapts the theory to an under-studied case.

Firstly, I argue that the dissertation contributes to the thematic expansion of the vernacular security literature by showing how the perception of security is reflected in a concrete and everyday issue in the context of forest fires. Vernacular security approach has been deployed in diverse empirical and thematic contexts so far,

⁶⁶⁹ Dauvergne, 'The Politics of Deforestation in Indonesia'.

including counter-radicalisation⁶⁷⁰, migration⁶⁷¹, counterterrorism⁶⁷², and environmental security⁶⁷³. In the case of Turkey, forest fires have been studied either as a tool for fighting insurgency or as a tool for terrorism, thereby reproducing ‘hard security’ discourse on the subject. The daily practices and discourses revealed by the vernacular narrative in the dissertation unveil how fires become a security crisis in the everyday life of local people. This allows the issue to be considered not only as an environmental disaster or terror/conflict-centred event, but also as a multidimensional threat intertwined with identity, memory, and ontological security of the local people.

Secondly, the empirical examination and elaboration of the tension between the official (elite) and the vernacular (non-elite) narratives provides supporting arguments for some of the main arguments of the theory. Vernacular approaches to security often focus on how the security constructions of official discourses are rejected ‘from below’, which demonstrates “the disruptive potential of non-elite knowledge”⁶⁷⁴ that has so far been largely ignored in security analyses. The synthesis section of the dissertation presents a Turkish example to the theory’s disruptive potential by revealing the two distinct and frequently contradictory security constructions on the same phenomenon. Therefore, the findings of the dissertation

⁶⁷⁰ Jack Holland and Natalie Higham-James, ‘Enactors of the State: The Everyday Coproduction of Security in the Prevention of Radicalisation’, *Political Studies*, 2024; Jarvis, Whiting, and Macdonald, *Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation, and Prevent: A Vernacular Approach*; Andrew Whiting, Keith Spiller, and Imran Awan, ‘Counter-Radicalisation in UK Higher Education: A Vernacular Analysis of “Vulnerability” and the Prevent Duty’, *Critical Studies on Security* 12, no. 3 (2024): 251–68.

⁶⁷¹ Vaughan-Williams, *Vernacular Border Security: Citizens’ Narratives of Europe’s Migration Crisis*.

⁶⁷² Joseph Downing, Sarah Gerwens, and Richard Dron, ‘Tweeting Terrorism: Vernacular Conceptions of Muslims and Terror in the Wake of the Manchester Bombing on Twitter’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 15, no. 2 (2022): 239–66; Akinyemi Oyawale, ‘The Impact of (Counter-)Terrorism on Public (in)Security in Nigeria: A Vernacular Analysis’, *Security Dialogue* 53, no. 5 (2022): 420–37; Lee Jarvis and Michael Lister, ‘What Would You Do? Everyday Conceptions and Constructions of Counter-Terrorism’, *Politics* 36, no. 3 (2016): 277–91; Richard Jackson and Gareth Hall, ‘Talking about Terrorism: A Study of Vernacular Discourse’, *Politics* 36, no. 3 (2016): 292–307.

⁶⁷³ Amber Huff, ‘Black Sands, Green Plans and Vernacular (in) Securities in the Contested Margins of South-Western Madagascar’, *Peacebuilding* 5, no. 2 (2017): 153–69.

⁶⁷⁴ Vaughan-Williams and Stevens, ‘Vernacular Theories of Everyday (in) Security: The Disruptive Potential of Non-Elite Knowledge’.

unveil how the concept of ‘security’ can be defined differently even on the same phenomenon, revealing security’s heterogeneous character. Such an approach is also an outcome of taking security as an ontologically empty concept. In Bodrum, for example, vernacular narrative fills this emptiness with the trauma of “they will build hotels in our forests”, driven by the structural pressures of tourism and neoliberal development policies. In contrast, in Milas, this emptiness is primarily shaped by anxieties over the detrimental effects of mining in forest areas. Thus, such an understanding on security, ontologically filled by the vernacular narratives, has the potential to provide an emancipatory framework that transcends universal, one-size-fits-all solutions.

Similarly, in this context, the vernacular narrative deepens the question of ‘whose security?’ by offering more comprehensive security referents and threat constructions. In the vernacular narrative, the disruption of ecosystems—evidenced by animals entering urban areas—raises concerns about broader issues in human–animal interactions. Moreover, the loss of people’s houses underlines not only material losses but also the psychological toll of losing memories and everyday spaces. Taken together, these factors provide a broader understanding of insecurity, one that top-down security approaches struggle to capture in its layered complexity.

Another striking concept that I must mention here is “information gaps”. As Vaughan-Williams puts it, the information gaps between official and vernacular discourses fuels public anxieties and their distrust towards policymakers and security professionals. These gaps occur when there is a lack of access to reliable authoritative information about the crisis.⁶⁷⁵ I argue that such a gap occurs in the 2021 forest fires in Turkey as well. The lack of linking the causes of forest fires to a concrete point has caused such an information gap to be created in the local communities. This uncertainty is also reflected in the 2021 fire statistics of the OGM. Therefore, I argue that the inability to determine the causes of fires in a concrete way, combined with diverse anxieties regarding their origins, has led to the

⁶⁷⁵ Vaughan-Williams, *Vernacular Border Security: Citizens’ Narratives of Europe’s Migration Crisis*, 98.

imagination of multiple threats, while also fuelling distrust towards the official elites and security professionals.

Lastly, the dissertation sheds light on how state–society relations are renegotiated through the lens of forest fires and security. While the official narrative emphasises “the success and control of the state,” the vernacular narrative is shaped around themes of the security professional’s inadequacy, delayed response, and detachment from the region’s local knowledge. Here, we clearly observe the tension between the state’s claim to provide security and local people’s tendency to assert a form of “self-determination” or assume the role of an “organic security provider.” This tension enriches the vernacular security theory’s emphasis on the interaction between elite discourse and non-elite knowledge. Empirically, this tension is reflected in the questioning of whether security ‘professionals’ are truly professionals. For instance, the fact that some firefighters or street sprinkler drivers were perceived as too overweight to fit in their vehicles became a metaphor—expressed through the image of the “fat-bellied man”—that called their merit into question. Similarly, the tendency to wait for orders before taking action during the fires intensified local frustration and distrust toward these professionals. As such, the vernacular narrative deconstructs the figure of the “security professional.”

However, the vernacular narrative, as interview quotes show, draws distinctions among security professionals. Those who are originally from the region are praised and described as having fought the fires with great dedication. In contrast, professionals deployed from outside the area are criticised for being afraid of the fires and unwilling to take risks. Thus, the vernacular narrative challenges the seemingly homogenous image of the “security professional,” revealing that they too act according to particular identities and varying motivations.

In conclusion, I argue that by presenting both official and vernacular narratives, this dissertation offers a new empirical case to the vernacular security literature, contributing to the enrichment of its thematic boundaries and conceptual debates. It is difficult to conceive environmental phenomena without their security and political dimensions. This suggests that environmental issues can generate diverse and

politicised security concerns at the level of local experience. Accordingly, this dissertation argues that environmental issues are better understood within the security-environment-politics nexus and through bottom-up analytical lenses. Moreover, the security understanding shaped by local communities—centred on themes of self-reliance and shared fate—challenges and invites a rethinking of the state’s traditional role as the sole provider of security. In this way, the dissertation aims to support ongoing efforts to analyse the security–environment–politics nexus by grounding these discussions in robust fieldwork data.

7.3.3. Epilogue

I began this dissertation out of a personal curiosity to understand the diverse security narratives surrounding the 2021 forest fires. This curiosity gradually led me away from mainstream critical security theories, which I found unsatisfying, and towards the search for an alternative approach. It was this search that introduced me to the vernacular security perspective and motivated me to conduct fieldwork grounded in its principles. I travelled to areas affected by the fires and spoke with those who had experienced them firsthand. Vernacular security, with its normative stance, requires not only recognising but also valuing how security is constructed within the vernacular - within local, lived experiences. Embracing this recognition and commitment, I felt that the most meaningful way to conclude this dissertation would be to share a poem written by an interview participant I met by chance during my fieldwork in Milas, following a long and heartfelt conversation about the fires.

*Kara Dağlar Kara*⁶⁷⁶ [Dark Are the Mountains]

Bir kuş kalktı yeşilcene daldan [A bird rose gently from a leafy green branch—]

Adı baştankara [They call it the coal tit.]

.

Uzakta bir böcek ve örümcek [Far away, a beetle and a spider]

Telaşla sallandılar ağda [Swayed in their web, startled and swift.]

.

Rüzgar, bir gün egede meltem [The wind—one day, a soft Aegean breeze,]

Veya yağmuru taşıyan lodos [Another, the south-westerly bearing rain.]

⁶⁷⁶ The translation and any errors therein are my own.

.
Ve nasıldır bilinmez aniden [And somehow, without warning,]
Alevleri sırtlayan bir dev [A giant emerged, carrying flames on its back.]

.
Kükredi yaşamı sırtlarcasına [It roared as though it bore all life—]
Bir kaplumbağa, bir arı yalvardı [A turtle, a bee, pleaded for mercy.]

.
Varız hep birlikte el ele birlikte [We are here, always, hand in hand—]
Çam, sandal, zeytin ve mersin [Pine, arbutus, olive, and myrtle.]

