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A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DIRECTORATE OF  
COMMUNICATIONS' MEDIA CONTENTS

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A Discursive Analysis of The Directorate of Communications' Media Contents

İletişim Başkanlığı Medya İçeriklerinin Söylemsel Analizi

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AKP:</b>	Justice and Development Party
<b>AP:</b>	Justice Party
<b>CHP:</b>	Republican People's Party
<b>DSP:</b>	Democratic Left Party
<b>DP:</b>	Democratic Party
<b>DYP:</b>	True Path Party
<b>EU:</b>	European Union
<b>FP:</b>	Virtue Party
<b>HSYK:</b>	The Council of Judges and Prosecutors
<b>MHP:</b>	Nationalist Movement Party
<b>MNP:</b>	National Order Party
<b>MSP:</b>	National Salvation Party
<b>MÜSİAD:</b>	The Association of Independent Businessmen
<b>RP:</b>	Welfare Party
<b>SP:</b>	Felicity Party

## ABSTRACT

In this study, it is investigated how official authority reinterprets and reconstructs history, and how these reconstructions contribute to the formation of political and ideological boundaries. The study focuses on why the Directorate of Communications rewrite the history in the context of current politics and interests by providing an in-depth analysis of the structure, communication, and propaganda activities of the Directorate of Communications. Using critical discourse analysis, the study examines historical video contents of Directorate of Communications: “Red Apple Anthem”, “Blue Homeland Anthem”, and “Sarıkamış Anthem”. The video contents are analyzed through the perspective of neo-Ottomanism and memory studies, with a focus on the construction of a new collective memory and identity as a counter to the Kemalist regime’s institutions, values, and symbols. Consequently, the study demonstrates that the Ottoman nostalgia has established a new collective memory and the Directorate of Communications uses the neo-Ottomanist narrative for propaganda purposes.

**Keywords:** The Directorate of Communications, Reproduction of the Past, Collective Memory, Neo-Ottomanism, Discourse Analysis

## ÖZET

Bu çalışmada, resmi otoritenin tarihi nasıl yeniden yorumladığı ve yeniden yapılandığı, bununla beraber, bu yeniden yapılandırmaların siyasi ve ideolojik sınırların oluşumuna nasıl katkı sağladığı araştırılmaktadır. Çalışma, 2018 yılında Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kararnamesi ile kurulan İletişim Başkanlığı'nın yapısı, iletişim ve propaganda faaliyetlerinin derinlemesine analizini yaparak, tarihi güncel siyaset ve çıkarlar doğrultusunda neden ve nasıl yeniden ürettiğine odaklanmaktadır. Kemalist rejimin kurum, değer ve sembollerine karşı yeni bir kolektif hafıza ve kimlik inşasına katkıda bulunan video içerikleri, yeni Osmanlılık ve hafıza çalışmaları teorik çerçevesinde analiz edilmektedir. Eleştirel söylem analizi metodunun kullanıldığı çalışmada, İletişim Başkanlığı'nın tarihe dayanan video içerikleri “Kızıl Elma Marşı”, “Mavi Vatan Marşı” ve “Sarıkamış Marşı” incelenmektedir. Tüm bu tartışmalar ışığında tez, Osmanlı nostaljisinin yeni bir kolektif hafıza oluşturduğunu ve İletişim Başkanlığı'nın Yeni Osmanlıcı anlatıyı propaganda amaçlı kullandığını göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İletişim Başkanlığı, Geçmişin Yeniden Üretimi, Kolektif Hafıza, Yeni Osmanlılık, Söylem Analizi

## INTRODUCTION

As of 2021, it has been 19 years since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has come into power on November 3, 2002. Turkey's political and social structure, collective memory, and foreign policy have changed dramatically over the last 19 years. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who came from the National Outlook Movement but emphasized that he “took off the National Outlook shirt”, became one of Turkey's most important political figures in his political life from the Prime Ministry to the Presidency.

The AKP, which in its initial years, has not question the foundations of the existing regime, after gaining power and consolidating its position, started to challenge and force the boundaries, institutions and principles of the Kemalist regime. During this power struggle, the AKP established its own hegemony and shaped Turkey's social and political structure to reflect its ideology. While Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected as the first elected President of Turkey in 2014, the parliamentary system was abolished in 2017 with a Constitutional Amendment Referendum. Then, the Presidency Government System was introduced, as well as changes to the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK).

Neo-Ottomanism has been an important narrative in Turkey in recent years.. The “neo-Ottomanism” as a policy defined by former Turkish Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. His book, “Strategic Depth” which is published in 2009, has played an important role in shaping Turkey's foreign policy. However, This policy, however, has contributed not only in foreign policy, but also in new formations that shape Turkey's social structure. Neo-Ottomanism, which glorifies the Ottoman past while undermining the Kemalist regime's values, institutions, and symbols, attempts to forge an alternative memory and identity. As a result, Neo-Ottomanism is more than just a political narrative, it also heavily influenced popular culture. With the help of the government, symbols and historical narratives of the Ottoman era have been turned into television series, and this

narrative has reached broader audience. Today, Ottoman symbols can even be found in souvenirs. Neo-Ottomanism, on the other hand, has been reflected in the discourses of Turkey's institutions and the presidency, as well as the discourses of the government and the president. Thus, the Directorate of Communications has become one of the Neo-Ottomanists' narrators.

The Directorate of Communications under the Presidency, chaired by Fahrettin Altun, was established by Presidential Decree in 2018. The Directorate of Communications, which has been increasing its effectiveness day by day and actively producing media content since 2020, acts as the spokesperson of the Presidency. It represents Turkey in national and international public opinion through this mission. Fahrettin Altun's comments on current politics, as well as his statements in support of the ruling party, have made the Directorate of Communications one of the most controversial institutions in recent times. The Directorate of Communications, which shares content that supports Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's discourses and produces contents related to current politics, its high-budget historical video contents is widely discussed nowadays.

This study investigates how history is re-interpreted and re-constructed by the official authority, and how these reconstructions play role in constructing political and ideological boundaries. The study presents an in-depth analysis of the Directorate of Communications, its structure, communication, and propaganda activities. This study concentrates on why the Directorate of Communications is rewriting and reconstructing history in the context of current Turkish politics and interests. In this sense, the examined contents of the study were determined to be video contents produced by the Directorate of Communications based on or inspired by history. The study, which analyzes video content within neo-Ottomanism and memory studies theoretical framework, focuses on the AKP's construction of a new collective memory and identity as an alternative to the Kemalist regime's institutions, values, and symbols, and thus the reproduction of history through the Directorate of Communications.

The first section, which includes the theoretical framework of the study, is focused on the reproduction of the past and neo-Ottomanism. The role of nostalgia in the construction of a new historical narrative, as well as what collective memory and identity are and how they are formed, are all explained in the section within memory studies while explaining the reproduction of the past. Furthermore, the study investigates the relationship between memory and power to shed light on why and how the past is remembered and forgotten. The emergence and development phases of neo-Ottomanism are explained in this study, which sees neo-Ottomanism as an alternative identity narrative seeking to undermine the Republic's Kemalist regime. It explains how the government spread the neo-Ottomanism narrative, which gives credit to the Ottoman past, from the political sphere to the social sphere. In addition, the section detailing the AKP's background from its founding to the present highlights Turkey's recent political history.

The second section of the study begins with information about the Directorate of Communications. While the Directorate of Communications' establishment, organizational structure, vision, mission, and duties are explained in detail, budget information for the years 2020-2024 is also provided. In the study, critical discourse analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, is used as a research method. The selected video contents are analyzed using the critical discourse analysis method in context of memory studies and neo-Ottomanism theoretical frameworks. The video contents analyzed in this study are created by the Directorate of Communications and distributed through the Directorate of Communications' official YouTube account. Three video contents based on or inspired by history are examined in the analysis section. The contents chosen are productions that are appropriate for current political interests, contain propaganda elements, and are produced with a neo-Ottomanist narrative, as well as high-budget productions.

## 1. CONCEPTUAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“*Criticizing the Directorate of Communications is to criticize the state.*”

Mehmet Uçum, Advisor of the President

### 1.1. REPRODUCTION OF THE PAST

The way social groups perceive the past changes over time. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how history is rewritten beyond understanding it. Collective memory, which plays an important role in rewriting history, is a living component of social groups that share common experiences, motivations, and interests. The conceptualization of collective memory is based on Maurice Halbwachs. While Emile Durkheim talks about commemoration ceremonies in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), later his student Maurice Halbwachs describes collective memory in a deep discussion in his book *The Social Frameworks of Memory*, published in 1925 (Olick, 1999: 344). Memory studies gained importance in the 1980s with Yosef Yerushalmi’s *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1982) and Pierre Nora’s *Between Memory and History* (1984) (Klein, 2000: 127).

Memory focuses on remembering (Steiner Editor & Zelizer, 1995: 214). Memory is based on remembering and forgetting actions is a dynamic sign of life produced by social groups (Nora, 2006: 19). Remembering is the visualization of an event previously experienced by individuals (Ricoeur, 2006: 58). Remembering is not disconnected from social life. Social events affect remembering. Therefore, memory cannot be considered separate from society (Schudson, 1992: 52). Collective memory is the resemblance of the memories of the members of the same social group; but it is more than individual memory (Harris, Paterson, & Kemp, 2008: 215). Because memory isn’t just a store that records events. As a matter of fact, memory is affected by social psychological and historical factors while recording information. Thus, memory does the work of both remembering and

forgetting (Schudson, 2007: 181). In other words, people outside the individuals create a “social framework” for the memory of the individual (Halbwachs, 1992: 43). Memory cannot exist alone, it must be nourished by the social and cultural values of society (Coser, 1992b: 372). Accessing information takes place through social interaction. Remembering memories is therefore a social activity and memory is social (Harris et al., 2008: 216). Halbwachs states that collective memory is a built concept. All social classes, families, and institutions have a memory of their own. They use this memory to remember and even reconstruct the past (Coser, 1992: 22). It exists in a social and cultural structure such as memory, language, symbols, events. The cultural products shared by society are stored in memory (Miszta, 2003: 11-2).

Halbwachs divides memory into autobiographical and historical memory. Autobiographical memory is a type of memory based on individuals’ past experiences. Autobiographical memory is what groups have accumulated through the same experience. It may weaken or disappear over time (Coser, 1992: 23-4). Thus, memory exists within the boundaries of the social group it belongs to, in the mind of the individuals who make it live (Halbwachs, 1980: 80). Individuals share their memories not only with their acquaintances but also with people they have never seen (Assmann, 2006: 214). Personal memories shared by a community actually indicate that memory is collective. Individuals’ memory is a personalized part of collective memory (Zerubavel, 1996: 294). On the other hand, historical memory is a memory that is remembered by reading and/or listening rather than what individuals experience. The historical memory preserved by social institutions is remembered by rituals such as memorial days and holidays. Thus, historical memory is revitalized and follows a path extending to future generations (Coser, 1992: 23-4). To put it another way, memory takes place not only in the human mind but also in laws and cultural institutions. Monuments created by society, celebrated holidays and even souvenirs are all part of the memory (Schudson, 1992: 51).

In addition, Assmann (2006) divides memory into four levels of individual memory, social memory, political memory and cultural memory (Assmann, 2006: 211). While individual and social memory depends on individual experience, political and cultural memory depend on the external factors. Social memory is an autobiographical memory because it is based on events experienced by a person. History, however, becomes a memory when it involves sharing and participation. In the transformation of history into collective memory; historical narratives that appeal to emotions, monuments that embody history, visual and verbal symbols, rituals, and commemoration ceremonies that keep the memory alive, are used (Assmann, 2006: 215-7).

Collective memory, besides being a shared memory, is based on common remembering (Zerubavel, 1996: 294). The inner world of people interacts with society through memory (Steiner Editor & Zelizer, 1995: 214). People remember together with society; because with society they gain their memory (Halbwachs, 1992: 38). This situation places even the memory of an unexperienced event in the memory of the individual. Belonging to a group paves the way to remember or forget certain events (Olick, 1999: 335). It is important to remember to keep society as a whole (Steiner Editor & Zelizer, 1995: 227). Memory motivates social groups to redefine their identity by pursuing their past and origins (Nora, 2006: 27). Collective memory should therefore also be seen as the identity of a social group, family, or nation that shares common values (Confino, 1997: 1390).

Memory and identity are articulated (Schudson, 1992: 207). Memory is like a map telling group members who they are and what to do. That's why it is at the center of identity (Eyerman, 2011: 305). On the other hand, memory and identity are two interdependent components. Identity is maintained by a shared partnership in a specific definition of space and time. (Gillis, 1994: 3). Although memory is created with a properly constructed identity, identity is shaped by the memory it has built (Megill, 1998: 44). Historical processes also change identity (Hall, 1996: 4).

The identity of individuals is influenced by their social environment, based on common cultural forms (Harth, 2008: 86). Although individual thoughts and interests differ, they construct a whole as members of the social group under the same identity (Confino, 2008: 81). State, institutions, and social groups build their own memories. They create an identity with the help of commemorations, rituals, and symbols (Assmann, 2006: 216). In other words, identity building is a practice-based process. The memory of a nation needs historical narratives in order to preserve its identity (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 121-2). The thoughts and tendencies of individuals who construct a society are affected by narratives preserved by collective memory (Knapp, 1989: 123). These narratives also make it possible for societies to adopt their identity. The future of societies consists of myths that hold them together (Wood, 1994: 144). Historical narratives that ensure the continuity of memory produce rituals for the act of remembering (Yerushalmi, 1982: 12). Narratives, which are the main elements of the emergence of memory, also serve the production of identity by being shaped from an ideological perspective. Thus, a constructed identity is created (Ricoeur, 2006: 84-5). Every social group, every belief, and every political system has an identity, and every identity has a collective memory. Collective memory is the basis of an individual belonging to a group. Switching between groups causes the past identity to be forgotten. Thus, assimilation takes place (Assmann, 2008: 113-4). Individuals forget their memories when the scope of the social framework changes (Halbwachs, 1992: 172). Political memory, as a top-down memory, consciously constructs memories of societies and identities for political purposes (Assmann, 2006: 215).

Memory is used to support the current strategic objective. Thus, memory is instrumentalized in line with current interests to manipulate memory. In doing so, a particular interpretation of the past is specifically chosen or a particular interpretation is ignored (Schudson, 2007: 184-7). While memory is building the past, it should have a structure that mobilizes and motivates society socially and culturally by stimulating its feelings (Confino, 2008: 81). Collective memory focuses on the glorious side of the past. In other words, the negative elements of

the past that build an identity are not remembered (Roediger III, Zarbon, & Butler, 2009: 150). Remembering offers a meaningful representation of the past in the form of culture. Thus, in a certain social context, the past is transferred to the present and the future (Steiner Editor & Zelizer, 1995: 227). In addition to building the past, collective memory has a continuity that extends from today to the future (Coser, 1992b: 372). In other words, memory is essential for the continuation of social groups that share the same values and common history (Miszal, 2003: 52).

Halbwachs argues that society consists of rational individuals who can form and make sense of their own concepts within a social framework. This rationality is demonstrated by social and cultural products such as institutions, laws, ceremonies, and traditions. On the other hand, rationality allows society to reconstruct the past according to the needs of society (Gedi & Elam, 1996: 39). Social groups revise their memories according to the period they live in. Therefore, collective memory cannot be formed independently of the present (Halbwachs, 1992: 189). The events of the present are interpreted on the basis of past experiences (Connerton, 1996: 2). Collective memory also includes the current extensions of the past. These extensions, which shape the character of the present, provide a framework for making sense of the current problems (Miszal, 2003: 13).

