DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HEGEMONIC POWER: THE TURKISH PRESIDENT ON TELEVISED PANEL INTERVIEWS

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2024

DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HEGEMONIC POWER: THE TURKISH PRESIDENT ON TELEVISED PANEL INTERVIEWS

Thesis submitted to the

Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

English Language Education

by

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Boğaziçi University

2024

Discursive Construction of the Hegemonic Power:

The Turkish President on Televised Panel Interviews

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May 2024

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Selman Ecevit, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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ABSTRACT

Discursive Construction of the Hegemonic Power:

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Conflicting with the journalistic notions of neutrality and accountability, political interviews in Turkey, especially in the last decade, turned into a channel of consolidation of power and propaganda. Earlier research discussed the causes and implications of this transition through the lens of the changing political landscape and the consolidation of the Turkish media in the last decades. Despite this, there is limited research on the language and discursive features of political interviews as they exist in this context. In order to bridge this gap, the present thesis explores televised interviews with the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, with a focus on panel interviews that involve 2 or more interviewers. A corpus consisting of 20 interviews from 2013 to 2023 is analyzed through a discourse analytic methodology. The data-driven approach yielded two main aspects of the discourse of these interviews. Firstly, the interviewee's organization and strategical utilization of expressive discourse and factual/logical discourse allowed for his transmissional and interpersonal dominance in the interviews. Secondly, questions formulated by the interviewers and the overall organizational and semiotic structure of the programming served to empower the interviewee and legitimize his authority. These findings are discussed in relation to the notions of interview society, factual and expressive discourses, and critical discourse analysis.

ÖZET

Hegemonik Gücün Söylemsel İnşası:
Panel Röportajlarında Türkiye Cumhurbaşkanı

Gazeteciliğin tarafsızlık ve hesap verebilirlik kavramlarıyla çelişen Türkiye'deki siyasi röportajlar, özellikle son on yılda, bir güç konsolidasyonu ve propaganda kanalına dönüştü. Daha önceki araştırmalar, bu geçişin nedenlerini ve sonuçlarını, değişen siyasi ortam ve Türk medyasının son on yıllardaki konsolidasyonu perspektifinden tartışıyordu. Buna rağmen bu bağlamda siyasi röportajların dili ve söylemsel özellikleri üzerine sınırlı sayıda araştırma bulunmaktadır. Bu boşluğu doldurmak amacıyla mevcut tez çalışması, Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın televizyonda yayınlanan röportajlarını, 2 veya daha fazla görüşmecinin yer aldığı ve panel röportajları olarak adlandırılan röportajlara odaklanarak incelemektedir. 2013'ten 2023'e kadar yayınlanmış 20 röportajdan oluşan bir derlem, söylem analizi metodolojisiyle incelenmektedir. Veriye dayalı yaklaşım, bu görüşmelerin söyleminin iki ana yönü olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. İlk olarak, görüşülen kişinin düşünsel söylem ile olgusal/mantıksal söylemi stratejik bir şekilde kullanması ve organize etmesi, onun görüşmede aktarımsal ve kişilerarası hakimiyetine olanak sağlamıştır. İkinci olarak ise, gazeteciler tarafından formüle edilen sorular ve programın genel organizasyonel ve göstergebilimsel yapısı, görüşülen kişiyi güçlendirmeye ve otoritesini meşrulaştırmaya hizmet etmektedir. Bu bulgular, röportaj toplumu, olgusal ve düşünsel söylemler ve eleştirel söylem analizi kavramlarıyla bağlantılı olarak tartışılmaktadır.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by expressing my thanks to my thesis advisor Assist. Prof. Işıl Erduyan, who was a great inspiration for the present thesis study and an excellent guide throughout my research. I would like to extend my thankfulness to my committee members Assoc. Prof. Didar Akar and Assist. Prof. Dilek İnal, whose invaluable feedback contributed greatly to the work presented in this thesis.

I extend my thanks to the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) for their financial support of my graduate studies through 2210-A Domestic General Master's Scholarship Program.

I would like to extend my thanks to my friends across my academic and professional life. I feel grateful for my cohorts, Erdem and Özge, who were excellent fellows to share this path with. In addition, I would like to thank Assist. Prof. Zeynep Cumhur Çamlıbel Acar and Assist. Prof. Pınar Başkan, who were great teachers and role models through my undergraduate studies at Marmara University, along with the other members of the faculty of the ELT department. Furthermore, I would like to express my thanks to my colleagues from MEF University, including the members of the faculty of the ELT department, the Faculty of Education, and especially the research assistants with whom I shared an office for the last two years.

Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude to my family, my parents, siblings, and my niblings. In addition, I am thankful for the unending support and friendship from the real and honorary members of my family, namely Giray, Koray, Eylül, Hamza, Mert, Enver, Kasım, Ömer, İpek, Gamze, Mecit, and Özgür.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my beloved wife Zehranur and my feline children Gıdık and Şeftali, who were always there when I needed them. I would not be here without their unconditional love and support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Turkey's last 22 years have seen uninterrupted single-party rule, in which Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - henceforth, *AK Party*), an extension of the conservative Islamist Welfare Party of the 1990s and center-right parties like the Homeland Party and True Path Party of the same period, has remained in the government since 2002 to this day. Such a long rule is unprecedented in Turkish history, as the only other similar example is the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* - henceforth, "CHP") governments from 1923 to 1950, 27 years of single-party rule that ended in the first free elections of the republic. Therefore, AK Party as a party, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as its leader, has achieved something unique by remaining in power almost as long as the regime that has formed the republic itself. Moreover, this is achieved in the context of a democratic regime, albeit a flawed one, where Erdoğan's AK Party came first in every election from 2002 to 2023. In addition to being the ruling party, AK Party has transformed the country in many stages, initially through constitutional changes and lastly with the Presidential Government System in 2017, which was accepted through a referendum.

The key figure in this story is Erdoğan, a rather unusual character in Turkish politics by virtue of being an Imam Hatip (Religious school) graduate. Although his family background is not so different from Özal or Demirel, the two previous presidents who do not come from elite backgrounds but managed to received engineering education, he differs from them both in terms of his high school

education and by lacking a substantial university degree. Erdoğan lived most of his life in Kasımpaşa, in the slums of Beyoğlu district of Istanbul. He entered politics in 1970s with his participation in the Turkish National Union of Students (*Milli Türk Talebe Birliği* or *MTTB*) a then-Islamist student union. He then joined the ranks of the Welfare Party, working for the party in 1980s, during which he made a bid for the mayorship of Beyoğlu for 1989 local elections, which he lost. His second attempt was the 1994 Istanbul mayorship, in which he won, despite all odds as a black horse candidate. Despite being local elections, the 1994 victory was a pivotal moment in the Republican history mainly because of the openly conservative agenda of the Welfare Party seen as a threat to secularism. This perception eventually led to serious consequences for the latter half of 1990s and early 2000s. During his mayorship, Erdoğan would be imprisoned in 1999 and banned from politics, and upon the final banning of his Welfare Party, he continued with the Virtue Party, which was also banned in 2001. Following his disagreements with the Felicity Party and the National Vision Movement as a whole, with the full support from different conservative segments of the society, Erdoğan would finally begin his own party, the AK Party, which would come to power in 2002 elections and remain in power to this day.

This unparalleled history has continuously attracted scholarly attention to AK Party and Erdoğan himself. More specifically for our purposes, Erdoğan and AK Party's deployment of discourse, rhetoric, and the interactions with media have become a special focus of discourse analysts (e.g. Ünan Göktan, 2022; Çakmak 2021), as well. On the other side of the coin, through AK Party's rule, the media itself has also transformed significantly. I believe that this transformation is most immediately visible in the formation of panel interviews, a distinct genre of political interview that hosts multiple interviewers and a single interviewee. Focusing on

Erdoğan in this context, I aim to describe and explain how the language and discourse is constructed and how they serve Erdoğan's power construction in this thesis study.

1.2 The context of the study

In its initial years, AK Party's coming to power was mainly viewed through two frames: either, it was seen as a process of democratization and societal peace, since AK Party was a platform through which demographics that were left out of conventional politics like Islamists, conservatives, Kurds and so on, received a voice. More critical voices, however, saw the regime as a disestablishing force, aiming to dismantle the secular, Kemalist structure of the state and possibly destabilize the norms of the republic (Çakmak, 2021). Eventually, AK Party policies, while initially favorable for a liberal democracy and even explicitly seeking European Union membership, dragged towards more authoritarian practices (Yeşil, 2016).

This is most clearly seen in the change in media discourse in 2010s, when the government started effective interventions. As the most important case in this period, the government had leveraged tax debt and other technicalities against the Doğan Group, a major established media conglomerate, as a way of silencing critical voices (Yeşil, 2016). Similarly, through embargoes, alienating discourses, and policies like appointing editors, the government sought to reduce opposition in media, and through favorable tenders and other connections, like family relations, sought to establish a pro-AK Party media.

In this trend of media consolidation, AK Party also changed its media policy significantly. After the 2002 elections, they took on an explicit policy of not appearing with opposition candidates, starting immediately with the 2004 local

elections (32.Gün, 2024a). At the same time, AK Party politicians and Erdoğan became much more selective towards which broadcasts they appeared in. They favored channels and journalists that favored them in general. As the media continued to transform under the AK Party regime, a new, distinct genre of interview emerged.