.
Bu topraklarda kök saldık hepimiz [We have all taken root in this soil,]
Alevlerin dağlasa da doğarız yeniden [Though scorched by fire, we are born again.]

.
Köyde başka bir telaş, acı haykırış [In the village, a different panic, cries of pain—]
Acaba ne zaman, nereden ulaşacak [When will help arrive, and from where?]

.
Dağları, ovaları ve koyuları kara boyasa da [Though the mountains, plains, and coves were blackened,]
Köyde kurtarılacak son anılar vardı hala [There were still memories left to save.]

.
Önce orman yeşildi; dağ, taş, toprak kara [Once, the forest was green; now mountain, stone, and earth
are dark,]
İs kokan gönüller kara [And hearts reek of smoke, darkened too.]

.
Varın siz böyle bilin, cancağızım [So know this, my dearest soul—]
Her şeyi ben karakalem yazdım. [I wrote it all in charcoal lines.] (Milas Merkez Male 5 Age 69)

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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16 AĞUSTOS 2023

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlişi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Zerrin TORUN

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Muhammed Onur Çöpoğlu'nun "*Çevresel Güvenliğe Dair Vernaküler Yaklaşım: Türkiye ve Orman Yangınları*" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek **0388-ODTÜİAEK-2023** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof. Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre Turgut
Üye

Doç. Dr. Şerife SEVİNÇ
Üye

Doç. Dr. Murat Perit ÇAKIR
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Süreyya ÖZCAN KABASAKAL
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TEMPLATE

A. Giriş ve Tanışma

1. Çalışmanın amacı ve araştırmacının tanıtılması
2. Mülakatın amacı ve beklenen çıktı
3. Gönüllü katılım formu ve mülakat verilerinin korunması konusu hk. bilgilendirme.

B. Orman Yangını Deneyimine İlişkin Sorular

1. Orman sizin için ve bölge halkı için ne ifade ediyor?
2. “Orman Yangını” dediğimde aklınıza neler, hangi duygular geliyor?
3. 2021 orman yangını zamanına döndüğümüzü düşünelim. Neler oldu? Neler hissetmiştiniz? Sizi en çok korkutan ne oldu?
4. Bölgenizdeki orman yangınları ne sıklıkta ve büyüklükte yaşanmaktadır?
5.
 - a. Bölgenizdeki orman yangınlarının sizce nedenleri nelerdir? Ormanları neler tehdit ediyor?
 - b. Resmi yetkililer tarafından belirlenen nedenler de bunlar mı?
6. Yangınlar üstünden 3 yıl geçti. Yaşadığınız bölgede nasıl değişimler oldu/etkiler yarattı? Yanan alanlar şimdi ne durumda?
7. Bölgenizdeki orman yangınları ile yeterli mücadele edilebildiğini düşünüyor musunuz? Yetersizlik [varsa] neden kimden hangi sebeplerden kaynaklanmaktadır?
8.
 - a. 2021 orman yangınlarında ve sonrasında bölgenizde çıkan orman yangınlarıyla ilgili sivil toplum örgütleri ve gönüllülerin faaliyetleri hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz? Bu faaliyetlere siz katıldınız mı?
 - b. Twitter’da #GlobalHelp çağrıları ile sosyal medyada çoğu kişi yardım kampanyası başlatmıştı. Bunun hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

9.
 - a. Sizce mevcut politikalar ve kanunlar ormanları korumakta yeterli mi?
 - b. Ormanı korumak kimin sorumluluğunda olmalı?
10. Eğer ormanları koruma noktasında yetkili olsaydınız, mevcut politikalardan neyi değiştirirdiniz?
11. Medyanın yangınlarla ilgili haberleri sunuş şeklinden memnun musunuz?
Medya ve televizyonlarda yangınlarla ilgili yalan haberlere rastladınız mı?
12.
 - a. Yangınlar sonrası zarar gördünüz mü? Zararlarınız karşılandı mı?
Devlet bu bölgeye ne tür yardımlar yaptı?
 - b. Yeniden ağaçlandırma faaliyetleri hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
13. Orman yangınlarından en çok zarar gören kimdir/nedir?
14.
 - a. Eskiden (20-30 yıl önce) burası nasıl bir yerdi? Bu bölgede en çok ne değişti?
 - b. Bölgenin geçirmiş olduğu değişim ormanı nasıl etkiledi?
 - c. Sizce politikacılar ve bölgenin halkı orman ve çevrenin korunması konusunda aynı şekilde mi düşünüyor?
15. 2021'deki büyük orman yangınlarından sonra sizce ormanların korunması konusunda hem politikacılar, hükümet nezdinde hem de bölge halkı nezdinde bir değişiklik/farkındalık oldu mu?

C. Toparlama ve Bitiriş

Çoğu konuyu konuştuk fakat eklemek istedikleriniz var mıydı?

Mülakatta sormamız beklediğiniz ama sormadığım, sizin gündeme getirmek istediğiniz konular var mıydı?

Beni yönlendirebileceğiniz başka insanlar var mıdır?

C. INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT LIST

Marmaris	Village	Age
Male 1	Çıldır	60
Male 2	İçmeler	41
Male 3	Turunç	52
Female 1	Siteler	56
Female 2	Armutalan	40
Female 3	Siteler	58
Köyceğiz	Village	Age
Male 1	Gelişim	55
Male 2	Ulucami	58
Male 3	Yeşilköy	42
Male 4	Ağla	35
Male 5	Pınar	37
Female 1	Yeni	50
Female 2	Gökova	34
Akseki	Village	Age
Male 1	Hocaköy	61
Male 2	Kepezbeleni	55
Male 3	Kepez	31
Male 4	Kepezbeleni	85
Female 1	Fakılar	36
Milas	Village	Age
Male 1	Gürceğiz	37
Male 2	Akçakaya	55
Male 3	Bozalan	62
Male 4	Alatepe	60
Male 5	Merkez	69
Male 6	Merkez	69
Male 7	Tuzabat	54
Male 8	Fesleğen	55
Female 1	Emek	45
Female 2	Türkevleri	52
Female 3	Tuzabat	47
Manavgat	Village	Age
Male 1	Sarılar	32
Male 2	Kalemler	37
Male 3	Kalemler	30
Male 4	Aşağıpazarcı	50
Male 5	Aşağıhisar	61
Male 6	Dikmen	44

Male 7	Dikmen	36
Male 8	Bucakşeyhler	57
Male 9	Oymapınar	70
Male 10	Yaylaalan	60
Male 11	Aydınevler	70
Male 12	Kalemler	55
Male 13	Evrenseki	58
Female 1	Örnek	42
Female 2	Kızılağaç	37
Gündoğmuş	Village	Age
Male 1	Rasihkaplan	50
Male 2	Senir	71
Male 3	Rasihkaplan	43
Male 4	Rasihkaplan	45
Alanya	Village	Age
Male 1	Üzümlü	52
Male 2	Üzümlü	55
Male 3	Kızlarpınarı	37
Male 4	Güzelbağ	51
Male 5	Bayırkozağacı	46
Male 6	Güzelbağ	28
Male 7	Güzelbağ	50
Female 1	Bayır	26
Female 2	Güzelbağ	67
Bodrum	Village	Age
Male 1	Mumcular	31
Male 2	Pınarlibelen	50
Male 3	Mumcular	44
Male 4	Pınarlibelen	33
Female 1	Pınarlibelen	35
Female 2&3	Pınarlibelen	34&30
Female 4	Kumbahçe	43

D. CURRICULUM VITAE

MUHAMMED ONUR ÇÖPOĞLU

Job

Research Assistant, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Ordu University, 2017 – continuing.

Research Assistant, Department of International Relations, Middle East Technical University, 2018-2023.

Education

PhD. in International Relations, Middle East Technical University, Department of International Relations, Ankara, Turkey (Thesis Title: “Fire Burns Where It Falls: A Vernacular Security Approach to 2021 Forest Fires in Turkey”, Supervised by Assoc.Prof.Dr. Zerrin Torun), 2025.

M.Sc. in International Relations, Karadeniz Technical University, Department of International Relations, Trabzon, Turkey (“Rusya Federasyonu’nun Örnek Vaka Analizleriyle Yeni Nesil Savaşın İncelenmesi / Examination of New Generation Warfare by Case Studies of Russian Federation”, Supervised by Prof.Dr. Gökhan Koçer), 2018.

B.Sc. in International Relations, Gazi University, Department of International Relations, Ankara, Turkey, 2014.

Publications (National, Peer-Reviewed)

Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2024). Eleştirel Güvenlik Çalışmalarının Tıkanıklığında Yeni Açılımlar: Görsel ve Yerel Güvenlik Çalışmalarının Vaatleri. *Güvenlik Stratejileri Dergisi*, 20(47), 43–61.

Tekin, E., & Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2018). Uluslararası Politik Krizlerin Küçük Ve Orta Büyüklükteki Konaklama İşletmelerine Etkisi. *Gümüşhane Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Elektronik Dergisi*, 9(22), 393–411.

Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2017). Avrupa’da Yükselen Popülist Aşırı Sağ Partiler: Özgürlükler Ve Uluslar Avrupası (ENF) Grubu Üzerine Bir İnceleme. *Uluslararası Sosyal ve Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 4(8), 1–17.

Publications (National, Book Chapters)

Torun, Z., & Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2021). Soğuk Savaş döneminde İngiltere dış politikası. In F. Çoban Oran (Ed.), İngiltere dış politikası (Britanya dış politikası) (pp. 117-145). Nobel Bilimsel.