Collective memory not only encompasses the past, but also the present. It makes it possible for collective memory to live by representing an event that has occurred in the past (Huyssen, 1995: 2-3). The hegemony of the present shapes the past in the discourses of today. It is inevitable that the past takes shape in the present discourse, because present discourses cannot escape current circumstances (Sarlo, 2012: 43-4). In other words, while the past is transformed into collective memory, it passes through the filter of the cultural and political codes of the present time (Traverso, 2009: 2). The past can be articulated with the present for a certain purpose. When the past is alive in the present, it enables the present to shape the past. Even if such a past is not part of collective memory, it becomes a living narrative through the memory of the present (Brown, 2010: 202-3). The existing memory of social groups

can only change with a new memory production. The traditions in the present memory are carried back to the present by going back to the past (Halbwachs, 1992: 185). While the past is reshaped in the memory of the present, the reconstruction of the past affects both the present and the future (Assmann, 2011: 27-8). The past, with narratives that carry it to the present, is interpreted as a continuity following the present. Past narratives include discourses that refer to the future (Sarlo, 2012: 11-2).

Collective memory is one of the most important areas of the desire to dominate a group (Le Goff, 1992: 54). To the extent that historical events and historical figures accumulate in collective memory, disagreements about how to remember them increase (Zerubavel, 1996: 295). This causes events that history has forgotten or ignored to manipulate memory (Le Goff, 1992: 54). Thus, collective memory is selective. It is important how memory changes from group to group, by whom and how it is shaped (Burke, 1997: 46). The aim of the social groups holding power is to build their hegemony (Schudson, 1992: 209). Memory is based on the act of remembering becomes politicized by underlining what will be remembered by those who remember (Gillis, 1994: 3). The memory of social groups is shaped by social forces. Thus the memory of the present reconstructed by the dominant ideology is remembered (Miztal, 2003: 53). It is impossible to prevent the memory from being distorted (Schudson, 2007: 181). As memory and identity are dynamic in nature, the reconstruction of the past is the result of current identities (Miztal, 2003: 14). This situation causes some of the narratives to be hegemonized or ignored (Erll & Rigney, 2009: 2). Collective memory, therefore, becomes one of the most powerful weapons in politics (Miztal, 2003: 14).

In politics, collective memory plays an important role because it represents political and social transformations (Olick, 1999: 333). In countries where democratic regimes have taken a hit and moved away from democracy, the past is an issue that should be addressed (Meyer, 2008: 173). States, especially totalitarian regimes, are attempting to shape collective memory. This shaping can even make

memories forget (Connerton, 1996: 14). Because the act of remembering is modified by the ideology that dominates (Misztal, 2003: 12). Power dominates hierarchically by controlling society's memory (Connerton, 1996: 1). The risk of losing the memory leads to the reflection of the culture in politics through discourses produced in the non-democratic countries (Sarlo, 2012: 19). When examining the relationship between history and politics, it should be considered by whom, why, and how the past is used as a political tool (Meyer, 2008: 176). This explains the relationship between memory and power. This causes memory to become a political tool (Confino, 1997: 1393). History in the political sphere is used for a specific purpose. This goal is to glorify or denigrate a particular period or person (Brown, 2010: 173). Memory is based on common memories shared by people also allows for emotions to be shared. Shared feelings provide a space to manipulate politicians with the help of propaganda (Lambert, Scherer, Rogers, & Jacoby, 2009: 199-201). Memory manipulation is ideological. Memory manipulation tries to legitimize the ideology which holds power. The historical reality is shown differently in the legitimizing process. Thus the unity between power, ideology, and history is established (Ricoeur, 2006: 82).

Rewriting the past in line with ideology and current needs makes history vulnerable (Schudson, 1992: 205). Thus, historical consciousness is trapped between past and present (Steiner Editor & Zelizer, 1995: 218). Determining the key issues of history on the current agenda causes the past to be distorted and reconstructed for certain interests (Confino, 1997: 1387). Memory is trained through the teaching of historical narrative. It is important for the training of memory to remember and celebrate a common date. The construction of official history and identity takes place in this way (Ricoeur, 2006: 85). The fact that history legitimizes the past is also rationalizing the future. People can imagine the future by accepting the past (Nora, 1989: 11). Collective memory makes the current order legitimate because it brings the past to the present (Connerton, 1996: 3). Society and the memory of society are essentially shaped by public institutions. Ideological apparatuses such as school, media, and law have an impact on the formation of memory (Misztal,

2003: 19-20). The relationship between memory and identity shaped by history, is maintained in the public sphere by an act of commemoration. Consequently, commemoration, which is a social and political act, is based on consent (Gillis, 1994: 5). Collective memory, built by institutions with different values, uses the past to manage the construction of the future. Public spaces, such as museums and monuments, are places that give shape to the memory (Huysen, 1995: 249-250).

While the past accompanies the present as a memory controlled by power, it sanctifies the places of memory, leads to commemoration obsession (Traverso, 2009: 2). The act of commemoration is a way of reproducing the past by emphasizing the narratives of the memory of society. It helps to refresh the memory. In addition, it allows individuals to share events as a common value even if they have not experienced them (Steiner Editor & Zelizer, 1995: 219). Ceremonies help the political power to gain legitimacy. It assigns power to the function of holiness in the process of formation and institutionalization (Özbudun, 1997: 13). Also, memory is passed on through commemoration ceremonies from generation to generation. In other words, products of collective memory, such as monuments and museums, seek to eliminate the limitation of time (Assmann, 2006: 215). Since collective memory is not universal, it is limited to a specific time and place (Halbwachs, 1980: 84). Memory spaces are created to keep collective memory alive. Established museums and archives, celebrated anniversaries, and commemoration ceremonies are artificial acts to ensure the survival of memory. Places of memory exist today as proof that they are not separate from history (Nora, 2006: 23). Elements that remind the past, with specific times and places, become concrete. While the relationship of remembering with time is based on the common past of communities, a material bond is created by its relationship with space (Assmann, 2011: 24-5). When ceremonies are invented as an extension of the past, they serve an ideological function. At the same time, the ceremonies help reduce conflict and increase interaction within the group. Thus, it is aimed to ensure the sustainability of memory (Connerton, 1996: 49-51)

Nostalgia, which is the combination of *nostos* (return home) and *algia* (longing), means “longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed” (Boym, 2001). Nostalgia wants to recall a world that is incomplete, blocked in the present (Tannock, 2006: 454). Restorative nostalgia is essentially based on the rebuilding of the past as a lost house. By destroying the modern, it wants to keep the symbols of the past alive (Boym, 2001). In this sense, nostalgia tries to maintain the continuity of the source, identity, and past from which it feels separated (Tannock, 2006: 456). The need for rebuilding stems from being distanced from the values that were thought to be heirs. This means not living the extension of traditions seen as glorious in the present (Nora, 2006: 21). That’s why nostalgia is one of the most important tools for connecting the past with the present and the future. Nostalgia also helps to build and maintain identity by reminding individuals and groups of who they are (Davis, 1977: 419). Nostalgia is fed by the experience of the present (Davis, 2011: 448).

Nostalgia includes melancholy that occurs in response to sudden social change. It creates a conservative reaction by presenting appropriate versions of the past (Pickering & Keightley, 2006: 920). Conservatism relies on the past to counter modernization innovations. It needs traditions and symbols to reproduce, so it has a longing for the nostalgia. While conservative nostalgia is struggling with modernism, it imagines the possible future of the past that modernity overthrows. It uses elements of the past to keep the nostalgia alive (Bora & Onaran, 2006: 234-5, 260), because, in order to long for the past, there must be a significant distinction between the past and the present. Breaking the link between the past and the present, and not knowing exactly what has happened in the past, causes the past to be embraced as a lost piece. The imagined past thus appears to be an inseparable part of life (Nora, 2006: 29-30). Conservative nostalgia uses traditional elements to cope with modernity. This nostalgia, which deals with the extensions of the past in the present, creates a “past fiction that will ensure cultural continuity” with “chosen traditions” (Bora & Onaran, 2006: 236-7).

Although traditions are believed to have existed since ancient times, some of them have been born recently or intentionally invented in reality. The concept of “invented tradition” comprises both the traditions that have recently emerged but have become important and valuable and have also been purposefully created. These invented traditions are forms of behavior that are based on a constant repetition, wish to build a historical connection (Hobsbawm, 1992: 1-2), because past practices need to be put on the present agenda in order to reconstruct the past. This reconstructed past is rationalizing itself by using memory (Assmann, 2011: 17-9). Invented traditions can be evaluated as traditions that increasing the loyalty of a group, the traditions that legitimize intentionally invented authority mechanisms, and the traditions created for the imposition of certain value judgments (Hobsbawm, 1992: 8). Invented traditions are used as propaganda for the right-wing ideologies while reshaping collective memory (Boym, 2001). History, as the common past and cement of the community, plays an important role in gaining the legitimacy and acceptance of the traditions that have been invented. This is why the invented traditions are interconnected with intentionally constructed discourses and symbols (Hobsbawm, 1992: 12-3). Memory, which seeks to establish the legitimacy of a group or institution, is invented on the basis of a past based on rituals and myths that aim to create the practice of society (Traverso, 2009: 2-3).

Present extensions of the past seem worthless when they find no voice in society. However, the history that has an impact on society is used as a unifying element, creating groups such as heroes and enemies (Sarlo, 2012: 12-3). Collective memory brings society together to produce an imagined history that can be used against an enemy (Wertsch, 2009: 122). Producing an imagined nostalgia can create dangerous situations by confusing the past with the imaginary. The elements required by current policies have an impact on the future by reproducing the past as a fantasy (Boym, 2001).

## 1.2. NEO-OTTOMANISM

Turkey's society, while continuing transformation to spend more than a century, has been the place of opposing ideas and identities with one another (İnsel, 2019: 7). Today, the conflict between secular and religious conservatives is one of the major challenges facing modern Turkey (Özbudun, 2014: 155). The basis of tension between the Seculars and the Islamist conservatives that is the reason for today's polarization, dates to the Ottoman period. While the westernization movements in the Ottoman period caused a conservative reaction, they led to the adoption of traditional and religious elements (Kaya, 2012: 7-8). The Kemalist regime in the Republican era took transformative steps to westernize the Republic, and cut it off from the Ottoman past. The dissatisfaction caused by this situation has triggered a desire of the masses to return to the essence of Turkey, particularly with the help of the AKP's neo-Ottomanism policy (Ünal Çınar, 2020: 46-7).

The fact that the Ottomans fell behind Europe led to Westernization and the modernization of the Ottoman Empire. In the process that began with the Tanzimat reforms, the lives and property of all Ottoman citizens were guaranteed, while non-Muslims were given equal rights like Muslims. Thus the idea of Ottomanism that emerged has created an identity that aims to keep multicultural elements together (Onar, 2009a: 231). Moreover, the nationalist movements that began in the Balkans led to the birth of a group called the Young Ottomans, which was founded by İbrahim Şinasi, Namık Kemal, Ziya Pasha, and Ali Suavi, to create a new Ottoman identity. According to young Ottomans, establishing a cultural, traditional, and historical social capital is the way to create an Ottoman identity (Ongur, 2015: 418). With Ottomanism in the Ottoman Empire, the concept of a "nation" began to be called a community, regardless of religion, rather than a religious community. Thus, while the concept of nation was taken to a secular front, it was planned to prevent nationalist separatist movements in the Balkans (Çolak, 2006: 589-590).

In the Republican era, the Kemalists continued the pro-Western secular ideas of reformists and young Turks in the Ottoman. Reforms towards westernization in the Kemalist regime were rationalized as modernization. The failure of some segments to adopt reforms was interpreted as leaving people ignorant (Akman, 2004: 37-8). Westernization movements in the Ottoman and Republican era differ from radical changes in the republic era (Belge, 2006: 98). Using the Latin alphabet instead of the Arabic alphabet, banning religious clothing paved the way for modern Turkey to detract from the Muslim-Ottoman tradition (Onar, 2009a: 232). The modernization movement in the Republican era essentially functions to complement the power vacuum that can emerge after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, because the disappearance of existing traditions and the disappearance of religious and ethnic differences from the agenda would create a great vacuum (İnsel, 2019: 44). In the Republican era, these radical changes, which destroy the old while creating the new, have created consequences that affect today (Belge, 2006: 98).

Ottomanism, which arose in the 19th century to keep the Ottoman Empire alive, became a subculture of the republic and could not be politicized for many years (Ongur, 2015: 417). However, neo-Ottomanism has become Turkey's most popular ideology as a solution center for contemporary politics (Yavuz, 2020: 7-8). In fact, Kemalism, a nationalist and secular ideology that sees Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as an authoritative figure, was Turkey's official ideology before Erdoğan (Yılmaz & Bashirov, 2018: 1815). However, the right-wing parties have begun to dominate the political parties of Turkey since the 1950s (Özbudun, 2014: 155). In the multi-party era, Islam and the Ottoman identity began to gain visibility with the Democratic Party. While the Democratic Party (DP) opened the Imam Hatip Schools and the Faculty of Theology in the 1950s, people such as Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Peyami Safa, Sezai Karakoç, Münevver Ayaşlı, Nurettin Topçu, and Cemil Meriç, who were members of the Ottoman-Islamist ideas, began to stand out (Ongur, 2015: 420). Thus, even though the Kemalist regime did not interfere directly, the state gave the Islamic movements the green light. After the DP was wiped out of the

stage of history as a result of the 1960 military coup, the Ottoman-Islamist elements lost power. However, despite rising left-wing movements during the Justice Party (AP), which came to power later, the Islamist movement supported, while taking its arms to the right-wing movement (Ongur, 2015: 422). After the 1980 coup, the Turkish-Islamic synthesis became the new ideology of the state (Yavuz, 1998: 30). In the years when workers and student movements increased, secular nationalism was not enough to prevent these movements and to carry out anti-communism activities. The way of struggle was seen as a Turkish-Islamic synthesis. So it became the official ideology. Religious groups became politicized, public cadres were filled with conservative nationalists (Yaşlı, 2014: 73-4). As a result, the secular regime began to weaken socially, culturally, and economically (Yavuz, 1998: 30). Turgut Özal, who became prime minister after the 1980 coup, highlighted the Turkish-Islamic identity, placed cultural elements of the Ottoman Empire on his agenda, and stressed that Turkey was the heir to the Ottomans with a glorious history (Çolak, 2006: 592). Thus, the neo-Ottomanism began to show its presence in Turkey.

