

**Re-presenting the Conflict:
Multilingualism, Intertextuality and Non-Translation in New Turkish Cinema**



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I, Aysun Kiran, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.





ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the re-presentations of conflict in new Turkish cinema vis-à-vis the official discourse in the 1990s and 2000s. It aims to identify to what extent the selected films present alternative perspectives on the conflict in relation to the ones that are promoted in the official discourse. The thesis adopts a critical discourse-analytical approach to the study of the interplay between the films and the official discourse as an intertextual one in which the former revisit and rework the latter. The thesis analyses this interplay on two levels. First, it situates the films within the history of the conflict to establish the effect of the state rhetoric and practices on their production, distribution and reception. Second, the thesis examines each film's interplay with the official discourse through the lens of multilingualism, non-translation and recontextualisation. It draws on the mainstream press as the medium for the identification of the official discourse on the conflict to be taken as a reference point on this second level of analysis. Demonstrating the historical overlap between the official and media discourses on the conflict, the thesis specifically focuses on the broadsheet newspaper, *Milliyet*, which effectively acted as the mouthpiece of the state. The inquiries into the functions of depicting multilingualism and translation also highlight the linguistic dimension of the conflict and discuss the official language ideology and language policy in Turkey as two interrelated components of the official discourse on the conflict. Finally, the thesis examines the recontextualisation of national symbols, official images, texts, audio and video material, songs and fairy tales in the films in identifying their intertextual references and interplay with the official discourse. The thesis thus introduces new readings of the selected films and contributes to the literature on the depictions of multilingualism and non-translation in Turkish cinema.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANAP	Motherland Party
AKP	Justice and Development Party
CHP	Republican People's Party
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DSP	Democratic Left Party
DYP	True Path Party
EU	European Union
HDP	People's Democratic Party
HEP	People's Labour Party
İFR	İstisnai Films and Commercials
IS	Islamic State
LHR	Linguistic Human Rights
MGK	National Security Council
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
MLR	Minority Language Rights
MP	Member of Parliament
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
RP	Welfare Party
SHP	Social Democratic Populist Party
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
TMSF	Savings Deposit Insurance Fund
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television Corporation
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Turkey
WTI	World Tribunal on Iraq
YÖK	Council of Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

The thesis investigates the re-presentations of Turkey's Kurdish conflict in new Turkish cinema vis-à-vis the official discourse in the 1990s and 2000s through the lens of multilingualism, translation and recontextualisation. It thus aims to identify to what extent the selected films present alternative perspectives on the conflict in relation to the ones that have been promoted in the official discourse. 'Re-presentation' is deployed here to signify an intertextual process which subjects prior utterances and discourses on highly contested or ambiguous topics to challenge and new interpretations.¹ The term hence implies the presence of competition over the meaning and validity of what has already been said elsewhere by others on a specific topic. The Kurdish conflict can be described such a contested one which has generated multiple accounts that may contradict one another over the depiction of actors involved and meanings assigned to certain terms such as 'victory' and 'defeat' or 'hero' and 'enemy.' The thesis adopts a critical discourse-analytical approach to the study of the interplay between new Turkish cinema and the official discourse on this conflict as an intertextual one in which the former revisits and reworks the latter. Therefore, the link between 'alternative' and 'official' is not a binary opposition because alternative is considered here as divergent from the official stance on the conflict without necessarily intending to be antagonistic or subversive.

The scope of the thesis is limited to eight multilingual films which deal directly or indirectly with the Kurdish question and the conflict, which has an ethnic and linguistic dimension.² The examination of each film's intertextual interplay with the official discourse on the conflict hence involves an inquiry into its engagement with the language policy and language ideology in Turkey, with a focus on the relationship between majority and minority languages. Therefore, the main research question of the thesis is to what extent selected multilingual films of new Turkish cinema represent the Kurdish conflict in relation to the official discourse and policies of the

¹ Hodges (2008), p. 485; Hodges (2011), p. 5.

² Chapter One elucidates the relationship between the Kurdish question and the conflict.

1990s and 2000s. This research question will be answered by addressing the four subsidiary research questions in the following:

1. How do the films engage with the state rhetoric and policies on the Kurdish question in their contexts of production and distribution?
2. How do the uses of multilingualism play a role in presenting alternative perspectives on the conflict in the films?
3. How do the depictions of translation reflect each film's interplay with the official discourse on the conflict in its treatment of the subject matter?
4. How does the recontextualisation of prior texts and discourses inform each film's intertextual interaction with the official discourse on the conflict in the 1990s?

In answering these questions, the thesis analyses the interplay between the films and the official discourse on the conflict on two levels. On the first level, it examines the effect of the state rhetoric and practices on the making of these films in view of the shifts in the official perception of the conflict between 1999 and 2013, when the films were produced. To identify how political power played a facilitating or restraining role in the production of the films, Chapter Two situates each film in its historical context and notes each film's experience of censorship, sources of funding and awards. The discussion of the films in consideration of these factors allows for pinpointing how each film was affected by and operated in relation to the state rhetoric and practices at the time of its release.

On the second level, the thesis investigates each film's treatment of its subject matter in relation to the official discourse on the conflict in the 1990s, which represent the context of reference for the stories narrated in most of the films. This decade refers to a significant phase in the development of the conflict with its repercussions such as unsolved murders and forced displacements among others, as is delineated in Chapter One. The significance of the official discourse in this period also lies in the fact that it did not represent an isolated or exceptional stance on the part of the military and ruling governments. Instead, albeit in a weakened form, it persisted as an undercurrent in the rhetoric and practices of the ruling power even during the Kurdish initiative, which the

AKP government announced in 2009 for the resolution of the conflict. In addition to pinpointing the change and continuity in the official discourse on the Kurdish question in the 2000s, Chapter Three identifies the characteristics of this discourse through analysing the mainstream print media's reporting of the conflict in the 1990s.

The findings of this analysis serve a reference point for examining each film's intertextual interplay with the official discourse on the conflict with a focus on their uses of multilingualism, translation and recontextualisation in the last three chapters of the thesis, respectively. These interrelated areas of inquiry enable the research to identify how the films diverge and converge, if any, in their presentation of alternative perspectives on the conflict. Overall, the thesis will both introduce new readings of the selected films by exploring how they rework the official discourse on the conflict and contribute to the literature on the depictions of multilingualism and translation in new Turkish cinema.

The Introduction provides the rationale and structure of the thesis in three sections. The first section elucidates the key concepts and analytical tools that this thesis employs in identifying the official discourse and exploring the research films in an intertextual relation to that discourse. The second section summarises the methodological approach followed in the process of selecting the films and the print media texts that convey the official discourse on the conflict. This section will also enable us to establish the original contribution of the thesis to the study of these films. Finally, the third section presents an outline of the thesis structure by providing brief summaries of all the six chapters and the conclusion.

1. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The inquiry into the functions of multilingualism, translation and recontextualisation in the selected films in this thesis can be framed through their relevance to the relationship between language and power. Scholarship on the concept of power in relation to language draws attention to 'the power of those who can use language for their various vested interests' to define similarities and differences or draw boundaries

between ‘us’ and ‘others.’³ Accordingly, it is usually ‘in language that discriminatory practices are enacted’, and ‘unequal relations of power are constituted and reproduced.’⁴ This section will delineate the key concepts used in this research by highlighting their link to this interplay between language and power. From this perspective, the following sub-section will explain the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) and its conceptualisation of intertextuality and recontextualisation in the thesis.

1.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

The view of language as a tool for domination represents a significant aspect of the conceptualisation of power in CDA, which ‘takes a particular interest in the relationship between language and power.’⁵ Accordingly, power refers to ‘the ability of people and institutions to control the behaviour and material lives of others.’⁶ The exercise of power in relation to language hence entails an asymmetrical relationship in which both control and the struggle for control of one group, language or discourse over another are present.⁷ CDA investigates these relations of dominance, discrimination, power and control as it is expressed, constituted and legitimised in discourse.⁸

In CDA, discourse is defined as ‘a social practice determined by social structures.’⁹ In addition to being socially conditioned, discourse ‘constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups

³ Ruth Wodak, ‘Language, Power and Identity’, *Language Teaching*, 45.2 (2012), 215-233 (p. 216).

⁴ Adrian Blackledge, *Discourse and Power in a Multilingual World* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005), p. 5.

⁵ Ruth Wodak and Brigitta Busch, ‘Approaches to Media Texts’, in *The Sage Handbook of Media Studies*, ed. by John H. Downing (London: Sage, 2004), pp. 105-123 (p. 108).

⁶ Roger Fowler, ‘Power’, in *Handbook of Discourse Analysis – Discourse in Society Volume 4*, ed. by Teun van Dijk (London: Academic Press, 1985), pp. 61-82 (p. 61).

⁷ Teun van Dijk, ‘Discourse as Interaction in Society’, in *Discourse as Social Interaction – Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction, Volume 2*, ed. by Teun A. van Dijk (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), pp. 1–36.

⁸ Blackledge, p. 5.

⁹ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 17.

of people.’¹⁰ It is also constitutive in terms of its contributory role in both reproducing and transforming the status quo.¹¹ In parallel, as is also implied in the dual character of discourse, power ‘is not a permanent or undisputed attribute of any one person or social group.’¹² From the perspective of CDA, language is not inherently powerful, but ‘gains power by the use powerful people make of it, specifically in new public spaces or new genres provided by globalised media.’¹³ Therefore, although power does not derive from language, language can be used to ‘challenge, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and long term.’¹⁴

The fact that language can also be used by less powerful groups and communities in resistant forms of discourses highlights the significance of access to communication as another dimension of the relationship between language and power. Accordingly, ‘special access to various genres, forms or contexts of discourse and communication is also a power resource.’¹⁵ In parallel, CDA suggests that the discourse produced by politicians and certain media largely has privileged access to communication and hence an increased chance of influencing public opinion.¹⁶ This thesis adopts the CDA’s view of discourse and focuses on official and media discourse as the areas in which power is enacted, maintained and perpetuated. This approach also underlies the rationale for taking the official discourse as a reference point in exploring how the selected films present alternative perspectives on the conflict.

¹⁰ Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’, in *Discourse as Social Interaction. Discourse Studies. A Multidisciplinary Introduction Volume 2*, ed. by Teun A. van Dijk (London: Sage, 1997), (pp. 258–284), p. 258.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹² Fairclough, p. 68.

¹³ Wodak and Busch, p. 108.

¹⁴ Ruth Wodak, ‘What CDA is About, A Summary of Its History, Important Concepts and Its Developments’, in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: Sage, 2001), pp. 1-13 (p. 11).

¹⁵ Teun van Dijk, ‘Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis’, *Discourse and Society*, 4.2 (1993), 249-283 (p. 254).

¹⁶ Melanie Cook and James Simpson, ‘Discourses about Linguistic Diversity’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism*, ed. by Marilyn Martin-Jones, Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 116-130 (p. 118).

It is worth noting here that a single text on its own does not achieve that influence. For instance, in the case of media, ‘the effects of media power are cumulative, working through the repetition of particular ways of handling causality and agency, particular ways of positioning the reader, and so forth.’¹⁷ Therefore, Critical Discourse Analysis provides an analytical framework for the study of official discourse in the media, as it ‘combines in an interdisciplinary approach close textual analysis with the analysis of the larger social context.’¹⁸ In identifying the official and mainstream media discourse on the conflict in Chapter Three, the thesis will draw on the tools of CDA to determine accessed and unaccessed voices, manipulative silences as well as the strategies of backgrounding and foregrounding.

CDA also considers the context of language use to be crucial in understanding the role of language in the reproduction of certain power relations.¹⁹ This approach is committed to the principle that ‘the meaning of a text cannot be exclusively derived from the text itself.’²⁰ Accordingly, a text relates to ‘other texts which represent the same social events, to other texts which make similar arguments, and to the broader socio-political and historical context within which the text was produced.’²¹ Context here can be defined as ‘backstage knowledge’ which is ‘constituted not only by the knowledge but also by the interests and presumptions of the hearer/reader.’²² This view of the relationship between a text and its wider context is also highlighted in the CDA’s conceptualisation of intertextuality and adopted in the thesis in exploring the interplay

¹⁷ Fairclough, p. 80.

¹⁸ Brigitta Busch, ‘Media, Politics and Discourse: Interactions’, in *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics, Second Edition, Volume 9*, ed. by Keith Brown (Oxford: Elsevier: 2006), pp. 609-616 (p. 612).

¹⁹ Ruth Wodak and Gilbert Weiss, ‘Introduction: Theory, Interdisciplinarity and Critical Discourse Analysis’, in *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity*, ed. by Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 1-34.

²⁰ Bethan Benwell and Elizabeth Stokoe, *Discourse and Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 104.

²¹ Blackledge, p. 9.

²² Paul Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge 2004), p. 154.

between the films and the official discourse on the conflict, as is shown in the following sub-section.

1.2. Intertextuality and Recontextualisation

Julia Kristeva coined the term ‘intertextuality’ in the 1960s when she translated Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism.²³ In its original sense, the term denotes the literal and effective presence in a text of another text. Accordingly, ‘a text is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text in which several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralise one another.’²⁴ Kristeva regards the text as ‘a textual arrangement of elements which possess a double meaning: a meaning in the text itself and a meaning in what she calls “the historical and social text.”’²⁵ Kristeva’s conception situates the meanings that can be assigned to a text within the sociocultural and political conjuncture in which it is created.

Taking its cue from Kristeva, CDA views intertextuality of a text as ‘a question of which genres, discourses and styles it draws upon, and how it works them into particular articulations.’²⁶ Central to the concept of intertextuality, text can broadly be defined here as an ‘objectified unit of discourse’ that can be lifted from its originating context and inserted into a new setting.²⁷ This definition, which is also adopted in the thesis, allows for extending the concept into ‘the domains of film, visual art and music

²³ Charles L. Briggs and Richard Bauman, ‘Genre, Intertextuality and Social Power’, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 2.2 (1992), 131-172 (p. 147).

²⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 36.

²⁵ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 37.

²⁶ Norman Fairclough, ‘Critical Discourse Analysis as A Method in Social Scientific Research’, in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2001), pp. 121-138 (p. 124).

²⁷ Susan Gal, ‘Linguistic Anthropology’, in *Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Keith Brown (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006), pp. 171–185 (p.178).

to talk about any creative work (e.g. movie, painting, musical score) that can be “read” for meaning.’²⁸

Likewise, CDA also considers the text and context as complementary to one another, and texts that co-exist in a specific context can thus be put in relation to each other. Intertextual analysis thus bridges the gap between texts and contexts.²⁹ The analysis of an intertextual relationship implies that a text depends for its meaning on another text. The voice of a text is heard only against the background of the voices of other texts in an intertextual relationship.³⁰ Meaning comes to exist between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, thereby moving out into a network of textual relations.³¹ Intertextual relationships between a particular text and prior discourse (real or imagined) play a crucial role ‘in building competing perspectives on what is taking place.’³² Therefore, the CDA’s conception of intertextuality rests on the view of texts as ‘sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies [...], contending and struggling for dominance.’³³

This conceptualisation of intertextuality informs the analysis of the films in the present study in two respects. First, intertextuality enables the thesis to relate the selected films to their contexts of making and discuss them as the outcomes of their contexts of production. In this respect, the analysis presents a socio-diagnostic critique that relates the text to the text producers, their respective interests and the context of

²⁸ Adam Hodges, ‘Intertextuality in Discourse’, in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis Volume 1 (2nd edition)*, ed. by Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton and Deborah Schiffrin (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), pp. 42-60 (p. 43).

²⁹ Norman Fairclough, ‘Linguistic and Intertextual Analysis within Discourse Analysis’, in *The Discourse Reader*, ed. by Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 183-213 (p. 185).

³⁰ Jay L. Lemke, ‘Semantics and Social Values’, *Word*, 40.1-2 (1989), 37-50 (p. 40).

³¹ Allen, p. 1.

³² Briggs and Bauman, p. 147.

³³ Ruth Wodak and Rudolf de Cillia, ‘Politics and Language: Overview’, in *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics, Second Edition, Volume 9*, ed. by Keith Brown (Oxford: Elsevier: 2006), pp. 707-719 (p. 714).

the text.³⁴ In parallel, it allows the thesis to explore the possible influences of the social and political context on the form and content of the films.

Second, intertextuality enables us to forge a link between the films and the official discourse on the conflict as it establishes connections across multiple texts and discourses on the presentation of the same contested or ambiguous topics.³⁵ Therefore, the notion also underpins Hodges' formulation of 're-presentation', which is employed in the thesis for incorporating two dimensions of intertextuality, as set out at the start of the Introduction. These dimensions are a) signifying the presence of an interplay between the films and the official discourse on the conflict, and b) highlighting contestation and transformation as two possible components of this interplay. Accordingly, the thesis argues that the films relate to the official discourse on the conflict based on re-presenting the same phenomenon, and the nature of this intertextual relationship determines each film's capacity to present alternative perspectives on the conflict.

The inquiry into this relationship also involves identifying the traces of the official discourse in the selected films and comparing the voices and perspectives presented in the films against the ones that are heard in the official discourse on the conflict. This point brings us to the concept of recontextualisation, which stands out as an important example of intertextuality.³⁶ It initially appeared in the work of Bernstein on the reproduction of educational discourse to describe the relocation and transformation of discourses from one setting into another one to constitute a new order.³⁷ The concept has since then been extended beyond the scope of educational discourse and used in a broad sense within the paradigm of CDA to refer to a movement or transfer of texts, images and discourses from one context to another, as is shown in Chapter Six.

³⁴ Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 47.

³⁵ Adam Hodges, 'The Politics of Recontextualization: Discursive Competition over Claims of Iranian Involvement in Iraq', *Discourse & Society*, 19.4 (2008), 483-505 (p. 485).

³⁶ Ruth Wodak and Norman Fairclough, 'Recontextualising the Bologna Declaration: The Austrian and Romanian case', *Critical Discourse Studies*, 7.1 (2010), 19-40.

³⁷ Basil Bernstein, *The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse, Volume IV: Class, Codes and Control* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990). p. 184.

Presenting a survey of the forms and functions of recontextualisation, this chapter examines the recontextualisation of national symbols, direct quotations, archival footage, television newsfeeds, audio records and photographs in terms of its role in representing the conflict in the selected films. The following sub-section will elucidate the definition of official discourse adopted in this thesis by indicating its relation to and difference from dominant discourse.

Official Discourse and Dominant Discourse

In their study of the structure of official documents concerning contemporary problems in the administration of law and maintenance of public order in the United Kingdom, Frank Burton and Pat Carlen define official discourse as ‘the systematisation of modes of argument that proclaim the state’s legal and administrative rationality.’³⁸ Further, they argue that texts are official if ‘they are produced at the command of the government.’³⁹ Accordingly, Burton and Carlen treat official discourse and state discourse as almost the same in their definition of the term ‘official discourse.’ They do not necessarily distinguish between the state and government-level discourses. This description of official discourse also corresponds with the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition of ‘official’ as ‘relating to an authority or public body and its activities and responsibilities.’⁴⁰

Unlike in its English usage, however, official discourse in Turkish (*resmî söylem*) is predominantly defined with reference to the state without any reference to the authority of persons in office or government.⁴¹ In other words, official discourse is associated with the state and institutions representative of its founding principles such as the military rather than elected politicians and policies adopted at the government

³⁸ Frank Burton and Pat Carlen, *Official Discourse (Routledge Revivals): On Discourse Analysis, Government Publications, Ideology and the State* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 48.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁰ ‘official’ (adj), in *Oxford English Dictionary, Third Edition*, ed. by Angus Stevenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 1232.

⁴¹ The Turkish Language Association, which is the official regulatory body of the Turkish language, defines ‘resmî’ (‘official’) as ‘devletin olan, devlete ait, devlele ilgili, özel karıştı.’ It translates as ‘which pertains to the state, belongs to the state and concerns the state and is opposed to the private.’

level. In my analysis, drawing on the Turkish Language Association's usage of 'official', I work with the definition of official discourse as a means of communicating the founding ideology of a state, which is represented by non-elected bodies rather than elected governments. Therefore, unlike Burton and Carlen, official discourse is used in this thesis to mean the state's discourse, the limits of which are set by Kemalism in Turkey, as is delineated in Chapter One.

It should also be added here that official discourse is not necessarily reflected in dominant discourse. Dominant discourses 'construct the parameters of meaning within which certain terms are used in public discussions of particular issues.'⁴² Therefore, they are marked by their superiority in the sense of effectiveness in circulating particular uses of language and imagery and invalidating any other meanings that represent a conflicting perspective. Further, they play a key role in the sustenance and reinforcement of the status quo in a specific context by defining it as 'natural', 'inevitable' and even 'democratic.'⁴³ In this respect, dominant discourse is linked to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power which highlights the role of language in creating a favourable opinion for a cause or topic.

Bourdieu defines symbolic power as 'a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself.'⁴⁴ In Bourdieu's view, it 'cannot be exercised without the contribution of those who undergo it and who only undergo it because they construct it as such.'⁴⁵ Therefore, 'what creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or

⁴² Karim H. Karim, 'Reconstructing the Multicultural Community in Canada: Discursive Strategies of Inclusion and Exclusion', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 7.2 (1993), 189-207 (p. 193).

⁴³ Teun van Dijk, 'Discourse, Power, and Access', in *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. by Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 84-104 (p. 91).

⁴⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 170.

⁴⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. by Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 40.

subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them.⁴⁶ Relatedly, a dominant discourse holds symbolic power, as it tends to represent what ‘goes without saying’ and ‘is noticed only in its violation, effective precisely because it seems to require no special assertion to achieve such effectivity.’⁴⁷

Dominant discourse is not confined to political and official realms although it may be derived from or largely informed by official discourse. However, official discourse, which is state-sponsored and state-sanctioned, can mostly be traced in the texts produced at the command of the state and/or government (depending on the context). An official discourse may be dominant, but the fact that a private television channel embodies and promotes this dominant state-sanctioned discourse does not turn that channel into an official medium. Therefore, dominant discourse is not tantamount to official discourse, and they can diverge from one another.⁴⁸ As is shown in Chapter Three, a brief history of the state and mainstream media relations in Turkey illustrates that the official discourse represented the dominant discourse on the conflict in the 1990s and early 2000s in view of the alliance between the military and private mainstream print media. This consonance between the two allows for the study of official discourse through an analysis of the mainstream media’s reporting of the conflict. The following two sub-sections elucidate the relevance of language and power relations to the study of multilingualism and translation in the selected films on the conflict in the thesis, respectively.

1.3. Multilingualism versus Monolingualism

The thesis adopts Rainier Grutman’s definition of multilingualism as ‘the co-presence of two or more languages (in a society, text or individual)’, as is noted in Chapter Four.⁴⁹ Language and power ‘intersect not only in obvious conflicts concerning

⁴⁶ Bourdieu (1991), p. 170.

⁴⁷ Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 61.

⁴⁸ Karim, p. 194.

⁴⁹ Rainier Grutman, ‘Multilingualism’, in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. by Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 182-185 (p. 182).

official tongues but also wherever the question of language difference becomes involved with asymmetrical political arrangements.⁵⁰ Power thus emerges as a distinct aspect of multilingualism, since ‘various languages and cultures rarely, if ever, have an equal status in multilingual contexts.’⁵¹ This dimension of how power is exercised in relation to multilingualism (and translation) is identified in the role of language ideologies and language policies in the imposition of a particular language at the expense of minority languages. In other words, ‘language ideology’ and ‘language policy’ define the status of multilingualism and translation in any given society. Therefore, it is important to provide a definition of these concepts and establish their relevance to the examination of the depictions of multilingualism in the films in the thesis.

Language policies can be defined as ‘guidelines or rules for language structure, use, and acquisition, established and implemented within nation-states or institutions such as schools and workplaces.’⁵² Therefore, language policy serves to install a specific language as the nation’s sole official language, thereby reinforcing the institutional representations of that language in government, legislatures, education, religion and the media.⁵³ It defines the status and social function of languages, that is, whether they are used as languages of instruction or taught as foreign languages or serve as a means of communication between the state and its citizens.⁵⁴ Accordingly, power of language means that ‘a particular language has become a symbol of the

⁵⁰ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, ‘Cinema After Babel: Language, Difference, Power’, in *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*, by Ella Shohat (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 106-137 (p. 127).

⁵¹ Olga Castro, Sergi Mainer and Svetlana Page, ‘Introduction: Self-Translating, from Minorisation to Empowerment’, in *Self-Translation and Power: Negotiating Identities in Multilingual Europe*, ed. by Olga Castro, Sergi Mainer and Svetlana Page (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 1-22 (p. 1).

⁵² James W. Tollefson, ‘Language Planning and Policy’, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. by Rajend Mesthrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 357-376 (p. 357).

⁵³ Sik Hung Ng and Fei Deng, ‘Language and Power’, in *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Communication*, 22 August 2017, Oxford University Press, <<http://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-436>> [accessed 29 August 2018].

⁵⁴ Wodak and de Cillia, p. 710.

power of the state over the different social classes, regions, nationalities, colonies and so on.’⁵⁵

Language policy is ‘based on linguistic ideologies, on images of “societally desirable” forms of language usage and of the “ideal” linguistic landscape of society, in turn often derived from larger socio-political ideologies.’⁵⁶ Language ideologies can be defined as ‘cultural ideas, presumptions and presuppositions with which different social groups name, frame and evaluate linguistic practices.’⁵⁷ Therefore, a language ideology may create marked differences in the functions and positions assigned to languages in a country, as it has been the case during the process of nation-building in many parts of the world.⁵⁸ While being (re)produced in different spheres such as media and politics, language ideologies can also be disputed in debates ‘in which language is central as a topic, a motif, a target.’⁵⁹ This aspect of language ideology as being open to challenge and contestation resonates with the study of the uses of multilingualism in the films in the Turkish context where monolingualism constitutes a defining aspect of its language ideology.

Monolingualism is here ‘treated as a fact but not an ideological perception.’⁶⁰ Elizabeth Ellis utilises the linguistic concept of ‘markedness’ to convey the sense of ‘the normal, the expected, or the unremarkable’ in this treatment of monolingualism.⁶¹ Accordingly, monolingualism signifies ‘the unmarked case’, which is ‘regarded as the

⁵⁵ Luisa Martín Rojo, ‘Language and Power’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Society*, ed. by Ofelia García, Nelson Flores and Massimiliano Spotti (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 77-102 (p. 80).

⁵⁶ Jan Blommaert, ‘Language Policy and National Identity’, in *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*, ed. by Thomas Ricento (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 238-254 (p. 244).

⁵⁷ Susan Gal, ‘Migration, Minorities and Multilingualism: Language Ideologies in Europe’, in *Language Ideologies, Policies and Practices: Language and the Future of Europe*, ed. by Clare Mar-Molinero and Patrick Stevenson (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 13-27 (p.13).

⁵⁸ Sue Wright, ‘Language and Power: Background to the Debate on Linguistic Rights’, *International Journal on Multicultural Societies (IJMS)*, 3.1 (2001), 44-54 (p. 46).

⁵⁹ Jan Blommaert, ‘The Debate Is Open’, in *Language Ideological Debates*, ed. by Jan Blommaert (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 1999), pp. 1-39 (p. 1).

⁶⁰ Blommaert (2006), p. 243.

⁶¹ Elizabeth Ellis, ‘Monolingualism: The Unmarked Case’, *Estudios de Sociolingüística*, 7.2 (2006), 173-196 (p. 177).

“normal” baseline against which bilingualism and multilingualism appear different, aberrant and problematic.’⁶² Monolingualism, which is characterised by a suspicion of other languages and those who speak them, aims for linguistic homogeneity due to the belief in the importance of a single language for a strong nation.⁶³ Therefore, there is an underlying tension between everyday linguistic practices of multilingual people and the monolingualist mindset.

The thesis explores the manifestations of this tension in the depictions of multilingualism (and translation) in the films with reference to the official language policy and its monolingualist tenets in Turkey. The fact that the conflict has a linguistic dimension adds to this tension, which explains the rationale for focusing on multilingualism as an area of interaction and contestation between the films and the official discourse on the conflict. Chapter Four and Chapter Five include detailed background sections which elucidate the implications of the language ideology and language policy in Turkey on the official discourse on the Kurdish question and the conflict. More specifically, Chapter Four presents a survey of the scholarship on the study of multilingualism in cinema in relation to a power struggle and tension between minority and majority languages. This scholarship also underlines that ‘language functions not only as a vessel of meaning, but as a socially loaded and complex tool which is far from neutral.’⁶⁴ The thesis draws on this literature on multilingual cinema in analysing the role of depicting linguistic diversity in enabling the films to present alternative perspectives on the conflict.

⁶² Elizabeth Ellis, Ingrid Gogolin and Michael Clyne, ‘The Janus Face of Monolingualism: A Comparison of German and Australian Language Education Policies’, *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 11.4 (2010), 439–460 (p. 440).

⁶³ Stephen May, ‘Contesting Public Monolingualism and Diglossia: Rethinking Political Theory and Language Policy for a Multilingual World’, *Language Policy*, 13.4 (2014), 371–393 (p. 384).

⁶⁴ Gemma King, ‘The Power of the Treacherous Interpreter: Multilingualism in Jacques Audiard’s *Un prophète*’, *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series. Themes in Translation Studies*, 13 (2014), 78–92 (p. 78).

1.4. Translation and Power

While multilingualism evokes the presence of two or more languages, translation ‘involves a substitution of one language for another.’⁶⁵ ‘Translation’ is used here and in the thesis to encompass two related practices of ‘translation’ and ‘interpreting’ for convenience, since Chapter Five both discusses the functions of the presence or absence of translation and analyses the portrayals of interpreters in the films. As in CDA, the understanding of power in translation studies does not equate power with oppression. Instead, power encompasses not only ‘the definition of repression and control, but also the ability to resist and subvert such actions.’⁶⁶ The relevance of power to the study and practice of translation has increasingly been recognised in translation studies since the term ‘cultural turn’ was coined by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere for the translation of literary works.⁶⁷ Bassnett and Lefevere signalled ‘the shift from a more formalist approach to translation to one that laid greater emphasis on extra-textual factors.’⁶⁸ The cultural turn then reconfigured translation ‘as a powerful mode of cultural construction’ by focusing on culture and context instead of language.⁶⁹ The emergence of an awareness of the strong influence of power in relation to translation has thus become inevitable since the cultural turn.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Grutman, p. 182.

⁶⁶ Castro et al., p. 4.

⁶⁷ André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett, 'Introduction: Proust's Grandmother and the Thousand and One Nights. The "Cultural Turn" in Translation Studies', in *Translation, History, and Culture*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (London, New York: Pinter Publishers, 1990), pp. 1-13.

⁶⁸ Susan Bassnett, 'Culture and Translation', in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. by Piotr Kuhiwczak and Karin Littau (Clevedon, Buffalo, and Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2007), pp. 13-23 (p. 13).

⁶⁹ Cristina Marinetti, 'Cultural Approaches', in *Handbook of Translation Studies vol II*, ed. by Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011), pp. 26-30 (p. 26).

⁷⁰ Beatrice Fischer and Matilde Nisbeth Jensen, 'Introduction - The Power of Translation', in *Translation and the Reconfiguration of Power Relations: Revisiting Role and Context of Translation and Interpreting*, ed. by Beatrice Fischer and Matilde Nisbeth Jensen (LIT Verlag Münster, 2012), pp. 9-14 (p. 11).

Translation is currently acknowledged as an act of mediation and transformation linked to existing power structures situated within broader social, political and cultural contexts.⁷¹ Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler stress that ‘the study of translation in charged political contexts illustrates the relationship between discourse and power, and shows that, as a site where discourses meet and compete, translation negotiates power relations.’⁷² Accordingly, translation ‘always implies an unstable balance between the power one culture can exert over another.’⁷³ However, power ‘is not simply “top-down”, invested primarily in political institutions, but exercised as well by those seeking empowerment and engaging in resistance.’⁷⁴ In parallel, ‘translators and interpreters mediating cross-cultural encounters play a major role in asserting and sometimes forcefully resisting existing power structures.’⁷⁵ Therefore, the current scholarship largely ‘approaches cross-cultural encounters that involve an element of interlinguistic mediation as a space of radical inequality.’⁷⁶ This aspect of mediation is highlighted in the interaction between the speakers of minority and majority languages as being ‘a site of a power struggle in which translation and interpreting can play either an oppressive or empowering role.’⁷⁷

In particular, Michael Cronin notes that ‘the symbolic as opposed to the informational function of language’ comes to the fore as a dimension specific to minority languages in translation.⁷⁸ In this case, translation serves beyond making communication possible and is undertaken to establish identity or enact a form of

⁷¹ Castro et al., p. 2.

⁷² Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler, ‘Introduction’, in *Translation and Power*, ed. by Edwin Gentzler and Maria Tymoczko (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), pp. xi-xxviii (p. xix).

⁷³ Román Álvarez and M. Carmen África Vidal, ‘Translating: A Political Act’, in *Translation, Power, Subversion*, ed. by Román Álvarez and M. Carmen África Vidal (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1996), pp. 1-9 (p. 4).

⁷⁴ Maria Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2007), p. 45.

⁷⁵ Mona Baker and Luis Pérez-González, ‘Translation and Interpreting’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics*, ed. by James Simpson (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 39-52 (p. 44).

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

⁷⁸ Michael Cronin, ‘Minority’, in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 2nd edition, ed. by Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 169-172 (p. 171).

resistance against the dominant status of the majority language.⁷⁹ Therefore, the study of the depictions of minority languages in and through translation allows for highlighting and analysing the link between translation and politics.⁸⁰ Relatedly, the presence/absence as well as the direction of translation may provide us with insights into how languages relate to one another in a multilingual society.⁸¹ These aspects of translation and its relation to power also underpin the filmic depictions of translation between minority languages which ‘posit an unequal relationship between two (or more) languages spoken in a nation.’⁸² Hence, the focus on the uses of translation in the films in the thesis constitutes a lens through which to explore the asymmetrical relationships between the speakers of Turkish and Kurdish languages against the background of the conflict and its repercussions.

Additionally, the question of power in relation to translation pertains to the scope of the thesis in terms of the link between language policy and translation policy and its implications on the incorporation of translation in film. Accordingly, language policy plays a role in defining the use or non-use of translation in a certain context.⁸³ Reine Meylaerts defines translation policy as ‘a set of legal rules that regulate language use for purposes of education and communication, the latter covering the language of legal affairs, of political institutions, of the media, and of administration.’⁸⁴ Even in the absence of explicit, written policies, there is necessarily an implicit translation policy, since ‘governments or administrations cannot go without using at least one language and thus need to make, at least implicitly, (ad hoc) decisions on what to

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 171.

⁸⁰ Jonathan Evans and Fruela Fernández, ‘Introduction’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Politics*, ed. by Fruela Fernández and Jonathan Evans (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 1-14 (p. 5).

⁸¹ Tong-King Lee, ‘Translation and Language Power Relations in Heterolingual Anthologies of Literature’, *Babel*, 58.4 (2012), 443-456 (p. 445).

⁸² Evans and Fernández, p. 6.

⁸³ Gabriel González Núñez, ‘Translating for Linguistic Minorities in Northern Ireland: A Look at Translation Policy in the Judiciary, Healthcare, and Local Government’, *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 14.3-4 (2013), 474-489 (p. 475).

⁸⁴ Reine Meylaerts, ‘Translational Justice in a Multilingual World’, *Meta*, 56, (2011), 743-757 (p. 744).

translate, for whom, when, and how.’⁸⁵ In parallel, Meylaerts adds that there is ‘no language policy without translation policy.’⁸⁶ Therefore, a translation policy or an official treatment of translation in a certain context does not exist independently of language policy.

To illustrate this point, language and cultural policy may result in the imposition of censorship on the products and processes of translation in certain historical and political settings, particularly with respect to film, as noted in the research on audiovisual translation and censorship in totalitarian regimes.⁸⁷ Crucially, Christopher Rundle draws attention to the significance of identifying whether censorship on translation is a direct consequence of translation policy or a by-product of a different combination of contextual factors.⁸⁸ For instance, Rundle shows that the fascist regime’s hostility towards translation in Italy during the 1930s and 1940s was a repercussion of its hostility towards popular fiction and perception of these translations as an invasion of foreign culture.⁸⁹ This observation pertains to the discussion in this thesis of the implications of the changes in the language policy in Turkey on the limits of incorporating translation in the films in the absence of an explicit translation policy.

The scholarship on the depictions of translation in film, which is surveyed in Chapter Five, taps into this link between translation, power and censorship in multilingual contexts. Therefore, the analysis of the depictions of interpreters in the films in that chapter considers the use and abuse of power and the reliability and unreliability of interpreters involved in linguistic mediation. In doing so, it also addresses the interplay between silence, silencing and translation with reference to

⁸⁵ Reine Meylaerts, ‘Politics of Translation in Multilingual States’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Politics*, ed. by Fruela Fernández and Jonathan Evans (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 221-237 (p. 222).

⁸⁶ Meylaerts (2011), p. 744.

⁸⁷ Gutiérrez Lanza (2002), Rundle (2000), Mereu Keating (2016), Díaz-Cintas (2018).

⁸⁸ Christopher Rundle and Vicente Rafael, ‘History and Translation: The Event of Language’, in *Border Crossings: Translation Studies and Other Disciplines*, ed. by Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2016), pp. 23-48 (p. 19).

⁸⁹ Christopher Rundle, ‘Stemming the Flood: The Censorship of Translated Popular Fiction in Fascist Italy’, *Perspectives*, 26.6 (2018), 838-851 (p. 838).

Turkey's language policy on Kurdish. This section has delineated the concepts and analytical tools used in this research and outlined how three areas of inquiry – multilingualism, translation and recontextualisation – are both interrelated and linked to the literature on the relationship between discourse, language and power.

2. CORPUS

This section delineates the steps taken in the selection process of the research films and the print media texts in two sub-sections, respectively. The first sub-section will establish the three selection criteria that form the basis for including eight films in the thesis. The second sub-section will summarise the process of deciding to use the mainstream print media and specifically *Milliyet* for analysing the official discourse on the conflict. This summary will thus help justify the choice of the films and the news reports to be focused on in the thesis and elucidate the original contribution of this research to the study of these films.

2.1. Films

The films examined in the thesis are Yeşim Ustaoglu's *Journey to the Sun* (*Güneşe Yolculuk*, 1999), Handan İpekçi's *Big Man, Little Love* (*Büyük Adam Küçük Aşk*, 2001), Özcan Alper's *Autumn* (*Sonbahar*, 2008), Levent Semerci's *Breath: Long Live the Homeland* (*Nefes: Vatan Sağolsun*, 2009), Miraz Bezar's *Min Dît* (2009), Orhan Eskiköy and Özgür Doğan's *On the Way to School* (*İki Dil Bir Bavul*, 2009), Özcan Alper's *Future Lasts Forever* (*Gelecek Uzun Sürer*, 2011) and Reha Erdem's *Jîn* (2013).⁹⁰ The selection of eight films is based on three main criteria, the first of which is the treatment of the Kurdish conflict or a related aspect as the subject matter that ties together all the films in the thesis. The significance of the conflict lies in its contested and ambiguous nature that allows for producing different interpretations of the past across a different range of texts and discourses, as is noted at the start of the Introduction.

⁹⁰ A brief plot summary of each film is provided in Chapter Two.

The second criterion is that the film constitutes an example of new Turkish cinema, referring to the films of the post-(mid)-1990s. This cinema both constitutes a break from the traditional filmmaking in Turkey and marks the resurgence of Turkish cinema, as is delineated in Chapter Two. Finally, the third selection criterion is that the film is multilingual because the denial of ethnic and linguistic differences represents one underlying reason for the emergence of the Kurdish question and the conflict. Hence, the focus on multilingualism enables the thesis to identify how a film engages with both the state ideology on the Kurdish question on a general level and the official discourse on the conflict on a more specific level.

In view of these selection criteria, the list of politically engaged films in new Turkish cinema was first narrowed down to those with a focus on the conflict. The films specifically focusing on the 1990s were prioritised in the selection process due to the significance of the given decade in the development of the conflict, as is shown in Chapter One. Subsequently, monolingual films in that category were weeded out in view of the third selection criterion. Table 1 in the Appendix illustrates the total list of multilingual films on the conflict that were produced in Turkey after the mid-1990s.⁹¹ Accordingly, the armed conflict, unsolved murders, hunger strikes and language ban were identified as the topics that were mostly treated in the films in relation to the conflict. Consequently, the list of twenty-four films was reduced to eight films in total in the selection process by prioritising the ones that addressed one or two of these topics with a focus on the reverberations of the conflict on the life of civilians.

Chapter Two provides a survey of the literature on new Turkish cinema and thus delineates the distinguishing aspects of the research films in the category of this cinema.⁹² More specifically, scholars such as Murat Akser and Giovanni Ottone have highlighted Reha Erdem's *Jîn* and Özcan Alper's *Autumn and Future Lasts Forever* as examples of independent cinema reflecting the thematic and stylistic characteristics

⁹¹ This list was made through an online search on the database of *Türk Sineması Araştırmaları* (Centre for Turkish Film Studies), accessed at the website <http://www.tsa.org.tr>.

⁹² Dorsay (2003), Suner (2010), and Onaran and Yücel (2011).

of their directors' preferences in narrating their stories.⁹³ Rebekah Rutkoff, Özgür Çiçek and Ayça Çiftçi have discussed *Min Dît*, *Jîn*, *On the Way to School* and *Big Man, Little Love* in terms of how they tap into the polarised perception of the Kurdish question and the controversy over what the truth is regarding the conflict.⁹⁴ Relatedly, some other scholars such as Zeynep Yaşar and Elif Akçalı have also examined these films in terms of their contribution to Kurdish representation and filmmaking.⁹⁵ For instance, Özgür Çiçek has noted *Min Dît*'s representation of 'histories that are not historicized, murders that are not revealed, and state officials who are not what they seem.'⁹⁶

Thematically speaking, many scholars have discussed *Journey to the Sun* and *Big Man, Little Love* with a focus on their treatment of national identity and belonging.⁹⁷ Eren Yüksel and Sevilay Çelenk have explored *Breath* in terms of its treatment of warrior companionship and hegemonic masculinity.⁹⁸ Kevin Smets has discussed *On the Way to School* as an example of victim cinema in which direct violence is usually moved to the background to concentrate fully on the consequences of intractable conflicts on communities.⁹⁹ Özlem Köksal and Ahmet Ergenç have discussed *On the Way to School* and *Autumn* in terms of their representation of minority groups in Turkey.¹⁰⁰ Several others have examined *Autumn* and *Future Lasts Forever* in terms of remembering the traumatic past and undermining the historical amnesia which is attributed to Turkey with reference to her failure to come to terms with the official wrongdoings in the past.¹⁰¹

⁹³ Akser (2015) and Ottone (2017).

⁹⁴ Rutkoff (2011), Çiçek (2016), Çiftçi (2016).

⁹⁵ Yaşar (2016) and Akçalı (2019).

⁹⁶ Özgür Çiçek, 'Making Fairy Tales Real', <<http://www.globalcinema.eu/single.php?sl=Miraz-Bezar-Min-Dit-Kurdish-Cinema>> [accessed 20 February 2015].

⁹⁷ Dönmez-Colin (2008), Robins and Aksoy (2002), Göktürk (2002) and Akbal Süalp (2014).

⁹⁸ Yüksel (2013) and Çelenk (2010).

⁹⁹ Kevin Smets, 'Cinemas of Conflict: A Framework of Cinematic Engagement with Violent Conflict, Illustrated with Kurdish Cinema', *International Journal of Communication*, 9 (2015), 2434-2455 (p. 2445).

¹⁰⁰ Köksal (2016) and Ergenç (2016).

¹⁰¹ Gökçe (2009), Gökçe (2011), Sönmez (2012), Suner (2010).

Despite acknowledging that these films revisit the official history of the conflict, current scholarship assumes the reader's knowledge of the nation-state ideology at work in Turkey. Relatedly, these works examine the selected films, from a general perspective, primarily as representations of violence, trauma, identity or belonging without exploring their explicit interactions with other texts and discourses, and specifically with the official discourse on the conflict. For instance, there has been no study of the films that focuses on the forms and functions of recontextualisation from the CDA's perspective of intertextuality. Some scholars recognise the use of archival footage in the films such as *Journey to the Sun* and *Big Man, Little Love* as a novelty in Turkish screens.¹⁰² However, they do not elaborate on how the footage is inserted into the fictional story and informs a film's treatment of the subject matter. Additionally, despite the recognition of the representation of ethnically and linguistically diverse groups in the films, no study has been found that explores the depictions of multilingualism and translation in new Turkish cinema. Therefore, this thesis addresses these unexamined areas of inquiry and introduces new readings of the selected films through exploring the uses of multilingualism, translation and recontextualisation. The following sub-section summarises the process of selecting the mainstream print media and specifically *Milliyet* as the means for analysing the official discourse on the conflict.

2.2. News Reports

The initial step taken to locate the official discourse in the 1990s and early 2000s was to identify and select the source(s) which embodied the texts in line with the official stance on the conflict. To this end, I considered consulting three sources that qualified as 'official' in terms of their originating source and sponsor. These sources were the state-sponsored television channel, the state-run press agency and the official website of the Turkish parliament. However, my attempts to work with these sources were

¹⁰² Robins and Aksoy (2002) and Akçalı (2019).

hampered by the difficulty in accessing the necessary data for my research, as is explained below.

I first attempted to reach the news archive of the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (hereafter TRT short for *Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu* in Turkish), Turkey's national public broadcaster. However, the TRT did not (and still does not) have a searchable online news archive accessible to the public. To find out about the chances of gaining access to the archive as a researcher, a TRT employee was reached through a personal contact in July 2014. According to the information provided, the TRT archived only the unedited tapes but not the daily newscasts.¹⁰³ This employee suggested that these newscasts could be found at the Prime Minister's Archives. However, I also found out that these Archives did not have any records of the TRT news programmes or daily newscasts. Therefore, the TRT's news archive had to be dismissed as a possible source due to the unavailability of the edited news coverage on the conflict.

Likewise, it also proved no easy task to gain access to the second source, the news archive of the Anadolu Agency, the sole state-run press agency. I first reached one personnel member via email regarding the options of access to the news archive after providing a summary of the research topic.¹⁰⁴ According to the reply to my email, the agency's archive was not open for public use, and subscription to the agency was required to obtain any products such as news content, photograph, graphics or video. After learning that there was a news archive of the agency, I arranged an appointment with the Agency's Deputy Director-General at the time, Ebubekir Şahin, through another personal contact in Ankara in August 2014. Following this appointment, I submitted a formal written request in person to gain access to the news archive for this research project. The personnel at the archive unit provided me with a username and password for my personal use only, adding that the archive could be searched off-site

¹⁰³ The contact's name was Timur Yıldızhan, who relayed the relevant information to me via email after contacting the TRT's Archive Unit in person.

¹⁰⁴ The contact's name was Bora Uçak, who was the Product and Business Development Manager at the Anatolian Agency at the time.

only until the second half of 1995. Therefore, there was no off-site access for the news archive for the period after July 1995. No specific reasons were provided regarding this limitation. These experiences testify that any scholarly attempts to examine the state-sponsored media's discourse or official discourse in Turkey via these channels are bound to face challenges in accessing the news archives.

A quick search on the agency's archive with the username and password provided also revealed additional drawbacks to the use of this source to extract the official statements on the conflict. First, the news bulletins in the archive contained the raw news material that was not tailored for the audiences but intended to be delivered to the news channels and stations. Second, the archive could not be searched by keywords due to the scanned nature of the documents. This limitation rendered the use of this source very impracticable due to the number of texts that proved too large to be searched in a measurable amount of time and to be included in this research. This disadvantage resembled the one that emerged in the third possible source where official texts could be found. It was the online archive on the official website of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM hereafter as short for *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi* in Turkish) where the parliamentary minutes could be accessed. The search in the TBMM's online archive for the parliamentary minutes between 1990 and 2000 yielded the results of 1,395 sessions, as shown in Table 2 in the Appendix.

These limitations in accessing and collating the corpus from the archives of the TBMM, TRT and Anadolu Agency necessitated a shift of focus away from these state-sponsored sources to one that was likely to present the conflict in line with the official stance, albeit not being state-sponsored: the mainstream print media of the 1990s. This decision could be made because the mainstream print media squarely overlapped with the official stance in their presentation of the Kurdish question and the conflict, as delineated in Chapter Three. The process of collating the news reports started with working at the newspaper archive of the National Library of Turkey in Ankara, Turkey between July and September 2014. As seen in Table 3 in the Appendix, a list of the newspapers with the largest monthly circulation was made according to the circulation

data for the period between 1990 and 2000, which was provided by the Turkish Press Announcement Association (*Basın İlan Kurumu*) via email on request.

The newspaper search was then limited to the news reports on the conflict between 1990 and 2000, and more specifically on the phenomena that were listed as being most frequently treated in the selected films in relation to the conflict. Therefore, the news reports unrelated to these four topics (the armed conflict, unsolved murders, hunger strikes and the language ban) were eliminated from the corpus. The two-month period of work in the newspaper archive showed that there were no considerable differences between the highest-selling newspapers in their reporting of the conflict and engagement with the official stance on this specific matter. As an illustration of the overlap of official and newspaper discourses, the mob attack on Ahmet Kaya was selected to be analysed for its coverage in the three highest-selling newspapers (*Hürriyet*, *Sabah* and *Milliyet*), as seen in the last two columns of Table 3 in the Appendix.¹⁰⁵ This analysis aims to demonstrate the absence of any striking discrepancies in these mainstream newspapers on the Kurdish question and thus justify the case for focusing on only one of them as representative of the mainstream print media.

The mob attack on Kaya took place at an award ceremony hosted by the Magazine Journalists' Association of Turkey and broadcasted live on a national TV channel on 10 February 1999. It was a night when the Association gave annual awards to news reporters, actors/actresses, singers, and comedians. Kaya, who was a very popular figure in *özgün müzik*, received the 'Musician of the Year' award.¹⁰⁶ He was known for his political activism and use of music as the means to protest oppression and state violence. On that night, Kaya accepted the award 'in the name of the Human Rights

¹⁰⁵ All the translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁰⁶ '*özgün müzik*' literally translates as 'original, authentic music.' It is a music form with leftist leanings that emerged in the traditional folk music tradition in the 1980s. It is characterised by its protest character and prioritises the voices of those living in the margins.

Association, Saturday Mothers, of all workers in the tabloid press and in the name of people of Turkey.’ He also added the following:

‘Bir de, şunu söyleyeyim, bu misyonu sana kim yükledi diye sormasınlar, bu misyonu bana tarih yükledi. Bir de, bir şey daha söyleyeceğim. Önümüzdeki kasette Kürt asıllı olduğum için Kürtçe bir şarkı yapıyorum ve Kürtçe bir de klip çekiyorum. Ve bu klipi yayınlayacak yürekli insanların olduğunu da biliyorum, yayınlamazlarsa Türkiye halkıyla nasıl hesaplaşacaklarını da biliyorum. Çok teşekkür ediyorum.’¹⁰⁷

Kaya’s speech was greeted with an outcry from an overwhelming number of the guests in the room. Some people expressed their anger vociferously by booing Kaya and flinging knives and forks at him, while some others walked over to attack him. The sentences were also heard such as, ‘Get out of here’, ‘there is no such thing as a Kurd’ and ‘you are doing separatism.’ Kaya responded to the protests before getting off the stage: ‘Biz yaşamımız boyunca Türkiye’nin bölünmez bütünlüğünü savunduk ama Kürt halkının realitesini reddeden insanların da kafasından inmeyeceğim.’¹⁰⁸ Kaya’s table was soon surrounded by the crowd of microphones, reporters and flashing cameras as well as those who attempted to attack him. In the meantime, a pop singer who was invited to the stage began to sing the tenth-anniversary march, a song that was composed in 1933 for the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic.¹⁰⁹ Kaya had to leave the room in the company of security guards after being sworn at and physically attacked by the guests in evening dress.

The use of the tenth-anniversary march, a potent symbol of the foundational years of the Republic, was not totally an original idea in the 1990s. The march was already revived in the pop music market and social gatherings. Esra Özyürek interprets this

¹⁰⁷ ‘Let me add this as well: do not ask who assigned this mission to me. History assigned me this role. Additionally, I will say one more thing. I will sing a Kurdish song in the next album because I am of Kurdish origin, and I will also make a music video for this song. And I know that there are courageous people who will air this video. I also know that they will be held accountable by the people of Turkey unless they do so. I thank you very much.’

¹⁰⁸ ‘We defended the indivisible unity of Turkey all our life, but I will breathe down the neck of those who reject the reality of Kurdish people.’

¹⁰⁹ Kaya Genç, ‘Pressure Points’, *Index on Censorship*, 42.4 (2013), 25–30 (p. 25).

revival as an expression of disenchantment with the present state in Turkish politics and nostalgic desire for the early years of the Republic.¹¹⁰ Highlighting the quasi-militaristic aspect of the song, Özyürek also notes that the march was taught in schools through the single-party organisation after its production and hence bears a direct reference to the authoritarian modernism of the 1930s.¹¹¹ Given this background, its resurrection in the non-official realms such as the award ceremony where Kaya was attacked testifies to the instrumentalisation of the march to exclude, silence and marginalise any opposing voices in the peak years of the Kurdish conflict.

Hürriyet, *Sabah* and *Milliyet* were searched for the period between 11 and 16 February 1999 to identify the overlaps in their coverage of the attack on Kaya. The reason for not limiting the time range to the day after the ceremony was that each newspaper gave detailed coverage of the night on a different date, as will be seen below. To start with *Hürriyet*, the search yielded eleven results (six news reports and five columns) in relation to the incident. The first news report dated 12 February 1999 referred to the awards as ‘the Oscars of the tabloid press’ and described the part of the ceremony before Kaya’s speech as a smooth and successful night.¹¹² This was done in a manner that accentuated a contrast with the atmosphere after Kaya took the stage. Depicting the night as one of joy and celebration, the news report added that Kaya caused a stir with his speech, but the following singer Serdar Ortaç alleviated the tension by singing the tenth-anniversary march. Kaya was thus put under the spotlight as the only troublemaker in the room. The second news report on the same date entitled ‘Ahmet Kaya yuhalandı’ (‘Ahmet Kaya was booed’) described the course of events that led up to Kaya’s departure from the venue as follows:

‘Özgün müziğin temsilcilerinden Ahmet Kaya, Magazin Gazetecileri Derneği Ödül Töreni’nde söyledikleri “çirkin” sözlerle bardağı taşırdı. [...] ödül aldıktan sonra yaptığı konuşmasıyla şimşekleri üzerine çeken

¹¹⁰ Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 168.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 168.

¹¹² ‘Magazincilerin gecesi’ (‘The night of the Tabloid Press Journalists’), *Hürriyet*, 12 February 1999, p. 7.

Ahmet Kaya, üzerine yürüyen grubun elinden güvenlik görevlileri tarafından zor kurtarıldı.’¹¹³

Strikingly, the news report did not provide an account of the attack in a non-partisan manner. On the contrary, it showed condescension towards Kaya by condemning Kaya for deviating from acceptable behaviour that was presumed to exist without any overtones of criticism against the attacking group. Additionally, Kaya’s speech that was depicted as ‘nasty’ was quoted with some alterations in the second paragraph of the news report. For instance, Kaya was alleged to have said that he looked for a brave TV channel to air the video of his Kurdish song, whereas he, in fact, said that he knew there were courageous people who would air the video, as illustrated in Table 4 in the Appendix. Kaya was also claimed to have prefaced his acceptance speech by saying that he would breathe down the neck of those who did not recognise Kurds. The moment in which this sentence was uttered was thus misrepresented here, since Kaya said it in response to the booing and flinging of knives and forks at him during his performance after accepting the award. It was further added that these words infuriated the guests even more, and the mob attack was referred to as ‘a brawl where forks and knives were flung all over the place’ (*‘çatal-kaşıkların havada uçuştığı bir arbede’*). This description of the incident as ‘a brawl’ obscured the agency of the guests in the attack and conveyed a misleading impression that Kaya was also involved in flinging the cutlery. Therefore, the newspaper reinforced its biased presentation of the incident by blurring the details of the assault on Kaya and taking his sentences out of their context to distort their intended meaning.

On the following day, 13 February 1999, four columnists launched a diatribe against Kaya in *Hürriyet* while commenting on the selected incident at the award ceremony. Two of them will be mentioned as being conspicuously in line with the newspaper’s coverage. Ertuğrul Özkök, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper at the

¹¹³ ‘Ahmet Kaya, who is a major figure of *özgün müzik*, went too far with his “nasty” words at the award ceremony of the Magazine Journalists’ Association. [...] Ahmet Kaya, who put the cat among the pigeons with his acceptance speech, narrowly escaped from the group walking over him by the help of security guards.’

time, adopted a disapproving tone towards the singer by referring to Kaya's speech as 'an act of tactlessness' (*'densizlik'*) and 'a bizarre act of provocation' (*'tuhaf provokasyon'*). In Özkök's view, Kaya was dragged into the quagmire of politics and fell into the sewer of sensation. The columnist inferred that Kaya might be seeking to regain popularity he recently lost, adding that singing in Kurdish was not forbidden. In doing so, Özkök neither mentioned nor questioned the acts of the guests who participated in the mob attack on Kaya. On the contrary, he praised all other guests as 'true artists', thereby singling Kaya out as the only ugly man in the ceremony.

Likewise, Oktay Ekşi, another chief columnist of the newspaper, participated in the newspaper's vituperative broadside against Kaya with his article entitled 'One tactless person' (*'Bir densiz'*).¹¹⁴ Ekşi deliberately avoided mentioning Kaya's name throughout his article but instead referred to the singer as 'a creature' who rather resembled a bad-looking bouncer. Echoing Özkök's argument, Ekşi asserted that Kaya aimed at a publicity stunt to arouse interest. Additionally, Ekşi did not include the details of the attack and the reaction on the part of the guests, which can be interpreted as an oblique endorsement of the physical violence Kaya was exposed to after his speech. Consequently, the mob attack was justified through vilification and dehumanisation of Kaya against the positive presentation of his attackers.

Sabah, the second highest-selling newspaper according to the annual circulation data, treated the incident as almost non-existent in its coverage of the award ceremony, with only two results that came up in the search. The first news report dated 12 February 1999 and entitled 'Reunion of the Superstars' (*'Devlerin Buluşması'*) simply noted that the award ceremony witnessed interesting moments. However, neither details were provided nor was Ahmet Kaya mentioned by name. Further, the newspaper completely excluded the consequent attack from its coverage of the night despite including the singing of the tenth-anniversary march with the omission of what preceded and followed the march. *Sabah's* stance became visible in a news report

¹¹⁴ Oktay Ekşi, 'Bir densiz' ('One tactless person'), *Hürriyet*, 13 February 1999.

entitled ‘Released from prison’ (*‘Cezaevinden döndü’*) on 16 February 1999. The incident at the award ceremony was briefly referred to by quoting Kaya’s alleged words: ‘Artık Kürtçe okuyacağım. Onların kafasına vura vura Kürtlüğümü kabul ettireceğim.’¹¹⁵ In an akin manner to *Hürriyet*, *Sabah* altered the singer’s words by fabricating sentences that did not exist in the speech. First, Kaya did not utter that he would make them recognise his Kurdish identity but referred to the denial of the Kurdish reality in Turkey. Second, his announcement of ‘singing a Kurdish song in the next album’ was distorted to mean as if he said he would sing only Kurdish songs in the future. Finally, the idiomatic phrase ‘kafasından inmemek’ in the original speech that can be translated as ‘breathe down someone’s neck’ was replaced by ‘kafasına vura vura’, loosely translating as ‘by using physical force.’

The search in *Milliyet* for the selected period yielded eight results (seven news reports and one column). The first news report dated 11 February 1999 and entitled ‘Kaya’yı polis kurtardı’ (‘Police saved Kaya’) included only a brief mention of the incident at the award ceremony by adding that the guests reacted to Kaya’s words by flinging forks. Accordingly, the singer allegedly said that he would make a video for the Kurdish song in his new album and breathe down the neck of the television channels which would not air it. On the following day, 12 February 1999, *Milliyet* covered both the ceremony and the incident in a more detailed manner in two pages. The news report on the first page entitled ‘Kaya’ya 10. yıl marşı’ (‘Tenth-anniversary march to Kaya’) summarised the incident by including the same quote from Kaya’s speech previously used in the newspaper. In the news report continued on the seventh page, it was stated that the award ceremony began in a tense atmosphere due to Kaya’s words.

As illustrated in Table 4 and shown through examples, all three newspapers presented a one-sided account of the incident by identifying with the so-called sensitivities of the attackers and openly censuring Kaya. All three newspapers also

¹¹⁵ ‘I will only sing Kurdish songs from now on. I will make them recognise my Kurdish identity by force.’

affirmed the singing of the march as a proper response. A full unedited version of Kaya's speech was not provided in any of these newspapers. The selected parts of the speech were either altered to distort the original meaning or taken out of the context and order in which they were said. The alterations and distortion in each newspaper can be seen in Table 4. This selective appropriation resulted in the exclusion of Kaya's remarks such as his thanking the association or his remark that he defended the indivisible unity of the country all his life. Therefore, the newspapers strictly omitted any details that rendered the verbal and physical attack on Kaya more contentious and less consensual.

Kaya was prosecuted for the charges of promoting separatism in his speech at the ceremony and aiding the PKK with reference to a photo that was allegedly taken at a concert in Berlin in 1993. He was also purported to have said that 'the men in the mountains needed money.' Despite the absence of the original photo, the prosecutor treated the photo that was first published in *Hürriyet* on 15 February 1999 as the evidence of crime in the court. Kaya was seen in the photograph as singing in front of a picture of the PKK's leader Abdullah Öcalan. Kaya died of a heart attack in Paris seven months after he was sentenced in absentia to three years and nine months in prison in March 2000.¹¹⁶ The video record of the controversial concert emerged in 2010, revealing that *Hürriyet* both published a forged photo and distorted Kaya's words.¹¹⁷

Several attempts were made to restore Ahmet Kaya's honour in the 2000s. The Magazine Journalists' Association, which hosted the award ceremony in 1999, began to give the Ahmet Kaya Special Award, an award named after the late singer, as a

¹¹⁶ 'Kurdish singer Kaya's commemoration held in Paris,' *Anadolu Agency*, 16 November 2014, <<http://aa.com.tr/en/culture-and-art/kurdish-singer-kaya-s-commemoration-held-in-paris/100937>> [accessed 20 May 2016].

¹¹⁷ 'Ahmet Kaya'nın görüntüleri sahte çıktı,' ('Ahmet Kaya's image turns out to be forged'), *Habertürk Daily*, 14 December 2010, <<http://www.haberturk.com/yasam/haber/581093-ahmet-kayanin-goruntuleri-sahte-cikti>> [accessed 20 May 2016].

posthumous apology in 2012.¹¹⁸ The Turkish Presidency also posthumously granted the Presidential Grand Award to Ahmet Kaya in 2013 ‘for his ability to bring people from different backgrounds together through his music, his unique style and his discourse’, according to a press statement issued by the Presidency.¹¹⁹ The then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan retrospectively referred to the attack at a parliamentary speech in 2013.¹²⁰ Erdoğan condemned the mob who verbally and physically attacked Kaya and criticised them for failing to acknowledge their involvement in the attack years later. Subsequently, the pop singer Serdar Ortaç, who started to sing the march on that night, apologised for his role in the incident.¹²¹ Ertuğrul Özkök, the then editor-in-chief of *Hürriyet*, expressed regret for the language used in the news reports on Ahmet Kaya after that night.¹²² Consequently, the steps that the AKP government took for the resolution of the Kurdish question in the 2000s facilitated a change in the manner of discussing this event and the smear campaign launched against Kaya in the mainstream media in the 1990s.

Despite the changing perception of this event a decade later, the analysis demonstrates that all three newspapers did not show any conspicuous differences on the matters that were perceived as a national threat and figures labelled as the enemy in the conjuncture of the 1990s. In other words, despite being owned by private companies, all these three newspapers acted as the mouthpiece of the official stance on the conflict and the Kurdish question. Based on the absence of striking differences

¹¹⁸ ‘Magazine journalists to honour Ahmet Kaya,’ *Hürriyet Daily News*, 19 June 2012, <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/magazine-journalists-to-honor-ahmet-kaya.aspx?pageID=238&nid=23473>> [accessed 20 May 2016].

¹¹⁹ ‘2013 “Presidential Culture and Arts Grand Awards” conferred,’ *Anadolu Agency*, 24 December 2013, <<http://aa.com.tr/en/culture-and-art/2013-presidential-culture-and-arts-grand-awards-conferred/195380>> [accessed 20 May 2016].