Publications (International, Book Reviews)

Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2024). [Review of Vernacular Border Security: Citizens’ Narratives of Europe’s “Migration Crisis,” by N. Vaughan-Williams]. *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, 21(81), 95–97.

Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2024). [Review of The Rise of Populism in Central and Eastern Europe, edited by S. Kukovič & P. Just]. *Populism*, 7(1), 139–141.

Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2022). [Review of Turkish-Russian Relations: Prospects and Challenges, by N. Ketenci & G. B. Goularas]. *Insight Turkey*, 24(3), 249–251.

Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2022). [Review of Russia Today and Conspiracy Theories: People, Power and Politics on RT, by I. Yablokov & P.N. Chatterje-Doody]. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 74(10), 1–2.

Conferences/Talks

Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2025, March). “An Ember Burns Where It Falls”: A Vernacular Approach On the Security-Politics-Environment Nexus in Turkey [Conference presentation]. ISA 2025 Annual Convention, Chicago, IL, United States.

Çöpoğlu, M. O., & Vural, Ç. (2024, October). Uluslararası İlişkilerde Bir Biyogüvenlik Ve Biyoterörizm Pratiği Olarak Yabancı İstilacı Türler [Conference presentation]. 7. Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Kongresi, Trabzon, Türkiye.

Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2024, May). Çevresel Güvenlik Olgusuna Alternatif Bir Teorik Yaklaşım: Yerel Güvenlik Perspektifi [Conference presentation]. X. Uluslararası İlişkiler Çalışmaları ve Eğitimi Kongresi, Ordu, Türkiye.

Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2023, November). Türkiye’de Çevresel Güvenlik Çalışmalarına Aşağıdan Yukarı Bakmak [Conference presentation]. 6. Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Kongresi, Trabzon, Türkiye.

Çöpoğlu, M. O. (2023, June). Eleştirel Güvenlik Çalışmalarının Limitlerini Aşmak: Görsel Ve Yerel Güvenlik Açılımları [Conference presentation]. II. Ulusal Siyaset Bilimi Kongresi, Ankara, Türkiye.

Projects

Project Coordinator in “Çevresel Güvenliğe Dair Vernaküler Yaklaşım: Türkiye Ve Orman Yangınları”, TÜBİTAK 1002-A, 2024.

Teaching

Teaching Assistant for IR 356 Critical Security Studies, 2020-2021 Spring Semester

Teaching Assistant for IR 585 Advanced Critical Security Studies, 2020-2021 Spring Semester

Languages

Turkish (native); English (fluent)

Research Interests

Critical Security Studies; Nationalism; Populism; Qualitative Research

E. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Trkiye’de “ateş dştğ yeri yakar” deyiş, acı ve kederin en ağır ykn doğrudan yaşıyanların taşıdığını vurgular; bu yaklaşım, gvenliğı nesnel bir olgu yerine toplumsal inşaa srecinin rn olarak kavrayan eleştirel gvenlik alıřmaları iin zellikle anlamlıdır. 2021 yazında Cumhuriyet tarihinin en byk orman yangınları Muğla ve Antalya evresini etkileyerek yalnızca evresel tahribata yol amakla kalmamış, sekiz can kaybı, binlerce kişinin tahliyesi ve byk bir alanın ormansızlaşmasıyla birlikte ok katmanlı bir gvenlik krizine dnşmştr. Geleneksel gvenlik anlayışının atfettiğı “temel gvenlik saėlayıcı” roln stlenen devlet yetkilileri, yangınlarla mcadelede kontrol saėladıklarını iddia ederek her gn personel, ara ve ekipman sayılarını aıklarken bařarı algısı inşaa etmiş; buna karřın yangınların dştğ yerlerde yaşıyanlar bu sylemi zorlayan bir bařka gereklikle karřı karřıya kalmıştir. Yangınlar, devletin “biz stesinden geliyoruz” mesajına raėmen somut kayıplar yaşıyan yerel topluluklar iin evresel felaketten te, gvenlik ve geim kaynaklarını tehdit eden varoluşsal bir meseleye dnşmştr. Bu gerilim sosyal medyada “#HelpTurkey” ve “#StrongTrkiye” etiketleriyle simgeleşmiş, ilki uluslararası destek aėrısı yaparken ikincisi devletin kapasitesini n plana ıkaran bir z-yeterlilik vurgusu retmiştir. Yangınların evresel bir krizden siyasal bir tartışmaya evrilmesi, gvenlik tahayyllerinin devlet odaklı bakışla yerel deneyimler arasındaki kopuşu gzler nne sermiştir. Bu elişki, eleştirel gvenlik perspektifinden bakan arařtırmacı iin resmi sylem ile gndelik yařantıda filizlenen “vernakler” anlatılar arasındaki farkı inceleme gereğini doėurmuştur. alıřmanın temel amacı, yangınların gvenlik boyutunu devlet ve halk dzeyinde nasıl farklı referans nesneleri, aktrler, tehditler ve nlemler zerinden kurduėunu ortaya koymaktır; ayrıca ormanların anlamı ve ormansızlaşmanın nedenleri hakkındaki ayırksı yorumları tartışarak 2021 yangınları etrafındaki siyasal mnazarayı deėerlendirmektir. Bu erevede tezin bařlıca arařtırma sorusu, “2021 orman yangınlarında resmi ve vernakler anlatılar gvenliğı nasıl kavramsallařtırıp tartışmaktadır?” biiminde formle edilmiştir; buna baėlı ikinci soru, “Bu ayırışma

(ya da örtüşme) Türkiye’deki genel güvenlik dinamikleri ve devlet–toplum ilişkileri hakkında ne söyler?” sorusudur. Birinci soru özgün alan verilerine dayanarak resmî anlatıyı (Bölüm V) ve vernaküler anlatıyı (Bölüm VI) betimlerken; ikinci soru bu bulguların karşılaştırmalı çözümlemesine (Bölüm VII) imkân tanıyarak alt düzey perspektiflerin güvenlik tartışmalarına olası katkılarını değerlendirir. Böylece güvenliğin tekil ve devlet-merkezli bir olgu olmadığı, yerel toplulukların deneyim, kaygı ve direniş pratikleriyle müzakere edilen, itirazlara açık bir kavram olduğu gösterilir.

Yangın olgusu Akdeniz havzasının ekolojik ve iklimsel gerçekliğine sıkı sıkıya bağlıdır. Sıcak, kurak yazlarla serin, yağışlı kışların karakterize ettiği Akdeniz iklimi; Kaliforniya, Şili’nin orta kesimleri, Güney Afrika Kap bölgesi ve Avustralya’nın güneybatısı gibi alanlarda olduğu gibi Türkiye’de de yangın riskini artırır. İklim değişikliğinin “tehdit çarpanı” rolü, yaz mevsimlerinin daha uzun ve kuru geçmesiyle yangın sayısı ve şiddetinin yükselmesine zemin hazırlamaktadır. Doğal koşullar altında yangın, binlerce yıldır Akdeniz ekosistem döngüsünün parçasıdır; ancak günümüzde bilimsel çalışmalar, yangınların büyük çoğunluğunun insan faaliyetleriyle (ihmal, kasten yakma, turizm baskısı, enerji ve madencilik izinleri vb.) ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Nitekim 2021’de kaydedilen 2793 yangının yalnızca yüzde 12,6’sı yıldırımdan kaynaklanırken yüzde 87,4’ü insan etkisiyle çıkmıştır; nedenleri tespit edilemeyen vakaların oranı ise yüzde 50’ye yaklaşmaktadır. Türkiye’de orman yangınlarına dair resmî kayıtlar 1937’ye uzanmakta, izleyen yıllarda yangın sayısı istikrarlı biçimde yükselirken toplam yanık alan miktarı (2012-2021 dönemi hariç) genel olarak azalma eğilimi sergilemektedir. 1970’ten bu yana “büyük yangın” sayılan 254 olay kaydedilmiş; 1979 Marmaris-Çetibeli (13.260 ha) ve 2008 Serik-Taşağıl (15.795 ha) yangınları hafızalara kazınırken, 2021 Manavgat yangını 26.903 ha’lık hasarla rekor kırmış, aynı yıl ilk elli yılın en büyük yirmi yangınından on birine sahne olunmuştur. Bölgesel dağılım, en ağır kayıpların Muğla ve Antalya’da yoğunlaştığını ortaya koyar. Yangın nedenleri bağlamında turizm ve ormana yönelik yatırımların yayılması, orman içi insan hareketliliğini artırarak hem çıkış ihtimalini hem de söndürme zorluklarını büyötmektedir. Kasıtlı çıkarılan yangınların oranı yüzde 4 civarında seyretse de, bu küçük pay dahi kamuoyunda terör söylemleriyle yüksek hassasiyet yaratmaktadır;

ancak Orman Genel Müdürlüğü verileri, terör bağlantılı vakaların yok denecek kadar az olduğunu göstererek güvenlik tartışmalarının askeri/militarize çerçeveye sıkıştırılamayacağını işaret eder. Yangın yönetiminden sorumlu 182 yıllık Orman Genel Müdürlüğü (OGM), hem veri güvenilirliği hem de kurumsal kapasite eksikliği nedeniyle eleştirilere maruz kalmaktadır. Literatürde 2008 Antalya yangını örneğinde olduğu gibi yanan alanın resmî kayıtlarda olduğundan düşük gösterildiği iddiaları, kamu baskısı ve “başarısızlık” korkusunun rakam manipölasyonuna yol açtığını öne sürer. Ayrıca 2019’da düzenlenen III. Tarım ve Orman Şûrası raporları, personel yaş ortalamasının yükselmesi, orman işçi sayısının azalması ve rotasyonlar nedeniyle kurumsal yangın hafızasının zayıflaması gibi yapısal sorunları vurgulamıştır. Bu zafiyetler, OGM’yi “güvenliğin profesyonel sağlayıcısı” rolünü sorgulatan bir odak haline getirirken, alternatif güvenlik üretim pratiklerine duyulan ilgiyi artırmaktadır.