Neo-Ottomanism, a new identity that emphasizes the glory of the Ottoman Empire should be built (Yavuz, 2020: 160-1), and an ideology based on an imagined past rather than reality, used to rebuild society and the state while helping to solve current problems. This ideology seeks to create a sense of belonging to society, while underlining the Muslim-Turkish identity as well as the preservation of the Ottoman heritage. At the same time, it marginalizes those who do not adopt this identity (Yavuz, 2020: 4). Neo-Ottomanism is the “return of the repressed” manifestation of the break with the Ottomans and Islam caused by the republic, the intention to live down the values of the Kemalist regime and the reconstruction of the social, and cultural codes of the Ottoman Empire (Tokdoğan, 2018: 56-7). Ottoman nostalgia, based on a sense of loss of the Ottoman’s glorious history, also ideas and identities cannot exist in modern Turkey. It points out that the Muslim-Turkish identity based on the Ottoman Empire against the secular Kemalist regime of modern Turkey, sees this identity as the victims of Kemalism. The revival of

cultural products belonging to the Ottoman Empire keeps the Ottoman Empire alive. Thus while Ottoman art, cuisine, and architecture are reproduced against the symbols of the Kemalist regime, a new social memory is to be created in this way (Yavuz, 2020: 21-3, 25-7). The memory of society based on a common past is being used by ruling regimes to build a common future. It is a past that can be determined by power and can change shape in order to protect current interests (Ünal Çınar, 2020: 41). For this reason, Ottoman history, beyond nostalgia, affects how Turkey's current policies will shape in the future. Moreover, this nostalgia is a facilitating factor in increasing the power of Turkey in the lands controlled by the Ottomans (Yavuz, 2020: 67).

The emergence of neo-Ottomanism was affected by internal factors such as the social transformations experienced by the liberal economy in Turkey, as well as external factors such as the end of the Cold War and subsequently the establishment of the Turkish state in Asia and Muslim states in the Balkans; the post-Gulf War Kurdish question; the issue of Cyprus and the rejection of Turkey's EU membership. Turgut Özal who is the 8<sup>th</sup> President (1989-1993) and 26<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Turkey (1983-1989), thus succeeded in softening the power of the Kemalist regime, with an emphasis on the neoliberal economy and the multicultural nature of the Ottoman Empire (Yavuz, 2020: 112). Developments in the late 1980s and 1990s led to new identity movements in the Kurdish, Islamic, and Balkan regions. While the multicultural environment that began to emerge, brought to mind the social structure of the Ottomans, it contributed the Ottoman to be seen as a model (Çolak, 2006: 589). New states emerged in the 1990s with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the break-up of Yugoslavia, and the Kurdish question arose after Iraq was lost the Gulf War. This has led to significant improvements in Turkey's new foreign policy strategy as the heir to the Ottoman Empire. In the period of Turgut Özal, the neo-Ottomanism that emerged under these conditions began to be adopted. Özal's neo-Ottomanism policy focused on the Balkans, and it was emphasized that the Balkans were at peace during the Ottoman period. Özal also added to his policy all the races that were former Ottoman citizens and now

within the borders of other countries, thus offering a solution to the Kurdish question (Çetinsaya, 2006: 378-9). Türkiye Günlüğü, the right-wing magazine, was the face of a new policy of neo-Ottomanism aimed at reviving the heritage of the Ottoman Empire. At that time, journalist Cengiz Çandar was an important figure neo-Ottoman view. According to him, Turkey should have a multicultural imperial structure like the Ottoman Empire rather than a nation-state (Çolak, 2006: 592-3). Özal's neo-Ottomanism was based on four main objectives. Firstly, to solve the Kurdish question while redefining Turkish nationalism with the idea of the Ummah; secondly, to redefine the role of secularism for the state and the market; thirdly, to strengthen trade with the Balkan, Caucasian and Middle Eastern countries and, finally, to establish good relations with the neighboring Muslim and Turkish states (Yavuz, 2020: 124-5). After Özal's death, the policy of neo-Ottomanism fell from power. Moreover, armed for solutions to the Kurdish question and then underlining secularism by the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, removed the neo-Ottoman policy (Uzgel & Yaramış, 2010: 4).

After the passage of time, neo-Ottomanism was resurrected with an Islamic emphasis. The resurrection took place with Necmettin Erbakan and the National Outlook Movement. To explain, the National Outlook Movement, Turkey's most important Islamic movement, started under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. Emphasizing the Ummah as a nation, this movement founded the National Order Party (MNP), National Salvation Party (MSP), Welfare Party (RP), the Virtue Party (FP), and Felicity Party (SP) (Çakır, 2005: 544). It is an ideology that encourages Muslims against the Crusaders who belittle them (Bora, 2017: 470). According to Erbakan, the founder of the National Outlook movement was actually Mehmed the Conqueror and Abdulhamid II. Furthermore, Erbakan sees himself as a sultan and a caliph (Yavuz, 2020: 135). He has a pan-Islamic approach that puts Turkey at the center of the Muslim countries. Pan-Islamism, based on Ottoman nostalgia, is the desire to be an imperial power. Turkey is therefore the only country to unite the Islamic world and save it from the West. This approach, unlike Özal's neo-Ottomanism policy, focuses on Islam and is related to the dream of "world

domination of Muslim Turks” (Bora, 2017b: 136-7). In particular, the National Outlook Movement, which followed an anti-Western policy, saw the United States and Israel as enemies of the Islamic world. According to the movement, Turkey, as the leader of the Islamic world, is also expected to change the situation for Muslim countries (Çakır, 2005: 565-6).

Erbakan wanted to create a strong Turkey by building a new identity for the Muslims. Thus, unlike Özal, he was more concerned with reviving the Ottoman identity than with the economy (Yavuz, 2020: 136). Erbakan’s neo-Ottomanism approach opposes neoliberal globalization and is based on a statist foundation. Therefore, he has a view that differs from the views of Ahmet Davutoğlu as well as the Özal period (Uzgel & Yaramış, 2010: 6). While the policy of neo-Ottomanism in the RP period desires a homogeneous structure under the Islamic identity, Özal has a multicultural outlook with ethnic and religious groups. Moreover, Özal did not follow a policy far from the West. However, according to the Welfare Party, Turkey should be away from the West and the center of the Islamic world (Yavuz, 2020: 141-2).

However, the nation understanding of the RP drew a great deal of reaction from the Kemalists. The nation rhetoric that threatens Turkey’s secular monoculture structure caused the closure of the RP with the February 28 process (Çolak, 2006: 597). On 28 February 1997, with the decision of MGK, it was reported that the government of which Erbakan was prime minister should put an end to practices that harm secularism. Thus the influence of political Islam, which threatens secular order in areas such as education, the media, and public institutions, was to be reduced. During the 1997 Turkish military memorandum period known as the 28 February process, the RP-DYP (True Path Party) coalition government resigned, and the RP was closed by the Constitutional Court (Akça, 2017: 28-9). In fact, all parties that support the Islamic view, except the Justice and Development Party (AKP), were closed by the Kemalist regime as a threat (Kaya, 2015: 52). The MNP which was founded in 1970, was closed by the Constitutional Court in 1971. After

the MSP which is its heir, was also closed in 1980, then finally the RP was established in 1983. However, the RP was also closed with 1997 Turkish military memorandum. Finally, in 2001, the more radical Islamists founded the SP. Additionally, politicians who abandoned the National Outlook and defined themselves as conservative democrats founded the Justice and Development Party (Bashirov & Lancaster, 2018: 1212).

Turkey suffered a major crisis of hegemony over the long history of the consecutive coalition governments. While the transition to the neoliberal economy did not receive much support from the working class, it also led to a conflict in the bourgeois class. The Kurdish question gained a military aspect, and the problems of secularism and religious identity have deepened the identity crisis. In such an environment, the RP preferred identity politics and managed to get support from workers and small capital damaged by neoliberal policies (Akça, 2014a: 12-3). In the late 1980s, the Association of Independent Businessmen (MÜSİAD) was founded by pro-Islamic industry and trade groups (Yavuz, 1998: 30). MÜSİAD established close relations with the RP. In fact, some MÜSİAD members are among the founding members of the AKP (Şen, 2010: 71). The AKP was born into the struggle for hegemony and the biggest economic crisis of Turkey in 2001 (Akça, 2014: 14). When AKP came to power in 2002, it received 34.4% of the votes. In the 2007 elections, the second period, the voting rate increased to 46.6%. The AKP, which increased its voting rate to 49.8% in the 2011 elections, consolidated its power by a referendum on a constitutional amendment in 2010, which was accepted by 58% of the people. (Özbudun, 2014: 156). The AKP came to power as the success of fast-moving Islamist politics since the 1990s. The AKP has also made it possible for Islamist capital to establish hegemony (Bekmen, 2014: 49).

The AKP Government may be examined in three periods. In the first period between 2002 and 2007, positive economic and democratic steps were taken to keep up with the requirements of the EU accession process. While the standard of living in the country was rising, also the AKP applied a zero-problem policy with

neighboring countries. At the same time, a “Kurdish Peace Process” was launched to resolve the Kurdish question during this period. AKP has almost undergone a transformation of its powers between 2007 and 2011 (Öniş, 2016: 142).

In 2008, at a press conference in Madrid, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the headscarf ban and said the constitution should be amended. While MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) supported this proposal, Republican People’s Party (CHP) and Democratic Left Party (DSP) were disturbed by this situation on the grounds that it was against secularism. On 14 March 2008, a lawsuit was brought against the closure of the party from politics. However, according to the decision announced on 30 July 2008, although the majority of the judges (six out of eleven) decided in favor of its closure, the party was not closed due to a lack of qualified majority (three-fifths or seven members out of eleven). Still, the court partially deprived the AKP of state funding for its anti-secular activities (Hale & Özbudun, 2010: 72-5).

After the 2010 referendum and the 2011 general election victory, the AKP focused on the New Turkey project. (Akça, 2014a: 21). The 2010 referendum envisaged amendments to the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) and the Constitutional Court, which would reduce the power of the seculars. In addition, the trial of soldiers in the civil court was also included in the topics of the referendum. In this way, the AKP wanted to prevent an uprising by the army and the judiciary (Özbudun, 2014: 156). Moreover, between 2008 and 2011, high-ranking soldiers were on Ergenekon and Balyoz trials With the coup attempt charge by the AKP (Yılmaz & Bashirov, 2018: 1816). In this period, the AKP gained strength and influenced the symbolic institutions of secularism, such as the military and universities. At the same time, during this period when the media began to be controlled, while secular media organizations were declining, the number of conservative media organizations increased (Aydın, 2014: 135-6). In short, after the 2011 general election, the AKP declared its hegemony in Turkey in its third period (Öniş, 2019: 208).

In the third period of the AKP its hegemony strengthened and paved the way for Turkey to become a party state (Öniş, 2019: 208). After the presidential and parliamentary general elections on 24 June 2018, Turkey passed the Presidency Government System with the help of constitutional amendments on 16 April 2017. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won the election as the AKP and MHP's presidential candidate. Erdoğan thus became Turkey's 12<sup>th</sup> president, taking 52.9% of the vote (Turan, 2018: 43). The transition from the parliamentary system to the Presidency Government System was aimed at making quick and effective decisions in the administration. Accordingly, with the Presidency Government System in Turkey the duality in country would disappear, and the President determine all public policy for five years, either directly or indirectly (Sobacı, Miş, & Köseoğlu, 2018: 1). Necmettin Erbakan, Alparslan Türkeş, Turgut Özal and Süleyman Demirel also expressed their views on the presidential system in various ways. Necmettin Erbakan referred to the presidential system as part of the National Order Party Program, the National Salvation Party Program and the 1973 MSP Election Statement, stating that the president should be elected by the people and that the state and the government should be united. However, with the support of the MHP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has brought the presidential system to life (Turan, 2018: 44).

Under the AKP rule, media outlets have been replaced by pro-government ones. Businesspeople close to the government and empowered by tenders have become the new media bosses. Ethem Sancak, Akın İpek, Erdoğan Demirören, Hasan Kalyoncu, Mehmet Cengiz, and Nihat Özdemir, who are close to the government, took an important role in the media, while the AKP overthrew major media giants such as Uzan and Doğan (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2018: 361). After the AKP consolidated its power, it tried to protect its political power by organizing social life. The AKP declared war against critical media outlets while taking control of the media. Turkish Radio Television Corporation (TRT) has begun producing content with Islamic themes (Kaya, 2015: 51). Erdoğan's neo-Ottomanism is also supported by pro-government media outlets such as *Yeni Şafak*, *Yeni Akit*, *Star*,

*Sabah* and *Akşam*. Islamic elements and the desire to change the regime found a place in the media (Yılmaz, 2017: 11-2). In addition, Erdoğan intended to maintain power through discourses such as “New Turkey” and “Target 2023” (Çınar, 2018: 139). The discourses “nation” and “national will” also have been used as tools to legitimize the activities of the AKP (Yaşlı, 2014: 127-8).

AKP established a neoliberal and conservative hegemony after years of political impotence. However, this authoritarian hegemony includes populist discourses that marginalize those who do not have their own opinion and regard them as enemies (Akça, 2017: 44-5). The Turkish-Islamic ideology, which is based on Turkey surrounded by internal and external enemies. West, secularism, non-Muslims, elites are therefore seen as a danger to political Islam (Yılmaz, 2017: 16-7). Accordingly, the AKP, while expressing that the Turkish-Islamic identity should be protected from internal and external enemies, is also constructing the Turkish-Islamic identity on a ground that tries to exist under the attack of its enemies. In this way, it is emphasized that Sunni Turks are surrounded by western and secular enemies who do not have a nostalgic state history (Yılmaz, 2018: 29-30). This is why Erdoğan’s policy includes aggressive rhetoric. He often portrays those who contradict his view as an enemy using a manipulative language (Lancaster, 2014: 1681). Victimization and the creation of enemies is one of the most important discourses of the Turkish-Islamic ideology. Victimization against the West and the Kemalist regime is used by the AKP and political Islamist politics to build hegemonies and act in accordance with their interests (Yılmaz, 2017: 2-3). The pre-Republican westernization movement, according to Erdoğan, not only threatens Islam’s spirit, but also victimizes Muslims (Tokdoğan, 2018: 103-7). Furthermore, neo-Ottomanism is a nostalgia for the AKP to be victimized by events that have not happened in the past. The Ottoman Empire, which disappeared with the Republic, is a glorious history that could not have been experienced and, the AKP is its inheritor (Ünal Çınar, 2020: 98-9). Neo-Ottomanism, which began with Özal in the 1990s, was not met with great satisfaction at the time. However, during the RP, it was strengthened by the view that Turkey was the leader of the Muslims and by the

effort to remove it from the West. After the AKP government and Ahmet Davutoğlu, neo-Ottomanism became a foreign policy (Onar, 2009: 11-2). In its third period, the AKP has also focused on neo-Ottomanism.

The states established after the collapse of the empire are affected by the administration policies of the empire. Therefore, the international relations policies of the old state are important for the new state (Walker, 2009: 496). Neo-Ottomanism, which presents a glorious historical narrative of the Ottoman past and serves to undervalue the elements of the Kemalist regime, has become the main strategy of the AKP's domestic and foreign policy, especially since 2009. Neo-Ottomanism, besides being a new historical narrative and memory construction of the AKP, was easily embraced with great appetite by people who were victimized by the Kemalist regime (Tokdoğan, 2018: 16-8). Erdoğan sees the abolition of the caliphate and the establishment of the modern Republic of Turkey as a catastrophe for Muslims. According to Erdoğan's understanding of neo-Ottomanism, a new identity that emphasizes the glory of the Ottoman Empire should be built (Yavuz, 2020: 160-1). The AKP's construction of a new history under the name of neo-Ottomanism has received grass-roots support, with references to the glorious history of the Ottomans and the victimization of the Kemalist regime (Ünal Çınar, 2020: 231-4).