¹²⁰ “‘We absolutely do not have amnesty in our agenda’: PM Erdoğan,” *Anadolu Agency*, 19 November 2013, <<http://aa.com.tr/en/turkey/we-absolutely-do-not-have-amnesty-in-our-agenda-pm-erdogan/203230>> [accessed 20 May 2016].

¹²¹ Ozan E. Aksoy, ‘Music and Reconciliation in Turkey’, in *Kurdish Question in Turkey: New Perspectives on Violence, Representation and Reconciliation*, ed. by Cengiz Güneş and Welat Zeydanlıoğlu (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 225-244 (p. 233).

¹²² ‘*Hürriyet*’in hakaret dolu Ahmet Kaya haberi’ (*Hürriyet*’s defamatory news on Ahmet Kaya’), *Akşam Daily*, 28 October 2015, <<http://www.aksam.com.tr/guncel/hurriyetin-hakaret-dolu-ahmet-kaya-haberi/haber-456471>> [accessed 20 May 2016].

among the three highest-selling newspapers, *Milliyet* was selected as the newspaper representative of the mainstream print media through which to identify and examine the official discourse on the conflict in the 1990s and early 2000s. This decision was made because *Milliyet* was the only newspaper among three of them with the online archives dating back to the early 1990s.

The collation of the news reports from *Milliyet*'s news archive involved three steps. First, in order to be used in the online search, a list of keywords was drawn up for the armed conflict, unsolved murders and hunger strikes. Second, the online search was limited to a specific period that varied depending on when these phenomena peaked. For instance, in the case of military operations and unsolved murders, the online search focused on the periods when they caused the highest death toll recorded in that decade. In contrast, in collating the corpus of news reports on hunger strikes, the search focused only on the periods between the starting and ending point of the hunger strikes. Chapter Three provides the keywords and results that the online search in *Milliyet*'s news archive yielded for each phenomenon related to the conflict. The following section provides brief summaries of the chapters of the thesis.

3. STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The thesis is composed of six chapters. The first chapter traces the evolution of the conflict from the late 1970s until the present day to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and its repercussions. In doing so, the chapter will also delineate the official state ideology in Turkey and its effect on the recognition of the ethnic and linguistic rights of Kurdish citizens. This insight into the broader official framework will allow for distinguishing between the long-standing Kurdish question and the conflict, which started in 1984. The survey will outline the political contexts in which the conflict intensified in the early 1990s, de-escalated in the early 2000s, underwent a period of de-securitisation between 2009 and 2015 and resumed after 2015. This detailed overview will illustrate the significance of the 1990s as the reference point for pinpointing the hard-line official discourse on the conflict and any

progress made on the Kurdish question. Additionally, it will set the background for situating the research films within their social and political contexts of production and distribution in Chapter Two.

The second chapter contextualises the films in relation to the history of the conflict to identify the constitutive role of the official discourse and policies on the Kurdish question in the making of these films. The chapter will summarise the development of film production in Turkey from the early years of the Republic to place the research films in the history of Turkish cinema. In discussing each film's context of production and distribution, the chapter will divide the films into three categories, depending on whether they were released before, during or after the Kurdish opening. This categorisation will enable us to pinpoint how each film operated in relation to the shifts in the trajectory of the official perception of the conflict between 1999 and 2013 when the films were released. The chapter will also consider each film's source(s) of funding, target audience and experiences of censorship in differentiating between the films in terms of the enabling or hindering role of the state rhetoric and practices in their production.

The third chapter investigates the characteristics of the official discourse on the conflict by focusing on the 1990s and early 2000s which represent the context of reference for most of the films in treating the conflict and related phenomena. The chapter will first delineate the state-media relations in Turkey to justify the use of a mainstream newspaper as a tool for locating the official responses to the conflict. This overview will also encompass the changes that have taken place in the structure of the media ownership since 2002 when the AKP's single-party rule began. This background will facilitate a deeper comprehension of the dynamics that defined the role of the mainstream media as a mouthpiece of the military in reporting the conflict. Second, the chapter will analyse the official and media presentation of the conflict by drawing on the texts collated from *Milliyet*, which is regarded as a broadsheet newspaper and selected as being a representative example of the mainstream press. The textual analysis will utilise John Hartley's 'accessed voice' and critical discourse-

analytical strategies of backgrounding and foregrounding to identify which perspectives were prioritised and which ones were marginalised and omitted in reporting the conflict.

The fourth chapter examines the role of depicting multilingualism in shaping and mirroring each film's engagement with the official presentation of the conflict. This inquiry will be preceded by an insight into the monolingualist tenets of the official language policy in Turkey and its impact on representing linguistic diversity in Turkish cinema. The chapter will also present a survey of the literature on the functions of linguistic diversity in films, thus exploring the potential of multilingual cinema to engage with the official language policy. Drawing on Chris Wahl's conceptualisation of polyglot cinema and Meir Sternberg's two poles of linguistic representation, homogenisation and vehicular matching, the chapter will distinguish between all the research films in terms of the uses of multilingualism. On the one hand, the analysis will demonstrate how each film's treatment of its subject matter disables or activates the potential of multilingual representation to challenge the monolingualist mindset. On the other hand, the chapter will show how each film's portrayal of linguistic diversity reworks the constructions of binary oppositions in the official and mainstream media presentation of the conflict.

The fifth chapter explores the role of diegetic interpreting, and the lack thereof in some cases, in re-presenting the conflict in the films in relation to the official discourse. Since interpreting facilitates communication between the speakers of Turkish and Kurdish, this chapter will specifically highlight the implications of the language policy on the use and status of Kurdish through a framework of silencing in discourse. This framework will enable us to address the interplay between silence, silencing and translation in discussing the diegetic interpreting sequences. The chapter will also include a survey of the scholarship on the portrayals of interpreting to provide an insight into the possible meanings and functions of diegetic interpreters in films. By highlighting their non-professional status, it will identify the characterisation of

diegetic interpreters and their functions both in the story and in relation to the viewers' perception of the story.

The sixth chapter investigates the role of recontextualisation in forging an intertextual interplay between each film's treatment of the subject matter and the official discourse on the conflict. The critical discourse-analytical conceptualisation of recontextualisation will provide an insight into the characteristics and functions of this process to explore its capacity to offer new perspectives on a contested topic such as the conflict in relation to the official version. The chapter will examine the forms of recontextualisation in three groups, the first of which is the recontextualisation of national symbols and official agents representing the Turkish state. The second group concerns the recontextualisation of audio and video material, which includes radio and television broadcasts, archival footage and non-fictional interviews. The third one involves the recontextualisation of texts, such as songs, fairy tales, quotes, which do not bear direct relevance to the context of the conflict.

The conclusion ties the findings from the use of multilingualism, translation and intertextuality as the lenses through which to analyse the films in relation to the official discourse and practices on the conflict in their context of production and context of reference. It also poses broader questions about the impact of the resurgence of the security-oriented approach and the lingering taboo status of the conflict on the ways of discussing these selected films. Finally, the conclusion addresses the possible avenues for further research where a similar analysis can be done to introduce new readings of multilingual political films.

CHAPTER 1

A Brief History of Turkey's Kurdish Conflict

This chapter provides an overview of the historical development of Turkey's Kurdish conflict, which represents the common thread that ties together the films selected for analysis in the thesis. It presents an up-to-date account of the conflict, starting from the formative years of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (hereafter referred to as the PKK) in the late 1970s and early 1980s until the present day.¹ In doing so, the chapter delineates the characteristics of the official state ideology in Turkey, with a focus on its implications on the linguistic and ethnic rights of Kurdish citizens. This helps us elucidate the distinction and relationship between the long-standing Kurdish question and the conflict. The chapter also highlights the factors that played a direct or indirect role in the emergence and intensification of the conflict such as the 1980 coup and the military's increased influence over the political domain in the 1990s. Subsequently, the 2000s are considered in terms of the changing paradigm in the perception of the conflict, the peace negotiations and resumption of the clashes in July 2015. Domestic and international factors such as the EU membership process and the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011 are also noted in terms of their effects on the trajectory of the conflict. This chapter thus aims to show how the conflict has changed since the 1980s, and in what respects the state's policy on the Kurdish question has shifted accordingly over time.

1.1. The Origins of the Conflict

Turkey's Kurdish conflict can be described as the general name of the armed conflict between the Turkish Armed Forces (hereafter TAF) and the PKK.² It has remained a perennial topic in Turkish politics for over three decades now since the PKK launched an insurgency against the Turkish state in 1984.³ It is worth noting here that the

¹ PKK is the acronym for the organisation's Kurdish name 'Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê.'

² PKK is listed as a terrorist organisation by the Turkish state as well as by the USA and EU.

³ Yılmaz Ensarioğlu, 'Turkey's Kurdish Question and the Peace Process', *Insight Turkey*, 15.2 (2013), 7-17 (p. 10).

Kurdish conflict is not the reason, but the outcome of what is known as the Kurdish question.⁴ In other words, the conflict emanated from the long-standing Kurdish question, but not the other way around. A brief characterisation of the official state ideology regarding national identity in Turkey can help us corroborate this point and attain a fuller comprehension of the conflict and its relation to the Kurdish question.

The official state ideology of Turkey, since the 1930s, has been Kemalism, which is named after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. Esra Özyürek describes the Kemalist ideology as one which is ‘founded on homogeneity, self-sufficiency, and secularism, replacing the pluralist Ottoman Empire ruled by Islamic principles.’⁵ To start with secularism, Kemalism represented a progressive agenda based on establishing a secular nation-state in the 1930s.⁶ However, although *laiklik*, the Turkish word for secularism, originates from the French *laïcité*, the Turkish case differed from the secularist model in France in that religion was not completely excluded from the state’s system.⁷ The Kemalist regime established rigid segregation between Islam and the political realm, while incorporating Islamic politics into the system in various ways.⁸ Therefore, a militant form of secularism was promoted during the single-party period (1923-1946) when there was complete state control of religious institutions, education and publications.⁹ Secularism thus served as the means to control religion and to consolidate the official Kemalist ideology of the state.

⁴ ‘Kurdish question’ is used in this study as the English translation of what is referred to as ‘*Kürt Sorunu*’ in Turkish. The Turkish term literally translates as ‘Kurdish problem’, but this literal translation is not preferred here because it implicitly associates the presence of Kurds with a problem. Alternatively, the term ‘Kurdish issue’ is used in the literature, but it is also dismissed here because it runs the risk of being too unspecific and thus obscuring what is at stake. In comparison with the other two terms, ‘Kurdish question’ conveys in a more straightforward manner the presence of a predicament concerning Kurdish citizens of Turkey that awaits resolution.

⁵ Esra Özyürek, ‘Miniaturizing Atatürk: Privatization of State Imagery and Ideology in Turkey’, *American Ethnologist*, 31.3 (2004), 374–391 (p. 375).

⁶ Ömer Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition* (New York: Routledge, 2005), ix.

⁷ Başak İnce, *Citizenship and Identity in Turkey: From Atatürk’s Republic to the Present Day* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2012), p. 41.

⁸ Ümit Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, ‘Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction in Republican Turkey’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 28.2 (1996), 231–251 (p. 231).

⁹ İnce, 41.

In addition to secularism, Kemalism was marked by the emphasis on homogeneity which was underpinned by the one-nation, one-language vision and hence, linguistic and territorial unity. Nicole Watts suggests that Kemalism was ‘a form of Turkish nationalism that preferentialized Turkish ethnic identity’ in the early years of the state.¹⁰ Indeed, the nationalist movement aimed to rebuild the political identity and unity based on Turkishness after the collapse of the multi-ethnic and multicultural Empire. The Turkish History Thesis (*‘Türk Tarih Tezi’*) and the Sun-Language Thesis (*‘Güneş-Dil Teorisi’*) promoted ‘a racialised conception of the history’ where the Turkish race, culture and language were put on the centre as the emanating source of all civilisations and languages.¹¹ In addition to the exaltation of a homogeneous Turkish identity at the expense of other constituent elements of the state, this official doctrine assigned a sacred character to the Republic as a unitary nation-state. Further, Atatürk was revered as the progenitor of the whole nation to inspire the masses to valorise the leader and thus to invoke a strong and unified image of the state.¹² This reverence went hand in hand with the establishment of sacred symbols such as the Atatürk busts and Turkish flag as well as the national anthem and tenth-anniversary march.

In parallel, the Kemalist regime also promoted Turkish as the national language, accompanied by other practices of Turkification. This language policy was (and is) politically significant, as it happened at the expense of the multilingual character of the country, an aspect inherited from the Ottoman past. The state sanctioned and built education and cultural centres called ‘People’s Houses’ (*‘Halk Evleri’*) to disseminate Turkishness across Anatolia, particularly in the Kurdish regions.¹³ For instance, the Law Faculty Students’ Association of İstanbul University initiated a nation-wide campaign with the motto ‘Citizen, Speak Turkish!’ (*‘Vatandaş, Türkçe*

¹⁰ Nicole F. Watts, ‘Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-94’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31.4 (1999), 631–656 (p. 633).

¹¹ Ayşe Gül Altınay, *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 22.

¹² Özyürek, p. 382.

¹³ Kristin Dickinson, ‘Where Language Is Ripped Apart: Absence and Illegibility in Bilge Karasu’s *The Garden of Departed Cats*’, *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, 2.1 (2014), 106–128 (p. 121).

Konuş!') in 1928 by hanging banners in public and private institutions throughout the country to encourage citizens to communicate only in Turkish.¹⁴ One local newspaper made an appeal to the readers with a banner 'Citizen, do not make friends with or shop from those so-called Turkish citizens who do not speak Turkish.'¹⁵ This movement, which began as a civilian attempt and later received extensive support from the state, testified that official language policies were also supported and disseminated at the individual level. Additionally, the Latin alphabet was adopted to replace the Arabic script, which was blamed for the country's high rate of illiteracy and backwardness.¹⁶ Relatedly, the Turkish Language Institute (*Türk Dil Kurumu*) was founded in 1932 to rid the Turkish language of the Persian and Arabic influences which were once deemed as more elegant or refined due to the dominance of Islamic culture in the Ottoman times.¹⁷

These Kemalist principles represent not historically or politically determined categories, but meta-political values that are supra-constitutional and normative.¹⁸ In other words, Kemalism both sets the intransigent red lines of the state structure and informs the boundaries of political activity within the country.¹⁹ Therefore, Kemalism as the official doctrine of Turkey stands above the domain of civilian politics to the point of subordinating the discourses of elected governments. This created a gap between the official rhetoric and practice in the implementation of rights and freedoms at certain points in the history of the country, as it happened in the 1990s, which will be elaborated on below. Crucially, the Turkish military became the central agent in the

¹⁴ Senem Aslan, "'Citizen Speak Turkish!': A Nation in the Making', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, (2007), 245-272 (p. 250).

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 245.

¹⁶ Svante E. Cornell, 'The Land of Many Crossroads: The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics', *Orbis*, 45.1 (2001), 31-46 (p. 34).

¹⁷ Frank Tachau, 'Language and Politics: Turkish Language Reform', *The Review of Politics*, 26.2 (1964), 191-204 (p. 193).

¹⁸ Ebru Bulut, 'Social Grammar of Populist Nationalism', in *Turkey Beyond Nationalism: Towards Post-Nationalist Identities*, ed. by Hans-Lukas Kieser (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 125-135 (p. 127).

¹⁹ Hamit Bozarslan, 'Kemalism, Westernization and Anti-Liberalism', in *Turkey Beyond Nationalism: Towards Post-Nationalist Identities*, ed. by Hans-Lukas Kieser (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 28-36 (p. 28).

institutionalisation of Kemalism as a state ideology.²⁰ This is linked to the fact that the founders of the Republic, including Atatürk himself, were army officers in the Ottoman Empire who also led the Turkish Independence War (1918-1922).

Ayşe Gül Altınay notes that ‘the discourse on the Turkish nation being a military-nation developed in late Ottoman and early Republican periods and became central to national self-understanding.’²¹ Altınay also stresses that the military as an institution and ‘military-nationhood’ as an idea have been omnipresent in Turkey since then.²² The military as a non-elected body not only regards itself but also is regarded by the majority of the population as the ultimate guardian of the Turkish state.²³ The Turkish military has thus retained a privileged status of autonomy vis-à-vis elected politicians throughout the country’s history. This custodianship role of the secular state also served as the pretext for the military to intervene in civilian politics from an ‘above-politics’ position four times in the period between 1960 and 2000.²⁴ The coups on 27 May 1960 and 12 September 1980 resulted in a new constitution with a view to reinforcing the military’s influence. Therefore, the 1961 and 1982 Constitutions of Turkey, the latter of which still remains in effect despite the amendments of its several articles, were both drafted by the military governments.

Finally, the Lausanne Treaty, the founding treaty of Turkey signed between the founders of the Republic and the Allied States on 24 July 1923, should be noted as the official document underlying the minority policy of the Kemalist regime.²⁵ Accordingly, minority status was (and still is) granted solely to non-Muslim groups living in Turkey, and hence only minority groups such as Jews and Armenians are

²⁰ Menderes Çınar and Burhanettin Duran, ‘The Specific Evolution of Contemporary Political Islam in Turkey and Its “Difference”’, in *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party*, ed. by Ümit Cizre (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 17–40 (p. 26).

²¹ Altınay, p. 50.

²² Ibid., p. 3.

²³ Bulut, p. 128.

²⁴ Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, ‘The Anatomy of the Turkish Military’s Political Autonomy’, *Comparative Politics*, 29.2 (1997), 151–166 (p. 153).

²⁵ Baskın Oran, ‘The Minority Concept and Rights in Turkey: The Lausanne Peace Treaty and Current Issues’, in *Human Rights in Turkey*, ed. by Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 35–56 (p. 35).

officially recognised as the ‘minority’ and granted minority rights in Turkey. Any other linguistically and ethnically diverse Muslim groups such as Kurds, Laz and Hamshen-speaking communities whose mother tongues are not Turkish have been denied minority rights because they are deemed as ethnically Turkish citizens of the Republic. Any demands as to the recognition of linguistic and ethnic differences have been dismissed as invalid at best and labelled as treasonous at worst since then. Therefore, any deviation from the Turkish character of the nation-state and the secular framework of the republic is construed as a challenge to the Kemalist ideology.

Relatedly, the Kemalist ideology and its minority policy have historically informed the official stance on the Kurds who are ‘Turkey's only large linguistic minority, comprising approximately one-fifth of the country's population.’²⁶ From its early years, the Turkish state defined the Kurdish question as ‘either political reaction, tribal resistance or regional backwardness, but never as an ethno-political question.’²⁷ The state denied the existence of Kurdish identity and maintained that ‘Kurds were mountain Turks, with toughened identities and language’ until the early 1990s.²⁸ Accordingly, an etymological myth was invented to explain the origin of the word ‘Kurd’ by attributing it to the crunching sound that came out of walking in the snow on the mountains ‘kart, kurt, kart, kurt.’²⁹ In parallel, official documents and newspapers discussed the problems in the Kurdish areas as the ones of ‘the East’ resulting from the lack of economic development and banditry.³⁰ Mesut Yeğen characterises the Turkish state’s discourse as deeply silent on the Kurdishness of the Kurdish question, referring to the efforts to avoid the ethnic dimension of the problem.³¹ This silence is also reflected in the official interpretation of the Kurdish question as a terror threat and rejection of linguistic and cultural rights that Turkish

²⁶ İnce, p. 13.

²⁷ Mesut Yeğen, ‘The Kurdish Question in Turkish State Discourse’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34.4 (1999), 555–568 (p. 555).

²⁸ Kemal Kirişci and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 108.

²⁹ Altınay, p. 43.

³⁰ Ceren Belge, ‘Civilian Victimization and the Politics of Information in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey’, *World Politics*, 68.2 (2016), 275–306 (p. 282).

³¹ Yeğen, p. 555.

authorities deemed as a complication. Therefore, the systematic denial and suppression constituted key factors in the emergence of the armed conflict, as is delineated below starting from the 1980s.

Although the conflict officially started after the end of a three-year military government (21 September 1980 – 13 December 1983), the origins of the PKK date back to the 1970s. The PKK was initially established as an illegal Marxist-Leninist party in 1978 and advocated the creation of a Marxist Kurdish state.³² In its early years, it was also known as *Apocular*, which loosely translates as followers of Apo, the nickname of Abdullah Öcalan, who founded the movement.³³ Hamit Bozarslan describes Öcalan's worldview as Fanonian. Accordingly, like Franz Fanon, Öcalan considered violent struggle as 'not simply a means of national liberation, but the very condition of personal emancipation.'³⁴ However, the PKK's use of violence constituted a strategic decision to compete against other Kurdish organisations in the 1970s.³⁵ The organisation thus created a climate of fear and ambivalence among Kurds due to its method and promotion of atheism and failed to achieve influence with its small-scale attacks before the 1980s.

The 12 September 1980 coup played a critical role in the escalation of the Kurdish conflict. The military's intervention, which was the third one in the history of the Republic, was initially welcomed by the public because the street clashes between the left-wing and right-wing groups had spread throughout the country and peaked during the late 1970s. The country's malfunctioning economy was also in the grip of a crisis. The combination of these factors created an atmosphere conducive to the military's justification of the takeover as a rightful intervention that was ostensibly driven to end the chaos and restore order. One of the earliest practices of the military government

³² Cornell, p. 39.

³³ Ceren Belge, 'State Building and The Limits of Legibility: Kinship Networks and Kurdish Resistance in Turkey', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 43.1 (2011), 95–114 (p. 106).

³⁴ Hamit Bozarslan, 'Kurds and the Turkish State', in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. by Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 333–356 (p. 352).

³⁵ Güneş Murat Tezcür, 'Violence and Nationalist Mobilization: The Onset of the Kurdish Insurgency in Turkey', *Nationalities Papers*, 43.2 (2015), 248–266 (p. 256).

that came to power in the aftermath of the coup was to amend the Martial Law Act. The martial law commanders were granted enhanced powers, ranging from the right to ban strikes, public meetings and demonstrations, to suspend newspapers and other publications, and to dismiss local and central government staff without right of appeal.³⁶ More than forty-three thousand people were arrested, and 167 mass trials were opened against ‘terrorist’ organisations within a year, some of which had solely exercised their rights under the 1961 constitution, which was in effect at the time of the coup.³⁷ Torture also came to be employed as a regular method to extract confessions from suspects during this period.³⁸

In addition to its immediate consequences, the 1980 coup also had a legacy for the following decades through the reconstruction of the state institutions. For example, a new Higher Education Law was issued and, accordingly, martial law commanders restricted university autonomy and dismissed many faculty members.³⁹ Likewise, the education system was also used to reinforce the status of the army as the guardian of the Turkish state. All civic textbooks published after the coup era defined the nation as a unity of language, religion, race, history, and culture.⁴⁰ In parallel, these textbooks began with the National Anthem, the Turkish flag, and a picture of Atatürk.⁴¹ These symbols were to prevail as the means of displaying solidarity with the military and condemning the ‘enemies’ of the Turkish state amid the surge of nationalistic sentiment in the 1990s, as will be discussed below.

Additionally, the military government issued a new constitution in 1982, which was primarily designed to restore the authority of the state and maintain public order rather than to protect the rights and liberties of its citizens.⁴² In other words, the

³⁶ William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 251.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

³⁹ Carter Vaughn Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism and Modernity: A History, 1789-2007* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 350.

⁴⁰ İnce, p. 177.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁴² The constitution is still in effect although many of its articles have been amended.

fundamental rights of the citizens were subordinated to the unity and security of the state.⁴³ In parallel, the priority to protect the state granted the new constitution its restrictive feature. For instance, Article 12 provided that everyone possessed inherent fundamental rights and freedoms which were inalienable, but Article 14 restricted this by stating that none of these rights could be exercised ‘with the aim of violating the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory and nation.’⁴⁴ Likewise, Article 28 guaranteed freedom of the press while also prohibiting publications in ‘any language prohibited by law.’⁴⁵ The language ban did not solely target the Kurdish language but concerned all the languages spoken in the country other than Turkish that did not hold a minority status. However, it reinforced the state’s denial of the existence of Kurds as a distinct ethnic group.

The transition to civilian politics in December 1983 did not lessen the military’s influence over the political domain, as the PKK launched its insurgency on 15 August 1984 by raiding two army bases near the Turkish-Iraqi border.⁴⁶ Initially, the government regarded the PKK as ‘a group of “few bandits and looters.”’⁴⁷ The Village Guard System was established by the government’s decision in 1985 as a counter-terror strategy against the PKK.⁴⁸ The village guards had been introduced in the country’s history in 1924 under the rationale that villagers could protect themselves against the criminal gangs of the 1920s.⁴⁹ The program re-introduced in the mid-1980s was at first implemented in three southeastern provinces with about 800 guards and later expanded to twenty-two provinces in 1993 when violence related to the conflict reached its peak.⁵⁰ This program involved assigning local groups to the task of controlling and reporting any separatist activities in their village. The state provided

⁴³ İnce, p. 141.

⁴⁴ Hale, p. 258.

⁴⁵ Findley, p. 353.

⁴⁶ Cengiz Güneş, *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 101.

⁴⁷ Metin Gürcan, ‘Arming Civilians as a Counterterror Strategy: The Case of the Village Guard System in Turkey’, *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 8.1 (2015), 1–22 (p. 2).

⁴⁸ Özlem Kayhan Pusane, ‘Turkey’s Military Victory over the PKK and Its Failure to End the PKK Insurgency’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 51.5 (2015), 727–741 (p. 728).

⁴⁹ Gürcan, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

the armament and financial support for these village guards. In other words, these locals served as paramilitary forces under the command of the Gendarmerie to aid the army in fighting terror.⁵¹ The PKK later targeted the villages that joined the program, killing the village guards and their families for collaborating with the state.⁵²

Overall, the 1980 coup and concomitant repression enabled the PKK to garner popular support among the Kurds in southeast Turkey and facilitate the recruitment of new members for the organisation. The primary reason was that the Kurds were amongst those receiving the harshest treatment from the military government.⁵³ For instance, the Diyarbakır Prison, which was built in 1980 and used as a military prison in the coup era, represented a site where Kurdish prisoners were forced to declare themselves as Turkish and yell the Turkish national anthem.⁵⁴ Likewise, Bozarslan attributes much of the PKK's success to the suffering of the Kurdish population under the military regime rather than to the external support from countries such as Syria.⁵⁵ The Kurds in the southeastern provinces perceived the PKK as the panacea to their persecution and welcomed its previously rejected offensive as an act of revenge from the mid-1980s onward.⁵⁶ The PKK also toned down its Marxist rhetoric and instead emphasised Kurdish nationalism in the hopes of attracting a more significant number of Kurds in Turkey.⁵⁷ Consequently, oppression and torture coupled with the language ban fostered the radicalisation of the Kurdish nationalist movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The following section presents an overview of the critical developments in the evolution of the insurgency in the 1990s.

⁵¹ Kerem Öktem, *Turkey Since 1989: Angry Nation* (London: Zed Books, 2011), p. 89.

⁵² Yelene Biberman, 'Self-Defense Militias, Death Squads, and State Outsourcing of Violence in India and Turkey', *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2016), 1-31 (p. 13).

⁵³ David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p. 413.

⁵⁴ Öktem, p. 65.

⁵⁵ Bozarslan (2008), p. 351.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 351.

⁵⁷ Cornell, p. 39.

1.2. The 1990s: the Intensification of the Conflict and Its Repercussions

The initial official perception of the PKK as an insignificant group of bandits changed in the early 1990s when the TAF declared a relentless struggle against terror. 1993 stood out as the year when the TAF started a low-intensity war against the PKK. Relatedly, that year also marked a shift in the government's stance on the resolution of the conflict. This change was precipitated by a single attack on 24 May 1993 when the PKK killed 33 unarmed soldiers in Bingöl, an eastern province of Turkey, and brought about the highest death toll in that year.⁵⁸ Subsequently, the Çiller government gave unlimited authority to the military to combat the PKK more effectively.⁵⁹

This shift in perception on the part of the Turkish state manifested itself in the intensification of counter-terrorism strategies and adoption of a hard-line stance to end the conflict. Accordingly, the TAF increased the number of military operations in response to the PKK's attacks on military posts. In return, the PKK also attempted to undermine the military in the southeast by killing teachers, civil servants and village guards who were assigned by the state.⁶⁰ It also targeted former PKK members who were blamed for cooperating with the state.⁶¹ The escalation of violence was reflected in the casualty figures, showing that 20,181 people, including 5,014 civilians, were killed between 1984 and 1995.⁶² Of this total amount, 16,613 killings took place in the period between 1992 and 1995.⁶³ Consequently, the 1990s, and its first half in particular, represented a peak point when the rebellion developed into a fully fledged conflict and the clashes caused the highest death toll.

However, the period before the PKK's deadly attack on 24 May 1993 witnessed some positive developments in terms of the resolution of the conflict. The self-image of Turkey as a monolithic nation was challenged in the early 1990s due to both internal

⁵⁸ Kirişci and Winrow, p. 127.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 128.

⁶⁰ Biberman, p. 10.

⁶¹ *Human Rights Watch, Turkey: Violations of Free Expression in Turkey* (Human Rights Watch, 1999), p. 10.

⁶² Kirişci and Winrow, p. 126.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 126.

and external factors. For instance, the increased international attention on the Kurdish question after the Gulf war heightened the pressure on Turkey to introduce reforms and replace the security-oriented approach with a human rights-oriented approach to resolve the problem.⁶⁴ It was in this context that the ruling Motherland Party (henceforth ANAP as short for *Anavatan Partisi*) proposed to partially lift the language ban on 26 January 1991, and removed the decree that ‘the mother tongue of Turkish citizens is Turkish.’

Additionally, in the same period, Kurdish nationalist opinion was represented in parliament for the first time in Turkey’s history by a group that voiced human rights violations against Kurds.⁶⁵ Süleyman Demirel’s right-wing Right Path Party (henceforth DYP as short for *Doğru Yol Partisi*) gained the majority of votes in the national elections on 20 October 1991 and formed a coalition government with Erdal İnönü’s left-wing Social Democratic Populist Party (hereafter SHP as short for *Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti*), which came third in the polls. Before the elections, İnönü had allied with the pro-Kurdish People’s Labour Party (hereafter HEP as short for *Halkın Emek Partisi*). The HEP defined itself as a party with the aim to ‘solve the Kurdish problem through peaceful and democratic methods in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.’⁶⁶ In the new parliament, the HEP constituted ‘a quarter of the SHP’s parliamentary strength with 22 HEP members out of 82 SHP members.’⁶⁷ Further, the HEP became part of the government through the continued alliance with the SHP as being the coalition partner. Hence, the election results were regarded as a major blow to the orthodox Kemalist position.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Gülistan Gürbey, ‘The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey since the 1980s’, in *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s, Its Impact on Turkey and the Middle East*, ed. by Robert Olson (Kentucky: Kentucky University Press, 1996), pp. 9-37 (p. 14).

⁶⁵ Martin van Bruinessen, ‘Turkey’s Death Squads’, *Middle East Report*, No. 199, *Turkey: Insolvent Ideologies, Fractured State* (April-June 1996), 20-23 (p. 20).

⁶⁶ Watts, p. 636.

⁶⁷ Meltem Müftüler-Baç, ‘The Never-Ending Story: Turkey and the European Union’, in *Turkey Before and After Atatürk: Internal and External Affairs*, ed. by Sylvia Kedourie (London: Routledge 1999), pp. 240-259 (p. 250).

⁶⁸ Veli Yadırgı, *The Political Economy of the Kurds of Turkey: From the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 223.

This short period also witnessed the first concrete steps being taken on an official level for ending the conflict. After the 1991 national elections, Süleyman Demirel, the new prime minister, declared in a speech in Diyarbakır that Turkey recognised ‘the Kurdish reality’ and thus became the first prime minister who acknowledged the ethnic dimension of the Kurdish question.⁶⁹ Both the speech and the program of this newly formed coalition government raised hopes that a democratisation process would be introduced to enable the Kurds in Turkey to maintain their ethnic and cultural identity.

Additionally, President Turgut Özal single-handedly took the initiative to set up a dialogue process with the PKK and sway the opinion of the bureaucrats and the public to support a PKK amnesty.⁷⁰ Particularly in response to Özal’s initiatives, the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire on 20 March 1993 for the first time since the start of the conflict as a gesture of goodwill.⁷¹ However, about one month after Özal’s sudden death in April 1993, the hopes for peace disappeared just as the two-month ceasefire ended with the PKK’s attack in Bingöl on 24 May 1993, which was mentioned at the start of this section. Thereafter, the Turkish state reverted to the politics of coercion regarding the Kurdish question between 1993 and 1999.⁷²

It is worth noting here that the Kemalist ideology still prevailed between 1991 and 1993, despite the increasing visibility of the Kurdish question and partial removal of the language ban. For instance, as part of the counter-terrorism strategies, the parliament passed an Anti-Terror Law in 1991, which promulgated a broad and ambiguous definition of terrorism and thus resulted in the prosecution of numerous people only for the expression of their thoughts.⁷³ This law outlawed ‘any written or

⁶⁹ Ayhan Kaya, ‘Democracy, Secularism and Islam in Turkey’, in *Religion and Politics: European and Global Perspectives*, ed. by Johann P. Arnason and Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 115-139 (p. 127).

⁷⁰ Mesut Yeğen, ‘The Kurdish Issue in Turkey: Denial to Recognition’, in *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey: Political Islam, Kemalism, and the Kurdish Issue*, ed. by Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 67–84 (p. 74).

⁷¹ Mustafa Coşar Ünal, ‘Is It Ripe yet? Resolving Turkey’s 30 Years of Conflict with the PKK’, *Turkish Studies*, 17.1 (2016), 91–125 (p. 98).

⁷² Yadırgı, p. 223.

⁷³ Michael M. Gunter, ‘Turkey’s Floundering EU Candidacy and Its Kurdish Problem’, *Middle East Policy*, 14 (2007), 117–123 (p. 120).

oral propaganda [...] that had the goal of destroying the indivisible unity of the state' regardless of intent, method or idea behind it.⁷⁴ Further, it allowed for an order where 'torture, maltreatment, and degrading treatment could be perpetuated with impunity, in the name of security and fight against terrorism.'⁷⁵ Relatedly, the military personnel and security officers were also granted broad powers under this law, bringing about the allegations that the state was implicated in killings and torture under the pretence of a struggle against terror.⁷⁶ The law provided the legal basis for human rights abuses and detentions of academics, intellectuals and journalists for advocating a political solution to Turkey's Kurdish question in the 1990s.⁷⁷

In addition to the Anti-Terror Law, another case which illustrated the dominance of the Kemalist state ideology was the process leading up to the closure of the HEP in 1993 and the imprisonment of two Kurdish parliamentarians in 1994. Kurdish representation had already caused unrest among the nationalist wing of the DYP. However, the inaugural addresses of two HEP deputies Leyla Zana and Hatip Dicle arguably witnessed the culmination of this opposition in open antagonism involving the use of physical force during the swearing-in ceremony on 6 November 1991. In Dicle's case, he began his oath by saying that he and his friends would read the text under duress. Although he immediately began to read the oath aloud, his words were drowned by the sounds of the audience who booed him and tapped their desks. The protests interrupted his second attempt when he prefaced the oath by adding that he was reading per Article 81 of the Constitution. At his third attempt, the President of the Assembly asked him to withdraw his previous statement and read the oath. However, this time, the protesting deputies went up to the stage and attacked Dicle. Finally, at the fourth attempt, Dicle took his oath, as demanded by the President.

⁷⁴ Stephen Kinzer, *Crescent and Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2001), p. 147.

⁷⁵ Banu Bargu, *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 182.

⁷⁶ Kirişci and Winrow, p. 129.

⁷⁷ Gunter, p. 120.

In Zana's case, the protests roared the moment she appeared on the rostrum. One deputy asked her to take the flag down, referring to her hairband in the banned Kurdish colours of yellow, red and green. Zana completed the oath amid these protests by adding in Kurdish that she took this oath for the fraternity between Turkish and Kurdish people. The President, who called Zana onto the stage for a second time, asked her to withdraw what she added and then take the oath. Strikingly, the descriptions of this incident in the formal minutes of the meeting referred to Zana's language not as Kurdish, but as 'a language that was not understood or known.' This description reflected the persistence of the established policy of denial and non-recognition even after the partial lifting of the language ban.

In the longer term, these swearing-in addresses instigated a two-year process of prosecution and trials for these two deputies and the party. The HEP was accused of 'cultivating social differences in Turkish society with the purpose of demolishing the "inseparable unity" of the state of Turkey with its people.'⁷⁸ The prosecution also claimed that the party had links with the PKK's illegal activities. The party chairman defended the HEP by stating that 'they were attempting to voice the reality of Kurds.'⁷⁹ However, the Constitutional Court decided to close the party on the grounds of 'violating the Constitution and the Political Parties Law in Turkey, violating the territorial integrity and national unity, as well as having organic connections with the PKK.'⁸⁰ Therefore, in 1993, the HEP members resigned before the decision and formed the Democracy Party. In response, in 1994, the Turkish Parliament lifted immunity for six parliamentarians, including Zana and Dicle, who were subsequently sentenced to 15 years in prison in 1994 for 'supporting the PKK and its terrorist activities.'⁸¹ They served ten years of their sentence before being released in 2004. Bozarslan attributed this to the process of Turkey's integration into Europe, arguing

⁷⁸ Dicle Koğacioğlu, 'Dissolution of Political Parties by the Constitutional Court in Turkey: Judicial Delimitation of the Political Domain', *International Sociology*, 18 (2003), 258–276 (p. 263).

⁷⁹ Dicle Koğacioğlu, 'Progress, Unity, and Democracy: Dissolving Political Parties in Turkey', *Law & Society Review*, 38 (2004), 433–462 (p. 445).

⁸⁰ Ödül Celep, 'The Political Causes of Party Closures in Turkey', *Parliamentary Affairs*, (2012), 1–20 (p. 15).

⁸¹ Müftüler-Baç, p. 250.

that Turkey ‘freed Leyla Zana in order to bolster its chances of EU candidacy.’⁸² Indeed, in December 2004, six months after Zana’s release, EU leaders agreed to open talks in 2005 on Turkey’s EU accession.⁸³ Thus, Turkey’s effort to integrate with the EU in the early 2000s arguably played a role in relinquishing the security-oriented treatment of the Kurdish question, which will be discussed at length in the next section. However, this example testified to the preponderance of the Kemalist ideology even in the early 1990s, resulting in a gap between the elected government’s rhetoric and the state’s practices in the implementation of rights and freedoms.

Additionally, the 1990s represented the first full decade in which the state of emergency (1987-2002) remained in effect throughout southeast Turkey.⁸⁴ During this period, the TAF ‘increased the number of military units stationed in the area in an effort to neutralise the PKK.’⁸⁵ The state of emergency also provided a legal basis for the security officers to carry out forcible and violent practices as part of the counter-terror struggle in the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey. Forced displacements constituted one instance among many others. Kemal Kirişci notes that displacements were initially intended solely for the villagers who were either threatened by the PKK or caught in the crossfire between the PKK and security forces.⁸⁶ However, in the mid-1990s, the security forces adopted a policy of forcibly evacuating villages to deprive the PKK of logistical support.⁸⁷ This policy resulted in the evacuation of more than three thousand villages by the end of the decade.⁸⁸ The evacuation of rural settlements

⁸² Bozarslan (2008), p. 356.

⁸³ Ayşe Betül Çelik, ‘Ethnopolitical Conflict in Turkey: From the Denial of Kurds to Peaceful Coexistence’, in *Handbook of Ethnic Conflict: International Perspectives*, ed. by Dan Landis and Rosita D. Albert (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2012), pp. 241-260 (p. 258).

⁸⁴ The military had imposed the martial rule between 1980 and 1987 throughout the country. Despite being lifted in all other regions in 1987, the martial rule was replaced by the state of emergency in thirteen provinces in east and southeast Turkey based on a governmental decree from July 1987 until 2002 (see Tim Jacoby 2005).

⁸⁵ Ayşe Kadioğlu, ‘Necessity and the State of Exception: The Turkish State’s Permanent War with its Kurdish Citizens’, in *Turkey between Nationalism and Globalization*, ed. by Riva Kastoryano (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 142-161 (p. 151).

⁸⁶ Kemal Kirişci, ‘Migration and Turkey: The Dynamics of State, Society and Politics’, in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. by Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 173–198 (p. 184).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁸⁸ Findley, p. 367.

as part of the military campaign against the PKK led to the massive displacement of Kurdish peasants.⁸⁹ Consequently, around one million Kurds were evicted from their rural villages and forced to migrate to urban centres during this period.⁹⁰

The same period also witnessed phenomena such as unsolved murders and disappearances in the southeast and beyond.⁹¹ The Truth Justice Memory Centre published a report entitled ‘Enforced Disappearances and the Conduct of the Judiciary’ in 2014, claiming that at least 1,353 persons disappeared in southeast Turkey since the 1980 coup.⁹² Particularly in the 1990s, the government officials failed to reassure the relatives of the disappeared that the state would bring those responsible for their loss to justice. For instance, the then Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel’s reply to Hatice Toraman asking for help (‘Your son is not in my pocket!’) was representative of the government-level stance on this phenomenon in the given period.⁹³

In return, the families of the disappeared began to gather in front of the Galatasaray High School in İstanbul every Saturday to draw attention to their loss by holding the photographs of their disappeared relatives.⁹⁴ The families initiated their silent demonstrations on 27 May 1995 after the tortured body of Hasan Ocak was discovered in a mass grave almost two months after he had disappeared, suggesting that then presumably others had also (been) disappeared.⁹⁵ These peaceful sit-ins corresponded to the protests of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo whose children were lost under the

⁸⁹ Çağlar Keyder, ‘The Turkish Bell Jar’, *New Left Review*, 28 (2004), 65-84 (p. 72).

⁹⁰ Muna Güvenç, ‘Constructing Narratives of Kurdish Nationalism in the Urban Space of Diyarbakır, Turkey’, *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, 23.1 (2011), 25-40 (p. 27).

⁹¹ Nicholas Glastonbury, ‘Specters of Kurdish Nationalism: Governmentality and Counterinsurgent Translation in Turkey’, *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, 3.1 (2015), 46-69 (p. 52).

⁹² Gökçen Alpkaya, İlkem Altıntaş, Öznur Sevdiren and Emel Ataktürk-Sevimli, *Enforced Disappearances and the Conduct of the Judiciary* (İstanbul: Truth Justice Memory Centre, 2014), p. 14.

⁹³ “‘Is your son in my pocket?’”, *Cumhuriyet Daily*, 10 November 1992.

⁹⁴ Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 170.

⁹⁵ Meltem Ahıska, ‘Counter-movement, Space, and Politics: How the Saturday Mothers of Turkey Make the Enforced Disappearances Visible’, in *Space and the Memories of Violence: Landscapes of Erasure, Disappearance and Exception*, ed. by Pamela Colombo and Estela Schindel (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 162-175 (p. 169).

military dictatorship in Argentina between 1976 and 1983.⁹⁶ Their equivalents in Turkey, who later came to be known as Saturday Mothers, had to end their gatherings in 1998 after being faced with the police force and detention.⁹⁷ Overall, the commitment to a security-oriented resolution of the conflict resulted in a climate of impunity and human rights violations in the southeast and elsewhere throughout the 1990s.

These phenomena that became associated with the state of emergency also rendered visible the gulf between the official rhetoric and practices related to human rights in the 1990s. An illustrative example can be given from the period between 1992 and 1994. On the one hand, these years were marked by an emerging concern about the advancement of human rights in Turkey on the part of the DYP-SHP coalition government. A Minister of Human Rights was assigned in the parliament for the first time in the country's history in this period. Further, the government promised to advance the dialogue with the locals in the southeastern region of Turkey. It promoted this move as a regional policy to express the government's will to begin a new chapter, '*şefkat dönemi*' ('an era of compassion'), in the relations between the Turkish state and its Kurdish citizens. Accordingly, *şefkat* (translated as compassion, sympathy or affection) involved carrying out a first-hand investigation in the region and establishing contact with the locals through local trips to attend to their problems. In other words, '*şefkat*' became the term through which the government's representatives highlighted their good will.

However, on the other hand, as noted above, the same period witnessed the highest number of unsolved murders in the southeast in which the government officials and security officers were allegedly involved. Despite the official rejection of these allegations, a traffic accident that occurred in Susurluk on 3 November 1996 disclosed

⁹⁶ Çağla Diner and Şule Toktaş, 'Waves of Feminism in Turkey: Kemalist, Islamist and Kurdish Women's Movements in an Era of Globalization', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 12.1 (2010), 41–57 (p. 48).

⁹⁷ Saturday Mothers resumed their protests on 31 January 2009 and continue to gather in front of the Galatasaray High School every Saturday.

the state and mafia connections. Those who died in the same car were found out to be Hüseyin Kocadağ, the former deputy head of the İstanbul Police Department and Abdullah Çatlı, an ultranationalist hitman and drug trafficker wanted on Interpol's Red List. The only surviving passenger of the accident was Sedat Bucak, who was the leader of a Kurdish village-guard clan and a member of the parliament from the DYP, the partner of the coalition government at the time. The then Deputy Prime Minister Tansu Çiller addressed this Susurluk incident and tacitly defended Çatlı in a speech to the parliamentary group of the DYP: 'Those who shoot bullets or those who are the targets of bullets in the name of the state are both honourable. They are heroes.'⁹⁸ The government's response to the revelations of the accident caused an uproar in the media and public, resulting in the formation of a parliamentary investigation commission to investigate the Susurluk incident, which came to be referred to as the 'Susurluk scandal.'⁹⁹

Crucially, the commission's report provided solid evidence on the clandestine activities of the Gendarmerie Intelligence Anti-Terrorism Unit (*Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele* in Turkish) whose existence was previously denied by the General Staff.¹⁰⁰ The early 2000s witnessed the disclosure of more evidence on the specific activities of this anti-terrorism unit based on the confessions of its former agents such as Abdülkadir Aygan. For instance, Aygan gave the names of some victims and perpetrators as well as the full description of the kidnappings and assassinations, including the techniques and sites of murders and interrogations, thus helping to illuminate some unsolved murders of the 1990s.¹⁰¹ Therefore, current scholarship presents the Susurluk incident as a turning point that confirmed the

⁹⁸ Mehtap Söyler, 'Informal Institutions, Forms of State and Democracy: The Turkish Deep State', *Democratization*, 20.2 (2013), 310-334 (p. 318).

⁹⁹ 'Commission begins investigating state-mafia links', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 30 November 1996.

¹⁰⁰ Söyler, p. 317.

¹⁰¹ Zerrin Özlem Biner, 'From Terrorist to Repentant: Who Is the Victim?', *History and Anthropology*, 17.4 (2006), 339-353 (p. 345).

suspensions on the Turkish state's ties with extrajudicial actors and activities as part of a 'counter-guerrilla' plan.¹⁰²

In retrospect, these revelations about the state-sponsored acts of violence enable us to problematize the adoption of the *şefkat* policy as a means to end on the part of the coalition governments in the given decade. On the one hand, it relegated locals/villagers to an inferior position, since the word *şefkat* presupposed its receivers as being vulnerable and in need of protection. On the other hand, *şefkat* positioned the state as a merciful and fatherly authority in a manner that reasserted the hierarchical relationship between the state and its citizens. Crucially, this word later came to be used for justifying the military's security-oriented actions in other contexts. For instance, the 'Return to Life' Operation, which aimed to end the hunger strikes in prisons in 2000 and killed thirty prisoners, was built on the instrumentalisation of *şefkat* to refer euphemistically to violence, as will be discussed in Chapter Three. Therefore, while marking the asymmetrical relations between the state institutions and citizens, *devlet şefkati* ('the state's compassion') also stood as a stark reminder of the deep gulf between the official rhetoric and practice in the 1990s.

It is important to stress that, in addition to the intensification of the Kurdish conflict, the 1990s differed from the previous decades mainly in two respects which consolidated the military's upper hand in politics. First, the period was marked by political instability and inefficiency, as reflected in the number of the governments - nine in total - formed between 1991 and 2002. Seven out of nine governments which came to power in eleven years were coalition governments. They failed to efficiently rule the country and resolve the problems in the political agenda, and hence the decade was frequently referred to as a period of weak coalition governments and a 'lost decade' in the country's history.¹⁰³ Relatedly, these governments failed to adopt and sustain an approach based on dialogue and negotiation as an alternative to the security-

¹⁰² Watts, p. 653.

¹⁰³ Öktem, p. 7.

oriented stance on the conflict. Consequently, elected governments had a conspicuously subservient position vis-à-vis the military in the given decade.

Second, the legacy of the 1980 coup procured the *de facto* supremacy of the military over civilian politics by providing a constitutional basis for any interventions. However, in the period after 1983, the military ‘tended to use more subtle means to ensure that government policies did not transgress what it deemed to be the limits of acceptability.’¹⁰⁴ Accordingly, the military resorted to utilising informal mechanisms at its disposal such as private meetings between generals and government officials as well as briefings for the media, judiciary and business community on the matters that were perceived as threats.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, on the one hand, a combination of these two factors enabled the military to tap into the concerns over national security and the growing public disillusionment with elected politicians. On the other hand, a strategic change involving the use of non-political realms allowed the military to tighten its grip over civilian politics.

‘The 28 February Process’ represented a case in point where the military dominated the political domain in rather implicit and indirect ways.¹⁰⁶ In addition to Kurdish nationalism, political Islam was labelled as the other threat against the foundational principles of the secular, unitary state and hence was targeted to be repressed in the 1990s.¹⁰⁷ The elected Islamist Welfare Party (henceforth RP as short for *Refah Partisi*) formed the *Refah-Yol* government with the DYP, and its Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan became the Prime Minister on 28 June 1996. An Islamist party thus came to power as a coalition partner for the first time in the country’s history.¹⁰⁸ However, the military stepped up the pressure by holding a series of

¹⁰⁴ Gareth Jenkins, ‘Continuity and Change: Prospects for Civil—Military Relations in Turkey’, *International Affairs*, 83.2 (2007), 339–355 (p. 343).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

¹⁰⁶ This event is referred to as a ‘postmodern coup’ in the history of Turkey, since the military did not take over the government as it conventionally did in the previous coups but forced the democratically elected ruling party to dissolve the government.

¹⁰⁷ Taşpınar, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ M. Hakan Yavuz, ‘Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey’, *Comparative Politics*, 30.1 (1997), 63–82 (p. 63).

briefings for the groups mentioned above on the threat posed to secularism by the RP in April and May 1997.¹⁰⁹ The government was forced to resign on 18 June 1997 in the aftermath of a National Security Council meeting. This intervention was followed by the closure of the RP and ban on Erbakan from all political activity for five years.¹¹⁰ As seen here, the military's range of influence did not remain tethered to the battle zone but held sway over non-military realms.

The prioritisation of the state's security over individual liberties as the legacy of the 1980 coup was also taken to extremes in the 1990s. In parallel, this decade witnessed a nationalistic surge which manifested itself in the prevalence of national symbols in everyday life such as the Turkish flag and Atatürk's portrait in domestic spaces, shops, and offices or on car-number plates.¹¹¹ These symbols that the coup officers promoted a decade ago were now reinstated by the public as an expression of their loyalty to the idea of national unity and longing for a strong state.¹¹² Singing the national anthem or the tenth-anniversary march became widespread even in contexts such as pop concerts, social gatherings or fashion shows.¹¹³ Further, elected politicians who suffered public disillusionment also fostered this surge in a populist attempt to ameliorate the mistrust toward political parties and compensate for their inefficiency in the resolution of the country's problems.

However, this nationalistic sentiment also took an antagonistic tone against the perceived enemies of that period, Kurds and Islamists, while aiming to articulate solidarity and display patriotism in mainstream Turkish society. An illustrative instance was the mob attack on Ahmet Kaya, a Kurdish singer, at an award ceremony in 1999 after he announced his decision to sing a Kurdish song in his next album.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Jenkins, p. 346.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 346.

¹¹¹ Bulut, p. 129.

¹¹² Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 169.

¹¹³ Tanıl Bora, 'Nationalist Discourses in Turkey', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102.2-3 (2003), 433–451 (p. 438).

¹¹⁴ See Introduction, pp. 36-37.

As seen in Kaya's experience of physical and verbal attack, the exclusionary aspects of the official state ideology then dominated the political and public discourse and defined the voices to be heard and suppressed in relation to the Kurdish question. The following section delineates the changes that have taken place in the political arena since the early 2000s, with a focus on their repercussions on the conflict.

1.3. The 2000s: the Ceasefire, Peace Process and Resumption of the Conflict

The 2000s witnessed significant developments in the resolution of the conflict and Kurdish question. These developments were linked to the unprecedented political reforms in the first half of the given decade which were primarily attributed to the formal recognition of Turkey as a candidate at the European Union's (EU) Helsinki Summit of December 1999.¹¹⁵ However, before that, the PKK had unilaterally declared the suspension of its armed activities in Turkey on 1 September 1999, almost seven months after the capture of its leader Öcalan.¹¹⁶ Öcalan had stayed in Syria for a long time until 1998 when Turkey threatened to open war against the country unless the Syrian government expelled him.¹¹⁷ After his forced departure from Syria, Öcalan travelled to several countries, including Russia and Italy, in pursuit of political asylum and finally ended up in the Greek embassy of Kenya. He was captured there by the Turkish authorities by the help of the US intelligence and brought back to Turkey on 15 February 1999.¹¹⁸ Therefore, the Justice and Development Party (hereafter AKP as short for *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) took over in November 2002 when there was a state of ceasefire and a list of reforms and amendments of laws to be carried out as part of the EU membership process.

The period from 2002 to 2007 was one of significant progress in the economy, the democratic order, and foreign policy, all under the strong influence of the EU

¹¹⁵ William Hale, 'Human Rights, the European Union and the Turkish Accession Process', *Turkish Studies*, 4.1 (2003), 107–126 (p. 108).

¹¹⁶ Michael M Gunter, 'The Continuing Kurdish Problem in Turkey after Öcalan's Capture', *Third World Quarterly*, 21.5 (2000), 849–869 (p. 849).

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 850.

¹¹⁸ Kemal Kirişçi, 'Between Europe and the Middle East: The Transformation of Turkish Policy', *Middle East Review of International Affairs* (MERIA), 8.1 (2004), 39–51 (p. 46).

accession process.¹¹⁹ The AKP continued the reforms that had been initiated by the former coalition government. Some of them included abolishing the death penalty and state security courts and lessening the military's influence in Turkish politics.¹²⁰ The AKP also implemented new legislation that permitted limited broadcasting in Kurdish in 2002 and allowed private schools to offer Kurdish language courses in 2004.¹²¹ Some other radical reforms included the narrowing of the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians and enhancing the exercise of the rights of freedom, expression and assembly.¹²² The start of the EU accession talks with Turkey in late 2005 and political stability achieved during the AKP's single-party rule created a climate which was conducive to a reform process for Kurdish rights.¹²³ Although the PKK resumed its attacks in 2004 and the insurgency was not officially over, the hard-line security-oriented approach fell out of favour in the early 2000s.

The AKP government was not in a subservient position to the military, as were the coalition governments of the 1990s. Nevertheless, the AKP also faced a party closure case amid the EU reforms in 2008. Turkey's Constitutional Court narrowly voted not to close down the AKP 'on charges of attempting to undermine the principle of secularism enshrined in the Turkish constitution' on 30 July 2008.¹²⁴ In the following period, the government focused on consolidating its power to prevent any similar threats to its existence and experiences that the previous Islamist party RP and its leader Necmettin Erbakan had because of the 28 February post-modern coup in 1996. Relatedly, this party closure case was soon followed by the initiation of a comprehensive investigation on a nationalist gang named 'Ergenekon', which was

¹¹⁹ Ziya Öniş, 'Turkey's Two Elections: The AKP Comes Back', *Journal of Democracy*, 27.2 (2016), 141–154 (p. 142).

¹²⁰ Kemal Kirişçi, 'The Kurdish Issue in Turkey: Limits of European Union Reform', *South European Society and Politics*, 16.2 (2011), 335–349 (p. 335).

¹²¹ Yadırgı, p. 228.

¹²² Alper Kaliber, 'De-Europeanisation of Civil Society and Public Debates in Turkey: The Kurdish Question Revisited', *South European Society and Politics*, 21.1 (2016), 59–74 (p. 59).

¹²³ Tuncay Kardaş and Ali Balcı, 'Inter-Societal Security Trilemma in Turkey: Understanding the Failure of the 2009 Kurdish Opening', *Turkish Studies*, 17.1 (2016), 155–180 (p. 163).

¹²⁴ Gareth Jenkins, 'Turkey's Latest Crisis', *Survival*, 50.5 (2008), 5–12 (p. 5).

accused of plotting a violent uprising against the government.¹²⁵ The Ergenekon trials launched a legal crackdown on the extra-political forces within the judiciary and Turkish military in late 2008, thereby strengthening the AKP's position against the military.¹²⁶

These significant events also arguably afforded the ruling party the leverage to put forward a progressive agenda for the resolution of the Kurdish question in the ways that pushed the limits of the Kemalist ideology of the Republic. Indeed, the AKP had already signalled its intention to dismiss the conventional securitisation of the problem and promote an alternative approach to the conflict in 2005 when Erdoğan announced in Diyarbakır that the Kurdish problem was his problem.¹²⁷ With that speech, Erdoğan also became the first prime minister who acknowledged that the state previously made mistakes in its handling of the Kurdish question.¹²⁸ Starting from 2007, top-level Turkish Intelligence officials held meetings with a PKK delegation in Oslo with the attendance of an undisclosed third party, starting a process known as the Oslo peace process.¹²⁹ Based on the progress made at these talks, the AKP started a 'process of democratic opening' ('*demokratik açılım süreci*') and announced an initiative called the Kurdish opening in May 2009.¹³⁰ The then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called on all the political actors to unite for producing a permanent solution to the terror problem in August of that year.¹³¹ In this respect, 2009 proved a turning point in terms of the developments regarding the resolution of the conflict.

¹²⁵ Senem Aydın Düzgit, 'The AKP in Turkey: Off the Hook This Time', *The International Spectator*, 43.4 (2008), 25–29 (p. 26).

¹²⁶ Kardaş and Balcı, p. 166.

¹²⁷ Ünal, p. 102.

¹²⁸ Kayhan Pusane, p. 737.

¹²⁹ Arda Bilgen, 'A Project of Destruction, Peace, or Techno-Science? Untangling the Relationship between the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) and the Kurdish Question in Turkey', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 54.1 (2018), 94–113 (p. 97).

¹³⁰ F. Stephen Larrabee, 'Turkey's New Kurdish Opening', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 55.5 (2013), 133–146 (p. 135).

¹³¹ Erdoğan asked in parliament, 'if Turkey had not spent its energy, budget, peace and young people on [fighting] terrorism, if Turkey had not spent the last 25 years in conflict, where would we be today?' in 'Erdoğan makes emotional appeal for unity on Kurdish Initiative', *Today's Zaman*, 12 August 2009.

However, despite the government's upper hand in the political domain, the Kurdish initiative did not prove a smooth and unobstructed process. The initiative triggered debates in Kurdish circles about its credibility, since its scope was not clearly delineated, and the AKP government also faced harsh criticisms from opposition parties and Turkish nationalists as well.¹³² On the other hand, a key incident on 19 October 2009 provoked the upsurge of nationalistic sentiments in mainstream Turkish society. A small group of unarmed PKK militants entered Turkey via the Habur Gate on the Turkish-Iraqi border according to the return-home policy that had been acknowledged by the government as part of the opening. The fact that an enthusiastic crowd greeted these militants was perceived by the opposition parties and the general public, including the moderates, as the PKK's victory parade.¹³³ Amid the controversy surrounding the initiative, the AKP rephrased the Kurdish opening as a project of national unity under the more comprehensive 'Democratic Initiative', to be later renamed as the 'National Unity and Fraternity Project' ('*Milli Birlik ve Kardeşlik Projesi*').¹³⁴ Secret talks with the PKK continued until 2011 when the 'Oslo Peace Process' totally ended.¹³⁵

In addition to the domestic factors leading to the volatility of the process, the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011 also had implications for the AKP government's handling of the resolution process in Turkey. The war highlighted the role of some Kurdish groups in fighting against the Islamic State (IS) such as Saleh Muslim's Democratic Union Party. These Kurdish forces of Syria not only gained de facto autonomy and control over several towns near the Turkish-Syrian border but also received the military support of the US-led coalition against the IS. This development represented a source of concern for the Turkish state, since it had the potential to both strengthen the PKK's capabilities and encourage such demands from the

¹³² Marlies Casier, Joost Jongerden and Nic Walker, 'Turkey's Kurdish Movement and the AKP's Kurdish Opening: A Kurdish Spring or Fall?', in *The Kurdish Spring: Geopolitical Changes and the Kurds*, ed. by Mohammed M.A. Ahmed, Michael M. Gunter, and Costa Mesa (California: Mazda Publishers, 2013), pp. 135-162 (p. 142).

¹³³ Ünal, p. 105.

¹³⁴ Casier et al., p. 142.

¹³⁵ Ünal, p. 106.

predominantly Kurdish areas of Turkey.¹³⁶ Consequently, as Hamid Akın Ünver observes, Turkey's predominant thinking on the Kurdish question shifted 'in favour of repressive stability and control-oriented administration during these periods.'¹³⁷

Despite the previous setbacks and heightened tensions due to the unstable conditions in the region, the earlier steps taken as part of the Kurdish opening prepared the ground for the initiation of a peace process in March 2013. The PKK's imprisoned leader Öcalan declared an end to the armed struggle by calling on armed militants to withdraw from Turkish soil.¹³⁸ The leader of the PKK in northern Iraq, Murat Karayılan, also announced a ceasefire following Öcalan's call.¹³⁹ Subsequently, on 4 April 2013, the government set up a consultative body entitled the 'committee of wise people' ('*akıl insanlar heyeti*') to influence public opinion on the process of rapprochement with the PKK. This committee was composed of intellectuals, writers, academics, singers, and other well-known public figures.¹⁴⁰ The government later announced a democratisation package in September 2013. The package proposed Kurdish education in private schools, greater protections for freedom of assembly, and a commission to investigate hate crimes among other things.¹⁴¹ However, especially the Kurdish circles questioned the sincerity of the government, noting that the demands such as the constitutional recognition of Kurdish identity or demands for autonomy remained unaddressed.¹⁴²

¹³⁶ Kayhan Pusane, p. 738.

¹³⁷ Hamdi Akın Ünver, 'Political Philosophy and Political Discourse of Intra-State Conflicts: The Case of Human Rights in Turkey's Kurdish Question', *Research and Policy on Turkey*, 2.2 (2017), 179–191 (p. 184).

¹³⁸ Hüseyin Hayatsever, 'Öcalan Calls on Kurdish Militants to Bid Farewell to Arms for a "New" Turkey', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 21 March 2013.

¹³⁹ 'Militants Should Lay Down Their Arms Before Withdrawing: PM Erdoğan', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 29 March 2013.

¹⁴⁰ Banu Baybars Hawks, 'Will Peace Flourish in the End? The History of Suffering: Terrorism in Turkey', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4 (2013), 278–282 (p. 280).

¹⁴¹ Paul Kubicek, 'Democratization and Relations with the EU in the AK Party Period: Is Turkey Really Making Progress?', *Insight Turkey*, 15 (2013), 41–49 (p. 44).

¹⁴² Ergun Özbudun, 'The Turkish "Democratization Package"', *Middle East Institute*, 15 October 2013, <<http://www.mei.edu/content/turkish-democratization-package>> [accessed 27 November 2014].

Turkey was no longer as Western-oriented and committed to the EU membership prospects in 2014 and 2015 as it was at the time of the AKP's first electoral victory in November 2002.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, albeit at an unsteady pace, the resolution process ('*çözüm süreci*') remained in progress until early 2015. The AKP government and representatives of Kurdish parties signed an official agreement and publicly announced the main framework for the resolution of the Kurdish question at Dolmabahçe Palace in İstanbul on 28 February 2015.¹⁴⁴ However, President Erdoğan dismissed the agreement as null and void on 22 March 2015 after the PKK's representatives denied that they would be disarming. Strikingly, Erdoğan also dismissed his earlier position as the advocate of the peace process and declared that there was no longer a problem such as the Kurdish question.¹⁴⁵ Although this looks like a drastic reversal of his earlier progressive position, it is possible to identify Erdoğan's conflicting statements and shifts in discourse before 2015, adding to the instability of the peace process. Drawing attention to this pattern, Ünver provides four quotes from Erdoğan's speeches at different occasions as follows:¹⁴⁶

'In a 2010 parliamentary speech, for example, Erdoğan stated 'As a Prime Minister, I'm supporting the Kurdish question and will continue to support it' (*Milliyet*, October 27, 2017). This discursive framework then switched in 2011 to: 'There is no Kurdish question in this country anymore; I do not accept it. There are problems of my Kurdish brothers, but no Kurdish question' (*Habertürk*, April 30, 2011); he then modified this stance to: 'There is no Kurdish question in this country, but a PKK problem' (*Habertürk*, July 15, 2011).'