Uluslararası literatürde yangın yönetimi yaklaşımı, baskın “yangını tamamen bastır” paradigmasından esnek, katılımcı ve dayanıklılık temelli yönetim çizgisine doğru evrilmektedir. ABD’de agresif bastırma politikalarının “yangın paradoksu”na yol açarak yakıt birikimini ve dolayısıyla mega yangın riskini artırdığı gösterilmiş; Avustralya ve Kanada gibi ülkelerde yerli/kültürel yakma uygulamalarının ekolojik işlevi ve toplumsal meşruiyeti tartışılmıştır. Yerel toplulukların karar süreçlerine dahil edilmesi, uyarlanabilir arazi kullanımı ve kontrollü yakma gibi stratejiler, “ateşle birlikte yaşama”yı hedefleyen dönüşümcü dayanıklılık yaklaşımlarının öne çıkan unsurlarıdır. Türkiye bağlamındaki çalışmalar ise daha çok yangın–terör ilişkisine odaklanarak yangını siyasallaştırırken, yangından doğrudan etkilenen köylülerin, orman işçilerinin ve yerel halkın güvenlik kaygılarını ihmal etmektedir. Bu boşluk, vernaküler güvenlik perspektifinin gerekliliğini pekiştirmektedir. Tez, güvenliği toplumsal inşa olarak gören sosyal inşacı metateorik konumlanmadan hareketle, “yüksek siyaset”in ötesine geçerek alt düzey deneyim ve söylemleri görünür kılmayı amaçlar. Vernaküler güvenlik yaklaşımının sunduğu kavramsal imkânlar, heterojen güvenlik tahayyüllerini bağlam içine yerleştirerek tekil devlet bakışının sınırlarını tartışmaya açar. Türkiye gibi neredeyse her yıl yangınla karşılaşan bir Akdeniz ülkesi için bu alt düzey bakış, çevresel güvenlik politikasında üstten dayatılan çözümlerle sınırlı kalmanın ötesine geçebilecek bir potansiyel barındırır. Tez yedi bölümden oluşur. Giriş bölümü (Bölüm I) problemi tanımlayıp

araştırma sorularını sunar. Bölüm II, güvenlik–çevre–siyaset üçgenini kuramsal temelleriyle inşa ederek eleştirel güvenlik çalışmaları içinde “aşağıdan yukarıya” bakışın gerekliliğini, vernaküler güvenlik kuramını ve bu kuramın yeni bir vakada sınanmasının katkılarını tartışır. Bölüm III kavramsal çerçeveyi genişleterek orman yangınlarını güvenlikle ilişkilendiren Uluslararası İlişkiler literatürünü ele alır; Türkiye’de çevre–güvenlik–siyaset bağlamını, ormansızlaşma dinamiklerini ve ormancılık rejiminin tarihsel dönüşümünü irdeler. Bölüm IV, saha araştırması yoluyla toplanan resmî ve vernaküler veri setlerinin toplanış, işleniş ve analiz yöntemlerini ayrıntılı biçimde açıklar. Bölüm V hükûmet cephesinin, Bölüm VI yerel toplulukların yangınları nasıl kavramsallaştırdığını sunarak güvenlik, çevre ve siyaset eksenlerindeki anlatılarını inceler. Bölüm VII, bu iki anlatıyı karşılaştırarak Türkiye’de güvenlik tartışmalarına vernaküler bakışın sunabileceği katkıları, araştırmanın sınırlılıklarını ve gelecekteki çalışma önerilerini ortaya koyar. Böylelikle tez, 2021 orman yangınlarını çok boyutlu güvenlik meselesi olarak ele alırken, yerel deneyimlerin devlet-merkezli söylemlere meydan okuduğu koşullarda güvenliğin nasıl yeniden tanımlandığını gösterecektir.

Bölüm II, tezin genel teorik çerçevesini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu kuramsal bölüm, çevresel sorunların yalnızca ekolojik değil aynı zamanda siyasal ve güvenlikle iç içe geçmiş meseleler olarak ele alınması gerektiği varsayımından hareketle, “çevre–güvenlik–siyaset” üçlü bileşkesini kavramsal zemine oturtmaktadır. Bölümün girişinde, çevre ile güvenlik tartışmalarının kesişim noktalarını aydınlatacak bir kuramsal çerçeve geliştirilmesinin, tezin ampirik analizine temel oluşturacağı vurgulanır. Ardından, çevrenin güvenlik tartışmalarına dâhil edilme süreci, bu alanın “temelinden tartışmalı” niteliği ve kavramın farklı kuramsal geleneklerce nasıl değişik biçimlerde tanımlandığı incelenir. Güvenliğin “esaslı biçimde tartışmalı” bir kavram olması gibi çevresel güvenliğin de neyi, kimi ve hangi tehdidi konu edindiği bağlamında yekpare bir tanıma indirgenemeyeceği savunulur; bazı yazarların çevresel güvenliği “nihai güvenlik” olarak olumlamasına karşın, Daniel Deudney gibi isimlerin çevresel sorunların askerileştirilmesi riskine dikkat çektikleri belirtilir. Metin daha sonra çevresel güvenlik gündeminin bilgi ve siyaset boyutlarını ayırdeden ikili bir çerçeve sunar. Kate O’Neill’in vurguladığı üzere, çevresel sorunları “tehlikeli” kılan veya acil gündem hâline getiren yalnızca bilimsel veriler

değil, bu verilerin siyasal alana nasıl taşındığıdır. Daniel Sarewitz'in "bilimin kaçınılmaz siyasileşmesi" saptaması ve Julian Allison'ın bilimsel gerçeklerin siyasî çıkarlara alet edilebileceği uyarısı, uzman bilgisi ile siyasal müzakere arasındaki geçirgenliği ortaya koyar. Buzan, Wæver ve De Wilde'in geliştirdiği "Janus yüzlü" model tam da bu noktada devreye girer: Bir tarafta UNEP veya IPCC gibi küresel epistemik toplulukların oluşturduğu bilimsel ajanda, diğer tarafta hükümetler, medya ve STK'ların şekillendirdiği siyasal ajanda yer alır. Bilimsel ajandanın ürettiği veriler, siyasal ajandanın ne ölçüde "yüksek siyaset"e dönüştüğü sorusunu belirler; ancak asıl meşruiyet testi, yerel düzeydeki algı ve taleplerle verilir. Bu nedenle yazar, Kopenhag Okulu'nun biçimsel "güvenikleştirme" şemasından ziyade, Nils Bubandt'ın geliştirdiği vernaküler güvenlik yaklaşımına yönelir ve yerelin önemini teorik olarak temellendirir. Bölüm, çevresel gündemin Buzan ve arkadaşlarının sınıflandırdığı altı başlık—ekosistem bozulmaları, enerji sorunları, nüfus baskıları, gıda güvenliği, ekonomik endişeler ve çatışma kaynaklı çevre tahribatı—içinden özellikle ekosistem bozulmasına odaklanır; tezin ilerleyen kısımlarında Türkiye'de 2021 orman yangınları üzerinden "orman tahribatı" meselesi ayrıntılandırılacaktır. Çevre-güvenlik ilişkisinin tarihsel seyrine geçildiğinde, soğuk savaş sonrası dönemin "yeni fırsat penceresi" yarattığı, Brundtland Raporu, 1992 Rio Zirvesi ve 1972 Stockholm Konferansı gibi kilometre taşlarının disiplinin diline çevreyi dâhil ettiği belirtilir. Carsten Ronnfeldt'in üç kuşaklı tasnifi bu evrimi sistematikleştirir: Birinci kuşak, çevreyle güvenlik arasındaki kavramsal bağı kurmaya çalışan realist odaklı tartışmaları; ikinci kuşak, Toronto ve Zürih ekollerinin ampirik çatışma çalışmalarıyla nedensellik arayışını; üçüncü kuşak ise çevresel güvenliğin "genişleyip derinleşerek" insan güvenliği ve toplumsal kırılganlık boyutuna geçişini temsil eder. Metin, bu tarihsel panoramadan sonra çevreyi farklı güvenlik kuramları merceğinden nasıl okunabileceğini ele alır. Pozitivist kökleri ağır basan realizm ve liberalizm çevre sorununu egemenlik boşluğu ve "ortak malların trajedisi" denkleminde ulusal güvenlik sorusu olarak görürken, eleştirel kuram geleneği—Frankfurt Okulu'ndan post-yapısalcılığa dek—devleti mercekten indirip kırılgan kesimlerin güvenliğine odaklanır. Feminist bakış açısı, çevresel yönetişimin eril doğasını, insan güvenliği yaklaşımı bireyi referans birimi olarak, Kopenhag Okulu ise çevre felaketlerini "varoluşsal tehdit" diline tercüme eden söylemsel mekanizmaları irdeler. Posthüman ve yeni-materyalist yaklaşımlar, Antroposen