AKP, as the successor to the Ottoman Empire, has a postimperial vision thanks to this heritage (White, 2014: 188). Ahmet Davutoğlu argues that Turkey should no longer be considered as the bridge between East and West, because he sees Turkey as the center that will dominate the land of the Ottoman Empire as the heir to the Ottomans. These ideas were followed as foreign policy in the period when Ahmet Davutoğlu was Minister of Foreign Affairs (Bora, 2017: 482). Ahmet Davutoğlu argues that Turkey, based on a long and glorious history as the Ottoman Empire, is a superior country and therefore this situation makes Turkey an important power in the region (Saraçoğlu, 2013: 62-3). Although the countries have a constant geographical location, the geopolitical importance of the countries may change over

time, and this situation also affects their foreign policy. Thus, Turkey should shape its foreign policy with a new geopolitical approach to becoming an active country (Davutoğlu, 2001: 116-8). In 2009, the “one minute” reaction of Erdoğan in Davos was one of the milestones for AKP politics. While this reaction was welcomed in the countries of the Middle East, Erdoğan’s sympathy for the region increased; but also for the West, a democratically elected Muslim leader was seen as a step forward in the name of Middle Eastern democracy (Ünal Çınar, 2020: 62).

The AKP has adopted a mission to protect Muslims around the world through its foreign policy strategies. Erdoğan, who assumed the position of leader of the Islamic world after his reaction in Davos, presented the AKP as an exemplary model for the West and the Middle East during the Arab Spring. Although this move was partially successful, it was not subsequently welcomed by the Arab countries. Then the coup in Egypt weakened the leadership claim of the AKP in the region and shook its authority. As a result, the AKP condemned the coup, the symbol of anti-coup “rabia” has become an important symbol in Turkey (Bora, 2017: 482-4). As a pan-Islamist, the AKP's neo-Ottomanism policy has been drawn to a more nationalist front as a result of events such as the end of the solution process, the Arab Spring, and the Gezi Park protests. The AKP politics has changed language in the discourse that the Kurds are in cooperation with the West as well as the various groups supporting the Gezi Park protests. In the meantime, Erdoğan has no longer seen as a democratic Muslim leader by the West, and the leader he supported in Egypt has been overthrown by a coup, finally, Erdoğan lost the hope to become the leader of the Middle East (Ünal Çınar, 2020: 81-3).

Abdulhamid II has a very important place in Erdoğan and his politics. Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, who is highly valued by Erdoğan, sees Abdulhamid II as an Islamic leader against Atatürk, the founding leader of modern Turkey (Yavuz, 2020: 148). Abdulhamid’s affinity with Erdoğan’s policies has motivated Erdoğan to become Abdulhamid II. The secularization movement that led to the deposition of Abdulhamid II is comparable to Erdoğan’s view of the republic. Like Abdulhamid

II, who highlighted the Sunni Muslim-Turkish identity during his reign and stood against the West, Erdoğan points out that he has girded his sword against Western oppression. The parallels between Abdulhamid II and Erdoğan are strengthened by the AKP government, writing anthems for Abdulhamid II, giving his name to the newly opened hospital to restore his honor. This similarity, which emerges from the Western and Islamic perspective, almost points to the resurrected Ottoman (Tokdoğan, 2018: 147-9, 152-5). While the Payitaht TV series, which tells of the Abdulhamid II period, produces a new image of Abdulhamid II, it also reflects current political issues on the screen. Erdoğan thus identifies himself with Abdulhamid II and describes himself as the protector of the Muslims (Yavuz, 2020: 149).

The appropriate dates for neo-Ottoman foreign policy and Sunni nation building have begun to be celebrated as a day of remembrance (Yaşlı, 2014: 137-8). During the AKP period, the Republic Day gave its place to the conquest of Istanbul, and the National Sovereignty and Children's Day was celebrated at Holy Birth Week on the birthday of Prophet Muhammad. In addition to these, children and young people are no longer celebrating national holidays in stadiums (White, 2014: 9). Also, the AKP government, which sees itself as an Ottoman inheritor, wants to replace the 19 May commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day, which the Kemalist regime attaches importance to, in order to construct a new historical narrative, with the conquest of Istanbul on 29 May (Ünal Çınar, 2020: 219). The conquest of Istanbul, Islam's victory over the Crusaders, was crowned after the conquest by the Friday prayer of Mehmed the Conqueror in Hagia Sophia. Hagia Sophia, which in the Republican era was converted into a museum, is read by Islamists as the defeat of Muslims by the West. For this reason, Hagia Sophia must be open to worship, in other words, to be conquered again. In this respect, Hagia Sophia is a spatial manifestation of neo-Ottomanism (Tokdoğan, 2018: 173-5). Thus, the conquest of Istanbul is seen as a victory over the Christian world, has become a resurrection story of New Turkey (Ünal Çınar, 2020: 222). Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, began to gain importance against Ankara, the capital

of the Republic during the period of the RP. The Mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, started to organize commemorative ceremonies for Mehmed the Conqueror, the conqueror of this Islamic city. Moreover, the ceremony in 1996 was attended by representatives from various Muslim countries, where discourses of “a new conquest” were emphasized. The conquest ceremonies, which began to reach the masses during the period of Erdoğan as mayor, continue by attributing an Islamic city meaning to Istanbul during the AKP period. The AKP addresses that national history started not with the founding of the Republic and, Turkish War of Independence, but with the conquest of Istanbul and, making the conquest almost an official holiday (Tokdoğan, 2018: 70-1, 88-9).

The AKP has redefined “the notions of nation, national history, national homeland and national interest”. International relations have become an important field as the production place of the nation and nationalism discourses (Saraçoğlu & Demirkol, 2015: 303). The mismatch of Islamism and nationalism is an obstacle to the nationalism of the AKP being out of sight; however, unlike Kemalist and the MHP nationalism, while discourses about the glorious history of the Ottoman Empire dominated the AKP politics, the concept of a nation refers to Islamic values (Saraçoğlu, 2013: 54-5). The AKP’s nationalism is in a position that is against Kemalist nationalism, even trying to undermine it. With the AKP, the definition of nation has come out of the concept of Turkish, and its scope has expanded. According to the new context, Turkishness matched Sunni-Muslim values (Saraçoğlu & Demirkol, 2015: 306-7). In other words, Islamic values occupy a large place in the nationalist discourses of the AKP. In pursuit of leadership in the lands ruled by the Ottoman Empire, the AKP integrates Islam into its discourses (Dönmez, 2015: 562). In short, the AKP’s understanding of nation and nationalism based on Sunni-Islam is embellished with the Ottomans. The common history of the AKP nation is based on the Ottoman Empire and its glorious past (Saraçoğlu & Demirkol, 2015: 313). Muslim nationalism is an Islam that feeds on the values of Turkish-Ottoman identity (White, 2014: 97). Particularly as a result of the alliance with the MHP, the AKP has begun to pursue its policies from an Islamic as well as

a nationalist perspective. It emphasizes the history of Turkey, which goes back to the Battle of Manzikert and not to the Turkish War of Independence. In New Turkey, Islamic elements such as the siege of Kut Al Amara and the conquest of Istanbul have been added to the current Kemalist narrative (Ünal Çınar, 2020: 67-8). İstanbul is a nostalgia that brings together Islamists with the idea that the capital of the Ottoman Empire is an Islamic city and nationalists with the idea that the Ottomans are Turkish ancestors. Consequently, İstanbul is a powerful symbol against the Kemalist regime's Ankara (Tokdoğan, 2018: 169). While the understanding of nationalism by the AKP is based on the concept of Sunni-Muslim, it is emphasized that Turkey's social structure and foreign policy must rely on Ottoman history (Saraçoğlu, 2013: 58-9).

To put it another way, neo-Ottomanism is an attempt to forge a new identity. As a result, it becomes part of society's daily routine. With the control of political communication and media, the Ottoman Empire's cultural and historical heritage is brought to the forefront. Thus, the Ottoman Empire is ingrained in society (Dönmez, 2015: 555). For this reason, neo-Ottomanism also spread to the production of space; the third bridge and the bridge connecting the Istanbul-Bursa highway, which opened with great pomp in the AKP period, were named after the Sultans. In addition, the situation has exceeded with the construction of the Halil Pasha Artillery Barracks in Gezi Park, which is a heritage of the Ottomans (Ünal Çınar, 2020: 92-4). It also affects architecture, from the restoration of Ottoman buildings to the names of newly opened universities and private sector residences. Moreover, it spreads to TV series, movies, and media products (Ongur, 2015: 426-8). Today, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan continues to spread the spirit of neo-Ottomanism through the Directorate of Communications.

## 2. ANALYSIS

The analysis section of the thesis first explains the establishment of the Directorate of Communications, its activities, vision, mission, organizational structure, and budget. Following that, the Directorate of Communications' YouTube contents are examined using the content analysis method. The analysis section continues with discourse analysis theoretical discussion. The contents of the Directorate of Communications named "Red Apple Anthem", "Blue Homeland Anthem", and "Sarıkamış Anthem" are analyzed by discourse analysis method based on the discussed discourse analysis section.

### 2.1. THE DIRECTORATE OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Directorate of Communications is one of the institutions set up under the Presidency Government System. Since the day of establishment, it has focused on the promotion of Turkey and the prevention of black propaganda activities against Turkey. Also, changing population dynamics and developing technology affect the activities of the Directorate of Communications. The emergence of new technologies and the integration of services in the digital field is an important factor in reaching the citizens (Strateji Geliştirme Daire Başkanlığı, 2019: 50-2). Indeed, the Directorate of Communications actively continues its communication activities through the use of social media platforms such as YouTube and Twitter.

The Directorate of Communications was established by Presidential Decree no. 14 published in the Official Gazette dated 24 July 2018 and no. 30488 citizens (Strateji Geliştirme Daire Başkanlığı, 2019: 17). On 25 July 2018, Prof Fahrettin Altun was appointed by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the Communications Director of Republic of Turkey ("İletişim Başkanlığı," 2021a). Established with the aim of "empowering the Turkey brand", the Directorate of Communications aims to work synchronously with all institutions of the state ("İletişim Başkanlığı," 2021b).

The Directorate of Communications has a vision of Turkey's representation in national and international public opinion and "empowers the Turkish brand" in all communication tools and methods. In addition, it has the mission to define the common language of all Turkish institutions and communication strategies for national and international policies, and thus to share Turkey's policy with the public. Moreover, organizing relations with the press and members of the press and ensuring communication between the nation and the state are among the missions of the Directorate of Communications ("İletişim Başkanlığı," 2021c). The fundamental values of the institution are based on "being reliable, being open to technological development and innovation, being a solution-oriented/constructive/project producing institution, being open to cooperation/participation, being an expert in its field" citizens (Strateji Geliştirme Daire Başkanlığı, 2019: 7).

The duties of the Directorate of Communications are set out in Presidential Decree no. 14, published in the Official Gazette of 24 July 2018. According to this decree, the Directorate of Communications assist in the determination of the strategies to be adopted by the President in the promotion of the State. It ensures that the public and the relevant authorities are informed in a timely and accurate manner. It sets a common corporate communication standard for all public institutions and organizations. It prepares press card and directs the press relations. It also acts as an intermediary for citizens to forward their requests and opinions to the State. In addition, it carries out external promotion activities, participates in activities that benefit Turkey in foreign countries and makes arrangements to support Turkey's foreign policy. Also, taking the necessary measures against the black propaganda activities about Turkey is one of its duties citizens (Strateji Geliştirme Daire Başkanlığı, 2019: 18-9).

The Directorate of Communications is composed of Central, Provincial and International offices. The Central Office consists of the Directory Office, 2 Deputy Directors, 1 Office of the Chief of Staff, 1 Office of the Legal Counsellor and 7

Departments. These departments are the Department of Public Diplomacy, Department of Press and Publications, Department of Public Relations, Department of Translation, Department of Administrative Services, Department of Information Technologies, Department of Strategy Development. In addition, there are 18 regional directorates in the Provincial Offices of the Directorate of Communications; 38 Offices of Press Counselors and 1 Office of Press Attaché in the International Offices citizens (Strateji Geliştirme Daire Başkanlığı, 2019: 39).

According to the Directorate of Communications' 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, the overall budget for these years is 2,116,142,000 TL. The Directorate of Communications has 368,136,000 TL in 2020; 394,675,000 TL in 2021; 416,874,000 TL in 2022; 450,219,000 TL in 2023; and 486,238,000 TL in 2024 citizens (Strateji Geliştirme Daire Başkanlığı, 2019: 49).

Also, the official YouTube channel of the Directorate of Communications is examined. The YouTube channel named "T.C. İletişim Başkanlığı" has 401 contents that published between 17 December 2018 and 13 January 2021 is reviewed. The contents is evaluated on the broadcast date, duration, topic, language, hashtag, like, dislike, views, comments and special day categories.

The Directorate of Communications has started content production on YouTube in December 2018. For 2018, only 1 content was shared. While content production increased in 2019, 2020 was the year that most content was produced. The duration of the 401 content is variable. The shortest content is 29 seconds, while the longest content is 2 hours and 46 minutes. The topics of shared content also vary. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statements and political activities, content describing Turkey's foreign policy, national and religious celebrations, various commemorative and special days, Turkish promotional content, Istanbul Yeditepe concerts that broadcast live have been shared.

Most of the contents are in Turkish; however, they are also available in foreign languages. Although the use of English stands out among foreign languages, there are Russian, Kurdish, Arabic, German, French, Spanish and Italian. Hashtags are used for almost none of the contents. The hashtags used are compatible with the topics of the contents. There are not a lot of comments on the contents. In addition, more than half of the contents are closed for comment. Like, dislike, and the number of views differ. The number of likes ranges from 1 to 4900; the number of dislikes ranges from 0 to 1600; the number of views ranges from 38 to 115687. “İstanbul Yeditepe Konserleri” broadcast live on the channel are content with the highest number of views and likes. These contents is also the most dislike ones. Contents related to special days should not be underestimated. These contents, which generally focus on the July 15 coup attempt but also include contents such as the conquest of Istanbul, the celebration of Holy Night, the Preveza Naval Victory, the Republic Day, Children’s Day, World Tourism Day, Teachers’ Day, World Children’s Day.

## **2.2. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

The Critical Discourse Analysis was born at a conference at the University of Amsterdam in January 1991. Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak contributed to the theory and method of discourse analysis at this conference (Wodak, 2001: 4). Critical discourse analysis suggests that discourses can be understood within the context of history. According to the Critical Discourse Analysis, this context is affected by cultural, political and socio-psychological factors (Meyer, 2001: 15). Critical discourse analysis is a theory that focuses on both language and method. It should also have a transdisciplinary relationship with other social theories (Fairclough, 2001: 121). The “critical” nature of the discourse analysis is based on the ideas of Jürgen Habermas and the Frankfurt School. Habermas sees language as a tool of domination and social power (Wodak, 2001: 2).

According to Foucault, discourse is a way of describing objects, producing, revealing actions and ideas, and organizing them (Hall, 2013: 29). Revealing the meaning in the text allows to look ideologically critical (van Dijk, 2003: 60). Language and ideology are interdependent. It is therefore necessary to analyze discourses in order to explain their functions (Mills, 2004: 118). In other words, Critical Discourse Analysis examines the relationship between language and power (Wodak, 2001: 2).

The critical discourse analysis is not just concerned with spoken and written texts. At the same time, it examines the social processes of discourse production and the meanings created by individuals and groups by interacting with these discourses (Wodak, 2001: 2-3). Discourse constructs meaning. In addition, information is generated by discourse, not the subject (Hall, 2013: 29-39). Meaning emerges from the audiences' relationship to discourse (Kress, 1990: 86).