As seen in the quotes above, Erdoğan's dismissal of the peace agreement in March 2015 was not the first time when he retracted on this topic. However, this one appeared to have a more decisive impact on the future of the resolution process, which came to

¹⁴³ Ziya Öniş, 'Monopolising the Centre: The AKP and the Uncertain Path of Turkish Democracy', *The International Spectator*, 50.2 (2015), 22-41 (p. 24).

¹⁴⁴ Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, 'The Conundrum of Coalition Politics in Turkey', *Turkish Studies*, 17.1 (2016), 31-38 (p. 33).

¹⁴⁵ 'Erdoğan Changes Mind on the Kurdish Issue Again: Timeline', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 17 March 2015, <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-changes-mind-on-kurdish-issue-again-timeline-79818>> [accessed 11 January 2018].

¹⁴⁶ Ünver, p. 180.

a halt in the period leading up to the national elections on 7 June 2015. Erdoğan increasingly took aim at the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (henceforth HDP as short for *Halkların Demokratik Partisi*) in his election campaign. He focused on campaigning for a constitutional change from the semi-presidential system to a type of presidentialism that would significantly expand his presidential powers.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, the HDP's decision to enter the 7 June elections as a party represented a complication for Erdoğan's ambitions to gain a sufficient majority in the parliament to introduce a presidential system.

Traditionally, the members of the pro-Kurdish parties ran as independent candidates in the elections due to the 10-per cent threshold that each party needed to surpass to enter the parliament. However, the HDP declared that they would gain enough votes to pass the threshold as a party and thus prevent Erdoğan from changing the constitutional system. The election results came as a shock to the ruling AKP, as the HDP achieved to cast a rate of 13.1 per cent and send 80 members to the parliament by crossing the 10-per cent threshold.¹⁴⁸ The AKP thus lost the majority vote in the Turkish Assembly in June 2015 for the first time since 2002.

The then AKP's leader Ahmet Davutoğlu held some coalition meetings with potential coalition partners to form a government, but all ended up in failure. In addition to the state of uncertainty due to a hung parliament, the period after the 7 June elections witnessed a sudden surge of violence. In July 2015, the PKK's killing of two police officers in the Şanlıurfa province of southeast Turkey was perceived as the declaration of an end to the ceasefire. The resumption of terror was coupled by the killing of over 30 civilians by the IS in a suicide bomb attack in Suruç, a town on the Turkish-Syrian border. On 10 October 2015, the IS once again aimed at a peace rally, which also involved the pro-Kurdish HDP, killing more than a hundred people in Ankara in the deadliest terrorist assault in the history of the Turkish Republic.¹⁴⁹ This

¹⁴⁷ Kalaycıoğlu, p. 33.

¹⁴⁸ Ünal, p. 111.

¹⁴⁹ Öniş (2016), p. 150.

last attack happened only a few weeks before the snap elections in November 2015, which was decided after the premature abandonment of coalition talks.¹⁵⁰ The unexpected rise in violent terrorist attacks created a climate of fear and insecurity among the public, which had not been the case in the period leading up to the 7 June elections in 2015.

In the period between June and November 2015 elections, Erdoğan also declared the freezing of the resolution process and adopted an antagonistic approach to the representatives of the pro-Kurdish party. According to some scholars, the fact that the AKP lost the majority vote in the parliament in the June elections played a crucial role in the re-emergence of the security-oriented discourses.¹⁵¹ Indeed, the AKP's aggressive turn to nationalism brought a 9-point increase in the party's vote share from 40.8 per cent in June to 49.5 per cent in November 2015, returning it to the 2011 level.¹⁵² The HDP once again managed to pass the threshold, but its share of votes dropped from 13.1 to 10.7 per cent and from 80 to 59 seats in the parliament.¹⁵³ Therefore, the AKP emerged as the winner of the snap elections in November 2015, gaining back all the ground it had lost.

In the following period, the military operations in the southeast intensified against the PKK. It turned out that the PKK had brought into Turkey vast stockpiles of ammunition and weapons from the Middle East and dug up trenches in eastern cities during the ceasefire.¹⁵⁴ As the security forces focused on suppressing this urban guerrilla activity against the Turkish state, the number of internally displaced people was estimated to stand between 350,000 and 500,000 since the resumption of the conflict in July 2015.¹⁵⁵ In the meantime, Turkey experienced a failed coup attempt on

¹⁵⁰ Ünver, p. 184.

¹⁵¹ See Ünal (2016), Öniş (2016) and Kalaycıoğlu (2016).

¹⁵² Öniş (2016), p. 150.

¹⁵³ Mehmet Bardakçı, '2015 Parliamentary Elections in Turkey: Demise and Revival of AKP's Single-Party Rule', *Turkish Studies*, 17.1 (2016), 4–18 (p. 15).

¹⁵⁴ Kalaycıoğlu, p. 34.

¹⁵⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Report on the Human

15 July 2016, as a result of which 161 civilians and 104 coup forces were killed, 1,440 wounded, and 2,839 soldiers of various ranks were detained.¹⁵⁶ The state of emergency, which was declared in the aftermath of this traumatic incident, remained in effect until 18 July 2018. Relatedly, the degree of authoritarianism that has become starker since 2013 has further intensified following the coup attempt.¹⁵⁷ In response to the deterioration of democracy and human rights, on 24 April 2017, the Council of Europe decided to reintroduce a monitoring process for Turkey, thereby downgrading the country's accession status to where it was between 1996 and 2004.¹⁵⁸ Hence, the current situation bears a resemblance to the 1990s in that the clashes between the TAF and PKK continue to exist and any oppositional voices calling the government to return to the peace negotiations are labelled as traitors or sympathisers of terrorists.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed overview of the history of Turkey's Kurdish conflict, outlining the social and political contexts in which the PKK's insurgency began in 1984 and has continued to exist since then. An insight into the official Kemalist ideology and its implications for the linguistic and ethnic rights of Kurdish citizens from the early years of the Republic has elucidated the nature of the relationship between the Kurdish question and the conflict. Additionally, this historical account has elaborated on the turning points that informed the character of the conflict, such as the 1980 coup. The literature review has also demonstrated that the 1990s stood out as a turbulent period of contradictory developments in relation to the Kurdish question. On the one hand, the language ban that had been stipulated by the 1980 coup

Rights Situation in South-East Turkey', 10 March 2017 <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR_SouthEast_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf> [accessed 8 January 2018].

¹⁵⁶ Metin Gürçan, 'Why Turkey's Coup Didn't Stand a Chance', *Al-Monitor*, 17 July 2016, <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/turkey-kamikaze-coup-attempt-fails.html#ixzz54J7KMIKi>> [accessed 8 January 2018].

¹⁵⁷ Ziya Öniş, 'Democratic Consolidation in Turkey: Micro and Macro Challenges', *Turkish Studies*, 18.2 (2017), 390–392 (p. 391).

¹⁵⁸ 'Turkey Back under Euro Monitoring after 13 Years, Government Furious', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 24 April 2017, <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-back-under-euro-monitoring-after-13-years-government-furious-112384>> [accessed 15 January 2018].

was partially removed, and Kurdish nationalist opinion was represented in parliament for the first time in the country's history. On the other hand, these years were marked by impunity and human rights violations such as forced displacements and unsolved murders. Therefore, the steps taken in the 2000s for the resolution of the conflict were perceived as a paradigmatic shift in the state's policy on the Kurdish question.

However, the overview has also clarified that the process of rapprochement with the PKK during the AKP rule did not gain traction among the Turkish public and opposition parties, as seen in the reaction against the return of the militants to Turkey. While the government backtracked a few times due to the concerns of losing its nationalist voters, the air of optimism as to the foreseeability of a permanent resolution vanished after the clashes resumed in July 2015. The military operations, evacuation of villages and increasing death toll of civilians, soldiers and PKK militants in the southeast have since then dominated the agenda in Turkey once again. In other words, given the short-lived ceasefire of two years that now appears to be irreversibly over, the conflict lost and regained its taboo status throughout this research.

Given the historical evolution of the conflict, the 1990s remain the central reference point for scholars and politicians to assess the progress made on the Kurdish question. For instance, during the Kurdish opening, the 1990s were referred to as the years which were left behind, never to be returned. Erdoğan also painted himself as an anti-establishment politician who suffered from the military tutelage of the 1990s as a former member of the Islamist RP, which was shut down after the postmodern coup in 1996. These references to the 1990s have increased since July 2015, as the clashes are accompanied by the detention of Kurdish politicians and purge of academics criticising the military operations in the southeast. This background will enable us to situate the development of new Turkish cinema and the research films in relation to the evolution of the conflict in the following chapter. Therefore, Chapter Two discusses how the official ideology influenced the form and content of new Turkish cinema, and the changes in the trajectory of the conflict informed the production, distribution and reception of selected films, and vice versa.

CHAPTER 2

History of Turkish Cinema and the Films on the Conflict in Context

The previous chapter outlined a brief history of the conflict and identified the changes in the official policies on the Kurdish question from the late 1990s until the 2000s, when most of the research films were made. The present chapter situates all the films under consideration within their contexts of production and reception, with a focus on their engagement with the political developments related to the conflict. It thus aims to identify how each film operated vis-à-vis the changes in the official policy on the Kurdish question, thereby answering the first subsidiary research question set out in the Introduction. To this end, the chapter will discuss the sources of funding and distribution for each film, including the experiences of censorship and trial, to account for the implications of the state rhetoric and practice on re-presenting the conflict on the screen. It will also consider each director's political standpoint and the intended audience in terms of their role in defining the perspectives to be prioritised in each film. This discussion will be preceded by a brief history of Turkish cinema from the early years of the Republic to set the background for understanding the general characteristics of new Turkish cinema in which these research films can be included.

In discussing each film's context of production and reception, the chapter will divide the films into three groups based on their release date. As shown in the previous chapter, 2009 proved a turning point in that the AKP government initiated the Kurdish opening and pointed to a paradigmatic shift in the official approach to the Kurdish question.¹ Therefore, *Journey to the Sun*, *Big Man*, *Little Love* and *Autumn* will be discussed together as they were produced before the Kurdish opening. *Breath*, *Min Dît* and *On the Way to School* will be considered together, since all were released or first screened in 2009 in the early days of the Kurdish opening. The other two, *Future Lasts Forever* and *Jîn*, were distributed in 2013 when the opening evolved into a solution process. This closer look at the historical background of the selected films will enable

¹ See 1.3. 'The 2000s: Ceasefire, Peace Process and Resumption of the Conflict', p. 72.

us to pinpoint the enabling or disabling effect of the changes in the trajectory of the conflict on making films on the Kurdish question.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will outline the evolution of Turkish cinema until the mid-1990s and compare different strands of traditional filmmaking in terms of their conformity with the official ideology on the representation of ethnic and linguistic differences. The second section will delineate the distinctive aspects of new Turkish cinema with reference to categorisations made in scholarship, such as ‘independent’ and ‘popular films’. Finally, the third section will discuss external factors that informed the process of producing and distributing the research films, such as the legal restraints, availability of funds and distribution companies. Consequently, this chapter will enable us to pinpoint the continuity and discontinuity in the relationship between the official policies and film production in Turkey.

2.1. Turkish Cinema before the mid-1990s

Turkey’s acquaintance with cinema dates from the late 1890s when private screenings were held in the palace for the sultan’s court. The first movie theatre was founded by Sigmund Weinberg, a Polish Jew from Romania, in 1908 in Pera, the most cosmopolitan district of İstanbul, where non-Muslim populations mostly resided at the time.² Several other theatres that were subsequently opened were also largely run by the non-Muslim minorities.³ At the time, the film ads and announcements were printed in French, German, Armenian or Greek, but not in Turkish, which indicated the diverse ethnic backgrounds of early spectators.⁴ Cinema continued to be seen as a western and elite form of art and entertainment that appealed to the non-Muslim populations or the

² Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *The Routledge Dictionary of Turkish Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 347.

³ Asuman Suner, *New Turkish Cinema* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2010), p. 2.

⁴ Nezih Erdoğan, ‘Narratives of Resistance: National Identity and Ambivalence in the Turkish Melodrama between 1965 and 1975’, *Screen*, 39.3 (1998), 259-271 (p. 260).

Muslim upper-classes even after the foundation of the Republic in 1923 until the late 1940s.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Republican elite imposed its own understanding of modernity and secularism in a top-down approach to establish and sustain the official Kemalist regime in Turkey. Therefore, in Çağlar Keyder's terms, the Turkish case constituted an example of 'modernisation-from-above' rather than a 'self-generating process.'⁵ In a related vein, Savaş Arslan uses 'Turkification-from-above' with respect to a series of reforms and changes which also affected the development of cinema in Turkey. In his view, the notion of Turkification harboured a variety of meanings, ranging from a model or ideal of nationalisation to the creation of a nation-state.⁶ Rather than a literal translation of Western values, the Turkification-from-above hence involved the creation of a Turkish essence denying the Ottoman sources and using Western sources based on the premises of the Republican modernisation programs.⁷

Relatedly, the implications of the 'Turkification from above' in the cultural realms were marked by both imposition and adaptation under the influence of the modernisation project. For instance, national cinema imitated the western forms and did not seek to create its own language. However, even the poor imitations of foreign models were in accordance with the cultural policy of the state, which aimed to sever all the ties with the Ottoman past.⁸ Likewise, the emphasis on Turkishness also took severe forms during the early years of the Republic, as the names of theatres in the Beyoğlu district of İstanbul were Turkified in line with the Republican language

⁵ Çağlar Keyder, 'Whither the Project of Modernity? Turkey in the 1990s', in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. by Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), pp. 37-51 (p. 39).

⁶ Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 44-45.

⁷ Ibid., p. 46.

⁸ Gülseren Güçhan, *Toplumsal Değişme ve Türk Sineması (Social Change and Turkish Cinema)* (Ankara: İmge Publishing, 1992), p. 75.

reforms.⁹ In parallel, the rule of non-Muslim populations over the management of theatres largely ended. Turkish Muslims began to play all the roles, including women's roles, which were previously given to Greeks, Armenians and White Russians.¹⁰

Crucially, while Republican reformers invested in the education of Turkish artists in other fields of art, such as opera, ballet and theatre, cinema was mainly ignored: no film schools were opened, no studios were founded.¹¹ The first film school in Turkey was opened in the mid-1970s.¹² There was some intervention in the form of tax regulation that served to protect Turkish cinema in financial terms. For instance, the municipal tax on domestic films was reduced to 25 per cent in 1948, while the tax on foreign films remained at 70 per cent.¹³ This regulation gave a boost to the commercial film industry during the 1950s.

Nevertheless, there was no state policy to provide systematic support for the film industry in Turkey. Ekkehard Ellinger and Kerem Kayi attribute this to the unfavourable political and social circumstances during the founding years of the Republic, which obstructed the endeavours of producers, directors and actors alike.¹⁴ However, Arslan views it as the outcome of the Republican elite's lack of interest in film production, which was responsible for the belated growth of cinema in Turkey.¹⁵ The Republican reformers imagined a national culture bereft of non-Muslim minorities, as they simultaneously dreamed of westernisation, of a secular, modern society with cosmopolitan entertainment practices.¹⁶ Consequently, the Turkish state

⁹ Ali Özuyar, *Sinemanın Osmanlıca Serüveni (The Adventure of Cinema in Ottoman)* (Ankara: Öteki Publishing, 1999), p. 34.

¹⁰ Dönmez-Colin, p. 25.

¹¹ Arslan, p. 42.

¹² Ibid., p. 75.

¹³ Suner, p. 3.

¹⁴ Ekkehard Ellinger and Kerem Kayi, *Turkish Cinema 1970-2007* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH: 2008), p. 574.

¹⁵ Arslan, p. 63.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 63.

did not take an active part in establishing a film industry in terms of sponsoring films or promoting the education of filmmakers.

The film production in Turkey remained a private enterprise due to this absence of systematic state support. For example, in parallel with the transition from the single-party period to the multi-party political system in the late 1940s, the economic liberalisation led to the emergence of a new upper class in the 1950s. The Turkish film industry, which had been a business for a very select group of people only up to the mid-1940s, predominantly turned into a commercial business and entertainment in the hands of profit-oriented producers from the 1950s until the 1980s.¹⁷ As money changed hands, the concerns of the film producers dominating the sector changed as well, which resulted in the mushrooming of popular films that aimed solely to satisfy the expectations of spectators.

Yeşilçam cinema represented this popular type of filmmaking similar to Hollywood cinema and dominated the traditional film sector in Turkey until the 1980s. Yeşilçam, which means ‘green pine’ in Turkish, used to refer to the name of a street in İstanbul that housed offices of film producers. The films that were produced in the golden years of Yeşilçam cinema lacked depth and full-blown characters. The stories largely rested on the stereotypical ‘boy meets girl’ narrative.¹⁸ Typical motifs included the dissolution of a family or separation of a couple, which was perpetuated by false accusations, misunderstandings, and infidelity, revenge, honour or class differences.¹⁹ Serendipitous events played a key role in the resolution of the protagonists’ struggles and obstacles in life. This cinema experienced growth from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, only to shrink in the late 1970s. What catalysed the demise of Yeşilçam was the advent of television in the early 1970s, which coincided with increasing economic

¹⁷ Ellinger and Kayi, p. 575.

¹⁸ Erdoğan, p. 265.

¹⁹ Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), p. 30.

turmoil and political unrest towards the end of the decade.²⁰ Further, the producers had prioritised commercial success over the quality of films, thereby failing to make long-term investments to establish a solid film industry in Turkey.²¹

Yeşilçam cinema was not only popular but also populist in terms of appealing to the masses whose traditions and values were undermined by the Republican elite. This populist character was reflected in the ambivalent stance of Yeşilçam films in promoting Republican ideals, such as national unity and modernity. The target audience of Yeşilçam cinema was predominantly comprised of the population of Anatolian cities and domestic migrants in the urban centres.²² However, Yeşilçam producers neither fully endorsed nor explicitly rejected the top-down approach of the Kemalist regime for modernisation. Instead, they exhibited an ambivalent populism, which manifested itself in the representation of a set of dichotomies, such as modern vs traditional, urban vs rural, and developed vs underdeveloped in the films in a manner that undercut the modernisation project. For instance, the rich who led luxurious lifestyles in urban areas were depicted as shallow, whereas being pristine and honest was associated with having a rural background. Relatedly, the lower-class people were portrayed as those with a golden heart who necessarily gave a moral lesson to the corrupt rich.²³ Therefore, the officially promoted sense of modernity was overturned in Yeşilçam cinema, serving as a counter-reaction against the top-down modernisation project.

Nevertheless, Yeşilçam did not pose an unequivocal challenge to Republican ideals. Unlike modernity, the notion of national unity remained unchallenged through total omission of ethnic and linguistic differences in this cinema. For example,

²⁰ Özlem Öz and Kaya Özkaracalar, 'What Accounts for the Resilience and Vulnerability of Clusters? The Case of İstanbul's Film Industry', *European Planning Studies*, 19.3 (2011), 361–378 (p. 370).

²¹ Özlem Öz and Kaya Özkaracalar, 'The Reemergence of İstanbul's Film Industry: A Path-Dependence Perspective', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 56 (2017), 61–85 (p. 66).

²² Nejat Ulusay, 'A Transformational Experience within the Contexts of "National" and "Transnational": The Case of Turkish Cinema', in *Imagined out of Place*, ed. by Gökçen Karanfil and Serkan Şavk (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 6–22 (p. 7).

²³ Dönmez-Colin (2008), p. 31.

Armenians spoke accented Turkish, and Kurds were stereotyped as eastern Turks in line with the official perception of Kurds as mountain Turks.²⁴ Those that were portrayed as being from the southeast were typecast as poor and illiterate characters wearing black *shalwar* (loose trousers) and speaking bad Turkish.²⁵ In other words, Kurds were not represented as Kurds *per se* in this traditional cinema where there was no reference to the non-Turkishness of these characters. Yeşilçam thus followed the state's one-nation, one-language secularist ideology by excluding any representations of minority groups in the country. This exclusion was not unique to Yeşilçam cinema, but was a shared aspect of all other films of the pre-1990s period.

As hinted above, Turkish cinema was not monolithic, and Yeşilçam cinema did not represent the whole range of film production in the country despite its overwhelming dominance over the sector. For instance, the 1960s witnessed the emergence of social realist films that rejected the use of cinema purely as a vehicle for entertainment and instead deemed it as a form of art closely engaged with the social reality and structural inequalities.²⁶ The 1961 constitution represented the catalyst for the emergence of this social-realist movement in Turkish cinema. The 1960s thus proved a period when the translation of political works and Marxist-Leninist writings played a crucial role in the flourishing of left-wing thought in Turkey.²⁷ Likewise, it was in this decade when workers' rights, internal migration and feudal relations were addressed for the first time in Turkish cinema. However, the state impeded the attempts of social-realist directors to create a new filmic language through strict bans.²⁸ For instance, Metin Erksan's *The Revenge of the Serpents* (*Yılanların Öcü*, 1962), which

²⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁶ Murat Akser, 'Turkish Independent Cinema: Between Bourgeois Auteurism and Political Radicalism', in *Independent Filmmaking around the Globe*, ed. by Doris Baltruschat and Mary P. Erickson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), pp. 131-148 (p. 132).

²⁷ Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar, 'Translation as Conveyor: Critical Thought in Turkey in the 1960s', *Works and Days* 39/40, 20.1-2 (2002), 253-275 (p. 260).

²⁸ Akser, p. 132.

was an adaptation of Fakir Baykurt's novel recounting a man's fight against rural traditions, was heavily censured for its alleged communist propaganda.²⁹

Another example was Erksan's *Dry Summer* (*Susuz Yaz*, 1963), which was about the conflicts surrounding the ownership of land and water in southern Anatolia. The film received the Golden Bear award at the 1964 Berlin Film Festival and opened the path of Turkish cinema to the world.³⁰ However, Erksan's film was almost not shown at the festival, since the censorship board banned the film for depicting a woman marrying her dead husband's brother, and this was thought to give a negative impression of Turkey to foreigners.³¹ Due to these pressures, these social-realist films remained relatively few, and commercial films continued to dominate the industry.

The movement that originated in the 1960s, however, paved the way for the emergence of a more politicised social realist cinema amidst the political upheaval of the following decade.³² Yılmaz Güney merits a special mention for his pioneering role in the emergence of this cinema; his influence went beyond the 1970s and inspired the political films of the post-1990s. Güney abrogated the gilded studio sets, the star system and the formulaic narratives that targeted commercial success.³³ He criticised Yeşilçam cinema for relying too much on the role of destiny and miracles rather than individual and/or collective struggle.³⁴ His film *The Hope* (*Umut*, 1970), which recounted the story of an impoverished and naïve horse-cab driver deceived into searching for buried treasure, was deemed as the precedent for *engagé* films in the 1970s.³⁵ However, Güney's film was banned for propagating class differences, degrading religion and provoking workers to resist authority until the ban was lifted in 1990.³⁶ *The Hope* is still considered as a milestone among the socio-critical and

²⁹ Dönmez-Colin (2014), p. 5.

³⁰ Suner, p. 4.

³¹ Dönmez-Colin (2008), p. 49.

³² Ibid., p. 51.

³³ Ibid., p. 119.

³⁴ Yılmaz Güney, *Yol (The Way)*, (İstanbul: Kaynak Publishing, 1994), p. 291.

³⁵ Suner, p. 5.

³⁶ Güney, p. 291.

political works of Turkish cinema.³⁷ Despite the rise in the number of these films, Turkish cinema stood on the brink of a crisis with Yeşilçam's impending demise by the end of the 1970s.

It is misleading to suggest, though, that all these censored films took a critical stand against the official ideology and were political in the same manner. For instance, while depicting the struggle of oppressed people and the tyranny of the oppressor through realistic accounts, the directors of social realist cinema did not question the nation-state ideology or tackle political taboos.³⁸ On the contrary, they aspired to form a movement based on the idea of a cinema with nationalist ambitions. They were concerned with the structural inequalities that resulted from the transition into a capitalist system and industrialisation. Doctors, lawyers, the police force and the army remained immune from scrutiny in these films, as in popular Yeşilçam cinema. Therefore, censorship was exerted, but not for the reasons of attacking the nation-state or threatening its indivisible integrity, as it were in the case of Yılmaz Güney's films in the 1970s.

In terms of the state's control over cinema, the censorship system always worked towards the objective of instituting a singular vision of the Turkish nation.³⁹ The content of films was controlled through a censorship regulation approved by the Board of Censors from the early years of the sector. Additionally, the Ministry of the Interior reserved the right to censor or ban a film even if the Board of Censors had approved it. Crucially, there was no law regulating the production, distribution, exhibition, or importation of films in Turkey until the mid-1930s. Despite the absence of legal regulations, the city governors were fully authorised to deal with the matter.⁴⁰ Incorporated in 1934 into the 'Regulation of the Control of Films and Film

³⁷ Dönmez-Colin (2008), p. 123.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

³⁹ Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy, 'Deep Nation: The National Question and Turkish Cinema Culture', in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 203-222 (p. 200).

⁴⁰ Erdoğan and Göktürk, p. 539.

Screenplays,' the censorship-article was executed with minor revisions until 1977 and applied to both Turkish and foreign films.⁴¹ The censorship-article in question consisted of ten criteria, which required that a film should avoid:

1) the political propaganda of a state; 2) degrading an ethnic community or race; 3) hurting the sentiments of fellow states and nations; 4) propagating religion; 5) propagating political, economic and social ideologies which contradict the national regime; 6) contradicting our national and moral values; 7) opposing the military forces and reducing the dignity and honour of the military forces; 8) being harmful to the discipline and security of the country; 9) provoking crime; and 10) attacking the state.⁴²

The Board, whose members were from the state departments, including the police and the military, examined the script as well as the final product, and in some cases, artists who did not conform were sent to prison or exile.⁴³ This censorship procedure prevented filmmakers from promoting challenging ideas or developing any explicit social or political critique.⁴⁴ The censorship board was moved from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and pre-scrutiny of the scripts from the centre was abolished in 1986.⁴⁵ However, before that, the military government in the aftermath of the 1980 coup had tightened censorship on political films due to their critique of the military regime. For instance, Erden Kıral's film *A Season in Hakkari* (*Hakkari'de Bir Mevsim*, 1983), which depicted the story of an exiled teacher and solitary lives of Kurdish peasants in a remote village in south-east Anatolia, was found subversive by the censorship commission for its portrayal of poverty in the southeast.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Dilek Kaya Mutlu and Zeynep Koçer, 'A Different Story of Secularism: The Censorship of Religion in Turkish Films of the 1960s and early 1970s', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 15.1 (2012), 70-88 (p. 73).

⁴² Nezih Erdoğan and Dilek Kaya, 'Institutional Intervention in the Distribution and Exhibition of Hollywood Films in Turkey', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 22.1 (2002), 47-59 (p. 54).

⁴³ Dönmez-Colin (2008), p. 49.

⁴⁴ Erdoğan and Göktürk, p. 540.

⁴⁵ Dönmez-Colin (2008), p. 49.

⁴⁶ Robins and Aksoy, p. 200.

The film was banned for five years in Turkey, although it won the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 1983.⁴⁷

Likewise, Ali Özgentürk's *Water Also Burns* (*Su da Yanar*, 1987), which recounted the anguish of a filmmaker striving to make a film about Nazım Hikmet, the banished poet of Turkey, won an award at the Tokyo Film Festival in 1987.⁴⁸ However, the film was banned in more than fifty provinces, and the public prosecutor of the Supreme Court in İstanbul 'demanded up to twelve years of imprisonment for Özgentürk for his anti-Turkish propaganda' and the 'bad image of state security forces' in his film.⁴⁹ Although the censorship board had been transferred to the Ministry of Culture in 1986, local administrations retained their authority to ban films at the time. Therefore, Özgentürk was obliged to appear in court in each province to win his case.⁵⁰ Among all these censored films, Güney's *The Way* (*Yol*, 1982) was arguably the most internationally acclaimed film ever made to date, since it won the Palme d'Or at the 1982 Cannes Film Festival. Based on the stories of five prisoners travelling on a week's leave from prison to different parts of Turkey, *The Way* used prison as a metaphor for the state of Turkish society under the military's rule and thus presented a critique of the 1980 military intervention. Banned in 1981, the film was screened for the first time in 1999 although the ban had been lifted in 1992.

As seen in these examples, the 1980 coup ushered in an era when films with political or explicit content were strictly controlled and censored to monitor cultural life.⁵¹ Relatedly, the coup influenced film production in two respects. On the one hand, the political situation marked by oppression under the military regime dealt a deathblow to the popular Turkish cinema that had already been in decline since the mid-1970s. On the other hand, an air of de-politicisation prevailed over the country as

⁴⁷ Agah Özgüç, *A Chronological History of the Turkish Cinema (1914-1988)* (Ankara: Ministry of Culture, 1988), p. 103.

⁴⁸ Chris Hellier, 'Two Steps Forward, One Back', *Index on Censorship*, 20.3 (1991), 9–11 (p. 9).

⁴⁹ Ellinger and Kayi, p. 603.

⁵⁰ Dönmez-Colin (2008), p. 49.

⁵¹ Arslan, p. 203.

a by-product of the post-coup oppression. This political climate resulted in the emergence of films which concentrated on the individual rather than social struggles and injustices, while presenting new ways of expression in cinema.⁵² A new group of filmmakers who emerged in the 1980s attempted to create complex fictional characters, unlike those in Yeşilçam cinema. For instance, some of these directors challenged the conventional roles that were assigned to female characters as obedient daughters or wives. The emancipation and empowerment of the woman became a recurring theme in these films of the 1980s, which portrayed her as ‘neither a virgin nor a prostitute’, but as a human being with sexual desires.⁵³ Despite their lack of explicit political engagement, these films represented a break from the past and indirectly informed the ways of addressing the unexamined topics of the country in the cinema of the post-(mid)-1990s. Therefore, the 1980 coup proved a turning point in marking the beginning of a new period in the evolution of Turkish cinema. The following section summarises the development of the film production in Turkey in the 1990s and beyond when the research films were made.

2.2. Turkish Cinema after the mid-1990s

The transitional period of crisis following the 1980 coup ended with the resurgence of Turkish cinema in the mid-1990s. One contributory factor was that a new law concerning the works of cinema, video, and music was passed in 1986, and the Turkish Ministry of Culture started to provide funding as an incentive to film projects as of 1988.⁵⁴ The state’s support was deemed necessary for the first time in the country’s history to resurrect Turkish cinema.⁵⁵ Further, Turkey joined Eurimages in 1990, the film funding scheme of the Council of Europe that was founded in 1989.⁵⁶ In addition to the Ministry of Culture, Eurimages thus became a major sponsor of the film projects during the 1990s.⁵⁷ The advancements in the television and advertising industries also

⁵² Suner, p. 8.

⁵³ Dönmez-Colin (2008), p. 145.

⁵⁴ Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 436.

⁵⁵ Arslan, p. 203.

⁵⁶ Deniz Göktürk, ‘Anyone at Home? Itinerant Identities in European Cinema of the 1990s’, *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 43.2 (2002), 201–212 (p. 205).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

played a role in the gradual improvement of the film industry in the mid-1990s.⁵⁸ Additionally, the enactment of Law 5224 in 2004, the first law on cinema in the history of Turkey, represented an unprecedented development that established a support system for the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to promote Turkish cinema.⁵⁹ This law on the evaluation, classification and support of cinema films provided the legal basis for the state's continued and systematic support for the domestic film production for the first time in the country's history. Consequently, all these factors ended the long-standing crisis of Turkish cinema and facilitated its growth throughout the 2000s.

The post-1990s cinema of Turkey has largely been discussed in two main categories: popular cinema and independent cinema.⁶⁰ The former bears a resemblance to Yeşilçam-style cinema in terms of its reliance on formulaic storylines and stereotypical characters, only with the difference that the technical quality of films is now incomparably improved. In contrast, independent cinema sets itself in opposition to the Yeşilçam tradition where the commercial success and star system were the rule.⁶¹ These independent filmmakers break with the precedent and employ an innovative cinematic style that is marked by aesthetic minimalism and realistic narration, thus transcending the local and national, notwithstanding the historical and social specificity of their stories. Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Zeki Demirkubuz and Yeşim Ustaoğlu are among the notable figures who made their debut films in the 1990s. These directors tend to work in small teams due not only to budgetary restraints but also to personal preferences. In some cases, they even single-handedly create their films by taking on multiple roles as the producer, director, screenwriter, camera woman/man and even actor. Therefore, at a basic level, popular and independent cinemas can be distinguished by their divergences in the production process and narration styles.

⁵⁸ Ulusay, p. 7.

⁵⁹ Josh Carney, 'Regarding North: *Bakur* and the Crystallization of Cinematic Censorship in Turkey', in *Kurdish Documentary Cinema in Turkey: The Politics and Aesthetics of Identity and Resistance*, ed. by Suncem Koçer and Can Candan (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), pp. 140-164 (p. 141).

⁶⁰ Arslan, p. 251.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

Differentiating between these two categories based on their ties with the past, Asuman Suner refers to popular and independent films as popular nostalgia films and new political films, respectively.⁶² Accordingly, how the former deal with the past does not (or cannot) encompass an interrogation of the past or violence in the past because a nostalgic treatment of what happened prevails over a critical outlook and downplays the necessity of a critique of violence. Instead, nostalgia films rest on an idealised portrayal of the past to criticise the flaws of the present society and state system.⁶³ In contrast, new political films do not idealise the past in treating the subject matter, be it a socio-political event or personal story. Instead, these new political films refrain from a nostalgic depiction, suggesting that a traumatic historical or personal event is not divorced from, but born out of the flaws of the circumstances in the background.

Relatedly, Suner's work analyses post-1990s Turkish cinema in relation to the notions of 'belonging', 'identity' and 'memory' against the backdrop of the neoliberal transformation and turbulent political climate in Turkey. Her main argument is that the question of belonging is constantly revisited and interrogated from different perspectives in both popular and independent films alike.⁶⁴ She also stresses the figure of 'spectral home' – spectral in terms of being metaphorically haunted by a traumatic past – as a recurring theme in different forms and with different meanings in these films.⁶⁵ In a similar vein, Sevcan Sönmez seeks to explore how social memory of the violent past can be traced through the filmic representations of traumatic realities, such as military coups, tortures, and forced migration.⁶⁶

⁶² Suner, p. 16.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 16.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁶ Sevcan Sönmez, 'How Does Cinema Reflect Traumatic Memory?: A Study on Turkish Cinema and Trauma Films', *Cineforum*, 14.5 (2012), 171-203, (p. 171).

Additionally, these post-1990s films have also been discussed in terms of their stand on repressed ethnic identities and minorities and their treatment of dominant discourses on the nation-state. For example, Gönül Dönmez-Colin discusses the representations of various identities in Turkish cinema by linking them to Turkey's quest for an identity or acceptance of her multiple identities.⁶⁷ Dönmez-Colin also notes that the rise in nationalism in 1990s Turkey coincided with the armed conflict in the southeast and the politicisation of the Kurdish question. Independent films responded to that development by flagging up nationalistic practices, such as 'reciting the maxims of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in schools or the ritual of singing the national anthem en masse to patriotic outbursts at football matches' in a subversive manner.⁶⁸ However, popular films incorporated the overtones of nationalism, conservatism and Islamism affirmatively, depending on what the subject matter was. They depicted the enemy as the initial aggressor who wounded 'our' honour and insulted 'our' flag.⁶⁹ Any violent hard-line actions were thus justified as the legitimate response to the acts of the enemy, such as massacre, torture, rape or insult to honour.

Likewise, Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins focus on the question of 'deep nation', which refers to 'the most fundamental aspect or level of belonging in any group' marked by the tendency towards the denial and repression of diversity.⁷⁰ It feeds on the fear and inhibition of change in the national community, and thus affects the community's relation to knowledge of oneself and different complexities of the society. In the Turkish case, the deep nation was underpinned by the unity and homogeneity of the Turkish nation as the ideals promoted during and sustained after the nation-building process of modern Turkey. According to Aksoy and Robins, the valorisation of the national ideal and the denial of difference to reinforce the deep nation proved repressive and silencing mechanisms, thereby obstructing the formation of a national cinema representative of the diversity in Turkey. Given this background,

⁶⁷ Dönmez-Colin (2008), p. 19.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 90.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 34.

⁷⁰ Robins and Aksoy, p. 205.

the portrayal of the oppressed ‘others’ of the Republic in post-1990s political films attested to the falling apart of the deep nation and ‘the progressive disordering of the ideal of the Kemalist nation based on disavowal and silence.’⁷¹

These new political films have also been examined in terms of exploring the sentiments of loss and frustration that accompany the act of remembering the traumatic past. For instance, according to Övgü Gökçe, aesthetics come to the fore as the main site ‘that accommodates the relationship between loss, remembrance, and mourning’ in addressing the taboo topics of recent Turkish history.⁷² In another work entitled ‘(Cannot) Remember: Landscapes of Loss in Contemporary Turkish Cinema,’ Gökçe specifically focuses on Ustaoglu’s *Waiting for the Clouds* (*Bulutları Beklerken*, 2003), which recounts Eka/Ayşe’s memory of her assimilated Greek identity, and Alper’s *Autumn* (*Sonbahar*, 2008), which attends to the deadly consequences of the state-sanctioned operation on hunger-striking prisoners in 2000 through the story of its protagonist Yusuf.⁷³ In Gökçe’s view, both films ‘bring together the aesthetics of a vast landscape bracketed with archival footage from state records, opening a powerful alternative narrative into the accounts of official history.’⁷⁴ In another study, Tülay Çelik discusses Alper’s *Autumn* as an example of auteur cinema in Turkey in terms of conveying frustration through aesthetic features and producing meanings regarding the effects of severe violence on society.⁷⁵

Deniz Bayrakdar delineates the relation between this independent cinema and politics in two categories. In the first category, she mentions ‘the *auteur*-directors, who have embedded “politics” in their narratives through the stories that function as

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 207.

⁷² Övgü Gökçe, ‘Cinema in Turkey: Disparities and Oppositions’, in *Cinema Turkey: New Times, New Tendencies*, ed. by Gözde Onaran and Fırat Yücel (Altyazı Project Office: İstanbul, 2011), pp. 42-59 (p. 50).

⁷³ Övgü Gökçe, ‘(Cannot) Remember: Landscapes of Loss in Contemporary Turkish Cinema’, in *Cinema and Politics: Turkish Cinema and the New Europe*, ed. by Deniz Bayrakdar (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp. 268-280 (p. 276).

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 277.

⁷⁵ Tülay Çelik, ‘Frustration in Cinema: Ideological Presentation of Dreams’, *Journal Academic Marketing Mysticism Online*, 6 (2013), 326-338 (pp. 333-334).

“caché” to veil the politics of the everyday life.’⁷⁶ Accordingly, for directors, such as Zeki Demirkubuz, Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Tayfun Pirselimoglu, politics is ‘hidden behind the curtains of the rooms, in the television frames and at tables where no one speaks to the other.’⁷⁷ In the second category of auteurs, such as Yeşim Ustaoglu and Özcan Alper, politics is inserted into the narrative in and of itself through the stories, which revolve around displacement, migration, disappearances, and ethnic conflicts. Crucially, Bayrakdar also adds that ‘in both categories, new Turkish cinema searches for truth in the everyday life of the ordinary (wo)man.’⁷⁸ In a similar vein, Derviş Zaim, one of the directors deemed as the forerunners of this new cinema, describes his generation as ‘alluvionic filmmakers’ to express the dynamics and diversity of post-1990s independent films as follows:⁷⁹

they flow in the same direction, but the linkages take different forms;
they work independently but also parallel to one another, similar to the
sediments of alluvium that together form an alluvium. At times, they
come together, and at times, spread apart, as do alluvia.

The analogy of alluvium is relevant in that each director in this group has her/his distinctive film language with recurring themes, tropes and political agenda. A significant and related development was the formation of a new initiative entitled ‘New Cinema Movement’ (*‘Yeni Sinema Hareketi’*) in 2010 by about thirty directors and producers, whose films achieved critical international acclaim. They announced the launch of their movement in a press release where they articulated their hope for creating a solidarity network vis-à-vis the problems of the industry.⁸⁰ They also emphasised that their common ground was an ethical standpoint rather than some

⁷⁶ Gizem Öztürk Erdem, ‘New Turkish Cinema: Interview with Professor Dr Deniz Bayrakdar’, *Nouvelle Europe*, 10 June 2013, <<http://www.nouvelle-europe.eu/node/1698>> [accessed 4 February 2015].

⁷⁷ Ibid..

⁷⁸ Ibid..

⁷⁹ Derviş Zaim, ‘Your Focus is Your Truth: Turkish Cinema, “Alluvionic” and International Acceptance’, in *Shifting Landscapes: Media and Film in European Context*, ed. by Nezih Erdoğan and Miyase Christensen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 86-108 (p. 88).

⁸⁰ Aslı Daldal, ‘The Concept of “National Cinema” and the “New Turkish Cinema”’, in *New Cinema, New Media: Reinventing Turkish Cinema*, ed. by Murat Akser and Deniz Bayrakdar (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), pp. 92-111 (p. 92).

aesthetic preferences or cultural traits that they shared.⁸¹ The movement is deemed as the best organised group of independent filmmakers in Turkey in that they continue to assist one another in finding sources of funding and sharing the knowledge and experience in producing films.⁸² The members of this movement also continue to stand together against any form of censorship on cinema. For instance, 39 members of the movement signed a letter in 2014 to protest the ban on the screening of Lars von Trier's film *Nymphomaniac*, saying that the decision of the Board of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was against freedom of expression.⁸³

In view of this diversity in the forms of political engagement, sensitivities to differences and stylistic qualities, the term 'Turkish cinema' is dismissed by some scholars as being too generic to reflect the break of post-1990s cinema from the film tradition of the previous decades. Two alternatives suggested are 'new Turkish cinema' and 'new cinema of Turkey.' On the one hand, 'new' signifies the revival of film production and the emergence of a new group of filmmakers in the 1990s. On the other hand, the preference for 'Turkey' over 'Turkish' in the latter one expresses a desire 'to move from a limiting, nationalistic framework to an understanding that highlights ethnic and linguistic pluralities, as well as the transnational and global characteristics of contemporary cinema in Turkey.'⁸⁴ Likewise, Fırat Yücel and Gözde Onaran refer to the productions of this period as 'Cinema Turkey' rather than 'Turkish Cinema.' In their view, for the first time in the 2000s, 'filmmaking became relatively democratic and much more representative than ever before.'⁸⁵

⁸¹ Çiçek Tahaoğlu, 'Yönetmenler ve Yapımcılardan "Yeni Sinema Hareketi"' ("New Cinema Movement" from Directors and Producers'), 1 April 2010, <<https://m.bianet.org/bianet/kultur/121036-yonetmenler-ve-yapimcilardan-yeni-sinema-hareketi>> [accessed 4 February 2018].

⁸² Akser, p. 133.

⁸³ Josh Carney, "'Nymphomaniac' Latest Pawn in Turkey's Battle Over Censorship', *Variety*, 21 March 2014, <<http://variety.com/2014/film/global/nymphomaniac-latest-pawn-in-turkeys-battle-over-censorship-1201138229/>> [accessed 4 February 2018].

⁸⁴ Arslan, p. 20.

⁸⁵ Gözde Onaran and Fırat Yücel (eds.), 'Introduction', in *Cinema Turkey: New Times, New Tendencies* (Altyazı Project Office: İstanbul, 2011), pp. 4-5 (p. 4).

However, Suner does not problematize the use of ‘Turkish cinema’, unlike Arslan, Yücel and Onaran. In her view, not all films produced in the post-1990s pose challenging questions about national belonging and identity. The ‘(new) cinema of Turkey’ is exclusively relevant for new political films that debunk the term ‘Turkish cinema’ as a classificatory designation by portraying Turkey as ‘a locus of divergent ethnic, religious, and cultural identities.’⁸⁶ Therefore, Suner acknowledges the novel aspect of film production in the post-1990s and utilises the term ‘new Turkish cinema’ as a category that embodies both popular and new political films. The thesis concurs with Suner’s objection to using ‘cinema of Turkey’ as an all-encompassing category and uses ‘new Turkish cinema’ due to the selection of the research films regardless of them being an independent or popular film.

Overall, the previous research on the post-(mid)-1990s cinema of Turkey highlights the critique of the state and examination of taboos as the recurring themes in the politically engaged films of this period. Increased awareness about identity issues and multiplicities that are associated with denial, suppression and violence in the official discourse is also acknowledged as a distinguishing aspect of new political films, in Suner’s terms. However, these scholarly observations do not elaborate on the interaction between the process of making films on the conflict and the changes in the official discourse on the Kurdish question. Further, they do not consider the role of external factors, such as the availability of funding and the risks of censorship in defining the distribution and reception of selected films. Taking these factors into consideration, the following section will discuss how the production and circulation of the research films were hampered or facilitated by the specific political contexts in which they operated.

⁸⁶ Suner, p. 75.

2.3. Contextualising the Selected Films in the History of the Conflict

This section will situate eight films under consideration within their contexts of production and reception, and discuss how they engaged with the mutations of the conflict at the time of their distribution. It will focus on the period between 1999 and 2013 when the oldest and most recent films, *Journey to the Sun* and *Jîn*, respectively, were released. These years witnessed some pivotal moments in the history of the conflict, ranging from the capture of the PKK's leader to the unprecedented peace talks between the Turkish state and PKK.⁸⁷ Therefore, it represented a period of drastic changes when the ruling power (the AKP) criticised the wrongdoings of the state in the past related to the Kurdish question. The section will discuss the research films in three groups, depending on whether they were produced before, during or after the Kurdish opening. It will thus pay attention to the differences and similarities in their experiences of censorship and distributional restraints in view of the changes in the state rhetoric and policies.

2.3.1. Re-presenting the Conflict before the Kurdish Opening

To start with *Journey to the Sun*, Yeşim Ustaoglu's film narrates the story of discrimination and transformation that Mehmet experiences as a Kurdish-looking Turk in the 1990s. Mehmet loses his lodging and job at the municipal water authority after being mistaken for a Kurd and detained as a suspect. His friendship with the Kurdish Berzan helps him to survive in İstanbul until Berzan's detention and subsequent death following the protests in support of the hunger strikes in the prisons. The journey that Mehmet sets out to take Berzan's coffin to the southeast transforms his identification with his Turkish identity. Setting the story in the tumult of the given decade, the director thus alludes to a variety of phenomena, such as the hunger strikes in 1996, disappearances and displacements in the southeast.

⁸⁷ See 1.3. 'The 2000s: Ceasefire, Peace Process and Resumption of the Conflict', pp. 70-73.

The film, which was produced in the late 1990s when the conflict was still ongoing, had its world premiere at the Berlin Film Festival on 16 February 1999 and there received the Peace Prize and Blue Angel Award for the Best European Film.⁸⁸ Crucially, the premiere coincided with the demonstrations of the PKK sympathisers in Berlin as well as other European cities, protesting against the capture of the PKK's leader Öcalan on 15 February 1999. The film's screening thus turned into a political event as the police surrounded the Zoo Palast, the festival venue in Berlin, during the protests.⁸⁹ In the same year, *Journey to the Sun* also received several awards in Turkey, including the Best National Film and Best Director, at the international film festivals which were organised in İstanbul and Ankara.⁹⁰

The film, a Turkish-German-Dutch co-production, received funding from Eurimages and television channels ARTE and ZDF.⁹¹ The film's domestic producer was İstisnai Films and Commercials (*İstisnai Filmler ve Reklamlar*, İFR), which was initially founded as a commercial production company, but later also began to produce films. Hence, it was primarily known as a profit-oriented company which generally supported popular films rather than low-budget, independent films. Therefore, *Journey to the Sun* did not precisely fit into the İFR's profile, given Ustaoglu's prioritisation of critical rather than commercial success and preference for working with amateur actors and locals. However, Ustaoglu explained in an interview that Behrooz Hashemian, the head of the company's film production unit at the time, played a defining role in the İFR Production's decision to support her film instead of any other potentially more profitable film(s).⁹²

⁸⁸ Dönmez-Colin (2014), p. 165.

⁸⁹ Göktürk, p. 206.

⁹⁰ The Centre for Turkish Cinema Studies, Awards – *Journey to the Sun*, <<http://www.tsa.org.tr/tr/film/oduller/2130/gunese-yolculuk>> [accessed 18 February 2018].

⁹¹ Göktürk, p. 207.

⁹² Baki Uğur Kart (ed.), 'Yeşim Ustaoglu: "1980 sonrasında yetişmiş büyük bir gençlik kesimi realiteden çok kopuk"' ('Yeşim Ustaoglu: "A large part of the young people who were raised in the post-1980s are detached from the reality"'), in *Sinema Söyleşileri 2001: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Mithat Alam Film Merkezi Söyleşi, Panel ve Sunum Yılı 2001* (Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayinevi: İstanbul, 2006), 111-131 (p. 128).

Ustaoğlu also added that her motivation to make this film was partly to demonstrate the existence of a 'Kurdish reality' and to find out to what extent Turkish people would be willing to acknowledge it.⁹³ Given the director's statement of intent, it is possible to suggest that the film was intended to reach Turkish viewers who were liberal and open-minded enough to question and revise their understanding of the Kurdish question. However, on the other hand, Ustaoğlu prioritised the perspectives of the Kurds in portraying the conflict and depicting the experiences of being or looking like a Kurd in the 1990s.

Further, she did not render her treatment of the subject matter particularly accessible and relatable to the mainstream Turkish public whose values were represented by the official state ideology. For instance, in addition to the film's use of Kurdish songs, Kurdish dialogues were not subtitled into Turkish for the film's theatrical release in Turkey. It should be emphasised that this absence of Turkish subtitles was not the director's choice, but an obligation for the film to avoid censorship due to the ban on the use of Kurdish in broadcasting and publishing at the time. However, the amount of Kurdish used in the film also required the audience to understand both Turkish and Kurdish to follow the story for its national screenings. Therefore, the film arguably addressed the Kurdish citizens of Turkey rather than Turkish viewers in terms of the accessibility of the content and the angle from which the story was told.

The security-oriented approach to the Kurdish question remained dominant at the time of the film's festival screenings and theatrical release in Turkey, although the clashes had already ended after the PKK's declaration of a ceasefire in September 1999, following Öcalan's imprisonment. The film's release in Turkey was hence delayed for more than a year after its world premiere, despite the critical acclaim that it received at several national and international film festivals. Ustaoğlu even had to take the initiative to find theatres to distribute her film, since most distribution

⁹³ Ibid., p. 120.

companies shied away from doing that due to its political content.⁹⁴ *Journey to the Sun* was finally released on 3 March 2000 and shown only in eight theatres in Turkey due to the difficulties involved. Relatedly, the film had its national premiere in the predominantly Kurdish-populated provinces of Diyarbakır and Van in the southeast instead of İstanbul.

One year later when Handan İpekçi's *Big Man, Little Love* was released in October 2001, some legal improvements had already taken place with respect to the Kurdish question. The film tells the story of an encounter between a five-year-old orphaned Hejar and retired judge Rıfat. Hejar takes refuge in Rıfat's home when the police raid the house of her caretaker, who happens to be Rıfat's next-door neighbour. However, the girl's Kurdish identity and inability to speak Turkish constitute a problem for Rıfat, who defends the official ideology. The film thus refers to the consequences of the conflict, such as military raids, displacements in the southeastern villages, and the stigmatisation of Kurds as potential suspects in the late 1990s.

As in the case of Ustaoglu's film, Kurdish dialogues were also not subtitled into Turkish for the theatrical release of İpekçi's film. The reason for this absence was that the ban on broadcasting in languages prohibited by law remained in effect until 26 March 2002.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, other legal amendments allowed for a gradual shift into a more relaxed attitude towards the Kurdish question, letting alternative voices be heard in the media. Unlike *Journey to the Sun*, *Big Man, Little Love* received funding from both Eurimages and the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Further, the film was selected as Turkey's official Oscar entry for the 'Best Foreign Film' category of the 74th Academy Awards in 2002.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

⁹⁵ Başak İnce, *Citizenship and Identity in Turkey: From Atatürk's Republic to the Present Day* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), p. 174.

İpekçi's film, which was a Turkish-Greek-Hungarian co-production, also won five awards in the International Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival, including the Best Film Award.⁹⁶ While commenting on the mainstream media's attention for İpekçi's film in 2001, which *Journey to the Sun* did not receive in 2000, Ustaoglu also acknowledged the change in the perception of the Kurdish question since 1999.⁹⁷ In her view, this change facilitated the recognition and discussion of new films on the Kurdish question without facing as many challenges as her film did. Ustaoglu even suggested that the media might have treated her own film differently if it had been released in 2001.

In addition to the change in context, the difference in the media's approach can also be attributed to the differences in each film's intended audience, which were also reflected in the directorial choices in treating the conflict. In terms of the subject matter, similar to *Journey to the Sun*, *Big Man*, *Little Love* depicted the implications of the conflict on ordinary Kurdish people who lost their relatives and were forced to abandon their villages. However, unlike Ustaoglu, İpekçi worked with notable actors and actresses, such as Şükran Güngör, Yıldız Kenter and Füsün Demirel in *Big Man*, *Little Love*. Therefore, although it was also a small-budget film and was shown only in ten theatres all over the country, the casting of these well-known actors arguably enabled İpekçi's film to gain more public attention.

Further, in both films, the encounter between a Kurd and a Turk had a transformative effect on the Turkish character's view of the conflict and consequent problems of Kurdish citizens of Turkey. However, in *Big Man*, *Little Love*, the change was triggered by the feelings of compassion and pity that the elderly Turkish man developed for the orphaned Kurdish child. Here, İpekçi's film diverged from *Journey to the Sun* in which the shared sense of exclusion and discrimination marked the non-hierarchical relationship based on companionship and friendship between the Kurdish

⁹⁶ 'Büyük Adam Küçük Aşk'ın Yasaklanması' ('The Ban on *Big Man*, *Little Love*'), 3 March 2002, <<http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/138613.asp>> [accessed 21 July 2015].

⁹⁷ Kart, p. 120.

and Turkish characters. This difference was arguably reflected in İpekçi's effort to make *Big Man, Little Love* relatable to the mainstream Turkish public by highlighting the vulnerability and emotional appeal of the Kurdish characters. Further, the presence of a 'translator' character in İpekçi's film rendered the absence of Turkish subtitles less problematic for the Turkish audience without any knowledge of Kurdish to follow the story.⁹⁸

Additionally, the film drew a great deal of attention when the Supervisory Council of Cinema, Video and Music Productions at the Ministry of Culture stopped its circulation three months after its release. The General Directorate of Security requested the revocation of the film's licence on the grounds that it depicted the police in the raid scene in a derogatory manner. Upon this request, the Council found the film 'objectionable' and censored its nationwide screening.⁹⁹ Therefore, despite having partly funded the film, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism withdrew it from the cinemas for 'violating the principle of the indivisible integrity of the state.'¹⁰⁰ İpekçi was later brought to trial for insulting the police, but the charge was eventually dropped when no element of crime was found.¹⁰¹ The ban was lifted in June 2002 after the director won her case in court.¹⁰² As an implicit signifier of this censorship on the film, the synopsis on the website of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism does not refer to the conflict or the Kurdish origin of the little girl. The film is described in broad strokes as one 'where ethnic differences lose their significance in the depths of human relationships.'¹⁰³ No mention of Kurdish here suggests the persistence of the official

⁹⁸ The uses of multilingualism and translation in the selected films will be discussed at length in Chapter Four and Five, respectively.

⁹⁹ Ömer Erbil, 'Önce Destek, Sonra Yasak', ('Support Followed by the Ban'), *Milliyet*, 3 March 2002, <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2002/03/03/guncel/agun.html>> [accessed 21 July 2015].

¹⁰⁰ Gönül Dönmez-Colin, 'Women in Turkish Cinema: Their Presence and Absence as Images and as Image-Makers', *Third Text*, 24 (2010), 91–105 (p. 101).

¹⁰¹ It is not possible to get hold of any documentation about this trial that shows how the charges and accusations were phrased.

¹⁰² Dönmez-Colin (2010), p. 100.

¹⁰³ *Büyük Adam Küçük Aşk*, 6 August 2005, <<http://www.kultur.gov.tr/TR,27731/buyuk-adam-kucuk-ask.html>>, [accessed 21 July 2015].

tendency based on denial, which underpinned Turkey's Kurdish language policy until the 1990s, as discussed in Chapter Five.¹⁰⁴

As seen in this instance, the Ministry's financial support did not prevent İpekçi from facing trial in 2001, implying the persistence of the oppressive practices in the early 2000s. However, further reforms were undertaken to meet the Copenhagen Criteria in the following period, which resulted in the opening of the accession negotiations with the European Union in October 2005.¹⁰⁵ Three reforms merit special mention in terms of their positive effects on the cinema sector. The first was the change in Article 159 of the Penal Code in August 2002, which penalised acts, such as 'insulting and deriding the Republic, "Turkishness", the Grand National Assembly, the government, the ministries, the military and security forces, and the moral personality of the judiciary.'¹⁰⁶ Following the change, it 'was stipulated that criticisms without the intention of insult or contempt would not constitute an offence.'¹⁰⁷ The second was the abolition in July 2003 of Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law, which penalised separatist propaganda and caused the detention of journalists and academics in the 1990s.¹⁰⁸ The third involved broadening the scope of freedom of expression by permitting the use of local languages other than Turkish.¹⁰⁹ For instance, Özcan Alper was brought to trial in 2000 for violating Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law with his short film *Momi (Grandma)* in the Hamshen language, but the charges were dropped after the cancellation of this article.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ See 5.2. 'Turkey's Language Policy on the Use and Status of Kurdish', pp. 203-206.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Kubicek, 'Political Conditionality and European Union's Cultivation of Democracy in Turkey', *Democratization*, 18.4 (2011), 910-931 (p. 910).

¹⁰⁶ Ergun Özbudun, 'Democratization Reforms in Turkey, 1993-2004', *Turkish Studies*, 8.2 (2007), 179-196 (p. 184).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

¹⁰⁸ Meltem Müftüler-Baç, 'Turkey's Political Reforms: The Impact of the European Union', *Southeast European Politics and Societies*, 10.1 (2005), 16-30 (p. 26).

¹⁰⁹ Özbudun, p. 184.

¹¹⁰ Dönmez-Colin (2014), p. 38.

In addition to these reforms, the AKP government also enacted the first law on cinema in the history of Turkey in 2004, as mentioned above, and thus sponsored film projects that would have been penalised under the previous law. For instance, both the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Eurimages funded Alper's debut film *Autumn*. Alper faced neither censorship nor distributional restraints, as his short documentary and İpekçi's film did. He indicated in an interview that the film was written and produced between 2004 and 2008.¹¹¹ Therefore, both the legal amendments and the AKP government's progressive policies in the early years of its rule arguably facilitated the treatment of politically contentious topics and critique of the official ideology in Turkish cinema.

Autumn, a Turkish-German co-production of Kuzey Film and Filmfabrik, recounts the story of Yusuf, a former hunger striker and a witness of the military operations in prisons which were organised to end the hunger strikes in 2000. Released on health grounds after serving ten years of his sentence, Yusuf returns home near the Turkish-Georgian border eight years after the operations. Revolving around the last days of his life, the film foregrounds the sense of approaching death as the season turns from autumn to winter. Alper himself and Serkan Acar co-founded Kuzey Film in İstanbul, Turkey in 2007 to work with a new generation of directors and scriptwriters and find solutions for the realisation of their productions.¹¹² As for Filmfabrik, based in Cologne, Germany, it is a multi-platform media production and distribution company with offices throughout Europe, which defines its mission as 'telling global stories to a broad audience.'¹¹³ Given the independent and universalistic character of these production companies, it is possible to infer that, despite the national and local

¹¹¹ Semra Çelebi, 'Altın Koza Ödüllü Özcan Alper'den Bir "Sonbahar" Ağıtı' ('*Autumn*: An Elegy by Özcan Alper, the winner of the Golden Boll'), *Bianet*, 14 June 2008, <<http://bianet.org/bianet/biamag/107655-altin-koza-odullu-ozcan-alper-den-bir-sonbahar-agiti>> [accessed 26 June 2014].

¹¹² 'Kuzey Film Production', <https://cinando.com/en/Company/kuzey_film_production_28848/Detail> [accessed 25 February 2018].

¹¹³ 'About us', <<http://filmfabrik.net/site/index.php/en/about-us-cologne-en>> [accessed 25 February 2018].

specificity of its story, the film was also intended to reach an international audience not necessarily familiar with the recent history of Turkey.

Alper's film was released on 19 December 2008, the eighth anniversary of the 'Return to Life Operation', alluded to in the film with the use of archival footage.¹¹⁴ Relatedly, Alper was asked in the interviews about the film's references to the fall of the Soviet Union and its repercussions on the lives of ordinary people as well as the activities of socialist revolutionary groups in 1990s Turkey. The director maintained that socialism was not a fad, but a way of life, adding that the film provided an opportunity for revisiting the failing aspects of left-wing ideologies, including socialism, without treating them as inherently flawed.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the film's premiere brought together several left-wing political groups, such as Republican People's Party, the Communist Party of Turkey, Freedom and Solidarity Party and Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey among others.¹¹⁶ The film's co-producer Serkan Acar noted this gathering as an unprecedented success that should be attributed to the film, thereby hinting at the historical fragmentation of the left-wing groups in Turkey as follows: 'Solun yapamadığını *Sonbahar* yaptı.'¹¹⁷ Therefore, considering the director's political standpoint, the film can be viewed as a tribute to the socialist movement of the 1990s in Turkey.

On the other hand, it is also possible to suggest that the film aimed to address a wider audience beyond the left-wing groups in Turkey. In one of his interviews, Alper noted that the films on the 12 September 1980 Coup portrayed revolutionaries as either victims or villains without providing specific examples.¹¹⁸ Accordingly, the two-dimensional portrayals of revolutionaries urged him to create a humanised depiction

¹¹⁴ 'Return to Life Operation' ('*Hayata Dönüş Operasyonu*') is the official name given to the raids that the security forces simultaneously carried out on twenty prisons on 19 December 2000 to end the hunger strikes and death fasts. The operations resulted in the deaths of thirty prisoners and two security officers.

¹¹⁵ Çelebi, *ibid.*.

¹¹⁶ 'Solun yapamadığını *Sonbahar* yaptı' ('*Autumn* achieved what the left failed to do'), *Sabah*, 18 December 2008.

¹¹⁷ '*Autumn* achieved what the left-wing failed to do for long.'

¹¹⁸ Gönül İlhan, 'Acı bir hikayeye geldi "*Sonbahar*"' ('"*Autumn*" is here with a sad story'), *Bianet*, 10 January 2009.

of a socialist. Hence, the film also targeted people who might be biased against socialists and hunger strikers, labelled as ‘terrorists’ in the official and mainstream media discourse at the time of the ‘Return to Life Operation’, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Autumn was distributed in thirty-six copies and had a higher number of viewers (151,392 viewers) in comparison with Ustaoglu’s and İpekçi’s films.¹¹⁹ In addition to the number of copies, the lifting of the ban on the use of Kurdish and other local languages in broadcasting removed the risk of inaccessibility for Turkish viewers. *Autumn*, which was shot in Turkish, Georgian and the Hamshen language, was released with Turkish subtitles and thus reached a broader audience in Turkey than the un-subtitled version of the film might have done. Therefore, the period between 1999 and 2008 witnessed a gradual removal of the legal barriers for these filmmakers who wished to tackle the official ideology and give voice to the minorities of Turkey. The years leading up to the Kurdish opening provided a relaxed atmosphere for them to revisit the peak years of the conflict from the perspectives of those marginalised and silenced in the 1990s.

2.3.2. Re-presenting the Conflict during the Kurdish Opening

New Turkish cinema continued to explore the past wrongdoings in the state’s handling of the conflict after 2008. Crucially, the release of three films selected for the thesis coincided with the AKP’s official announcement of the Kurdish opening in October 2009. First, *Breath* drew a great deal of attention as the first war film which depicted the armed conflict in the 1990s from the perspective of soldiers. Second, *On the Way to School* represented the first documentary which portrayed the real-life struggles of a Turkish teacher to communicate with Kurdish children who did not speak Turkish in a south-eastern village of Turkey. Third, *Min Dît* became the first film which was entirely shot in Kurdish and accepted for the national competition in the film festivals

¹¹⁹ ‘*Sonbahar*’ (‘*Autumn*’), Box Office Türkiye, <<https://boxofficeturkiye.com/film/sonbahar-2010062>> [accessed 25 February 2018].

of Turkey. These three films introduced new perspectives on the different aspects of the Kurdish question in a context when the AKP's Kurdish opening was being debated in the political sphere amid harsh reactions from nationalist groups in parliament and public.