tartışmasını merkeze alarak insan-merkezci ontolojiyi sarsar. Bilimsel realizm ise görünür olguların ardındaki derin nedensel mekanizmalara dikkat çeker; doğa ve toplum ayrımının aşıldığını savunarak daha katmanlı bir ontoloji önerir. Bölümün ikinci büyük eksen, güvenliğin siyasal karakterini tartışır. Simon Dalby'nin “güvenliğin farklı yeniden formülasyonları, kavramın kendisini de sarsar” saptaması üzerinden, güvenlik söylemlerinin siyasal toplulukları kurduğu ya da dışladığı vurgulanır. Geleneksel yaklaşımların “devlet–bilim–statüko–strateji” dörtlüsüne dayalı, genellikle militarist ve elitist çerçevesine karşılık, Kopenhag Okulu'nun “gözle, başkaları nasıl güvenlik kılıyor” mottosu, Welsh Okulu'nun “gözlemek aynı zamanda savunmaktır” diyen özgürleştirici vizyonu ve PARIS Okulu'nun hükümsellik eleştirisi karşılaştırılır. Bilgin'in belirttiği gibi, Welsh Okulu güvenlik dışılaştırmaya kıyasla “güvenliği siyasallaştırmayı” tercih eder; ancak bu okulun evrenselci-liberal idealizmi, postkolonyal ve feminist eleştirilerce elitizmle suçlanır. Bu tartışmanın ardından, “aşağıdan yukarı” bakış ihtiyacı ortaya konur. Columba Peoples ve Vaughan-Williams'ın alan haritalarının yarattığı kısır döngüye dikkat çeken João Nunes ile Simon Tulumello'nun “agonistik güvenlik” önerileri, antagonistik ikilemleri geride bırakacak çoğulcu ve ilişkisel bir yaklaşıma çağrı yapar. Bu çerçevede, eleştirel literatürün “olumsuz (yıkıcı)–olumlu (yeniden kurucu)” ikiliğine sıkıştığı; Welsh Okulu'nun eleştirel vizyonuna rağmen modernist evrenselcilikten ve teorik elitizmden kurtulamadığı savunulur. Vernaküler güvenlik tam da bu noktada devreye girer: Nils Bubandt'ın kavramı “boş bir kap” olarak tanımlaması, güvenliğin her yerde farklı adlandırıldığını ve arzulanabileceğini öne sürer. Böylece araştırmacının “tabula rasa” bir zihinle sahaya inmesi, yerel söylemlerin kendi anlam evrenini bozmadan kayda geçirmesi amaçlanır. Jarvis ve Vaughan-Williams'ın dikkat çektiği üzere, vernaküler yaklaşım “tekil halk” yerine çoğul kamulara, niceliksel kamuoyu ölçümleri yerine derin niteliksel analizlere, sessizleştirilmiş bilgileri açığa çıkarmaya ve araştırmacı öznelliğinin farkında olmaya davet eder. Bölümün sonuç kısmı, çevre–güvenlik ile güvenlik–siyaset bağlantılarının literatürde köklü olsa da, çevre–siyaset ekseninin hâlâ yeni vakalar ve yöntemlerle zenginleştirilmeye muhtaç olduğunu vurgular. Bu nedenle, çevresel sorunların siyasal bağlamda tetkikinin kuramsal ve yöntemsel olarak yerel düzeye inmekle mümkün olduğu savunulur. Welsh Okulu'nun potansiyeline rağmen evrenselci ve elitist handikapları, vernaküler güvenliğin tercih edilmesini

gerekelendirir. Böylelikle bölüm, tezin ilerleyen sayfalarında Türkiye’deki orman yangınlarını ve ormansızlaşma meselesini bağlam içinde çözümleyecek ampirik kısım için gerekli kuramsal temel taşlarını döşer; çevrenin güvenlikleştirilmesinin tarihsel, siyasal ve yerel anlamlarını kavramaya imkân tanıyacak çoğulcu bir bakış sunar.

Bölüm III, tartışmayı kavramsal alana çekmektedir. Güvenlik kavramının “esaslı biçimde tartışmalı” oluşu, bu bölümün merkezi savını temellendirir: çevresel sorunları anlamak için yalnızca ekolojik değil, aynı zamanda siyasal ve güvenlik odaklı boyutlarını da göz önünde bulundurmak gerekir. Türkiye’de çevre tartışmaları, devletin kalkınmacı modernleşme arzusuyla gerilim içindedir; politik iktisat literatürü bu gerilimi “gelişme–çevre” çatışması olarak tanımlar. Güvenlik çalışmaları bağlamında bakıldığında bu çatışma, hangi referans nesnesinin öncelik kazanacağına dair bir mücadeleye işaret eder. Ancak çevresel güvenlik literatürünün büyük bölümü devleti esas aldığı için söz konusu gerilimin yerel boyutlarını görünmez kılar; Türkiye’de “yumuşak güvenlik” başlıkları arasında dahi çevresel riskler, enerji ve ekonomik güvenliğin arkasında yer alır. Dolayısıyla çevresel güvenliğin, özellikle eleştirel ve aşağıdan yukarı araştırmalara konu edilmesi son yıllarda yeni yeni ivme kazanmıştır. Cumhuriyetin kuruluşundan itibaren kalkınmacı idealler, 1930’ların korumacı/etatis politikalarından 1980’lerin neoliberal açılımına kadar farklı biçimlerde sürdürülmüş, “çağdaş uygarlık” hedefi zamanla “neoliberal kalkınmacı fetişizme” dönüşmüştür. Turgut Özal döneminde ivme kazanan bu paradigma, doğal kaynak sömürsünü ve arazi rantını meşrulaştırarak çevresel güvenliğini ikincil plana iter. Türkiye’nin iklim müzakerelerindeki “özel koşul” ısrarı, ekonomik büyüme ve sera gazı azaltım taahhütleri arasındaki ikilemi yansıtır. AKP döneminde inşaat, enerji ve konut temelli “üç ayaklı neoliberalizm” stratejisi bu ikilemi daha da derinleştirerek çevreyi koruma ile milli gelir artırma hedeflerini doğrudan karşı karşıya getirir. Bu çerçevede çevre dostu politikaların çoğu kez kalkınma söylemiyle geri plana atılması, güvenlik tartışmalarında çevresel boyutun geri planda kalmasına yol açar; aynı durum Çin ve Hindistan gibi yükselen ekonomilerde de gözlenir. Türkiye’de çevre siyaseti ve kurumsallaşması geç başlamış, 1972 Stockholm Konferansı sonrasında kalkınma planlarında simgesel olarak yer bulsa da esas ivme 1980’lerin nükleer karşıtı hareketleriyle ortaya

çıkmiştir. 1983'te çıkan Çevre Kanunu ile 1991'deki Çevre Bakanlığı kuruluşu, kurumsal altyapıyı güçlendirse de 1990'lardan itibaren neoliberal yeniden yapılanma, özellikle ÇED düzenlemelerini işlevsizleştirerek ormanlar ve doğal alanlar üzerindeki koruma mekanizmalarını zayıflatmıştır. 2000'lerde AB uyum süreci ve BM İklim Çerçeve Sözleşmesi gibi uluslararası dinamikler kısmi ilerlemeler sağlasa da “ekonomik büyüme millî beka meselesidir” söylemi, çevre mevzuatında ardı ardına esneklikler yaratmıştır. Örneğin ÇED usullerinin on dört kez değişmesi ve “acil kamulaştırma” kararlarının enerji projeleri için rutin hâle gelmesi, doğa koruma alanlarının fiilen yatırıma açılması sonucunu doğurmuştur. Ormancılıktaki politik sürece bakıldığında, geç Osmanlı'da cibal-i mübâha statüsünün yürürlükte kaldığı, 1870 tarihli Orman Nizamnamesi'nin ise gelir kaygısıyla orman işletmeciliğini yabancı ve yerli sermayeye açtığı görülür. Cumhuriyet'te 1937 tarihli 3116 sayılı Orman Kanunu ve Orman Umum Müfrezesi ormanları “devlet koruması” altına alarak askerileştirmiş, ancak 1950 sonrası çok partili dönemde genel aflar ve 6831 sayılı Kanun'daki değişikliklerle orman sınırları daraltılmış, 1970'teki 1255 sayılı kanun anayasal korumayı aşındırmıştır. En kritik kırılma ise 2/B düzenlemeleridir: orman niteliğini yitirdiği iddiasıyla Hazine'ye devredilen araziler, 1980'lerden itibaren özelleştirme ve inşaat sektörüne kaynak yaratma aracı olmuş, 2012 ve 2018 değişiklikleriyle Cumhurbaşkanlığı kararıyla orman dışına çıkarma yetkisi genişletilmiştir. Böylece ormanlar, siyasal iktidarın hegemonya üretiminde rant dağıtım mekanizmasına dönüştürülmüştür. Neoliberal ekstraktivist politikaların hız kazandığı AKP döneminde, “millet ormancılığı” sloganlarıyla tabanda rıza üretilirken, madencilik için verilen ruhsatlar ve büyük altyapı projeleri ormansızlaşmayı tetiklemiştir. Eşzamanlı olarak FAO raporlarında Türkiye'nin orman varlığını artırdığı iddia edilse de bu veriler OGM'nin geniş orman tanımına ve kadaastro eksikliklerine dayandığı için eleştirilmiştir. Yerel hareketler Bergama altın madeni direnişiyle sembolleşmiş; hidroelektrik santral projeleri, nükleer karşıtı protestolar ve 2020'lerde Kazdağları'ndaki madencilik karşıtı yürüyüşler çevre bilincini toplumsallaştırmıştır. Fakat devlet-toplum çatışmasında köylülerin çoğu zaman “orman düşmanı” olarak damgalanması, yerel bilgilerin görmezden gelinmesi ve “orman suçlarına af” siyaseti, güvenliği devlete ait bir ayrıcalık olarak yeniden üretir. Bu arka planda 2021 yazındaki büyük orman yangınları, “yangın kimin güvenliğini tehdit ediyor?” sorusunu yakıcı biçimde gündeme getirmiştir. Yangınlar,