Eventually, these developments lead to the genre of televised content that I call the *panel intervie*w for the purposes of the present thesis. The use of this term in the present thesis comes from its use in professional and clinical contexts, referring to an interview with multiple interviewers and a single interviewee, as described in Dixon et al. (2002). The term is also used (in my observation, mainly in the United Kingdom) to refer to televised interviews that have multiple interviewees, albeit this use is much less frequent. However, in the context of the present thesis refers to a type of political interview where there are multiple interviewers, hence a panel of interviewers, interviewing a single interviewee. While this genre has existed as a form of conventional political interview, it grew into its own genre in Turkey. Originally, panel interviews could feature one or more critical interviewers, along with several interviewers who are neutral or in favor of the interviewee. I believe that is the original appeal of the panel interview as a form conventional interview in 2000s and early 2010s in Turkey. The panel has the potential to create a negotiated space that is neither hostile enough to scare politicians nor favorable to bore the audience.

However, as the government's control over media grew stronger, panel interviews also went through a transformation over time. Erdoğan turned more selective towards the channels, and the critical journalists who would otherwise ask difficult questions to Erdoğan started not appearing in these high-profile broadcasts.

Besides, Erdoğan's public relation affairs started being managed by the Presidential Communications Office, which increased its prevalence and its operations starting from the second half of the 2010s. With the resources of the state at its disposal, this office engaged in the public relations operations in favor of Erdoğan, managing his media appearances and conducting propaganda campaigns notably on television and on the internet. With these three mechanisms, panel interviews turned into what they are now.

This transformation would not have been as significant if it did not accompany another policy shift by Erdoğan. While he often appeared in a variety of one-to-one interviews from 1990s to 2010s, these appearances have reduced over time. Moreover, especially after his presidency in 2014, Erdoğan has engaged much less with journalists, and held much fewer press conferences where the questions and answers can be broadcasted. These actions resulted in the panel interview becoming the sole genre of televised content where Erdoğan and many high-profile AK Party politicians can be seen interacting with and responding to input from journalists. Over the last decade, Erdoğan did not appear in any non-panel interviews with journalists from Turkey, however, he continued conventional interviews with foreign journalists.

1.3 Discursive construction of power

Language and the social and historical context that surrounds it are inseparable (Blommaert, 2005). Language and discourse are meaningful with their users, as linguistic and communicative resources, as parts of the users' repertoires, take on duties as components of the discourse in context (van Dijk, 2009). In that regard, understanding that the social contexts are transformed through broader ideological

and institutional forces, it is natural that language and discourse are also embedded in these forces. Moreover, as power and inequality are inherent to these forces, language itself is also reflective of power and inequality (Fairclough, 1989). The relationship between power and language can and often works both ways, language can reflect power and power differences and it can also facilitate them.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) paradigm, incorporating both language and other semiotic modalities, is mainly concerned with the relationship between power, social context, and emergent discourses (Fairclough, 1995). Along with the critique offered through a variety of possible disciplines and methodologies, CDA also aims to offer solutions or encourage action for improvement of the social and political conditions (Fairclough, 2018, p. 13; van Dijk, 2015) While the present thesis may not be considered strictly CDA, the investigation of the relationship between power and language positions the present study as at least adjacent to the CDA paradigm.

Overall, language and discourse can be deployed for the construction of power in a variety of ways. Firstly, discourses that emphasize and give importance to certain people, groups, or ideas can be understood to empower the said people, groups, or ideas. Alternatively, the deployment of linguistic and semiotic resources that are embedded in certain social practices or discourses can help legitimize those resources and by extension their embedded social structures and discourses.

1.3.1 Multimodality

Verbal language in its purest form represents one modality that can facilitate the construction of discourse and power. However, Discourses can also exist in modalities other than verbal language. The respective phenomenon of multimodality, and subsequent discipline of multimodal discourse analysis, is concerned with

communication outside of language, such as visuals and sounds (van Leeuwen, 2015; Ledin & Machin 2018). Multimodal discourse analysis is ultimately inter-disciplinary, encompassing extra-, para-linguistic resources as well as areas like architecture.

Power in multimodality is constructed primarily through the foregrounding of certain symbols that are associated with certain groups and people. Moreover, multimodality can construct power directly in the interaction, through the foregrounding of the participation itself, through elements like physical positioning and attire.

1.3.2 Mediatized discourses

The mediation of the discourse is, in essence, the transformation of the discourse from its most immediate form, which is face-to-face interaction, to discourses in other domains, such as phone calls or television broadcasts. While the ontological differences are often debated, mediatized discourses can be distinguished from natural interactions which are often subjected to scrutiny in discourse analytic studies (Talbot, 2007). Arguably, the key distinction is identified with the authenticity of interactions in mediatized contexts. A crucial and historically relevant notion in understanding mediatized discourses is the "para-social interaction"[1], a term coined by Horton & Wohl (1956). The original conception of the term refers to the quasi-dialogue between the mediatized content and the audience in an explicitly monologic context. This "simulacrum of conversational give and take" (Horton & Wohl, 1956,

[1] Moores (2005, as cited in Talbot, 2007, p.86) suggests that it should be called *social para-interaction,* since mediatized discourses maintain the social structures and the overall social element of the interaction but modify the inherent qualities of interaction.

p. 215) has, since the beginning of the mass media in 20th century, been a critical starting point for the analysis of mediatized discourses.

Thompson (1995; Talbot, 2007) conceptualizes how mediation affects interaction. According to Thompson, interactions can fit into three broad categories: *face-to-face interaction, mediated interaction,* and *mediated quasi-interaction. Face-to-face* interactions require an unmediated dialogue between parties. In other words, all communicative resources (sound, visuals, time, space etc.) are available to the parties in the interaction, with no intermediaries. Mediated interactions, while still dialogic, possess the quality of mediation. For instance, a conversation in a hallway can be considered a face-to-face interaction, while a phone call, by the virtue of being mediated by the phones, thus having a narrower repertoire of communicative resources (e.g. no visuals, no shared space, limitations on sound).

The third category of interaction in Thompson's (1995) proposal is mediated quasi-interactions. While conversations in hallways and phone calls are similarly dialogic, mediated quasi-interactions are often monologic. In this framework, broadcasted discourses, as consumed by the audience, are a type of mediated quasi-interaction. Thus, these discourses are primarily limited by the lack of certain modalities, like space, and the lack of input from both sides. In other words, in essence, the audience is primarily receptive while the mediatized discourse (i.e. the television broadcast) is offered in the format of a monologue.

In the context of the present thesis, the interview as a television broadcast counts as mediated quasi-interaction from the perspective of the audience. Within it, the broadcast has also another interaction that takes place between the interviewer and the interviewee. This embedded interaction, in this framework, can be considered face-to-face or an unmediated interaction, although, as will be explored in the

following chapters, whether the interaction is adherent to the conventions of conversations or even a political interview is questionable.

1.3.3 Factual and expressive discourses

As part of the Systemic Functional Linguistics tradition (Schleppegrell, 2012), Halliday proposes the notion of macro-functions (1972/2003, 1973/2003; later called meta-functions e.g. in Schleppegrell, 2012) as an underlying structure for the functions of language. These macro-functions are divided into three categories: *ideational, interpersonal,* and *textual.* The ideational macro-function is concerned with the ideation and experience of the world, "within and beyond the self", including people, world, animate and inanimate. In other words, the ideational function is involved with the content of the produced language. Besides the experience, it is also concerned with the logical relationships that exist within and between the experiences. Hence, the *ideational* macro-function is discussed as having two sub-components: the *experiential* and the *logical* (Halliday, 1972/2003, p. 351).

According to Halliday (1972/2003), these functions are framed as parallel components that are present for each utterance. An utterance would have an ideational dimension, mainly a list of people, objects, actions, concept and so on; an interpersonal dimension related to the relationship between the elements of the interaction and the utterance itself; and finally, a textual dimension concerned with themes and rhemes, as well as the linguistic context of the utterance. While these macro-functions have a distinct role in Systemic Functional Linguistics, in this study, we aim to adapt this framework to a more sociolinguistics-oriented lens for analyzing language.

As a strong example of an attempt at bridging the meta-functions with discourse analytic and sociolinguistic approaches Kiernan (2019) reports a study on transnational language learner narratives, analyzed with a combination of Halliday's framework and the narrative model. For instance, Kiernan categorizes the ideational component into circumstances, participants, and processes. These three categories, alongside having direct grammatical equivalents (adverbials, nouns, verbs in general, respectively) are also argued to have narrative equivalents. Circumstances are argued to be associated with the orientation and coda as found in the narrative model (Labov, 1973), while the participants are categorized with the complicating action.

In the context of the present study, a model based on the elements of Halliday's (1972/2003) proposed macro-functions is proposed. Similar to Kiernan's (2019) adoption of the functional model combined with narrative model, the present study deploys an analytical approach that adapts Halliday's macro-functions to a sociolinguistic and discourse-analytic tradition. Primarily based on a data driven preliminary analysis, it was decided that the factual and expressive discourses, akin to the experiential and ideational meta-functions to an extent would be the focus of the present study, thus, a relevant framework is presented.