Language is a social practice and constitutes social representations (Kress, 1990: 85-6). Discourse enables the use of language as a social practice while at the same time building social relationships and social identities (Sözen, 1999: 40). So, language functions as the founder of identities and social relations (Fairclough, 2010: 92). Discourses are “linguistic mechanisms” that contribute to individuals' understanding of the world and themselves. Thus, discourses become elements that enable the construction of an identity (Richardson & Langford, 2015: 83). Discourse analysis also reveals the link between discourse and social processes while examining discourse (Fairclough, 2010: 10); because discourse analysis emerges from the interaction of language, discourse and social structure (Blommaert, 2005: 25).

While discourse brings the practices of society to life, it is one of the most important elements in the transmission of ideology (van Dijk, 2003: 112). Dominant groups use the norms, values, and attitudes of the public in their interests (İnceoğlu & Çomak, 2009: 31). Since the discourse is produced by dominance, it also gains

legitimacy from the ideology of powerful groups (Wodak, 2001: 3). The discourse has an important place in the reproduction of socio-cultural hegemony (van Dijk, 1989: 23). Hegemony manifests itself through discursive practices. While discourse reinforces and reproduces hegemony, discourse itself becomes a manifestation of hegemony (Fairclough, 2010: 129-130).

Discourse does not originate from a single source or action (Hall, 2013: 29). The source of the discourse is not limited to political communication and news. Discourses also spread through the materials of social life such as entertainment media such as movies, games, music, fashion and architecture. Thus, it is associated with daily life by individuals (Machin, 2013: 347). Discourses are propagated and imposed from institutionalized production areas (Purvis & Hunt, 1993: 489). The control of discourse and discourse production enables the control of social life (van Dijk, 1989: 21). The power lies in the discourse (Purvis & Hunt, 1993: 488). Power-holding groups determine what and how the discourse will be. Discourse thus becomes a reflection of those in power (van Dijk, 1989: 21-22). The reproduction of power is the focus of the discourse analysis; because discourse is an “instrument of power” (Blommaert, 2005: 24-5). Language may be used to consolidate and even abolish power (Wodak, 2001: 11). In addition, discourse generates and transmits power (Mills, 2003: 128). Discourses represent ideas and behaviors that are acceptable and try to justify why they should be that way (Machin, 2013: 352). Discourse analysis focuses on how ideology, political and social processes interact to build representations of what is acceptable (Richardson & Langford, 2015: 83). Ideological discourses generally emerge as “us” and “them” (van Dijk, 2003: 65).

The meaning of the phrases in the discourse should be interrelated and consistent within themselves (van Dijk, 2003: 61). Consistency is constructed within the meaning of the text (İnceoğlu & Çomak, 2009: 21). Each discourse has its own order. The boundary with other discourses is also dynamic (Purvis & Hunt, 1993: 485-6); because discourses exist in a context and interact with the others (Sözen, 1999: 27).

As a result, discourse analysis focuses on the political and ideological consequences of discourses, by dealing with which identities and actions are highlighted or hidden (Machin, 2013: 352). Thus, discourse analysis not only analyzes discursive events, written and spoken texts, but also how social and cultural structures emerge and ideologically shaped through power relations (Fairclough, 2010: 93).

Based on the theoretical discussion of discourse analysis, three video contents from the Directorate of Communications are analyzed: “Red Apple Anthem”, “Blue Homeland Anthem”, and “Sarıkaş Anthem”. The videos chosen are historically based or inspired. These video contents are produced with a neo-Ottomanist narrative and a high-budget production that corresponds to contemporary political goals by incorporating propaganda components.

### **2.2.1 Red Apple Anthem**

The video titled “Red Apple Anthem” was published on the YouTube account of the Directorate of Communications on August 24, 2020. The video takes 4 minutes and 12 seconds. The lyrics and music of the Red Apple Anthem, the soundtrack of the video, belong to Ali Sinanoğlu.

Essentially, the red apple, which can be defined as “the ideal to be achieved and the imaginary place to be achieved” is a concept that symbolically expresses “the idea of Turkish world domination”. The Ottomans thought they had to defeat the Roman and Byzantine empires in order to become world rulers, and therefore in a sense they saw Istanbul as a red apple. In fact, the siege of Vienna by the Ottoman Empire, which subsequently turned its target to Rome, is a red apple (Gökyay, 2002). Accordingly, the concept represented by the red apple is constantly changing.

The video begins with a close-up image of a man who later became known to be Sultan Alp Arslan, with a mustache and beard in a military uniform. Later, a man in black clothes with a mustache appears, who has been taught to be Osman Gazhi,

the founder of the Ottoman Empire. In the following scene, in a red and yellow gilded caftan, a man who was later presented to be Mehmed the Conqueror is shown. While Corporal Seyit, the symbol of the Gallipoli Campaign with the cannonball he carries, and also, a boy in a military uniform who is later taught to be a child soldier fighting in the Gallipoli are seen. Then, with the Turkish flag in his right hand, the modern Turkish soldier is displayed on the screen. A horse and a person on it and three people on horseback are seen in the foreground in the next scene, while Sultan Alp Arslan is seen in front of them on a horse. After that, an old woman, presumed to be Nene Hatun, and a young woman believed to represent a Turkish woman carrying ammunition to the front are shown. Sultan Alp Arslan returns and orders the attack after four men, one of whom is dressed in military uniform, appear in front of the July 15 Martyrs Memorial. Finally, the janissary band enters the frame and begins playing. Comparative images of modern Turkish soldiers walking and Sultan Alp Arslan's army on horseback. The video begins with a journey from the Great Seljuk State to the Ottoman Empire, then to the Gallipoli Campaign and finally to the present day.

The video tells the red apple and Turkish-Muslim identity began to assert their dominance on the historical stage. This journey began with Sultan Alp Arslan in the Battle of Manzikert and continued on 15 July with a nation defending their country at the cost of their lives. From this vantage point, it is possible to identify specific historical eras for the content of Red Apple. The Battle of Manzikert, the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, the conquest of Istanbul, the Gallipoli Campaign, and the 15 July coup attempt are all highlights of this period. AKP sees the Battle of Manzikert as an important step in spreading the Turkish-Islamic identity of Anatolia. For this reason, during the AKP period, the Manzikert Victory has become a crucial day. The journey that started with Sultan Alp Arslan, who opened the doors of Anatolia, continued with Osman Gazhi, the founder of the Ottoman Empire that ruled over three continents. In addition, the conquest of Istanbul is often referenced by the AKP, as it represents victory over the West in the narrative of neo-Ottomanism. On the other hand, The AKP accepts the

resistance to the coup as a resurrection and identifies the coup attempt with the concept of epic. Therefore, discourses about the coup attempt are frequently encountered in AKP's political communication.

The Red Apple Anthem begins with the words: "*Lives are in the way*". Then, a door opens at first. In the "*way*" part of the anthem, Al-Aqsa Mosque is seen. Also, in the "*The goal of the red apple will be reached*" part, the contemporary Turkish army is seen walking from the darkness towards the camera.

**Figure 2.1:** Al-Aqsa Mosque

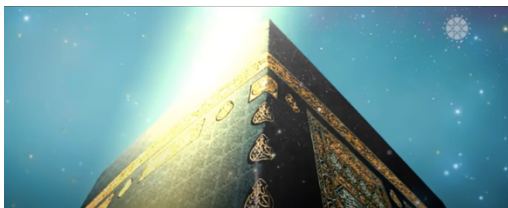


**Figure 2.2:** Turkish Soldiers in the Darkness

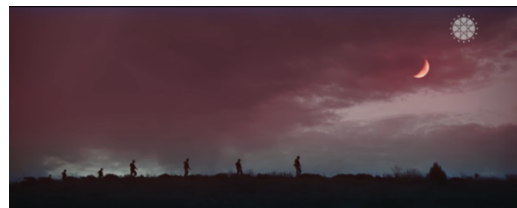


Then the Kaaba is represented on the screen during the words, "*The promised divine light*". Finally, in the part "*Will forever be the ruler*" the Turkish soldiers appear again. On this basis, the content makes audiences think that the target of the red apple is Islam related. Moreover, both important historical figures such as Sultan Alp Aslan, Mehmed the Conqueror, Osman Gazhi and even the modern Turkish army are serving Islam. While in the section "*Only the conquest of the red apple, the earth will find peace*", Turkish soldiers are walking slowly and in the expanding frame, a moon near the crescent stands out in the sky.

**Figure 2.3:** The Kaaba



**Figure 2.4:** Turkish Soldiers are Walking



It seems to be that Turkish soldiers are already on their way to conquer the red apple. From this point of view, today's red apple is to lead and protect the Muslim geography. Actually, Turks play a significant role in jihad policy of Islam. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated at the celebration of the 949<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory in the Battle of Manzikert, which opened the doors of Anatolia to the Turks: "*The two armies confronted on the Manzikert Plain on 26 August 1071. It was Friday. On that day, it was prayed for the victory of Muslims in all Islamic lands.*" (Erdoğan, 2020). Obviously, for the AKP and Erdoğan, the Manzikert Victory represents the beginning of the Turkish and Islamic world's great victories. According to the same speech, the Turks' conquest of Anatolia destroyed plans of Western and the crusaders and strengthened Islamophobia. In addition, Erdoğan included Yahya Kemal Beyatlı's poem "August 26, 1922" in his speech. In his poem, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı refers to the Turkish army as the Islamic army. The poem's most significant aspect is that Beyatlı wrote it for the Great Offensive, which began on August 26, 1922. The Great Offensive and Victory Day on August 30 are overshadowed by the Manzikert Victory celebrations on the same dates. Actually, The Battle of Manzikert was first put on the agenda for the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary by Osman Turan, Deputy of the Justice Party, and one of the leading names of nationalist-conservative historiography, to make the date a national holiday. Manzikert Victory is a nationalist conservative alternative to Dumlupınar on the grounds that the Turks are the rulers of Anatolia and the leader of Islam (Bora, 2018: 207-8).

The anthem continues with the following words: "*We are coming glorious flag, with the love of homeland from every corner*". While Nene Hatun is holding the Turkish flag in front of the Turkish soldiers and the Turkish woman in the Turkish War of Independence, the female soldiers are approaching them, a soldier is kissing the flag. When the janissary band is shown in the section "*Let the takbir sounds rise to the arsh*". In the next part of the anthem, the words "*arch forward*", "*Allah Allah*" continues. These words give an Islamic meaning to the army again. The following scenes, contemporary Turkish soldiers and soldiers from the Gallipoli Campaign are shown by being compared. They basically refers the power strengthened by

faith. During the “*Shoot, let the voice of the cruel groan. Let the seven worlds hear our free voice*” part, the contemporary navy and air forces are shown, and it is emphasized that the Turkish nation has the same faith and obviously, strong enough to challenge the world as in the past. Here, the red apple symbolizes the soldiers who receive the help of faith to reach their goal. The scene follows, while the Janissary band is shown again, shows male police on motorcycles and female police on horseback. The video refers to the Gallipoli Campaign, with a child soldier in Çanakkale that kisses the flag and Corporal Seyit. During the “*My glorious Turkey, we are committed to dear homeland and your red flag*” part, a little girl wearing a bandanna with a crescent and moon appears. In the “*Devote our life all around the world*” section, modern Turkish soldiers are running, and then the Sultan Alp Arslan appears. Despite the fact that it is the homeland to be devoted to, it is visually linked to Sultan Alp Arslan. Sultan Alp Arslan is depicted as the hero of the Manzikert Victory and the person who began Turkish-Islamic history by making Anatolia the Turks’ homeland. As a result, the Battle of Manzikert is not only a military victory, but also one that demonstrates the power of faith.

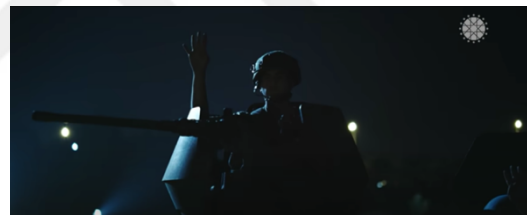
Later, Turkish warplanes are shown in the “*Crazy Turks for the sake of a crescent*” section. In the meantime, child soldiers salute the Turkish planes, video is vocalized with these words: “*Come on Turkey, for God’s sake. To make a mark on history again*”. The Turkish army is motivated to change the history on the way of the red apple, just as in the Gallipoli Campaign. Afterward, in the “*Dear nation, for the love of the homeland*” part the coup attempt on July 15 is referred. Three people, one woman and two men, waving Turkish flags, are shown at the July 15 Martyrs Memorial. Sultan Alp Arslan raises his right hand and makes rabia sign in the section, “*To inspire generations again*”, and then a Turkish soldier is seen while making rabia sign again. Erdoğan frequently uses the discourse of “*one nation, one flag, one homeland, one state*” in his politics, which refers to the rabia sign and the 15 July coup attempt. Furthermore, the 15 July coup attempt is described as epic, and thus the coup attempt was literally mythologized. The people who took to the streets on the night of July 15 were honored as true patriots and

Muslims, and this inspired narratives of the identity created by the AKP. As a consequence, July 15 is a new construction of history and memory. Rabia, on the other hand, has become one of the AKP’s political tools, despite the fact that it arose as a result of the killing of opponents of the Egyptian coup during protests in Rabia al-Adawiyya Square. With the ideological meaning it gained, this gesture drew a lot of attention from religious conservative groups, and it was even suggested that it could be a symbol of unity for the Islamic world (Hecker, 2020). Erdoğan adapted the rabia gesture for the AKP and Turkish politics, incorporating it into the discourse of “one nation, one flag, one homeland, one state”. Rabia presents an unbreakable stance against the West, demonstrating the enormous power of Turkish-Muslim identity since Manzikert.

**Figure 2.5:** Sultan Alp Arslan with Rabia Sign



**Figure 2.6:** Modern Turkish Soldier with Rabia Sign



In “*Sultan Alp Arslan who rising up in Manzikert, this blood becomes Osman Gazhi in the establishment*” section, Sultan Alp Arslan first appears to raise his right hand on the horse and then give the Great Seljuk State flag to the right of the frame, then Osman Gazhi holds the flag; however, the flag has turned red. Sultan Alp Arslan’s transfer of the flag, the symbol of domination in Anatolia, to Osman Gazhi who is the founder of the Ottoman Empire, can be read as reinforcing the presence of Turks in Anatolia. The spirit and faith in Manzikert continue with the Ottoman Empire. It is understood that the person with the red caftan seen at the beginning of the video is Mehmed the Conqueror during the “*The world that heralded with conquests*” part, and it is addressed that Mehmed the Conqueror opened the doors of world domination for Muslim Turks. While the Gallipoli Campaign, which was fought for independence, is symbolized by a child soldier with the words “Child hero in

Çanakkale”, important historical figures are used to explain the Turkish dominance in the world. These men are the main characters of the content and basically, this is a brief Turkish history for the AKP. In the content, there is no Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Turkish War of Independence is hardly seen. This shows that the AKP ignores the process leading to Kemalist state.