bir yandan iklim krizi diskuruyla küresel bir felaket olarak çerçevelenirken, diğer yandan “kundak terörizmi” söylemiyle ulusal beka meselesine dönüştürülmüştür. Resmî söylem, devletin teknik kapasitesini ve “yeşil vatan” savunusunu öne çıkarırken; yerel halk, geçim kaynaklarının, yaşam alanlarının ve hafızalarının kaybına odaklanmış, devleti ihmalkâr ya da rant odaklı politikalarla suçlamıştır. Bu ikili anlatı, çevresel krizin aynı zamanda derin bir güvenlik-siyaset meselesi olduğunu gösterir. Dolayısıyla Türkiye’de çevresel güvenliğin “aşağıdan” okunması, hem kalkınmacı devlet anlatısını sorgulamak hem de köylülerin, yöre halkının ve ekolojik hareketlerin güvenlik tahayyüllerini görünür kılmak açısından zorunludur. Vernaküler güvenlik yaklaşımı, güvenliği bağlamsal ve çoğul bir kavram olarak ele alarak elitist paradigmaları aşmayı mümkün kılar; “orman köylüsü”nü pasif suçlu değil, güvenlik üreticisi özne olarak tanımlamaya imkân verir. Bu bakış, deforestation–yangın döngüsünün teknik nedenlerinden çok, politik “motorunu”—neoliberal rant rejimini, hukuksal esnetmeleri ve hegemonya pratiklerini—merkeze alır. Sonuç olarak, çevre-güvenlik-siyaset üçgeni Türkiye’de kalkınmacı kırımlar, hukuksal dönüşümler ve neoliberal sermaye birikimiyle şekillenen çok katmanlı bir gerilim alanıdır. Mevcut literatür devlet-sermaye eksenine yoğunlaşırken, yerel toplulukların ontolojik ve gündelik güvenlik kaygılarına sınırlı yer verir. 2021 yangınları örneği, bu boşluğun aciliyetini gözler önüne sermiştir İklim krizi ve orman politikaları yalnızca ekolojik bir mesele değil, halkın varlığını, aidiyetini ve siyasi temsilini doğrudan etkileyen bir güvenlik problemidir. Bu bağlamda vernaküler güvenlik çerçevesi, Türkiye’de çevresel adalet mücadelesini ve devlet–toplum ilişkilerini yeniden düşünmek için vazgeçilmez bir analitik zemin sunar.

Bölüm IV, çalışmanın genel araştırma dizaynını detaylı bir şekilde açıklamaktadır. Buna göre öncelikle araştırmanın ontolojik ve epistemolojik arka planı tartışıldıktan sonra, bu arka plana uyumlu bir metodolojik tercihin izleri aranmaktadır. Nitel araştırma dizaynının çalışmanın hem araştırma sorusu hem de ontolojik ve epistemolojik duruşuyla uyumlu olduğu iddia edilmektedir. Araştırma metodu kısmı ise, çalışmanın temel iddiası olan iki anlatının Analiz edilmesi için iki farklı data setinin nasıl elde edildiğini detaylı bir şekilde açıkladığı kısımdır. Resmi anlatının analizi için resmi dökümanlar 4 elite odaklanarak toplanmıştır. Diğer taraftan yerel anlatının analizi için saha araştırması yapılmış ve yüzyüze yarı yapılandırılmış

mülakatlar ile veri toplanmıştır. Saha araştırmasının detayları bu kısımda açıklandıktan sonra bu iki veri setinin hangi yöntemle Analiz edileceği açıklanmıştır. Nitel içerik analizi yöntemi MAXQDA programı yardımıyla veri analizi için kullanılmıştır. Bu kısım son olarak, güvenilirlik ve konumsallık (positionality) gibi konuların açık bir şekilde tartışıldığı kısımları içermektedir. Burada aynı zamanda çalışmanın sınırlılıkları da tartışılmıştır. Özellikle saha araştırmasının daraltılması, doktora eğitimi süresinin kısıtlılığı, yurtdışı saha araştırması için fon bulma zorlukları çalışmanın temel sınırlılıkları olarak bahsedilmiştir.

Bölüm V, tezin iki ampirik alanının ilki olan resmi anlatının analiz edildiği ve bulguların paylaşıldığı kısımdır. Burada öncelikle “elitlerden” neyin ve hangi grupların kastedildiği açıklanmıştır. Resmî anlatının temel söylem hatları, 2021 yangınları sırasında güvenliğin yegâne teminatı olarak devleti ve onun ormancılık teşkilatını –özellikle Orman Genel Müdürlüğü (OGM) personelini– konumlandırır. Bu çerçevede OGM, modern yangın gözetleme kulelerinden termal kameralarla donatılmış insansız hava araçlarına, geniş hava filosundan dijital harita tabanlı müdahale sistemlerine kadar “yüksek teknoloji” ile donatılmış bir kurumsal aktör olarak sunulur. Anlatı, uluslararası karşılaştırmalara başvurarak “benzer ölçekli Akdeniz ülkeleri içinde en hızlı müdahale süresi” gibi istatistiklerle kurumsal kapasiteyi yüceltir; bu sayede yangınla mücadele, devletin teknik kudretinin bir vitrini hâline getirilir. Devlet görevlileri –orman mühendisleri, itfaiye erleri, jandarma birlikleri, havadan müdahale ekipleri– “ateşe karşı savaşan kahramanlar” retoriğiyle sembolleştirilir; topluma düşen rol ise “güvenlik tüketicisi” olarak konumlanmaktadır. Böylece geleneksel güvenlik ikiliği, yani “sağlayıcı” ve “yararlanıcı” ayrımı yeniden üretilir; yerel halk ve sivil toplum aktörleri, sürecin karar verici ve uygulayıcı aşamalarına dâhil edilmez. Bu dil, ormanları “yeşil vatan” metaforunun içine yerleştirir. Vatan söylemi yangınla mücadeleyi askerîleştirerek “orman savunması”nı sınır güvenliğiyle eş tutar. Böylelikle çevresel afet, neredeyse teritoryal bir istilaya karşı verilen “milli mücadele”ye tercüme edilir. Milli birlik ve beraberlik çağrıları, politik eleştiriyi kolayca “iç tehdit” kategorisine kaydırılabilecek bir zemin yaratır; çünkü vatan metaforunun mantığı, karşı çıkan sesleri potansiyel “vatana zarar veren” unsurlar olarak kodlamaya elverişlidir. Politik anlatının içinde üç aşamalı bir güvenlikleştirme hamlesi belirgindir. İlk aşama, yangını iklim krizi

veya “kundak terörizmi” olasılığı üzerinden “varoluşsal tehdit” kategorisine sokar. İkinci aşama, bu tehdidi bertaraf edebilecek yegâne otorite olarak merkezi devleti öne çıkarır; OGM ve ilgili bakanlık, “kontrol tamamen bizde” mesajını düzenli basın brifingleriyle pekiştirir. Üçüncü aşama ise tehdidi gerek uluslararası yardım çağrıları gerek muhalif yerel yönetimler şeklinde “ötekileştirilmiş aktörlere” yönlendirerek iktidarın meşruluğunu tahkim eder. Bu çerçevede “ülkeyi zayıf göstermek isteyen dış odaklar” ile “devleti aciz gösteren iç odaklar” arasında çizilen hiyerarşik ayırım, muhalefetin söylemsel alanda “millî birliğe kasteden” unsur gibi resmedilmesine imkân tanır. Buna karşın tehdidin faili ya da yangınların “asıl müsebbibi” konusunda resmî anlatı yekpare bir açıklama sunmaktan uzaktır. İklim değişikliği “ana tetikleyici” olarak kabul edilse de, çakışan alt anlatılar –kundak terörizmi vurguları, küresel ısınma kaynaklı kuraklık, sabotaj ihtimalleri– net bir failden ziyade muğlak bir risk repertuarı üretir. Bu muğlaklık, Vaughan-Williams’ın işaret ettiği “bilgi boşlukları”nı doğurur; belirsiz kalan alanlar toplumsal korku ve söylentilere açık hâle gelir. Özellikle “orman köylülerinin elinden toprak alınıp otele verilecek” endişesi, yerel düzeyde yankı bulan ve resmî söylemle çelişen bir kaygı dizgesinin yükselmesine yol açar. Bilgi boşluğu derinleştikçe, “yeşil vatan”ı koruma iddiasıyla “rant projeleri” arasında ikili bir gerilim doğar; devlet görevlileri ile köylülerin karşılıklı güvensizliği pekişir. Resmî anlatı, referans nesnesi olarak öncelikle “gezegen/ekoloji” kategorisini vurgular; iklim değişikliği, yangınların ve dolayısıyla ormansızlaşmanın başlıca itici gücü olarak ilan edilir. Ancak bu çerçeve, Türkiye’nin iklim krizindeki payı veya sera gazı azaltım hedefleri üzerine sahici bir özeleştiriyeye kapı aralamaz. Sorumluluk, tarihsel emisyon birikimine sahip “gelişmiş ülkelere” yöneltilir; Türkiye ise mağduriyet ve “özel koşul” retoriğiyle kendini ikincil konuma yerleştirir. Bu pozisyon, rekor sayıda fidan dikimi veya “dünyada en çok ağaçlandırma yapan ilk üç ülkeden biri olma” gibi nicel göstergelerle tahkim edilir; ağaç sayısına dayalı başarı söylemi, karbon yoğun ekonomik politikalara dair eleştirileri perdelemeye yarar. Hükûmetin “yeşil dönüşüm” başlığı altında lanse ettiği konut projeleri, millet bahçeleri ve imar düzenlemeleri ise eleştirel akademisyenlerce “kentsel toprak yeniden dağıtımı” ya da “ideolojik-mekânsal tahkimat” stratejileri olarak okunur. Nitekim TOKİ aracılığıyla yürütülen yangın sonrası “tek tip köy evi” inşaatları, resmî söylemde “afet mağdurlarına şefkat eli” iken, eleştirel literatürde köylülerin mekânsal kültürünü dönüştüren, mülkiyet yapısını yeniden düzenleyen ve