Originally, *ideational, interpersonal,* and *textual* macro-functions referred to parallel dimensions of an utterance (Halliday, 1972/2003). Later literature, however, offers alternative perspectives. For instance, Kiernan (2019) offered to relate these macro-functions to the components of the narrative model, such as *coda* or *complicating action*, thus conceptualizing these macro-functions as discrete utterances. In the present study, as a synthesis of Halliday's (1972/2003) original model, Kiernan's (2019) adoption thereof, along with a primarily data driven

approach, I propose a similar and derived model to understand and analyze the discourse as it is found in the context of Erdoğan's panel interviews.

I argue that the relationship between power and factual/expressive discourses exists in a multitude of forms. Primarily, the control over the factual domain of an interaction empowers certain speakers while disempowering others. Similarly, the control over the ideations presented in an interaction can be associated with power. Ultimately, the uniformity of the factual and expressive discourses, and the fact that certain speakers are not challenged in their construction of factual and expressive discourses is the key in construction of power in interaction through factual and expressive discourses.

1.3.5 Genre theory

The final major theoretical tenet relevant to the present thesis study is genre theory. According to Bhatia (1993):

> [genre] is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s) (p. 49).

In other words, there are certain criteria that elevate a speech event to the category of a genre. Firstly, genres are often distinct in terms of their forms and functions. They may have distinct linguistic and semiotic resources at their disposal and they, by definition, abide to a distinct communicative purpose. Secondly, they must have some regularity and some set of participants that engage with them. Thirdly, more often than not, conventions of a genre empower certain members and disempower others; the mere access to the genre itself can be contested.

I argue that panel interviews constitute a distinct genre following this theoretical framework, and the distinct linguistic, interactional, and semiotic resources serve to establish it as such not only in terms of its style, but also in terms of its social function. Firstly, the forms and the functions of the speech event must be understood by all of its participants. This involves the understanding of the underlying communicative purpose, the changes which may or may not accompany changes in the forms found in the event. I argue that in the context of the present thesis study, the underlying communicative purpose of propaganda and public relations, distinct from the conventional interview's accountability and public information, is understood by Erdoğan and the journalists. Secondly, the panel interviews follow a strict structure and have distinct conventions that separate them from daily interactions and other types of political interviews. Thirdly, these conventions, in the context of the present study, ultimately work to empower Erdoğan both within and outside of the immediate context. The following chapters will further establish the relationship between the discourses found in panel interviews and the construction of the panel interviews as a genre.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

Recognizing Erdoğan's prominence as a public figure with explicit political power and significant symbolic capital, it is clear that Erdoğan's public discourse is worthy of analyzing. Moreover, understanding the role of political interviews, more specifically the panel interviews, in Erdoğan's public communication strategy, it became apparent that these interviews are significant communicative events in multiple dimensions. This is further deepened by the immense contrast between Erdoğan's interviews at present and other examples of political interviews from

around the world. Even interviews from 1990s and early 2000s, as well as contemporary interviews with other public and political figures were seen to be considerably different from Erdoğan's panel interviews.

These observations are further supplemented by some important gaps in the literature. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that most of the discourse analytic studies conducted in the context of political interviews come from the United Kingdom and the United States, with the rest of the world, including many western contexts being immensely underrepresented in terms of high-quality research. Turkey is no exception, as I was only able to find one study on the discourse of Erdoğan in political interviews. Thus, it is worth noting that the present thesis fills an important gap in research, as it is presumably the first direct study of Erdoğan's discourse in political interviews.

An important consequence of the UK- and US-centricity of the literature so far is that theories themselves are also heavily skewed by their specific contexts. The conversation on the normativity of the political interviews and the consequent framing of hybridities as divergences from the norms, besides being reductive, are not even applicable as frames for understanding Turkish political interviews in the last decade.

Another relevant consequence is that the interviews are mostly understood as communicative events in which the journalists hold, at least, equal power opposed to the politician. The journalists are seen as challengers to the politicians, even hostiles at times, taking an aggressive, adversarial, or at least oppositional stance to the politician. This is, to an extent, even true in contexts that are considered to be divergent from the normative political interview. It is also true in the past research on

Erdoğan's interviews, as Ünan Göktan (2022) places the focus of the study on interviews and on periods where Erdoğan did engage with critical journalists.

Thus, past research appears limited, even inadequate, in understanding the political interviews of Erdoğan in the last decade. The normative frames developed through the research in the past are not applicable to the Turkish context, and the findings of the past research on Erdoğan are no longer as relevant with the transformation of media and more specifically, with the development of the panel interview as a distinct genre. Furthermore, as most of the interviews analyzed in the past research are conducted one-to-one, the dynamics of having multiple interviewers remains unexplored.

Finally, while there are several discourse analytic studies on Erdoğan, they are ultimately still relatively limited both in quantity and scope. The studies of discourses produced by Erdoğan often employ a feminist or a critical discourse perspective, (as would be expected out of a figure like Erdoğan) the literature is almost non-existent in terms of paradigms focusing on the linguistic resources. Similarly, past research had a special emphasis on themes like populism, misogyny, authoritarianism, and hostile rhetoric, and I definitely do not question the importance of such studies, I believe it failed to capture the hybridity and the complexity found in Erdoğan's discourse, thus limiting the scholarly conceptualization of Erdoğan to a mere demagogue.

This overview highlights several important goals for this thesis. Firstly, more studies of political interviews are needed outside of the US and the UK contexts, both to explore different contexts and to contribute to the future conceptualizations of normativity in political interviews. Secondly, overall, as a growing subject, discourse analyses on Erdoğan are a constant need, deploying both critical and sociolinguistic

approaches. Finally, more research is certainly needed on Erdoğan's political interviews, as they have been transformative and been themselves transformed in the last decade. Thus, the present thesis is a candidate for contributing to all of these concerns.

Therefore, the following research questions are formulated with the intention of guiding the exploration of the discourse of Erdoğan's panel's interviews:

1. What are the discursive strategies and resources deployed for Erdoğan's construction of power in the context of panel interviews?
2. How are factual and expressive discourses constructed in Erdoğan's panel interviews?

1.5 Thesis layout

The present thesis consists of 7 chapters, the first of which is this one, that serves as a general introduction to the theoretical and social context in which the present study is situated in. Chapter 2 serves as an overview of past research, reviewing earlier studies conducted with similar rationales and contexts. Chapter 3 moves on to the methodological concerns of the present study, giving an account of the context, the dataset, analytical approach, and other issues related to the research methods. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 report the findings of the analysis, focusing on the semiotic and the social context of the interviews, construction of the factual discourse, and the construction of the expressive discourse in synergy with the factual discourse respectively. Finally, Chapter 7 provides a discussion of these findings, placing the present study within broader theoretical and social context, acknowledging the limitations and possible future directions, and a general conclusion for the whole thesis.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a review of the literature concerning the subject of the present thesis is presented. Firstly, a brief review of the literature relevant to the notions of factual and expressive discourse. Secondly, a review of research and theory regarding political interviews from around the world is presented. Then, studies on Erdoğan's produced discourses are reviewed. This is followed by a review of research on Erdoğan's discourse in political interviews. Finally, following a summary of the research so far, and more importantly, the emerging gaps, an argument for the present thesis is made.

2.2 Factual and expressive discourses

Conceptual analogues to factual and expressive discourses exist in various schools of language and discourse studies, such as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) or Critical Discourse Analysis. SFL approach proposes that language has three meta-functions, namely *experiential, interpersonal,* and *textual* (Schleppegrell, 2012). These meta-functions are argued to be present as domains of meaning that co-exist in every utterance. Placing those propositions at the core, the SFL offers a framework for analyzing texts and discourses highlighting the complex relationship between language and context.

As an example of how meta-functions may be relevant in a discourse analytic approach, Kiernan (2019) reports a study on interviews with translingual learners of English in Japan. Mainly using the Labovian narrative model (Labov, 1973), Kiernan

explores how these narratives and associated multimodal resources are deployed in the service of Hallidayan meta-functions. For instance, the experience of a translingual identity is found to be indicated through code-switching practices, which is indicative of the ideational meta-function. Similar multi-modal and translingual practices are understood not as mere narrative resources, but also as components of the meta-functions and associated social actions. In that regard, Kiernan (2019) is a good example for adapting Hallidayan meta-functions, transforming them into the components of other discourse analytic approaches.

As part of the Critical Discourse Analysis tradition, Fairclough (1989) also proposes a framework that can be considered analogic to the factual/expressive dichotomy presented in this thesis study. Fairclough argues for four values that are attributed to the formal features, which are *experiential, relational*, *expressive,* and *connective.* Relational and connective values are almost synonymous with the interpersonal and textual meta-functions, as they are concerned with the social relations and textual coherence respectively. Also comparable to the Hallidayan approach, experiential values are related to the experience of the world, including knowledge and beliefs. Distinctly, expressive values, in Fairclough's proposal, are argued to be expressions of social identities and evaluations, from both within and without the interaction.

These values are similar to the meta-functions, but they exist more as a (practical) framework for discourse analysts rather than as a core tenet of a greater theoretical approach. Moreover, a major conceptual distinction between the Hallidayan approach and Fairclough's proposal is that Fairclough argues that these values are attached discretely to the individual formal features, like sounds, words, or utterances, while the Hallidayan approach argues that the meta-functions exist in

parallel to one another in a statement, without direct correlation with the linguistic forms. There is no visible genealogical relationship between the two approaches, therefore it is possible that the idea that linguistic forms carry distinct values in social and textual context is thought of, for different purposes, by two different linguists. It is worth noting that the present thesis does not truly subscribe to either of the approaches but offers a synthesis of both of the approaches within the frame of the emergent themes from the data.