To start with Levent Semerci's *Breath*, the film is set in 1993 when the clashes between the Turkish Armed Forces (henceforth TAF) and PKK peaked and caused the highest death toll, as noted in the previous chapter. It narrates the story of a Lieutenant and forty soldiers in a military station located on the fictitious Karabal Hill near the Turkish-Iraqi border. The film addresses soldiers' fears and hesitations about the war in the face of an unexpected raid, killing almost all the soldiers and PKK militants at the end of the film. Semerci expressed his intended contribution as translating the story of a period in which unbelievable events took place into the screen in its entire reality.¹²⁰

Several factors enable us to identify the mainstream Turkish public as the film's intended audience. First, the film draws on a memoir entitled *Güneydoğu'dan Öyküler* (*Tales from the Southeast*) and written by Hakan Evrensel, who worked as a commissioned officer in southeastern Turkey during the 1990s.¹²¹ Hence, the director prioritises the perspectives of soldiers rather than those of the PKK militants. Second, the film makes a lot of references to official Turkish history and key historical figures, such as Atatürk, the founder of Turkey, and Mehmet II, the Ottoman ruler, the functions of which will be examined in Chapter Six.¹²² Third, there is a 'narrator' character in *Breath*, who addresses the audience directly as 'you' and explains how soldiers dedicate their lives to defending the homeland so that the audience can sleep in peace at home. Therefore, the film is intended to tap into the anxieties and values

¹²⁰ İdris Borak, 'İlk Türk Savaş Filmi' ('The First Turkish War Film'), 26 March 2009, <<http://www.sinemakeyfi.com/news.php?id=1352>> [accessed 21 November 2014].

¹²¹ Hasan Pulur, 'Nefes' (*Breath*, in Turkish), *Milliyet*, 2 November 2009.

¹²² See 6.1. 'The Recontextualisation of National Symbols and Official Agents', pp. 243-244.

of mainstream Turkish society by incorporating the symbols of Turkish nationalism as the sources of inspiration for the war against terror.

Distributed in 319 copies, *Breath* became a box office hit and came third in the list of the highest-grossing films of 2009.¹²³ In addition to its commercial success, the film also won the Best Picture and Best Director awards at the International Golden Boll Film Festival in Adana, Turkey in 2010. *Breath* did not receive any funding from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism or any other international funding bodies such as Eurimages. The director himself and a private production company named Creavidı funded the film. Although there were claims that the film was commissioned and sponsored by the Turkish military, the film's producers and director rejected these claims as unfounded, and no evidence was found to substantiate these claims.¹²⁴

However, specific official figures from the military praised the film's treatment of the conflict. For example, İlker Başbuğ, the Head of the General Staff at the time of its release, acclaimed the film as the most successful one ever in terms of humanising soldiers and reflecting the TAF's struggle against terror.¹²⁵ Başbuğ emphasised that the film's primary significance lay in reminding us of the 1990s, adding the following: 'O yıllara geri dönülemez. O zaman bunu kime borçluyuz. İşte bu filmde de gördüğümüz gibi bunu şehitlerimize borçluyuz.'¹²⁶ Therefore, Semerci's film was not perceived as promoting a security-oriented approach to the conflict and articulating a longing for the past. However, the film highlighted the commitment that the military staff and soldiers showed at the expense of their lives in the 1990s for the sake of the Turkish state.

¹²³ *Breath* was screened in 608 cinemas and seen by 2,436.780 viewers, with a box-office revenue of 19,816.778 Turkish Lira (See <https://boxofficeturkiye.com/yillik/?yil=2009&yilop=tum>).

¹²⁴ 'Nefes: Vatan Sağolsun filmi için şok iddia!' ('Shocking claim about *Breath: Long Live the Homeland*'), 17 November 2009, <<http://www.gazeteciler.com/haber/nefes-vatan-saolsun-filmi-iin-ok-iddia/166218>> [accessed 12 December 2014].

¹²⁵ 'Yaşananları kimse tasvip edemez' ('No one can approve of what happened'), *Cumhuriyet Daily*, 25 October 2009.

¹²⁶ 'We are unlikely to return to those years [the 1990s] now and to whom do we owe this? Just like we see in this film, we owe this to our martyrs.'

The release of Özgür Doğan and Orhan Eskiköy's *On the Way to School* in October 2009 also coincided with the beginning of the official talks between the Turkish state and PKK. The documentary tells the story of an elementary school teacher Emre Aydın in the Kurdish-speaking Demirci village of the Şanlıurfa province in southeastern Turkey throughout an academic year. The Turkish title, which translates as 'Two Languages, One Suitcase', also conveys the teacher's journey from the west to the southeast of Turkey where he is appointed to teach elementary school courses to students who only speak Kurdish. The film, a Turkish-Dutch co-production, was produced by Bulut Film and Perişan Film, which was co-founded by Zeynel Doğan as well as Doğan and Eskiköy. Therefore, as in the case of *Autumn*, the directors acted as the co-producers of their debut films. Bulut Film, founded by Yamaç Okur, Nadir Öperli, Enis Köstepen and Seyfi Teoman in 2007, is known for producing films with 'fresh styles and experimental narratives' which reflect 'the director's artistic vision.'¹²⁷ Therefore, both production companies support small-budget films, like *On the Way to School*, narrating universal stories rather than seeking popular support and profit.

Eskiköy and Doğan also received the post-production grant from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Although the Ministry had previously funded İpekçi's film, the mainstream media presented the Ministry's fund as if the state provided financial support for a film with Kurdish dialogues in it for the first time in history. Some headlines included 'Kürtçe filme ilk kez devlet desteği' ('The first-time state support for a Kurdish film'),¹²⁸ 'Tartışılan filme destek çıktı' ('Financial support to be given to the disputed film'),¹²⁹ and 'Sinemada Kürt açılımı!' ('The Kurdish opening in cinema!').¹³⁰ Therefore, the media perceived the documentary as part of the government's plan to shape public opinion on the Kurdish question and thus gain

¹²⁷ Bulut Film, <https://cinando.com/en/Company/bulut_film_13957/Detail> [accessed 1 March 2018].

¹²⁸ 'Kürtçe filme ilk kez devlet desteği', *Milliyet*, <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/kurtce-filme-ilk-kez-devlet-destegi-pembenar-detay-kultursanat-1145167/>> [accessed 1 March 2018].

¹²⁹ 'Tartışılan filme destek çıktı', *Hürriyet*, 6 October 2009, <<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/tartisilan-filme-destek-cikti-12633497>> [accessed 1 March 2018].

¹³⁰ 'Sinemada Kürt açılımı!', *Beyazperde*, 1 October 2009, <<http://www.beyazperde.com/haberler/filmler/haberler-14478/>> [accessed 1 March 2018].

popular support for the Kurdish opening. In response to this, the directors clarified that they shot the documentary in 2007 when there was no Kurdish opening on the agenda.¹³¹ They also acknowledged the facilitating role of the government's initiative, adding that the film's production and distribution might have faced obstacles in a different political context.

The film, which was distributed in 22 copies, also garnered critical acclaim and received several awards at the international film festivals organised in Turkey, such as the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival and Adana Golden Boll Film Festival. It also attracted the attention of journalists and columnists in terms of stressing the dysfunctional aspects of the language ban in the past and the official language policy in the Turkish education system. For instance, Meyda Yeğenoğlu called on Turkish people to break their established prejudices and gain knowledge about the other from an unbiased perspective.¹³² Therefore, the documentary's depiction of a Turkish teacher's communication problems with Kurdish students propelled a discussion, sympathetic to the needs of the Kurds such as mother tongue education in Kurdish.

Surprisingly, the Turkish Ministry of Education recommended a list of films in December 2016, including *On the Way to School*, to teachers to use cinema in guiding their students to good deeds.¹³³ As seen in the Ministry's acknowledgement of the documentary as an educational film, those involved in the education system can partly be deemed as the film's intended audience. Relatedly, the directors' focus on the Turkish teacher's viewpoint and the camera's role as an unobtrusive observer of daily life in the Kurdish village suggest that the film was intended to reach a larger group of

¹³¹ Murat Özer, 'İki Dil Bir Bavul' ('*On the Way to School*'), *Beyazperde*, <<http://www.beyazperde.com/filmler/film-186702/elestiriler-beyazperde>> [accessed 21 July 2015].

¹³² Meyda Yeğenoğlu, 'Haydi, Türkler okula: Şimdi "geri öğrenme" zamanıdır' ('Turks, back to school! It is time to "unlearn"'), *Taraf*, 4 November 2009, <<http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/haber-haydi-turkler-okula-simdi-geri-ogrenme-zamanidir-43394/>> [accessed 21 July 2015].

¹³³ 'MEB öğretmenlere bu filmleri tavsiye etti' ('The Ministry of Education recommends these films to teachers'), *Yeni Şafak Daily*, 9 December 2016, <<https://www.yenisafak.com/hayat/meb-ogretmenlere-bu-filmleri-tavsiye-etti-2577619>> [accessed 1 March 2018].

Turkish audiences. Accordingly, the documentary aimed to raise awareness among the Turks about the problems caused by the lack of linguistic rights of minorities and the poor living conditions of Kurdish people in the southeast.

The third film released at the time of the Kurdish opening is Miraz Bezar's *Min Dît: The Children of Diyarbakır*. The film narrates the story of two siblings, Gülistan and Firat, who witness the murder of their parents by unknown assailants and begin to live in the streets with other orphaned street children after failing to afford their living costs. The film, which is set in the southeast of the 1990s, depicts the repercussions of the war on terror on the lives of ordinary citizens in the conflict-afflicted area, with a focus on unsolved murders and disappearances. Additionally, the film highlights the role of state-sponsored agents in carrying out these extrajudicial killings.

Bezar's film drew a lot of attention at its first screening at the International Golden Orange Film Festival in Antalya, Turkey on 15 October 2009. Commenting on the selection of his debut film for this festival organised by the metropolitan municipality of Antalya and partly funded by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Bezar remarked that the film's screening at this festival was a significant step for Turkish cinema.¹³⁴ *Min Dît* was not only the first film shot in Kurdish and screened with Turkish subtitles without being censored but also the first Kurdish film to compete at this festival and win the Jury Special Prize.¹³⁵ The film also received several other awards, such as the Best Director and Best Actress Awards at the 29th İstanbul Film Festival and Gaztea Youth Award at the 57th San Sebastián International Film Festival among others.

Despite the film's reception of critical acclaim at its festival screenings, Bezar indicated that it was a challenge to produce the film, since they 'never knew if the film would make it through the censorship in Turkey.'¹³⁶ *Min Dît* was financed through the director's and his family's savings without any production or post-production support

¹³⁴ Nichole Sobecki, 'From banned to box office', 7 June 2010, <<https://www.pri.org/stories/2010-06-06/banned-box-office-kurdish-story>> [accessed 2 March 2015].

¹³⁵ Dönmez-Colin (2014), p. 75.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 75.

from the Turkish Ministry. Fatih Akın also joined Bezar as a co-producer to speed up the production of the film. Although the story was set in the 1990s, Bezar noted in an interview that the subject matter was not a phenomenon of the distant past, and unsolved murders continued to happen in Turkey until two or three years ago.¹³⁷ Bezar's funding his film without any official grant and acknowledgement of censorship as a possibility suggest that the director remained free from any concerns about the official and public perception of the film's story.

The AKP's Kurdish opening was still in progress at the time of *Min Dît*'s nationwide theatrical release on 2 April 2010. Crucially, two weeks before that, the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan invited directors, producers, actors and actresses to a meeting on the Democratic Initiative, an alternative term later adopted by the AKP to refer to the opening.¹³⁸ Erdoğan asked for the support of these filmmakers for the government's initiative, urging them to contribute to the process with suggestions and criticisms. Referring to films, such as *Journey to the Sun* and *On the Way to School* among others, Erdoğan emphasised that the portrayals of inequality, poverty and exclusion in these films inspired and motivated the government to tackle these problems.

This shift in the perception of the Kurdish question, primarily represented by the government, did not necessarily translate into the smooth reception of *Min Dît* by the mainstream Turkish public. An illustrative example was the incident which took place at the press conference after the film's screening at the Golden Orange Film Festival. Some viewers whose names were omitted in the news reports reacted to the portrayal of Turkish soldiers as the agents of extrajudicial killings and accused Bezar of dividing the country, adding that Turkish soldiers did not commit such acts.¹³⁹ As seen in this

¹³⁷ 'Bezar'dan *Min Dît* açıklaması' ('Bezar on his film *Min Dît*'), *Hürriyet*, 5 April 2010, <<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/bezardan-min-dit-aciklamasi-14296038>> [accessed 1 March 2018].

¹³⁸ 'Erdoğan sanatçılardan açılıma destek istedi' ('Erdoğan asked for the support of filmmakers for the opening'), *CnnTürk*, 20 March 2010, <<https://www.cnntrk.com/2010/turkiye/03/20/erdogan.sanaticilardan.acilima.destek.istedi/568660.0/index.html>> [accessed 23 March 2018].

¹³⁹ 'Kürtçe filmin galasında kavgâ' ('Dispute at the Kurdish film's premiere'), *Cumhuriyet Daily*, 15 October 2009.

reaction, Bezar's narration neither glorified Turkish soldiers nor resonated with the nationalist sentiment and official versions of the conflict that were promoted in 1990s Turkey. The film prioritised the perspectives of Kurdish children and incorporated a Kurdish fairy tale and Kurdish songs in articulating their views of the conflict. Therefore, while entering the national competition in the film festivals of Turkey, *Min Dît* was primarily intended to appeal to the Kurdish audience in the southeast of Turkey and beyond. Overall, the government's Kurdish opening and revisionist rhetoric facilitated the production and distribution of these three films without censorship or restraints despite the absence of overwhelming popular support or change in the public perception of the Kurdish question. The following section discusses how the progression of this initiative affected the process of producing and distributing *Future Lasts Forever* and *Jîn*.

2.3.3. Re-presenting the Conflict after the Kurdish Opening

Özcan Alper's *Future Lasts Forever*, a German-French-Turkish production, tells the story of Sumru, who travels to the southeast of Turkey to find out the whereabouts of her boyfriend, Harun, who joins the PKK. Stating that her purpose of travel is to collect data for her master's thesis on elegies, Sumru interviews those who mourn the disappearances of their relatives and search for their bodies at the same time. In the meantime, she also strives to gather the information that is likely to provide clues about what happened to Harun. Sumru achieves closure in the film's finale when she visits Harun's grave on a snowy hill, after finding out that he was killed in an attack. The film was co-produced by Nar Film, which Alper himself founded in 2009 to produce feature and documentary films. The other two producers were UnaFilm, based in Germany, and Arizona Films, based in France. Like Alper's production company, these companies define their mission as supporting independent and artistically challenging art-house films.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ 'Unafilm', <<http://www.unafilm.de/about.html>> [accessed 15 March 2018].

Future Lasts Forever did not manage to attract as many viewers as *Autumn* did, as it was distributed in 32 copies and seen by only 38,589 viewers.¹⁴¹ Although the film did not achieve a lot of commercial success, it gained several awards at national and international festivals in Turkey and abroad. Therefore, the film appealed to the festival audience rather than the mainstream viewers in Turkey. In terms of the film's intended audience, Alper emphasised in an interview that the film aimed to give voice to those who suffered the loss of their relatives and witnessed unsolved murders and disappearances.¹⁴² He also added that the film was not made only for the Kurds but also for people in Turkey who were not Kurdish, like himself, to gain an insight into the repercussions of the conflict on ordinary locals.

However, *Future Lasts Forever* was released in November 2011 when a combination of factors hampered the government's 'solution process' ('*çözüm süreci*' in Turkish). One was the disclosure in September 2011 of the secret meetings between the state officials and PKK representatives in Oslo between 2009 and 2011.¹⁴³ Another one was the PKK's attack on a military post in the southeast of Turkey in October 2011, resulting in the death of 24 soldiers.¹⁴⁴ Although the solution process had raised the hopes for the resolution of the conflict in the process of writing the film, the detention of Kurdish politicians and pro-Kurdish academics before the film's release reversed the optimism in the air.

Nevertheless, the government did not completely rule out its progressive stance on the Kurdish question. For instance, both Eurimages and the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism funded Alper's film. It is worth noting here that Alper largely focuses on examining the state's extrajudicial acts of violence in the 1990s from the

¹⁴¹ 'Gelecek Uzun Sürer', <<https://boxofficeturkiye.com/film/gelecek-uzun-surer-2011112>> [accessed 15 March 2018].

¹⁴² Enis Köstepen ve Berke Göl, 'Şimdi Değilse Ne Zaman?: Özcan Alper' ('If Not Now, When?: Özcan Alper,' *Altıyazı*, 111 (2011), 32-37 (p. 33).

¹⁴³ Mustafa Coşar Ünal, 'Is It Ripe Yet? Resolving Turkey's 30 Years of Conflict with the PKK', *Turkish Studies*, 17.1 (2016), 91-125 (p. 108).

¹⁴⁴ Ayşegül Kayaoğlu, 'Socioeconomic Impact of Conflict: State of Emergency Ruling in Turkey', *Defence and Peace Economics*, 27.1 (2016), 117-136 (p. 117).

perspective of the 2000s. Although the film hints at the continued existence of the clashes, it does not provide an explicit statement on the status of the conflict at the time of its production. Therefore, the Ministry's financial support for the film, which critiques the state's practices related to the conflict in the 1990s, can be construed as an overlap between the director's narration and the government's approach to the wrongdoings of the past.

Reha Erdem's *Jîn*, a Turkish-German co-production, was funded by independent production companies, such as Bredok film production based in Berlin, Germany and Atlantik Film based in İstanbul, Turkey. The film had its world premiere at the 63rd Berlin Film Festival in 2013 and received several awards at national and international film festivals. It was released in March 2013 when a ceasefire was in progress, and there were peace talks between the Turkish state and the PKK for the first time. *Jîn*'s significance lies in being the first example where a female PKK militant emerges as the central character in Turkish cinema.¹⁴⁵

The film narrates the story of a 17-year old female fighter Jîn, who leaves the PKK and sets out on a journey to reach her mother living in the west of the country. However, her attempt to reach her destination proves challenging for two reasons. First, she cannot always evade routine identification checks in the conflict-afflicted region. Second, male figures she meets on her way impedes her progress. Additionally, Jîn also needs to protect herself from exploding bombs and gunfire in the battle zone. All these hindrances transform Jîn's escape from the organisation into a story of survival, which is also evoked in the eponymous title of the film named after this character. The word 'jin' bears two meanings in the Kurdish language, and they are distinguished by the use of a diacritical mark above the letter i. Accordingly, 'jîn'

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Reha Erdem, 'Jîn'in tarafındayım' ('I am on the side of Jîn'), *BBC Turkish*, 8 March 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkce/haberler/2013/03/130307_reha_erdem_guney> [accessed 5 November 2014].

means ‘life’, whereas jin denotes ‘woman.’ The film evokes these two meanings at the same time through the story of a fighter who strives to survive the war as a woman.

In contrast with *Breath*’s director Semerci, who aimed to portray a realistic account of the war, Erdem asserted that his film did not intend to be realistic despite its references to the decades-long armed conflict in Turkey. Therefore, Erdem rejected the idea of discussing the film only in relation to the contemporaneous developments on the resolution of the conflict.¹⁴⁶ However, he also noted that Jin’s uniform had continuously been shown as a costume worn by demons, evil men, and infant killers until then. Therefore, the director acknowledged as his point of departure the ‘terrorist’ image which was promoted by the state and the mainstream media in the 1990s, which will be evidenced in Chapter Three.

Despite being screened in fewer theatres and seen by fewer viewers than other research films, *Jin* attracted a great deal of attention not only among film critics but also among political commentators, politicians, columnists and journalists.¹⁴⁷ This attention was mainly due to the coincidence between the film’s release and the peace negotiations between the Turkish state and PKK. Relatedly, as in the case of *On the Way to School*, Erdem was frequently asked about whether his film was a project assigned to promote the peace process and create public support for the government’s initiative. Noting that there were no peace negotiations while he was making the film, Erdem revealed that he even had to postpone the film’s release for a year due to the unfavourable political climate following the obstruction of the process in 2012.¹⁴⁸ The

¹⁴⁶ Şenay Aydemir, “‘Atın silahları” deyince barış gelmiyor’ (‘It does not bring peace to give the order of “laying down the arms”’), *Radikal Daily*, 15 March 2013.

¹⁴⁷ *Jin* was screened in 7 cinemas and seen by 8,281 viewers, with a box-office revenue of 95,403 Turkish Lira. (see <https://boxofficeturkiye.com/>)

¹⁴⁸ Zeynep Bilgehan, Interview with Reha Erdem, ‘Herkes iyi ve kötüdür, amaç kötü olanı azaltmak’ (‘Everyone is both good and evil and the aim is to diminish the evil’), *Hürriyet Daily*, 16 March 2013, <<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/herkes-iyi-ve-kotudur-amac-kotu-olani-azaltmak-22819730>> [accessed 22 January 2015].

director still expressed his wish to contribute to the political process by facilitating an empathetic understanding of ‘the enemy’ via his film.

However, as outlined in Chapter One, Turkey has reverted to the security-oriented approach in fighting against the PKK since the resumption of the armed conflict and termination of the peace process in July 2015.¹⁴⁹ The resurgence of the hard-line stance on the conflict in the 1990s and dismissal of the Kurdish opening by the same government that introduced it has gradually rendered it more difficult for directors to produce films on the conflict. This reversal has since then had a direct impact on the Ministry’s distribution of the funds at the expense of oppositional directors who criticise the government’s antagonistic stance and call on the government to resume the peace process. For instance, Özcan Alper, who had received the Ministry’s support for both *Autumn* and *Future Lasts Forever*, failed to obtain the state’s support for his third film *Memories of the Wind* (*Rüzgârın Hatıraları*, 2015), the reason for which was, in his view, the Armenian identity of the protagonist.¹⁵⁰

The debates on the biased distribution of financial assistance came back to the news once again after the rejection of financial support for the film projects of award-winning directors, such as Emin Alper and Tolga Karaçelik.¹⁵¹ Both directors interpreted the result as an ideological decision which they attributed to their reaction to the counter-terror operations in the southeast and consequent human rights violations after the resumption of the conflict. In their view, the Ministry began to blacklist oppositional directors and use its funding programme as a tool to prevent them from making films and exploring taboo subjects. Highlighting the role of the state of emergency, which remained in effect for two years after the failed coup attempt in July 2016, Yamaç Okur, one of the co-producers of *On the Way to School*, claims

¹⁴⁹ See 1.3. ‘The 2000s: Ceasefire, Peace Process and Resumption of the Conflict’, pp. 75-78.

¹⁵⁰ Selin Girit, Interview with Özcan Alper, “‘Başrolde Aram değil, Ali olsaydı filmim desteklenecekti’”, (“‘My film would have been funded if the protagonist’s name had not been Aram, but Ali’”), *BBC Turkish*, 23 May 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2013/05/130523_cannes_ozcan_alper>, [accessed 12 January 2017].

¹⁵¹ Ezgi Atabilen, Interview with Emin Alper ve Tolga Karaçelik, ‘Film çekmemizi istemiyorlar’ (‘They do not want us to make films’), *Cumhuriyet Daily*, 6 February 2017.

that the political situation makes it almost impossible for filmmakers to produce oppositional films on the Kurdish conflict.¹⁵² Accordingly, the Ministry's grant proves essential, since Eurimages requires a film project to have received domestic funds in its country of origin as a prerequisite for the director to apply for the support of Eurimages.¹⁵³ Therefore, the unavailability of the Ministry's fund for these oppositional directors also limits their chances of applying for Eurimages, which in turn hampers the production and distribution of films that they wish to create.

Additionally, this shift back to hard-line, security-oriented rhetoric and practices has also brought about an increase in the censorship and intervention of the Ministry in the form, content and distribution of some films. Two striking examples can be given to illustrate the point. The first involved the cancellation of the screening of *Bakur (North)*, a documentary depicting the lives of PKK militants in their camps, at the international İstanbul Film Festival in 2015. The festival organisers removed the film only hours before its screening after the Turkish Ministry of Culture sent a letter, claiming that the film did not have the certificate of registration.¹⁵⁴ The requirement of a certificate of registration from the Ministry of Culture for the commercial distribution of every Turkish film came into effect with the 2004 Cinema Act, but festival screenings were exempt from this requirement. When more than 100 filmmakers, including Nuri Bilge Ceylan, signed a letter to protest the decision, they accused the government of imposing this regulation as a tool of censorship and oppression. The signatories also pointed out that some other films without this certificate were screened at the festival without any problems. Following the reactions, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism issued a statement in which it rejected the claims of censorship and held the festival organisers accountable for including a PKK

¹⁵² Nilüfer Kuyaş, 'Turkish filmmakers fear the spectre of censorship', *Financial Times*, 26 June 2017, <<https://www.ft.com/content/c63216c4-49e0-11e7-a3f4-c742b9791d43>>, [accessed 23 March 2018].

¹⁵³ Berke Göl, 'Current State of Filmmaking in Turkey', 3 May 2017, <<http://povfilm.se/12/current-state-of-filmmaking-in-turkey/>> [accessed 23 March 2018].

¹⁵⁴ Constanze Letsch, 'Film-makers withdraw from İstanbul festival in censorship protest', *The Guardian*, 13 April 2015, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/13/film-makers-withdraw-films-istanbul-film-festival>> [accessed 23 March 2018].

documentary in their programme and thus condoning terror propaganda.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, the Ministry's statement testified to their use of this certificate as an instrument for controlling the distribution of films.

The second example concerned the imposition of censorship on the acclaimed Kurdish director Kazım Öz's *Zer*, which had received the Ministry's support and already obtained its certificate of registration. In this case, Öz was asked to remove the scenes that depicted a historical massacre of ethnic Kurds by government forces in 1938.¹⁵⁶ For the film's festival screening at the İstanbul Film Festival in 2017, the director blacked out the scenes that the Ministry wanted to be deleted while keeping the soundtrack audible. The title, which appeared on the blacked-out screen, read: 'You cannot view this scene because the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism's Supervisory Board of Directorate General of Cinema finds it inappropriate.'¹⁵⁷ Therefore, Öz both screened the film completely and exposed the censorship, but this resulted in the Ministry's revocation of the film's certificate of registration. The Ministry later required the omission of those scenes to re-issue the necessary document for the film's theatrical release. Consequently, these two different cases of censorship demonstrate that what operated as a support mechanism in a facilitating political context has turned into a controlling tool to either discourage filmmakers from challenging the state's actions or limit their possibilities of subversion in depicting the conflict in Turkish cinema.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the history of the film production in Turkey and an insight into the limits of the state's control over the form and content of Turkish cinema before and after the 1990s. It has shown that Turkish cinema traditionally cohered to the official state ideology by not contesting the vision of a homogeneous

¹⁵⁵ Kaya Genç, 'One step back: spring sidesteps the 2015 İstanbul Film Festival', 19 April 2015, <<http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/one-step-back-spring-sidesteps-2015-istanbul>> [accessed 23 March 2018].

¹⁵⁶ Kuyaş, *ibid.*.

¹⁵⁷ Berke Göl, *ibid.*.

nation in terms of ethnic, linguistic and religious identity. The mid-1990s witnessed the resurgence of new Turkish cinema and the emergence of a new group of filmmakers producing their debut films and narrating the experiences of the minorities of the country. In parallel, the increasing availability of the funds from the state and foreign sources also boosted the growth of the number of such film projects. Therefore, the treatment of taboo subjects, such as the Kurdish question and the armed conflict in Turkish cinema had started even before the change of political power in 2002.

The AKP's progressive agenda in the early 2000s accelerated the undermining of the 'deep nation' and diminished the ideological pressures of the 1990s over filmmakers. In parallel, the Kurdish opening provided a fertile ground for filmmakers to critique the exclusionary aspects of the official Kemalist ideology, particularly concerning the Kurdish question. Especially in the years between 2005 and 2015, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism supported the film projects of directors such as Özcan Alper, who faced censorship before 2002. Further, those films, such as *Jîn* and *Min Dît*, which did not receive any state support, were distributed without censorship. However, the statements of their directors that they did not rule out the possibility of censorship or other types of restraints testified to the precariousness of the initiative at the time. Therefore, on the one hand, the coincidence of the films and the Kurdish opening turned new Turkish cinema into an instrument to influence public opinion on the conflict. On the other hand, in hindsight, the government's support for these films was the product of a political conjuncture rather than of a paradigmatic shift in the official policy on the conflict.

All the selected films engage with the history of the Kurdish question by focusing less on the reasons than the repercussions of the conflict on the lives of ordinary people. However, this does not mean that all of them challenged the official practices at the time of their production and reception. For instance, despite the continued presence of the conflict after 2004, the films produced during the AKP rule do not include any reference to or comment on the government's handling of the conflict at the time of their production. Instead, they criticise the state's practices as part of the

armed struggle against terror by setting the story either in the 1990s or in an unspecified place and time with a retrospective look at the 1990s. The mutations of the conflict in the 2000s do not openly become the object of these films. Therefore, the films produced between 2002 and 2013 operated in an alternative, but not oppositional manner vis-à-vis the government's rhetoric and policies at the time of their release. Chapter Three will analyse the official and media discourse on the conflict in the 1990s, which represent the reference point for most of the research films in treating the Kurdish question.



CHAPTER 3

Official and Media Discourse on the Conflict in the 1990s

The previous chapter situated the research films within the history of Turkish cinema and the history of the conflict. It elucidated how these films as the examples of new Turkish cinema represented a break from the ones of the pre-1990s. Following this survey of the literature on new Turkish cinema, the chapter discussed how each film operated in relation to the official discourse and policies on the Kurdish question in their contexts of production, distribution and reception. This chapter will identify and analyse the characteristics of the official discourse on the conflict in the 1990s, which represent either the context when the films set their stories or the context of reference for treating the conflict in retrospect. As highlighted in the Introduction, official discourse is used here and in this thesis to mean the state's discourse, the limits of which were (and still are) set by Kemalism, the official state ideology of the Turkish Republic. The adoption of this definition is also aligned with the distinction between the official discourse and the government-level rhetoric in the Turkish context, with the former being associated with the state and institutions representative of its founding principles, such as the military and civilian bureaucracy.

Crucially, the Turkish press is traditionally included among the defenders of the state ideology, which Ceren Belge refers to as the Republican alliance.¹ Accordingly, this alliance shared a Kemalist worldview and rejected political projects based on religious and ethnic identity in line with Kemalist secularism and nationalism, which will be delineated below. In parallel, the relationship between the state and this media was (and still is) particularly unified regarding any topics that concerned national security and territorial unity. Therefore, the analysis will draw on the mainstream press as the medium for the identification of the official (state) discourse on the conflict, specifically focusing on the broadsheet newspaper, *Milliyet*. It has been chosen,

¹ Ceren Belge, 'Friends of the Court: The Republican Alliance and Selective Activism of the Constitutional Court of Turkey', *Law & Society Review*, 40.3 (2006), pp. 653-692 (p. 657).

because it effectively acted as the mouthpiece of the state and relayed the official (state) discourse on the struggle against terror, as also shown in the Introduction.² This discourse was produced and articulated by elected and non-elected representatives of the state, such as military officers and government officials. The textual analysis of selected articles from *Milliyet* will enable us to establish what qualifies as ‘alternative’ in relation to the official discourse on the conflict, and to recognise the reproduction and subversion of that discourse in the selected multilingual films. Therefore, this chapter will provide the basis for the analysis in the following chapters, which will explore how far the selected films offer alternative re-presentations of the Kurdish conflict, which constitutes the main research question of the thesis.

Analysing texts collated from *Milliyet*’s online news archive, the chapter will draw on John Hartley’s ‘accessed voice’ to identify the external voices from the government and security officers that the newspaper incorporated in reporting the conflict and related phenomena.³ Accessed voices can be defined as the views of a privileged body of politicians, civil servants, directors, experts of various kinds such as doctors and professors.⁴ Accordingly, accessed voices can take the form of interviews or on-the-spot comments that are distinguished from the reporter’s own account. However, interviews or quotations in the print media allow for making sense of an event in particular terms, depending on what is accessed or excluded. Therefore, as Roger Fowler points out, ‘imbalance of access results in legitimating and perpetuating the status quo through an imbalanced representation of the already privileged and the already unprivileged.’⁵ Therefore, ‘as “agents” of “knowledge (valid at a certain place at a certain time)”’, discourses exercise power.’⁶ Consequently, limiting access to knowledge not only operates on the level of individual choices but also is informed by the wider context (such as an institution) in which everyone uses language.

² See Introduction, pp. 41-42.

³ John Hartley, *Understanding News* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 111.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁵ Roger Fowler, *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 22.

⁶ Siegfried Jäger, ‘Discourse and Knowledge: Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of a Critical Discourse and Dispositive Analysis’, in *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: Sage, 2001), pp. 33-62 (p. 37).

Accessed voices also determine the orientation of a text to difference, which is the ‘intertextualizing of different voices in a text’, in Norman Fairclough’s terms.⁷ This can also be defined as the presence of alternative, competing voices in a text. Accordingly, the intertextuality of a text depends on the embeddedness of other utterances and voices in a text, but does not necessarily guarantee difference. For example, the use of quotations in a news report makes it intertextual, but difference emerges in a text only if these quotations challenge one another. Therefore, intertextuality can be replaced here with dialogicality. ‘A word, discourse, language or culture undergoes “dialogization” when it becomes relativised, de-privileged, and aware of competing definitions of the same things. Undialogized language is authoritative or absolute.’⁸ In other words, language becomes less dialogized to the extent that it presumes consensus and suppresses differences of meanings. The result is the production of ‘consensual texts’ which are characterised as undialogical and intolerant of difference.⁹ The degree to which selected print media texts are consensual can then be determined through identifying what the accessed voices are and how they are incorporated in the news reports.

Taking its cue from Hartley’s ‘accessed voice,’ the analysis here will coin the term ‘unaccessed voices’ to also discuss the opinions and perspectives that were excluded in *Milliyet*’s reporting of the conflict in the 1990s. Unaccessed voices also echo manipulative silences among Thomas Huckin’s categories of textual silence, which is defined as ‘the omission of some piece of information that is pertinent to the topic at hand.’¹⁰ More specifically, manipulative silences are those that ‘intentionally conceal relevant information from the reader or listener, to the advantage of the writer or speaker.’¹¹ This also corresponds to what Teun van Dijk refers to as a distinctive

⁷ Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 43.

⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Imagination Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 427.

⁹ Fairclough, p. 44.

¹⁰ Thomas Huckin, ‘Textual Silence and the Discourse of Homelessness’, *Discourse and Society*, 13.3 (2002), 347-372 (p. 348).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

characteristic of the news discourse defined by ‘the unsaid or information that could (or should) have been given but is selectively left out.’¹²

In discussing the accessed and unaccessed voices (or manipulative silences), the chapter will pay attention to the strategies of backgrounding and foregrounding used in *Milliyet*. Backgrounding and foregrounding emerge as the strategies of avoidance and perpetuation in texts, respectively.¹³ Accordingly, backgrounding downplays the negative events that do not coincide with the intended message, whereas foregrounding emphasises positive aspects of a situation that affirm the state’s actions as part of the armed struggle against the PKK. For instance, passive agent-deletion, which is achieved by means of passive sentences and nominalisation of an action, facilitates the backgrounding of responsible social actors and denial of agency in the presentation of negative events.¹⁴ The investigation of backgrounding and foregrounding strategies as well as accessed and unaccessed voices in *Milliyet* will allow for pinpointing the official and dominant depiction of the armed conflict.

The chapter begins with the background information on the mainstream press-state relations in Turkey to clarify the print media’s engagement with the official ideology (Kemalism), which underpinned the state’s rhetoric and practices in the 1990s. This section will also elaborate on the changes in the structure of the press ownership since 2002 in terms of their implications on the mainstream print media’s stand on the Kurdish question. Following this background, the second section will present a qualitative textual analysis of the most representative examples of the news reports in *Milliyet* that reflected the official discourse on the armed conflict in the 1990s. The official responses to unsolved murders and hunger strikes will also be considered to provide a fuller picture of the state’s stance on political acts of dissent in relation to the conflict in this period.

¹² Teun van Dijk, ‘News Schemata’, in *Studying Writing: Linguistic Approaches*, ed. by C. Cooper and S. Greenbaum (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1986), pp. 155–186 (p. 178).

¹³ Ruth Wodak, ‘Introduction’, in *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, ed. by Ruth Wodak, Rudolf De Cillia, Martin Reisigl, Karin Liebhart and Angelika Hirsch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 1–48 (p. 39).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

3.1. The State-Mainstream Press Relations in Turkey

This section provides an insight into the relationship between the press and the state to understand the continuity and change in the mainstream print media's engagement with the official state ideology and the Kurdish question. During the single-party era (1923-1945), the Republican People's Party (hereafter CHP as short for *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) controlled and mobilised the press to construct a modernised, Westernised and secular national identity.¹⁵ In parallel, the Press Law, introduced in 1931, was intended to create 'a responsible press' that would support and help the regime.¹⁶ On the one hand, there were newspapers which focused on upholding the ideas of the founding political elite and justifying the practices of the one-party regime in the eyes of the public. On the other hand, there was a group of newspapers which opposed the Kemalist modernisation and advocated liberalism against the statist economic policies of the Republican elite.¹⁷ Further, there were leftist newspapers that the CHP government targeted for making communist propaganda.¹⁸ Despite this diversity of the press, the authoritarian tone of the single-party regime required journalists to align with the Republican discourse.¹⁹ The press was hence predominantly subscribed to the Kemalist principles and had a close relationship with the state from the 1920s on.

The period after 1946 witnessed the emergence of a new kind of commercial press which adopted consensual views, focused on entertainment and prioritised financial gain rather than political advocacy.²⁰ For instance, the dailies *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* were launched in 1948 and 1950, respectively, aiming to be financed through

¹⁵ Bilge Yeşil, *Media in New Turkey: The Origins of an Authoritarian Neoliberal State* (University of Illinois Press, 2016), p. 21.

¹⁶ Dilruba Çatalbaş, 'Freedom of Press and Broadcasting', in *Human Rights in Turkey*, ed. by Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), pp. 19-34 (p. 23).

¹⁷ Raşit Kaya and Barış Çakmur, 'Politics and the Mass Media in Turkey', *Turkish Studies*, 11.4 (2010), 521-537 (p. 524).

¹⁸ Çatalbaş, p. 24.

¹⁹ Murat Akser and Banu Baybars-Hawks, 'Media and Democracy in Turkey: Toward a Model of Neoliberal Media Autocracy', *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 5.3 (2012), 302-321 (p. 303).

²⁰ Kaya and Çakmur, pp. 524-525.

advertisements. This press developed in the subsequent decades thanks to the economic growth and technological novelties, such as new printing and distribution facilities. Especially in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the commercialisation of the press reached a new phase as media companies became integrated into conglomerates. For instance, Aydın Doğan, the owner of the Doğan holding with businesses in the energy and retail sectors, purchased *Milliyet* from the Karacan family and thus entered the media sector in 1979.²¹ This trend continued in the 1990s as Doğan acquired *Hürriyet*, another highest-selling mainstream newspaper, in 1994.²² The media environment thus came to be dominated by a very few group of businesses through purchases by the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, the conglomeration of the print media rendered media companies more vulnerable to political pressures and increased the media's reliance on the state, since they 'depended on state bids and privatization deals for their commercial activities in non-media sectors.'²³

Even after the end of the single-party era in 1946, the state continued to impose strict press laws over these privately held newspapers, thereby preventing them from challenging the Kemalist ideology. These impositions were largely defined by the paradigm of national security which treated the expression of ethnic, religious or ideological diversity as a threat to the secular character and territorial integrity of the state. For instance, following the 1980 coup, the legal changes that the military regime introduced with the new constitution affected the press, since Article 28 of Law No. 2932 decreed that 'publication shall not be made in any language forbidden by law.'²⁴ Therefore, the press was unable to represent the voices of minority groups. It is worth adding here that the state also monopolised the radio and television broadcasting until the early 1990s. Given these legal restraints and the economic interests of media owners at stake, the subscription to the official ideology became a necessity rather than a choice for the mainstream press.

²¹ Füsün Alver and Şebnem Çağlar, 'The Power Struggle Among Media Groups and Its Effects on Journalism in Turkey', *GSTF Journal on Media & Communications*, 1.1 (2013), 25-35 (p. 28).

²² Ibid., p. 28.

²³ Yeşil, p. 68.

²⁴ William Hale, 'Human Rights, the European Union and the Turkish Accession Process', *Turkish Studies*, 4.1 (2003), 107-126 (p. 117).

The loyalty of the mainstream press to the Kemalist values was also noted in the works of some scholars on the Turkish press. For instance, Arus Yumul and Umut Özkırımlı conducted a survey of 38 Turkish daily newspapers on 16 January 1997 which was a randomly selected day.²⁵ Accordingly, most newspapers constantly reminded the reader of national ideals through their names such as *Türkiye* ('Turkey'), *Milliyet* ('Nationality'), *Hürriyet* ('Freedom'), *Cumhuriyet* ('The Republic'). Further, approximately one-third of the newspapers used either the Turkish flag or a map of Turkey in their logos.²⁶ Yumul and Özkırımlı also drew attention to the employment of slogans that directly or indirectly evoked the homeland and national identity.²⁷ The slogans such as 'Turkey for the Turks' in *Hürriyet* and 'The newspaper of those who love their country' in *Akşam* conveyed nationalistic discourse in overt forms. However, others such as 'The best newspaper of Turkey' in *Sabah* or 'The new newspaper of new Turkey' in *Günaydın* were subtler in their evocation of the nation. Consequently, the authors suggested that Turkish newspapers contributed to the daily reproduction of nationalism by pointing out the signs of nationhood and quoting nationalistic utterances of politicians in an affirmative manner.²⁸

Murat Somer's 2004 study argued that, in parallel with the state's policy of refusing to recognise 'Kurds' as an ethnic group in Turkey, the word 'Kurd' was hardly used in the public-political discourse until the 1990s.²⁹ To illustrate his point, Somer mentioned the rare use of the words '*Kürt*' ('Kurd') and '*Kürtçe*' ('the Kurdish language') in mainstream Turkish newspapers until the given period. Somer compared the periods of 1984-1985 and 1991-1992 in the mainstream daily *Hürriyet* and identified a twenty-six-fold surge in the number of articles and an almost four-fold rise in the portion of the articles with reference to '*Kürt*' in the latter period.³⁰ Although

²⁵ Arus Yumul and Ümit Özkırımlı, 'Reproducing the Nation: "Banal Nationalism" in the Turkish Press', *Media, Culture & Society*, 22.6 (2000), 787–804 (p. 789).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 789.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 789.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 801.

²⁹ Murat Somer, 'Turkey's Kurdish Conflict: Changing Context, and Domestic and Regional Implications', *Middle East Journal*, 58.2 (2004), 235–253.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

Somer did not provide an examination of the reasons for the increased usage of these terms, he noted Prime Minister Demirel's recognition of the 'Kurdish reality' toward the end of 1991 as a factor in triggering this change. President Özal's proposal to lift the ban on Kurdish and consequent debates in parliament in early 1991 can also be added here as the possible reasons for this increased visibility of terms such as 'Kurd', 'Turk of Kurdish origin' or 'Turkish Kurd.' Drawing on Somer's point, we can suggest that the mainstream press adjusted its editorial policy depending on the changes in the official discourse.

Dilara Sezgin and Melissa Wall analysed the news coverage of Kurds from 1997 to 2002 in *Hürriyet* to identify the construction of Kurds in the mainstream media discourse.³¹ The authors described the newspaper as nationalistic and biased against Kurds in that its coverage silenced Kurds by discussing their problems without including their viewpoints and largely associating them with terrorism and the PKK. Further, *Hürriyet* arguably justified the official state ideology without questioning the facts presented by the government and other authorities.³² Sezgin and Wall also problematized the phrase '*Kürt sorunu*' ('Kurdish problem'), which, in their view, contributed to the construction of Kurds as a problem in the state's and mainstream print media's discourse. The repeated use of the same phrase perpetuated the bias against the Kurdish minority and the perception of them as an internal threat.³³

The scholarship then suggests that the mainstream press, albeit privately owned, historically served as the mouthpiece of the official ideology and complied with the state's glorification of Turkishness as the unique binding force and its denial of ethnic and linguistic diversity. Therefore, the pro-state and pro-military character of the mainstream press resulted in either the total exclusion or the one-sided depiction of Kurds and the Kurdish question. In discussing the state-press relations, it is worth paying special attention to the 1990s due to the military's attempts to control the flow

³¹ Dilara Sezgin and Melissa A. Wall, 'Constructing the Kurds in the Turkish Press: A Case Study of *Hürriyet* Newspaper', *Media, Culture & Society*, 27.5 (2005), 787–798.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 795.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 795.

of information and the media's reporting of the conflict, which will be outlined in the following section.

3.1.1. The Military's Collaboration with the Mainstream Press in the 1990s

In parallel to the growth of the commercial press and its increased potential to circulate information and mould public opinion, the military began to view it as an instrument to gain public consent for the actions of the armed forces.³⁴ This pursuit of consent represented a marked change in the interaction between the military and society, since it had never been the former's concern in the three coups that took place between 1960 and 1980.³⁵ Some scholars argued that the military strove to 'construct its own support base by acting like a political party directly addressing the public' through using the mainstream media as the means of voicing its views.³⁶

In addition to the intensification of the conflict, political and economic instability enabled the military to bolster its political influence and come further to the fore as the country's 'most trusted institution.'³⁷ The military could thus extend its authority beyond the battle zone via different methods to promote a hard-line stance on the struggle against terror. For instance, the decision of the National Security Council meetings (MGK hereafter as the shortened form of *Milli Güvenlik Kurulu* in Turkish) included directives in the form of 'warnings' and 'recommendations' for the mass media and universities in 1993. Accordingly, the MGK directive asked higher education institutions and their faculty members to be 'more conscious of the country's problems' and invited academics to carry out and publish research on the subjects relevant to the country's national security.³⁸

³⁴ Emre Toros, 'The Kurdish Problem, Print Media, and Democratic Consolidation in Turkey', *Asia Europe Journal*, 10.4 (2012), 317–333 (p. 319).

³⁵ F. Michael Wuthrich, 'Commercial Media, the Military, and Society in Turkey during Failed and Successful Interventions', *Turkish Studies*, 11.2 (2010), 217–234 (p. 217).

³⁶ Ümit Cizre and Menderes Çınar, 'Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in Light of the February 28 Process', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102.2/3 (2003), 309–332 (p. 322).

³⁷ Yeşil, p. 51.

³⁸ 'Üniversitelere MGK Emri' ('NSC Directive for Universities'), *Milliyet*, 13 April 1993.

The mainstream press espoused the military's extended control over the armed conflict at the expense of the political parties in power. An illustrative example can be given from the textual organisation of a news report in *Milliyet*, dated 10 July 1993 and entitled 'Temizlik harekâtı' ('Clean-up operation').³⁹ The news report mentioned the military operation to be launched against the PKK, and the request of Doğan Güreş, the chief of General Staff at the time, and other commanders for support from the government and opposition parties. In doing so, the newspaper gave precedence to the military's side of the situation from the first paragraph to the last by placing other political actors in a relatively subordinate position.

The order in which the following opening sentence was constructed set an interpretive framework for the rest of the text in two steps: 'GENELKURMAY'ın, Güneydoğu'da PKK'ya karşı geniş çaplı bir temizlik harekâtına hazırlandığı ve bu konuda Başbakan Tansu Çiller'den siyasi destek aldıkları bildirildi.'⁴⁰ First, the sentence presupposed a subservient role for the elected government in resolving the conflict. The preparation for the operation was understood to have begun earlier than the arranged meeting with the head of the ruling party. Therefore, it was implied through the order of the predicates that the General Staff did not turn to the government for approval or consent and the operation would have taken place even in the absence of political support. Second, the opening paragraph established the TAF as the prime decision-making body in the situation. This was communicated through the repeated use of the same word '*destek*' ('support', 'aid', 'cooperation' or 'endorsement') to also refer to the General Staff's invitation to media workers and journalists. The absence of differentiation between the government's and media's involvement in the operation implied that the government had an instrumental rather than an executive role in the resolution of the conflict during the 1990s.

In a related vein, several scholars noted that media workers also went the extra mile to show their respect for the TAF at the expense of political elites. For instance, Michael Wuthrich suggested that the media frequently acted on their own initiative in

³⁹ 'Temizlik Harekâtı' ('Clean-up Operation'), *Milliyet*, 10 July 1993.

⁴⁰ 'THE GENERAL STAFF prepares for a large-scale clean-up operation against the PKK in the southeast and has received political support from Prime Minister Tansu Çiller, it is reported.'

anticipation of the military's desires without having been prompted by them.⁴¹ Likewise, Metin Heper and Tanel Demirel observed that, in many instances, journalists either called for intervention by the military or tried to involve the military in political debates.⁴² The media thus tacitly inculcated 'the view that the military had the last word in such matters.'⁴³ Consequently, the media created opportunities to show its support for the armed forces and take their side against politicians.

Nevertheless, the military tightened its grip over the media's activities in direct and indirect manners. Some journalists faced prosecution and imprisonment for their political opinions on the Kurdish question. Some others with oppositional views on the official handling of the conflict were fired by their bosses who did not want to provoke the generals and risk their financial interests.⁴⁴ Military officers also pressured media owners, editors and journalists by calling or visiting editors to express their discomforts in a newspaper's coverage of the conflict and Kurdish question.⁴⁵ Therefore, media workers were compelled to adhere to the military's orders and not challenge its hard-line approach.

Further, reporters were not allowed to provide first-hand accounts from the conflict zone, since the General Staff restricted journalists' access to Kurdish provinces in the 1990s.⁴⁶ Therefore, the mainstream press heavily relied on the information, numbers and footage provided by the military personnel in reporting the conflict, which was not publicly known at the time. The state's total control over the media's reporting of the conflict in the 1990s was also revealed in the writings of some veteran journalists on the Kurdish question. For instance, Hasan Cemal noted that prominent journalists

⁴¹ F. Michael Wuthrich, 'Factors Influencing Military-Media Relations in Turkey', *The Middle East Journal*, 66.2 (2012), 253–272 (p. 262).

⁴² Metin Heper and Tanel Demirel, 'The Press and the Consolidation of Democracy in Turkey,' in *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics*, ed. by Sylvia Kedourie (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 109–124 (pp. 113–114).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁴⁴ Andrew Finkel, 'Who Guards the Turkish Press? A Perspective on Press Corruption in Turkey', *Journal of International Affairs*, 54.1 (2000), 147–166 (pp. 160–161).

⁴⁵ Yeşil, p. 56.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

and editors were given direct instructions about how to frame the conflict at a meeting with the president, the military, and intelligence officers in April 1990.⁴⁷ More specifically, they were told to refer to the PKK's activities as 'terrorism' and its members as 'terrorists' rather than as an 'uprising' and 'guerrilla fighters', respectively.⁴⁸ The editors or reporters were thus informed about the boundaries of the coverage that would please the military. Coupled with the dependence on the military officials as being the sole source of information, the tacit agreement between this commercial press and the military defined the mainstream reporting of the conflict in the 1990s. The following section will present an overview of the changes in press ownership since the early 2000s in terms of its implications on the media's approach to the Kurdish question and the conflict.

3.1.2. The Transformation of the Press Ownership during the AKP Rule

The first decade of the 2000s witnessed a marked transformation in the media sector, which was both propelled by the economic crisis in 2001 and the change of political power in 2002. The economic crisis resulted in the collapse of several banks, being followed by the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (hereafter TMSF as short for '*Tasarruf Mevduatı Sigorta Fonu*') taking their media assets over and auctioning them off.⁴⁹ Aydın Doğan, who already owned the highest-selling mainstream newspapers such as *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet*, benefited from this crisis and acquired some other media outlets, such as *Star* and *Vatan* dailies. As a result, the Doğan Group came to control almost half of Turkey's private media until 2011 as one of the largest conglomerates in Turkey.

This crisis also discredited most of the political elite and parties in parliament, which facilitated the AKP to stand out as a newly-formed party and come to power in November 2002.⁵⁰ Despite the Islamist background of the AKP's founders, the government largely maintained friendly relations with the pro-military and secular

⁴⁷ Hasan Cemal, *Kürtler (Kurds)*, (İstanbul: Doğan Publishing, 2003), pp. 118-119.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 119.

⁴⁹ Yeşil, p. 88.

⁵⁰ Reuben Silverman, 'Doğan versus Erdoğan: Business and Politics in AKP-Era Turkey', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 25.2 (2014), 131-151 (p. 142).

mainstream print media during its first term between 2002 and 2007. Additionally, the AKP continued to carry out several constitutional amendments related to press freedom as part of the EU harmonisation packages. For instance, Articles 26 and 28 of the Constitution were amended to delete the phrase ‘any language prohibited by law’, removing the restrictions on the use of Kurdish in the expression and dissemination of thought.⁵¹ Further, in July 2003, broadcasting in minority languages was extended to private stations in addition to the state-owned Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT as short for ‘*Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu*’).⁵² One year later, a new Press Law was adopted in June 2004 ‘to promote the freedom of expression and of the press.’⁵³

However, the reforms did not go so far as to amend some articles of the Anti-Terror Law and Penal Code, which provided a legal basis for filing against journalists and authors. For instance, Article 301 of the Penal Code, which criminalised ‘insulting Turkishness’, continued to be used during the AKP rule to prosecute many journalists and authors such as Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk, Elif Şafak, and Hrant Dink, the former editor-in-chief of the Armenian Agos newspaper.⁵⁴ Additionally, the European Court of Human Rights condemned Turkey twice in 2010 for using its Anti-Terror Law to close leftist and pro-Kurdish newspapers, stating that the closures violated free expression and involved censorship.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Alper Kaliber, ‘De-Europeanisation of Civil Society and Public Debates in Turkey: The Kurdish Question Revisited’, *South European Society and Politics*, 21.1 (2016), 59-74 (p. 63).

⁵² Ergun Özbudun, ‘Democratization Reforms in Turkey, 1993–2004’, *Turkish Studies*, 8.2 (2007), 179-196 (p. 184).

⁵³ Esra Elmas and Dilek Kurban, *Communicating Democracy: Democratizing Communication Media in Turkey: Legislation, Policies, Actors* (İstanbul: Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation [TESEV], 2011), p. 46.

⁵⁴ Eylem Yanardağoglu, ‘Elusive Citizenship: Media, Minorities and Freedom of Communication in Turkey in the Last Decade’, *İleti-ş-im*, 19.2 (2013), 87-102 (p. 94).

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2011: Events of 2010* (New York: Human Rights Watch), p. 480.

Likewise, the scholarship points to the emergence of authoritarian tendencies and a slowdown in reforms in the AKP's second term starting from 2008.⁵⁶ On the one hand, Kemalist and oppositional journalists were imprisoned as part of the Ergenekon investigation, which began in July 2007, based on the claim that various media organisations had joined forces with the armed forces to remove the AKP from power.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the government started a criminal investigation in April 2009, involving the arrest of more than 2,000 individuals, including Kurdish politicians, intellectuals and journalists, who were accused of being affiliated with the PKK.⁵⁸ Strikingly, this investigation coincided with the declaration of the Kurdish opening, thereby undermining the credibility of the AKP's reformist agenda for the resolution of the Kurdish question.

In parallel, AKP-friendly entrepreneurs such as the Çalık, İpek-Koza and Sancak groups entered the media sector from mid-2007 onward.⁵⁹ The ruling party thus aimed to create its own partisan media by using the TMSF and channelling state advertising to the media outlets loyal to Erdoğan. One of the early examples was the sale in a state-run auction of *Sabah* daily and ATV channel, which together represented Turkey's second-largest media group in 2011, to the pro-AKP Çalık Holding whose media branch was led by Erdoğan's son-in-law.⁶⁰ These newspapers helped the government to promote the criminal investigations mentioned above by reporting alleged coup plots which were 'based on illegally leaked information and were taken up by the prosecutors as evidence in their indictments.'⁶¹ However, it later became clear that the evidence presented in the Ergenekon trials was sham. After the failed coup attempt in July 2016, Erdoğan claimed that the trials had been brought by police officers, prosecutors and judges who belonged to the Gülen movement, a religious group led by the exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen, with which the AKP was at that time closely

⁵⁶ Bilge Yeşil, 'Press Censorship in Turkey: Networks of State Power, Commercial Pressures, and Self-Censorship: Press Censorship in Turkey', *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 7.2 (2014), 154–173 (p. 155).

⁵⁷ Wuthrich (2012), p. 254.

⁵⁸ Firat Cengiz and Lars Hoffmann, 'Rethinking Conditionality: Turkey's European Union Accession and the Kurdish Question', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 51.3 (2013), 416–432 (p. 424).

⁵⁹ Gözde Yılmaz, 'Europeanisation or De-Europeanisation? Media Freedom in Turkey (1999–2015)', *South European Society and Politics*, 21.1 (2016), 147–161 (p. 150).

⁶⁰ Silverman, p. 146.

⁶¹ Kaya and Çakmur, p. 537.

allied.⁶² Therefore, while Ergenekon and associated trials became an instrument for clipping the wings of the military and secularist establishment, the partisan media contributed to silencing dissent and covering up any misconduct by the AKP.

Additionally, the government strove to silence criticism in the mainstream media. The imposition of heavy tax fines on Doğan Media represented an important example. Aydın Doğan attempted to appease Erdoğan by firing some oppositional voices from *Hürriyet* and *Radikal*. Nevertheless, the government refused to revise the tax fine until the group agreed to sell two of its three major newspapers, *Milliyet* and *Vatan*, to the Demirören Holding, a government-aligned business with interests in energy, construction and tourism.⁶³ Finally, Doğan completely withdrew from the media sector in March 2018 when he sold his remaining media assets to the same Demirören group. This final sale which further consolidated the partisan media was viewed as the taking over of ‘Turkey’s last bastion of liberal media’ and, hence, the end of the mainstream media in Turkey.⁶⁴

Relatedly, it became common for multiple newspapers to run the same headline in this period. For instance, on 9 November 2013, six newspapers ran the same headline ‘We will solve it amongst ourselves,’ quoting Erdoğan regarding his conflict with Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç over Erdoğan’s decision to use the police to investigate co-ed student housing.⁶⁵ Another striking case which testified to the prevalence of the censorship in the media happened in 2013 when the environmentalists organised a sit-in protest against the government’s plan to re-build

⁶² Ella George, ‘Purges and Paranoia’, *London Review of Books*, 40.10 (2018), 22-32 <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v40/n10/ella-george/purges-and-paranoia> [Accessed 9 June 2018].

⁶³ Koray Çalışkan, ‘Toward a New Political Regime in Turkey: From Competitive Toward Full Authoritarianism’, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 58 (2018), 5–33 (p. 17).

⁶⁴ ‘Pro-Erdoğan firm reportedly taking over Turkey’s last bastion of liberal media’, *Deutsche Welle*, 21 March 2018, <<http://www.dw.com/en/pro-erdogan-firm-reportedly-taking-over-turkeys-last-bastion-of-liberal-media/a-43073914>> [accessed 9 June 2018].

⁶⁵ Susan Corke, Andrew Finkel, David J. Kramer, Carla Anne Robbins, and Nate Schenkkan, *Democracy in Crisis: Corruption, Power and Media* (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2014), p. 13.

the Ottoman-era barracks in the Gezi Park of İstanbul.⁶⁶ The mainstream media failed to broadcast the protests, whereas the pro-government media outlets presented the protests as the conspiracy of the ‘foreign powers’ which envied Turkey’s economic development.⁶⁷ Therefore, the Turkish press lost both its autonomy and diversity due to the prevalence of different pressure and censorship mechanisms.

The ideological overlap, which proved an underlying factor behind the mainstream media’s alignment with the military in the 1990s, was absent in the former’s relationship with the AKP. Nevertheless, due to the factors described above, both the mainstream and pro-government press complied with the changes in the official rhetoric and policies related to the conflict and the Kurdish question. Media workers and journalists showed their readiness to use the influence of the media in shaping public opinion and thus to contribute to the resolution of the conflict. For instance, on 26 December 2010, *Milliyet* declared its commitment to showing the awareness needed for resolving Turkey’s most sensitive problem through democratic and peaceful means.⁶⁸ However, in doing so, the newspaper also made a point of emphasising the importance of respecting territorial boundaries and equal citizenship rights. *Milliyet* thus pledged to remain within the parameters of what was acceptable for the official state ideology.

Prime Minister Erdoğan also resorted to similar methods that the military used in the 1990s to control the media’s reporting of the conflict. For instance, in October 2011, he organised a closed meeting with media owners and journalists in executive positions in various media organisations, asking them to be ‘sensible’ in their coverage of terrorism and violent incidents.⁶⁹ Right after the meeting, five news agencies

⁶⁶ Kerem Öktem, ‘Why Turkey’s Mainstream Media Chose to Show Penguins rather than Protests?’, *The Guardian*, 9 June 2013, <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/09/turkey-mainstream-media-penguins-protests>> [accessed 10 June 2018].

⁶⁷ Mustafa A. Sezal and İhsan Sezal, ‘Dark Taints on the Looking Glass: Whither “New Turkey”?’, *Turkish Studies*, (2017), 1-23 (p. 16).

⁶⁸ Derya Sazak, ‘Kürt Sorunu ve Medya’ (‘The Kurdish Question and Media’), *Milliyet*, 26 December 2010, <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/kurt-sorunu-vemedya/ombudsman/haberdetay/27.12.2010/1331284/default.htm>> [accessed 10 June 2018].

⁶⁹ Dilek Kurban and Ceren Sözeri, *Case Study Report - Does Media Policy Promote Media Freedom and Independence? The Case of Turkey* (İstanbul: Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation [TESEV], 2011), p. 30.

declared in a joint statement that their coverage of terrorism shall take the public order into account and ‘comply with the publication bans of the competent authorities.’⁷⁰ However, the details on the extent of these bans remained vague.

The scope of the ban became much clearer when Erdoğan called on journalists to stop covering the conflict in a live televised debate in August 2012. He argued that the Turkish media ‘served as a propaganda platform for the PKK’ by reporting and broadcasting information about Turkish soldiers’ deaths.⁷¹ Erdoğan also warned the press that it must ignore the conflict, adding that he expected the media to ‘act as one hand and one heart.’⁷² A striking example of the media’s adherence to the ban on reporting terrorism took place in December 2011 when the Turkish military bombed a convoy of Kurdish villagers crossing the Turkish-Iraqi border in southeastern Turkey. Mainstream news channels remained silent for about 18 hours regarding the bombing, which killed thirty-four civilian Kurds, until an official statement was issued.⁷³ The media’s silence ended with a limited coverage based on the government’s press release, stating that the Turkish Armed Forces acted on intelligence that the border-crossing group had included PKK militants, and hence the bombing.⁷⁴

Another instance indicative of the government’s grip over the media’s reporting of the conflict concerned *Milliyet*’s disclosure in March 2013 of the minutes of a meeting that was held between the PKK’s imprisoned leader Öcalan and representatives from the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party as part of the peace process.⁷⁵ Erdoğan,

⁷⁰ Ayça Söylemez, “‘We will comply with official publication bans...’”, *Bianet*, 24 October 2011, <<http://bianet.org/english/freedom-of-expression/133600-we-will-comply-with-officialpublication-%20bans>> [accessed 9 June 2018].

⁷¹ Özgür Öğret and Nina Ognianova, ‘Erdoğan tells media not to cover Kurdish conflict’, *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 12 September 2012, <<https://cpj.org/blog/2012/09/erdogan-tells-media-not-to-cover-kurdish-conf.php>> [accessed 9 June 2018].

⁷² Ibid..

⁷³ Ceren Sözeri, ‘The Political Economy of the Media and Its Impact on Freedom of Expression in Turkey’, in *Turkey’s Democratization Process*, ed. by Carmen Rodríguez, Antonio Ávalos, Hakan Yılmaz, and Ana I. Planet (London: Routledge, 2014), 391-404 (p. 395).

⁷⁴ Yeşil (2016), p. 137.