yerel toplumun özneleşme kapasitesini sınırlayan araçlar olarak değerlendirilir. Böylece iktidar, çevre dostu söylemlerle meşruiyet üretirken; muhalif çevreler, bu projelerin ardındaki politik-iktisadî hedefleri teşhir etmeye çalışır. Resmî anlatının başarısını perçinleme stratejilerinden biri de kahramanlaştırma ile şeffaflığı eşzamanlı yürütmektir: günlük brifinglerde personel ve araç sayıları detaylı verilirken, yangınların çıkış sebebi veya söndürme stratejisindeki aksaklıklar kamuoyuna sınırlı biçimde açıklanır. Bu kısmi açıklık, teknik yeterlilik algısını güçlendirir; ancak sebep-sonuç zincirindeki boşluklar, sahada deneyimlenen travmalarla birleşince yerel halk nezdinde güvensizlik doğurur. Özellikle “orman köylüsü” ile orman teşkilatı arasındaki tarihsel gerilim, “köylü ateşi büyümeden fark ederdi” türünden söylentilere zemin hazırlar. Sonuç olarak resmî anlatı, yangınları egemenlik ve beka eksenine oturarak devleti mutlak güvenlik sağlayıcı, toplumu ise güvenlik tüketicisi statüsüne yerleştirir; “yeşil vatan” metaforu, hem çevre koruma söylemine millî-askerî bir katman ekler hem de itiraz alanlarını daraltır. Ancak tehdidin faili konusundaki belirsizlik ve bilgi boşlukları, yerelde travmatik senaryoları ve rant şüphelerini besler. Özetle resmî anlatı, teknik başarı ve kahramanlıkla meşruiyet inşa ederken, muğlak tehdit tanımları ve “her eleştiri devleti zaafa uğratar” ön kabulü aracılığıyla muhalif sesleri marjinalleştirir; fakat tam da bu strateji, sahadaki belirsizlikleri derinleştirerek alternatif güvenlik tahayyüllerinin – özellikle yerel olanların– filizlenmesine imkân tanır.

Bölüm VI ise odağı yerel anlatıya çevirmektedir. Bu kısım ilk olarak tezin araştırması kapsamında “yerel”den kimlerin kastedildiğine dair kısa bir değerlendirme yaparak başlamakta; bu anlatıda kimlerin sesine odaklanıldığını açıklamaktadır. Ardından bir önceki kısımda uygulanan kod sisteminin aynısının yerel anlatıya da uygulandığı ifade edilmektedir. Bu kısımda sunulan anlatının resmi anlatıdan oldukça farklı bir görüntü sunduğu ve hatta resmi anlatıya bir meydan okuma sunduğu tespit edilmiştir. Yerel anlatının temel bulguları, orman köylülerini “organik güvenlik sağlayıcılar” olarak konumlandırarak, bu toplulukların orman ekosistemiyle kurdukları çok katmanlı ve karşılıklı bağımlılık içeren ilişkiyi görünür kılar. Köylülerin ormanla kurduğu bağ, yalnızca kültürel aidiyet veya doğaya duyulan romantik yakınlıkla sınırlı değildir; barınma, ısınma, beslenme ve hane gelirinin önemli bölümünü doğrudan orman kaynaklarından sağlayan ekonomik bir

yaşam damarına da işaret eder. Dolayısıyla orman, köylü nüfus için hem “ev” hem “geçim partneri” niteliği taşır. Bu çift yönlü bağımlılık, köylülerin tarihsel olarak sahiplendiği cibal-i mübâha zihniyetinin güncel izdüşümüdür: orman, devlet tekelinden ziyade yerelin gündelik pratikleriyle korunan ve kullanılan müşterek bir varlık olarak görülür. Böylece vernaküler söylem, devletin güvenlik sağlayıcı, vatandaşın ise pasif güvenlik tüketicisi olduğu geleneksel bölünmeyi ters yüz eder; güvenliğin korunmasında yerel özneleri karar verici ve aktör konumuna yükseltir. Bu yaklaşımın meşruiyet temeli, yerel bilgi formlarıyla teknik-bürokratik uzmanlık arasında kurduğu hiyerarşiyle güçlendirilir. Avcıların rüzgâr yönünü, çobanların ara patikaları, arıcıların bitki dönemlerini bilmesinin yangınla mücadelede hayati olduğu vurgulanarak “bölgeye yabancı” memur kadrosunun yeterliliği sorgulanır. OGM personelinin haritalara dayalı planlamasına karşı, ormanın nabzını tuttuğunu iddia eden köylü deneyiminin üstünlüğü öne çıkar. Bu vurgu, ormancılık teşkilatına duyulan kuşkuyu derinleştirir; güvenlik profesyonelleri “yöreyi tanımamak”, “talimat gelmeden harekete geçmemek” ve hatta “göbekli, ağırkanlı” imgeleriyle niteliksizleştirilir. Yerel anlatı, güvenlik araç ve yöntemlerini tarif ederken merkezi otoriteye ait ekipman listelerinden ziyade topluluk temelli, kimi zaman “ilkel” sayılabilecek pratikleri öne çıkarır. Yangın sezonunda yol kenarlarına su bidonları yerleştirme, silah sesiyle çevre köylere alarm verme, WhatsApp gruplarıyla “çok noktadan gözetim”, köylülerin kendi aralarında nöbetleşe gözetim düzenlemesi gibi alt düzey denetim mekanizmaları, devletin baskın müdahale paradigmasına alternatif mikro güvenlik ağları yaratır. Böylece köylüler, hem bilgi üreten hem de güvenliği aktif olarak icra eden “organik aktörler” olarak tanımlanır. Ormanla kurulan derin ilişkinin karmaşıklığı, eşlenik bir güvensizlik haritası üretir. Yerel anlatı, resmi raporlardaki “hasar rakamları”nı yüzeysel bulur; onun yerine üç katmanlı bir kırılganlık tasviri sunar: ekosistemik, ekonomik ve ontolojik. Ekosistemik düzey, hayvan popülasyonlarının göçe zorlanmasından biyolojik çeşitliliğin kaybına; ekonomik düzey, bal üreticilerinin geçim kaynağının yok olmasından yanan zeytinliklerin gelir kaybına; ontolojik düzey ise nesiller boyu muhafaza edilen evlerin, hatıraların, mezarlıkların kül olmasına uzanır. Böylece yangın, yalnızca “doğa tahribatı” değil, varlığın ve kimliğin bütüncül sarsıntısı şeklinde resmedilir. Tehdit kaynaklarını belirlemedeki belirsizlik, resmî anlatıda da görülen “bilgi boşlukları”nı yerelde daha derin korkularla doldurur. “Oteller yapılacak”, “maden

şirketleri ormanı bilerek yaktı”, “elektrik hatlarını yenilemediler” gibi travmatik düşünce kalıpları, somut dayanaklardan çok kolektif hafıza ve deneyimden beslenir. Bu söylence ağı, hem resmi yetkililere hem “dışarıdan gelen” büyük sermayeye yönelik güvensizliği büyütür. Böylece yangın yalnızca ekolojik değil, devlet-toplum ilişkisinde onarılması zor bir çatlak yaratır. Bu noktada yerel anlatı, ormancılık rejiminin tarihsel kırılmalarına da gönderme yapar; OGM-köylü ilişkilerini, cibal-i mübâha’dan 2/B düzenlemesine uzanan mülkiyet politikaları üzerinden eleştirir. Özellikle mülkiyet belirsizlikleri, “orman senin değil, bizim” söylemini güçlendirir. Yerel perspektifin “yıkıcı potansiyeli”, yangın sırasında ve sonrasındaki temel resmi politikaların sorgulamasıyla somutlaşmaktadır. Son tahlilde yerel anlatı, orman yangınlarını devletin bekâsına indirgemek yerine, yaşam alanlarının ve toplumsal hafızanın bekâsı olarak kodlar; güvenliği “yeşil vatan” metaforunun ötesinde, orman-insan müşterekliğinde yeniden tarif eder.