2.3 Political interviews

The mediatized interview, in general, is a genre that has been subject to frequent scrutiny. In their critique of use of interviews in sociology, Atkinson & Silverman (1997) overview the pitfall of the association between experientiality and authenticity. Using the term "interview society", they highlight the extensive role in which interviews are dominant in the cultural imagination, ranging from anthropological research to political communication. The lack of criticality, as well as the implicit asymmetry between the interviewer and the interviewer, foundational in the perception of interviews, is suggested to be the key for the prominence of interviews as social practices in so many domains. In this context, the feasibility of the political interview becomes obvious for the transformation of politics and power into discourse.

Interviews in general, and political interviews specifically, have been a subject of interest for discourse and conversation analysts, as well. A significant portion of the past research on political interviews focuses on the interaction from a conversation analytic perspective, emphasizing elements like turns, sequences, and the organization of discourse (e.g. Heritage & Clayman 2010). From this strain of

research, political interviews are understood to be rather conventionalized and more or less a structure is defined that is subject to some manipulation from factors like adversariness.

As acknowledged by Clayman & Heritage (2002), the interview is seen as an attempt for the " joint construction of news" (p.29), in which journalists and politicians act to serve their agendas. The politicians utilize the interview as a means of accessing publicity while journalists are in search of the news for the audience (Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Fetzer, 2009). These entangled incentives create the unspoken "interview contract" (Clayman & Heritage, 2002, p. 28), through which cooperation and limited imposition is ensured.

The conversation analytical perspective, recognizing this complexity, has attempted to scrutinize the political interviews in terms of turn-taking systems, sequences, and facework in questions and answers. As the culmination of the research in the conversation analysis paradigm, political interviews are understood in three broad categories (Hutchby, 2022). The conventional political interview is defined with a strict adherence to the *question-answer-next question* or *question-answer-formulation* formats (Heritage, 1985), which may determine the category of the interview. In other words, while all political interviews, to an extent, follow a similar sequencing, the fault lies at whether the sequence is deployed for the purposes of adversariness or neutrality. In the cases where the interviewer does not comment on or evaluate the answers in the *formulation* it may be understood to be a neutral stance, which is characteristic of a conventional political interview (Hutchby, 2017; see also Hutchby, 2011).

In contrast, the adversarial political interview is a type of political interview where both the structure and the neutrality are violated in favor of the interviewer.

For instance, adversarial political interviews may see instances where the interviewer engages in question-answer-repeated question as a way of essentially cornering the interviewee. The third type, the hybrid political interview, is seen in interviews that mostly follow the conventional turn taking structure, but with breakages in the format that approach adversarial interviews, leading to the neutrality being left in the background.

The concept of hybridity in the context of political interviews can be understood in multiple dimensions. The integration of confrontational practices and the integration of humor are seen as two main strands, both understood as practices for empowering the journalist and transforming the political interview genre (Kantara, A., 2022, p. 44). Alternatively, hybridization of the political interview can be a further resource in eliciting information, thus allowing journalists to engage in face-threatening subjects and thus contributing to the public knowledge without provoking the politician as much (Ekström, 2011).

The transformation of the role of political interviews has been highlighted by Fairclough & Mauranen (1997). In their analysis of broadcasted interviews of Finnish and British politicians, they highlight an increasing marketization, both commercial and political, of the political interview. Moreover, they claim that the political interviews have transformed from policy to personality and from journalistic struggle to conversational exchanges.

Fetzer & Bull (2013) define what is called the "default political interview", which is understood through defined goals, roles, and linguistic repertoires. They suggest that:

> A default political interview is defined by (1) clear-cut tasks and purposes, that is asking questions and giving answers, and eliciting information and providing the requested information, (2) clear-cut discourse roles, that is a

> journalist as interviewer and a politician as interviewee, and (3) a clear-cut use of language; that is non-emotional, neutral language. (p. 85)

They highlight that, as a genre, political interviews have certain normative qualities, that act as the conventions for the conversations. They do not, however, recognize these norms as requirements or obligations for the construction of the genre. On the contrary, they go on to elaborate how the violations of these conventions are deployed, such as the participation of the audience (Fetzer & Bull, 2008, as cited in Fetzer & Bull, 2013) or the antagonistic and adversarial relationships between the interviewers and the interviewee (Lauerbach & Fetzer; Schegloff, 1989, as cited in Fetzer & Bull, 2013). These complexities and the emergent hybridity are recognized not as the erosion of the genre, but as a natural consequence of the inherent hybridity of it.

Therefore, due to these discursive, stylistic, and social complexities, political interviews are not to be considered akin to conversations, other professional interviews, or even other televised interviews. The use of non-interrogative questions, for instance, is a prominent feature of political interviews (Bull, 2009), so much so that the identification of the questions and replies themselves become a point of contention in the analysis of political interviews (Bull & Mayer, 1993; Bull, 1994). Moreover, the range in possibility of questions are often beyond normal everyday interaction, as adversarial or loaded questions can be deployed strategically by the interviewers as a means of controlling the conversation (Macaulay, 2017).

The complexity of the social and discursive context requires a nuanced theory for understanding these interrelations, such as Goffman's notion of face (Bull et al., 1996; Bull, 2019). Regardless, it must be acknowledged that the almost antagonistic relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee in political interviews is represented and reflected in discourse, in many ways.

Beyond the hybridity found within the boundaries of a normative framework for political interviews, there are some studies that challenge the assumptions of such norms. These studies are often conducted in contexts where such departures are empowering to the journalists, either understood as a result of cross-cultural differences (Zhu & Chen, 2016) or as a shift towards conversalization of the political interview (Tolson, 2012). As a recent example, Vuković-Stamatović (2022) investigates such departures from these norms in the context of Montenegrin political interviews. Analyzing the departures of interviewers from the questioning strategies, it is concluded that factors such as programming constraints or the interviewer styles can have an effect on the frequency of departures from the question-answer-next question format and the normativity of the format is challenged, while acknowledged as the format that is most frequently followed in political interviews.

However, there are also studies that investigate various semiotic domains in the context of political interviews. One such study is reported by Ekström (2012), where gaze, as in eye contact, is scrutinized in the context of interviews from 2006 Swedish elections. The study finds that looking away, i.e. interviewee breaking eye contact with the interviewer, is a frequent feature accompanying adversarial questions, both when the interviewee receives the question and answers it. In relation to the concept of face and stance, the gaze is understood to be a multimodal resource that assists linguistic communication in complex situations.

While there are some studies with a focus on the discursive strategies of the interviewers (Andone, 2013; Riccioni et al, 2013; Gaulan et al., 2023) or the rhetoric of the interviewees (e.g. Tan & Al-Rikaby, 2022), the literature so far has an emphasis on the interaction as a conventionalized structure, with limited emphasis on the content and definitely almost no studies where the interviewee is the challenger.

This is an important gap and the study of Erdoğan's political interviews can help expand the knowledge and understanding of such contexts.

2.4 Previous research on Erdoğan's discourse in Turkey

Erdoğan's stylistics and manipulation of the discourse is so prominent that it is argued to be transformative of the Turkish political discourse as a whole, noted with the term "Erdoğanization" (Selçuk et al., 2019). Erdoğanized discourses can be broadly defined with the use of personalized insults, othering and alienating strategies, and a discourse that is overall shaped by personality (Över & Tuncer-Ebetürk, 2022). Consequently, Erdoğan's discursive construction of power and the variety of discourses he has engaged in has been analyzed through a variety of perspectives, including corpus-driven analyses (Çay, 2022; Erdoğan, 2014), critical discourse analysis (Gülel, 2020; Jovanović & Đidić, 2020; Zararsız & Seyhan, 2014; Aydın-Düzgit, 2016), and conversation analysis (Ünan Göktan, 2022).

Çakmak (2021) may be the most comprehensive study on Erdoğan's discourse so far, examining his use of rhetorical and discursive strategies in detail in a variety of domains. Utilizing critical discourse and discourse historical perspective, Çakmak highlights the role of evocation of historical events like the 1960 coup or the conquest of Istanbul, historical figures like Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and various ideations like Neo-Ottomanism in Erdoğan's discourse. Specifically, Çakmak is concerned with the argumentative structure of Erdoğan in constructing the self and the other in relation to the history as it exists in the background of Turkish culture and the relationship between the discourse and the subsequent policy. The cross-section between the discourse and policy is a subject that received attention from other scholars as well, such as Özel Volfová (2016), who places emphasis on the

contrasts between Ottomanism and Neo-Ottomanism (also, Gontijo & Barbosa, 2020). A common theme in the scholarship is an emphasis on discontinuity (Christofis, 2023), where Erdoğanism is seen as a transformative force in Turkish culture, politics, and so on, that is a divergence from the Kemalist institutions and ideology. The apparent consensus of the research on Erdoğan's discourse is one that of transformation, where Erdoğan is seen to be transforming both the semiotics and the content of political discourse.