⁷⁵ Steven M. Ellis, ‘IPI Expresses Concern at Erdoğan Criticism of Peace Negotiations News Report’, *International Press Institute*, 5 March 2013, <<https://ipi.media/ipi-expresses-concern-at-erdogan-criticism-of-peace-negotiations-news-report/>> [accessed 10 June 2018].

who viewed it as the leaking of state secrets and a plot designed to damage that process, condemned *Milliyet* for ignoring the sensitivities of Turkish people. Hasan Cemal, the newspaper's well-known columnist and a veteran journalist, defended the publication as serving the public interest and called on politicians to not intervene into the business of journalists.⁷⁶ Erdoğan Demirören, the pro-government owner of *Milliyet*, fired Cemal a few weeks later after the prime minister verbally attacked the journalist with his remark: 'if this is journalism, then, down with your journalism.'⁷⁷ This example shows that, despite a climate of open debate regarding the Kurdish question in contrast with the 1990s, the boundaries of press freedom were still set by the official mind-set that prioritised the protection of the state's interests over the public interest.

Overall, the period after 2002 represented both continuity and change in terms of the mainstream media's engagement with the official ideology. On the one hand, the highest-selling newspapers such as *Sabah*, *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* lost their power to influence public opinion that they enjoyed in the 1990s.⁷⁸ On the other hand, as seen in their treatments of the bombing of Kurdish villagers, both the AKP and the media assigned priority to the security of the state at the expense of the rights and liberties of citizens, in line with the statist tradition of the Republic. Therefore, the ostensible changes in the official discourse on the Kurdish question in the 2000s did not translate into an improvement in the freedom of expression and consolidation of the democratic environment. Relatedly, the transformative effect of these progressive changes remained too limited and ephemeral to remove the long-standing security-oriented approach to the Kurdish question. Following this background, selected texts of *Milliyet* will be analysed below to explore the manifestations of this security paradigm in the official discourse on the conflict and related phenomena such as unsolved murders and hunger strikes in the 1990s.

⁷⁶ Corke et al., p. 9.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

⁷⁸ Hasan Cemal, 'Why Does the Big Media Not Have Its Former Power?', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 5 May 2012, <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/why-does-the-big-media-not-have-its-former-power---20017>> [accessed 11 June 2018].

3.2. *Milliyet*'s Presentation of the Official Discourse on the Conflict

This section will identify and discuss the official discourse on the conflict through analysing *Milliyet*'s reporting of the conflict by means of critical discourse-analytical tools. To collate the corpus of news reports on military operations and PKK's raids on military stations in southeastern Turkey, *Milliyet*'s online news archive was searched by the following keywords for January–December 1993 when the armed conflict peaked: '*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*' ('Turkish Armed Forces'), '*PKK*', '*çatışma*' (translated as clash, conflict or battle) and '*karakol baskını*' ('raid on a military post').⁷⁹ The online search yielded 162 results for '*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*' and 11 results for '*karakol baskını*.' Due to the broad meaning of '*çatışma*', I did the online search by this keyword together with '*PKK*', which yielded 385 results related to the armed conflict.

The peak years of the TAF's struggle against the PKK also witnessed the highest number of unsolved political murders between 1992 and 1994. Certain government officials and military personnel were questioned for their direct or indirect involvement in these killings. According to the figures, 1993 came first with 467 killings, being followed by 1994 and 1992 with 423 and 362 killings, respectively.⁸⁰ The online search by the query term '*faili meçhul*' in *Milliyet*'s news archive for this period yielded 460 results in total - 35, 93 and 223 results for 1991, 1992 and 1993, respectively. Finally, in collating the corpus on the hunger strikes in prisons, *Milliyet*'s news archive was searched by the keywords '*açlık grevi*' ('hunger strike') and '*ölüm orucu*' ('death fast') for May–July 1996 and October–December 2000. The online search yielded 86 results for '*açlık grevi*' ('hunger strike') and 94 results for '*ölüm orucu*' ('death fast') for the former period. The same search yielded 75 results for '*açlık grevi*' and 171 results for '*ölüm orucu*' for the latter period. The textual analysis will draw on the most representative examples to pinpoint *Milliyet*'s presentation of

⁷⁹ All the translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

⁸⁰ '21 yılda 1901 faili meçhul işlendi' ('1901 unsolved murders were committed in 21 years'), *Milliyet*, 25 January 2012.

the official discourse on the conflict and other episodes of violence in the 1990s and early 2000s.

3.2.1. Military Operations

As shown in Chapter One, the Turkish state historically reduced the conflict to a regional problem which was reflected in the persistent use of the term ‘the Southeast problem’ rather than ‘the Kurdish question.’ *Milliyet* perpetuated this official perception of the conflict and the enemy through an undifferentiated use of ‘terör’ (‘terror’) whereby the term was unexceptionally collocated with the PKK as in ‘PKK terör örgütü’ (‘the PKK terrorist organisation’). Negative associations were also formed through the noun phrases such as ‘PKK terörü’ (‘PKK terror’), ‘PKK mayını’ (‘PKK’s mine’), ‘PKK vahşeti’ (‘PKK brutality’) and ‘PKK katliamı’ (‘PKK massacre’). This undifferentiated use of terror was complemented with an undifferentiated description of terrorists via two different strategies in *Milliyet*. The first strategy involved depicting them as the agents of actions which were regarded as evil. The second concerned assigning a homogeneous identity to these people and thereby denying them individual characteristics and differences.⁸¹ The features attributed to the PKK as ‘the enemy’ were thus automatically ascribed to its members whose perspectives were hardly accessed.

While the military and state officials in executive and judicial positions articulated their determination to end the conflict, *Milliyet* foregrounded their views through the ways in which quotations and press statements were used in the news reports. These statements, which served to condemn and threaten the PKK, can be discussed in two categories: promise/threats and denunciations. Promise/threat statements had dual effects in addressing both the public and the PKK at the same time. Depending on the intended target, the meanings oscillated so that the statement constituted either a promise or a threat. In contrast, denunciatory statements aimed directly at the PKK to express condemnations in the face of attacks or the terror problem in general. Despite

⁸¹ Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 147.

these differences, each accessed voice further consolidated the image of the Turkish state and its army as resolute and unyielding against the enemy.

The then Prime Minister Çiller's promise/threat statements can be given as examples to demonstrate how quotations emphasised the state's determination. Çiller, who became the head of the central-right coalition government in June 1993, addressed the conflict in general terms. She repeatedly stressed the government's willpower to fight terror. However, she largely eschewed referring to the PKK by its name and replaced the name of the organisation with 'terror.' For instance, in her first week of the premiership, her remark 'Devlet, terör konusunda kararlı' was quoted in the headlines.⁸² In another news report on 21 November 1993, she was quoted in the headlines as 'Çiller: Ülkeyi böldürtmeyiz.'⁸³ This latter statement articulated a single-minded determination to resolve the conflict, while also endeavouring to reassure the public. Consequently, a combination of defiance and reassurance in Çiller's statements suggested threat only as a subtext in a rather subtle and indirect tone.

In contrast, an aggressive tone predominated over a reassuring one in the promise/threat statements that were issued as reactions to a specific incident. President Süleyman Demirel's responses to the PKK's attack on the unarmed soldiers in the province of Bingöl on 24 May 1993 constituted two striking examples in this regard. On 26th May, Demirel made the headlines with his remark 'Bizden günah gitti.'⁸⁴ On 27th May, the President was quoted in the headlines with another promise/threat statement: 'Dağlar temizlenecek.'⁸⁵ In both cases, Demirel pledged resolution to the conflict and prescribed retaliation as inevitable and necessary. Further, both quotations asserted that the state was not defensive, but rather offensive in tackling the conflict. Consequently, Demirel's promise/threat statements aimed to invoke confidence in the public for the state's struggle against terror in a similar manner to Çiller's statements.

⁸² 'Devlet, terör konusunda kararlı' ('The state is resolute in the terror issue'), *Milliyet*, 2 July 1993.

⁸³ 'Çiller: Ülkeyi böldürtmeyiz' ('Çiller: We do not let the country be divided'), *Milliyet*, 21 November 1993.

⁸⁴ 'Bizden günah gitti' ('Do not blame us for what will happen'), *Milliyet*, 26 May 1993.

⁸⁵ 'Dağlar temizlenecek' ('Mountains will be cleared'), *Milliyet*, 27 May 1993.

However, unlike the latter ones, Demirel also adopted the impending destruction rhetoric to assert the state's perspective and power.

To demonstrate variation in the promise/threat statements, a third example can be given from General Doğan Güreş's statement on 30 October 1993.⁸⁶ Güreş, who attended the reception organised by the President on the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic, was quoted in the headlines with his statement 'Hepsini öldüreceğiz.'⁸⁷ The quote was accompanied by an image of the President in the forefront with Atatürk's wax statue and a Turkish flag in the background. Unlike Çiller's statements describing the problem in general terms and Demirel's implying the annihilation of the enemy, Güreş articulated a direct threat to the PKK through the explicit use of the phrase 'kill all of them.'

Furthermore, the framing image visually reinforced this dichotomising approach in Güreş's statement by highlighting the figure of Atatürk and the Turkish flag as the unifying elements of the nation-state. The deployment of these symbols implied what the PKK threatened and what the TAF was fighting for. The act of killing the enemy that was promised by the military was thus elevated to an exalted status through the frame of the Turkish flag and Atatürk figure. Therefore, the same promise/threat statement, which declared death for one group, was designed to represent a promise for the public whose harmony and support for the quoted action were assumed.

While promise/threat statements asserted the state's determination to resolve the conflict, denunciatory statements depicted the enemy as despicable and threatening. Therefore, the construction of the military's hard-line approach as justified was facilitated through portrayals of the state and soldiers as 'victim' and of the enemy as inhumane in denunciatory statements. For example, General Güreş's response to the PKK's attack on 24 May 1993 was quoted in the headlines as follows: 'Bunlar insan olamaz.'⁸⁸ In another example, the news report included Demirel's press release on the PKK's attack on the village of Başbağlar, killing 33 villagers on 5 July 1993. The

⁸⁶ 'Hepsini öldüreceğiz' ('We will kill all of them'), *Milliyet*, 30 October 1993.

⁸⁷ 'We will kill all of them.'

⁸⁸ 'Bunlar insan olamaz' ('They cannot be humans'), *Milliyet*, 26 May 1993.

President was quoted in the headlines: ‘Bu bir insanlık suçudur.’⁸⁹ Considered together, both Güreş’s and Demirel’s denunciations highlighted the PKK and its members as inhumane and callous. Consequently, such accessed voices established the state as the one that bestowed the right to life, while referring to the enemy as feeding on blood and preying on its victims.

Milliyet participated in the ‘us versus them’ rhetoric of these accessed voices by implying the unity and unanimity of the public toward the military’s struggle against terror. Turkish flags, Atatürk figure and crescent-star shapes suffused the texts. For example, on 29th October, the anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the newspaper distributed a Turkish flag free of charge. It promoted the campaign with an additional statement entitled ‘Bu millet bu vahşeti mutlaka yenecek’ and accompanied by a Turkish flag printed on the left.⁹⁰ In a similar vein, on 10th November, the anniversary of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s death in 1938, a picture of Atatürk covered the half of the first page with the headline ‘Seni anlıyoruz, ülkeye sahip çıkıyoruz.’⁹¹ Both examples reflected the association between the hard-line military approach and intended surge in national sentiment.

The news reports on the military operations stood out with the use of discursive strategies designed to foreground the TAF’s supremacy over the PKK. For instance, the state’s desire to eliminate the enemy manifested itself in the operation names such as ‘Temizlik’ (‘Clean-up’), ‘İmha’ (‘Extermination’), ‘Kartal’ (‘Eagle’) operations. *Milliyet* highlighted the destructive force of these operations in its coverage by incorporating many military terms and technical details as in the following example:⁹²

⁸⁹ ‘Bu bir insanlık suçudur’ (‘This is a crime against humanity’), *Milliyet*, 5 July 1993.

⁹⁰ ‘Bu millet bu vahşeti mutlaka yenecek’ (‘This nation will certainly defeat this atrocity’), *Milliyet*, 28 October 1993.

⁹¹ ‘Seni anlıyoruz, ülkeye sahip çıkıyoruz’ (‘We understand you. We protect the country’), *Milliyet*, 10 November 1993.

⁹² ‘PKK’ya hava harekâtı’ (‘Air operation on the PKK’), *Milliyet*, 30 May 1993.

‘Operasyonlarda, PKK’nın Şehit Ayhan Taburu adını verdiği Elazığ-Bingöl il sınırındaki Gökçekanat Vadisi’ne dün öğle saatlerinde F-104 ve F-4 savaş uçaklarınca 32 sorti yapıldı. Daha sonra bölge Skorsky ve Kobra helikopterleriyle tarandı. Bu arada, Skorsky helikopterleri tarafından vadideki belirli bölgelere havadan jandarma timleri indirildi. [...] bir grup PKK’lı, güvenlik güçlerine taciz ateşi açtı, ancak karşılık görünce kaçtı. [...]’⁹³

In addition to the use of special military terminology such as ‘sortie’ and ‘harassment fire’, the models of aircraft appeared as well as the names of helicopters ‘Cobra’ and ‘Skorsky.’ In contrast with the emphasis on the equipment, the human involvement was obscured in the writing. The agency of gendarmerie teams was made unclear because they were rendered passive through the passive form of the Turkish verb ‘indirmek’ (‘to drop’ or ‘dismount’). The military’s priority, to destroy the enemy, was thus conveyed through construction of the text in a manner which put helicopters in the position of agent and reduced the soldiers to a relatively secondary position.

However, in addition to the helicopters dropping bombs and aircrafts making sorties, the subject position was ascribed in the final sentence to a group of terrorists opening harassment fire. This sentence attributed an agency to ‘terrorists’ while obscuring the soldiers’ engagement at the same time, and hence served two purposes. First, the subject position associated the enemy with a negatively loaded action that evoked irritation. Second, the sentence highlighted a stark contrast between the destructive force of the TAF’s equipment and the failed attempt of the PKK, which was portrayed as weak and timid. Consequently, the news report reinforced the military’s supremacy in the battle zone directly by the inclusion of the equipment and indirectly by the trivialisation of the threat posed by the enemy.

⁹³ ‘In yesterday’s operations, 32 sorties were made by F-104 and F-4 war crafts in the Gökçekanat Valley referred to by the PKK as Martyr Ayhan Battalion and located in the border between the provinces of Elazığ and Bingöl. Subsequently, Skorsky and Cobra helicopters raked the area. In the meantime, gendarmerie teams were dropped from the air by Skorsky helicopters on specific spots in the valley. [...] a group of PKK militants opened harassment fire on the security forces, but fled upon the counterattack. [...]’

Further, *Milliyet*'s coverage of the TAF's operations also brought the PKK's death toll and casualties to the fore, whereas the soldiers' death toll was rendered less visible and explicit in the news reports. Accordingly, the headlines accentuated the number of PKK militants killed or captured dead even when there was a loss on the side of the TAF. In contrast, the Turkish death toll caused by the PKK's attacks was largely airbrushed through the exclusion of this information from the bold headlines. This was reflected in the frequent co-occurrence of the words 'PKK' and the verbs denoting death alongside the numbers, as in the following examples: '55 PKK militanı ölü ele geçirildi'⁹⁴, '13 PKK'lı öldürüldü'⁹⁵, '17 PKK'lı öldürüldü'⁹⁶, '58 PKK'lı ölü'⁹⁷ and '9 günde 74 PKK'lı ölü.'⁹⁸ The salience of the figures obscured how human life was either pushed to the background or foregrounded in the reports, depending on the affiliation of the dead. In this respect, the passivisation of soldiers in the previous extracts can also be interpreted as an indirect manifestation of de-valued or undervalued human life within the frame of military operations.

In parallel, the loss of the TAF was either placed in a lead-in text after the headlines or given at the end of a paragraph. In a news report on 14 June 1993, the headline drew the reader's attention to the fact that 17 PKK militants were killed.⁹⁹ The headline was accompanied by an image in which two soldiers were seen in their working environments, raising weapons to aim at the target in a focused manner. However, although the main text contained information that three TAF members were also killed in the raid, the PKK's death toll was emphasised to create the impression that the operations yielded results on the elimination of the enemy. In parallel, the Turkish death toll was rendered less immediately striking through its removal from the headlines and less significant through the accompanying images of target-oriented Turkish soldiers on duty. Therefore, the combined effect of the headline and soldiers'

⁹⁴ '55 PKK militanı ölü ele geçirildi' ('55 PKK militants captured dead'), *Milliyet*, 25 May 1993.

⁹⁵ '13 PKK'lı öldürüldü' ('13 PKK militants killed'), *Milliyet*, 29 July 1993.

⁹⁶ '17 PKK'lı öldürüldü' ('17 PKK militants killed'), *Milliyet*, 14 June 1993.

⁹⁷ '58 PKK'lı ölü' ('58 PKK militants killed'), *Milliyet*, 26 July 1993.

⁹⁸ '9 günde 74 PKK'lı ölü' ('74 PKK militants killed in 9 days'), *Milliyet*, 15 November 1993.

⁹⁹ '17 PKK'lı öldürüldü' ('17 PKK members were killed'), *Milliyet*, 14 June 1993.

image established the army as victorious despite the conflicting facts in the news report.

The captions accompanying the photographs also reinforced the framing effect elicited from the deployment of soldiers' images in the first place. Portraying soldiers as dedicated fighters, these captions signified the TAF's omnipresence in the mountains. Two examples can be given from the selected corpus in this regard. The first one was presented as part of the news report on an operation in the Tendürek Mountains.¹⁰⁰ The image placed above the headline was a long-shot photograph of the rugged landscape where the soldiers were seen standing on top and searching for something with their weapons in their hands. The caption below the photograph stressed that the soldiers carried out operational search activities and left no rock unturned to find terrorists.

The second example which solely included an image and a caption implied the preponderance of soldiers in the region without any reference to a specific event.¹⁰¹ A photograph showed five soldiers in their working environments in military uniforms and carrying weapons in their hands. Two of them in the foreground pointed their hands at a point outside the image, while the other two in the back focused on that spot. The fifth soldier, the closest to the camera, aimed his weapon at the target from behind the rocks. Here, soldiers were visually presented in line with the positive characteristics ascribed to the Turkish army. Therefore, they were attributed a homogeneous identity as their portrayals were strictly bound up with the body with which they were affiliated. The army's supremacy in the battle zone, which was endemic in the news reports on operations, was perpetuated in a rather condensed form in these examples framed by an image and its caption.

Overall, the official discourse on the armed conflict was marked by the justification of the war and its rhetoric of destruction, the glorification of the Turkish military, the heroification of TAF soldiers and vilification of the enemy. In parallel, *Milliyet*

¹⁰⁰ '13 PKK'lı öldürüldü' ('13 PKK members were killed'), *Milliyet*, 29 July 1993.

¹⁰¹ 'DAĞ TAŞ ASKER KAYNIYOR' ('EVERYWHERE TEEMING WITH SOLDIERS'), *Milliyet*, 18 July 1993.

concentrated on two interrelated tasks in relaying the official perspective and covering the military operations. The first was to construct the war waged against the PKK as a rational act. The second was to affirm the military's commitment to a hard-line, security-oriented approach. Complementary to these tasks were portrayals of the state as invincible, and of the public as being in absolute solidarity with the state as well as the treatment of the enemy as doomed to failure. Consequently, *Milliyet* implied the state's victory through both visual and textual organisation of the news reports.

3.2.2. Unsolved Murders

The state's prioritisation of victory against the enemy at all costs also manifested itself in the treatment of the conflict as an extenuating circumstance to pre-empt any questioning of the military's operations and condone the wrongdoings of security officers. This was particularly seen in the official handling of unsolved murders which peaked in the conflict-afflicted provinces during the first half of the 1990s. The responses to Kurdish MP Mehmet Sincar's assassination in 1993 can be mentioned to illustrate this point. Sincar was murdered by unknown assailants in Batman, which stood out as the southeastern province with the second highest number of unsolved murders after Diyarbakır.¹⁰² While condemning the unknown assailants, President Demirel also implied the murder as being circumstantial and understandable in his statement: 'Batman normal bir zeminde değil. [...] Olaya Güneydoğu problemi içinde bakmak gerekir.'¹⁰³ Both the government and military officials treated civilian deaths in the southeastern region as inevitable and excusable.

Crucially, the same approach was discernible in the official responses to the cases of burnt-down villages in the conflict-afflicted regions for which soldiers were incriminated. Demirel acknowledged the wrongdoings but still highlighted the

¹⁰² Michael M. Gunter, 'Susurluk: The Connection Between Turkey's Intelligence Community and Organized Crime', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence*, 11.2 (1998), 119-141 (p. 124).

¹⁰³ 'Batman is not under normal circumstances. [...] We need to consider the incident within the framework of the Southeastern problem.'

circumstances of the ongoing conflict.¹⁰⁴ ‘Bu bir çatışmadır. Bu yer artık bir köy olmaktan çıkmıştır.’¹⁰⁵ In a similar vein, Ayvaz Gökdemir, a member of the parliament, drew an analogy between burning down villages and breaking an invaluable vase in his statement: ‘Evdeki yangını söndürmek için çabalayan itfaiyeci, yanlışlıkla evdeki değerli bir vazoyu kırabilir.’¹⁰⁶ Further, the government and military officers responded to the allegations of official involvement by transferring blame onto illegal organisations such as the PKK and the Turkish Hezbollah, which were active in the region at the time.¹⁰⁷ *Milliyet* foregrounded these official voices in the headlines such as “‘Faili meçhul cinayetler örgüt işi’”¹⁰⁸ and “‘Cinayetler, PKK’nın işi.’”¹⁰⁹

Additionally, two strategies of positive self-presentation of the state stood out in the official responses to unsolved murders. The first was the frequent use of a consensual remark that Turkey was a state of law. The emphasis on the rule of law also added a tone of defiance to the attempts to avoid blame on the part of the state officials. Prime Minister Demirel’s absolute rejection of the idea that the state committed murders conveyed this defiance in the following statement: ‘Benim idare ettiğim hükümet, devlet cinayet işlemez ve işletmez. Bir tane bulursanız getirin.’¹¹⁰ Likewise, the regional governor Ünal Erkan made a rather reassuring statement: ‘Bölge halkıyla terörü birbirinden ayırıyoruz. Masum vatandaşa ateş etmekle bir yere varılamaz. Kanun dışı davranışlara asla müsaade etmeyeceğiz.’¹¹¹ The reference to the

¹⁰⁴ ‘Demirel: “Problem hep aynı”’ (‘Demirel: “The problem is always the same”’), *Milliyet*, 6 September 1993.

¹⁰⁵ ‘There is an ongoing armed conflict, and this place can no longer be called a village.’

¹⁰⁶ ‘A firefighter may inadvertently break a precious vase in the house, while striving to put off the fire in that house.’

¹⁰⁷ The Turkish Hezbollah, based in southeastern Turkey, was a radical Islamic group which was primarily composed of Kurds but opposed the separatist activity pursued by the PKK (see Karmon 1998 and Poulton 1999).

¹⁰⁸ “‘Faili meçhul cinayetler örgüt işi’” (“‘Unsolved murders are the work of the organisation’”), *Milliyet*, 7 March 1992.

¹⁰⁹ “‘Cinayetler, PKK’nın işi’” (“‘Murders are the work of the organisation’”), *Milliyet*, 24 October 1994.

¹¹⁰ ‘The government and the state, which I oversee, neither commit murders nor assign someone to do so. I challenge you to give me one name.’

¹¹¹ ‘We differentiate locals from terrorists. Nothing can be attained through shooting innocent citizens. We will never condone illegal actions.’

rule of law enabled these officials to both dismiss the accusations and highlight the state system as inherently fair and democratic.

The second reference point for the positive self-presentation of the Turkish state was the *şefkat* policy whereby the coalition government portrayed the state as well-intentioned and caring. Accordingly, *şefkat* ensured that the government representatives and security forces treated locals compassionately and distinguished them from the PKK. Prime Minister Demirel's statement that they [soldiers and security officers] would be harsh against the PKK and compassionate toward citizens illustrated this point.¹¹² Therefore, the state's compassion did not extend to those whom the state considered guilty or hostile. Likewise, the Minister of Internal Affairs at the time, Nahit Menteşe, categorically denied the likelihood of any official involvement in killings through an emphasis on compassion in the state's attitude towards its citizens:¹¹³ 'Devlet cinayet işlemez. Devlet masum vatandaşını korumak ister.'¹¹⁴ Therefore, the word *şefkat* served to credit the state with positive attributes and to pre-empt any accusations to be directed at the government and military officials.

Milliyet buttressed the official portrayal of the killings as collateral damage in two ways. First, the newspaper used a single term, '*faili meçhul*', to report unsolved murders, thereby streamlining all cases into one broader category. This indiscriminate use of the term obscured the extrajudicial aspect of killings and mystified them as the deeds of invisible hands as in the news report entitled 'Güneydoğu'da cinayetler' ('Murders in the Southeast').¹¹⁵ Second, *Milliyet* treated the phenomenon as banal and turned '*faili meçhul*' into a hackneyed phrase in the given period by using it to emphasise the anonymity of the agent in a situation. Some examples included the titles of the news reports 'faili meçhul bir dayak' ('an unsolved beating'),¹¹⁶ 'borsada "faili

¹¹² "“PKK'ya sert, vatandaşa şefkatli davranacağız” (“We will be harsh against the PKK and compassionate toward citizens”), *Milliyet*, 4 March 1992.

¹¹³ "“Cinayetler, hesaplaşma” (“Murders are acts of retaliation”), *Milliyet*, 7 June 1994.

¹¹⁴ 'The state does not commit murders. The state wishes to protect its innocent people.'

¹¹⁵ 'Güneydoğu'da cinayetler' ('Murders in the southeast'), *Milliyet*, 23 September 1992.

¹¹⁶ 'Faili meçhul bir dayak' ('An unsolved beating'), *Milliyet*, 25 May 1995.

meçhul” (“unsolved” in the stock exchange’),¹¹⁷ ‘faili meçhul hayvan cinayeti’ (‘unsolved animal murder’).¹¹⁸ The appearance of the term outside its usual contexts of use thus contributed to the de-politicisation and de-historicisation of civilian deaths.

Milliyet’s alignment with the state also manifested itself in the presentation of the killings as a testament to an uncontrollable situation and the justification of security-oriented measures in the region. In doing so, locals were portrayed as seeking help from the state against the PKK and Hezbollah in line with the use of the word *şefkat*. For example, in the news report entitled ‘Batmanlı huzursuz’ (‘Batman’s people are ill-at-ease’), the lead-in text read as follows:¹¹⁹ ‘Halk, faili meçhul cinayetlerden o kadar bıkmış, o kadar korkmuş ki, devletin bu işi bıraktığı kanısı yaygınlaşmış. [...] PKK’lıdan da bıkmış, Hizbullahçıdan da. Güvenlik istiyor.’¹²⁰ Therefore, *Milliyet*’s depiction of the killings did not challenge the government’s transferral of blame onto other organisations. On the contrary, *Milliyet* tacitly affirmed the government’s argument through the implied support and demand of the locals for protection.

The newspaper’s alliance with the state also revealed itself in the acknowledgement of the official information as expert knowledge. For example, the news report entitled ‘Faili meçhul cinayet’ (‘Unsolved murder’) included a photograph showing the dead bodies of a married couple, found in an open space and identified by their own children.¹²¹ The report did not provide any detailed background information regarding the identity of the murdered, but concluded with the quote from the unnamed experts that the PKK executed the murder.¹²² In other words, *Milliyet* adopted a strategy of silence in the form of withholding relevant information that might weaken the state’s position. Akin to its reporting of the military operations, the newspaper neither questioned the lack of document-based evidence to corroborate the agency of illegal organisations nor incorporated alternative opinions on the topic. The reference

¹¹⁷ ‘Borsada “faili meçhul” (“Unsolved” in the stock exchange’), *Milliyet*, 17 June 1995.

¹¹⁸ ‘Faili meçhul hayvan cinayeti’ (‘Unsolved animal murder’), *Milliyet*, 24 April 1995.

¹¹⁹ ‘Batmanlı huzursuz’ (‘Batman’s people are ill-at-ease’), *Milliyet*, 18 February 1993.

¹²⁰ ‘People are so tired of and frightened by unsolved murders that they are convinced that the state has already given up on them. [...] They are fed up with both the PKK and Hezbollah. They ask for security.’

¹²¹ ‘Faili meçhul cinayet’ (‘Unsolved murder’), *Milliyet*, 28 December 1993.

¹²² ‘Counter-terrorism experts said that “this killing is the execution of PKK.”’

to expert knowledge served to forestall any doubts about the credibility of the news report and sustain the government's depiction of the killings as the work of the enemy. A similar pattern is also observed in *Milliyet*'s presentation of the official discourse on the hunger strikes in 1996 and 2000, as will be shown below.

3.2.3. Hunger Strikes and the 'Return to Life' Operation

In early May 1996, the coalition government in power proposed to introduce a new prison system, replacing the ward system in prisons based on dormitories with the newly built high-security closed cells.¹²³ These cells, officially called 'F-type prisons', were intended for prisoners arrested for acts of terrorism and membership of illegal armed organisations such as the PKK.¹²⁴ Prisoners commenced hunger strikes on 16 May 1996 to protest the government's plan, based on their conviction that they would be less safe and more vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment in these new individual cells.¹²⁵ Following that, on 3 July 1996, 1518 prisoners declared that they had changed their hunger strikes into death fasts.¹²⁶ One week later, the new Minister of Justice Şevket Kazan cancelled the circulars issued by his predecessor Mehmet Ağar on 10 July 1996. However, the prisoners continued their death fasts, claiming that the government did not assure the removal of the F-type plan. A group of intellectuals, including the novelists Yaşar Kemal and Orhan Pamuk, stepped in to mediate between the prisoners and the Ministry of Justice, and an agreement was finally reached on the 69th day of the hunger strikes on 27 July 1996.

Four years later, the same proposal to introduce F-type prisons returned to the political agenda in October 2000 when another coalition government was in power. Prisoners objected to the proposal once again as they perceived it as an imposition of

¹²³ Penny Green, 'Turkish Jails, Hunger Strikes and the European Drive for Prison Reform', *Punishment & Society*, 4.1 (2002), 97–101 (pp. 98–99).

¹²⁴ Gürçan Koçan and Ahmet Öncü, 'From the Morality of Living to the Morality of Dying: Hunger Strikes in Turkish Prisons', *Citizenship Studies*, 10.3 (2006), 349–372 (p. 350).

¹²⁵ Green, p. 98.

¹²⁶ In the Turkish context, hunger strike is differentiated from death fast in that the former involves the ingestion of some water or other liquids, salt, sugar, and vitamin B1 for a certain time without asserting intent to fast to death. However, a person on a death fast asserts that the fasting will continue to death unless their demands are met. (See Oğuz and Miles 2005, p. 169).

solitary confinement (*tecrit*).¹²⁷ Hunger strikes were initiated in prisons on 20 October 2000 by radical left organisations, such as the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front and the Communist Party of Turkey.¹²⁸ This time, prisoners' demands included the renunciation of the plan to introduce F-type prisons, the removal of the State Security Courts, and medical treatment of those who had become disabled in the previous death fasts as well as the suspension of their penalty and their placement under house arrest.¹²⁹ The government initially repudiated the idea to negotiate with prisoners and labelled the hunger strikes as illegitimate.

Nevertheless, it later gave assurances that the transfers to F-type prisons would be postponed for another six months at least until a social accord was reached. However, only one day after this word of reassurance, the security forces carried out simultaneous raids on twenty prisons on 19 December 2000 to end the hunger strikes. The operations, which were officially named as the 'Return to Life Operation' (*'Hayata Dönüş Operasyonu'*), resulted in the deaths of thirty prisoners and two security officers. Subsequently, the prisoners who had been on death fasts and in a critical condition were sent to the hospitals, whereas others were transferred to the newly built F-type prisons.

These two episodes of hunger strikes, albeit interrelated, differed from one another in two respects. First, the conflict was not a priority on the agenda during the hunger strikes in 2000 as it was in 1996, since the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire after the capture of its leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. Second, unlike those in 1996 which lasted only about two months, the hunger strikes that started in 2000 lasted over six years. Therefore, following the 'Return to Life' Operation, the government managed

¹²⁷ It should be noted here, though, that F-type cell system is distinct from solitary confinement where prisoner is isolated from any human contact, except for members of prison staff, for 22-24 hours a day (See *Solitary Watch FAQ*, <<http://solitarywatch.com/facts/faq/>> [accessed 20 February 2017]. However, F-type cells were created to house a prisoner in an individual cell alone or with two other inmates, and prisoners were permitted to socialize for up to 5 hours a week. Following a legal amendment in January 2007, prisoners are now allowed to socialize with other inmates for up to 10 hours a week and spend time outside their cells, ranging from 6 to 20 hours per month. See Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Turkey: Prison conditions and the treatment of prisoners in civilian and F-type prisons, including the prevalence of torture and the state response to it* (2006-2007), 7 June 2007, <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/47d6547e23.html>> [accessed 20 February 2017].

¹²⁸ Koçan and Öncü, p. 350.

¹²⁹ 'Mahkumlardan dört talep' ('Prisoners have four demands'), *Milliyet*, 7 December 2000, p. 23.

to introduce the new system, but failed to end the hunger strikes. Some prisoners continued their hunger strikes in their cells, whereas some others who had been released on health grounds continued to do so outside. They thus aimed to pressurise the government to ease the living conditions in F-type cells. Consequently, this second episode of hunger strikes claimed at least 120 lives in total, thus proving the longest and deadliest one in the history of the country.¹³⁰

Although different coalition governments were in power during the hunger strikes in 1996 and 2000, the government officials emphasised the lack of individual freedom and safety in the prisons in both cases. For instance, following the first reported death in 1996, *Milliyet* highlighted the then Minister of Health Yıldırım Aktuna's remark that the hunger-striking prisoner in critical condition died, since the terrorist organisations did not allow the paramedics to enter the jails.¹³¹ Aktuna also stressed that these hunger strikers were impressionable victims of illegal organisations which commanded them to begin hunger strikes in the first place. Likewise, in 2000, the then Minister of Internal Affairs Sadettin Tanttan contended that the hunger strikes were guided from abroad, and terrorist organisations, active in the prisons, forced new members to go on a death fast.¹³² Crucially, *Milliyet* neither challenged Aktuna's monopolisation of 'truth' nor compromised the credibility of Tanttan's claim by including the hunger strikers' perspectives. Further, the newspaper did not provide any corroborating evidence to support these official views.

As seen in the reporting of the military operations and unsolved murders, *Milliyet's* coverage of the hunger strikes largely rested on prioritising official voices and presenting the government representatives' evaluations as conclusive. In line with the official portrayal of hunger striking prisoners as being brainwashed by terrorist organisations, *Milliyet* also depicted the hunger strikes in 1996 as the actions of a

¹³⁰ Koçan and Öncü, p. 350.

¹³¹ 'Aktuna: Hastaneye götürülseydi ölmezdi' ('Aktuna: He would not have died had he been taken to hospital'), *Milliyet*, 23 July 1996, p. 14.

¹³² 'Örgütler tahliyesi yakın olanı ölüm orucuna zorluyor' ('The organisations force those, who will be released, to go on death fasts'), *Milliyet*, 13 December 2000, p. 1.

homogeneous group that was prone to violence and uncompromising. The news report entitled ‘Cezaevinde isyan giriřimi’ (‘Attempt of rebellion in prison’) mentioned the prisoners without making any differentiation between their points of view or the organisations with which they were affiliated.¹³³ Accordingly, the inmates affiliated with the PKK set fire to the mattresses and blankets to prevent the prison medical staff from entering their blocks and transferring the hunger striking prisoners in critical condition to the prison infirmary.

Likewise, another example entitled ‘Cezaevlerinde açlık grevleri yayılıyor’ (‘Hunger strikes spread in prisons’) emphasised that the prisoners by no means agreed to be checked by doctors.¹³⁴ In reporting the hunger strikes of 2000, *Milliyet* gradually accentuated the chaos in the prisons and the need for the state to intervene in the situation. For instance, the news report entitled ‘Cezaevi değil, derebeylik’ stressed that some wards could not be entered for the last seven years, and depicted the Bayrampařa Prison as a rebel zone under the complete control of prisoners.¹³⁵ Lumping them all together in a unitary group, *Milliyet* perpetuated the impression that the state was grappling with an uncontrollable and destructive group to restore peace and order in the prisons.

Milliyet also reinforced the official promotion of the F-type prisons by incorporating the voices that affirmed the government’s position and criticised the hunger striking prisoners. For instance, the news report entitled ‘Cem Özdemir: F tipi doğru’ (‘Cem Özdemir: ‘F-type system is advisable’’) highlighted the remark of Cem Özdemir, a member of the Home Affairs Committee in the Parliament of Germany at the time, that the ward system represented a human rights violation.¹³⁶ In another example, the newspaper quoted the statement of Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz, the then President of Religious Affairs, that a death fast was forbidden in Islam as suicide and

¹³³ ‘Cezaevinde İsyân Giriřimi’ (‘Attempt of rebellion in prison’), *Milliyet*, 30 May 1996, p. 3.

¹³⁴ ‘Cezaevlerinde açlık grevleri yayılıyor’ (‘Hunger strikes spread in prisons’), *Milliyet*, 14 June 1996, p. 14.

¹³⁵ ‘Cezaevi değil, derebeylik!’ (‘A feudal system in prisons!’), *Milliyet*, 19 December 2000, p. 19.

¹³⁶ ‘Cem Özdemir: “F tipi doğru”’ (‘Cem Özdemir: “F-type system is advisable”’), *Milliyet*, 16 December 2000, p. 22.

self-immolation.¹³⁷ Drawing on Islamic values, Yılmaz asked the prisoners to end their death fasts and their families to persuade them to do so. Foregrounding a religious official's moral evaluation of the hunger strikes as sinful, the newspaper shifted the attention away from discussing the prisoners' demands into problematizing the form of their protests.

Relatedly, *Milliyet* emphasised the deadly implications of the hunger strikes rather than the reasons for these actions. For instance, the news report entitled 'Bu oruç öldürecek' ('This fasting will kill') drew attention to the fact that over two hundred prisoners on death fasts were about to reach a critical limit.¹³⁸ Likewise, another news report entitled 'Azrail'den önce Korsakoff' ('Korsakoff before Azrael') highlighted the irreversible damage of the death fasts on the body of these prisoners, outlining that they would first lose their ability to see and walk, and then their memory because of the Wernicke Korsakoff syndrome.¹³⁹ This emphasis on the deleterious effects of the hunger strikes downplayed the underlying cause of the hunger strikes and replicated the official perception of the hunger strikers as prone to self-harm and infliction of violence.

In line with the negative presentation of the hunger strikes in the official discourse, the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs framed the military raid on 19 December 2000 as a benevolent act to save the victims of illegal organisations. For instance, the then Minister of Justice, Hikmet Sami Türk, stressed the urgency of the intervention and described the state's action as 'one of compassion' ('devletin şefkat operasyonu').¹⁴⁰ Türk contended that the state carried out its responsibility and added the following: 'Devlet insanların ölümüne sevk edilmesine seyirci kalmaz.'¹⁴¹ Likewise, the newspaper declared the military's armed intervention as the state's victory in its

¹³⁷ "'Ölüm orucu günah'" ("Death fast is a sin"), *Milliyet*, 16 December 2000, p. 22.

¹³⁸ 'Bu oruç öldürecek' ('This fasting will kill'), *Milliyet*, 8 December 2000, p. 24.

¹³⁹ 'Azrail'den önce Korsakoff' ('Korsakoff before Azrael'), *Milliyet*, 19 December 2000, p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ 'Müdahale etmek artık kaçınılmazdı' ('The intervention was necessary'), *Milliyet*, 20 December 2000, p. 19.

¹⁴¹ 'The state cannot stand on the sidelines while people are being forced to die.'

headlines ‘9 yıllık efsane bitti’ (‘The nine-year legend has ended’). Two soldiers who were killed during the operations were described as ‘martyrs’ in line with the official discourse. *Milliyet* also promoted the rightfulness of the operation by foregrounding the statements of support for the government’s decision from non-governmental bodies and professional organisations. The news report entitled ‘Baro’dan operasyona destek’ (‘The Union of Turkish Bar Associations supports the operation’) can be mentioned here to illustrate this point:¹⁴²

‘Bugüne kadar cezaevleri operasyonlarında devletin tutumuna karşı ihtiyatlı bir tavır sergileyen Türkiye Barolar Birliği (TBB), devletin mahkumların yaşam haklarını korumak amacıyla son çare olarak düzenlediği ‘Hayata Dönüş Operasyonu’na destek verdi.’¹⁴³

The official presentation of the ‘Return to Life’ Operation as a last resort for the state was thus impressed on the reader by means of highlighting the independent union’s support for the intervention. Likewise, the editorial penned by Güneri Cívaoğlu also rationalised the raids in its title ‘Zorunluydu’ (‘It was necessary’).¹⁴⁴ The newspaper also highlighted the restoration of order in the aftermath of the operations as in the following report: ‘Ölüm oruçlarının bitirilmesi amacıyla düzenlenen operasyonla eş zamanlı açılan F tipi cezaevlerinde ilk geceye sessizlik hakim oldu.’¹⁴⁵ The sentences such as ‘hiç kimse şikayet etmedi’ (‘no one made any complaints’) and ‘mışıl mışıl uyudular’ (‘they slept peacefully’) established the transfer to the F-type prisons as a success story for the state and surrender for prisoners.¹⁴⁶ Consequently, the decision for the armed action was portrayed as an act that affirmed life and granted freedom.

¹⁴² ‘Baro’dan operasyona destek’ (‘The Union of Turkish Bar Associations supports the operation’), *Milliyet*, 22 December 2000, p. 17.

¹⁴³ ‘The Union of Turkish Bar Associations (TBB), which adopted a cautious attitude towards the state’s handling of previous operations in prisons, backs the ‘Return to Life Operation’ that the state organises as the last resort to protect the prisoners’ right to life.’

¹⁴⁴ Güneri Cívaoğlu, ‘Zorunluydu’ (‘It was necessary’), *Milliyet*, 20 December 2000, p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Silence prevailed on the first night in the F-type prisons which were opened simultaneously with the operation organised to end the death fasts.’

¹⁴⁶ ‘F tipinde ilk gece: Mışıl mışıl uyudular’ (‘First night at F-type prisons: they [inmates] slept peacefully’), *Milliyet*, 21 December 2000, p. 18.

On the day of the raids, *Milliyet* declared the hunger strikes as a sham and hunger strikers as fraudulent, with its headline ‘Sahte Oruç, Kanlı İftar’ (‘Fake Fast, Bloody İftar’).¹⁴⁷ The newspaper rested its claim on the statements of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Tantan, which it presented as ‘telling the truth’: ‘Tantan *Milliyet*’e açıkladı: “Ölüm orucu yapıyoruz diye kandırdılar. Hastaneye kaldırılanların çoğu sağlam çıktı.”¹⁴⁸ Likewise, the then Minister of Health, Osman Durmuş, dismissed any life threats involved in the prisoners’ condition as irrelevant, since there were no death fasts. Further, *Milliyet* claimed that the leaders of illegal organisations commanded hunger striking prisoners on the phone to immolate themselves and 18 prisoners were thus burnt to death. The news reports on the day of the operations indicated that prisoners opened fire with Kalashnikovs from the Bayrampaşa prison, and hand grenades were found in cells.

Relatedly, *Milliyet* distorted the words of Birsen Kars whose face was burnt in the raid, ‘Bizi yaktılar’ (‘They burnt us’), to mean that the hunger strikers burnt their own friends.¹⁴⁹ On the following day, the newspaper referred again to Kars’s quote to further vilify the hunger striking prisoners in a news report entitled ‘Tek Duyguları Ölmek, Öldürmek’ (‘All they care about is to die and kill’).¹⁵⁰ Although Kars did not specify who burned them, *Milliyet* placed the blame on her inmates. *Radikal*, one of the few alternative print media outlets at the time, published the details of the forensic report based on the investigation in the Bayrampaşa Prison between 22 December 2000 and 19 January 2001. Accordingly, the chemicals and firebombs were used in the raids, and no fires were shot from inside the cells.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ ‘Sahte Oruç, Kanlı İftar’ (‘Fake Fast, Bloody İftar’), *Milliyet*, 20 December 2000, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Tantan explained to *Milliyet*: They deceived us when they said that they were on death fasts. Most of those taken to hospital turned out to be in good health.’

¹⁴⁹ ‘Arkadaşlarını suçladı: bizi yaktılar’ (‘She blamed her friends: they burnt us’), *Milliyet*, 21 December 2000, p. 19.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Tek Duyguları Ölmek, Öldürmek’ (‘All they want is to die and kill’), *Milliyet*, 22 December 2000, p. 20.

¹⁵¹ Ahmet Şık, ‘Gerçeğe dönüş’ (‘Return to Truth’), *Radikal*, 2 July 2001.

Ten years after the operations, the Bayrampaşa Prison Trial, also referred to as the ‘Return to Life’ Trial, was opened in November 2010 to prosecute 39 soldiers for killing twelve prisoners and attempting to kill twenty-nine others.¹⁵² Türk, who was the Minister of Justice during the operations, reacted to the accusations, stating that it was the state’s decision to carry out the operations, taken in the National Security Council’s meeting, and they [he and soldiers] only did their duty.¹⁵³ Crucially, Türk’s disclosure that the National Security Council took the decision for the operation implied the government’s subservience to the orders of the Turkish Armed Forces. In other words, this testified to the continuing prevalence in 2000 of the military’s dominance over civilian governments as in the 1990s.

The trial process resulted in the disclosure of a great deal of information that had been unknown until then. One revelation was a report dated 25-30 September 2000 and signed by Colonel Ali Aydın and Commander Cemal Vural.¹⁵⁴ The report, which the Gendarmerie General Command sent to the court, incorporated the results of Aydın’s and Vural’s inspections in the prisons of various provinces. It also included recommendations in a section entitled ‘what needs to be done’ and suggested that attention should be focused on psychological warfare to influence public opinion via non-governmental organisations and media.¹⁵⁵ The disclosure of this report showed that the plans for an armed intervention had started even before the hunger strikes began. It also corroborated that the military requested the media to promote the operations as rightful as it did for the armed struggle against the PKK. Based on the exclusion of the perspectives of those labelled as an enemy as in the TAF’s war on terror, the official and media discourse framed the hunger strikes as the conflict between the benevolent government officials and evil terrorists.

¹⁵² “‘Hayata dönüş’ davası başladı” (‘Return to Life’ Trial begins’), *Habertürk Daily*, 23 November 2010.

¹⁵³ ‘Türk: Operasyon devletin kararıydı’ (‘Türk: It was the state’s decision to carry out the operations’), *Radikal Daily*, 25 November 2010.

¹⁵⁴ Ayça Söylemez, “‘Hayata Dönüş’ün Gerçek Planı: Medyada Psikolojik Harekat” (‘The Real Plan Behind the “Return to Life”: The Psychological Warfare in the Media’), 9 July 2014 <<https://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/157069-hayata-donus-un-gercek-plani-medyada-psikolojik-harekat>> [accessed 25 December 2015].

¹⁵⁵ Söylemez, *ibid.*.

Conclusion

The discussion of the state-media relations in Turkey has demonstrated that the mainstream press historically remained loyal to the secularist Kemalist ideology and adopted a nationalistic discourse on the Kurdish question. In parallel, the scholarship has suggested that it served as the mouthpiece of the military and promoted a hard-line stance on the conflict in the 1990s. Despite carrying out democratisation reforms in its first term, the AKP also followed an ambivalent approach to the Kurdish question for fear of losing nationalist support, since the clashes continued to exist during the Kurdish initiative. On the one hand, the government urged journalists to cultivate the need for peace and reconciliation in support of the Kurdish opening. On the other hand, Erdoğan curbed the freedom of journalists to report the conflict and question the government's policies on the Kurdish question. As it happened in the case of its support for political cinema, the AKP hence encouraged the media to investigate the state's wrongdoings in the 1990s, but showed no tolerance for criticism on its own policies in the media. Therefore, the security-oriented discourse on the conflict in the 1990s was not replaced by an official discourse that prioritised the rights and liberties of citizens and highlighted the freedom of thought and expression. Consequently, both continuity and change arguably marked the relationship between the official and mainstream media discourse in the 1990s and 2000s in terms of their approach to the Kurdish question.

The analysis of the official discourse on the conflict in the 1990s, drawing on the selected texts from *Milliyet*, has corroborated the scholarship on the mainstream print media's reliance on the military as the sole source of information during the peak years of the conflict. The textual analysis has shown that the news reports were intertextual in terms of incorporating external voices, in Fairclough's terms. However, the exclusive use of the government representatives' and military officials' views as the accessed voices resulted in the lack of dialogised language in *Milliyet*'s reporting of the conflict and related phenomena. The voices of the enemy or any dissenters such as hunger striking prisoners were silenced as they were stigmatised as terrorists and a

threat to the unitary state. Therefore, the newspaper replicated the military's discourse and left no room for ambiguity and ambivalence in asserting the rightfulness of the war on terror by omitting alternative perspectives and assuming consensus among the public. In acting as an instrument of propaganda for the military, *Milliyet* justified the security-oriented official policy, promoted the nationalistic sentiment and backgrounded the consequences of the conflict, such as human loss and environmental damage.

These findings will enable the following three chapters to identify the points of contestation and convergence between the films and the official discourse in representing the conflict and related phenomena. In other words, this chapter will serve as the basis for defining the extent to which the filmic re-presentations offer alternatives to the official version of the conflict promoted in the mainstream media. Crucially, the language policy in Turkey also constitutes an underlying force of this official discourse on the conflict, since the language ban and denial of minority language rights contributed to the emergence of the conflict. Given this linguistic dimension of the conflict, an inquiry into the uses of multilingualism represents a lens through which to identify the interplay between the films and the official discourse on the conflict. Therefore, the following chapter will investigate the role of depicting multilingualism in each film's engagement with the official language policy.

CHAPTER 4

Depictions of Multilingualism in the Films on the Conflict

The previous chapter analysed the official presentation of the conflict in the 1990s and 2000s by focusing on the military and state officials' statements on the different aspects of the Kurdish conflict. In doing so, *Milliyet* was selected as being representative of the secularist and pro-military Turkish press in the given period and used as the medium for locating these statements. The analysis showed that the mainstream media's discourse was aligned with the official discourse in promoting the rightfulness of the war and assuming unanimous public support for the military. Both were marked by the absence of any perspectives discordant with the depiction of the conflict in these discourses. These findings will constitute a reference point for this chapter to examine the role of multilingualism in informing each film's engagement with the official discourse on the conflict. This chapter aims to identify how the portrayals of multilingualism contribute to the presentation of alternative interpretations of the conflict in the films, thereby answering the second subsidiary research question set out in the Introduction. In doing so, the chapter will elucidate the intertwined relationship between the language policy and the official discourse on the conflict.

In differentiating between the uses of multilingualism in the selected films, the chapter will draw on Meir Sternberg's two 'poles' of linguistic representation, 'homogenisation' and 'vehicular matching,' which will be elaborated below.¹ Relatedly, Chris Wahl's distinction between genuine polyglot films and those which incorporate multilingualism without any contribution to character or plot development will serve a reference point in discussing the differences in the functions of multilingualism in each film.² The analysis will explore what symbolic values are

¹ Meir Sternberg, 'Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis', *Poetics Today*, 2.4 (1981), 221–239 (pp. 223–224).

² Chris Wahl, 'Discovering a Genre: The Polyglot Film', *Cinemascope 1 – Independent Film Journal*, 2005. <http://www.madadayo.it/Cinemascope_archive/cinema-scope.net/articolo07_n1.html> [accessed 15 July 2013].

assigned to particular languages through the temporal and spatial contexts of use and how the characters speaking these languages are depicted in the story. This will facilitate the identification of any tacit connection between being multilingual and being oppressed and/or exposed to physical violence. Consequently, the chapter will demonstrate how the conflict finds expression on the linguistic level and how each film's use of multilingualism serves as a tool for revisiting the glorification of the war, the heroification of soldiers and vilification of the enemy in the official presentation of the conflict.

In analysing the multilingual representation, all the languages heard in the films will be distinguished from one another due to their varying degrees of relevance to the context of the film. Turkish emerges as the single common language spoken across all of them. It is followed by the Kurdish language present in seven out of eight films except for *Autumn*. Kurdish is spoken by Kurds, the second largest ethnic group in Turkey which composes approximately 15-18% of the total population.³ Kurds constitute significant proportions of the populations of almost all regions, but a large majority of them are still in the eastern provinces.⁴ Additionally, Hamshen, German and English languages appear in two films, whereas Armenian, Georgian and Arabic are each heard only in one. Hamshen is a Western Armenian dialect spoken in the eastern Black Sea region of Turkey. A great majority of the Arabic population (97%), the third largest language/ethnic group in Turkey, lives in the southern and eastern parts of the country.⁵ All these languages will be categorised into three groups: majority language, minority languages and foreign languages. The majority language refers to the official language, which is 'guaranteed to be more widely spoken, more useful in the job market, more prestigious, and more acceptable for communication with the outside world.'⁶ Accordingly, Turkish, which holds the status of the sole

³ İsmet Koç, Attila Hancıoğlu and Alanur Cavlin, 'Demographic Differentials and Demographic Integration of Turkish and Kurdish Populations in Turkey', *Population Research and Policy Review*, 27.4 (2008), 447-457 (p. 456).

⁴ Ibid., p. 456.

⁵ Mehmet Ali Eryurt and İsmet Koç, 'Demography of Ethnicity in Turkey', in *The International Handbook of the Demography and Race and Ethnicity*, ed. by Rogelio Sáenz, David G. Embrick and Néstor P. Rodríguez (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015), pp. 483-502 (p. 489).

⁶ Penelope Gardner-Chloros, 'Multilingualism of Autochthonous Minorities', in *Handbook of Multilingualism and Multilingual Communication*, ed. by Peter Auer and Li Wei (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), pp. 469-492 (p. 469).

official language in Turkey, emerges as the majority language in the context where all the films take place.

As the second category, minority languages will be used here to refer to languages of autochthonous groups characterised as ‘traditional, territorially linked, and long-standing.’⁷ These autochthonous groups can be differentiated from other minority groups based on a ‘new’ versus ‘old’ minority distinction, which particularly prevails in the discourse regarding minority languages in Europe.⁸ For instance, to underline this distinction, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages uses the term ‘allochthonous’ which ‘means “not found in the place where it originated”, “originating from another place”, “non-aboriginal” or foreign.’⁹ Accordingly, the allochthonous (or ‘new’) minorities consist of ‘migrant workers or asylum seekers who recently (i.e. in most cases in the second half of the 20th century or later) settled in a European state.’¹⁰ In contrast, the autochthonous (or ‘old’) minorities consist of ‘communities that have lived in their respective territories for centuries.’¹¹ The Turks in Belgium or Germany can be given as examples of the former group, whereas the Welsh in the UK or Hungarians in Slovakia belong to the latter group.¹²

Robert Phillipson and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, two proponents of the theoretical foundations of linguistic human rights (LHR), argue that linguistic rights are a type of human right and that depriving people of their human rights leads to conflict.¹³ The causal relationship that is noted between linguistic rights and conflict makes LHR relevant for this analysis which investigates the filmic treatments of the tension

⁷ Ibid., p. 471.

⁸ Peter Auer and Li Wei, ‘Introduction: Multilingualism as a Problem? Monolingualism as a Problem?’, in *Handbook of Multilingualism and Multilingual Communication*, ed. by Peter Auer and Li Wei (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), pp. 1-12 (p. 10).

⁹ Anikó Hatoss, *Displacement, Language Maintenance and Identity: Sudanese Refugees in Australia* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013), p. 6.

¹⁰ Jeroen Darquennes, ‘Minorities, Language Politics and Language Planning in Europe’, in *The Languages and Linguistics of Europe: A Comprehensive Guide*, ed. by Bernd Kortmann and Johan van der Auwera (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), pp. 547-560 (p. 548).

¹¹ Ibid., p. 548.

¹² Ibid., p. 548.

¹³ Robert Phillipson and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, ‘Linguistic Rights and Wrongs’, *Applied Linguistics*, 16.4 (1995), 483-504 (p. 483).

between the official ideology and multilingual components of society in Turkey. From the perspective of LHR, which combine language rights with human rights, the definition of ‘autochthonous’ minorities is not limited to those commonly labelled ‘indigenous.’¹⁴ It also includes those who have lived in an area for a long time and are largely regarded as the dominated group.¹⁵ Accordingly, an autochthonous minority is marked by ‘a difference in terms of its linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, and the inequality concerning its social status and its position vis-à-vis the dominant majority.’¹⁶ Therefore, this LHR framework highlights the asymmetrical relationship between an autochthonous minority and the majority group as being ‘reflected in the lower prestige, the lower status and the less developed legitimisation and institutionalisation of the minority language vis-à-vis the majority language.’¹⁷ In this respect, the LHR proponents arguably adopt a more encompassing approach, since they are likely to treat as ‘autochthonous’ certain communities described as ‘allochthonous’ by the Charter. Nevertheless, both approaches consider a long-standing history as the defining criterion for a language to be regarded as ‘autochthonous’ in a territory.

Based on this commonality, Kurdish, Hamshen, and Armenian languages are included in the category of minority languages. However, there is a caveat related to the use of the term ‘minority’ in the Turkish context. The founding Treaty of Lausanne, signed between the Turkish Republic and the Allied States in 1923, forms a reference point as to the official recognition of minorities in Turkey.¹⁸ Accordingly, Kurdish, Laz, Circassian, Hamshen communities among many others were denied the minority status and accompanying rights, since they were Muslim. Hence, not all languages listed here under ‘minority languages’ are officially recognised as such in Turkey. However, the focus on their autochthonous character helps to categorise together the

¹⁴ Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, ‘Language Policy and Linguistic Human Rights’, in *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*, ed. by Thomas Ricento (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), pp. 273-291 (p. 273).

¹⁵ François Grin, ‘Combining Immigrant and Autochthonous Language Rights: A Territorial Approach to Multilingualism’, in *Linguistic Human Rights: Overcoming Linguistic Discrimination*, ed. by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Phillipson (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), pp. 31-48 (p. 33).

¹⁶ Darquennes, p. 548.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 548.

¹⁸ See 1.1. ‘The Origins of Turkey’s Kurdish Conflict’, pp. 52-53.

languages of Muslim and non-Muslim communities relegated to a subordinate position after the end of the Ottoman Empire.

As for the third category, foreign languages refer to languages that are historically and geographically external to the context of Turkey. They are similar to allochthonous ones in that they are not found in the place where they originated. In other words, they appear out of their ordinary contexts of use. However, this group of languages is not spoken by a community of (im)migrants in the films who have settled and are likely to have a continual presence in Turkey. Therefore, they are neither autochthonous nor allochthonous. Thus, language policy does not bear any particular relevance to the uses of these languages in public and private domains in the absence of an asymmetrical relationship with the majority language. English, German and Georgian will be included in this group to highlight their outsider status in the Turkish context.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides an insight into the monolingualist tenets of the official language policy in Turkey. The second section outlines the characteristics and functions of multilingual cinema, being followed by a brief history of multilingual representation in Turkish cinema to identify the implications of the language policy on film production. The fourth section will discuss the uses of multilingualism in the research films, with a focus on the depiction of the contexts of use and characterisation of speakers of the languages in each category. Any references to the language policy will be pinpointed to establish a film's perspective on its monolingualist tenets and hence, the film's engagement with the official discourse on the conflict.

4.1. The Official Language Policy in Turkey

Turkey can be described as a country characterised by the tension between its multilingual population and the monolingual(ist) ideology inherent in its language policy. The early years of the Republic merit special attention, since they informed the

official standpoint on the treatment of the minority languages until the 1990s.¹⁹ The Ottoman Empire accommodated the cultural and linguistic diversity of peoples through a system of *milletler* ('nations') by allowing subordinate ethnic groups 'to retain a good deal of their ethnic identity, including native religious and linguistic practices.'²⁰ Therefore, a multilingual landscape was inherited in view of the miscellaneous communities speaking a language other than Turkish such as Kurds, Armenians, Jews, Circassians, Laz and Hamshen people among others in the populace.

The Turkish nation-building project rested on a vision of linguistic homogenisation and, to this end, focused on establishing Turkish as the common national language through the processes of legitimation and institutionalisation. Accordingly, legitimation addresses 'the formal recognition accorded to the language by the nation-state — usually, via "official" language status.'²¹ Institutionalisation, the more important one of the two according to Stephen May, signifies 'the process by which the language comes to be accepted, or "taken for granted," in a wide range of social, cultural, and linguistic domains or contexts.'²² In the Turkish case, the 1924 Constitution legitimated the status of Turkish by providing the legal basis for an understanding which equated the term citizenship with Turkishness.²³ The official status of the Turkish language was thus justified through the constitutional recognition of Turkishness as the sole binding force.

In terms of institutionalisation, Turkey experienced a language reform in the 1920s and 1930s, which may be referred to as an exemplary case of overt language planning. Ottoman Turkish was 'written in an Arabic orthography, and was influenced by both Arabic and Persian.'²⁴ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic,

¹⁹ Dicle Cemiloğlu, 'Language Policy and National Unity: The Dilemma of the Kurdish Language in Turkey', 2009 <<http://repository.upenn.edu/curej/97/>> [accessed 3 July 2015], 1-83 (p. 4).

²⁰ Nancy Dorian, 'Western Language Ideologies and Small-language Prospects', in *Endangered Languages: Language Loss and Community Response*, ed. by Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 3-21 (p. 5).

²¹ Stephen May, 'Language Policy and Minority Rights', in *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*, ed. by Thomas Ricento (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), pp. 255-272 (p. 261).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 261.

²³ Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), p. 11.

²⁴ Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 385.

adopted the Latin alphabet as a result of which books in the old characters could no longer be used in schools.²⁵ This dramatic change was intended ‘to unite Turkey with Europe in reality and materially.’²⁶ To further the reform, the Turkish Language Institute (*Türk Dil Kurumu*) was founded as a national language association in 1932 to ‘purify’ and standardise Turkish.²⁷ In parallel, the proponents of the reform, who highlighted speaking a common language as the most significant criterion to be considered as part of the new nation, developed the ‘Sun-Language Theory’ (*Güneş-Dil Teorisi*) to reinforce their argument.²⁸ Accordingly, ‘Turkish was the mother tongue of the world, and when Turkish borrowed from other languages, it was really taking back what had originally been Turkish anyway.’²⁹ Consequently, the language reform established and promoted the exalted status of Turkish during the nation-state formation process.

May underlines that the combined effect of legitimation and institutionalisation, which achieves cultural and linguistic homogeneity as required by the nation-state ideology, banishes ‘minority’ languages and dialects to the private domain.³⁰ This was arguably the outcome of the nation-state formation process in Turkey. For instance, Nergis Ertürk describes the language reform as ‘extreme self-surgery’, which fomented a deep internal fear of the linguistic other.³¹ Relatedly, the Republican vision of linguistic homogenisation influenced the official view of linguistic diversity as a challenge to its ‘one nation, one language tenet.’³² The state’s approach to tackling this challenge involved practices such as the denial of linguistic diversity and different forms of censorship. The recognition of Kurds not as a separate ethnic group but as

²⁵ Bernard Spolsky, *Language Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 30.

²⁶ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 82.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 82.

²⁸ Welat Zeydanlıoğlu, ‘Turkey’s Kurdish Language Policy’, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 217 (2012), 99-125 (p. 103).

²⁹ Wardhaugh, p. 385.

³⁰ May, p. 261.

³¹ Nergis Ertürk, *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2011), p. 88.

³² Mesut Yeğen, *Son Kürt İsyanı (The Last Kurdish Rebellion)* (İstanbul: İletişim Publishing, 2011), p. 123.

the ‘mountain Turks’ also provides a striking example for the denial, which will be elaborated on in the following chapter.³³

In terms of censorship, the state’s practices varied over time, but all incorporated the two elements that Adrian Blackledge underscores in outlining the monolingualist ideology: privileging one language over others and associating those less privileged with negative features.³⁴ For instance, a law was passed in 1959 ‘to rename villages, natural landmarks, and other places with non-Turkish names.’³⁵ As a result, the names of over 12,000 villages, which ‘amounted to every third village in Turkey’ had been changed and given new Turkish names by 2000.³⁶ All these examples show that the official attempts to achieve a linguistically homogeneous society did not remain limited to the early years of the Republic but continued until the early 2000s.