**Figure 2.7:** Sultan Alp Arslan is Transferring the Flag



**Figure 2.8:** Osman Gazhi is Holding the Flag



**Figure 2.9:** Mehmed the Conqueror Appears



**Figure 2.10:** The Child Hero in Çanakkale



Accordingly, Nene Hatun kisses the female soldier’s forehead in the section “*The same blood comes from his lineage*” emphasizes that the Turks still have the same belief. In the “*The epic rewrites with the resurrection*” part, four men, one of whom is in military uniform, shown at the beginning of the video, are seen this time with the July 15 Martyrs Memorial. July 15 is accepted as a resurrection by the AKP, which identifies the coup attempt on July 15 with the concepts of unity and solidity, also epic. In the section, “*I’la-yi Kelimetullah is waiting for the world. We do not give the red apple, which is our direction*” scenes of Turkish naval and air forces are shown. “I’la-yi Kelimetullah” is the goal of conquest in connection with the understanding of jihad in the way of popularizing the religion of Allah (Yurdagür, 2000). It is therefore expected that Turkey will achieve this for the Muslims. In this

case, it can be said that the idea of jihad is located the heart of the red apple concept. In the “*Like Alp Arslan rearing up in Manzikert. Like my ancestors who wrote history with victories*” part, Sultan Alp Arslan and Osman Gazi are both seen, and in the “*Like our ancestor who closed the era and opened the era*” part, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan salutes Fatih drill ship, which found natural gas in the Black Sea in August 2020. It can be said that with the gas reserves that have been discovered recently, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is able to open the era like his ancestors. Erdoğan is shown as a great leader. This leadership is based on a power that can challenge the whole world and especially the West. During the passage of ships and artillery fire in the Eastern Mediterranean, the anthem ends with “*Our target is red apple, forward march*”. In the next scene, while Mehmed the Conqueror is walking between the Janissaries, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is walking on a turquoise carpet in front of the Presidential Guard Regiment.

**Figure 2.11:** Mehmed the Conqueror is Walking in front of Hagia Sophia



**Figure 2.12:** President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is Walking After Sultan Mehmed



In the meantime, “*forward march*” sounds are heard. Erdoğan is shown in the video as a great leader, just like his ancestor. It is meant here that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is the leader who takes Turkey to the red apple. In July 2020, Hagia Sophia, which had been a museum during the Republican period, reopened for worship. When Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror conquered İstanbul, he went to Friday prayer there. In a broader perspective, the conquest of İstanbul is seen as a victory for Muslims over the Christian West. By conquering İstanbul and converting the Byzantine lands to Islam, Mehmed the Conqueror fulfilled the Islamic understanding of jihad and also reached the red apple. However, the establishment of the republic against the great power, as well as the Kemalist regime’s secular state understanding,

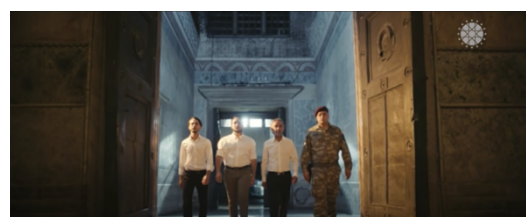
shifted the importance of İstanbul and conquest to the second plan. As a consequence, the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque is crucial for the AKP and Erdoğan, as it represents the return of the repressed. In fact, Erdoğan reconquered İstanbul by reopening Hagia Sophia to worship and obviously challenged the West with the Kemalist regime.

The video shows that Mehmed the Conqueror comes to the door of Hagia Sophia and a whirling dervish is seen. In the next scene, Mehmed the Conqueror, in the middle and slightly ahead of the others, marches with Sheik-ul-Islam, the child soldier in Çanakkale on his left; and Osman Gazhi, Sultan Alp Arslan on his right. Meanwhile, the tunes of the Salawat are rising, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is beginning to read the Surah Al-Fatah. This prayer, which translates as a prayer of conquest, is also read in Hagia Sophia during İstanbul's conquest celebrations. Then, Mehmed the Conqueror opens the door of Hagia Sophia and while walking along with Sheik-ul-Islam, Sultan Alparslan, Osman Gazhi and the child soldier, followed by four men seen in front of the July 15 Martyrs Memorial. Three men in civilian clothes represent the nation that went out on the streets on the night of July 15 to stop the coup and wrote an epic, while the person in military uniform represents Ömer Halisdemir. Ömer Halisdemir is a soldier who was killed in the night of July 15 while resisting the coup. He killed the commander who attempted to seize command on the night of the coup, and then was murdered by the commander's soldiers. Because he was a martyr in the event that broke the coup's power, Halisdemir began to be perceived as a hero.

**Figure 2.13:** Sheik-ul-Islam, Sultan Alp Arslan, Osman Gazhi and the child soldier



**Figure 2.14:** Three citizens and Ömer Halisdemir



Later, in Hagia Sophia, Sheik-ul-Islam goes to the altar and Mehmed the Conqueror, Osman Gazhi, Sultan Alp Arslan and the child soldier pray by opening their hands. A whirling dervish is seen again after this scene. There is an image of the Al-Aqsa Mosque from above at the end of the video.

**Figure 2.15:** Sheik-ul-Islam, Sultan Alp Arslan, Osman Gazhi and the Child Soldier are Praying



**Figure 2.16:** Al-Aqsa Mosque



The Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem is known as the Muslims' first qibla. It is a key point in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Muslims believe that Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque are Muslim heritage. In many of his speeches, Erdoğan says, "*Jerusalem is our red line.*". For this reason, it is pointed out that Erdoğan, as the hero of the reconquest of Hagia Sophia with its transformation into a mosque, will reconquest Al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims. Finally, the video ends with the name and logo of the Presidential Communication Presidency of the Republic of Turkey on a white background.

The red apple, which represents the goal to be attained, has taken on different interpretations throughout Turkish history. The Battle of Manzikert allowed the Turks in Anatolia to promote Islam and Turkify the region, and it was a red apple. Then, Sultan Alp Arslan left the crown of Anatolia to Osman who is the founder of Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans gained a significant success over the West with Mehmed the Conqueror's conquest of Istanbul, converting the empire from a city state to an empire. It was the biggest goal of the Ottomans. The Ottomans also battled and won against the West at the Gallipoli Campaign. Despite the fact that the Ottomans lost the World War I, this victory is crucial to them. Emphasizing the

Gallipoli Campaign is a demonstration of ignorance to the Kemalist regime instead of the Turkish War of Independence. In the content, the spatial representation of the neo-Ottomanist narrative can also be noticed. With its recent conversion from a museum to a mosque, Hagia Sophia has become one of the most compelling symbols of the neo-Ottoman narrative, crowning the victory over the West. The most important part of the video content is that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is presented as a leader, like Fatih Sultan Mehmet proved his power against the West. Finally, The Al-Aqsa Mosque has been demonstrated as red apple of Turkey. It explains the intention of Turkey to lead the Islamic geography.

### **2.2.2 Blue Homeland Anthem**

The video titled “Blue Homeland Anthem” was posted on the YouTube account of the Directorate of Communications on September 27, 2020. The video takes 5 minutes and 7 seconds. The lyrics and music of the Blue Homeland Anthems belong to Ali Sinanoğlu.

Cem Gürdeniz coined the term Mavi Vatan in 2006. The term “Blue Homeland” refers to Turkey’s territorial waters, continental shelf, and exclusive economic zone in the Mediterranean, Black Sea, and Aegean Sea as maritime jurisdictions (Gürdeniz, 2013). Cihat Yaycı has turned the concept of Mavi Vatan into doctrine. After the changes have taken place in the Balkans and the Middle East in the post-cold war period, it is understood that Turkey is an Eastern Mediterranean country when considering Turkey’s foreign affairs issues relating to the Aegean and Cyprus regions, which are in the transitional direction of these regions (Davutoğlu, 2001: 169-170). Additionally, the Eastern Mediterranean’s importance in transportation and energy is growing by the day. While the Mediterranean’s sea traffic is significant in the world, recent discoveries of oil and natural gas reserves have increased the Mediterranean’s importance (Yaycı, 2012: 7-11). As a result, Turkey’s rights and decisions on Blue Homeland, while foreign policy issues, have been included in propaganda activities of Directorate of Communications.

The video begins with the scene of a dark-haired boy wearing a blue and white striped shirt and a dark-haired girl wearing a bandana with moon and star like in the Turkish flag on his head, while the boy is saying, “*Hayreddin Barbarossa: who dominates the seas, dominates the world.*”. In the meantime, the book in his hand is seen, and it is understood that the child has read the text in the book. Hayreddin Barbarossa was a famous Turkish sailor who rose to become the Ottoman Empire’s captain of the sea. Although his birth name is Hızır, he is known by his nicknames Hayreddin Barbarossa. Sultan Yavuz Sultan Selim bestowed the nickname Hayreddin, which means “the best of religion” for his services to the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, because of his red beard, he was renamed “Barbarossa” by Westerners. Hayreddin Barbarossa was a great hero in Ottoman maritime history. He led the Ottoman Navy during the Battle of Preveza between the Ottoman Empire and the Crusader navy. Following the Ottoman Empire’s victory in this war, the Ottoman Empire gained control of the Eastern and Middle Mediterranean. During his reign, the Ottoman Empire was at its most powerful period in the seas (Turan, 1992). The Ottoman Empire adopted Hayreddin Barbarossa’s words and aimed to be a powerful sea power (Yaycı, 2012: 3). As a consequence, the Ottoman Empire tended to focus on the Mediterranean. It is possible to argue that the legitimacy of the Blue Homeland doctrine stems from its historical background.

After the boy reads this sentence, he turns to the girl, they look at each other. Then the door knocked and they are startled. The boy stands up and the music starts. As the boy opens the door, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan begins to read “Bayrak (Flag)” poem by Arif Nihat Asya, known as the flag poet. In Turkey, the flag plays an important role. The Turkish flag’s red color is derived from the blood of martyrs who died in the service of their country. At school, children are taught to draw flags and to sacrifice themselves for the flag when necessary (White, 2014: 74). The poem “Bayrak” is the result of such a society. In his famous poem, Arif Nihat Asya emphasizes the importance of the flag, earning him the nickname “flag poet”. Subsequently, the door opens, it is seen that two sailors arrive. The one on the left

has a folded Turkish flag in his hand, and the one on the right has a model ship. Erdoğan says, “*White and red ornament of blue skies*” to emphasize that the flag is proof of freedom. Later, the boy on the left, the girl on the right and a woman with no face behind them are seen, and then the children holding hands are shown. It is therefore understood that the father of the children was martyred, and Erdoğan says, “*The wedding dress of my sister, the last cover of my martyr.*”. The concept of martyrdom used in the death of a Turkish soldier has a religious meaning. Martyrs are sacrificed to protect the integrity of the state (White, 2014: 160). When a soldier is martyred, a flag is brought to the soldier's house. In addition, a flag is covered on the coffin at the funerals of martyrs. For this reason, the flag that adorns the skies in the “Bayrak” poem becomes the last cover of the martyrs with the blood of the martyr, which it takes its color. In the meantime, the girl is looking at the girl with curious eyes, Erdoğan says, “*My flag waves with light. I’ve been reading your epic.*”. Two soldiers give the boy the flag and put the model of the ship on it. Then, it appears that “Barbaros” is written on the ship. Erdoğan tells, “*I will write your epic*”, while the boy hangs the Turkish flag from the window of the house. Again, Erdoğan reads the part of the poem: “*I will dig the grave of those who don’t look you like I do.*”. At that time, a young sailor raises the Turkish flag on the deck of the ship and then salutes, while Erdoğan says, “*I will destroy the nest of the flying bird without greeting you*” and then the photograph of “Martyr Navy Lieutenant Süleyman Mehmetoğlu” who is presumed to be the father of the children, is shown on the screen. Arif Nihat Asya guides in these verses how to fight faithfully against the enemies of the independent Turkish state. Also, Erdoğan shares these verses to demonstrate a strong Turkey manifesto. Then, the Blue Homeland anthem begins to play, and the photo of the boy, the model of the ship with “Barbaros” written next to it, and the photograph of the martyr is seen side by side. Afterward, a young sailor is shown at the helm of the ship and his captain is behind him. Then the epaulette and the badge of the sailor are shown in the close-up. Later, this person looks away with binoculars, and the reflection of the Hayreddin Barbarossa is

visible in the lens of the binoculars. Hayreddin Barbarossa's navy is seen while Hayreddin Barbarossa is looking away from the deck.

**Figure 2.17:** Sailor Looks Away with Binoculars



**Figure 2.18:** Hayreddin Barbarossa



After that, the sailor looks through the observation point and writes it in the logbook, and then it is seen that Hayreddin Barbarossa also wrote it. Hayreddin Barbarossa and other sailors are also seen making plans. While looking through binoculars, the sailor recognizes his ancestor. Furthermore, the actions of the Ottoman empire in Hayreddin Barbarossa command and modern Turkish naval are portrayed on screen in comparison. As a result, Hayreddin Barbarossa's spirit lives and guides the Turkish navy. This spirit dominates the AKP's neo-Ottomanism policy. According to the AKP, Turkey is the Ottoman successor state that carry its heritage. Therefore, based on the history of the Ottoman Empire as well as its glorious past, Turkey should maintain the spirit of the Ottomans. As a consequence, Hayreddin Barbarossa who gave the Ottoman Empire its most magnificent period at sea, can be regarded as a role model for modern Turkey's navy. Most importantly, the reference to Hayreddin Barbarossa is a manifestation of Turkey's desire to demonstrate its power. Turkey's position on the Eastern Mediterranean issue and Blue Homeland policy, are attempted to be consolidated with references to Barbarossa Hayreddin and the Ottoman Empire.

In the meantime, the Blue Homeland Anthem begins with the following words: "*Kufr had formed an alliance by becoming one nation. (...) In the Mediterranean, the abasement alliance was the target*". In these words, the Crusader Navy first appears and is called "*kufr*". Then, it is seen that Hayreddin Barbarossa prayed and

drew his sword, and then the soldiers made a takbir sign. Kufr is a term that refers to not agreeing with what the prophet said about religion. According to the Koran, willfully ignoring God, prophets, and the Koran will lead to kufr (Sinanoğlu, 2002). Christians who are not Muslims and do not accept the Koran grouped together to form the Crusaders, a kufr unity. In addition, the Ottoman navy under the leadership of Hayreddin Barbarossa is introduced as the army of Islam. In this scenario, it imposed a duty on the Ottoman Empire to protect and spread Islam because of the fact that the Caliphate was in the Ottomans. In the Battle of Preveza, the Ottoman Empire and the Crusader Navy came face to face in the struggle for domination in the Mediterranean. In the Blue Homeland Anthem, the crusader navy was defined as the abasement alliance. It is worth mentioning that the words used in current politics are chosen when defining the western Christian world with “*abasement alliance*”. It is also used by Erdoğan, the AKP, and the MHP to define opposition parties in Turkey, and the opposition is thus portrayed as the enemy.

The anthem continues with the sentences: “*Written surah brought to the sea. La galibe illallah (there is no winner but God). The storm changed its way.*”. With the Islamic navy Hayreddin Barbarossa hit the Crusader navy. Hayreddin Barbarossa is seen as having ordered soldiers to throw papers into the water and shoot arrows. It can be thought that Hayreddin Barbarossa and the Islamic army had been rewarded by Allah, filled with the power of faith that refuge in Islam, for the storm had changed and the Crusaders had easily been attacked by the Islamic navy. The only winner god undoubtedly helps the Ottoman Empire fighting for God. Hayreddin Barbarossa is seen making the takbir sign in the part of “*Captain of the Sea with Preveza Victory*”, then the soldiers do the same, then a fight is seen with scenes of arrows and swords shooting. Following scene, it is shown that Hayreddin Barbarossa thanked God. Hayreddin Barbarossa became “*Captain of Sea*” after Preveza Naval Victory. Also, the Preveza Naval Victory was known as a victory that consolidated Ottoman sovereignty in the Mediterranean. The anthem follows these sentences: “*Captain of the sea (...). You are the inspiration of the brave sailors in the navy. The Prophet’s army is coming*”. In the meantime, the scenes of

Hayreddin Barbarossa and the Battle of Preveza left their place to contemporary sailors. The contemporary sailors line up on the deck by taking off their hats. It is clear that the sailors greet Hayreddin Barbarossa. The modern navy also has Islamic mission rather secular meanings like Ottomans. It is understood from the content that modern sailors are following in the footsteps of the Ottomans.