Investigating populist discourses produced by Erdoğan in his speeches, Çay (2022) uses a content analytic and corpus driven approach to the analysis of discursive construction of populism. Focusing on sub-themes of populism like anti-elitism and people-centrism and the associated lexicon, the frequency of the populist terminology is displayed. This is then followed by a qualitative analysis of two key terms: "nation" ("millet") and "brothers" ("kardeş"). The study thus demonstrates and consequently discusses how these words are deployed as resources in Erdoğan's discursive construction of populism. The analysis shows that Erdoğan constructs a populist ideology through discourse, which may be further seen as part of a broader political strategy.

Similarly, Erdoğan (2014) reports on another mixed-method study of Erdoğan's speeches through a feminist perspective. Utilizing corpus-based approaches like lexical analysis and cluster analysis, the use of items referring to women in Erdoğan's discourse is put to scrutiny. This is followed by a qualitative approach through a critical discourse analysis perspective in Erdoğan's speeches, essentially breaking down the discourse into arguments and discourses. These findings are interpreted in the context of conservative politics over women's bodily autonomy, interrelatedness and hierarchical organization of broader discourses of

economy and democracy and bodily autonomy, and the discursive construction of women as not autonomous individuals but as components of a family unit. Similarly, Gülel (2020) also investigated Erdoğan's speeches from a feminist-critical perspective, highlighting the discursive construction misogyny. Emphasizing women's role in family and society from a conservative framework, Erdoğan's discourse is found to be alienating towards and othering of non-conforming women and feminists and constructive of a patriarchal worldview.

Moving outside of the realm of spoken language, Zararsız & Seyhan (2024) report a study on the discursive construction of Erdoğan's populism, through Erdoğan's posts on Instagram. In their analysis, they highlight the role of Erdoğan's attire, his positioning with the public workers, his masculine demeanor and so on, contribute to Erdoğan's self-presentation as a patriarchal leader, while maintaining his image as a member of the public. Another study in Erdoğan's deployment of multimodal resources in discourse, Aslan (2021) analyzes Erdoğan's acts of public weeping. It is reported that, since it is a sharp contrast to Erdoğan's strong-man self-image, the prevalence of weeping as a performance is meaningful in context. This performance is stated to be abundant, especially in contrast to pre-AK Party politicians and politicians abroad in general, to the level that it is described as becoming "almost mundane" (Aslan, 2021, p. 3). The abundance of public weeping performance, both by Erdoğan and other AK Party politicians, is understood as signal for sincerity, which is discussed in connection to the populist discourses wielded by Erdoğan. In other words, Erdoğan deploys public weeping performances, which are understood to communicate vulnerability and authenticity, the values that synergize with Erdoğan's anti-elitist discourses that portray his opposition and his predecessors as invulnerable, inauthentic, and by extension, disconnected from the people.

Thus, previous research shows several important ideas regarding Erdoğan's political communication. Firstly, Erdoğan is seen transformative with his discourse, where the scholarship often juxtaposes the Kemalists ideology seen before Erdoğan in opposition to Erdoğan's (Neo-)Ottomanism and Islamism. This ideological contrast is also reflected in Erdoğan's discourse, where populistic, patriarchal, and authoritarian discourses occur prominently, which is seen as in contrast to the political discourse of late 90s and early 2000s. The third point, in an interesting clash between the ideology and discourse, is that Erdoğan also deploys discursive strategies, like public weeping, thus compromising his strong man image but constructing a populist or authentic argument, as part of his repertoire that consists of somewhat contrasting strategies and forms.

2.5 Erdoğan's political interviews

It is notable that, while world leaders' interviews are often subject to discourse analysis studies, there are only two such studies that I was able to find regarding Erdoğan. Bulut (2013) reports a study comparing the questions asked by interviewers to Erdoğan and the opposition leader, Kılıçdaroğlu in portions of two interviews from 2011 using the question-answer system (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). Its main findings indicate that, in the context of that study, Erdoğan receives more preface tilt, which is seen as an indication of interviewer assertiveness. Moreover, questions to Erdoğan also included more unfavorable framing in the prefacing, which is seen as more aggressive. These findings indicate that in these two interviews journalists were more assertive and slightly more aggressive towards Erdoğan than Kılıçdaroğlu, which is discussed in relation to political bias of the interviewers.

The author, rightfully, acknowledges that the study is not truly generalizable, as the findings may not even be applied to the entirety of the interviews, fractions of which were used as data in the study. I believe that the context of the study is skewed in a way that is not representative of the discourse of political interviews, even the contemporary ones. Moreover, while similar findings could have been argued to be much more prevalent earlier into Erdoğan's political career, I believe that these findings, as will be seen in the present thesis, are impossible to replicate in any of Erdoğan's interviews after his presidency. Therefore, despite being an interesting study of adversarial and/or hybrid interviews in Turkey, I argue that this study is, at best, outdated.

The most prominent study of Erdoğan's discourse in interviews was conducted by Ünan Göktan (2022), who analyzed 11 interviews of Erdoğan from 2002 to 2021. Utilizing a conversation analytical approach, Ünan Göktan reports that the prominence of discursive strategies deployed by the interviewers in questions and interviewee in the answers are the key features of Erdoğan's construction of power and legitimacy in a post-truth framework. These strategies include avoidance of probing and face-threatening questions, indirect addressing, question prefacing, and praises by the journalists, and the subversion of the topic, opposition criticism, and insertion of government projects and achievements utilized by Erdoğan. These findings are discussed in the context of the political culture in Turkey, in which cautiousness is understood as a crucial component. In other words, the strategies deployed by the journalists are framed as a way of constructing a cautious discourse.

While these findings are immensely meaningful, I argue that this perspective is somewhat incomplete. Firstly, the study does not acknowledge or investigate the role of panel interview format. However, the panel interview, within the time period

analyzed by Ünan Göktan (2022), evolved from a type of interview associated with polyphony and editorial balance to a specific genre of televised media associated with monophony and editorial consolidation. Moreover, besides the transformation of the panel interview itself, Erdoğan (and AK Party in general) has seen a transformation in media strategy, refusing to appear with critical journalists and refusing to take part in interviews outside of the panel interview format.

Secondly, while the broadcasting context (i.e. the fact that Erdoğan's appearances are rarely part of a weekly-aired program) is acknowledged to an extent, the possible effects of Erdoğan being the host in most programs and semiotic resources associated with Erdoğan taking prominence is not discussed. The limitations discussed so far can be considered the shortcomings of Conversation Analysis as a paradigm, as the broader semiotic, cultural, and socio-political context can be acknowledged, but cannot truly be integrated into the analysis. To understand how these sources are immensely relevant in Erdoğan's interviews, a more holistic picture needs to also pay attention to elements of discourse found immediately outside of the interaction itself.

Thirdly, even though the consolidation of the media and editorialization of these interviews are given some thought, the relationship between institutional forces and the interactions themselves are not explored. These findings are discussed in the context of a political culture of "cautiousness" (p. 344), thus lowering the assumed agency of the interviewees and interviewers themselves.

Notably, Ünan Göktan (2022) presents several extracts from Erdoğan being interviewed by left-leaning or at least critical journalists in which journalists ask face-threatening questions and do not follow the strategies above. It is worth noting that these journalists (Ertuğrul Özkök, Uğur Dündar, Fatih Altaylı, Ruşen Çakır),

despite continuing their careers in journalism, have not appeared in an interview with Erdoğan since 2013. Moreover, some of them have also left mainstream television in general, with Ruşen Çakır and Fatih Altaylı continuing their careers on Youtube.

2.6 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the past research on political interviews, Erdoğan's discourse, and Erdoğan's discourse in political interviews. This overview allows one to draw several important conclusions regarding the state of research and overall themes emerging from past literature.

Firstly, it is clear that more research is needed on Erdoğan's discourse, and specifically his discourse in political interviews. This is supplemented by a limited literature on Turkish political interviews in general. Secondly, studies that emphasize linguistic and discursive resources in context are needed for a holistic view of semiosis of Erdoğan's power construction. Thirdly, overall, more studies on political interviews in contexts where journalists are not as antagonistic or even neutral are needed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, methodological choices regarding the present thesis are presented. The chapter begins with a description of the context, providing an overview of the historical and political situation. This is followed by the description of the panel interviews as a genre and a review of its historical development. Then, the methodology for the present thesis is summarized, providing a summary of the corpus, data collection, and data management. After a summary of the preliminary analysis that offers a survey of the data, the chapter concludes with a statement on the ethical concerns.

3.2 Description of the context

A consequence of media consolidation under the AKP regime (Yeşil, 2016) is the fact that prominent politicians, especially in the last decade, never appear in challenging circumstances. Instances of AKP politicians appearing on "challenging grounds," like on critical channels or with critical journalists are far and few between - most televised interactions are in curated circumstances. Only a few exceptions, like the presidential spokespeople or the party spokespeople do exist with the help of extensive media training and an explicit role towards interacting with media and critics. As a notable example, İbrahim Kalın, the former spokesperson for the president, appeared in many challenging grounds, like interviews in left-leaning Youtube channels (196Sekiz, 2020) or interviews with critical foreign journalists (DW Türkçe, 2019).

Consolidation and isolation are most visible with the televised appearances of Erdoğan. The president, despite appearing frequently on national television, is rarely seen to be in interaction. Most of Erdoğan's televised appearances are from rallies, ceremonies, addresses to the nations, speeches, and press conferences. Predictably, most of Erdoğan's monologues are devoid of interaction, but more interestingly, his press conferences in Turkey also see little to no input from the press.