Additionally, in the countries where this monolingualist mindset prevails, institutional monolingualism may also be the rule. Accordingly, ‘one language regulates communication between authorities and citizens in education and public settings.’³⁷ Crucially, this policy of institutional monolingualism ‘presupposes a policy of non-translation often by means of an explicit legal interdiction to translate into the minority languages.’³⁸ This results in the institutionalisation of the majority language as opposed to minority languages that end up being not, or much less, institutionalised.³⁹ Reine Meylaerts stresses that ‘the monolingualism of the institutions (administration, legal affairs, education, army, political life, media, etc.) contradicts with [sic] the multilingualism of people living in that particular country.’⁴⁰ Therefore, the wide gap in the institutionalisation of languages spoken in a country

³³ F. Stephen Larrabee, ‘Turkey’s New Kurdish Opening’, *Survival*, 55.5 (2013), 133–146 (p. 134).

³⁴ Adrian Blackledge, *Discourse and Power in a Multilingual World* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing, 2005), p. 225.

³⁵ Nicholas Glastonbury, ‘Specters of Kurdish Nationalism: Governmentality and Counterinsurgent Translation in Turkey’, *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, 3.1 (2015), 46–69 (p. 52).

³⁶ Zeydanlıoğlu, p. 109.

³⁷ Reine Meylaerts, ‘Multilingualism as a Challenge for Translation Studies’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. by Carmen Millan-Varela and Francesca Bartrina (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 519–533 (p. 526).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 526.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 523.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 523.

suggests a hierarchical relationship between the statuses of these languages which perpetuates the unequal recognition of linguistic rights.

This was also the case in Turkey. For instance, the non-Turkish speaking minorities were denied the right to ask for an interpreter in court in the past, although those who did not speak Turkish were entitled to that service.⁴¹ In one particular case where Mehdi Zana, the former mayor of Diyarbakır, refused to speak Turkish and insisted addressing the court in Kurdish in 1989, the court considered this as the defendant's waiving his right to defend himself.⁴² The appointment of a translator was deemed as being in conflict with the official view of Kurdish as an unknown language, which will be further delineated in the following chapter on the depictions of interpreting in the films. Consequently, this example testifies that the representation of linguistic plurality in such contexts bears a tone of defiance against institutional monolingualism.

Although the monolingualist practices are largely attributed to the official authorities, it should be noted that they are not exclusive to these actors. Blackledge stresses that the official approach is 'reproduced in political, media and other public discourses.'⁴³ Following this point, cinema should also be marked as a medium through which the official language policy can be reproduced and sustained. Hollywood films and its Turkish equivalent, Yeşilçam cinema, which represented the mainstream film production in Turkey before the 1980s, provided leading examples in that regard, as will be shown below. The multiplicity of the means of inculcating the monolingualist mindset hints at the conclusion that multilingual cinema has the potential to run counter both to the official actors and the non-official agents such as those films promoting the vision of a linguistically homogeneous society. It is crucial to add the caveat, though, that realising this potential largely depends on how these languages and their speakers are represented in the films. The following section offers

⁴¹ Derya Bayır, *Minorities and Nationalism in Turkish Law* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), p. 250.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁴³ Blackledge, p. 225.

an insight into the potential of multilingual cinema against these agents of the monolingualist mindset.

4.2. Multilingual Cinema

Multilingualism can be characterised as being ‘worded in different languages.’⁴⁴ Although multilingualism has so far been used here in relation to the representation of linguistic diversity in the films, the term was limited to written texts before the expansion of the concept into art forms such as cinema.⁴⁵ Multiple terms are used to refer to the same phenomenon.⁴⁶ For instance, Chris Wahl utilises the term ‘polyglot’ instead of ‘multilingual’ by claiming that the former signifies the presence of more than one language and therefore includes bilingual films, whereas the latter requires the presence of three languages.⁴⁷ However, Rainier Grutman dismisses any differentiation between ‘bilingual’ and ‘multilingual’ or between ‘polyglot’ and ‘multilingual’ by defining multilingualism as ‘the co-presence of two or more languages (in a society, text or individual).’⁴⁸ Any distinction between ‘bilingual’ and ‘multilingual’ also bears little relevance within the scope of this research, since the number of languages varies from one film to another. For instance, only three out of the eight films (*Jin*, *Big Man*, *Little Love* and *On the Way to School*) are bilingual, while the rest incorporates more than two languages. Consequently, the chapter draws on Grutman’s definition of multilingualism, while referring to Wahl’s characterisation of polyglot films at the same time.

Meir Sternberg posits two ‘poles’ of linguistic representation: ‘homogenisation’ and ‘vehicular matching.’⁴⁹ In Sternberg’s terms, the homogenising convention

⁴⁴ Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman, ‘Fictional Representations of Multilingualism and Translation’, *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series—Themes in Translation Studies*, 4 (2005), 11-34 (p. 15).

⁴⁵ Juan José Martínez-Sierra, José Louis Martí-Ferriol, Irene de Higes-Andino, Ana M. Prats-Rodríguez and Frederic Chaume, ‘Linguistic Diversity in Spanish Immigration Films: A Translational Approach’, in *Polyglot Cinema: Migration and Transcultural Narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*, ed. by Verena Berger and Miya Komori (Berlin: LIT Verlag Münster, 2010), pp. 15-29 (p. 15).

⁴⁶ Additionally, terms such as plurilingualism, heterolingualism and polylingualism are encountered as synonyms for multilingualism.

⁴⁷ Wahl (2005).

⁴⁸ Rainier Grutman, ‘Multilingualism’, in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. by Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 182-185 (p. 182).

⁴⁹ Sternberg, pp. 223-224.

‘retains the freedom of reference while dismissing the resulting variations in the language presumably spoken by the characters as an irrelevant representational fact.’⁵⁰ In contrast, vehicular matching ‘suits the variations in the representational medium to the variations in the represented object.’⁵¹ Carol O’Sullivan also points out that vehicular matching ‘constitutes a necessary, if not sufficient, requirement for film to begin to embrace the plurality of natural languages.’⁵² In contrast with the homogenising convention which manifests itself in the unexceptional use of one language as a lingua franca on the screen, vehicular matching could then be explained by a ‘desire to correct past socio-linguistic insensitivities.’⁵³ This also results in the positioning of multilingual cinema on the pole of vehicular matching against one where all the characters speak more or less the same language despite noticeable ethnic and/or national differences.

The case of monolingual cinema based on the homogenising convention has largely been discussed with reference to Hollywood cinema. For instance, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam note that especially after World War II, everybody, from Madame Bovary to God, spoke in English in Hollywood films.⁵⁴ Hollywood’s policy was that ‘foreign characters would all speak in English with a thick accent, even to people of their own nationality.’⁵⁵ This unexceptional use of English by non-English characters in Hollywood films was interpreted as cultural colonisation by the West in general and of the film industry by Hollywood in particular. Drawing on the use of Tove-Skuttnabb Kangas’ term ‘linguicide’, Lukas Bleichenbacher discusses Hollywood films as examples of linguisticist representation due to the use of English as the lingua franca.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 224.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 223.

⁵² Carol O’Sullivan, ‘Multilingualism at the Multiplex: A New Audience for Screen Translation?’, *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series—Themes in Translation Studies*, 6 (2008), 81-95 (p. 83).

⁵³ Deborah Shaw, “‘You Are Alright, But...’: Individual and Collective Representations of Mexicans, Latinos, Anglo-Americans and Africans in Steven Soderbergh’s *Traffic*”, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 22.3 (2005), 211–223 (p. 215).

⁵⁴ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, ‘The Cinema After Babel: Language, Difference, Power’, *Screen*, 26.3-4 (1985), 35–58 (p. 36).

⁵⁵ John D. Sanderson, ‘The Other You. Translating the Hispanic for the Spanish Screen’, in *Polyglot Cinema: Migration and Transcultural Narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*, ed. by Verena Berger and Miya Komori (Berlin: LIT Verlag Münster, 2010), pp. 49-71 (p. 51).

Accordingly, a linguistic representation features ‘an absolute limitation [...] of non-English dialogue altogether, as well as a distorted representation of code-switching or similar phenomena of multilingual discourse.’⁵⁶

Considered against the backdrop of these mainstream modes of film production, multilingual cinema signifies a movement away from linguistic homogenisation characteristic of the post-war period.⁵⁷ Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman state that ‘multilingual texts were very much frowned upon back in the 1980s but are seen [...] as a sign of the times in today’s world.’⁵⁸ The number of multilingual films has been on the increase since the 1980s and 1990s, and this is associated with economic motives especially in terms of Hollywood films.⁵⁹ Relatedly, an increase in international productions and funding sources contributes to a greater number of multilingual films being made in Hollywood and Europe. Referring to the European case, Chris Wahl also highlights that there is a global aspect to the rise of polyglot cinema.⁶⁰ Wahl attributes the emergence of these films to a large influx of migrants into European countries, particularly the ones in the Mediterranean region, since the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁶¹

Contrasting polyglot cinema with Hollywood films, Wahl underlines that the former depicts the diversity of language use as opposed to the abolition of linguistic difference in the latter. However, Wahl also notes that not every film where different languages are heard on its acoustic level is a ‘genuine’ polyglot. Accordingly, in ‘genuine’ polyglot films, languages are used in the way they would be used in reality. In other words, they are ‘marked by the naturalistic presence of two or more languages

⁵⁶ Lukas Bleichenbacher, ‘Linguicism in Hollywood Movies? Representations of, and Audience Reactions to Multilingualism in Mainstream Movie Dialogues’, *Multilingua*, 31.2-3 (2012), 155–176 (p. 158).

⁵⁷ Verena Berger and Miya Komori, ‘Introduction’, in *Polyglot Cinema*, ed. by Verena Berger and Miya Komori (Berlin: LIT Verlag Münster, 2010), pp. 7-12 (p. 9).

⁵⁸ Delabastita and Grutman, p. 11.

⁵⁹ Reine Meylaerts and Adriana Șerban, ‘Introduction Multilingualism at the Cinema and on Stage: A Translation Perspective’, *Linguistica Antverpiensia – New Series*, 13 (2014), 1–13 (p. 8).

⁶⁰ Chris Wahl, “‘Du Deutscher, Toi Français, You English: Beautiful!’ - The Polyglot Film as a Genre”, in *Shifting Landscapes: Film and Media in European Context*, ed. by Miyase Christensen and Nezih Erdoğan (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 334-350 (p. 349).

⁶¹ Wahl (2005).

at the level of dialogue and narrative.’⁶² Therefore, polyglot films are ‘anti-illusionist in the sense that they do not try to hide the diversity of human life behind the mask of a universal language.’⁶³ In Dwyer’s view, ‘genuine’ polyglot films ‘script language contact into their narrative, dialogue and setting.’⁶⁴ Further, they ‘celebrate the multiplicity of languages by making (mis)translation and miscommunication central to the film’s rationale.’⁶⁵ Therefore, in these films, multilingualism is included not only to represent authenticity but also to contribute to the plot and character development.

In contrast, multilingualism carries a minor role rather than a pivotal one in films that are not ‘genuine’ polyglot films. It is included only for the purposes of ‘postcarding’, in Wahl’s terms.⁶⁶ In other words, foreign dialogue is used ‘merely as ornament, to mark location or nationality.’⁶⁷ In a similar manner to the examples which (re)produce the monolingualist mindset and adopt the homogenising convention, these multilingual films can be labelled as illusionist in that they provide an inauthentic representation of the linguistic diversity present in real life. Therefore, multilingualism fails here to reveal the tension between the speakers of different languages or to challenge the status of the majority language in a film.

Wahl’s conceptualisation discusses polyglot films as a genre, which are divided into seven subgenres: the episode film, the alliance film, the globalisation film, the fraternisation film, the colonial film, the existential film and finally, the immigrant film. This categorisation takes into consideration an aspect of transnational narratives ‘implying a hybridity of aesthetics, settings, acting and languages.’⁶⁸ As one of the early attempts to conceptualise ‘polyglot cinema’, Wahl’s categorisation arguably provides a rather limited perspective particularly for the analysis in this chapter. The

⁶² Tessa Dwyer, ‘Universally Speaking: Lost in Translation and Polyglot Cinema’, *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series – Themes in Translation Studies*, 4 (2005), 295-310 (p. 296).

⁶³ Wahl (2005).

⁶⁴ Dwyer, p. 307.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 307.

⁶⁶ Wahl (2005).

⁶⁷ O’Sullivan, p. 84.

⁶⁸ Berger and Komori, pp. 8-9.

reason is that the categorisation reduces the representation of linguistic diversity to the main theme of border crossing and its related ones such as immigration, international wars or colonial ruling. However, there is no category where autochthonous minority languages (such as Kurdish and the Hamshen language in the Turkish context) are represented. Therefore, it can be suggested that a nation-state perspective dominates Wahl's categorisation. Consequently, unlike Wahl's distinction between genuine and not genuine polyglot films, his categorisation of seven subgenres does not provide a fruitful framework within which to analyse the multilingualism of the research films.

Multilingual interactions in cinema can serve different functions, depending on their purposes. For instance, they can be deployed as a means for exerting power and (re)negotiating interpersonal hierarchies.⁶⁹ Likewise, linguistic non-reciprocity, which Shohat and Stam describe as a colonialist habit, may also serve as a strategic act in multilingual films.⁷⁰ Accordingly, one character speaks and responds only in a particular language, and expects the others to follow suit. Shohat and Stam's view of linguistic non-reciprocity as a colonialist practice can be deemed as limiting, since it can also be attributed to generational differences between immigrant parents and second-generation adults. For instance, a character that understands the language spoken by their parents but responds only in English demonstrates linguistic non-reciprocity. Therefore, the reluctance to reciprocate takes place not necessarily because that person does not understand the 'foreign' language in a given context. Consequently, all these interactions operate in relation to the form and content of the story as well as the purpose of multilingualism in films. The following section offers an insight into the multilingual representation in Turkish cinema before and after the mid-1990s in view of the changes in the official language policy.

⁶⁹ Gemma King, 'Code-Switching as Power Strategy: Multilingualism and the Role of Arabic in Maïwenn's *Polisse* (2011)', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 52.2 (2015), 162–173 (p. 162).

⁷⁰ Shohat and Stam, p. 54.

4.3. Multilingualism in Turkish Cinema

The language policy in Turkey did not enforce direct bans on the representation of language diversity in cinema. However, Yeşilçam cinema was similar to Hollywood films in terms of adopting a homogenising convention. The universal language myth to which both Wahl and Dwyer alluded was adopted in the pre-1980s period during which the language of cinema promoted the official language without exception and leaned on dubbing as a mainstream practice.⁷¹ The ‘assertion of the supremacy of the national language and its unchallenged political, economic and cultural power within the nation’s boundaries’ characterised Yeşilçam cinema through the dubbing practice.⁷² Accented Turkish was spoken only by characters who were implied to be non-Turkish, to create a comic effect or by Turkish ones to point to their rural background.⁷³ The dubbing practice not only obscured the identity-based differences but also signified the imposition of standard Turkish, predicated on the illusion of a monolithic society. Therefore, the homogenising convention arguably operated in this traditional cinema as a tool of singularisation, reflecting the reign of one-language nation-state ideology over domestic film production.

The 1990s witnessed a break from the monolingual(ist) conventions of Yeşilçam cinema. The emerging cinema was marked by an interest in representing the ethnic and linguistic differences that had previously been treated as non-existent. Reis Çelik’s *Let There Be Light* (*Işıklar Sönmesin*, 1996), Yeşim Ustaoğlu’s *Journey to the Sun* (*Güneşe Yolculuk*, 1999) and Kazım Öz’s short film *Soil* (*Toprak*, 1999) represent the early examples in which Kurdish is heard. Crucially, the sensitivity to render linguistic diversity visible goes hand in hand with the political content of these films which refer to phenomena such as the armed conflict, forced displacements, disappearances and hunger strikes. These early works also set a precedent for the films of the 2000s which

⁷¹ Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 22.

⁷² Martine Danan, ‘Dubbing as an Expression of Nationalism’, *Meta: Journal des traducteurs*, 36.4 (1991), 606–614 (p. 612).

⁷³ Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), p. 42.

incorporated linguistic diversity as part of their interrogation of taboo subjects. Handan İpekçi's *Big Man, Little Love* (*Büyük Adam, Küçük Aşk*, 2001), Kazım Öz's *Photograph* (*Fotoğraf*, 2001) and *The Storm* (*Fırtına*, 2008), Özcan Alper's *Autumn* (*Sonbahar*, 2008) and *Future Lasts Forever* (*Gelecek Uzun Sürer*, 2011) and Sedat Yılmaz's *Press* (*Basın*, 2010) can be mentioned as some of the examples among many others.

The period after 2002 experienced an increase in the representation of linguistic diversity in Turkish cinema due to the legal changes in 2001 and 2002 that decriminalised the use of minority languages other than Turkish in publishing and broadcasting.⁷⁴ Film scholars and critics also acknowledged the emergence of multilingual films as a shift from a monolingual and homogenising film production into one perceptive to linguistic and ethnic differences. This recognition was also reflected in the attempts to re-name the film production in Turkey as 'cinema of Turkey' or 'new Turkish cinema' rather than 'Turkish cinema', as noted in Chapter Two.⁷⁵

In addition to these works of politically engaged directors, multilingualism was also deployed by some others to exhibit the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the populace only for the reasons of authenticity and representational concerns. For instance, Fatih Akın and Ferzan Özpetek based in Germany and Italy, respectively, produced films that revolved around the themes of journey and border crossing. Turkish was occasionally incorporated into their films through Turkish migrant characters or Turkish songs heard in the background. However, unlike Alper and İpekçi, Akın and Özpetek did not problematize the official treatment of linguistic diversity and its implications in Turkey. Further, the multilingual films of these directors can be distinguished from the ones to be analysed here in that the stories did not fully take place in Turkey in the former. Therefore, their films, which rested on

⁷⁴ See 5.2. 'Turkey's Language Policy on the Use and Status of Kurdish', p. 205.

⁷⁵ See 2.2. 'Turkish Cinema after the mid-1990s', pp. 97-98.

transnational elements, can be considered as the examples of migration polyglot films in Wahl's categorisation.

Drawing on Sternberg's two 'poles' of linguistic representation, it can be suggested that, in contrast with Yeşilçam cinema, new Turkish cinema incorporates varying degrees of vehicular matching since the second half of the 1990s. The films in the latter group can be acknowledged as intrinsically subversive, since they contradict the idea that Turkish is 'a ubiquitous single language unifying the population.'⁷⁶ However, this should not mean to state that each multilingual film challenges the monolingualist mindset in the same manner with no or little variation in their degree of vehicular matching. On the contrary, there are discrepancies in terms of not only the degree but also the ways of representing linguistic diversity. Consequently, the research films will be deemed as examples of the latter group that diverge from that homogenising convention of the previous years. The following analysis will demonstrate how each film marks a different point on the spectrum between two poles of linguistic representation.

4.4. The Uses of Multilingualism in the Selected Films

Following the literature on multilingual cinema and a brief history of multilingual representation in Turkish cinema, this section compares the depictions of minority and foreign languages to that of the majority language in the films. In doing so, the uses of multilingualism will be differentiated on the basis of three outcomes: how far they (i) hint at the presence of different ethnic groups in the population; (ii) provide an authentic representation of ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity in Turkey; and (iii) subvert the asymmetrical relationship between Turkish and minority languages. Turkish will be discussed as the language of the 'outsider', Kurdish as the 'marked', stigmatised language, and Hamshen as the 'indoor language' to refer to its use in

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Ellis, Ingrid Gogolin and Michael Clyne, 'The Janus Face of Monolingualism: A Comparison of German and Australian Language Education Policies', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 11.4 (2010), 439–460 (p. 440).

private domains. The identified outcome for each film will be considered as part of its engagement with the monolingualist mindset and the official discourse on the conflict.

It should be noted here that geographical location emerges as a significant signifier in the representation of multilingualism. In six of the films, the story partly or wholly takes place in the southeastern region. In *Breath*, where the time and place are specified as ‘1993, Southeast’, the fictitious Karabal patrol station is based in a border town in the southeast. In *Jîn*, which narrates the story of a female militant attempting to return home, the same geographical region in *Breath* is implied through the mountainous landscape, and the scenes of aerial bombardments and battles. The repercussions of the conflict on the locals in the region are explored in both *Min Dît* and *Future Lasts Forever* through focusing on the Diyarbakır province. In *Journey to the Sun*, which narrates the transformative experience of Mehmet around the questions of stigmatisation and exclusion, the story begins in İstanbul and ends in the fictitious Zorlu village near the Turkish – Iraqi border. Finally, *On the Way to School* depicts the communication struggles of Turkish Emre Aydın in the Demirci village of the southeastern province Şanlıurfa, where he is appointed as a teacher. *Big Man, Little Love*, one of the two films not taking place in the southeast, includes references to the region through Hejar and Evdo, displaced from their village in Diyarbakır. *Autumn* is singled out from the others in that the story takes place in the Hopa district in the Black Sea region near the Turkish – Georgian border. The depiction of geographical location becomes a vehicle for incorporating linguistic diversity and challenging the monolingualist mindset in all the films except for *Breath*, as will be shown below.

4.4.1. Turkish as the Language of the ‘Outsider’

In categorising the repertoire of languages in the films, the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ statuses have been dismissed as inapplicable to characterise the relationship between the majority language and (autochthonous) minority languages in Turkey. However, these statuses prove relevant to discussing the filmic representations of these languages. In some films, Turkish is reframed as an outsider’s language as a means of articulating the critique of the language policy and official discourse on the conflict. This is achieved in two different ways. The first one is through Turkish-speaking

characters travelling to the southeastern region on an (self-)assigned mission. The second is through Kurdish characters that treat the speakers of Turkish as ‘outsiders.’ Differently from the first one, an outsider signifies here not a traveller who is unfamiliar with the region, but someone who cannot be trusted. In both cases, the assignment of an outsider status to the speakers and symbols of the majority language constitutes a reversal of the language prejudice against the ‘minority’ languages, thereby undermining the monolingualist mindset. Sumru in *Future Lasts Forever*, Mehmet in *Journey to the Sun*, and the elementary school teacher Emre in *On the Way to School* stand out as the traveller characters that represent the ‘outsider’ Turk in the southeast.

In *Future Lasts Forever*, Sumru’s phone conversation on her arrival in Diyarbakır reveals early in the film that her mother tongue is the Hamshen language, as is Yusuf’s in *Autumn*. Sumru’s bilingualism informs her identity as an outsider, marked by her acknowledgement of and orientation to the use of another language other than Turkish in Diyarbakır. Despite her lack of knowledge of Kurdish, Sumru does not represent ‘the colonialist mindset’, in Shohat and Stam’s terms, manifesting itself through ‘linguistic non-reciprocity.’⁷⁷ She does not demand or force Kurdish people to respond to her exclusively in Turkish. Instead, she tries to communicate with them in their own language when she can, saying ‘Good night’ in Kurdish to the daughter of her friend, for example. Likewise, Sumru alternates between Armenian and Turkish in her dialogues with Antranik, the custodian of the Armenian Church. The absence of (mis)communication in Sumru’s depiction can be interpreted as the film’s desire to accentuate linguistic diversity as a value against the perception of language difference as an obstacle and speakers of minority languages as a threat in the official language policy.

⁷⁷ Shohat and Stam, p. 54.

On a related level, Sumru's depiction as an 'outsider' does not rest on any experiences of adaptation difficulties. On the contrary, her exploration of the city serves for the film to examine the linguistic practices of the locals closely and confront the idea of a linguistically homogeneous society. For instance, through Sumru's daily encounters, it becomes clear that Kurdish prevails as the language of the songs heard in the taxi, the fairy tales told by mothers, and the elegies sung by the interviewed relatives of the disappeared. In view of Sumru's purpose of travel, her depiction as an outsider can also be considered as an example of a 'traveller-translator' in Michael Cronin's terms. Cronin notes that translation is widely understood to mean the knowledge of two languages and rendering of meaning in one language into another.⁷⁸ However, he adds,

'...there are many instances in travel where no such knowledge is available, the travellers do not know the language, but they must nonetheless attempt a "translation" in order to make sense of a situation or place in which they find themselves. In these instances, the traveller-translator will try to correlate sounds, gestures, facial expressions with emotions that are familiar to him or her such as fear, joy, concern, menace or apathy.'⁷⁹

In Sumru's case, her attempts to comprehend her boyfriend Harun's departure for the mountains and find out about his whereabouts engage her in a journey in which she listens to the experiences of people who lost their beloved like her. Sumru's quest for Harun correlates with the quest of those who mourn the disappearances of their relatives and search for their bodies at the same time. Thus, the fact that Sumru speaks Turkish and is an outsider in the region loses its significance, as she is united in the feelings of loss with these Kurdish people. Therefore, 'translation' involved in being a traveller-translator lies in finding a commonality in differences and identifying with one another as speakers of different languages.

The second 'outsider' character is Mehmet in *Journey to the Sun*, who travels to the southeast for the first time in his life on a self-assigned mission of taking Berzan's coffin to his village. Unlike Sumru, Mehmet experiences communication and

⁷⁸ Michael Cronin, *Translation Goes to the Movies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 113.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

orientation difficulties. The film underlines that not only the landscape changes during Mehmet's journey from the west to the east but also Mehmet enters a space where Turkish is not necessarily spoken and understood. However, Mehmet's difficulties cause not any resentment in him as a Turk, but rather a detachment from his own Turkish identity, as he witnesses the sufferings of Kurdish locals in the region due to the conflict. When asked where he is from towards the end of the film, Mehmet tells the soldier on the train that he is from Berzan's village Zorduç, but not from his hometown Tire in the west of the country.

Like Sumru, albeit for a different reason, Mehmet can also be regarded as a traveller-translator as well as an outsider. In his case, being a traveller-translator means to be engaged in an attempt to comprehend the state of emergency, evacuated villages, red-crossed houses, migrating families in the southeastern region during the conflict. Mehmet's initial incomprehension of the environment as an outsider disappears as he correlates the locals' experiences with the incidents of stigmatisation and marginalisation that he underwent in İstanbul when being mistaken for a Kurd. Therefore, Mehmet's experience results in him familiarising with the perspective of Kurdish locals and discarding the Turkish mindset. 'Translation' here facilitates not only an empathetic understanding of the oppressed but also a defiant and resentful attitude against the oppressor.

In addition to the experiences of Mehmet as an outsider Turk in the southeast, there are also particular scenes in İstanbul, where Kurdish-speaking characters are implied to treat Turkish as an outsider's language. Accordingly, they speak Turkish only when they speak to Turkish officers or when someone not from their community is around. For instance, Berzan is seen speaking Turkish with his Kurdish friend Şeyhmus for the first time when Mehmet visits Berzan in Eminönü. After welcoming Mehmet in Turkish, Berzan turns to Şeyhmus to tell him in Turkish that he needs to leave. Crucially, Şeyhmus never responds to Berzan in Turkish in any part of the dialogue. Therefore, Berzan's attempt to include Mehmet in the conversation is hampered by Şeyhmus' insistence on using Kurdish. Further, Berzan does not take on the role of an

interpreter for Mehmet to follow the conversation, which will be examined in Chapter Five. As Berzan feels compelled to continue in Kurdish, Mehmet is left in the dark and out of the conversation. Turkish is thus presented as serving a limited function in the lives of Kurdish speakers regardless of the geographical location.

As the third ‘outsider’ Turk, Emre in *On the Way to School* is distinguished from Sumru and Mehmet in two significant ways. First, unlike the other two, Emre does not travel to the southeast on a self-assigned mission but is appointed by the Turkish Ministry of Education. Second, he works as a primary school teacher at a state school and therefore represents the official stance. Although Emre suffers from the impositions of the current educational system, he does not show any signs of criticism or questioning regarding the problem and its causes. On the contrary, he perceives Kurdish as an obstacle in his communication with students and fails to see the mother tongue education in Kurdish as a linguistic right. This can be attributed to Emre’s affiliation with the state and the presence of a camera that records his conversations. Both factors bring with them anxiety as to how he will be treated in the documentary, and his portrayal might affect his status as a civil servant.

Emre’s inability to speak Kurdish and tendency to demonstrate linguistic non-reciprocity become emblematic of his outsider identity. Having received no pedagogical training for teaching Turkish as a second language, Emre is left to his own devices to overcome the language barrier. He emphasises his own lack of Kurdish as the reason why students are not allowed to speak Kurdish in the classroom. In this respect, Emre’s rule echoes the ‘total immersion’ method employed in education, ranging from foreign language classes to classes where the teacher imposes the majority-language to educate the minority-language children. The method can be deemed controversial in terms of its following consequences among others: creating a sense of inferiority in the child whose first language is viewed as a necessary evil and avoided as much as possible, undermining the child’s confidence and motivation due to being compared to native speakers of the majority language and leading to academic

failure.⁸⁰ The implications of Emre's ban on speaking Kurdish on the children's communication and academic skills can also be considered in this framework. Therefore, the classroom provides a platform for the documentary to highlight the dysfunctional aspects of the monolingualist educational policies and practices in Turkey.

Unlike Sumru and Mehmet, Emre also experiences orientation difficulties to the extent that they cause a sense of frustration in the early days of his village life. Telling the villagers that it is his first time in the east, Emre contrasts the living conditions in the Demirci village with the ones he is used to in his hometown Denizli in the Aegean region. Emre's observations about water and power supply deficiencies in the village point to a lack of balance in the distribution of resources between the east and west of the country. His dissatisfaction with the working environment is also accompanied by a sense of alienation, which is discerned in his perception of Kurdish people. For instance, on his eighth day, Emre utters indistinctly when he sees an approaching villager: 'I cannot distinguish between them.' They all look the same to him as much as being different from him.

While portraying Emre as an outsider and Turkish as the outsider's language, the documentary also depicts the daily life in the children's houses without being intrusive. Most of these scenes are shot from outside the doorway of the houses. Parents seem preoccupied with their own troubles, whereas children have no space for studying and do their homework on the floor. Juvenile sisters take care of their baby siblings after washing the clothes in the stream and spreading them over the rocks outside for drying. The camera's observation of daily life in these houses serves two purposes. On the one hand, it reframes Kurdish as the language of the underprivileged in the impoverished areas of Turkey. On the other hand, it demonstrates the central position of Kurdish in children's lives as the language in which they speak with their parents, play games and joke with one another. It reinforces the idea of Kurdish as a 'home' language, one that

⁸⁰ Barry McLaughlin, *Second Language Acquisition in Childhood: Volume 2: School-age Children* (New York: Psychology Press, 2012), pp. 138-141.

is associated with familiarity and intimacy, rather than being the language of education and other formal contexts.

Crucially, in the films where Turkish is treated as an outsider's language, Kurdish characters either refuse to speak with those they deem outsiders or speak Turkish to disguise their ethnic identity and background. The multilingual interactions in *Jîn* can be considered in this regard. Jîn speaks in Kurdish to the characters she regards as 'comrades', including the animals that seek shelter from the aerial bombardments in the same way that she does. She also speaks in Kurdish with her mother, the woman she meets on the bus, and the child who asks her about the scars. However, she does not reveal her real name to anyone with whom she speaks Turkish, except for the wounded Turkish soldier. For instance, she speaks Turkish with the shepherd, the truck driver, the cashier at the bus terminal, the sick old lady, the employer who attacks her, and soldiers doing the identity check controls. Crucially, she uses the false Turkish name Leyla and pretends to be someone else when communicating in Turkish. For Jîn, Turkish is the language through which she disguises her background and feigns an identity that is not hers.

It should be noted here that Turkish is not designated an 'outsider' status in every film for different reasons. For instance, in *Autumn*, the theme of travel involves a homecoming on the part of Yusuf, a former hunger striker, who is released from prison on health grounds and returns his hometown to spend his remaining days with his mother. The only characters that can be described as 'outsiders' in the film are the Georgian Eka and her friend, who work as sex workers in Hopa. Further, no tension is implied to exist regarding the use of the Hamshen language as the one between the speakers of Kurdish and Turkish that can be identified in the films on the conflict. This difference is reflected in the characterisation of Kurdish and Hamshen as the 'marked' and 'indoor' languages in this analysis, respectively, as will be elaborated below. Therefore, *Autumn* deploys multilingualism as a resource to expose the linguistic heterogeneity of the community living in a border town for an authentic representation rather than to subvert the asymmetrical relationship between Turkish and the Hamshen language.

The assignment of an outsider or insider status to any language is also absent in *Breath*. However, unlike *Autumn*, the reason is not its irrelevance to the context, but its contradiction with the film's engagement with the monolingualist mindset. Compared to other films, *Breath* emerges as the one where linguistic diversity is least represented in terms of the number and function of the scenes in which another language is heard. This may not be surprising, given the context where the story takes place. The patrol station represents an official setting belonging to the Turkish army, known as the leading institution upholding the Republican ideals and the official language policy. Hence, Turkish is the sole language acknowledged and spoken in that venue regardless of its being based in the southeast region.

Languages other than Turkish are heard in a limited number of scenes in the film. Kurdish and Arabic are heard twice and once, respectively, when soldiers speak to their families or partners on the phone. These scenes are placed in a sequence showing the conversations during which soldiers express their love and longing for their beloved. This represents a type of multilingualism that functions like 'postcarding', in Wahl's terms. Accordingly, the film's use of linguistic diversity points to the ethnic diversity of soldiers who serve the Turkish state and reinforces the status of Turkishness as a binding force. Nevertheless, the film also recognises the linguistic underpinnings of the conflict between the Turkish army and PKK, as seen in the scene where 'the enemy' is heard telling the Lieutenant on the phone: 'you banned my language.' However, as the language in question is left unspecified, the film does not problematize the ban as a violation of human rights but treats it as an excuse articulated by those who oppose the unity of the Turkish state. The film's characterisation of the speakers of the Kurdish language also reinforces this point, as is shown in the following subsection.

4.4.2. Kurdish as the ‘Marked’ Language

In addition to its limited use of linguistic diversity, *Breath* reflects the official discourse on the conflict and the inferior treatment of Kurdish in the language policy through its portrayal of the Kurdish characters. Relatedly, the Kurdish identity of ‘the enemy’ is only implied throughout the film rather than explicitly stated. For instance, the enemy is represented through three figures. The first is the group’s leader, who organises the deadly ambush at the beginning of the film and is planning to raid the military post. The film mentions him by name, Rıza, or the codename, the Doctor, and informs the spectator that he was a medical student before quitting university to join the outlawed organisation. The Doctor, whose face is never shown, is exclusively portrayed as a shadow with an ominous voice. Therefore, although the film makes his voice heard and provides a glimpse of the PKK’s rationale for the insurgency, the vilification of the Doctor echoes the dehumanisation of the enemy in the official discourse.

The second ‘enemy’ figure in the film is the female militant, Dicle, captured wounded in a small-scale operation. Unlike the Doctor, her face is shown close-up. However, she is portrayed in a vulnerable position covered in blood, and her voice cannot be heard. It is important to note here that Dicle’s muteness is presented as the effect of the Lieutenant’s attempt to strangle her while trying to extract information out of her. The act of strangling obscures the fact that her silence can be an expression of her refusal to speak and thus an act of defiance. Therefore, the film eschews attributing agency to the enemy in depicting the Lieutenant’s failure to make her inform against her friends.

The third ‘enemy’ figure in the film is a surviving male militant found alive by two soldiers in the aftermath of the raid. This figure, who also does not speak, is seen from the perspective of the soldiers intending to kill him. The encounter, which results in the Turkish soldier lowering his gun, affirms the benevolence of the soldiers by portraying them as merciful. Additionally, this scene underlines the difference between ‘terrorists’ and soldiers by depicting the former with a conspicuously darker skin tone, which serves to distinguish the enemy as foreign, unidentified and

unfamiliar. Despite being implied to be Kurdish, none of these ‘enemy’ figures are heard speaking their own language in the film. They either communicate in Turkish or do not speak at all. Overall, *Breath* perpetuates the stereotypical representation of the linguistic other as an internal threat, especially when s/he does not conform to the official ideology and tends to assign an outsider status to Turkish.

The role of linguistic (and ethnic) difference in facing oppression and violence is rendered more visible in the films where the armed conflict is treated through its consequences on the lives of civilians. For instance, *Journey to the Sun* offers insightful examples on the stigmatisation of a minority language in the context of the conflict. Crucially, the word ‘Kurdish’ is not used throughout the film. For instance, the son of the old man with whom Mehmet tries to communicate in the southeast says that his father does not speak Turkish, and Kurdish is solely heard as their language without being explicitly expressed. This absence could be interpreted as an allusion to Kurdish not only being the language of the oppressed but also the oppressed language.

The film highlights that oppression is not indiscriminately inflicted on anyone but on Kurds or individuals assumed to be Kurds. For instance, despite not being a Kurd or speaking Kurdish, Mehmet also becomes the target of this oppression mainly due to his physical appearance. His dark skin colour proves a ‘negative symbolic coefficient’, in Pierre Bourdieu’s words, which ‘negatively affects everything that he is or does and serves as a sign of belonging to a stigmatised group.’⁸¹ The director Ustaoglu states in an interview that it is a deliberate choice to cast an actor with a darker complexion for Turkish Mehmet but not for Kurdish Berzan, stressing her intention to subvert a cliché.⁸²

⁸¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. by Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 42.

⁸² ‘Yeşim Ustaoglu ile Son Filmi Üzerine’ (‘An Interview with Yeşim Ustaoglu on Her Last Film’), <http://www.lightmillennium.org/winter01/turkish/journey_yesim_turk.html> [accessed date 26 June 2013].

This presumption based on a skin tone is made explicit through the question ‘where are you from?’ during the police interrogation. The police respond with scepticism to the fact that Mehmet is from Tire but not from the southeast predominantly populated by Kurds. The policeman states that Mehmet’s complexion is too dark to be from the western part of the country and his father must be from the East, if not Mehmet himself. His dark skin and the Kurdish cassette found in his pocket turn him into a suspect terrorist in the eyes of the police, although ‘Kurdish’ is once again not stated as the language of the songs in the cassette. This suspicion results in the marginalisation of Mehmet from the centre to the periphery of the city. In parallel, the status of Kurdish as a ‘marked’ language is reflected in its being spoken in the peripheral locations. For instance, as a politically engaged Kurd, Berzan can only find employment where the employers and colleagues are Kurdish. After attracting the police’s attention, Berzan begins to work at the intercity bus terminal for a bus company travelling between İstanbul and the southeastern cities. Likewise, he can only find a job for Mehmet at the place of another Kurdish employer.

Mehmet directs his frustration to his darker complexion and hair that lead him to be mistaken for a Kurd. Before setting out on the journey to the east, he changes his hair colour by using the yellow paint that he finds at the rubbish dump. On the one hand, spraying his hair unnaturally yellow can be interpreted as Mehmet’s acceptance of what it takes to be an ordinary Turk and his desire to be like one of them. On the other hand, the artificial change of his hair colour exposes the transformative effect of discrimination and stigmatisation that Mehmet experienced in the west of the country as a Kurdish-looking Turk, suggesting that he is no longer the Turk he was once before.

Big Man, Little Love also highlights the hierarchical relationship between the Turkish state and speakers of the Kurdish language through the tense relationship between Rıfat and Hejar. Rıfat, a retired judge, represents the advocate of the Kemalist ideology and its monolingualist mindset, as reflected in his reaction to the use of Kurdish at home and elsewhere. Asserting that ‘a nation must protect its own language’, Rıfat denies that a citizen of Turkey speaks any other language than Turkish. Crucially, Rıfat’s opposition to Kurdish is accompanied by his poor

perception of Kurds as backward, rebellious and nit-infested, and his urge to dress Hejar up and teach her how to eat and behave. Like *Journey to the Sun*, *Big Man*, *Little Love* addresses the marked status of Kurdish in the official discourse on the conflict through these characters who work (or worked) for the state such as a retired judge, military officials and police officers.

Unlike the other two, *Min Dît* does not refer to the official perception of Kurdish as the linguistic other through incorporating the perspectives of Turkish characters. Instead, *Min Dît* constitutes a subversive example in that its representation of Turkish and Kurdish undoes the treatment of Kurdish as the ‘marked’ language. Narrating the story of extrajudicial murders in the southeast of 1990s Turkey from the viewpoint of Kurdish children, the film establishes Kurdish as the language for social interaction and daily communication in Diyarbakır. Starting from its first scene, all the characters are understood to be Kurdish, and Kurdish forms the main and only language they speak at home and outside in the streets.

The references to the monolingualist mindset are incorporated into the story in a manner that foregrounds its dysfunctional and illusory aspects. For instance, in *Min Dît*, Fırat is seen struggling with his homework in math. His aunt’s friend offers his help and asks him to sound out the problem. This is the scene where Turkish is heard for the first time in the film [11:35:00], which occurs relatively late when compared to others. He solves the problem easily after it is explained to him in Kurdish. Fırat’s difficulty is not attributed to his lack of capacity but presented as the outcome of the fact that the language of education is Turkish. The monolingualist mindset, which is referred to in terms of its impact on the language and education policy, is thus framed as an imposition and impediment in the lives of Kurdish people as well as being an ineffectual position doomed to failure.

4.4.3. Hamshen as the ‘Indoor’ Language and Foreign Languages

‘Indoor’ language is largely spoken in private domains, between two people, not with the aid of a translator or not to be translated for another person, if there is any in the environment. The Hamshen language can be described as such, given its spatial contexts of use in Özcan Alper’s *Autumn* and *Future Lasts Forever*. On the one hand, Alper, whose mother tongue is the Hamshen language, renders the language more visible in both films. On the other hand, the film’s authentic representation reveals three aspects of the language. First, it enables intergenerational communication between elderly parents and their adult children. Both Yusuf and Sumru speak Hamshen to communicate with their mother. Second, the language is largely spoken within the house, alluding to its limited function in social or business-related communication in daily life. Third, it is relatively more widely spoken by women spending more time at home. Yusuf’s mother and neighbour Nesime are seen unexceptionally speaking the Hamshen language inside or around the house. Differently from the representation of Kurdish, speaking the Hamshen language does not signify any tension and oppression in terms of the interactions with Turkish-speaking characters.

Foreign languages are incorporated into the films through fictional characters in the role of tourists or foreign workers. *Autumn*, *Journey to the Sun* and *Min Dît* include examples. To start with *Autumn*, Georgian characters are depicted through a substantial degree of vehicular matching, in Sternberg’s terms. In other words, the representation of Georgian is naturalistic in that it is used as it would be in reality. Eka and Maria, who unexceptionally speak Georgian between one another, are heard speaking accented Turkish only when they communicate with the locals. On the one hand, these Georgian characters serve for the film to provide an authentic representation of the border town. On the other hand, they are not seen in the background merely to reflect the linguistic diversity of the context due to the locational proximity of Georgia. Instead, they are built into the plot development through their role in the narrative, as seen in the relationship between Eka and Yusuf.

Additionally, the stories of Georgian-speaking characters resonate with the theme of mourning the loss of youth in Yusuf's story. For instance, Mikhail is seen lamenting the end of socialism while mentioning the struggles of Georgia after the fall of the Soviet Union: 'at least there was hope for socialism in the past. Now, their [Georgian] women come here to work as prostitutes, and their men steal steel from the factories.' Therefore, on an implicit level, the film associates the absence of joy of life with the failure of the dream for socialism through the intertwined stories of Eka, Maria, Mikhail and Yusuf. Consequently, in addition to contributing to the authentic portrayal of the town, the inclusion of Georgian-speaking characters enables the film to draw a parallel between the loss of hope for the future and Yusuf's approaching death.

The foreign languages heard in *Journey to the Sun* are English and German. Unlike *Autumn*, the film does not provide a detailed portrayal of the speakers of these languages. For example, English is heard on the tram when a tourist woman argues with her boyfriend. Likewise, German is heard because German tourists are sitting at the next table in a restaurant where Arzu and Mehmet drink beer. Following that, Arzu mentions Germany as her place of birth and Mehmet asks her to speak some German. Arzu says 'Ich Liebe Dich' and translates it into Turkish when being asked for its meaning. Mehmet with no knowledge of German uses the same sentence in another scene when he is too embarrassed to say in Turkish that he loves her. Hence, the speakers of foreign languages remain in the background or are mentioned in passing. They provide a glimpse of the cosmopolitan character of the city in which the story takes place but do not create a shift in the course of the story.

In this respect, *Journey to the Sun* differs from *Autumn* in terms of the roles attached to foreign characters and languages. On the one hand, *Journey to the Sun* utilises foreign languages as an ornament rather than as a vehicle for plot development. However, on the other hand, the theme of marginalisation underlying the use of the Kurdish language in the film adds a different meaning to foreign languages, which does not exist in *Autumn*. In other words, the film's framing of speaking Kurdish as a source of oppression provides a basis on which the presence of foreign languages

should be interpreted. Accordingly, the experience of Kurdish speakers stands in contrast with the absence of tension and stigmatisation on the part of the speakers of foreign languages in the film. Further, İstanbul is thus represented as a linguistically diverse city where different languages are heard, which in turn enables the film to accentuate the restraints on the Kurdish language and identity. Consequently, it is a misrepresentation to suggest that foreign languages are included in *Journey to the Sun* for ‘postcarding,’ to use Wahl’s term, in reference to their lack of function in the narrative.

As for *Min Dît*, unlike the other two films, the foreign language is incorporated here through television rather than through a diegetic fictional character. English is heard in a scene where the viewer is introduced to the family life of the killer Nuri Kaya for the first time. His wife is seen watching an English drama on television when he comes home. This scene not only reveals Nuri’s double life as an extrajudicial killer and an ordinary family man but also depicts the life of a Turkish family in Diyarbakır. The appearance of English in the context of Nuri Kaya’s house turns the foreign language into a signifier of the gap between Turkish and Kurdish people in terms of economic and social circumstances. Further, the presence of English as part of an untroubled, comfortable life can be interpreted as the film’s attempt to frame Turkish characters as indifferent to and isolated from the sufferings of Kurdish ones living in the same city. Like in *Journey to the Sun*, the use of foreign language attains a meaning and function against the tense relationship between Turkish and Kurdish highlighted in the film.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the role of multilingual representation in informing and reflecting how each film engages with the official discourse on the conflict. The films have been discussed as examples of multilingual cinema without being pigeonholed into one of the subgenres in Wahl’s conceptualisation. Accordingly, the uses of multilingualism not only reveal the linguistic heterogeneity of the Turkish territory but also problematize the asymmetrical relationship between Turkish and minority languages. The analysis has also shown that the use of foreign languages serves a

purpose, depending on whether a film taps into the implications of the official language policy in plot and character development. On the spectrum of hinting at the presence of linguistic diversity and subverting the idea of a linguistically homogeneous society, *Breath* has been found out to be the least representative of linguistic diversity in terms of the number and functions of multilingual interactions. *Autumn* provides an authentic representation of linguistic diversity without implying any connection between Yusuf's political engagement and his bilingualism. Hence, the analysis has demonstrated that, despite the repertoire of languages incorporated into the narrative, the use of multilingualism does not serve its subversive potential here, as it does in the ones on Turkey's Kurdish conflict.

At the very opposite end are the films that take place in the southeast and, on an implicit or explicit level, treat Turkish as the outsider's language, as opposed to Kurdish as the local language. The monolingualist mindset and its practices are undermined through the depiction of the southeast as predominantly Kurdish. The uses of multilingualism also involve addressing and acknowledging the linguistic underpinnings of the conflict in these films. Turkish-speaking characters such as teachers, (retired) judges, police officers and commanders are characterised by their tendency to either silence Kurdish characters or force them to speak Turkish. The subversive potential of multilingualism is activated in these films through exposing and highlighting the oppressive and malfunctioning aspects of the language policy.

The films such as *On the Way to School* and *Future Lasts Forever* also challenge the stigmatisation of the Kurdish language and its speakers in the official and media discourse on the conflict through accentuating the deprivation in the daily lives of locals. They thus revise the image of Kurdish as the language of the oppressed and marginalised, while questioning the homogenising vision of the state's language policy and the exalted status of Turkishness as the sole binding force in Turkey. Therefore, as in *Breath* and *Jin*, the references to the language ban operate in alignment with a film's approach to the glorification of the war and sanctification of the state's policies and institutions. Consequently, this chapter has demonstrated that each film's

engagement with the official presentation of the conflict is reflected in and constituted by the forms and functions of linguistic diversity. The following chapter focuses on the depictions of diegetic interpreting, a by-product of multilingualism in film, with reference to the changes in the language policy on Kurdish. In doing so, it will explore how translation plays a role in each film's interplay with the official discourse on the conflict, which constitutes the third subsidiary research question set in the Introduction.



CHAPTER 5

Depictions of Translation in the Films on the Conflict

The previous chapter explored the functions of depicting multilingualism in the research films with reference to language policy in Turkey and its tenet of monolingualism. As the analysis showed, multilingualism serves as a tool for engaging with the linguistic dimension of the conflict through echoing, challenging or subverting the official statuses assigned to the majority and minority languages. The present chapter examines the depictions of translation in the selected films, with a focus on diegetic interpreting, that is, ‘any act of (oral) interpreting which takes place within the story world through the agency of a character in the narrative.’¹ The chapter thus aims to identify the role of diegetic interpreting in informing and reflecting each film’s treatment of its subject matter in an interplay with the official (state) discourse on the conflict. This will enable us to discuss how translation serves for the films to introduce new perspectives on the conflict and related phenomena, thereby answering the main research question of the thesis.

Crucially, interpreting only takes place during the encounters between the speakers of Turkish and Kurdish in the films. Unlike the previous chapter’s discussion of all the languages heard in the stories, this chapter analyses the portrayals of diegetic interpreting with a specific reference to the changes in the language policy on the use and status of Kurdish. Further, all the characters who take on the role of interpreters are amateur and inexperienced. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the portrayals of non-professional interpreting, which Giuseppe de Bonis defines as the cases ‘in which a bilingual character in a film acts as a lingua-cultural mediator on a specific occasion, without necessarily being a professional in the field.’² This chapter will explore the

¹ Carol O’Sullivan, *Translating Popular Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 80.

² Giuseppe de Bonis, ‘Mediating Intercultural Encounters on Screen. The Representation of Non-professional Interpreting in Film’, in *Non-professional Interpreting and Translation in the Media*, ed. by Rachele Antonini and Chiara Bucaria (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), pp. 43-64 (p. 43).

characteristics of non-professional interpreters and the purpose of their mediation in the films to pinpoint the functions that they serve in the context of the conflict.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section will outline the characteristics and manifestations of silencing as a framework for discussing the official language policy on Kurdish in Turkey. This will be followed by an overview of the changes in the use and status of Kurdish. The third section will provide a survey of the literature on the representations of translation and interpreting in film and present the works that will be taken as a reference point in the analysis. Finally, the fourth section will analyse the depictions of non-professional interpreters, with a focus on their characterisation and performance in mediating the multilingual communication. This section will also note the lack of interpreting in some of the films. This line of inquiry will enable us to discuss further the effect of the language policy on the limits of incorporating translation and interpreting in the films. Overall, the analysis will elucidate the potential of diegetic interpreting in addressing the interplay between silence, silencing and translation in the filmic treatments of the conflict.

5.1. Silencing in Discourse

Silencing entails ‘the act of force on others’ behaviour and the reactions to that act among its targets.’³ Silencing can be better understood through its distinction from silence which may take place regardless of an external force or imposition. However, silence can also be linked to silencing when the potential speaker refuses to speak by choice to protest against the imposition of silence or only a particular form of speech by an external force. To elucidate this point, an example can be given from a case of silence that Robin Clair mentions in discussing silence as a self-containing opposite which can convey oppression and resistance at the same time.⁴ Clair mentions one woman in the Warramunga society who chose to remain silent for twenty-four years,

³ Lynn Thiesmeyer, ‘Introduction’, in *Discourse and Silencing: Representation and the Language of Displacement*, ed. by Lynn Thiesmeyer (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2003), pp. 1-33 (p. 11).

⁴ Robin Patric Clair, *Organizing Silence: A World of Possibilities* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998), p. 147.

although ‘mourning silence’ is imposed on married women for two years after the death of their husbands.⁵ Clair suggests that the widow’s refusal to speak for longer than two years adds a tone of subversion to her silence, since it turns oppression, that is, the imposed silence, into an act of resistance. Referring to Clair’s example, Melani Schröter points to the duration of silence as a defining factor that facilitates the interpretation of this silence as an act of defiance.⁶ As seen here, an individual’s silence implies an act of resistance when it is done as a counteraction against the imposition of silence by an outer force. By the same token, any attempt to forcibly break this type of prolonged self-imposed silence can also be considered as an extended form of silencing in that it aims to regain control over when to speak (or not to speak). Given the multiplicity of interpretations of silence, the scope and nature of external force in silencing need further clarification.

Silencing has largely been examined in a Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth ‘CDA’) framework. Accordingly, discourse is ‘constitutive both in that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in that it contributes to transforming it.’⁷ In a related vein, Lynn Thiesmeyer points out that the theory of silencing is grounded on the contention that ‘discourse constructs and edits our knowledge on a particular subject or group, and in turn shapes our choices of how to act.’⁸ Therefore, a CDA perspective conceptualises silencing as operating in and through language. Additionally, Schröter notes that the CDA framework allows for the study of silencing to draw attention to power structures that determine which perspectives are preferred and whose voices are heard in discourses.⁹ Schröter refers to societies that have discourses about minorities in which the minorities themselves are hardly ever heard. In such cases, silencing operates through ‘talking about minorities rather than talking

⁵ Ibid., p. 147.

⁶ Melani Schröter, *Silence and Concealment in Political Discourse* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: John Benjamins Publishing, 2013), p. 16.

⁷ Ruth Wodak, ‘Discourses of Silence: Anti-Semitic Discourse in Post-war Austria’, in *Discourse and Silencing*, ed. by Lynn Thiesmeyer (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2003), pp. 179-209 (p. 187).

⁸ Thiesmeyer, p. 1.

⁹ Schröter, p. 4.

with them' or even allowing the minorities to create their own discourse.¹⁰ Therefore, silencing does not merely signify the absence of expression but can be disguised in the act of speech, depending on whose voices are heard and whose views are circulated.¹¹

Adam Jaworski defines silencing as 'the oppressive form of silence' and argues that silence becomes oppressive when it characterises a dominated group, and when the group is not permitted to break silence by its own choice.¹² Jaworski's socio-political theory of silencing draws on Edmund Leach's anthropological theory of societal organisation. Leach claims that 'the perception of another person or a group of persons can be altered or manipulated.'¹³ Further, 'the identity of a person can be altered so that he or she will be perceived as someone who belongs neither to *us* nor to any accepted and unambiguous *others*' (emphasis in original).¹⁴ Accordingly, the opposition (or the group to be silenced) is first labelled as abnormal-ambiguous to alter society's perception of its/their status from clear to ambiguous. This then paves the way for 'questioning the opposition's right to exist, to ban or delegatize it, or to declare it subversive.'¹⁵ As an example, Jaworski mentions the suppression of a student demonstration in Beijing on 4 June 1989 by drawing attention to the official description of students and their actions in derogatory terms. He adds that the demonstrations were labelled as a 'counterrevolutionary riot' or 'counterrevolutionary rebellion' and 'students were not referred to as "students", which established their ambiguous status and in consequence led to their silencing.'¹⁶ It can also be noted here that silencing might have affected not only those students *per se* but also their defenders, since speaking about that group or arguing for their rights was treated as a criminal act. Therefore, the ambiguous-abnormal status of an object or individual/group becomes a manifestation of being silenced in direct and indirect ways.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 4.

¹² Adam Jaworski, *The Power of Silence: Social and Pragmatic Perspectives* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992), p. 118.

¹³ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 132.

In a rather general and less socio-politically oriented framework, Thiesmeyer describes silencing as ‘a way of using language to limit, remove or undermine the legitimacy of another use of language.’¹⁷ As in Jaworski’s conceptualisation, Thiesmeyer implies the presence of a hierarchical relationship between the silencer and silenced. Additionally, this definition highlights that silencing does not necessarily prevent someone from speaking, but rather shapes the form and content of her speech. Further, it may involve the substitution of one discourse over another. Thiesmeyer explicates this point through the term ‘discursive displacement’ as in the following:

‘A major function of silencing is to contain this potential for opposition by identifying categories of persons and ideas about which speech and texts will be acceptable, that is, categories of forbidden speech. [...] This process is complemented by the circulation of acceptable speech and texts that express some things at the expense of others; it is thus a discursive displacement.’¹⁸

In its literal meaning, displacement refers to a shift in the place, position or status of an object or person. In discursive terms, the displaced material (written or verbal texts) undergoes a change in its status and/or content. This shift seeks not to erase the targeted material, but to subordinate it to be supplanted by another discourse.¹⁹ Therefore, ‘discursive displacement’ encapsulates two interrelated functions of silencing: to assimilate and conceal. Accordingly, while assimilation alters the status of an object or a person, it also incorporates the idea that what is now displaced can also take on an assimilating position. This facilitates the concealment of assimilation involved in discursive displacement, the combined effect of which is to ensure that the silencing process proves effectual. In a similar vein, William Conklin notes that the existence of excluded material (‘displaced’ in Thiesmeyer’s terms) is concealed in the most effective examples of silencing.²⁰

¹⁷ Thiesmeyer, p. 2.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁰ William Conklin, ‘The Assimilation of the Other within a Master Discourse’, in *The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse*, ed. by Stephen Harold Riggins (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 226–248 (p. 244).

Thiesmeyer's use of 'forbidden speech' arguably obscures the fact that silencing can also take subtle forms as well as explicit ones such as legal bans and censorship. Thiesmeyer herself refers to these subtle types of silencing as 'enlightened forms' to contrast with the practices typical of totalitarian regimes. In the latter, silenced material has a banned status whereas, in the former, silencing goes unnoticed through 'a simulacrum of freedom of expression or of choice.'²¹ Likewise, Jaworski also names certain subtle forms of silencing such as brainwashing, indoctrination, and negative stereotyping. In his view, the shared aspect of all these forms is 'the creation of the silenced group's self-image as a powerless, submissive, and inferior body with nothing relevant to say.'²²

Both Jaworski's and Thiesmeyer's conceptualisations reveal two aspects of silencing. First, it constitutes a process informed by the social and political boundaries of its time. Second, this process requires a collective effort rather than taking place on an individual basis.²³ Further, both approaches imply that the process is twofold. In the case of silencing as discursive displacement, the first step is to filter out some speech and writing as unacceptable, and the second, to solely permit the circulation of those that are acceptable. In the view of silencing as oppressive silence, silencing facilitates 'certain individuals or groups to speak and be heard while at the same time making it more difficult for others.'²⁴ Therefore, in both cases, un-silencing goes beyond gaining the right to speak and/or write and means gaining the control of one's own communication. The following section establishes the relevance of silencing to Turkey's language policy on the use and status of Kurdish.

5.2. Turkey's Language Policy on the Use and Status of Kurdish

The Turkish state's policy on Kurdish should be considered within the framework of the official language policy in Turkey, since it forms the basis for any debates regarding the status and use of Kurdish. As noted in Chapter One, in addition to the nation-building project, the Treaty of Lausanne, signed between the Turkish Republic

²¹ Thiesmeyer, p. 3.

²² Jaworski, p. 118.

²³ Schröter, p. 5.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

and the Allied States in 1923, defined the linguistic rights of Kurdish people in Turkey.²⁵ The Treaty includes no reference to Kurds in the Turkish territory who had local autonomy during the Ottoman era.²⁶ In other words, Kurds ceased to be recognised as a distinct minority group, although they represented ‘the largest non-Turkish speaking group in the country.’²⁷ This Treaty not only defined the status of the Kurdish people and their language in Turkey but also underpinned the state’s Kurdish policy of the early years.

Hamit Bozarslan notes that ‘official state policy either denied the very existence of a distinct group called Kurds or presented Kurds as a threat to Turkey and the Turks as a national entity.’²⁸ Accordingly, Kurdish was not inherently a language but a dialect, and those who claimed to be Kurds in Turkey ‘had forgotten their “Turkishness.”’²⁹ Stephen May notes that the treatment of a language as a dialect constitutes a strategy used to justify and bolster the official status of the majority language in a given context.³⁰ In the Turkish case, the treatment of Kurdish as a dialect allowed for suppressing any nationalistic attempts at expressing a distinct linguistic identity and thereby denying the use of Kurdish.³¹ However, Mesut Yeğen challenges the idea that the state’s discourse concealed the exclusion of Kurdish identity.³² Instead, Yeğen argues that the state’s discourse played a constructive role in this exclusion rather than being a “‘linguistic” epiphenomenon of that practice.’³³ In parallel, Donald Bloxham contends that the struggle against the Kurds was framed in

²⁵ See 1.1. ‘The Origins of Turkey’s Kurdish Conflict, pp. 52-53.

²⁶ Dicle Cemiloğlu, ‘Language Policy and National Unity: The Dilemma of the Kurdish Language in Turkey’, 2009 <<http://repository.upenn.edu/curej/97/>> [accessed 3 July 2015], 1-83 (p. 28).

²⁷ Svante E. Cornell, ‘The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics’, in *Dangerous Neighborhood: Contemporary Issues in Turkey’s Foreign Relations*, ed. by Michael Radu (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2003), pp. 123-137 (p. 127).

²⁸ Hamit Bozarslan, ‘Kurds and the Turkish State’, in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. by Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 333-356 (p. 333).

²⁹ Welat Zeydanlioğlu, ‘Turkey’s Kurdish Language Policy’, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 217 (2012), 99-125 (p. 101).

³⁰ Stephen May, ‘Language Policy and Minority Rights’, in *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*, ed. by Thomas Ricento (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), pp. 255-272 (p. 261).

³¹ Bozarslan, p. 333.

³² Mesut Yeğen, ‘The Turkish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish Identity’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 32 (1996), 216-229.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

the state's rhetoric as a fight against the influence of religion and reactionary traditionalism.³⁴ Therefore, denial was complemented by the exclusion of words such as 'Kurd' or 'Kurdish.'

In terms of the changes in the status and use of Kurdish, the 1980 coup had a dramatic and long-lasting effect on the language. The military government (1980-1983) drafted a new constitution in 1982 and provided a constitutional basis for the exclusion of linguistic rights. For example, Law 2932 stipulated that 'the mother tongue of Turkish citizens was Turkish.'³⁵ Without explicitly referring to Kurdish, the law also banned 'the languages other than those which were the primary official languages of states recognised by the Turkish state.'³⁶ Article 26 stated that no language prohibited by law shall be used in the expression and dissemination of thought. Further, Article 28/2 stated that 'no publications or broadcasts may be made in any language prohibited by law.'³⁷ Article 42 provided that 'no language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institutions of training or education.'³⁸ Apart from the abolition of Law 2932 in 1991, the legislation of certain ethnolinguistic rights, such as education and broadcasting in Kurdish only took place in the 2000s. Although Kurdish broadcasting was legalised in 2002, it was limited to four hours a week until 2009 when all the restrictions were removed.

The Turkish state's policy towards the Kurdish language has been discussed in the contexts of linguistic rights and minority language rights (MLR) as an example of 'linguistic assimilation' and 'linguicide.' Accordingly, linguistic assimilation is described as 'the belief that everyone, regardless of origin, should learn the dominant language of the society.'³⁹ Welat Zeydanlioğlu suggests reading the history of modern

³⁴ Donald Bloxham, 'Changing Perceptions of State Violence: Turkey's "Westward" Development through Anglo-Saxon Eyes', in *Myths of Europe*, ed. by Richard Littlejohns and Sara Soncini (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 223-234 (p. 230).

³⁵ Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Sertaç Bucak, 'Killing a Mother Tongue - How the Kurds are Deprived of Linguistic Human Rights', in *Linguistic Human Rights. Overcoming Linguistic Discrimination*, ed. by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Phillipson (Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 347-370 (pp. 355-356).

³⁶ Zeydanlioğlu, p. 110.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 110.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 110.

³⁹ Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 380.

Turkey as ‘the long-term policy of annihilating the Kurdish language.’⁴⁰ Further, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas uses ‘linguicide’ and ‘linguistic genocide’ to highlight the deliberate extermination of the language as the outcome of Turkey’s Kurdish language policy. In comparison, ‘language replacement’ and ‘language loss’, which describe that one must learn the official language at the expense of her/his first language, are used in MLR as relatively less neutral terms to refer to the Kurdish case in Turkey.

Overall, the literature underlines the use of force and annihilation in the historical development of the Kurdish language in Turkey. When compared with linguicide or language assimilation, the term ‘silencing’ is arguably more relevant to understand the implications of the official language policy on the use and status of Kurdish. This is mainly because silencing encompasses both explicit (such as the language ban) and implicit (stigmatisation and de-glorification of a language and speakers of that language) forms of imposed silences. The functions of silencing and its relevance to the Turkish case will help us address the interplay between silence and translation in discussing the contexts of mediation between the speakers of Turkish and Kurdish in the research films. The following section provides an overview of the literature on the uses of translation and interpreting in film.