**Figure 2.19:** Hayreddin Barbarossa



**Figure 2.20:** Sailors Salute Hayreddin Barbarossa



Then the camera moves away from the soldiers and shows the ship, and in the end, it is seen that the ship is in Mediterranean waters with a shot taken from above, and it is emphasized that the soldiers in the Eastern Mediterranean are members of the Islamic Army. Inspired by Hayreddin Barbarossa, Turkey still protects the faith of the Islamic army in the eastern Mediterranean and acts with the same beliefs. In “*We depart from the port to the road of the Blue Homeland the way of Barbarossa, the conqueror of the ocean.*” section, first, the soldiers who make the words “Blue Homeland” with the bodies on the ship are seen. Then, with the order of Barbarossa, soldiers who shoot cannonballs and make a takbir sign, while Turkish ships are floating in the Mediterranean Sea. Nowadays, dealing with the issues of the Eastern Mediterranean and due to the Blue Homeland Doctrine, Turkey wants to strengthen the presence of Turkish forces in the Mediterranean and show its power just like Hayreddin Barbarossa, who dominates the Mediterranean. It is therefore emphasized that the Blue Homeland has progressed with the inspiration of Hayreddin Barbarossa. Moreover, one of two seismic exploration vessel of Turkish navy carries the name Hayreddin Barbarossa.

The battle scenes from the Preveza reappear on the screen and the video continues with the following sentences: *“Love of the country begins with my existence and comes from faith. It is my sacred that set sail to victories with a deserving cause”*, the battle scenes of the Preveza and the current Turkish ships in Mediterranean waters are again seen. While it is emphasized that the love of the country comes from birth and faith, it is meant to explain how sacred it is. Again, Preveza and contemporary navy are compared. Furthermore, a takbir sign in the video reinforces visually the deserving case emphasis. As a result, it is reported once more that the Ottoman navy was God’s army and the protector of Islam. The deserving case from Hayreddin Barbarossa to the Blue Homeland means to be in God’s way. Although love of homeland is compatible with nationalism, the AKP cannot be said to refrain from these discourses. On the contrary, the AKP integrates Islamic values into its nationalist discourses while also referencing the Ottoman Empire’s history. In the part, *“The Blue Homeland is painted red for you. To be a martyr is an award. We’re sacrificing our life.”*, the Turkish navy is seen, and in the section where martyrdom is emphasized, the Stop Passenger monument in Çanakkale is shown on the back and refers to the victory in Çanakkale. Also, being martyr is represented as a reward to be achieved.

**Figure 2.21:** Takbir in Battle of Preveza



**Figure 2.22:** Stop Passenger Monument

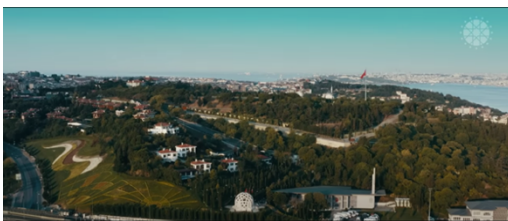


In fact, the video focused solely on Çanakkale front, one of the many fronts fighting for Turkey’s independence. With regard to Turkey’s sea sovereignty, it can be argued that the struggle of Turkey for independence is not represented in this video. The following words increase the anthem’s dosage of neo-Ottomanism: *“Greeting to the ancestor Mehmed the Conqueror, who is the conqueror of the hearts, who runs the ships by land.”* In the meantime, Mehmed the Conqueror is shown and the

sailors salute. He is remembered as the conqueror of the city, heralded by Islam and won the victory over the Christian world. İstanbul, which was the capital of the Ottoman Empire for centuries, is a proof of the strength of the Muslims against the Crusaders. Istanbul is also a manifestation of the nostalgia created by the neo-Ottomanism.

Hayreddin Barbarossa makes a takbir sign in the part of “*Our Lord is God, our Prophet is Muhammad*” and then the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad (Green Dome) is shown, and in the part of “*My holy book, My guide is the Koran*” a sailor kisses the Koran. It is clearly explained that the Turkish navy is the army of a prophet that served Islam, under the leadership of the Koran. The content once again strengthens the Islamic meanings. In addition, the “*Martyrs Sayyidi Hamza is the leader*” section shows the July 15 Martyrs Memorial and Martyrs Hill above and then the tomb of Hz. Hamza is seen. Then, in the section “*My ancestor is Sultan Mehmed*”, Mehmed the Conqueror is seen from behind, looking at the Bosphorus on the horse. With the proclamation of the republic, Istanbul, the Ottoman Empire’s capital, lost its place to Ankara and was pushed to the second plan. Istanbul nostalgia is created by the neo-Ottomanist narrative, which yearns for the Ottoman past. Seeing the conquest of Istanbul as a victory over the West gives Istanbul symbolic meaning. While Mehmed the Conqueror was glorified in the neo-Ottomanist narrative and defined as ancestor in the content, he assigned the duties of remaining powerful against the West to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

**Figure 2.23:** July 15 Martyrs Memorial



**Figure 2.24:** The Tomb of Hz. Hamza



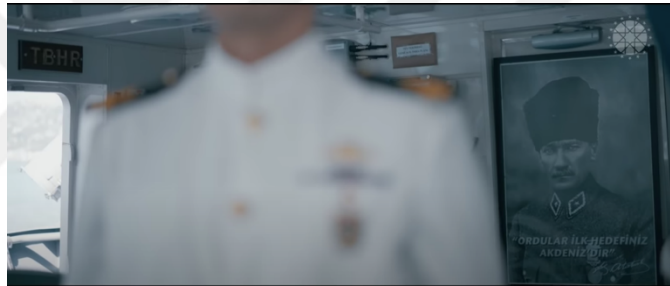
The AKP portrayed the July 15 coup attempt as the triumph of a beloved nation that loves its homeland and is willing to sacrifice its life for it. With the 15 July discourses, the concepts of victory and heroism emerged in the narratives of the neo-Ottomanism (Tokdoğan, 2018: 230-1). The 15 July cannot be considered apart from the concept of martyrdom. As a result, the Directorate of Communications honors the nation that defeated the coup and was martyred for the sake of the country, and reinforces the sacredness of martyrdom by emphasizing the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's uncle, Hamza, one of the first Muslims. The concept of martyrdom continues to be emphasized in the continuation of the anthem. The anthem continues with words emphasizing that the Turkish army is the son of a martyr, and a military band playing music for a while. Meanwhile, the words were passing: "*My ancestor's blood in my vessel. We die and kill for the Blue Homeland*", the scenes from the Battle of Preveza appear on the screen. Once again, the nation that is willing to give its life for its homeland is expressed. Furthermore, the blood of the ancestors still circulates in the veins, preserving the Ottoman legacy. AKP has taken on the mission of conserving this heritage.

After this section explains that Turkey does not run away from war, these sentences are accompanied by: "*You are the hope of the needy, the wrath of the enemy. You're a white knight of the ummah who says catch up with the last place, come to the rescue. You're going to be light for the dark.*". While the anthem is going on, a Turkish ship and a submarine, and then scenes from Preveza are seen. Turkey claims to be the hope of the Islamic world and the savior of the Muslims. Turkey, which runs to the aid of Ummah, is a country that protects the rights of both its own nation in the eastern Mediterranean. For this reason, Turkey signed maritime boundary treaties with Libya on November 27, 2019, on the basis of the Blue Homeland doctrine. The Agreement was then published in the Official Gazette on December 7, 2019, and entered into force (Acer, 2019: 11-2). Turkey, with the largest coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean, is described as a state which has the power to preserve the interests and peace of all the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean. These statements not only legitimize the activities in the Eastern

Mediterranean region of Turkey, it also creates a strong evidence that Turkey, like its ancestors, should provide peace and stability in the region, as well as safeguard national security. In this context, it is announced that Turkey will not compromise in the region with the power and determination of its ancestors.

After finishing the lyrics of the Blue Homeland Anthem, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan continues the “Bayrak” poem he read at the beginning of the video. Then, a sailor in uniform with a poster of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is shown behind him on the wall.

**Figure 2.25:** Atatürk behind the Sailor



This sentence is written in the poster, “*Armies, your first target is the Mediterranean*”. Although it emphasizes Turkey’s sovereignty in the sea, it appears that modern Turkey’s founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is only shown for about one second and almost at the end of this video. Based on this, it is possible to say that the neo-Ottomanism attempts to create a new Turkish-Muslim identity by undermining the values of the Kemalist regime and nourishing the Ottoman past. The Ottoman Empire’s glorious past is highlighted throughout the video by Preveza Naval Victory and Hayreddin Barbarossa. In the part where Erdoğan says, “*My history, my honor, my poem, my everything*”, the scene where Mehmed the Conqueror is walking is shown, and then the scene continues with the Turkish flag on the pole. Turkish military ships, helicopters and soldiers are shown in the “*Choose a place on earth!*” section. Then, that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is walking on a turquoise carpet with children waving flags on both sides while making rabia

gesture, and the focus is again on the Turkish ship in the Mediterranean, in the section “*Wherever you want to stand, tell me, I’ll stand up there*”.

**Figure 2.26:** President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is Walking



In this section of the flag poem, Erdoğan can be said to be making a jihad announcement through the poet’s verses. Erdoğan is portrayed as a great leader who can raise the Turkish flag anywhere he wants. In fact, he confidently emphasizes how strong he is with the Blue Homeland doctrine in this video because Erdoğan clearly derives this power from his successor to the Ottoman Empire. Finally, Hayreddin Barbarossa looks proudly in the last scene of the video. It can also be said that, in fact, he is proud of Erdoğan and his Turkey. The video ends with an image with a Turkish flag on the back of Erdoğan making a rabia sign with both hands. The screen says “WE ARE STRONG IN THE BLUE NATION, WE ARE SECURED IN THE HOMELAND” with the signature of Erdoğan under it. Obviously, this video refers to the history to offer solutions to problems in Turkey’s current politics. As AKP shows the dominance and power of Ottoman in the Mediterranean Sea, it try to consolidate Turkey’s current policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and its historical base.

As one of Turkey’s current issues and agenda, the Eastern Mediterranean question, as well as the Blue Homeland doctrine, seek to be resolved with regard to the past of the Ottoman Empire. The content shows how the Ottoman Navy, under the direction of Hayreddin Barbarossa who is the model for modern navy, dominated the eastern Mediterranean and gained considerable success. The Turkish army

derives its power from God just like Hayreddin Barbarossa, and the sailors are ready to go to their own countries, too. Thus, this content embraces pieces of Islam and nationalism. On the other side, though the contents depict Hayreddin Barbarossa as a hero, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk appears for a second at the end of the video. It is therefore clear that the AKP glorifies the Ottoman past rather than the founder of the Turkey in national questions.

### 2.2.3 Sarıkamış Anthem

The video titled “Sarıkamış Anthem” was published on the YouTube account of the Directorate of Communications on December 25, 2020. The video takes 4 minutes and 37 seconds. The lyrics and music of the Sarıkamış Anthem belong to Ali Sinanoğlu.

The Battle of Sarıkamış was fought between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire during World War I. The battle began on December 22, 1914, and ended on January 4, 1915. Due to heavy snowfall, the battle in the Sarıkamış region ended in defeat. Although the exact number of soldiers who died from cold weather-related causes is unknown, it is estimated that 90,000 soldiers were martyred (Öğün, 2019).

The video starts with scenes of a large group of soldiers walking in a line during the day. The first soldier is carrying the Turkish flag. This soldier, whose close-up shot follows, is seen falling to the ground in the rest of the scene. The soldier in the back takes the flag from the soldier who has fallen to the ground. The words of the soldier who took the flag begin while the soldiers walking in a line on the snow are shown in distant shots. *“Glorious Mehmetçiks of the prophets’ army, these brothers who fell to the land of our country, completed their blessed marches and achieved absolute victory with martyrdom. None of them will be unknown soldiers. Our great state, which dates back thousands of years, will not forget or make any heroic child forget.”* Soldiers are seen fighting and walking on the snow during these words.

While it is stressed that the soldiers will not be “*unknown soldiers*”, a Turkish flag waving on a pole and a statue of two soldiers helping each other are shown. At the end of the speech, the camera focuses on the soldier who is speaking. The soldiers resumed their walk after the soldier said, “*Keep walking*”. The soldier is seen speaking again in the following scene. It’s getting dark outside. The soldier notices four soldiers sleeping at the bottom of the tree and exclaims “*Soldier! Make the soldiers do not sleep!*”

**Figure 2.27:** The Sleeping Soldiers in Sarıkamış



Then, the soldier who received the order says “*Takbir!*”. As a result, the soldiers begin telling their names and the provinces from which they came: “*Hasan’s son Yusuf, Antalya; Emin’s son Süleyman Bayraktar, Mardin; Aydın’s son Ahmet, Van; Hilmi’s son Ali, Yemen; Cemal’s son Agah, Tiran; Süleyman’s son Mecit, Edirne; Mehmet’s son Nuri, Osmaniye; Mürsel Türk, Bakü; İsmail’s son Tahir, Medine; Mustafa’s son Kemal Mutlu, Rize*”. Each soldier who appears on the screen introduces himself and tells us where he is from. The soldiers are cold, and their tops are snowy. Some soldiers have been seen trembling or freezing. Following that, the Sarıkamış anthem begins.

“*The braves of Sarıkamış who frozen to death, the sherbet of martyrdom tastes like an absolute victory*” is said the anthem’s first sentence. In the scene where the anthem begins, the soldiers are shown in the snow. The soldiers are trembling with cold and on the verge of freezing. During the words “*absolute victory*”, soldiers appear on the screen while running. A snowdrop, on the other hand, is seen in the

“*Sherbet of martyrdom*” part. Obviously, the soldiers are on the run for martyrdom, which is their victory, to be a martyr. The marching soldiers are seen from various angles in the anthem’s continuation. Meanwhile, the anthem continues with the lyrics: “*Snowflakes falling on the wings of the angels are shrouds of light for the martyrs rewarded by the God.*”. In the words of the anthem, the concept of martyrdom, which Islam regards as sacred, is mentioned as a great achievement. At the same time, God’s angels literally sent the snow that caused the soldiers to be martyred. Snow is a reward for being a martyr that appears in the form of lights. The sacredness of martyrdom is explained in the video as the concept of divine light, which is important in Islam. Divine light, one of God’s names, means that illuminates everything (Topaloğlu, 2007).