In this context, these panel interviews are the only times in Turkey where Erdoğan receives questions from, and therefore interact with, journalists. However, a look into the channels and the conglomerates that own these channels show that Erdoğan does not appear on every TV channel, and presumably does not interact with every journalist. Table 1 below summarizes the total number of interviews listed on the presidential website along with the channel and corporation information. As of February 2024, out of 46 interviews (listed as *Mülakatlar*[2]) listed on the president's official website, 37 of them belong to this genre.

In terms of the corporations, the president appears mostly in the state-owned channel(s) TRT, followed by Turkuvaz channels, and then the Demirören channels. In other words, Erdoğan's interviews in Turkey (as his interviews and press conferences abroad are not the subject of this study) are conducted exclusively by (1) directly state-owned channels, like TRT, (2) channels owned by pro-Erdoğan/ pro-AKP corporations, like ATV, or (3) channels that self-present as neutral but have editorial directives from the AKP regime and its supporting elite (Yeşil, 2016), like CNN Türk.

[2] This is an Arabic loanword that is used more in professional contexts; the word that is used more frequently for political and news interviews is "Röportaj", which is rooted in French.

Table 3.1. An overview of the officially listed interviews and the number of panel interviews respective to the broadcasting corporation.

Broadcaster	Panel Interviews	Total Interviews
TRT (state-owned)	16	17
Turkuvaz	8	10
Demirören	6	6
Kanal 7 Group	3	3
Doğuş Group	3	3
Türkmedya	2	2
Albayrak	2	2

Presumably because panel interviews are Erdoğan's main outlet for mediatized of interaction, every year since his presidency, he has appeared on at least one panel interview per year. While the yearly changes can be described, there are no universal rules as to when or why these panel interviews are conducted. For instance, the increased number of interviews in 2019 and 2023 (in both years the interviews are located during the months leading to an election) may imply that there is more focus on panel interviews during the election periods. On the other hand, the fact that there was only one interview in 2018, another year for election suggests otherwise.

Table 3.2. Overview of the corpus and Erdoğan's total interviews with panel interviews in parentheses, across years.[3]

Year	Total Interviews (Panel Interviews)	Included in the corpus
2012	N/A	1
2013	N/A	1
2014	N/A	1
2015	5 (4)	1
2016	5 (2)	2
2017	3 (1)	1
2018	1	1
2019	5	3
2020	2	2
2021	7 (6)	2
2022	5 (4)	2
2023	14	3

There are two main patterns regarding the date and the topics of these interviews presented in Table 2. Firstly, the interviews are often produced in blocks. In other words, interviews are localized within a two- or three-month window in a year. For instance, 12 out 14 of Erdoğan's interviews in 2023 were conducted between March 22 and May 26 of that year, and all of the interviews were produced between

[3] Note: Since the records are not kept officially for the period before Erdoğan's inauguration as the president, I am not able to provide definite numbers before 2014.

February 1 and May 26. After these 14 interviews in the first 5 months of the year, Erdoğan did not appear in any new panel interviews during that year.

Secondly, these blocks are often connected within themselves thematically. For instance, a relevant thematic block constituted by 3 interviews (2 of them were panel interviews) was produced between July 18 and August 4 of 2016. These three interviews are, predictably, focused on the main news headline of the period, which is the July 15 coup attempt and the cleanup of the Gulenist organization, as well as the underlying theme of the presidential system.

3.3 The panel interviews

Panel interviews, as in my use of the word in the context of the present study, refers to a genre of TV programming in Turkish television. While being extremely similar to a regular interview with some journalists on the face value, a closer look reveals significant deviations from the commonplace interview, especially as it is known to the public in western countries (Clayman & Heritage, 2002) or even Turkey before AKP.

3.3.1 Description of the genre

Firstly, panel interviews include only one interviewee. This allows for the emphasis and centralization of the interviewee, as questions have only one direction. This also means that interviewees can appear on the broadcast as a guest in a special episode of a pre-existing series. An example for such an episode is interview #20 in my data set, in which Erdoğan appears in a *Cumhurbaşkanı Özel* (President Special) of a political discussion program, *"Enine Boyuna."*

Secondly, panel interviews always include more than one interviewer. This is likely an explicit design choice, in an attempt to not empower any one journalist by providing them the opportunity for a solo interview with the president or the prime minister. These solo interviews did occur, albeit rarely, with high profile journalists. For instance, in 2013 during the Gezi protests, Erdoğan appeared in a one-to-one interview with the prominent, critical high-profile journalist, Fatih Altaylı, who was the chief editor for *Habertürk* newspaper at the time. Similarly, the same year Erdoğan appeared in a one-to-one interview with the prominent journalist Mehmet Barlas. However, in the last decade, especially after relegating many of the public relations affairs to his spokespeople and the Presidential Communication Office, Erdoğan stopped appearing in interviews with such high-profile and highly critical journalists.

Thirdly, the most speculative feature of a panel interview is that a panel interview is either heavily scripted or heavily weighted; both for the purposes of making the interviewee appear powerful, legitimate, and overall positive. These are achieved in several ways. There are almost no "difficult" questions on a panel interview, there are almost no attempts to criticize, delegitimize the interviewee, and the interviewee is given plenty of time to make propaganda in the interview. These strategies can be seen in context in further chapters or in the sample interview found in Appendix A.

3.3.2 History of the genre

Erdoğan became involved with mainstream media and national television mainly after his election as Istanbul mayor in 1994. With the political landscape in Turkey being shifted with 1997 Army Memorandum Crisis (often called *February 28* or *28*

Şubat Krizi), he started becoming much more relevant as the mayor of Istanbul of the Islamist party. During this period, he appeared in several interviews with the high-profile journalist Mehmet Ali Birand, such as one that followed the floods in Istanbul in 1997 (32. Gün, 2019) and another one where he answered questions from a forum of university students in 1998 (32. Gün, 2019).

From 2002 to 2012, during which Erdoğan served as the prime minister and the leader of AKP, the majority ruling party, he appeared in plenty of interviews. He continued occasionally appearing on 32. Gün with Mehmet Ali Birand, while also being interviewed by other high-profile broadcasts. During this period Erdoğan also started appearing in lesser known and more pro-AKP journalists like Ahmet Hakan.

The first 10 years of the AKP in government saw an increasingly consolidating media market, perpetuated by the market forces as well as the government intervention (Yeşil, 2016), like in the case of Doğan News Agency. In this environment, while the interviews were still in the conventional format (1 interviewer and 1 interviewee) they started trending towards pro-Erdoğan channels, pro-Erdoğan journalists, and overall, a pro-Erdoğan format.

The earliest panel interview I could find dated back to no later than August 2010 – I was not able to determine the exact date. Later on, in 2011, Erdoğan appeared in at least two more panel interviews before the 2011 general elections. During this period, panel interviews and conventional interviews co-existed. Erdoğan appeared both in interviews with a panel of pro-AKP journalists and one-to-one interviews with pro-opposition, critical, liberal journalists like Fatih Altaylı (Habertürk, 2015).

Following his election as the president in 2014, Erdoğan started appearing exclusively on panel interviews in Turkey, abandoning the conventional one-to-one

interview (except for his interview Mehmet Barlas) with Turkish journalists. It is important to note that he continued appearing in more conventional interviews with the foreign press, but his only mediatized and broadcasted interactions were through panel interviews during his presidency.

The panel interview is not a genre exclusive to Erdoğan. In fact, other people from both his own party and opposition have appeared in panel interviews. These include the former prime ministers Ahmet Davutoğlu and Binali Yıldırım between the years 2014 and 2017, during Erdogan's presidency in the parliamentary system. Similarly, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the main opposition candidate for 2023 presidential elections, also appeared in several televised panel interviews (e.g. CHP - Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, 2023).

However, these appearances are much more limited in terms of scope and time. Former prime ministers only held their positions for no more than two years each, and Kılıçdaroğlu's appearances were only related to his election campaign and the subsequent defeat in the election. Consequently, panel interviews are associated primarily with Erdoğan, simply due to the frequency and impact of his appearances on this genre of televised interview.

3.4 Sampling and data collection

As mentioned above, the universe for a study focusing on panel interviews of Erdoğan is approximately 45 to 50 interviews. This is a rough number due to the possibility of lost media or content that is not available publicly. The broadcasted materials after 2014 are in much better condition and are thoroughly listed by the office of the president.

A qualitative analysis of all of the interviews is not feasible for practical concerns, and the state of preservation (or lack thereof) for interviews before 2014 may even make it impossible to reach every panel interview of Erdoğan. Therefore, a sampling strategy had to be developed. Firstly, in order to achieve a level of representativeness, one random interview was chosen for every year. This was, predictably, a simple step for the years that Erdoğan appeared in only one panel interview, namely, 2017 and 2018. It was also a random selection for the years 2015 to 2023. However, sampling interviews from 2012-2014 proved more difficult, as the only interviews that I was able to find were the ones that are readily available on Youtube. In other words, I am not able to list all of the interviews before Erdoğan's presidency because they are not as neatly listed as those that were produced after 2014. After the first round of sampling, which yielded 12 interviews added to the corpus, 8 more interviews were chosen from the rest of the interviews to achieve a total number of 20 interviews. Thus, the corpus is representative of each year, with the added weight for years that saw more interviews.