5.3. Functions of Translation in Multilingual Films

Multilingualism and translation are ‘inextricably linked’, since translation takes place ‘within and in between multilingual entities.’⁴¹ In most cases, extra- or intra-diegetic interpreting techniques accompany multilingual interactions in a film. Intra-diegetic interpreting techniques are ‘forms of translation contained within the narrative structure of the film’, whereas extra-diegetic ones are placed onto the narrative.⁴² Subtitling, dubbing and voiceover constitute examples of extra-diegetic interpreting techniques.⁴³ Among these, dubbing is noted as having the greatest streamlining effect

⁴⁰ Zeydanlioğlu, p. 105.

⁴¹ Reine Meylaerts, ‘Multilingualism and Translation’, in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. by Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2010), pp. 227-230 (p. 227).

⁴² Michael Cronin, *Translation Goes to the Movies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 116.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

on the complexity and variety of the character network and the intense singularity of each person, which form the centre of the polyglot film.⁴⁴ Studying the translation of multilingual films is beyond the scope of this chapter, which focuses on the portrayals of diegetic interpreting in the selected films on the conflict. However, the presence or absence of extra-diegetic translation may inform the function of diegetic interpreting in a film, and vice versa, as will be shown in the following section. Therefore, it is important and relevant to note here that social and political factors underlie the widespread use of subtitling or dubbing in a specific context.

These factors are largely affected by the cultural and linguistic identity of a nation.⁴⁵ For instance, the predominance of dubbing in France has been partly attributed to ‘a desire to protect the national language against foreign influence.’⁴⁶ However, the emergence of dubbing as the standard practice in countries such as Germany, Italy and Spain in the 1930s pertained to the political agenda to control film content and impose censorship. For instance, dubbing constituted the only permitted mode of translation in Italy during the 1930s, since Mussolini prohibited non-dubbed foreign films from entering the country.⁴⁷ Following in the footsteps of Italy and Germany, Spain imposed dubbing by law in 1941 during the Franco regime, to ‘manipulate the content of foreign productions and to reaffirm the unity and national identity of the country through language.’⁴⁸

Additionally, the target audience may also play a significant role in choosing the mode of translation to be used for a film. In contrast with dubbing, subtitles ‘signal otherness in a direct and immediate way’, while allowing the audience to hear the

⁴⁴ Chris Wahl, ‘Discovering a Genre: The Polyglot Film’, *Cinemascope 1 – Independent Film Journal*, 2005. <http://www.madadayo.it/Cinemascope_archive/cinemascope.net/articolo07_n1.html> [accessed 15 July 2013].

⁴⁵ Martine Danan, ‘Dubbing as an Expression of Nationalism’, *Meta: Journal des traducteurs*, 36.4 (1991), 606-614 (p. 606).

⁴⁶ Wai-Ping Yau, ‘Translation and Film: Dubbing, Subtitling, Adaptation and Remaking’, in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. by Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2014), pp. 492-503 (p. 493).

⁴⁷ Carla Mereu, ‘Censorial Interferences in the Dubbing of Foreign Films in Fascist Italy: 1927-1943’, *Meta: Journal des traducteurs*, 572 (2012), 294-309 (p. 297).

⁴⁸ Jorge Diaz-Cintas, ‘Film Censorship in Franco's Spain: The Transforming Power of Dubbing’, *Perspectives*, (2018), 1-19 (p. 5).

original soundtrack.⁴⁹ Subtitling also implicitly ‘promotes the use of a foreign language as an everyday function in addition to creating an interest in a foreign culture.’⁵⁰ Especially in the case of a multilingual film, the use of subtitling reminds viewers of the multilingual nature of characters and does justice to the representation of linguistic diversity. However, using the single-language subtitles may also bring with it the risk of blurring the multilingual character of a film.⁵¹ This is particularly valid when there is no diegetic translation, and it is not clear from the plot that there are communities speaking two or more languages.⁵² Consequently, extra-diegetic translation may highlight or obscure multilingualism, depending on the presence or absence of translation and interpreting in a film.

On the other hand, the primary aim of multilingual films is ‘not to make the film more accessible to all audiences but to represent language diversity as its protagonists experience it.’⁵³ Relatedly, the decision to incorporate multiple languages in a film may also constitute ‘a strategy for a critical assessment of linguistic and social hierarchies.’⁵⁴ In such cases, the viewer may be confronted with an incomprehensible language, which is left untranslated in film, to produce an effect of alienation.⁵⁵ Therefore, the effect that a director aims to create in the audience is also ‘at

⁴⁹ Cronin, p. 115.

⁵⁰ Danan, p. 613.

⁵¹ Christine Heiss, ‘Dubbing Multilingual Films: A New Challenge?’, *Meta: Journal des traducteurs*, 49.1 (2004), 208-220 (pp. 215-216).

⁵² Irene de Higes-Andino, ‘The Translation of Multilingual Films: Modes, Strategies, Constraints and Manipulation in the Spanish Translations of *It’s a Free World*’, *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series- Themes in Translation Studies*, 13 (2014), 211–231 (p. 222).

⁵³ Verena Berger and Miya Komori, ‘Introduction’, in *Polyglot Cinema: Migration and Transcultural Narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*, ed. by Verena Berger and Miya Komori (Berlin: LIT Verlag Münster, 2010), pp. 7-12 (p. 9).

⁵⁴ Alison Smith, ‘All Quiet on the Filmic Front? Codeswitching and the Representation of Multilingual Europe in *La Grande Illusion* (Jean Renoir, 1937) and *Joyeux Noël* (Christian Carion, 2005)’, *Journal of Romance Studies*, 10.2 (2010), 37-52 (pp. 37-38).

⁵⁵ Heiss, p. 218.

considerable risk of disappearing or having its subversive potential downplayed in translation.’⁵⁶

However, in the cases when subtitling or dubbing is not welcome, diegetic interpreting may be deployed as ‘a film’s only mode of translation’ that helps the audience to comprehend foreign dialogues.⁵⁷ While this may be performed by a professional interpreter, diegetic interpreting may also be provided by a character, who happens to mediate thanks to her/his presence in the environment and knowledge of the languages involved.⁵⁸ Additionally, diegetic interpreting can take place in the form of self-translation when a character translates her/his own words for another person in the environment.⁵⁹ In parallel with the multiplicity of the ways in which translation can be incorporated, the presence or absence of diegetic translation takes on different roles and meanings. For instance, in multilingual films where the themes of travel, exploration or migration are involved, conflicts are likely to find expression on the linguistic level. In such cases, translation may contribute to ‘the resolution of a conflict, or alternatively, the absence or mismanagement of interlinguistic mediation may become the main obstacle to a solution.’⁶⁰ Therefore, films may address the central position and responsibility that translators and interpreters have in multilingual communication.

Relatedly, the fictionalised representations of translators and interpreters can be treated as a source that offers insights into the predominant perception and conception of translation in a specific context. In doing so, they can both contribute to the public image of the profession and provide an understanding of the societal implications of

⁵⁶ Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman, ‘Fictional Representations of Multilingualism and Translation’, *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series–Themes in Translation Studies*, 4 (2005), 11-34 (p. 28).

⁵⁷ O’Sullivan, p. 81.

⁵⁸ Carol O’Sullivan, ‘Multilingualism at the Multiplex: A New Audience for Screen Translation?’, *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series–Themes in Translation Studies*, 6 (2008), 81-95 (p. 83).

⁵⁹ Juan José Martínez-Sierra, José Louis Martí-Ferriol, Irene de Higes-Andino, Ana M. Prats-Rodríguez and Frederic Chaume, ‘Linguistic Diversity in Spanish Immigration Films: A Translational Approach’, in *Polyglot Cinema: Migration and Transcultural Narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*, ed. by Verena Berger and Miya Komori (Berlin: LIT Verlag Münster, 2010), pp. 15-29 (p. 22).

⁶⁰ Delabastita and Grutman, p. 24.

translation.⁶¹ In a similar vein, Michael Cronin notes the lack of a ‘sustained attempt to examine the thematisation of translation in films’ and the potential of diegetic translators and interpreters as ‘a rich intertextual resource’ for the teaching of translation.⁶² In Cronin’s view, these films can be used to initiate discussions with students about several topics, pertinent to the practice and theorisation of translation, such as fidelity versus infidelity, domestication versus foreignisation, and visibility versus invisibility.⁶³

Indeed, the studies on the role of diegetic interpreting in film are relatively fewer, in comparison with the research on extra-diegetic translation in the field of audio-visual translation. The reason may be that this area of research has received consistent scrutiny only since the turn of the millennium.⁶⁴ The rise in the number of multilingual films can also be deemed as a factor in the increased visibility of translation and interpreting in film. For instance, noting the emergence of translation as a central topic in literature and film, Klaus Kaindl coins the term ‘transfiction’ to discuss ‘the introduction and (increased) use of translation-related phenomena in fiction.’⁶⁵ Existing scholarship, though still emerging, provides significant observations on the functions of diegetic interpreting to be taken as the reference points for the analysis in this chapter.

To start with the variety of terminology that appears in the literature, some scholars use ‘filmic language-helper’ and ‘linguistic go-between’ to refer in general terms to these characters that mediate between the speakers of different languages.⁶⁶ Some

⁶¹ Klaus Kaindl, ‘Fictional Representations of Translators and Interpreters’, in *Researching Translation and Interpreting*, ed. by Claudia V. Angelelli and Brian James Baer (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 71-82 (p. 72).

⁶² Cronin, p. xi.

⁶³ Ibid., p. xi.

⁶⁴ Kaindl, p. 72.

⁶⁵ Klaus Kaindl, ‘Going Fictional! Translators and Interpreters in Literature and Film’, in *Transfiction: Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction*, ed. by Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2014), pp. 1-26 (p. 4).

⁶⁶ Delia Chiaro, ‘Mimesis, Reality and Fictitious Intermediation’, in *Non-professional Interpreting and Translation in the Media*, ed. by Rachele Antonini and Chiara Bucaria (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), pp. 23-42 (p. 25).

others opt for more specific terms to reflect the backgrounds and characteristics of these diegetic interpreters. For instance, Giuseppe de Bonis uses ‘non-professional interpreter’ and ‘lay interpreter’ as interchangeable terms to highlight a character’s lack of experience and training in interpreting.⁶⁷ Delia Chiaro also deploys the term ‘fortuitous interpreter’ to note the element of coincidence in situations where some characters happen to act as interpreters on screen.⁶⁸ In contrast, liaison interpreting is utilised to indicate that the ‘interpreter’ character has a professional background in translation.⁶⁹ This instance of interpreting differs from conference interpreting in two respects. It is, first, two-way in that ‘the interpreter works from and into both languages’, and, second, consecutive in that ‘the interpreter waits for the speaker to finish before speaking.’⁷⁰ The analysis in the present chapter will use the terms that de Bonis and Chiaro deploy in their works, since the characters who appear as interpreters in the research films are non-professional.

In terms of its diegetic functions, the scholarship notes that translation and interpreting may be deployed to slow down the pace of the story and thus increase suspense.⁷¹ Relatedly, diegetic interpreting may be employed to manipulate the viewer’s curiosity and create mystery.⁷² Additionally, directors may treat the socio-political potential of translational actions by addressing the ‘themes of movement such as migration, flight, displacement, wandering, restlessness or uprooting in film.’⁷³ Fictional representations of translators and interpreters in film may thus tap into the intricacies of operating between languages and cultures against the backdrop of political, religious and/or ethnic conflict. In depicting the intermediary position of interpreters in such tense situations, a film may recognise the ambivalent character of their identity as ‘invisible and ubiquitous, subordinate and powerful, faithful and dubious, oppressed and uncontrollable.’⁷⁴ This chapter will also note to what extent

⁶⁷ De Bonis, p. 44.

⁶⁸ Chiaro, p. 26.

⁶⁹ De Higes-Andino, p. 222.

⁷⁰ O’Sullivan (2011), p. 81.

⁷¹ De Bonis, p. 56.

⁷² Dirk Delabastita, ‘Fictional Representations’, in *The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies*, ed. by Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 109-112 (p. 109).

⁷³ Kaindl (2014), p. 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

these traits are featured in the portrayals of the characters performing linguistic mediation in the context of the armed conflict and consequent turmoil.

The literature also points out the questions of trust and loyalty as a salient aspect of the filmic depictions of translators and interpreters. Carol O'Sullivan highlights that the trope of the unreliable interpreter is a long-standing one in cinema, since the lack of trust in people who speak multiple languages creates space for comedy or suspense.⁷⁵ Likewise, Chiaro states that 'lies and deceit govern much polylingual interaction in which fictional interpreters are concerned.'⁷⁶ De Bonis suggests considering qualities such as linguistic proficiency, objectivity and detachment to assess the reliability of a diegetic interpreter.⁷⁷ However, Cronin draws attention to the role of competing loyalties involved in an interpreter's task, noting that loyalty is largely presented as a choice concerning translation.⁷⁸ Therefore, in comparison with the others, Cronin's approach may be viewed as more nuanced in reminding us that diegetic interpreters may have to negotiate their divided loyalties during the process of mediation in precarious circumstances.⁷⁹

The significance of reliability for successful communication is also intertwined with the translator's or interpreter's power that can be used or abused for different purposes. Gemma King indicates that the interpreter is largely portrayed as 'a figure equipped with the potential for wielding power.'⁸⁰ These characters, especially those in a position of submission or oppression, exploit their multilingualism to exert authority or manipulate others to renegotiate hierarchical relations.⁸¹ Likewise, the questions of power and treachery may also come to the fore in depicting the multiple

⁷⁵ O'Sullivan (2011), p. 87.

⁷⁶ Chiaro, p. 28.

⁷⁷ De Bonis, pp. 51-52.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 50.

⁷⁹ Cronin, xvi.

⁸⁰ Gemma King, 'The Power of the Treacherous Interpreter: Multilingualism in Jacques Audiard's *Un prophète*', *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series- Themes in Translation Studies*, 13 (2014), 78-92 (p. 79).

⁸¹ Gemma King, *Decentring France: Multilingualism and Power in Contemporary French Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 6.

faces of the interpreter in times of war and conflict as a misinformer, manipulative language teacher, intercultural mediator and traitor.⁸²

This overview illustrates the variety of the approaches taken in the literature to analyse fictional translators and interpreters in film. Michael Cronin adopts a genre-based approach and demonstrates the functions of diegetic translation and interpreting in a wide-ranging number of genres from western to comedy, from thriller to science fiction.⁸³ Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman classify fictional representations based on two variables that determine the translator's or interpreter's power: 'the importance of the message that is to be communicated, and the distance between the cultures which enter into communication via the translator.'⁸⁴ Accordingly, they identify four categories of communication: the one between gods and humans, intergalactic communication, international or intercontinental communication, and translation as a subjective experience.⁸⁵ This fourth category refers to 'the multilingual encounters and experiences of individual travellers, immigrants, nomads, expatriates, explorers, refugees, exiles, and the like (involving changes of geographical space).'⁸⁶

Gemma King focuses on contemporary multilingual French cinema to discuss 'the delicate and crucial role of translation in a social landscape marked by linguistic hybridity and intercultural conflict.'⁸⁷ In a similar vein, Juan José Martínez-Sierra et al. examine how foreign languages are conveyed to the Spanish audience in Spanish polyglot films.⁸⁸ In doing so, the authors examine whether these languages are translated or not, and the possible reasons for the use of a specific translation strategy. For instance, self-translation is presented as less foreignising than extra-diegetic translation or liaison interpreting, since it 'exposes the audience to the foreign language, but immediately mitigates any possible shock by translating the dialogues

⁸² Kayoko Takeda, 'The Interpreter as Traitor: Multilingualism in *Guizi lai le (Devils on the Doorstep)*', *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series-Themes in Translation Studies*, 13 (2014), 93–111.

⁸³ See Cronin (2009).

⁸⁴ Delabastita and Grutman, p. 19.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 19–24.

⁸⁶ Delabastita, p. 111.

⁸⁷ King (2014), p. 78.

⁸⁸ Martínez-Sierra et al., p. 16.

into Spanish.’⁸⁹ Therefore, each translation strategy marks a point on a continuum with the poles of domestication and foreignisation, depending on the degree of its alienating effect on the Spanish audience.

While drawing on some of the insights that this scholarship provides into the functions of diegetic interpreting, the chapter will take its cue from Giuseppe de Bonis’ approach in his analysis of the representation of non-professional interpreting in film.⁹⁰ De Bonis poses specific questions to identify how diegetic interpreting operates on both diegetic and extra-diegetic levels, that is, the interaction between characters and the viewers’ understanding of what they see and hear on screen, respectively.⁹¹ These lines of inquiry include who performs the mediation; how the interpreting is processed (that is, whether the lay interpreter is reliable or unreliable); why the interpreting is done (that is, whether the purpose of the mediation is to mitigate or exacerbate conflict, to facilitate or hamper communication).⁹² The following analysis will seek answers to these questions in pinpointing the role of diegetic interpreting in each film’s treatment of the subject matter in relation to the official discourse on the conflict and related phenomena. An inquiry into the audience’s reception of diegetic interpreting in the films falls outside the scope of this thesis. Hence, in establishing the possible function of diegetic interpreting on the extra-diegetic level, the chapter will discuss how diegetic interpreting provides an understanding of the political and sociocultural contexts of their production.

5.4. Functions of Diegetic Interpreting in the Selected Films

This section will discuss the contexts and functions of diegetic interpreting in the selected multilingual films to identify the interplay between silence, silencing, and translation. In doing so, we will first note the absence of diegetic interpreting in some of them and examine its role in shaping the nature of the multilingual interaction in

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

⁹⁰ De Bonis, pp. 43-64.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 44.

⁹² Ibid., p. 44.

them. Second, we will consider the depictions of Kurdish locals as lingua-cultural mediators for the Turkish characters travelling to the southeast region of Turkey. Third, we will focus on two examples of diegetic interpreting which highlight the interpreter's (ab)use of linguistic power in the presence of bias and antagonism between two sides of the conversation. The fourth sub-section will discuss the role of some Kurdish characters as language teachers as part of their mediation. The analysis will thus establish the role of diegetic interpreting, and the lack thereof, in reflecting and challenging the asymmetrical relations of power between the speakers of Kurdish and Turkish in the context of the conflict.

5.4.1. The Absence of Diegetic Interpreting in the Films

Translation is conspicuous by its absence in three of the research films. No diegetic interpreting accompanies multilingual exchanges, and no characters take on the role of an interpreter in *Journey to the Sun*, *Min Dît* and *Autumn*. Differentiating between each film, this section will identify any links between the absence of diegetic interpreting and the silencing effect of the official language policy on the use of Kurdish in Turkey. As noted in the previous chapter, *Autumn* constitutes an anomaly in terms of not treating the conflict and not incorporating any Kurdish. Therefore, the absence of translation in this film will be discussed with respect to the use of the Hamshen language, another minority language affected by the language policy. Before proceeding further, it is important to elucidate the relevance of non-translation (or no-translation) to the absence of diegetic interpreting.

Irene de Higes-Andino defines 'non-translation' as 'the absence of translation mode.'⁹³ In identifying the translation strategies employed in a selected corpus of Spanish multilingual films, Martinez-Sierra et al. also use the term 'no-translation' to refer to the cases when immigrant characters speak their languages and no translation is provided at all for the Spanish audience.⁹⁴ Therefore, non-translation emerges as the combined effect of the absence of both diegetic and extra-diegetic translation and interpreting in a film. This lack of translation can be linked to the insignificance of

⁹³ De Higes-Andino, p. 222.

⁹⁴ Martinez-Sierra et al., p. 24.

these ‘foreign’ dialogues for the development of the plot, or the director’s desire to reflect an immigrant character’s feeling of alienation or of not belonging in the environment.⁹⁵ The authors present no-translation as the most foreignising translation strategy in terms of its alienating effect on the Spanish audience. Likewise, Elena di Giovanni argues that the total absence of translation for the musical numbers of American film musicals screened in Italy creates gaps in the narrative and the effect of interruption and confusion for the Italian viewers.⁹⁶ While focusing on the reception of non-translation in the target culture, these works do not elaborate on any possible sociocultural and political reasons for these absences.

Crucially, the term ‘non-translation’ is also used to denote ‘absented or suppressed translations’, that is, ““translations” that have not been made, or “translations” that do not exist at all’ due to censorship over a piece of literature in a context.⁹⁷ In some cases, non-translations may be triggered by a desire ‘to conform to the country’s dominant ideology and social conventions so that potential conflict with government censors can be avoided.’⁹⁸ Therefore, non-translation is ‘one of the many cultural consequences of the political institution of censorship, which [...] is set up to prevent circulation of material that is felt to threaten official ideology.’⁹⁹ The role of censorship in this phenomenon also points to the changeability of conditions which may shift the status of non-translations into ‘permissible’ or ‘unsuppressed’ translations.¹⁰⁰ Although non-translation is used in these works to discuss the prohibition of certain literature, it can also be applied to the implications of censorship on film translation, as it happened in Turkey. Therefore, identifying non-translations in films may offer an insight into

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

⁹⁶ Elena Di Giovanni, ‘The American Film Musical in Italy’, *The Translator*, 14.2 (2008), 295-318 (p. 311).

⁹⁷ Zaixi Tan, ‘Censorship in Translation: The Dynamics of Non-, Partial and Full Translations in the Chinese Context’, *Meta: Journal des traducteurs*, 62.1 (2017), 45–68 (p. 49).

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 50.

⁹⁹ João Ferreira Duarte, ‘The Politics of Non-Translation: A Case Study in Anglo-Portuguese Relations’, *TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction*, 13.1 (2000), 95–112 (p. 98).

¹⁰⁰ Tan, p. 50.

the limiting aspects of the official language policy and the relationship between the speakers of the official and minority languages.

In Yeşim Ustaoglu's *Journey to the Sun*, Mehmet's lack of knowledge of Kurdish becomes pronounced in the southeast of Turkey where he travels to take Berzan's coffin to his village in the Turkish-Iraqi border. During this journey, Mehmet meets elderly people either not speaking a word of Turkish or understanding Turkish, but preferring to communicate in Kurdish. For instance, in one sequence, Mehmet stops a minibus to ask for help with the coffin when his truck breaks down. Hearing that the coffin is not empty, the bus driver does not agree to help Mehmet. At that moment, an old woman sitting in the minibus reacts to the driver in Kurdish by insisting that he should give the boy a hand. Mehmet seems lost and follows events around him, only from the actions and gestures of these locals. Although the Kurdish woman does not utter a word of Turkish to Mehmet, they communicate through eye contact without speaking one another's language. Therefore, the film does not present the absence of translation as the source of any miscommunication or linguistic misunderstanding between the speakers of Turkish and Kurdish.

The omission of diegetic interpreting in the film was more likely to be an obligatory decision rather than a deliberate choice on the part of the director. As noted in Chapter Two, the ban on the use of Kurdish in broadcasting was still in effect at the time of the film's release in 1999. To bypass censorship, Ustaoglu released her film without Turkish subtitles for the Kurdish dialogues, since subtitling would 'give a substantive reality to the existence of difference', and constitute 'a form of recognition.'¹⁰¹ Further, the director also excluded diegetic interpreting, rendering these dialogues non-translations for the national screenings, in order not to suggest Kurdish as a distinct language that was translatable. Consequently, this instance of non-translation testifies to the official treatment of (diegetic) translation in Turkey as a tool through which a film can challenge the status of non-recognition of a language.

¹⁰¹ Cronin, p. 115.

Despite the limiting effect of this censorship, it is possible to suggest that Ustaoglu uses the ban to her advantage to reflect and even reverse the asymmetrical relationship between Turkish and Kurdish. On the one hand, most speakers of Kurdish in the film can communicate in both languages, whereas the Turkish Mehmet cannot. On the other hand, rendering a banned language visible and audible takes on a subversive role, since the total absence of translation puts the Turkish-speaking viewers at a disadvantage in following the dialogues in a language other than Turkish. This is particularly the case in comparison with the bilingual Kurdish-speaking viewers who do not need a translation. Further, Ustaoglu highlights the communicative value of Kurdish and excludes linguistic bias in depicting Mehmet's interaction with the locals in the southeast. The director thus minimises the risk of making the Kurdish dialogues, left untranslated, sound like barbaric noise.

Diegetic interpreting is also absent in *Autumn* (2008) and *Min Dît* (2009). However, the absence can be treated as a directorial decision in these cases rather than a by-product of censorship, given the total lifting of the language ban in 2002. Therefore, these films did not constitute instances of non-translation, since the extra-diegetic translation was provided for their national screenings despite the absence of diegetic interpreting. Monolingual Turkish viewers were thus able to follow the story without feeling lost thanks to the presence of Turkish subtitles for the dialogues in languages other than Turkish. As noted in Chapter Four, linguistic and ethnic conflict is not relevant to the representation of the Hamshen or Georgian language in the Turkish context, as in the case of Kurdish.¹⁰² Therefore, it is important to distinguish between the possible motivations for and implications of the lack of diegetic interpreting in these two films.

In Özcan Alper's *Autumn*, which portrays the homecoming of a former hunger striker, Yusuf, after ten years of imprisonment, all the dialogues between Yusuf and his mother are uttered in the Hamshen language. They do not resort to any occasional

¹⁰² See 4.4.3. 'Hamshen as the 'Indoor' Language and Foreign Languages', p. 193.

use of Turkish or the help of a third party acting as a mediator. The examples include the dramatic scenes when Yusuf and his mother first meet after ten years, and the ones when his mother remembers the past and shares her sufferings in his absence. Additionally, unlike the elderly people with no knowledge of Turkish whom Mehmet meets in the southeast in *Journey to the Sun*, the older generations of Yusuf's hometown are shown to be able to speak Turkish. For instance, Yusuf's mother is seen speaking Turkish to the neighbour's child, which can be interpreted as a signal for the linguistic characterisation of the younger generations as monolingual. Consequently, the multilingualism of both locals and immigrants in this small town on the Turkish-Georgian border obviates the need for self-translation and someone to act as an interpreter.

Autumn also incorporates instances of code-switching, that is, 'the alternation between two languages, dialects or language varieties.'¹⁰³ Codeswitching in film may be deployed as a device for exerting authority over one another or restructuring asymmetrical relations.¹⁰⁴ However, its use in Alper's film signals no power struggle or conflict of interest between the characters. For instance, in a scene when Yusuf speaks Turkish with his sister on the phone, he is seen switching from Turkish to the Hamshen language to ask his mother to come to the phone. In the absence of diegetic interpreting and linguistic prejudice, codeswitching between the younger and older generations can be deemed as the film's effort to record and reinforce the presence of this language community in Turkey. This is particularly valid, considering the recent change in the status of the Hamshen language from 'vulnerable to 'definitely endangered', according to UNESCO's research on endangered languages in 2018.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, while it used to be a language spoken by most children, albeit possibly only in certain domains, 'definitely endangered' indicates that 'children no longer

¹⁰³ Lawrie Barnes, 'The Role of Code-switching in the Creation of an Outsider Identity in the Bilingual Film', *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, 38.3 (2012), 247-260 (p. 247).

¹⁰⁴ See Smith (2010), King (2015) and Barnes (2012).

¹⁰⁵ *Europe Breaking News*, 'UNESCO: Dialect of Hamshen Armenians endangered in Turkey', 18 August 2018, <<https://www.europebreakingnews.net/2018/08/unesco-dialect-of-hamshen-armenians-endangered-in-turkey/>> [accessed 15 November 2018].

learn the language as a “mother tongue” in the home.’¹⁰⁶ When considered from that angle, codeswitching serves an informative and premonitory function in *Autumn* in terms of manifesting the risk of extinction that this minority language faces.

Miraz Bezar’s film *Min Dît* re-enacts the everyday uses of the Turkish and Kurdish languages in the Diyarbakır province in the southeast of Turkey. However, unlike *Autumn*, Bezar’s film forges a clear link between linguistic bias and the conflict in its treatment of unsolved murders and disappearances in the 1990s. Despite the use of linguistic diversity, the film does not incorporate any multilingual exchanges or instances of code-switching in the conversations. It is noted above that a film’s deployment of codeswitching may be intended as a strategic act rather than a manifestation of ‘mere fidelity to a previously established external reality.’¹⁰⁷ However, the absence of code-switching can be as revealing as the ways in which it is incorporated, especially when it is coupled with linguistic prejudice and the lack of diegetic interpreting.

Indeed, while no Turkish character speaks Kurdish, Kurdish characters use Turkish only when they need to communicate with the Turkish-speaking ones. Further, there is no scene in which Kurdish is spoken when a Turkish character is around. Sharon Deckert and Caroline Vickers note that switching between distinct languages involves an act of boundary-crossing in that it ‘reflects movement across perceived social or ethnic boundaries.’¹⁰⁸ Hence, the film’s omission of language alternation and diegetic interpreting can be deemed as a signifier of the lack of interaction and empathetic understanding between the Kurds and Turks who only speak the official language in the context of the conflict. The following section discusses the portrayals of the

¹⁰⁶ UNESCO, ‘UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger’, <<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/atlas-of-languages-in-danger/>> [accessed 15 November 2018].

¹⁰⁷ Smith, p. 37.

¹⁰⁸ Sharon Deckert and Caroline Vickers, *An Introduction to Socio-linguistics: Society and Identity* (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 13–14.

interpreters in the films which treat the speakers of Turkish as the outsiders in the southeast.

5.4.2. The Interpreter as the Outsider's Lingua-Cultural Mediator

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the theme of travel is deployed in three of the research films to signify the outsidership of Turkish characters both to the conflict-afflicted region and to the full scope of the conflict. Travelling to the southeastern region on a mission, these characters do not speak Kurdish, another signifier of their outsider identity, and find themselves in situations where they need to communicate with locals with no knowledge of Turkish. Except for *Journey to the Sun*, the 'outsider' characters in *Future Lasts Forever* and *On the Way to School* receive the help of locals who act as their mediators in certain circumstances. Drawing on Giuseppe de Bonis' term 'lingua-cultural mediator', this section will discuss these locals as 'the outsider's lingua-cultural mediators', since they help these characters to both overcome the language barrier and orient themselves into the unfamiliar aspects of the region. Interpreting serves a different function in each film in parallel with the outsider character's interaction with the speakers of Kurdish and the treatment of intercultural communication in the story.

In *Future Lasts Forever*, the conversations between the speakers of Turkish and Kurdish do not articulate any tension or bias against one another. On the contrary, the film highlights an effort to understand one another's perspectives on both sides. For instance, Sumru, a polyglot herself, comes to Diyarbakır as part of a field trip for her master's thesis on the elegies of Anatolia. While collecting data through interviews and listening to those who suffer the implications of the conflict, she also shares her own story and the reasons for her trip to the city. When asked about her source of inspiration for this research topic, she refers to the quote from Yaşar Kemal, the Turkish novelist of Kurdish origin, 'I wish all the elegies in Anatolia can be recorded in their own languages.' The film's emphasis on the equal treatment of languages is thus conveyed through the portrayal of Sumru, who does not seem disturbed by the prevalence of Kurdish in the city and the status of Turkish as a secondary language on the part of some locals.

Nevertheless, Sumru's ease of orientation does not rule out her need for translation due to her inability to speak Kurdish. This is particularly the case during the interviews with the relatives of the disappeared who witnessed some extrajudicial killings in the 1990s. The interviewees narrate their witness testimonies either in Turkish or Kurdish, depending on their language skills and preferred language of communication. In the scenes in which an interviewee narrates in Kurdish, a woman is seen sitting next to Sumru and performing whispered interpreting. It involves the interpreter working simultaneously without a booth by whispering the interpretation into the ear of the receiver.¹⁰⁹ The film does not provide an insight into the process of preparing for the interviews, selecting the interviewees and deciding on the interpreting technique to be used, other than suggesting that Sumru communicates through a language go-between.

Whispered interpreting is used in a wide range of situations from community-interpreting settings¹¹⁰ to court interpreting,¹¹¹ to the contexts of interpreting in international institutions such as the European Union and the United Nations.¹¹² Being a peripheral type of simultaneous interpreting, this technique is largely practised when there is a lack of suitable technical equipment needed for standard in-booth simultaneous interpreting.¹¹³ However, it is only feasible for a small number of listeners who are usually the speakers of a minority language in the given environment.¹¹⁴ Therefore, while rendering the role of mediation visible, whispered interpreting also obscures the interpreter's agency by making her/his voice barely audible and limiting the chances of evaluating the interpreting performance.

¹⁰⁹ Barbara Ahrens, 'Interpreting Techniques and Modes', in *The Encyclopaedia of Applied Linguistics*, ed. by Carol A. Chapelle (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), pp. 1-7 (p. 5).

¹¹⁰ Ann Corsellis, *Public Service Interpreting: The First Steps* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 25.

¹¹¹ Jakub E. Marszalenko, 'Three Stages of Interpreting in Japan's Criminal Process', *Language and Law/Linguagem e Direito*, 1.1 (2014), 174-187 (p. 186).

¹¹² Robert Neal Baxter, 'A Discussion of Chuchotage and Boothless Simultaneous as Marginal and Unorthodox Interpreting Modes', *The Translator*, 22.1 (2016), 59-71 (p. 61).

¹¹³ Bistra Alexieva, 'A Typology of Interpreter-Mediated Events', *The Translator*, 3.2 (1997), 153-174 (p. 158).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

These distinguishing aspects of whispered interpreting can be considered in relation to its use in *Future Lasts Forever*. The interviews take place at the Mesopotamia Solidarity and Culture Association for Families Who Lost their Relatives, which is a non-governmental organisation working closely with the relatives of the disappeared in Diyarbakır. The interpreter's identity, whether she is Kurdish or Turkish and whether she is a non-professional or professional interpreter, remains unknown. Whispered interpreting is provided exclusively for Sumru, suggesting that Turkish represents the minority language in that context. The interpreter's facilitating role is shown but not brought to the fore at all. On the contrary, the act of translation is downplayed in the film as is implied in the idea of 'recording the elegies in their own languages.'

On the other hand, the visible but inaudible presence of the mediator in this community-based environment enables the film to present the interviews in a documentary-like form without letting Sumru interrupt the narration or her interpreter's voice be heard. This unobtrusive incorporation of the mediation process allows for focusing the spectator's attention on the revelations about the disappearances. Nevertheless, the interpreter becomes part of this situation in which she participates due to her physical presence in the environment. Therefore, these scenes strike a chord with Cronin's point about the testimonial function of interpreters, as the mediator 'bears witness' to the dramatic disclosures about the execution of the killings.¹¹⁵

In portraying the implications of the conflict, the film also does not address the language ban on Kurdish or the exclusionary aspects of the official language policy in Turkey. Likewise, it does not present ethnic and language plurality as a triggering factor behind the killings. On the contrary, it capitalises on intercultural and multilingual communication as a way of reconciling with the unresolved grievances of the past. The film's omission of linguistic bias and tension between the Turkish and Kurdish characters highlights the sense of resentment toward the Turkish state and

¹¹⁵ Cronin, p. 111.

military officials as being the culprit for the human rights violations in the context of the conflict.

In contrast, *On the Way to School* centres on the linguistic underpinnings of the conflict rather than its violent repercussions. The documentary foregrounds the interplay between the language policy, silencing and translation through depicting Emre's predicament concerning his double status as an outsider in the southeastern region and an elementary teacher working for the Turkish state. Unlike Sumru, the inability to speak Kurdish is coupled in Emre's case by being a civil servant who is obliged to defend and implement the official language policy as part of his mission in the village. For instance, he introduces the ban on speaking Kurdish in the classroom on the first day of the classes. He reprimands or punishes students when they respond or do homework in Kurdish by asking them to stand on one leg in front of the blackboard. Crucially, the classroom scenes also show that some students reproduce the ban to gain recognition and appreciation from Emre by informing on their peers when they speak Kurdish.

The camera registers Emre's moments of desperation while striving to teach Turkish in the classroom. He is seen repeating the same sentence several times, sounding out the words or using gestures to get his point across. In many cases when none of his strategies works, he ends up violating his own rule and asking other students with some knowledge of Turkish to mediate between him and those who do not understand Turkish. Zilkif stands out as a striking case with his silence and resistance to learning Turkish. On the first day of classes, Emre registers the students by asking their full names. However, he fails to trigger a response from Zilkif, despite calling out the student's name several times, as shown in Table 1. Showing no sign of comprehension, Zilkif only tells his name effortlessly when one student translates the question into Kurdish. Crucially, before that, Emre prompts students to ask him a question, without directly expressing his need for mediation. Emre's avoidance and hesitation can be attributed to anxiety due to the presence of a camera recording the conversations in the classroom. Additionally, Emre persists in mispronouncing the

student's name as 'Zülküf' rather than 'Zilkif', since the former is the Turkish equivalent of the same name. Hence, this scene reveals both Emre's unfamiliarity with Kurdish names and his tendency to assimilate what sounds foreign into the familiar.

There are also certain cases when Emre needs to communicate outside the classroom with some students and parents who do not speak Turkish. Rather than one specific character like Sakine in *Big Man, Little Love*, different locals take on the role of an interpreter for Emre in *On the Way to School*. For instance, after no student shows up on the first day of the school, Emre visits some of the students' houses by the help of a child who acts both as a guide and an interpreter for him. On another occasion, Emre visits another student's house, being accompanied by an adult villager, to understand the reasons for her failure to attend the classes. On the one hand, the documentary thus accentuates the role of interpreters in resolving linguistic incomprehension and misunderstandings. On the other hand, it emphasises the inevitability of the need for interpreting as a way of manifesting the invalidity of linguistic non-reciprocity as an option for the Turkish-speaking outsider. Therefore, interpreting sequences serve to both expose the dysfunctional aspects of the Turkish education system and undermine Emre's authority as being the only teacher and practitioner of the official language ideology in the given context.

Table 1: The role of interpreting in overcoming the language barrier between Emre and Zilkif [14:25-14:45]

Source dialogue in Turkish	English translation
Emre: Adın ne <u>senin</u> ? Adın ne?	Emre: What is your name? Your name?
Zilkif: ...	Zilkif: ...
Emre: <u>Zülküf mü</u> <u>senin</u> <u>adın</u> ?	Emre: Is <u>Zülküf</u> your name?
Zilkif: ...	Zilkif: ...
Emre: <u>Ses ver</u> !	Emre: Speak!
Zilkif: ...	Zilkif: ...
Emre: <u>Senin</u> <u>adın</u> <u>Zülküf mü</u> ?	Emre: Is your name <u>Zülküf</u> ?
Zilkif: ...	Zilkif: ...
Emre: <u>Çocuklar</u> , <u>bir soru sorun buna</u> .	Emre: Kids, ask him a question.
<u>Öğrenciler (Kürtçe)</u> : Zilkif, <u>diyor ki</u> <u>adın</u> <u>ne</u> .	Students (in Kurdish): Zilkif, he asks what your name is.
Zilkif: Zilkif.	Zilkif: Zilkif.

Additionally, the interpreting activity provides an opportunity for some of these villagers to reinforce the status of Kurdish as a distinct language in front of the camera. For instance, Emre invites the parents to a meeting at the school to discuss their children's progress. He shares the students' tendency to speak Kurdish in the classroom, urging the parents to speak Turkish at home. The Mukhtar, who attends the meeting as a parent, responds in a joking manner that Emre is learning a new foreign language thanks to these students. Subsequently, the man asks for Emre's permission to orally translate his requests for two female participants with no knowledge of Turkish. This instance exhibits the male dominance in lingua-cultural mediation for a male outsider in that environment, as all those children and adults who act as lay interpreters for Emre are male. Despite differing in their treatments of mediation, both films discussed here depict diegetic interpreting as a means of facilitating communication and orientation in the absence of prejudice between Turkish and Kurdish characters. The following section examines the portrayals of diegetic interpreters in the films where linguistic bias underpins the need for mediation.

5.4.3. The Reliable versus Unreliable Interpreter

The questions of trust and (ab)use of linguistic power come to the fore in the depictions of interpreters in the films which address a hierarchical and antagonistic relationship between Turkish and Kurdish characters in treating the conflict. Handan İpekçi's *Big Man, Little Love* and Reha Erdem's *Jîn* portray two distinct types of lay interpreters, both serving to break the silence of a Kurdish-speaking character who either does not know or refuses to speak Turkish. In İpekçi's film, interpreting is needed for Rıfat to communicate with Hejar, who is displaced from Diyarbakır due to the conflict and takes refuge in Rıfat's house next door after the police raid, killing her caretaker. In Erdem's film, interpreting is needed for the Lieutenant at the military post where Jîn is taken after failing to evade an identity check on the bus. Both films foreground the interplay between silence, silencing and translation, while situating the need for linguistic mediation in the context of the armed conflict.

To start with Sakine, the diegetic interpreter in İpekçi's film, she has been working as a cleaning lady at Rıfat's house for ten years. The viewer is provided with no information about Sakine's background, such as whether she also migrated from a southeastern province into İstanbul to flee the conflict, like Hejar. Addressing Rıfat as Uncle Rıfat rather than Mr Rıfat, Sakine treats him as if he is an elderly member of the family. Additionally, she is portrayed as an obedient figure who excuses Rıfat's cranky behaviour and acts carefully not to upset him. Although it is a professional relationship marked by respect and trust, the sense of intimidation and oppression is also discerned in their communication, which shapes the characterisation of Sakine as a reliable interpreter.

As noted in the previous chapter, Rıfat refuses to acknowledge linguistic diversity as a characteristic of Turkish society and, therefore, views Hejar's inability to speak Turkish as problematic. After being allowed into Rıfat's house, Hejar utters her first word 'mother' in Kurdish, a language which he fails to recognise. Sakine responds to Rıfat in an apologetic manner that she speaks Kurdish, while comforting the crying kid in that language. Despite their long-standing relationship, speaking her mother tongue turns Sakine into a potential suspect in Rıfat's eyes. Sakine explains in tears that she has no links to those killed in the police raid or any wrongdoings. This scene thus elucidates that Rıfat does not react to the use of any language, but of Kurdish. He forbids her and Hejar ever to speak Kurdish, replicating the official language policy, which was partly in effect at the time of the film's release in 2001.

Considered against this background, interpreting represents a break from silencing in that Rıfat permits the conditional use of Kurdish at home. However, Sakine does not provide unrequested interpreting for Rıfat to communicate with Hejar, despite the language barrier that stands between him and the girl. She suppresses her Kurdish identity in her working environment and abides by Rıfat's silencing without showing any resistance or resentment. Interpreting takes place only on the request of Rıfat, after he visits Hejar's relative Evdo in the suburbs of İstanbul and finds out that the girl's family was killed in the clashes between soldiers and militants in Diyarbakır. Having decided to adopt Hejar, Rıfat asks Sakine to mediate and learn the names of her

parents. Therefore, he deploys interpreting as an instrument to obtain information about Hejar's family, underscoring that it is a one-off situation.

The film suggests that Sakine has neither professional training nor previous experience in interpreting. From Rıfat's angle, Sakine's submissive behaviour and reliability rule out any questions about the use of manipulation or misinformation in her mediation. Rıfat asks her to extend his apology for slapping the girl the other day. Crucially, she embroiders in her interpreting by making her own additions as part of her mediation. Carol O'Sullivan indicates that verbal embroidery does not necessarily have any narrative significance and affect the integrity of an interpreter.¹¹⁶ While relaying his apology, Sakine adds that Rıfat is not going to beat her ever again. Therefore, her embroidery aims to serve a peace-making function to mitigate the conflict between Rıfat and Hejar.

However, Sakine's verbal embroidery also reaches the point of lying to the girl to make her provide the information that Rıfat needs. For instance, while asking Hejar about her parents' names, she says that if she says her mother's name, Rıfat will take her there. Sakine uses her position as a mediator to create a bond between them, since she welcomes Rıfat's decision to adopt the girl and provide for her needs. Despite Rıfat's hostile attitude toward the use of Kurdish at home and in general, Sakine praises Rıfat as a kind and benevolent person and asks the girl not to swear at him. Although this does not turn Sakine into a treacherous interpreter in pursuit of advancing her personal interests, her embroidery can be interpreted as a reflection of her loyalty to Rıfat.

While Sakine largely refrains from speaking with the girl at home due to Rıfat's ban, the task of interpreting also lends her the courage to be openly involved in Hejar's situation without restraint. Sakine apologises after Rıfat scolds her for getting too emotional and crying while translating that Hejar is waiting for Evdo to come and take

¹¹⁶ O'Sullivan (2011), p. 87.

her to her mother. Nevertheless, Sakine also takes her chance to show compassion for the girl and re-connect with her Kurdish identity during the process of mediation. Crucially, since subtitles were still unwelcome due to the partial language ban in 2001, Sakine's diegetic interpreting also served an extradiegetic function in facilitating the viewer to follow the story during the domestic screenings.

Likewise, in *Jîn*, interpreting takes place to mediate between a female Kurdish child, Jîn, and a male Turkish figure, the Lieutenant at the military post, who seeks to obtain information about the former. Jîn refuses to speak, pretending as if she does not speak Turkish. The Lieutenant does not comprehend how Jîn cannot speak a word of Turkish and calls someone for help. The film thus puts the audience in a more informed position about the girl's deliberate silence than the Turkish-speaking character on screen. The Kurdish villager, whom the Lieutenant calls on to mediate, can be described as a fortuitous interpreter, in Chiaro's terms, in that he happens to be present in the military post and ready to provide help at that moment.¹¹⁷ The film does not specify the villager's status or reasons for his availability in the military post, but he seems to be a willing ally in the absence of any force involved. Further, unlike Sakine, who hides her ethnic identity to work at Rîfat's house, the male interpreter in *Jîn* owes his position to the fact that he agrees to work as a Kurd for the Turkish state.

One function of the unreliable interpreter in the film is to provide suspense by raising questions about whether he is friendly and will help Jîn or hinder her journey. The Lieutenant asks him to find out who Jîn is, where she was headed and what happened to her face, referring to the scars on Jîn's face. The interpreter uses his leverage to force the girl to speak up, to prove his significance to the Lieutenant. Jîn continues to remain silent, realising that the interpreter has a relationship with the Turkish state, based on self-interest, and therefore cannot be trusted. However, she feels urged to respond after the interpreter tacitly threatens her to devise a story which would put her in trouble. He continues to threaten Jîn, while trying to take advantage of her in the prison cell: 'If I had said, "She may be a terrorist", who knows where you'd be now!' As Cronin underscores, the subtitles 'confer a form of reflexive

¹¹⁷ Chiaro, p. 28.

awareness on spectators as they see how interpreters or language mediators have to negotiate exchanges between languages.¹¹⁸ In *Jîn*, the presence of extra-diegetic translation renders visible the manipulative use of linguistic power at the discretion of the mediator in the context of this armed conflict.

Relatedly, another function of the diegetic interpreting sequence in *Jîn* is to disclose the vulnerability of those at the mercy of locals who collaborate with the military and are ready to abuse their upper hand. The fact that the Lieutenant relies on an unreliable interpreter's word to detain Jîn is also framed as another failing aspect of the armed struggle against terror. Overall, the portrayal of the male interpreter as a treacherous figure is complementary to the film's depiction of all the men that Jîn encounters in the conflict zone as oppressive and violent. In contrast, Jîn, who resists translation and prefers silence over speech, looks empowered as she stands, back in her uniform, on top of the mountains and gazes at the vast landscape after being allowed to leave the military station. These examples illustrate the role of the prejudice and lack of trust between Turkish and Kurdish characters in informing the characterisation of diegetic interpreters. Regardless of the involvement of these factors, language teaching may also emerge as part of the Kurdish interpreter's task of facilitating communication and orientation, which will be discussed in the following sub-section.

5.4.4. The Interpreter as a Language Teacher

In addition to overcoming the language barrier, fictional interpreters may also be involved in teaching the minority language to the speaker of the majority and official language in certain cases.¹¹⁹ *Big Man*, *Little Love*, *On the Way to School* and *Breath* include such instances of mediation through which the Turkish character ends up learning some Kurdish. The role of the Kurdish interpreter as a language teacher serves different purposes in each film, depending on the context in which learning or teaching

¹¹⁸ Cronin, p. 107.

¹¹⁹ Takeda, pp. 104-105.

Kurdish takes place. For instance, in the case of both Emre and Rıfat, who are marked by their attachment to the official language policy, learning Kurdish provides them with an opportunity to teach Turkish to students and Hejar, respectively.

In *Big Man, Little Love*, Rıfat's intolerance of Kurdish and poor perception of the Kurds lead him to believe that he can teach Hejar Turkish. The silenced girl may then be permitted to speak 'only if she suppresses her authentic voice.'¹²⁰ However, his attempts to break Hejar's silence and communicate only in Turkish create further tension in their unsuccessful communication, as they spend days without speaking to one another. Therefore, the girl's continued silence highlights Rıfat's sense of failure to put the official language policy into practice at home as he deems fit. Finally, Rıfat feels compelled to alter his uncompromising stance and learn Kurdish so that he can both teach Hejar Turkish and render a 'mediator' figure superfluous. However, the film does not make clear to what extent, if any, Rıfat's emotional attachment to Hejar changes his perception of language difference and awakens him to the exclusionary aspects of the official language policy in Turkey.

As in the other instances of mediation, Sakine does not determine the timing and scope of what to teach. For instance, Rıfat once pays an impromptu visit to Sakine's house, asking her to teach the Kurdish equivalents of some Turkish words. In another case, he asks the meaning of a Kurdish phrase, which Hejar often uses, only to find out that it is a swear word. Despite Rıfat's ulterior motive, Sakine welcomes his willingness to learn Kurdish as a sign of recognition of her mother tongue. Teaching Kurdish makes her feel empowered enough to reveal that Sakine is her adopted name to hide her Kurdish identity, and to request Rıfat to call her by her real name, Rojbin.

Thereafter, Rıfat is often seen referring to his notes in Kurdish to teach Hejar Turkish during the day when eating breakfast, jogging in the park or crossing the Bosphorus bridge. However, learning one another's language may turn into a power struggle between the two, as featured in a scene when Rıfat takes Hejar out to a

¹²⁰ Marsha Houston and Cheris Kramarae, 'Speaking from Silence: Methods of Silencing and of Resistance', *Discourse & Society*, 2 (1991), 387–399 (p. 389).

clothing store to buy her new clothes. At first, the girl repeats every word that he says in Turkish such as ‘hat’, ‘shoes’ and ‘jacket’, suggesting that these two have settled their differences. However, Hejar cannot answer a question that the cashier asks in Turkish at the store. Feeling embarrassed about her Kurdish origin, Rıfat lies by saying that she is Turkish, but has a poor command of Turkish only because she lives in Germany. Subsequently, as a reaction, Hejar responds in Kurdish to every Turkish word that he utters. On another occasion, Rıfat fails to stop Hejar from crying one evening after the girl asks about Evdo and her mother. As a last resort, he calls Sakine in desperation to ask her how to say, ‘do not cry’ in Kurdish, which invalidates Rıfat’s attempt to render the interpreter redundant.

In *On the Way to School*, unlike Rıfat, Emre does not ask his mediators to teach him Kurdish, but ends up learning some Kurdish through overhearing the language spoken by his students in the classroom. For instance, he asks a student if she knows Turkish and receives the response ‘erê’, which means ‘yes’ in Kurdish. Emre asserts that you will not say ‘erê’ but ‘evet’ (‘yes’ in Turkish) in the classroom. In addition to learning some Kurdish words, Emre also finds himself engaged in the process of translation, while teaching students Turkish. This form of translation involves describing everyday foods, such as mint or walnut or animals like a bear or butterfly. Despite using pictures to illustrate them, he needs to depict ‘nane’ (‘mint’) as a green, edible herb with fresh smell to evoke a sense of familiarity in students. These scenes reveal that students are not only unfamiliar with the vocabulary but also with the object that the vocabulary such as walnut or mint signifies. The documentary thus sheds light on another aspect of why teaching Turkish poses a challenge for Emre.

Finally, *Breath* incorporates language teaching through interpreting in an indirect manner. As noted in the previous chapter, Levent Semerci’s war film, the first to depict the armed conflict between the Turkish Armed Forces and PKK, is marked by its limited use and functions of linguistic diversity. In parallel, diegetic interpreting emerges as an isolated incident in the form of self-translation. It takes place in a scene where two soldiers are seen raising the Turkish flag outside the military post, and one

of them is heard singing a song in Kurdish. The Kurdish language is explicitly mentioned by its name only when the other soldier does not recognise the language in which the song is sung and asks about the lyrics. The Kurdish soldier thus orally translates the song's lyrics from Kurdish into Turkish for his peer. This leads to a conversation in which the Kurdish soldier mentions his fiancée's name 'Hetce.' The scene teaches both the Turkish soldier and the Turkish viewers about the Kurdish equivalent of the Turkish female name 'Hatice.' The double presentation of diegetic and extra-diegetic translation thus enables the viewer to overhear and become familiar with the Kurdish language, albeit on the word-level.

Additionally, this interpreting sequence operates in the story in line with the film's engagement with the official discourse on the conflict. The song selected for this scene is one which the Turkish viewer is likely to recognise due to the familiarity of its rhythm to a well-known Turkish folk song. The incorporation of the Kurdish language through such a song arguably implies the film's desire to underscore the similarities and shared values between Turkish and Kurdish people. Further, the function of diegetic interpreting is arguably linked to a confrontational phone conversation that takes place between the Lieutenant and the enemy earlier in the film. The enemy with the code-name 'Doctor' refers to the language ban, among others, to defend the rightfulness of their armed rebellion against the Turkish state. This scene thus serves to undermine the Doctor's claim as to the language ban by showing that a Kurdish soldier freely speaks Kurdish, while on duty, in an official setting such as a military base.

On a related level, the scene illustrates a visual representation of the idea articulated by the Lieutenant on the phone against the Doctor: 'there is the blood of all of us in the Turkish flag.' This quote alludes to the fact that the Turks and Kurds fought together in the war of independence after the First World War. Therefore, that the soldier sings and translates a Kurdish song into Turkish while raising the Turkish flag can be construed as the film's statement that the red flag as a national symbol is the binding force between Turkish and Kurdish citizens. By referring to the historical aspect of the relationship between two communities, the film also frames the Doctor's

approach as radicalised and divisive as opposed to that of the Kurdish soldier doing his military service. In this respect, the depiction of linguistic diversity and translation mirrors the film's categorical approach to the members of an ethnic minority group as either loyal or separatist.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the role of diegetic interpreting, and the lack thereof, in the research films in reflecting and informing each film's treatment of the conflict and related phenomena. It has taken its cue from Giuseppe de Bonis' approach to the inquiry of non-professional interpreting in film and focused on identifying the functions of diegetic interpreters both on the diegetic and extra-diegetic level, when applicable. Despite the variety of languages featured in the films, translation is only needed to facilitate communication between the speakers of Turkish and Kurdish. This has formed the rationale for investigating the portrayals of diegetic interpreters with a specific reference to the official treatment of the Kurdish language. The CDA-oriented conceptualisation of silencing has provided a framework for understanding the implications of the state's language policy on the status and use of Kurdish. The analysis has also highlighted the non-professional status of these diegetic interpreters as a commonality in the films, which can arguably be deemed as an implication of the almost non-existing institutionalisation of Kurdish in Turkey.

Five of the research films depict the multiple faces of a diegetic interpreter in the role of a peace-maker, treacherous interpreter, language teacher or the outsider's lingua-cultural mediator. Some of these films tap into the interplay between silence and silencing in their depictions of diegetic interpreting. For instance, *On the Way to School*, *Jîn* and *Big Man*, *Little Love* emphasise the lack of language skills on the part of the Turkish-speaking characters who are marked by their affiliation with the state and tendency to silence Kurdish. The sequences of diegetic interpreting thus address the asymmetrical relations of power between those who need translation and those who are silenced and resist translation like Jîn, Hejar and Emre's students. The

subversive potential of silence as a form of defiance is activated when interpreting ends silencing and challenges the privileged status of Turkish. This forms a contrast with the function of self-translation in *Breath*, which has an affirmative engagement with the state ideology, to debunk the argument of the enemy and consolidate the status of the Turkish language as a lingua franca.

The portrayals of diegetic interpreters also address the role of trust and loyalty in informing the process of mediation in the context of the conflict and related phenomena. For instance, *Big Man, Little Love* illustrates the ambivalent position of an interpreter in the presence of language bias and conflict. While intending to mitigate the conflict between her employer and Hejar, Sakine perpetuates Rıfat's use of interpreting as an instrument to extract information due to her loyalty to her employer. Albeit in a different setting, this instrumentalisation of interpreting resonates with *Jîn*'s portrayal of the informant as a treacherous interpreter who serves the interests of the military officers in the context of the conflict. Therefore, the characterisation of non-professional interpreters exhibit competing loyalties of interpreters who may be both subordinate and powerful, or both oppressed and uncontrollable. This ambivalence involved in the intermediary position of interpreters comes to the fore especially when a film problematizes the silencing effect of the language ban and its repercussions related to the conflict.

Additionally, the chapter has noted the lack of diegetic interpreting in three of the films. Accordingly, this absence was linked to the director's desire to evade censorship in *Journey to the Sun* due to the language ban at the time of its release. Nevertheless, the film turns the imposition of non-translation into a narrative device for highlighting the outsidership of a Turk in the southeast. In the cases when the lack of diegetic interpreting is a directorial choice, this omission helps to reveal the dynamics of multilingual exchanges in the context of the story. In *Min Dît*, it serves to emphasise the lack of trust and dialogue between the speakers of Turkish and Kurdish in the city. In *Autumn*, the absence of interpreting points to the status of Turkish as the common language between the younger and older generations in a setting which is not marked by tension between multilingual members of the community.

In terms of the extra-diegetic functions of diegetic interpreting, it enables the viewers to follow the story in *Big Man, Little Love* because of the censorship at the time of the film's release. When the abuse of linguistic power comes to the fore, diegetic interpreting also draws the viewers' attention to the role of manipulation and distortion involved in mediation, as in *Jîn*. On the other hand, it may contribute to the viewers' knowledge of a minority language by familiarising them with some vocabulary and thereby undermining the stigmatisation of Kurdish as a non-language, as in *Breath* and *On the Way to School*.

When considered in relation to the findings of the previous chapter, the analysis shows that a film's celebration of linguistic diversity to challenge the monolingualist language policy does not necessarily result in the emergence of translation as an accompanying aspect of multilingualism. That the act of translation may serve to pronounce the dominating status of the majority language and its speakers over the minority groups in a context arguably plays a role in defining the manner and degree of incorporating translation in a film. On the one hand, the prioritisation of the perspectives of unaccessed Kurdish voices may result in the incorporation of translation in a manner that obscures or excludes the interlinguistic mediation. On the other hand, this attitude towards translation may also help re-present Turkish as the minority language and thus challenge the linguistic dimension of the official state discourse on the conflict. Therefore, we can conclude that a film's omission or incorporation of translation between the majority and minority groups is both a constituted and constitutive aspect of its interplay with the official discourse on the conflict. The following chapter will investigate the extent to which recontextualisation shapes each film's presentation of its subject matter and forges an intertextual relationship between the films and the official discourse on the conflict. This inquiry will enable us to establish the role of this form of intertextuality in providing alternative interpretations of the conflict.

CHAPTER 6

Forms of Recontextualisation in the Films on the Conflict

The previous chapter examined the role of diegetic interpreting in addressing the linguistic underpinnings of the Kurdish question and offering new perspectives on the conflict. As shown in the chapter, the purpose of interpreting sequences and characterisation of non-professional interpreters in five of the research films both reflect and constitute their engagement with the official discourse on the conflict. The present chapter will investigate how the recontextualisation of prior texts and discourses informs each film's treatment of its subject matter related to the conflict, which forms the fourth subsidiary research question of the thesis. It thus aims to establish the role of recontextualisation in forging an intertextual link between the films and the official discourse and thus enabling the former to present alternative interpretations of the conflict in relation to the latter. To this end, the chapter will specifically focus on identifying the functions of national symbols, official texts, images, audio and video material that are incorporated into the films in narrating their stories.

Recontextualisation refers to a process whereby a text or discourse is lifted from one setting and brought into another discursive encounter.¹ Likewise, Norman Fairclough defines intertextuality as 'a matter of recontextualisation – a movement from one context to another.'² Following Fairclough's definition of intertextuality, Per Linell defines intertextual recontextualisation as 'relating different specific texts, discourses and conversations, each anchored in its specific contexts.'³ Therefore, recontextualisation constitutes both a form and an aspect of intertextuality. However, it does not involve the repetition or pure transfer of a fixed meaning of a text. On the contrary, the process of recontextualisation concerns 'the dynamic transfer-and-

¹ Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, 'Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 19 (1990), 59-88.

² Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 51.

³ Per Linell, 'Discourse Across Boundaries: On Recontextualizations and the Blending of Voices in Professional Discourse', *Text*, 18.2 (1998), 143-157 (p. 147).

transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context [...] to another.’⁴ In other words, it entails the reworking and reinterpretation of prior texts or discourses while subjecting them to being relocated from one context to another.⁵ Therefore, recontextualisation is significant because arguments, topics, narratives, events and appraisals gain new meanings when transmitted from one genre to another or from one public space to a different sphere.⁶

Adopting a related but broader view of the concept, Theo van Leeuwen develops an approach to the study of discourse as the recontextualisation of social practice. Accordingly, he views that ‘discourses recontextualise social practices, and that all knowledge is, therefore, ultimately grounded in practice.’⁷ In other words, discourses are ‘socially specific ways of knowing social practices’ and hence, ‘they can be, and are, used as resources for representing social practices in text.’⁸ Recontextualisation then involves the reconfiguration of social actors, activities, and circumstantial elements across texts and discourses.⁹ Therefore, it entails the processes of transformation that ‘occur as practices are turned into discourses.’¹⁰ Van Leeuwen’s approach to recontextualisation ties in with the critical discourse-analytical approach to the study of texts as ‘representations as well as interactions (strategic or otherwise).’¹¹ This view of recontextualisation also informs the use of ‘re-presentation’ as opposed to ‘representation’ in this thesis due to the focus on the role of intertextual

⁴ Ibid., pp. 144-145.

⁵ Adam Hodges, ‘The Politics of Recontextualization: Discursive Competition over Claims of Iranian Involvement in Iraq’, *Discourse & Society*, 19.4 (2008), 483-505 (p. 485).

⁶ Ruth Wodak and Rudolf de Cillia, ‘Commemorating the Past: The Discursive Construction of Official Narratives about the Rebirth of the Second Austrian Republic’, *Discourse & Communication*, 1.3 (2007), 337-363 (p. 345).

⁷ Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), vii.

⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

⁹ Kay O’Halloran, Sabine Tan, Peter Wignell and Rebecca Lange, ‘Multimodal Recontextualisations of Images in Violent Extremist Discourse’, in *Advancing Multimodal and Critical Discourse Studies: Interdisciplinary Research Inspired by Theo Van Leeuwen’s Social Semiotics*, ed. by Sumin Zhao, Emilia Djonov, Anders Björkvall and Morten Boeriis (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 181-202 (p. 181).

¹⁰ Theo van Leeuwen, ‘Discourse as the Recontextualization of Social Practice: A Guide’, in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis Second Edition*, ed. by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: Sage, 2009) pp. 144-161 (p. 145).

¹¹ van Leeuwen (2008), p. 5.

interaction in each film's presentation of the conflict, as highlighted in the Introduction. It also underpins the study of the incorporation of symbols, agents and practices, representative of the state ideology and constitutive of the official discourse on the conflict, as forms of recontextualisation in the first section of this chapter.

Context plays a key role in defining in which direction the shift of meaning will take place by means of recontextualisation. The new context may reinforce or undercut the intended meaning in the original context through 'a signification opposed to that of the other's word.'¹² Therefore, recontextualisation may 'put the words into a less friendly or more critical context, or some context that comments on, evaluates, or puts the words at a distance.'¹³ Adam Hodges highlights the subversive potential of recontextualisation as a process which subjects the representation of highly contested or ambiguous topics to 'new *re-presentations*' (emphasis in original).¹⁴ In parallel, Hodges adds that recontextualisation may be deployed to either perpetuate the existing understandings of a socio-political phenomenon or challenge and replace them with alternative ones.¹⁵ This point strikes a chord with the aim of this chapter to explore the role of recontextualisation in the films in offering new understandings of the conflict.

Relatedly, perspective is also an important factor in influencing the ways in which recontextualisation operates, since it 'selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses, and relates other discourses to constitute its own order.'¹⁶ In a similar vein, Linell also points to the 'discriminatory aspect of the selection and re-embedding practices involved in recontextualisation.'¹⁷ Accordingly, some aspects of a text or discourse may be accentuated or attenuated or eliminated, depending on the perspective from which recontextualisation is done. For instance, the process of recontextualisation may

¹² Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 73.

¹³ Charles Bazerman, 'Intertextuality: How Texts Rely on Other Texts', in *What Writing Does and How It Does It? An Introduction to Analyzing Texts and Textual Practices*, ed. by Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 83-96 (p. 90).

¹⁴ Hodges, p. 485.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 488.