For a while in the video, which continues with scenes of soldiers walking, similar shots are used. It is mostly shown that the soldiers walk in a line on the snow. Soldiers are occasionally seen in the midst of battle. Real scenes from the Battle of Sarıkamış are also displayed on the screen. The anthem continues with the words, accompanied by these visuals: “When the heroes slept in the Sarıkamış frost, they surrendered to God and awoke to eternity. They walked towards the God with the spirit of the holy cause, they attained eternal victory in the chair of martyrdom. The human who freezing in the Sarıkamış frost, thirsty in the deserts in defense of Medina, set his life from Yemen for the Caucasus, this army was named after its Prophet.”. The Ottoman Empire, which adopted the definition of jihad as the task of spreading and protecting Islam, defines itself as the state that leads the Muslims. As a result, the Ottoman army serving Islam is also attempting to protect Muslim lands in Sarıkamış. Any war for this reason is considered to be a sacred cause. Indeed, being martyr is the highest accessible position for a soldier. Martyrdom, in other words, is seen in Islam as sacred. When the Ottoman Empire crossed its largest boundaries, it controlled the lands from Yemen to the Caucasus. For this reason, the soldiers from this area, which can be called Islamic geography, fought for the same cause together. The martyrs of Sarıkamış marched to martyrdom for God and Islam and received the holy award.

While the Anthem is playing, the 57<sup>th</sup> Commando Battalion Command's logo appears. The soldiers walking in the snow then return to the screen, followed by the historical scene. The Sarıkamış soldiers are moving to each other. Contemporary Turkish soldiers, on the other hand, are marching towards the point where the Sarıkamış soldiers will unite. The anthem continues, "*Rest in peace, my soldier, don't think about the entrust.*". Throughout these words, contemporary soldiers is seen marching in a line. The soldiers who fought in Sarıkamış hand over the task of continuing the holy case to contemporary soldiers. Soldiers from Sarıkamış and contemporary soldiers come together in the part; "*The brave of his homeland, the standing watchers.*". A contemporary soldier kisses the Turkish flag held by the Sarıkamış military man, positions it on his head, and takes it. The contemporary soldier is seen walking with the Turkish flag in his hand in the following scene. After that, the soldier erects the flag to the snow.

**Figure 2.28:** Sarıkamış and Contemporary Soldiers are Coming Together



**Figure 2.29:** The Soldier is Erecting the Flag



Meanwhile, the words "*The guardian of the last castle, Mehmed the End Times, awaits with the holy army, ready to watch.*" is heard. Turkey, as the Ottoman Empire's successor, is shown to be the rightful owner of Muslim geography leadership. Turkey, the guarantor of oppressed Muslims, is the protector of Islamic countries that vulnerable to the West's treacherous desires. Turkey is the "last castle" as the hope of oppressed countries, with a history of challenging the West on countless times, and Mehmetçiks will continue to protect this castle. Also, while contemporary soldiers are standing side by side, a large Turkish flag is in front of them. While the concept of martyrdom is reflected in the video with a religious

emphasis, a nationalist emphasis is intended with the use of flags. In this way, the limits and criteria for an acceptable citizen to love their homeland are shown. The flag, whose color is derived from the blood of the martyrs, is a symbol that is always loved and respected. Sarıkamış soldiers are seen lined up during the words “*The martyrs are greetings to the Prophet Zışan. Muhammad Mustafa from the hill of the Martyrs.*”. The commander then salute, and the soldiers are shown saluting in the following scene. “*Prophet Zışan*” which means “prophet with glory”, is a title given to the prophet Muhammad. The martyred Sarıkamış soldiers, identified as members of the prophet’s army, salute their prophets.

**Figure 2.30:** The Commander is Saluting



**Figure 2.31:** The Soldiers are Saluting

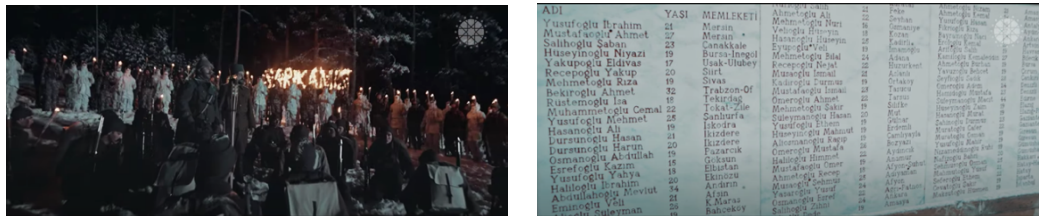


The scene continues with the anthem’s lyrics: “*Es Salatu Ve’s-Selamu Aleyke Ya Resulallah, Allahumme salli ala sayyidinâ Muhammed.*”. “*Es Salatu Ve’s-Selamu Aleyke Ya Resulallah*” which means to greet the Prophet, is a prayer read at Muslim funerals and called as “sela”. In Islam, the words “*Allahumme salli alâ sayyidinâ Muhammed*” which mean remember God and show respect to the Prophet Muhammad, are known as salawat. In a nutshell, martyrs are commemorated in Islamic respects in the video.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan then reads Arif Nihat Asia’s poem “*Bir Bayrak Rüzgar Bekliyor (A Flag is Waiting for the Wind)*” in the video. The Sarıkamış Martyrs Monument is displayed on the screen as Erdoğan says, “*The hill of martyrs is not empty, heroes await its land.*”. The scene afterward shifts to a contemporary Turkish soldier erecting the Turkish flag on snow. Meanwhile, Erdoğan speaks again and says, “*And a flag to fly awaits the wind.*”. Martyrs are depicted as the guardians of the homeland and the flag in this poem, which emphasizes the

importance of the flag for a nation and the greatness of the country, are sanctified. On the other hand, martyrdom is not only associated with Islam, but also with Turkish culture. In Turkish culture, there is an army-nation myth that tells that Turks are good soldiers. “Every Turkish person is born as soldiers” is one of the most important indicators of this myth. That is why Turks are warriors and their history is full of success. These characteristics even helped the Turks to become the leader of the Islamic world (Altınay & Bora, 2008: 142-3). In other words, the prophet’s army is willing to die for his homeland, with both warrior spirits and the acceptance that martyrdom is one of the highest places in Islam. Erdoğan continues the poem in the following scene, while the “Sarıkamış” script written with fire appears on the screen. “His epic of the unknown soldier, his silence is deep. His tomb fits this holy hill, the ground he lies on is clear, the flag he holds is clear, Who said the unknown soldier?”. During his speech, contemporary soldiers stand in front of the Sarıkamış script, and a marble with the names, ages, and homelands of the martyred soldiers appears on the screen.

**Figure 2.32:** Soldiers with Sarıkamış Script **Figure 2.33:** The Pedigree of the Soldiers



Four soldiers, thought to have died by freezing and lying in the snow, are holding the Turkish flag. Fahrettin Altun, Communications Director, says of not leaving the hill of martyrs empty:

*“Saying that the hill of martyrs will not remain empty means we will never and never leave this homeland irrigated with the blood of our martyrs vulnerable to enemy attack, and if necessary, we will die” (Altun, 2020).*

The pedigree of the soldiers who were martyred for the sake of their country demonstrates that they were not “unknown soldiers”. Martyrs are remembered through memorials such as martyrdoms and monuments. As a consequence, no soldier goes unknown, and the hill of martyrs will never be empty as long as the homeland exists. Finally, a Sarıkamış soldier salutes in the video. Then the video focuses on the Sarıkamış Martyrs Monument and then ends with the Directorate of Communications’ logo.

The soldiers of the Battle of Sarıkamış have been described as an army of prophets. The fighting soldiers came from all around the Ottoman Empire to defend their homeland, from the Caucasus to Yemen. In the content, the theme of martyrdom is honored. In fact, the martyrdom is portrayed as a reward, also visually supported through martyrs memorials. Nationalist components such as homeland and flag are also included, in addition to the religious concept of martyrdom. Martyrs are those who write epics for the sake of the flag.

## CONCLUSION

Since the 2010's, Neo-Ottomanism has become a new narrative that has emerged from Turkey's foreign policy and has greatly influenced the country's daily life. The neo-Ottomanism policy, shaped by internal and external factors such as the collapse of the Soviet Union, the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the Kurdish question during Turgut Özal's reign, strengthened ties with the Ummah via the National Outlook Movement. Nonetheless, neo-Ottomanism has become a historical narrative and has been widely adopted during the AKP period.

Progressive groups in society adopted the modernization movements that began during the Ottoman Empire period, but conservative and religious groups reacted negatively. In fact, this situation magnified the distinction between the groups, particularly after the proclamation of the republic. Because republican revolutions were top-down, conservative groups felt oppressed. This sense of repression made the groups long for their essence, for their home. These groups, who had felt excluded during the Republican period, came to regard the Ottoman Empire as their true home and began to yearn for it. As a result, Ottoman nostalgia was born. During the AKP period, these oppressed groups found a voice in the narrative of neo-Ottomanism. Indeed, for groups that do not accept the Kemalist regime as their home, the AKP has constructed a new narrative based on glorious Ottoman past and its values. This narrative is about a lost past, a past that never existed and can never be had. The Ottomans, who were destroyed by the Kemalist revolution, are a loss and the primary basis of the victimization. Under these conditions, neo-Ottomanism has created a new collective memory and identity. Groups yearning for the glorious Ottoman past escaped victimization because of it.

The Ottoman past, which was not depicted gloriously enough in the Kemalist regime's historical narrative, gained reputation with the narrative of neo-Ottomanism. As a result, an alternative historical narrative was invented. The fact that the new understanding of history was not limited to the political sphere paved

the way of the narrative's success. The power imposed the new narrative, which was integrated into media products such as news discourse, movies, and television series. Most importantly, it was enthusiastically received by the groups. The narratives coping with victimization under the Kemalist regime's hegemony were combined with the magnificent past and longing of the Ottoman Empire. It has been characterized as a resurrection, the "return of the oppressed". While the West was declared the enemy of the Ottoman Empire and neo-Ottomanist Turkey, Turkey became a candidate to be the World's voice of the oppressed. Following his Davos speech, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan desired to take the leadership of the Muslim world. Erdoğan, who received positive reactions following his speech, gained a victory over the West. However, when Erdoğan's desire to lead the Ottoman Empire's lands in the Middle East failed to happen, the AKP shifted its policy toward the Turkish-Islamic synthesis line.

The Directorate of Communications, which was established by Presidential Decree in 2018, became one of the new narrative's narrators. With the historical content it created, it began to use the Neo-Ottomanist narrative as propaganda. In Turkey, which has a thoroughly authoritarian regime as a result of the transition to the Presidency System of Government, the Directorate of Communications has become the government's propaganda institution, under the duty of the spokesperson of the president. Fahrettin Altun, Communications Director, comments in support of President Erdoğan's discourse at a number of political and social events. Although the opposition parties frequently criticizing the Directorate of Communications, President's advisor Mehmet Uçum emphasized that criticizing the Directorate of Communication also is criticizing the state. Nowadays, in Turkey where a one-man regime exists, the Directorate of Communications is the state, and the state is the ruling party, as well as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

This study focuses on how and why official institutions reconstruct history. Three video contents produced by the Directorate of Communications are examined in the analysis section of this study, titled "Red Apple Anthem", "Blue Homeland

Anthem”, and “Sarıkamış Anthem”. These materials are based on history, specifically Ottoman nostalgia. As discussed in the literature, the AKP attempts to undermine the values and symbols of the Kemalist regime, while the Ottoman past is glorified. The Republic of Turkey is the successor state that carries on the Ottoman Empire’s legacy. Leaving the Ottoman past is regarded as a loss in this context.

“Red Apple Anthem” is the content that emphasizes Ottoman nostalgia the most, however, it is also an important example of Turkish-Islamic synthesis. Throughout history, the red apple, which represents the ideal to be reached, has taken on various meanings. This ideal is to conquer Anatolia and end Byzantine dominance in Anatolia for the Great Seljuk State, ruled by Sultan Alp Arslan. The Battle of Manzikert, which opened the doors to the Turks in Anatolia, is significant in Turkish history. Sultan Alp Arslan is depicted in this context as a warrior attempting to spread Islam to Anatolia while also Turkifying Anatolia. After completing his duties, Sultan Alp Arslan handed over the throne of Anatolia to Osman, the founder of the Ottoman Empire. With Mehmed the Conqueror’s conquest of Istanbul, the Ottomans won a major victory against the West, transforming the empire from a city state. As a result, the Crusaders witnessed the power of the Muslims. On the other hand, portraying Sultan Alp Arslan with the mission of spreading Islam while ignoring to show the Turkish War of Independence, which is a great example of victory over Western imperialism, can be explained by deliberate misrepresentation and denial of historical reality. The Victory Day, which occurs four days after the Manzikert Victory, is never mentioned in the content. Instead of the Turkish War of Independence, the Gallipoli campaign, which was the Ottoman Empire’s victory in World War I, is highlighted. The spatial manifestation of the neo-Ottomanist narrative can also be seen in the content. The Hagia Sophia, which was converted into a mosque in July 2020, represents a new victory over the West. Istanbul was conquered once more after being pushed to the second plan by the Republic. Furthermore, the display of the new red apple as Al-Aqsa Mosque proves Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Turkey’s claim to be the leader of Islamic world.

While referring to the glorious history of the Ottoman Empire in the content titled “Blue Homeland Anthem”, it is possible to say that the content is more nationalist in nature. The Eastern Mediterranean issue, as well as the Blue Homeland doctrine, which is one of Turkey’s current problems and agendas, are attempting to be resolved through reference to the Ottoman past. The content describes how the Ottoman navy dominated the Eastern Mediterranean and achieved great success, under the command of Hayreddin Barbarossa. The modern Turkish navy is modeled after him. The Turkish navy, like the Ottoman Empire, is a formidable force capable of great victories. Ottoman nostalgia is being used to legitimize Turkey’s current interests and policies. This content contains Islamic elements as well. The Turkish navy, like Hayreddin Barbarossa, derives its power from God. In contrast to the others, this content also mentions Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The photo of Atatürk hangs on the wall, and the words “*Armies, your first target is the Mediterranean*” appear on the screen below it. This shot, however, is shown at the end of the video content and lasts less than a second. It can be noted how the AKP hegemony overthrew the Kemalist regime.

The soldiers who were frozen and martyred during the Battle of Sarıkamış are remembered in the “Sarıkamış Anthem” content. One of the most tragic defeats of the history, the Battle of Sarıkamış, is described using Islamic elements. The prophet’s army is overflowing with faith. The soldiers depicted in the content are from different areas of Ottoman geography. Soldiers from these regions defended the Ottoman Empire, which conquered three continents from the Caucasus to Yemen. Again, in this context, the martyred glorious army hands over the land that has been entrusted to them to modern soldiers. In the content, martyrdom is sanctified. Being a martyr is the best thing a person can do for the country to which they have been entrusted. In fact, this sanctification is visualized by including a memory space, like a martyrdom. Apart from the concept of martyrdom, nationalist elements such as homeland and flag are also included. Martyrs are those who compose epics for the flag.

Neo-Ottomanist narrative of the AKP, which undermined the hegemony of the Kemalist regime and enabled the oppressed to return. Based on Ottoman Empire nostalgia, the new historical narrative became the voice of oppressed groups who did not feel at home. The Ottoman imagination began rewriting history by glorifying the Ottoman Empire's past, and finally neo-Ottomanism has shaped Turkish political history in recent years. The AKP has established a new cultural ethos, whereas Neo-Ottomanism, which promised to return home, constructed a new home on the basis of a dream. Consequently, by reinterpreting history in accordance with current interests, this glorious historical narrative has created a new collective memory and a new identity. Neo-Ottomanism has spread to institutions representing Turkey, while forming the discourse of the AKP's chairman and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. So, the neo-Ottomanist narrative, which has emerged from the political sphere, is now used for propaganda by the Directorate of Communications. Consequently, the Directorate of Communications can be identified as a propaganda institution. The voice of the Directorate of Communications is assumed to be growing in authoritarian Turkey.

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