Data was collected through two main sources. Firstly, through the official website of the president's office (tccb.gov.tr), transcripts and occasionally video recordings were found (called "*Mülakatlar*", or "Interviews") following Erdoğan's inauguration as president in 2014. Out of 46 total interviews, 37 of those fit into the criteria that were set up. Out of the 37 panel interviews listed on the official website, 17 of them ended up being chosen in accordance with the sampling strategy.

A notable limitation of the official website was the fact that it only included the interviews from after Erdoğan's inauguration, thus, it offered no data before 2014. In order to bridge this gap, more interviews were sought through web searches on sites like YouTube, with keywords *Cumhurbaşkanı özel*, *başbakan özel*, *röportaj*,

mülakat and so on. Through this approach, 3 more interviews were added to the corpus corresponding with the sampling strategy.

3.5 Transcription

Since the corpus consisted of 20 interviews, with each over one hour in length, often more than two hours, the practicality would dictate an approach of selective, or at least, limited transcription. As a compromise of practicality and transparency, transcriptions provided by the office of the president are used, supplemented with a triangulation of the text through a review of the interview footage.

Reliability of the transcription acquired from a party explicitly invested in positive visibility in a politicized context can be an issue. However, I would like to make a case for relative transparency of the transcriptions provided by the presidential office. Consider this example:

Excerpt 3.1

> Dolayısıyla bu bahsettiğiniz arama *şeyden* epey önce.
>
> Thus, the search that you mentioned happened much earlier than *the thing.*

The word *şey* is not preferred in a strict, prescriptive grammar of written Turkish. Moreover, substituting *şey* with a more preferred term for written Turkish would not be particularly difficult, and such a change may even be preferred for the purposes of transcription or captioning.

The presence of such features indicates that transcriptions generally follow the broadcast. These excerpts further demonstrate that the transcriptions as provided by the president's office are relatively reliable for the purposes of the present study.

Nonetheless, I watched the broadcasts and compared the available transcripts, made edits when necessary in order to assure that the transcripts are representative of the broadcast.

3.6 Data management

Data was handled through a spreadsheet, with dates, broadcasting channels (frequently these interviews were joint broadcasts by multiple channels), journalists, contextual information (such as the main agenda items and relevant events that are referred to during the interview), links to the videos and transcriptions found online (if available), and the links to backups that I have created in order to safeguard the footage in case they are made unavailable through the duration of the study. Backups of the video footage were maintained in several hard drives and cloud-based storage systems were utilized to preserve the resources and the researcher's work when available. A summary of the interviews and relevant contextual information can be found in Appendix B.

3.7 Preliminary analysis

A preliminary analysis was conducted through a process of thorough reading and initial coding, as informed by discourse analytic and qualitative data analysis literature (such as Saldaña, 2013). These steps had a primary focus on the overall interview structure and the questions by the interviewers, finally leading to the expressive-factual analysis that forms the backbone of the present thesis.

3.7.1 Question structure

As part of the preliminary analysis, several interviews were chosen for an analysis of the interview structure in terms of "main questions" and "follow-up questions." As an example, the excerpt below was considered a main question:

Excerpt 3.2

Hande Fırat: Sayın Cumhurbaşkanı, tabii çok büyük bir felaket yaşadık, fakat beyannamenizin en büyük bölümünü bununla mücadele aslında, bir tek sadece deprem değil afetlerle mücadele kapsıyor. . . Benim sorum şu: Şimdi ciddi bir çalışma yapılmış. . . Nasıl bir yol haritanız olacak, nasıl bir takvimlendirmeniz var, nasıl çalışacaksınız, çünkü çok ciddi bir ekip aynı zamanda?

Hande Fırat: Dear President, of course we experienced a great disaster, but the largest part of your manifesto is actually about combatting this actually, not only earthquakes but it includes combatting disasters. ... My question is this: Now there is a serious work done... . What kind of a roadmap will you have, what kind of a schedule do you have, how will your work, because this is also a very serious team?

(Interview #1, 12 April 2023)

The excerpt exemplifies the emergent criteria for a main question is exemplified here. Firstly, word count and the overall length of the utterance implies importance. Secondly, the main questions are often prefaced with another positive statement, such as a review of the news from the time, a micro-narrative, or a review of previous statements. Thirdly, these questions often included a transitional statement ("*Benim sorum şu" - "My question is this"*) to signal the transition

between the preface and the interrogative statement. These qualities are in contrast to the “follow-up questions”. The follow-up questions are significantly shorter, rarely include any preface or content other than the interrogative statement. Below you may find an example for a follow-up question:

Excerpt 3.3

Ahmet Hakan: Kentsel dönüşüme girmeyenler, değil mi? Bizi de sokun mu diyorlar?

Ahmet Hakan: *Those who did not participate in urban renewal, right? Are they asking, “let us in too”?*

(Interview #1, 12 April 2023)

The overview of the structure demonstrated two important patterns: firstly, each of the interviews consisted of about 12-18 “main questions” that often organized the interview topically. An example of how these questions occur in the context of an interview can be found in the overview provided in Appendix C. Moreover, most of the speech time and word counts of the interviewers and the interviewee belonged to these main questions.

The second important pattern that was discovered was about the quality of the questions and answers. The main questions are visibly more “scripted”, presenting a more fluent and coherent language compared to follow-up questions and other talk as seen in the interviews. Furthermore, this is also true in the case of the answers. The answers are more coherent, fluent, show more lexical depth and syntactic complexity, almost beyond the limits of the spoken language.

Excerpt 3.4

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Öncelikle tabii günümüzün en önemli başlığı, herhalde siz de ondan dolayı bu başlığı seçtiniz. Asrın felaketini yaşadığımız 6 Şubat afetler konusunda bizim için bir milat ve bunu da ifade ettik daha önce. Bu vesileyle bir kez daha ben tabii depremlerde vefat eden vatandaşlarıma Allah'tan rahmet diliyorum, çok canımız yandı ve 50 bini aşkın vefatımız var. Tabii yaralılarımız çok çok fazla, onlara da yine Allah'tan şifalar diliyorum. Çok kararlı adımlar atmamız kesinlikle şart. Bunun için de biz iktidara gelmeden önce en önemli başlık olarak eğitim ve sağlığı arka arkaya koyduk. Ve sağlıkta dünyada herhalde en ileri ülkelerle yarışır durumdayız. Özellikle bu şehir hastanelerimizle örnek bir ülke haline geldik. Ama daha da güçlü ve daha da kararlı adımlar atmamız gerekiyor. Öncelikle deprem bölgesindeki vatandaşlarımızı sizin de ifade ettiğiniz sağlam konutlara yerleştirmemiz gerekiyor.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Of course, the most important agenda item of our day, probably you also chose this item because of that. February 6, when we experienced the disaster of the century, is a milestone for us in terms of disasters and we expressed this earlier. With this surely I wish to ask for Allah's mercy for my citizens who lost their lives in the earthquakes, we were hurt very much, and we have over 50 thousand deaths. Surely our injured is also so so many, I wish health for those from Allah as well. It is absolutely necessary that we take determined steps. For this reason, before we came to power we placed education and health back-to-back. And we are in a situation where we compete with the most advanced countries in health. Especially with city hospitals we became an example country. But we need to take

stronger and even more steps. Primarily, we need to locate our citizens in the earthquake area to, as you mentioned, structurally sound residences

(Interview #1, 12 April 2023)

This excerpt from Erdoğan's response to the question excerpted above is quite demonstrative of how the answers are formulated following the questions. Once again, answers to main questions are much more coherent, comprehensive, and lengthy. These qualities, along with relatively flawless delivery implies a level of scriptedness and a sense of written language in the answers to the main questions. These are in contrast to the answers to follow-up questions, such as:

Excerpt 3.5

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Evet, biz yanlış yaptık, ne olur gelin bizimkileri de yıkın. Tam ben size dediğim zaman bunu yapsaydınız, şimdi sizin binalarınız da bitmiş olacaktı, siz de oralara yerleşmiş olacaktınız. Şimdi, yanlış yaptık, gelin bizim buraları da yıkın. Tabii belediye başkanıma da gerekli talimatı verdik, şimdi onlarda da aynı çalışmalar başladı.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Yes, "we did wrong, please come and demolish ours too". If you did this when I told you your buildings would be done by now, and you would be moved there. Now, "we did wrong, come and demolish here too". Of course we gave the necessary order to my mayor, now they started the same work with them too.

(Interview #1, 12 April 2023)

This excerpt demonstrates the contrast between answers to follow-up questions as opposed to main questions. Most notably, the lack of reporting verbs in the utterance, which consists of three distinct quotations, is possible evidence

towards this answer not being as scripted as the answers to the main questions. Moreover, the repetition of the utterance reduces coherence and possibly indicates limited attention and preparedness. Thus, follow-up questions, and the paired answers, are often shorter, use fewer words, often lack coherence or conciseness of written language or even the main questions.