¹⁶ Basil Bernstein, *The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse, Volume IV: Class, Codes and Control* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 184.

¹⁷ Linell, p. 151.

be deployed to deprive an official statement of the authoritative and unchallengeable voice that it has in the context of official discourse. Therefore, there is an element of manipulation involved in the deliberate addition or omission of new perspectives on a prior text or discourse by means of recontextualisation.

By the same token, the same piece of information that is unambiguous in one context can deliberately become ambiguous in another one, and vice versa. Therefore, the transformative effect of recontextualisation may give an insight into the use of ambiguity in a film's treatment of its subject matter. This is particularly relevant to the analysis here in that the official discourse is marked by an absence of ambiguity underlying the promotion of binary oppositions and the dismissal of nuanced approaches to the conflict, as shown in Chapter Three. Given that 'to decontextualise and recontextualise is an act of control', the context that is selected for recycling a prior text or discourse may play a role in undermining or accentuating this lack of ambiguity.¹⁸ In parallel, recontextualisation may then serve to counteract or reinforce the intended influence of the official discourse on the conflict, respectively.

Additionally, Linell stresses that recontextualisation has not only a retrospective but also a prospective aspect. In other words, while transforming the meaning of prior texts and discourses, recontextualisation is also intended to appeal to specific audiences and inform their (re)interpretations.¹⁹ In the case of a film, this prospective aspect of recontextualisation also ties in with the element of ambiguity that may allow the viewer to be an interpreter rather than a spectator and draw their own conclusions based on what is provided in a story. Given its relationship with ambiguity and hence its potential for subversion, this inquiry into the functions of recontextualisation will enable us to explore how the research films engage with the official presentations of the phenomena related to the conflict.

¹⁸ Bauman and Briggs, p. 76.

¹⁹ Linell, p. 153.

The chapter will examine the forms of recontextualisation in the films in three sections. First, it will discuss the recontextualisation of national symbols and official agents that are representative of the state ideology in Turkey and gain particular prominence in the official discourse on the conflict. This section includes references to the findings of the analysis in Chapter Three on the official and media discourse on the conflict. The second type of recontextualisation concerns the incorporation of television and radio newsfeeds, archival footage and non-fictional interviews. The third section involves the recontextualisation of texts and discourses that do not pertain to the context of the conflict and/or Turkey. In exploring the functions of recontextualisation in the films, the chapter will consider the role of the perspective from which the story is narrated and the use of ambiguity in a film's treatment of its subject matter.

6.1. The Recontextualisation of National Symbols and Official Agents

As shown in Chapter Three, the official and media presentation of the conflict in the 1990s focused on invoking the state's determination to end the conflict and glorifying the military's struggle against terror as justified at all costs.²⁰ In doing so, it impressed an unambiguous perception of the conflict and suppressed any contested interpretations of the phenomenon. Accordingly, military stations represented the commanding presence of the Turkish army in the southeast region, and the mountains were described as a shelter for the enemy. Further, as also noted in Chapter One, the use of national symbols such as the Turkish flag, national anthem and Atatürk figure revived in parallel to the resurgence of the nationalist sentiment during these peak years of the conflict.²¹ In the given context, these symbols served to demonstrate solidarity and approval for the military. It should be emphasised here that this signification of national symbols is not limited to the 1990s, especially when considered in relation to the Kurdish question. Therefore, the period is taken as a reference point due to its illustrative character of the official (state) discourse on the conflict.

²⁰ See 3.2.1. 'Military Operations', pp. 143-150.

²¹ See 1.2. 'The 1990s: the Intensification of the Conflict and Its Repercussions', pp. 69-70.

The recontextualisation of symbols and agents representative of the state is particularly pronounced in *Breath* and *Jîn* in which the story is set in the battle zone and depicted from the perspective of those involved in the armed conflict. To start with *Breath*, the film presents itself as the re-enactment of a true story that took place in the fictitious Karabal military station in the southeast of Turkey in 1993. Located at an altitude of 2365m on the Karabal Hill, this station stands alone amid vast space. It is identified as the base of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) through the waving Turkish flag and the Atatürk statue erected outside. Further, the sentences are written on top of the building ‘Güçlüyüz, Cesuruz, Hazırız’, which means ‘We are strong. We are brave. We are ready.’ However, the film frames the military post as a vulnerable site which is placed in a confined area and dwarfed by the surrounding snowy landscape in a way that undermines the effectiveness of that statement.

Despite depicting the Karabal station in such a precarious condition, the film’s opening sequence also hints at the prioritisation of the military’s perspective in its portrayal of the armed conflict. During a crane shot, from above, of the snowy landscape, a soldier is heard transmitting information to the Karabal station while the military helicopter is hovering over the area. The camera stops panning when two dead bodies in two different uniforms are detected on the rugged surface. Death is shown as part of a soldier’s experience for the first time in a Turkish film, in contrast with the frequent circulation of the image of dead militants in the official and media discourse. The focus on the dead body in the TAF uniform reveals the film’s interest in the perspective of soldiers rather than of ‘the enemy.’

A similar effect of recontextualisation can also be observed in the film’s incorporation of the Turkish flag. For instance, the waving Turkish flag is constantly blown ragged by strong winds. Every new flag that replaces the old one evokes the lives of soldiers lost and replaced by new ones drafted to win the war on terror. Likewise, soldiers are seen taking regular turns to remove snow from the roof and clean the Atatürk statue outside, as it is covered in snow. These repetitive cleaning

shifts and recurring images of the torn-up flag suggest the forced existence of the military station and Turkish soldiers on that hill.

In contrast with the obscuring whiteness of the snow on the outside, darkness prevails in the interiors of the station in a manner that portends doom and gloom. The military station is depicted as a site of tension that externalises the inner psychology of the Lieutenant and soldiers. While writing a letter to his wife about his shortness of breath in the dimly lit office, the Lieutenant Mete is seen looking at the Atatürk statue right outside the military station. Through the window frame, the film frames him as being stuck in a liminal space between the Atatürk figure outside and the engulfing darkness of the station. Atatürk's overpowering presence is also visualised in another scene when the Lieutenant is shaving his beard in the same dark room that exudes a funereal atmosphere. The picture of Atatürk with a frowning facial expression hangs over the wall right behind the Lieutenant and is seen in the mirror at a point when he turns away. This frame evokes the omnipresence of Atatürk as the figure watching Mete over his shoulders in the military's execution of the war. In other words, it suggests that Atatürk is constantly at the back of the Lieutenant's mind as the source of motivation behind the war on terror. On the other hand, when Atatürk's frown is considered together with the Lieutenant's depression and shortness of breath, the symbolic meanings associated with this figure also take on a suffocating dimension. Consequently, the film's recontextualisation of the Turkish flag and Atatürk suggests the vulnerability of soldiers and thus adds an element of ambiguity that contests the sanitised presentation of the conflict in the official discourse.

Nevertheless, although these forms of recontextualisation cast doubt on the feasibility of continuing this war, *Breath* does not dismiss the idea of war and aggression in general as inherently inhumane and destructive. In addition to Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, the film also alludes to the Ottoman past through the visual layout of the military station. For instance, in a scene which turns out to be a nightmare, the film features a painting that illustrates the entry of Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II (also referred to as Mehmet the Conqueror) to Constantinople on a horse in 1453. In that dream, the Lieutenant and soldiers are seen intercepting the radio

communication of the enemy and thus listening to an armed clash taking place at an unspecified location. After showing the expressions of worry and tension on the faces of soldiers, the camera first zooms into the Atatürk bust on the wall and then the Ottoman ruler in the painting against the sound of this clash in the background.

The recontextualisation of these historical figures in a dream sequence involving a clash between soldiers and militants serves two purposes in the film's presentation of the conflict. First, the use of such imagery invokes unitary nationalism and territorial integrity as the unifying values in the war on terror. Second, and relatedly, it presents the insurgency as a violation of these values and a threat against the existence of the nation state. Thus, the film also implies the absence of a history and tradition that unite the enemy by reminding the viewers of the Turkish state's power and endurance. This evocation of national identity and unity through recontextualisation can be construed as a testament to the film's overall alignment with the official ideology. It is also reflected in the Lieutenant's remark that the Doctor lives like a boar in the mountains and will die like an animal. This constitutes an echo of the dehumanisation of the enemy in the official discourse in which the mountains are referred to as a den for being a shelter for terrorists. Consequently, the film's use of ambiguity falls short of challenging the binary construction of 'hero versus villain' in the official discourse on the conflict.

While *Breath* is set in an enclosed military station, the battle zone is shifted to the mountains in southeastern Turkey in *Jîn*. This locational shift reflects a perspectival change of focus on the experiences of a seventeen-year-old female militant in the latter. Relatedly, the camera follows Jîn throughout her circuitous journey in the conflict-afflicted region. Military helicopters are heard hovering over the mountainous area, causing a deafening noise and intimidating effect on the ground. Hence, the film renders the armed conflict visible through dropping bombs and exploding mines. In doing so, unlike *Breath*, Reha Erdem's film provides no insight into the origins of the conflict and decontextualises the war from its ideological motivations. The absence of historical and political references to the past enables the film to present the conflict as

a disquieting intrusion into the harmonious state of the natural environment. Consequently, *Jîn* recontextualises the image of the Turkish soldier as being involved in gratuitous violence and hence provides a more critical context for questioning the state's glorification of the war, in comparison with *Breath*.

The military station which signifies the presence of the Turkish state in the film is also recognised on top of a hill from the same Turkish flag and Atatürk bust. However, the difference in the angle from which the conflict is presented results in this official setting operating differently from the one in *Breath*. The TAF's difficulty in handling the conflict manifests itself when one of the soldiers says in exasperation to the old man and Jîn, being kept in custody together due to their failure to present a valid ID, 'I am sick of you all! Get the fuck out! My men are dying out there!' On the one hand, the film frames the station as a site of uncontrollable chaos, reflecting a sense of lethargy on the part of soldiers. On the other hand, the recontextualisation of the military station illustrates the 'us versus them' rhetoric as a distinguishing feature of the official discourse.

Additionally, *Jîn* avoids portraying the female militant as a one-dimensional character devoid of individuality and moral ambiguity. For instance, Jîn ends up saving the life of a wounded Turkish soldier and killing her own ally who is brought to the cell in the military station. However, the element of ambiguity in *Jîn* does not involve assigning negative attributes to the military and incorporating perspectives that glorify the insurgency. Although Jîn is seen alone on top of a hill with her uniform back on in the finale, the director does not provide the viewers with a clear answer about Jîn's returning to the organisation. Consequently, the film offers subtle alternatives to the constructions of 'good' and 'evil' that are promoted in the official and media discourse by blurring our conceptions of war and how the enemy behaves.

Official agents and national symbols are also incorporated in the films which address the implications of the armed conflict beyond the battle zone. For instance, the exalted image of the Turkish soldier in the official discourse is recontextualised in a subversive manner in *Min Dît*, which narrates unsolved murders in the southeast of

1990s Turkey from the perspectives of orphaned street children. Gülistan, one of those children, witnesses the murder of her parents by Nuri Kaya without knowing his identity or profession. Nuri is later shown as the leader of a group interrogating Gülistan's aunt in a building that belongs to the gendarmerie. Nuri's background becomes clearer once Gülistan finds out that he previously worked as a commando and was granted a certificate of achievement for his outstanding service for the military as a sergeant major between 1991 and 1995. Hence, *Min Dît* transforms the glorified image of the Turkish soldier to affirm the perpetrator's affiliation with the military and highlight the role of civil servants in executing extrajudicial killings by means of underhanded methods.

In *Big Man, Little Love* and *Journey to the Sun*, the Turkish flag is recontextualised as a marker of nationalistic practices in the peak years of the conflict. For instance, in the former, Rıfat is seen hanging a Turkish flag on his house's window to celebrate the national holiday. While recontextualising a traditional practice followed by secular nationalists like Rıfat, the film also suggests a link between the subscription to the nation-state ideology and the tendency to discriminate against the Kurds, given Rıfat's prejudices against Hejar's language and identity. In the latter, the Turkish flag is recontextualised in a scene which exhibits the racial component of the nationalistic sentiment in the 1990s. The street celebrations over the victory of the national football team turn violent when the mob chanting and waving Turkish flags begins to vandalise a car, assuming that its driver must be a Kurd if he is not blowing the horn. Mehmet and Berzan are attacked when they intervene to save the driver from being persecuted inside the car. This form of recontextualisation arguably causes a shift in the official signification of the Turkish flag by associating its use with those who are marked by discriminatory practices.

Further, the recontextualisation of official texts such as the Student's Oath and Atatürk's Address to the Turkish Youth provides cues for identifying a film's interplay with the official state ideology and, by extension, with the official discourse on the conflict. For instance, in *Future Lasts Forever*, which takes place in the city of

Diyarbakır, Sumru hears the school children reciting the oath early in the morning from her hotel room. The oath starts with ‘I am a Turk, I am honest, I am hardworking’, and concludes with the statement ‘Happy is the one who says, “I am a Turk!”’ The darkness of the room and the gloomy look on Sumru’s face at that moment of recontextualisation contribute to the trivialisation of the meaning inherent in these phrases.

The Student’s Oath, which every student was obliged to recite every day at school until 2013, constituted a guiding principle of the national education system in Turkey.²² In parallel, students are also seen reciting the oath in the mornings in *On the Way to School*. Additionally, Emre writes Atatürk’s Address to the Turkish Youth on the board and makes his students recite it in the classroom as part of a routine national curriculum. Given the documentary’s focus on the language barrier between Emre and his students, the recontextualisation of these official texts serves to highlight the lack of relevance for their content to these Kurdish students with limited or no knowledge of Turkish. The following section will discuss the recontextualisation of audio and video material pertaining to the conflict and related phenomena in terms of its functions in a film’s treatment of the subject matter.

6.2. The Recontextualisation of Audio and Video Material

The uses of audio and video material can be identified in *Journey to the Sun*, *Future Lasts Forever*, *Breath*, *Big Man*, *Little Love*, and *Autumn*. Audio material is largely incorporated as radio newsfeeds, whereas video material is inserted either as television broadcasts or in the form of archival footage that interrupts the fictional story. Additionally, this section will discuss the use of non-fictional interviews with the relatives of the disappeared in the southeast of 1990s Turkey. ‘Non-fictional’ is utilised here to address the testimonial and factual character of the information that is provided in the interviews. In discussing these forms of recontextualisation, we will also

²² Vehbi Türel and Eylem Kılıç, ‘The Inclusion and Design of Cultural Differences in Interactive Multimedia Environments’, in *Human Rights and the Impact of ICT in the Public Sphere: Participation, Democracy and Political Autonomy*, ed. by Christina Akrivopoulou and Nikolaos Garipidis (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2014), pp. 245-267 (p. 248).

consider whether a film treats its subject matter by re-enacting the past as in *Breath* or revisiting the 1990s in retrospect as in *Future Lasts Forever* and *Autumn*.

6.2.1. Radio and Television Newsfeeds

To start with *Journey to the Sun*, the hunger strikes in prisons in 1996 provide the background to Mehmet's and Berzan's story of stigmatisation and exclusion in the context of the 1990s. Television and radio newsfeeds are recontextualised in the film to inform the viewer that the hunger strikes are taking place in the Bayrampaşa Prison and that the negotiations are in progress between the government and prisoners to reach an agreement. At different points of the story, the newsfeeds are inserted to give an update on the day of the hunger strikes without providing an insight into the reasons for these protests. The film neither incorporates any debates on the government's plan to introduce F-type prisons nor portrays any fictional characters in the role of hunger strikers or government officials. Nevertheless, the progression of these incidents adds an element of suspense to the fictional story at the forefront as Berzan is detained and killed, following the protests that start in the aftermath of the first death in hunger strikes.

A more subversive instance of recontextualisation is identified in the use of a radio newsfeed in *Future Lasts Forever*, which highlights unsolved murders and disappearances as the unresolved phenomena of the 1990s. The film incorporates the news from a local radio that Sumru turns on during the road trip from Diyarbakır to Hakkari in the southeast of Turkey. The recontextualised audio rejects the use of the terms deployed by the mainstream media in reporting the news on the conflict. For instance, militants are not referred to as 'terrorists' but as 'guerrillas' in the following text heard on the radio: 'Tens of thousands of people took the bodies of five guerrillas from the morgue of the Hakkari State Hospital and marched to the county cemetery.' This piece of information offers an insight into the presence of solidarity for these militants among the locals in reaction to their deaths. Therefore, the recontextualisation of such an alternative media text provides the viewer with a form of knowledge that is

airbrushed from the official and mainstream media's presentation of the conflict which reports those deaths solely in terms of figures.

In both cases, the audio material does not include any recognisable voices or mention specific names with whom the audience may be familiar. In this respect, the audio record recontextualised in *Breath* constitutes a distinct example in that it incorporates the voice of a well-known military officer and articulates the military's perspective in the 1990s. As Doğan Güreş, the Head of General Staff in 1993, is heard on the radio in the almost dark room of the military station, the camera shows the depressed look on the faces of the soldiers who are listening to Güreş's following statement: 'These men are doing a great and sacred job. [...] We managed to weaken the terrorists severely. [...] As I promised our distinguished people, terrorism will no longer be an important topic by the end of summer.' A soldier is seen shedding tears by the window as the statement ends. The moment selected for incorporating this radio newsfeed highlights a sense of vulnerability and doubt in these soldiers who are assigned to confront the enemy in the battle zone.

As noted in the scholarship, recontextualisation may result in repositioning the words of a speaker in a manner that works against her/his goals and undercuts the influence of those words achieved in the original context. Likewise, this scene does not activate the intended effect of Güreş's statement to convey the state's determination and the general's pledge of victory. On the contrary, the film recontextualises this official voice in a manner that weakens the influence of the message, as it serves to externalise fear and disbelief in the inner world of these soldiers. Therefore, the film's reworking of this prior text forms an example of negative recontextualisation, in Adam Hodges' terms, since the embedding context challenges the signification of a text in its originating context.²³ Additionally, it is important to consider that the film's treatment of the armed conflict is a retrospective one. Therefore, the subversive effect of recontextualisation is also arguably reinforced by the viewers' knowledge that the military failed to deliver its promise and end the

²³ Adam Hodges, *The 'War on Terror' Narrative: Discourse and Intertextuality in the Construction and Contestation of Sociopolitical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 104.

conflict, as of the film's release date in 2009.

Breath also adopts a critical stance on the media's portrayal of soldiers, which is articulated through the Lieutenant acting as the voice-over narrator in the story. For instance, during a roll call at the beginning of the film, the Lieutenant takes aim at the 'hero' status granted to soldiers when they are depicted as martyrs in the media: 'You'll even make it into the news on television. You'll be heroes for 45 seconds! A fancy lady will say in a sad tone: "Ekin Bulut died a martyr during an ambush." 45 seconds! After that, celebrity news!' Further, the film features the front page of a newspaper from 1993 with the phrase 'Long Live the Homeland' on the headline. Crucially, the newspaper's headline, which is accompanied by a picture of the coffins wrapped in the Turkish flag, is shown as covered with drops of blood. On the one hand, the recontextualisation of this print media text testifies to the prevalence of this expression in the given period. On the other hand, it can also be construed as an allusion to the perfunctory use of the phrase as reflective of the media's cursory approach to the deaths of soldiers.

The film's critique of the media is also discerned in the recontextualisation of a television broadcast in a scene involving heightened tension at the military station. A wounded female militant is brought to the TV room after being caught in an ambush. The medical soldier is seen attending to the bleeding to keep her alive, while the Lieutenant strives to extract information from her at the same time. At this moment, what is heard and seen on the TV playing in the background is an interview with one of the contestants in a beauty pageant. The recontextualisation of this television interview arguably serves two purposes in the film. First, it builds up the tension in the room with its distracting effect on the medical soldier who ultimately asks for the Lieutenant's permission to turn it off. Second, the content of the broadcast selected for this moment forms a striking contrast with the action taking place in the forefront. Consequently, the recontextualisation of this broadcast facilitates the film to present the media's engagement with the war as hypocritical and superficial.

Television newsfeeds are also employed to set the background for the stories taking place in *Journey to the Sun* and *Big Man, Little Love*. In the former, Mehmet is seen watching the news on the protests in the aftermath of Berzan's detention. The film puts Mehmet in an onlooker's position, implying the limited agency at his discretion in the social and political context of the 1990s. In the latter, Rıfat is also occasionally seen switching channels and watching the news on TV in his sitting room. The film thus features the media's reporting of official martyr funerals and military operations, showing dead bodies of the militants killed in a battle. These images suggest that the armed conflict and its repercussions dominated the news agenda at that time. Incorporating phrases such as 'our martyrs lost their lives in the treacherous ambush' and 'terrorists captured dead after clashing with the security forces', these broadcasts also provide a glimpse of the media's discourse in the given period. Whilst situating the film in the context of the conflict, this form of recontextualisation also highlights Rıfat's passive position in relation to the consequences of the conflict.

6.2.2. Non-fictional Interviews

Future Lasts Forever constitutes an exception in terms of incorporating non-fictional interviews that are done with the visitors of the Mesopotamia Solidarity and Culture Association for Families Who Lost their Relatives. It should also be noted here that the names mentioned and photographs used in the interviews refer to real people. Although the 1990s constitute the reference point in the film's treatment of disappearances, the director Özcan Alper does not include any scenes in which violence related to the conflict is re-enacted. Hence, the film's engagement with the acts of violence is confined to the eyewitness accounts of the interviewees who narrate their first-hand experiences of unsolved murders in the given decade.

The photographs of disappeared people are seen in the background, while the camera records the interviewees' answers to Sumru's questions. Occasionally, some of the interviewees stand up to show the pictures of their relatives on the wall during the interviews. Although Sumru acts as the interviewer behind the camera, Alper incorporates the interviews into the fictional story in a manner that draws the viewer's attention to the answers. The director thus creates the impression that eyewitnesses

directly address the viewer rather than Sumru. Alper notes the media's distortion of the events related to the conflict as the main reason for interviewing real witnesses rather than writing fictional testimonies based on those accounts.²⁴ In his view, having the interviewees speak to the camera proves the least mediated method for communicating the peculiarity and harshness involved in what they witnessed without replicating the mainstream media's approach.²⁵ However, Alper thus neglects the mediating role of the camera and his own recontextualisation of the interviews in relation to Sumru's search for the whereabouts of her boyfriend who joins the PKK.

Per Linell notes that recontextualisation may serve to '*subdue or silence voices* that have been heard earlier' (emphasis in original).²⁶ When considered in relation to the official and media presentation of the conflict, the recontextualisation of these interviews enables the film to disregard the perspectives of any military personnel or security officials. The interviewees' statements, which are marked as being descriptive and attentive to detail, repeatedly point to the agency of soldiers in burning down their village houses. Some examples include phrases such as 'Soldiers surrounded us', 'Soldiers set the house on fire from the inside', and 'Soldiers started raiding the houses.' In another instance, one interviewee recites an elegy after remarking that soldiers did not allow them to save their cattle: 'We could not save the animals. The soldiers did not let us move a muscle. The animals shrieked in terror.' Another interviewee narrates her husband being tortured before he is forced to disappear: 'They were blindfolded and dragged behind the armoured personnel carrier from village to village.' In doing so, the film excludes any debates on the underpinnings of the conflict and information about the political affiliation of those who were murdered and/or disappeared. Consequently, these individual acts of remembering are recontextualised

²⁴ Dicle Müftüoğlu, 'Yolculuğun hikâyesi, hikâyenin yolculuğu' ('The story of the journey, the journey of the story'), 22 November 2011, <<http://www.etha.com.tr/Haber/2011/11/22/kultur-sanat/yolculugun-hikayesi-hikayenin-yolculugu/>> [accessed 27 February 2015].

²⁵ Ibid..

²⁶ Linell, p. 151.

in a manner that evokes empathy in the audience toward the sufferings of these witnesses.

Further, these detailed descriptions of soldiers' actions contradict the positive self-presentation of the state and military officials as merciful and respectful of the law. For instance, the interviewees refer to details that are omitted in the mainstream media, such as throwing the bodies out of the military helicopter and running the armoured vehicle over the corpses. While showing the killings as human rights abuses, these descriptions are also accompanied by an emphasis on the persistent pursuit of justice: 'if this is justice, we do not accept it. Turkey has a Minister of Justice. If there are laws, we want the bones that belong to us.' Therefore, the director's treatment of the subject matter does not refrain from incriminating the military and security officers in the killings of civilians. On the contrary, the film leaves no room for ambiguity that may serve to justify these killings as collateral damage and mystify their perpetrators as in the official and media discourse on the conflict.

In presenting the experiences of the relatives of the disappeared, the film also frames these mourners as resistant to consolation and unable to reconcile with the loss. In doing so, it conveys the idea that it is inevitable for the state to reckon with the past, as one of the interviewees says in front of the camera: 'if they do not answer us today, they will answer to our children or our grandchildren.' Accordingly, what renders mourning unresolved is the presence of impunity and the absence of the graves to mourn. For example, Sumru achieves consolation at the end of the film when she finds out about Harun's death and visits his grave, unlike the women that she interviews. Thus, the film highlights the prolonging sentiment of grief and need for resolution on the part of these mourners.

The production of these non-fictional interviews can also be considered as part of the film's emphasis on unearthing and collecting the evidence that can shed light on certain unsolved murders in the 1990s. For instance, Sumru visits the Musa Anter Memory Centre, which is the film's own invention as a place for storing and classifying the archival material on these killings. The place is named after the Kurdish

journalist and writer Musa Anter, who was murdered by unknown assailants in the same city in 1992. Therefore, Sumru's search in the memory centre awakens the viewers to the presence of such audio records that include revelations about the state-sponsored actors' involvement in the killings. For instance, one audio record discloses that 'by 1992 they devised a particular way of killing Kurds called "murder by unknown assailants."' Another example incorporates the voice of a perpetrator who confesses his role in extrajudicial executions and describes the scope of the tasks assigned to them. Overall, the recontextualisation of these audio records serves to reinforce the testimonies of the interviewees by highlighting their overlap with the confessions of some locals about unsolved murders.

6.2.3. Archival Footage

The recontextualisation of archival footage is identified in three of the research films. *Future Lasts Forever* recontextualises one video footage in which a police tank is seen running over people whilst some masked policemen with rifles are persecuting one young person and trying to pick him from among the crowd. The recontextualisation of this footage enables the film to reinforce the negative presentation of the security forces as oppressive and violent in the story. It also shows the director's desire to provide visual proof and add evidential value to the interviewees' narration of the violent treatments of soldiers mentioned above.

In *Journey to the Sun*, the archival footage appears in the scene when Mehmet searches for Berzan and his friend Şeyhmus amid the protests that break out following the death of a hunger-striking prisoner. A group of demonstrators are seen running away from the police towards Mehmet. Here, the black-and-white footage that shows the police chasing and beating up some protestors in a similar context is incorporated in a manner that switches from fiction to non-fiction and then back to fiction. Crucially, the angle from which Mehmet is watching the protestors is the same as the one from which the camera records the people in the archival footage. In doing so, the recontextualisation of the footage creates a sense of continuity between the fictional

and non-fictional in terms of the overlap between the course of action and the perspective from which the whole action is seen. Therefore, the recontextualisation of this footage adds a documentary sense of reality to the fictional story, thus enabling the film to manipulate the viewer's perception of police violence on screen as being rooted in actual events.

While presenting the protests from Mehmet's point of view, this scene also puts him in the position of a spectator who sees the police using force on the demonstrators in a real situation. The same applies in another scene in which the director makes use of the footage showing soldiers and military vehicles patrolling in the streets of the southeast under the state of emergency. Mehmet looks out of the window of his hotel room in one of the southeastern provinces on his way to Berzan's village. The fictional scene in which Mehmet is seen looking outside cuts to the non-fictional images of soldiers and tanks, thereby providing an insight into the state of emergency in the southeast of 1990s Turkey. Further, since the footage is recontextualised as if the soldiers are seen through Mehmet's eyes, his personal fears inform the portrayal of these security officials as intimidating and callous. Therefore, Mehmet being a Kurdish-looking Turk is depicted not only as the target of discrimination and stigmatisation but also as the observer who strives to comprehend the oppression in that political environment that affects his identification with Turkishness.

Özcan Alper's *Autumn* treats the repercussions of the hunger strikes in prisons in 2000 from the perspective of a former hunger striker Yusuf. As noted in the previous chapters, this film is distinguished from all the other films included in the research as an anomaly in terms of not referring to the armed conflict on an implicit or explicit level. Therefore, the film frames the hunger strikes in prisons as part of a struggle for the sake of socialism, which is communicated through Yusuf's portrayal as a revolutionary. Further, unlike *Journey to the Sun* that addresses the 1996 hunger strikes in the background of its story, *Autumn* is set in 2008 eight years after the 'Return to Life' Operation. Therefore, the director's treatment of the event involves an act of revisiting the past and tracing its legacy to the present moment. In parallel, the film

deploys archival material to forge a link between the past and present by crafting Yusuf as a collector of the memories of the hunger strikes and consequent armed operations.

The film's opening illustrates this point with the recontextualisation of the official footage shot by the security officers on the day of the 'Return to Life' Operation in 2000. A police officer is seen reading a statement to call out to prisoners to stop their hunger strikes, and finally adding that 'life is beautiful despite everything.' Towards the end of the footage, the camera zooms beyond the room where the video is taken, and the police officer's voice is juxtaposed with those of the hunger strikers heard from afar behind the barbed wire. Both voices fade out as a slogan 'Down with the fascist dictatorship!' is heard. The footage cuts to the scene when Yusuf is taken from his prison cell to the infirmary and introduced to the viewer with his frail and unhealthy appearance. The portrayal of Yusuf as a terminally ill patient underscores the permanent damage of the hunger strike on his body. On the other hand, this scene that reveals Yusuf's approaching death as the reason for his early release from prison counteracts the intended effect of the footage to highlight the state's affirmation of life.

Likewise, Yusuf's recollection of the raids in prisons is depicted through recontextualisation of archival footage either as flashbacks in his memory or as haunting nightmares. The footsteps of walking people, photographs, and television broadcasts about the F-type cells serve as mnemonic devices that transport Yusuf to the past or bring the past to the present. Recontextualisation is deployed here to 'select, endorse and/or re-perspectivise suitable parts and aspects, edit these parts in new ways and combinations.'²⁷ For instance, the recontextualised footage is followed each time by the scenes where Yusuf wakes up from sleep or suffers in silence in his dark room, reminiscent of a prison cell. The film thus suggests that being in the liminal space between life and death accompanies the confinement between the past and present in Yusuf's case. This form of recontextualisation also enables the film to re-construct the 'Return to Life' as a nightmare-like experience and accentuate the euphemistic use of

²⁷ Linell, p. 151.

language in the official naming of the operation.

Presented as an unsettling experience where violent memories inflict themselves on the present moment, the act of remembering the past is not confined to the memory of the operations. For instance, Yusuf looks nostalgic while revisiting the past through his old photographs as a politically engaged university student attending the demonstrations. This scene featuring Yusuf's photographs dissolves into the images of people being persecuted by the police at the demonstrations. The recontextualisation of this archival footage following the protagonist's personal moment of reflection can be construed as the film's effort to ascribe a social import to Yusuf's pain. In other words, remembering the 1990s as well as the raids is traumatic, and trauma is not only individual but also collective, as it relates to an experience that is shared by others like Yusuf and their families.

While being haunted by the memories of the past, Yusuf tends to remain silent about whether he was tortured or exposed to any maltreatment in prison. On the one hand, Yusuf's silence forms a striking contrast with the expressionistic use of the landscape in the film to externalise Yusuf's psychological state of mind. On the other hand, his silence facilitates the evasion of verbose language and propagandistic narration, thereby casting doubt on the validity of speech. Therefore, silence adds an element of ambiguity that subverts the official promotion of the 'Return to Life' Operation as an altruistic act of bringing hunger striking prisoners back to life. The recontextualisation of archival material also enables *Autumn* to compensate for Yusuf's silence and establish the director's credibility to challenge the negative portrayals of those who go on hunger strikes. Overall, the recontextualisation of archival footage allows these films to prioritise the perspectives and experiences of those marginalised or excluded in the official and media presentation of the conflict.

6.3. The Recontextualisation of Fairy Tales, Quotes and Songs

Recontextualisation also takes the form of incorporating texts that do not bear direct relevance to the context of the conflict and related phenomena in Turkey. While these texts are not found in all the research films, they add different layers of meaning to the

treatment of the conflict in those such as *Future Lasts Forever* and *Min Dît*. To start with the former, in the film's opening sequence, we hear birds chirping and roosters crowing in the background, thus signalling the dawn of the day. These ambient sounds of nature are suddenly drowned by the whirring sounds of a helicopter and subsequent neighing of a horse. A white horse appears on the horizon, running wildly across a barren terrain and being shot to death. The scene fades to black and reopens to a train trip where a group of people chant the Turkish version of the Chilean folk song 'Venceremos', which translates as 'We Shall Triumph.'²⁸ While conveying the hope for a free future among these people with a socialist worldview, the recontextualisation of this song in the opening also enables the film to frame the Kurdish insurgency as an act of resistance against oppression in view of the lyrics.

Sumru passes through the group chanting the song and sits opposite her boyfriend, Harun, by the window. The air of hope and optimism exuding from the song disappears after a farewell letter reveals that Harun is leaving for the mountains to join the PKK. This personal loss begins a new journey for Sumru to Diyarbakır, where she meets the witnesses of unsolved killings and records their testimonies for her dissertation on elegies. Her quest ends in Harun's hometown, Hakkari, where she finds his grave on top of a mountain. In the finale, a black horse appears on the snowy mountains, and Sumru is seen walking alone by the frozen river, being accompanied in the background by the song 'Lullaby' in Khachatur Avetisyan's work released 'in memory of the victims of the Armenian Great Catastrophe of 1915.'²⁹ The recontextualisation of these songs arguably hints at the film's desire to forge bonds between different communities across the world based on their unresolved sufferings of the past. When considered together, it is also possible to suggest that the opening and final songs bookend the film, emphasising the need for mourning and resolution in the end.

²⁸ 'The storm breaks the silence. /The sun rises on the horizon. /People come out of their shacks. /All Chile sings songs. /Venceremos, Venceremos! / Let's break our chains away. / Venceremos, Venceremos! /Put an end to oppression and poverty' (My translation from Turkish to English).

²⁹ In the album cover released by Kalan Music in Turkey in 2009, the English expression 'Armenian Genocide of 1915' in the original version was replaced by the 'Armenian Great Catastrophe of 1915.'

Another form of recontextualisation that can be identified in *Future Lasts Forever* is the use of quotations referring to different violent events in history. The first example is the opening quote from Cesare Pavese's *The House on the Hill*: 'everybody, if one day it [the war] should end, ought to ask himself: "And what shall we make of the fallen? Why are they dead?"' The text, which is set during the Resistance Movement in Italy between 1943 and April 1945, accentuates the brutality and futility of war as well as the value of human life in its original context.³⁰ The film's recontextualisation of this text in the role of a preface allows for re-framing Turkey's Kurdish conflict as a civil war as opposed to the state's labelling it as a war on terror. Further, the film recognises murdered and disappeared people as the victims of this war. Overall, the quote taken from Pavese's novel introduces a human-rights-oriented perspective to the film's portrayal of the killings.

The second example is John Berger's statement written in support of the culminating session of the World Tribunal on Iraq (WTI) in İstanbul in 2005. The WTI was founded as 'an independent tribunal to investigate allegations of war crimes and violations committed by the United States, the United Kingdom and other coalition forces in Iraq.'³¹ It aimed 'to disseminate the truth about the Iraq war.'³² Berger's statement underlines the significance of restoring memory to provide an alternative historical record of the occupation in Iraq as follows: 'the records have to be kept and, by definition, the perpetrators, far from keeping records, try to destroy them. They are killers of the innocent and of memory.'³³ This text is relocated from the Tribunal's booklet into the plaque on the wall of the fictitious memory centre that Sumru visits. The film thus draws an implicit parallel between the Iraq war and the armed conflict through recontextualisation of Berger's quote, thereby opening the possibility of viewing the killings as equivalent to a war crime. Further, the recontextualised text

³⁰ Vincenzo Binetti, 'The Myth of the Resistance or the Resistance to the Myth? For a (re)reading of Cesare Pavese, *The House on the Hill*', in *Once Di Questo Mare: Reconsidering Pavese*, ed. by Rossella Riccobono and Doug Thompson (Leicester: Troubador, 2003), pp. 91-101 (p. 91).

³¹ Ayça Çubukçu, 'On Cosmopolitan Occupations', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 13.3 (2011), 422-442 (p. 426).

³² 'World Tribunal on Iraq, 'Declaration of the Jury of Conscience of the World Tribunal on Iraq', in *World Tribunal on Iraq: Making the Case Against War*, ed. by Müge Gürsoy Sökmen (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), pp. 492-502.

³³ The statement that appears in the film is in Turkish.

highlights the risk of distorting the facts on the past killings and disappearances as the fictitious centre marks the absence of such memorialisation in real life.

The third example of quotations in *Future Lasts Forever* is the graffiti seen on a street wall, which reads ‘Hope is more valuable than victory.’ This phrase is largely attributed to the PKK’s imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan; however, the graffiti in the film is signed by ‘The Wretched of the Earth.’ It is not made clear if the quote is an invention, but its recontextualisation in Diyarbakır offers a colonial framework for approaching the conflict due to its reference to Frantz Fanon’s book of the same title. In his critique of imperialism, Fanon presents violence as a practice which binds the colonised people together as a whole and invests their characters with positive and creative qualities.³⁴ Further, violence is justified as a cleansing force, which frees them from despair and inaction.³⁵ By referring to this work, the film arguably suggests that the relationship between the Kurdish citizens and the Turkish state is akin to the one between the colonised and the coloniser.

As for the fourth example of recontextualised quotes, Sumru notes Yaşar Kemal’s work *Elegies* as the source of inspiration for the idea of collecting elegies in the film’s story. She quotes Kemal’s remark in that work, ‘I wish, all the folk elegies in Anatolia were recorded in their own voices’ as being her life’s motto after Harun’s departure. On the one hand, Sumru’s explanation suggests that her pursuit of elegies contains a desire for finding consolation for her loss. On the other hand, the text originally articulates Kemal’s vision of Turkey as a mosaic of different cultures.³⁶ Therefore, Kemal’s idea plays a constitutive role in the film in terms of recognising and reflecting the multilingual character of society, as noted in Chapter Five.³⁷ Overall, without subverting the intended meanings of their authors, the film forms a dialogic relationship with these texts, which highlight the destructive consequences of

³⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 93.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³⁶ Yaşar Kemal, ‘The Dark Cloud over Turkey’, *Index on Censorship*, 24 (January-February 1995), 141-146.

³⁷ See 5.4.2. ‘The Interpreter as the Outsider’s Lingua-Cultural Mediator’, p. 221.

oppressive violence in different settings, and thus situates the conflict in a wider context.

Unlike Alper's film, *Min Dît* recontextualises a fairy tale entitled 'The Wolf with the Bell' ('*Zilli Kurt*'), which also serves as a frame for the fictional story narrated therein. It is important to provide an insight into the content of the fairy tale to identify the effect of recontextualisation in the film. In the tale, a wolf represents a source of occasional nuisance for a group of villagers in eastern Anatolia. Faced with the threat of losing their animals, the villagers set out on a hunt to both exact revenge and subdue the wolf. However, they do not take any pistols or knives along. On the contrary, they avoid frightening the wolf when they locate it. At a close enough distance, they gently put the heavy bell around its neck with light strokes. The ringing bell thus ensures that the wolf cannot sneak into their village and approach any animals.

The film draws thematic parallels between the wolf's tale and the children's story through the way in which the tale is included. It should be noted here that the film's story unfolds in three parts: the children's life before the murder of their parents, their survival in the streets, and their retaliation against the perpetrator. In the first part, ten-year-old Gülistan and her brother Fırat seem oblivious to the circumstances related to the conflict in their daily life, while going to school and doing homework. This part ends with the murder of their parents before the children's eyes on a road trip after a wedding in the neighbouring province Batman. In the second part, Gülistan and Fırat start to live in the streets and meet with orphaned street children who teach them how to survive in the city. This part ends with Fırat's encounter with the murderer of his parents who asks for the price of a lighter. In the third part of the film, the children reveal the perpetrator's identity and devise a method to punish him.

The complete tale is also revealed in the film in three parts, not in chronological order but parallel with the progression of the story in the forefront. Children listen to the tape-recorded narration of the fairy tale by the murdered mother of Gülistan and Fırat. For example, the fragment of the tale heard in the first part of the film is taken from the middle where a hunt is being planned to capture a wolf. Neither the reason

for the hunt nor the problem with the wolf is understood. The beginning of the tale when the wolf attacks the animals is only heard in the film after the children's parents are killed. Finally, after their encounter with the perpetrator, the children are seen listening to the third part of the tale, which inspires them to devise a non-violent method of retaliation. Therefore, the fairy tale suggests how the text should be read and how the primary narrative should end.

Recontextualisation here involves a form of adaptation in that the fictional story reflects a parallel but altered version of the plot in the fairy tale. Accordingly, the film introduces the metaphor of a terrible plague, adapting what is an occasional source of nuisance in the original story into an exceptional case with catastrophic consequences. The city of Diyarbakır represents the village under attack, and the wolf is portrayed as the state-sponsored perpetrator who does 'not leave the village in peace.' The state-linked perpetrators are thus assigned the traits of a wolf and depicted as stealthy and destructive. The orphaned street children become the hunters who collaborate to retaliate for unsolved murders, whereas the torn-apart sheep refer to the city's innocent people killed by unknown assailants. Therefore, the recontextualisation of the fairy tale enables the film to dramatise the extent and scope of the killings that orphaned children witness in their hometown.

In the film, night-time is also specified as the hours when 'the wolves creep in to devour livestock', to refer to the killings secretly done at night by perpetrators leading double lives. For example, the street children sitting around the fire at night witness two dead bodies being thrown away in the bushes. Hence, the co-existence of the witnesses and perpetrators lends a double character to the city. Indeed, the city life in broad daylight seems unaffected and dynamic, whereas an uncanny atmosphere takes control over the city at night. Finally, putting the bell around the wolf's neck translates into disclosing the concealed identity of Nuri Kaya for his acquaintances in his neighbourhood in the fictional story. On the one hand, the recontextualisation of this fairy tale provides a structure to the children's story in the form of a beginning, middle and an end. On the other hand, it has a premonitory function in terms of hinting at how

the events will unfold in the film. Consequently, recontextualisation reinforces the director's oppositional reading of the official and media presentation of unsolved murders as mysterious acts of invisible agents.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the role of recontextualisation in forming an intertextual interplay between each film's re-presentation of the conflict and the official discourse on the phenomenon. In doing so, it has referred to the findings of the analysis in Chapter Three on the official depiction of the conflict in the 1990s and early 2000s. These salient aspects include the lack of ambiguity, the 'us versus them' rhetoric, the glorification of the war on terror and the vilification of the enemy. These points have been particularly helpful in analysing the shifts of meaning involved in the recontextualisation of national symbols, images and agents representative of the official state ideology in the films. For instance, the recontextualisation of the Turkish soldier in *Breath* and *Jîn* shifts the focus away from the invincibility of the state and rightfulness of the war at all costs to the destruction and loss of life caused by the war. Additionally, *Journey to the Sun* and *Big Man, Little Love* attenuate the sanctified status of the Turkish flag in the official discourse through reworking it as a signifier of the nationalistic practices that involved discrimination and violence in the 1990s.

The chapter has also paid special attention to identifying the reinterpretations of the binary oppositions underlying the official discourse on the conflict in the films through recontextualisation of these national symbols. The analysis has shown it to be particularly the case for *Breath*, a film which proves ambivalent in its engagement with the official state ideology. For instance, while emasculating the military's pledge of victory through negative recontextualisation of an official voice, the film also evokes the imperial and national past of Turkey. Despite presenting soldiers as fallible rather than unyielding, *Breath* also ennobles military life as a learning experience and perpetuates the benevolence of the Turkish soldier as in the official discourse. In contrast, the element of ambiguity incorporated through recontextualisation takes a challenging tone in *Jîn*, which overturns the official dehumanisation of the enemy without vilifying the Turkish state and making a case for the insurgency. Embedding

a fairy tale as a frame for its fictional story, *Min Dît* also promotes a binary opposition between the good and evil in a similar manner to the official discourse, only to reverse it. Recontextualisation helps the film to relegate the official discourse to a less credible and more questionable position by redefining unsolved murders as state-sponsored killings and accentuating the human rights violations involved in the conflict.

The analysis has also found that the transformative power of recontextualisation and its potential for subversion are enabled in the films which incorporate non-fictional material into their fictional stories. The recontextualisation of radio and television broadcasts serves several functions, such as providing a background or adding suspense to the progression of the fictional story, as in *Journey to the Sun*. Additionally, it contributes to conveying the passive attitude of a Turkish character in relation to the conflict, as in *Big Man, Little Love*. When intended as a negative recontextualisation, these broadcasts also allow for highlighting a film's critique of the official and media discourse on the conflict, as in *Breath*.

The recontextualisation of archival footage in *Journey to the Sun* and *Autumn* is used strategically to select and accentuate some aspects of the hunger strikes and to disregard the official voices. Recontextualisation thus facilitates these films to undermine the state rhetoric of compassion and revalorise the arguments and actions of both those who went on a hunger strike and their supporters. In addition to using archival footage to reinforce a negative presentation of the state, *Future Lasts Forever* also recontextualises non-fictional interviews to provide access to the testimonies of the relatives of the disappeared in the 1990s. The film thus contests what qualified as unchallengeable and incriminates soldiers and security forces who were (and still are) immune from criticism and blame in the official discourse on the conflict. Overall, albeit in varying forms, recontextualisation enables the research films to offer new and alternative interpretations of the conflict by echoing, challenging or subverting the official discourse. The following chapter draws together the conclusions of all six chapters, addressing how the analyses in each chapter answer the central and sub-research questions of the thesis.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined how new Turkish cinema re-present the conflict in relation to the official (state) discourse in the 1990s and 2000s, with a focus on their uses of multilingualism, translation and recontextualisation. In doing so, it has adopted the critical discourse-analytical notions of intertextuality and re-presentation to discuss and identify the interaction and contestation, if any, between the selected films and the official discourse on the conflict. This chapter first summarises the conclusions of each chapter, corresponding to the research questions set out in the Introduction. Second, it acknowledges the limitations of the research in terms of methodology and accessibility of sources. Third, and finally, it points to the areas of possible future research that this research may lead based on the interdisciplinary approach adopted here.

The first chapter has outlined the historical evolution of Turkey's Kurdish conflict from the late 1970s to the present day, thereby establishing the significance of the phenomenon within the country's history. This overview has provided an insight into Kemalism, the official state ideology, which defines the national identity of the Turkish Republic, thus elucidating its role in underpinning the official discourse on the conflict. Clarifying the link and distinction between the Kurdish question and the conflict, this background chapter has summarised the social and political context of the 1990s in which the conflict intensified and caused the highest death toll. This summary has been followed by the overview of the changes that took place in the political arena at the turn of the century in Turkey, leading to the decline of the hard-line approach to the Kurdish question and the initiation of the Kurdish opening in the 2000s. The chapter has finally noted that the conflict has regained its taboo status in Turkey since the termination of the peace negotiations and the resumption of the conflict in 2015.

The second chapter has first provided the historical development of Turkish cinema and identified the relationship between the traditional cinema and the official state ideology in Turkey. This overview has allowed for pinpointing how new Turkish cinema relates to and diverges from the filmmaking tradition of the pre-1990s.

Following the survey of the literature on new Turkish cinema, the chapter has situated these films within the history of the conflict, depending on whether they were produced before, during or after the Kurdish opening of 2009. This contextualisation has enabled the chapter to illustrate the implications of the distinction between the official (state) discourse and the government-level support on the making of the films. For instance, *Big Man, Little Love*, which was produced in 2001 before the Kurdish initiative, faced censorship after its release despite the financial support of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Based on this example, the thesis concludes that the government's financial support does not guarantee the uncensored distribution of a film due to the overpowering influence of the state's discourse in the Turkish context.

The chapter has also emphasised the lessening of the ideological pressures related to the conflict with the military's waning influence over politics and the AKP government's Kurdish initiative between 2009 and 2013 during which five of the research films were released. Two of these films (*On the Way to School* and *Future Lasts Forever*) received the grant of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. However, the absence of the Ministry's fund does not necessarily mean a hindering role on the part of the ruling power. On the contrary, some of the films which did not receive such financial aid (*Jîn* and *Min Dît*) indirectly served to promote the government's progressive agenda for the resolution of the conflict at the time. Therefore, the research has shown that the government's rhetoric and policies provided a favourable political environment for presenting alternative perspectives on the conflict in cinema with reference to the state's practices before the AKP rule.

The third chapter has identified the official (state) discourse on the conflict through analysing *Milliyet*'s reporting of related phenomena in the 1990s and early 2000s. The brief history of the state-media relations has illustrated the long-standing alliance and overlap between the state's and the mainstream media's approach to the protection and reproduction of the principles that underlie the national identity and territorial unity of the country. This overview, which has also encompassed the state-media relations during the AKP rule, has demonstrated that, despite being accompanied by progressive

policies, the government's rhetoric and practices did not translate into a paradigmatic shift in the official discourse on the conflict. The chapter has thus highlighted the distinction between the state- and government-level discourses in the Turkish context, underlying the continuity and change in the official approach to the Kurdish question in the 2000s. Following this background, the chapter has identified the official discourse on the conflict through examining the news reports that incorporate the statements produced by the military officers and government officials in response to phenomena, such as military operations, unsolved murders and hunger strikes in the 1990s and early 2000s.

The fourth chapter has explored the uses of linguistic diversity in the research films and identified a direct correlation between the functions of multilingualism in the story and each film's engagement with the official discourse on the conflict. For instance, the prioritisation of the military's perspective in *Breath* engenders a minor and superficial representation of linguistic diversity that problematizes neither the repercussions of the official language policy nor the hierarchical relationship between Turkish and minority languages heard therein. In contrast, films such as *Jîn*, *Min Dît* and *Future Lasts Forever* highlight the link between the conflict and denial of minority language rights. They activate the subversive potential of multilingualism by undercutting the privileged position of the speakers of Turkish through the portrayal of their communication and orientation problems. Therefore, the analysis has revealed that the purposes of incorporating multilingualism interact with the depictions of the minority and majority groups in the films.

The fifth chapter has examined the role of depicting translation, and the lack thereof, in informing each film's interplay with the official discourse on the conflict. Crucially, the analysis has found that the omission of diegetic interpreting may result not only from the language ban but also from a directorial decision to reflect the nature of intercultural communication between the speakers of majority and minority languages. It has also revealed that the characterisation and visibility of diegetic interpreters vary depending on whether translation serves to mitigate or reinforce conflict, to break the silence or perpetuate silencing, to make peace and facilitate

understanding or benefit from misunderstanding and mistrust between the parties. Relatedly, the chapter has also paid attention to the extent to which a film problematizes the silencing effect of the ban on Kurdish and its repercussions related to the conflict in treating its subject matter. Accordingly, the sequences of diegetic interpreting which highlight the imbalances of linguistic power through silencing draw the viewers' attention to the lack of a shared understanding between Turkish and Kurdish citizens of Turkey related to the conflict.

In parallel, the analysis has identified language bias as a significant element that defines the role of multilingualism and translation in informing a film's interplay with the official discourse on the conflict. Depending on the presence or absence of language bias, translation may represent an activity to be resisted through silence, which takes a subversive function especially when the act of translation is accompanied by silencing. When language bias is present, even learning one another's language via translation may turn into a power struggle between the two. These findings are also arguably representative of the effect of the language policy on Kurdish on the biased perception against the act of translation from and into Kurdish on the part of the speakers of Turkish in Turkey.

Additionally, the research has shown that the purpose of depicting linguistic diversity plays a direct influence over the forms and functions of translation in a film. For instance, a film which incorporates multilingualism for the purposes of postcarding, in Wahl's terms, may tend to treat translation as an 'innocent' activity without challenging the unequal relations of power involved in the context of an ethnolinguistic conflict. In contrast, a film which depicts multilingualism as a tool to exert authority or renegotiate hierarchical relations may emphasise the need for translation to highlight the state's failure to impose its language policy or render visible the shortcomings involved in the state's handling of the conflict. Hence, we can conclude that the depictions and functions of multilingualism and translation in a film, which may be interrelated and complementary to one another, both constitute and are constituted by that film's engagement with the official discourse on the conflict.

The sixth chapter has investigated the role of recontextualisation in forging an intertextual interplay between the films and the official discourse, thereby identifying each film's capacity for re-presenting the conflict in relation to the latter. In doing so, the chapter has discussed the forms of recontextualisation in three groups. The first one has concerned the recontextualisation of national symbols and official actors representative of the official state ideology in Turkey. The second group has involved the recontextualisation of television and radio newsfeeds, archival footage and non-fictional interviews. Unlike the first two categories, the third group has referred to the recontextualisation of texts and discourses not directly related to the context of the conflict. The chapter has identified that these different forms of recontextualisation allow for undermining or challenging the binary constructions and the lack of ambiguity in the official discourse on the conflict. Crucially, this is particularly the case when the recontextualisation of official texts, images, voices or symbols is done in a film which prioritises the marginalised or silenced voices in narrating the story.

As seen in the summaries of these chapters, the examination of the intertextual interplay between the films and the official discourse has been at the core of the thesis. This focus has enabled the thesis to identify how far these films offer alternative understandings of the conflict. Accordingly, the thesis has revealed that the intertextual relationship between the two operates in both directions – in terms of the ways in which the broader social and political context shaped the making of the films and the ways in which the films contributed to the reproduction and transformation of the status quo. For instance, as mentioned above, the films, the release of which coincided with the Kurdish opening, directly and indirectly, contributed to the government-level efforts to undermine the official state ideology of the Turkish Republic. Consequently, the contextualisation of the films within the history of the conflict has demonstrated the constituted and constitutive character of these films.

The inquiries into the depictions of multilingualism and translation as the components of the intertextual interplay between the films and the official discourse have elucidated the close link between national language politics and film production dynamics in Turkey. Accordingly, the changes in the language policy in the 2000s

have had a direct impact on the form and content of new Turkish cinema. Relatedly, the research has highlighted the use of multilingualism and translation in Turkish cinema as the product of a context conducive to the representation of linguistically and ethnically diverse groups. Although the official state discourse persisted even during the Kurdish opening, the changes in the language policy that were carried out as part of the opening dealt a blow to the official ideology on the Kurdish question. Crucially, despite the termination of the peace process, these changes remain in effect as the legacy of that progressive period. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that, despite the changing political climate since 2015, multilingualism and translation may still serve as the tools for new Turkish cinema to revisit and rework the official state discourse on contentious topics such as the conflict.

It is crucial at this point to acknowledge two limitations of this research. The identification of the official discourse on the conflict in 1990s Turkey has been an exploratory case due to the lack of academic research based on the analysis of texts that embody the official discourse on the conflict. The process of deciding on the source(s) to be used for this purpose has faced the challenges in accessing the official archives, as explained in the Introduction. Therefore, a methodological approach has been developed to select, collate and identify the official discourse through analysing the mainstream print media's reporting of the conflict by means of the concepts and perspectives in Critical Discourse Analysis.

The second limitation concerns the accessibility of resources and persons such as film directors and producers. For instance, the main reason for selecting *Milliyet* as the newspaper representative of the mainstream print media is that the online news archive of *Hürriyet*, the newspaper with the highest circulation, does not date back to the early 1990s, but starts in 1997. In terms of the accessibility of persons, interviewing directors and producers might have helped me to gain a deeper insight into the role of internal and external restraints in the process of making their films. For instance, no information has been found on whether some of the directors who did not receive the

Ministry's support had applied for the state's fund. The difficulties in establishing contact with these people have led to the dismissal of the idea.

Possible future research which incorporates interviews with the directors can overcome this limitation and present a deeper understanding of the decision-making process related to applying to the Ministry's financial support, accessing the archival footage, incorporating multilingualism and translation in their films. Additionally, another area of future research can include a larger corpus of multilingual films on the conflict which have been produced since 2015 when the conflict resumed. This may allow for identifying the converging and diverging aspects of re-presenting the conflict in the films before and after the Kurdish opening. Future research which also compares the uses of multilingualism and translation in the films produced during and after the Kurdish opening may also allow for bringing a new perspective to the films studied in this thesis as they will be situated in a wider context than the one presented here.

APPENDIX

Table 1. List of multilingual films on the conflict in new Turkish cinema

#	YEAR	FILMS	DIRECTOR	THEME	S
1	1996	<i>Işıklar Sönmesin</i>	Reis Çelik	Bandit	
2	1996	<i>Eşkıya</i>	Yavuz Turgul	Bandit	
3	1996	<i>Direjan</i>	Şahin Gök	Bandit	
4	1998	<i>Güneşe Yolculuk</i>	Yeşim Ustaoglu	Hunger strikes, unsolved murders, forced displacement	X
5	2001	<i>Büyük Adam Küçük Aşk</i>	Handan İpekçi	Forced displacement, language ban	X
6	2001	<i>Doz</i>	Gani Rüzgâr Şavata	PKK	
7	2004	<i>Yazı Tura</i>	Uğur Yücel	Battle/Operations, southeast	
8	2008	<i>Sonbahar</i>	Özcan Alper	Hunger strikes and F-type prisons	X
9	2008	<i>Bahoz - Fırtına</i>	Kazım Öz		
10	2008	<i>İki Dil Bir Bavul</i>	Orhan Eşiköy Özgür Doğan	Language ban	X
11	2009	<i>Nefes: Vatan Sağolsun</i>	Levent Semerci	Battle/Operations	X
12	2009	<i>Min Dît</i>	Miraz Bezar	Unsolved murders and disappearances	X
13	2009	<i>Güneşi Gördüm</i>	Mahsun Kırmızıgül	Battle	
14	2010	<i>Press</i>	Sedat Yılmaz	Unsolved murders and disappearances	
15	2011	<i>Kir</i>	Yusuf Çetin	Village guards	
16	2011	<i>Gelecek Uzun Sürer</i>	Özcan Alper	Unsolved murders and disappearances	X
17	2011	<i>Kayıp Özgürlük</i>	Umur Hozatlı	Unsolved murders	
18	2011	<i>Oğul</i>	Atilla Cengiz	Battle	
19	2011	<i>İz</i>	Tayfun Aydın	Forced displacement	
20	2012	<i>Dağ</i>	Alper Çağlar	Battle/Operations	
21	2013	<i>Jin</i>	Reha Erdem	Battle/Operations	X
22	2014	<i>Cennetten Kovulmak</i>	Ferit Karahan	Battle	
23	2014	<i>Annemin Şarkısı</i>	Erol Mintaş	Forced displacement	
24	2014	<i>Sesime Gel</i>	Hüseyin Karabey	Battle	

Table 2. The number of parliamentary minutes between 1990 and 2000

	Time range	Sessions
Term 18	9 January 1990 – 1 September 1991	203 sessions
Term 19	6 November 1991 – 24 December 1995	550 sessions
Term 20	24 December 1995 – 18 April 1999	423 sessions
Term 21	2 May 1999 – 20 December 2000	219 sessions
Total	9 January 1990 – 20 December 2000	1,395 sessions

Table 3. Annual Average Circulation Figures retrieved from the Turkish Press Association

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000		1990-2000
1	<i>Sabah</i> 634.746	<i>Sabah</i> 782.237	<i>Sabah</i> 769.652	<i>Milliyet</i> 899.668	<i>Sabah</i> 629.520	<i>Sabah</i> 712.440	<i>Milliyet</i> 629.283	<i>Hürriyet</i> 600.247	<i>Hürriyet</i> 537.873	<i>Hürriyet</i> 526.918	<i>Sabah</i> 676.222	1	<i>Sabah</i> 7,271.234
2	<i>Hürriyet</i> 516.196	<i>Hürriyet</i> 572.075	<i>Hürriyet</i> 641.004	<i>Sabah</i> 893.413	<i>Hürriyet</i> 515.090	<i>Hürriyet</i> 603.492	<i>Sabah</i> 618.385	<i>Sabah</i> 596.115	<i>Sabah</i> 505.609	<i>Sabah</i> 452.895	<i>Hürriyet</i> 660.215	2	<i>Hürriyet</i> 6,554.007
3	<i>Türkiye</i> 467.247	<i>Milliyet</i> 491.482	<i>Milliyet</i> 396.234	<i>Hürriyet</i> 784.091	<i>Milliyet</i> 379.237	<i>Milliyet</i> 510.756	<i>Hürriyet</i> 596.806	<i>Milliyet</i> 498.666	<i>Türkiye</i> 427.346	<i>Türkiye</i> 355.627	<i>Star 2</i> 502.515	3	<i>Milliyet</i> 5,333.964
4	<i>Milliyet</i> 415.083	<i>Türkiye</i> 468.283	<i>Türkiye</i> 297.225	<i>Türkiye</i> 318.210	<i>Türkiye</i> 358.544	<i>Türkiye</i> 426.292	<i>Türkiye</i> 549.275	<i>Türkiye</i> 438.024	<i>Milliyet</i> 392.827	<i>Milliyet</i> 340.225	<i>Milliyet</i> 380.503	4	<i>Türkiye</i> 4,444.663
5	<i>Günaydın</i> 399.622	<i>Bugün</i> 253.320	<i>Bugün</i> 187.338	<i>Meydan</i> 170.866	<i>Zaman</i> 277.667	<i>Zaman</i> 345.687	<i>Zaman</i> 258.612	<i>Zaman</i> 256.750	<i>Zaman</i> 223.772	<i>Posta</i> 295.246	<i>Türkiye</i> 338.590	5	<i>Zaman</i> 2,102.869

Table 4. Ahmet Kaya's speech and its versions in the selected newspapers

	Turkish original	English translation
Ahmet Kaya's speech	First part (after receiving the award): Bu ödülü İnsan Hakları Derneği adına, bu ödülü Cumartesi Anneleri adına, bu ödülü magazine emek veren bütün insanlar adına, bu ödülü bütün Türkiye adına alıyorum. Bir <u>de</u>, şunu söyleyeyim, bu misyonu sana kim yükledi diye sormasınlar, bu misyonu bana tarih yükledi. Bir <u>de</u>, bir şey daha söyleyeceğim. Önümüzdeki kasette Kürt asıllı olduğum için Kürtçe bir şarkı yapıyorum ve Kürtçe bir de klip çekiyorum. Ve bu klipi yayınlayacak yürekli insanların olduğunu da biliyorum, yayınlamazlarsa Türkiye halkıyla nasıl hesaplaşacaklarını da biliyorum. Çok teşekkür ediyorum.' Second part (after the protests during his performance): Yuhalayanlara da teşekkürler. Biz yaşamımız boyunca Türkiye'nin bölünmez bütünlüğünü savunduk ama Kürt halkının realitesini reddeden insanların da kafasından inmeyeceğim.'	I accept this award in the name of the Human Rights Association, Saturday Mothers, of all workers in the tabloid press and in the name of people of Turkey. Let me add this as well: do not ask who assigned this mission to me. History assigned me this role. Additionally, I will say one more thing. I will sing a Kurdish song in the next album because I am of Kurdish origin and I will also make a music video for this song. And I know that there are courageous people who will air this video. I also know that they will be held accountable by the people of Turkey unless they do so. I thank you very much.' I also thank those who are booing. We defended the indivisible unity of Turkey all our life but I will breathe down the neck of those who reject the reality of Kurdish people.
Hürriyet	Presented as the first part of Kaya's speech: Kürtleri tanımayanların kafasından inmeyeceğim. Ayrıca bu ödülü İnsan Hakları adına, Cumartesi Anneleri adına alıyorum.' Presented as the second part: Kürt halkını kabul etmeyenlere böyle bir halkın varlığını kabul ettireceğim. Söylediklerimin arkasında da her zaman dururum.'	Presented as the first part of Kaya's speech: I will breathe down the neck of those who do not recognise Kurds. Additionally, I accept this award in the name of human rights and Saturday Mothers.' Presented as the second part I will make those who do not recognise Kurdish people recognise the existence of such people. I always stand by my words.'
Sabah	Given as if it was a single speech: Artık Kürtçe okuyacağım. Onların kafasına vura vura Kürtlüğümü kabul ettireceğim.'	I will only sing Kurdish songs from now on. I will make them recognise my Kurdish identity by force.
Milliyet	Given as if it was a single speech: Yeni albümündeki Kürtçe şarkıya klip çekeceğim. Bu klipi yayınlamayan televizyonların tepesine bineceğim.'	I will make a video for the Kurdish song in my new album and breathe down the neck of the television channels which will not air it.

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