Bölüm VII, ise her iki anlatıyı bir arada sentezlemekte ve bu sentezden daha geniş tartışmalar için çıkarımlar sağlamaktadır. Bu bölüm, tezin başında atıfta bulunulan “ateş düştüğü yeri yakar” deyişine yeniden dönerek, 2021 orman yangınlarının güvenlik boyutunu hem resmi hem de yerel bakış açılarından ele almanın yarattığı kavramsal çerçeveyi bütünler. Saha araştırmasında yangınları doğrudan yaşamış aktörlerle yapılan görüşmeler ve yetkililerin resmî beyanları, güvenliğin bağlamsal ve toplumsal inşa niteliğini berraklaştırmış; böylece çalışmanın iki temel sorusu—resmî ve vernaküler anlatıların güvenliği nasıl kurup tartıştığı ve bu ayrışmanın Türkiye’deki daha geniş güvenlik-siyaset ilişkileri hakkında ne söylediği—bu son tartışma bölümünde kapsamlı biçimde yanıtlanmıştır. Tez, tarihsel ve kuramsal arka planı çizdikten sonra 2021 yangınlarını çok boyutlu bir güvenlik sorunu olarak ele almış, sahadan derlenen resmî söylem ile yerel sesleri eleştirel güvenlik perspektifine yerleştirerek güvenliğin tekil değil çoğul bir olgu olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Öncelikle, yangınlara dair güvenlik, çevre ve siyaset eksenlerinde şekillenen iki karşıt anlatı arasındaki kesişme ve çatışma noktaları özetlenmelidir. Resmî anlatı, yangınları iklim krizi ya da “kündak terörizmi” (pyro-terrorism) göstergesi olarak çerçeveleştirip devleti birincil güvenlik sağlayıcı konumuna yerleştirirken, vernaküler anlatı gündelik pratikler, yerel bilgi ve aidiyet duygusunu öne çıkarır; köylüleri ve bölge sakinlerini “organik güvenlik sağlayıcılar” olarak

tanımlar. Böylece dört temel güvenlik sorusu—“kim sorumlu”, “kimin güvenliği tehlikede”, “tehdit nereden geliyor” ve “hangi araçlarla önlem alınmalı”—üzerinden ciddi ayrışmalar ortaya çıkar. Devlet, teknik uzmanlık ve kurumsal kapasiteyi vurgulayıp vatandaşları pasif tüketiciler gibi konumlandırırken, yerel halk coğrafyayı en iyi kendilerinin tanıdığı iddiası ile müdahalede öncü rol oynadığını savunur. “Kim sorumlu?” sorusu, iki anlatı arasındaki en görünür kırılma hattıdır. Resmî söylem, ilgili bakanlık ve Orman Genel Müdürlüğü personelini meşru otorite olarak sunar; yangın söndürmeyi adeta “vatan savunması”na benzeterek tekeli pekiştirir. Buna karşın vernaküler söylem, orman köylülerinin yangına ilk anda müdahale edebilecek hız ve motivasyona sahip olduğunu, devlet görevlilerinin ise coğrafyaya yabancı kaldığını vurgular. Devletin yabancı ülkelere yardım istemesi, resmî söylemin mutlak güç iddiasını zayıflatırken “#HelpTurkey” ve “#StrongTürkiye” etiketleriyle sembolleşen ikili kampanya, güvenlik sağlayıcı konusundaki meşruiyet mücadelesini zirveye taşır. “Kimin güvenliği?” meselesi ise ekolojik ve toplumsal katmanlarıyla ortaklaşa risk algısı üretse de önceliklerde ayrışır. Resmî söylem, iklim değişiminin tehdidini vatanın “yeşil” kimliğiyle birleştirip doğayı korumayı ulusal gurura dönüştürür. Vernaküler bakış ise ekolojik kaybı geçim, bellek ve habitat yitimine bağlayarak insan-doğa bütünlüğünde çok katmanlı güvensizlik vurgusu yapar; böylece resmi ulusal çerçeveye ek olarak mikro ölçekli ama derin travmaları görünür kılar. “Tehdit kaynakları” konusunda her iki anlatı da belirsizlikle maluldür; ancak resmî söylem bu belirsizliği küresel iklim krizi veya sabotaj iddialarıyla “dışsallaştırırken”, vernaküler söylem devletin rant odaklı politikalarını ya da altyapı ihmalini olası nedenler arasında sayar. OGM verilerinin terör kaynaklı yangın oranlarını çok düşük göstermesine rağmen terör vurgusunun siyasette merkezi yer tutması, bilgi eksikliğiyle siyasal söylem arasındaki gerilimi derinleştirir. Yerel halkın “otel yapılacak”, “madencilik genişliyor” gibi kuşkuları, yangınların ardında içsel politik-ekonomik etkenler arama eğilimini pekiştirir. “Önlemler ve araçlar” bakımından da iki anlatı taban tabana zıttır. Devlet, yüksek teknoloji, hava filosu, personel sayıları ve TOKİ’nin hızlı konut projeleriyle kurumsal kapasiteyi öne çıkarırken, vernaküler anlatı su bidonları, silah sesleriyle alarm verme, WhatsApp ağları gibi tabandan doğan yöntemlerin etkinliğine dikkat çeker. Zorunlu tahliyeleri sorgulayan köylüler, “evden ayrılmasaydık yangın bu kadar büyümezdi” söylemiyle tahliye politikasının sonuçlarını tartışmaya açar; yeni konutların mimarisi ve geri

ödeme şartları ise mekânsal yabancılaşma ve ekonomik belirsizlik kaynağı olur.Çevresel anlatıda da “yeşil vatan” retoriğiyle tabanda hissedilen ekolojik yıkım arasındaki uçurum belirgindir. Devlet, fidan dikme kampanyalarını millî seferberlik diye sunarken, yerel halk kuşaklar boyu oluşmuş ekosistemin parayla, sayıyla, betonarme evlerle ikame edilemeyeceğini savunur. Resmî söylem ormansızlaşmanın itici gücü olarak iklim değişimini ve küresel eşitsizlikleri öne sürerken, vernaküler bakış turistik tesisler, madencilik, neoliberal kalkınmacılık ve özelleştirmeleri başlıca tetikleyiciler olarak görür. Politik anlatıda, yangınlar üzerinden yürüyen iktidar–muhalafet çekişmesi karşılıklı “güvenlik” etiketlemeleriyle sertleşir. Resmî taraf “yalan terörü” ve işbirliği yapmayan muhalif belediyeler söylemiyle muhalefeti kriminalize eder; vernaküler taraf ise tarihsel orman rejimi gerilimlerini, OGM–köylü çıkar çatışmalarını ve yardımların dağıtımındaki popülist yarışı ortaya koyarak devletin kriz yönetimi iddiasını sorgular. Maddi yardımların düzensizliği ve toplu konut projelerinin “siteleşme” etkisi, yerel düzeyde ontolojik güvensizlik ve mekânsal kopuş yaratmıştır.

Tüm bu bulgular, mevcut literatürle kurulan diyalogu iki yönde derinleştirir. Orman yangını yönetişimi literatürü, teknik baskılamacı stratejilerin yetersiz kaldığını, topluluk temelli, uyarlanabilir ve katılımcı modellerin elzem olduğunu vurgular. Türkiye örneği, resmî baskılamacı refleks ile yerelden yükselen “organik” müdahale pratikleri arasındaki gerilimi göstererek bu tartışmaya özgün bir vaka ekler. Özellikle yerel bilgi, gönüllü ağlar ve aidiyet duygusunun IFM (Indigeneous Fire Management- Yerli Yangın Yönetimi) benzeri yaklaşımlara zemin hazırladığı, devletin tek merkezli stratejisinin ise bu potansiyeli körelttiği ortaya konur.

Vernaküler güvenlik kuramına katkı açısından tez, çevresel bir olgunun günlük yaşamdaki güvenlik tahayyüllerini nasıl dönüştürdüğünü göstererek tematik sınırları genişletir. Resmî ve yerel söylemler arasındaki “bilgi boşlukları”, güvenlik profesyonellerinin meşruiyetini sarsmakta; “şişman göbekli itfaiyeci” veya “talimat bekleyen sürücü” imgesi gibi anlatılarla profesyonel figür yapısökümüne uğratılmaktadır. Yerel deneyim, güvenliğin heterojen ve bağlamsal inşa olduğunu, tek tip çözümlerin sahadaki karmaşıklığı kavrayamadığını somutlaştırır.Sonuç olarak bu bölüm, 2021 orman yangınlarını devletin meşruiyet arayışı ile yerel toplulukların

varoluşsal endişeleri arasındaki müzakere alanı olarak kavramsallaştırır. Yangınların çevresel, toplumsal ve siyasal boyutları iç içe geçmiş; güvenlik, aidiyet, ekoloji ve kimlik üzerinden çok katmanlı bir mücadeleye dönüşmüştür. Tez, alt düzeyde üretilen vernaküler güvenlik söylemlerinin, devlet-merkezli paradigmayı sorgulayan dönüştürücü potansiyele sahip olduğunu göstererek hem orman yangını yönetişimi hem de eleştirel güvenlik literatürüne özgün ve kapsamlı bir katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir.



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