A frequent critique of Erdoğan's speech is the scriptedness of it. The fact that Erdoğan relies on prompters to remember his speeches during the rallies has been somewhat controversial. Following the preliminary analysis, we are led to believe that the main questions and answers are scripted to an extent. As I may speculate that practicality may render memorizing and scripting entire questions or answers non-feasible, I am led to believe that the questions and answers for the main questions are prepared for before the interviews in the form of an outline. Conversely, the quality of the language during the follow-up questions leads me to believe that the follow-up questions and other talk is not scripted, or not at least at the level of main questions.

3.7.2 Role of questions in interaction

Considering the emphasis given on the journalists and their questions in the past research, it is important clarify a few points about the journalists and their agency (or lack thereof) in the context of Erdoğan’s panel interviews. The questions have several roles in the interview, although they are much less significant than anything explored in the past. Questions primarily act as topical organizers, marking the transition from one topic to another. Secondly, questions may act, although very rarely, to determine whether Erdoğan’s answer will be factual or ideation oriented. Besides these two functions, the questions do not have any other role that has a consequence in the interaction.

As dictated by the context, the questions do not have any trace of antagonism, adversariness, or any challenge towards Erdoğan. While there are very few instances of journalists going off-script, these instances are very few and inconsequential that their discussion and analysis would overly represent their effect and frequency in the discourse. The questions are frequently embellished with praises and lengthy pre-faces for various purposes. But in their essence, questions do not have any consequence in the interaction, whether following the script perfectly or not.
The interviews are essentially monologues by Erdoğan, with the journalists acting not as agents but as discursive organizers, helping to remind the audience and the interviewee of the agenda items. The interviewers get much fewer words than Erdoğan, both individually and collectively, and they never interrupt Erdoğan, or they never engage in anything other than the formula of the interview. This formula designates very specific, albeit very limited, roles for the interviewers.

For these reasons, the present thesis will mostly omit questions from the excerpts, as the questions' role can simply be summarized much more briefly, and the content of these questions are often so uniform across journalists, interviews, and broadcasters that they do not warrant any deeper discussion.

3.7.3 Expressive and factual statements

As part of the preliminary analysis, an initial coding and through reading was conducted. In this stage, while a variety of linguistic features and discourse strategies were noticed, the organization of the factual, ideological, and interpersonal utterances in a turn attracted attention. During this stage, I analyzed an interview along the codes of "factual" and "expressive" statements, which led to the conclusion

that the organization of these statements were meaningful and strategic. Excerpt 3.7 demonstrates an example for an expressive statement uttered by Erdoğan.

Excerpt 3.6

> İstanbul dediniz, tabii ki İstanbul burada ayrı bir önem taşıyor.
>
> You said Istanbul, surely Istanbul has a distinct importance here.
>
> (Interview #1, 12 April 2023)

This line is an example of an expressive statement. It presents a direct statement of the party line or the ideology or overall conceptualization. This line is uttered just before the following example:

Excerpt 3.7

> İstanbul'un 39 ilçesinde tüm risk unsurlarını ele alacak şekilde bir harita çıkarttık. Bugün İstanbul'da yaklaşık 1,2 milyon bina ve 5,9 milyon konut bulunuyor.
>
> We prepared a map that considers all of the risk elements in Istanbul's 39 districts. Today, there are approximately 1.2 million buildings and 5.9 million residences.
>
> (Interview #1, 12 April 2023)

This line, in contrast, exemplifies factual statements. In the classification that will be explored in the following chapter, this demonstrates a numerical, statistical, quantifiable fact. Factual statements often refer to events, actions, places, or things that can be experienced.

As part of the preliminary analysis, I coded a smaller corpus with these two codes. In that exploratory process, I reached three key findings that are formative of

the present study. Firstly, the way these facts are formulated is worthy of attention, as they are not just transmissional content or rhetorical devices used in argumentation. Secondly, the distinction, while relevant, is not dichotomous, or black-and-white. There was a considerable gray area and genuine challenges to categorizing an utterance as either of these. In other words, factuality and expressivity can, and in my opinion, should, be conceptualized as a spectrum. Last but definitely not the least, the interplay between these two types of statements and their organization in the discourse is an important aspect of the discursive style presented in these interviews.

Overall, the preliminary analysis highlighted three main themes. Firstly, the role of factual and expressive statements being organized strategically in the president's discourse was noticeable. Secondly, the way the interviewers formulated the questions and how they structured the discourse cooperatively with the interviewee was quite revealing. Finally, the structure of the broadcast as it existed in a multitude of modes available to the TV production and the overall semiotics of the discourses outside of the spoken language warranted further attention.

3.8 Ethics

Ethical concerns are of the utmost importance in the context of social science research, especially with qualitative and critical discourse-analytic research. One such concern is the anonymity of the participants. In studies where the participants' privacy or anonymity is assumed, and therefore threatened with exposure, it is recommended practice to ensure these through anonymization and assignment of pseudonyms (Tagg & Spilioti, 2022)

However, as this study analyzes publicly available data, the people scrutinized in the analyses are not threatened by exposure. On the contrary, the

president himself and the journalists are public figures, recognizable at least at the national level, if not internationally. Moreover, the present study is concerned with speech events that are televised, therefore, all of the data, more or less as presented in the present study, are already publicly available and easily accessible on the internet.

Finally, the institutional review board at Boğaziçi University, Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences was contacted in preparation for the present thesis. The reply indicated that the present study was not subject to ethical review, thus would not require procedures that would be necessitated in other contexts.

CHAPTER 4

MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE OF PANEL INTERVIEWS

4.1 Introduction

The context in which the panel interviews take place is distinct and influential on the linguistic and discursive construction of the interviews. Research in the past, including studies on Erdoğan's interview, often assumed a level of universality across contexts. However, especially in the case of Erdoğan's panel interviews, the institutional context, as observable through the broader semiotics and the non-verbal elements of communication, plays an important role in Erdoğan's construction of legitimacy and power, and lays the ground for the discourses that will be explored in following chapters.

In this chapter, I will provide a brief description of the social context in which these interviews take place. Then, I will provide an analysis of the semiotic context (i.e. an analysis of the non-linguistic discourse). Finally, after contextualizing the discourse in the interaction itself via a review of the topics and questions, I will elaborate on how the context itself facilitates and interacts with the linguistic production achieved in the panel interviews.

4.2 The broadcasting of panel interviews

The way the visual language of AK Party era panel interviews differs from their antecedents or even contemporaries may not be immediately visible. However, a comparative analysis immediately brings up some salient differences. Therefore, following an overview of "conventional interviews" from the past and near present,

the following sections will provide an analysis of the visual language of panel interviews.

4.2.1 An overview of conventional interviews

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 exemplify two interviews outside of Erdoğan's panel interviews. In Figure 4.1, an interview with Süleyman Soylu, then Minister of Interior Affairs, hosted by Mehmet Akif Ersoy, in Habertürk studios can be seen. Finally, Figure 4.2 is a screen capture from an interview with then mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, hosted by Mehmet Ali Birand, following the floods in Istanbul in 1997. For a general reference, these interviews will be referred to as "conventional interviews."

Figure 4.1 Minister of Interior Affairs, Soylu, on an interview with Ersoy
Source: Habertürk TV, 2023

Figure 4.2 Erdoğan on a 1997 interview with Birand
Source: 32.Gün, 2019

The most immediately visible feature, and the one that is the most taken for granted, of the conventional interview is the number of interviewers and the interviewees. The conventional interview, in sharp contrast to the panel interview, features only one interviewer, and mostly only one interviewee. While exceptions do exist, it is almost normative for the conventional interview to be held one-to-one.

Secondly, the conventional interviews are often held in a channel studio that is used for programming other than the specific interviews. The studio in Figure 4.1 is located in Habertürk building, and it is used for programs other than the interview with Süleyman Soylu; similarly, the studio in Figure 4.2 is used for other production within the 32. Gün programs. In addition, these studios and the broadcast show prominent branding from their respective owners. In Figure 4.1, Habertürk logos on computers and cups can be seen, as well as the large 32. Gün text on the screen in the background and other distinctive furniture in Figure 4.2 are representative of the brand identity of 32. Gün program.

Finally, the interlocutors in both interviews (and most conventional interviews) are sat not too far from each other. The interviewer and the interviewee in Figure 4.1 are sat approximately 2 meters from each other, while the participants in Figure 4.2 have almost less than a meter, with their hands on the table being only a few centimeters apart.

4.2.2 The context of the panel interview

As mentioned in the previous chapter, panel interviews have come to be the exclusive outlet for Erdoğan's televised interactions with the media over the course of years. While Erdoğan did appear on the contemporary televised genres, like political commentary, political interviews, or political debates in the 90s up to the

2002 election, these appearances left their place to the panel interview over time. In its most recent form, it is the only genre of televised content where Erdoğan is part of a conversation with other people, in this case, journalists.

One foundational aspect for the panel interviews is the branding of the program. These interviews are exclusively labeled as distinct programs, titled *Cumhurbaşkanı Özel*, *Başkan Özel* (both meaning *The President Special*), or *Başbakan Özel* (*The Prime Minister Special*). Predictably, following Erdoğan's inauguration as president in 2014, the programs have switched their labelling from "Prime Minister" to "President". Except for a single interview, which was part of the panel show *Enine Boyuna* (*Exhaustive*) all interviews are broadcasted following similar labeling.

Accompanying this special labelling is a short, animated video that serves as the opening for the program. These sequences are different based on the channel or the broadcasting corporation, but they share several elements. They often feature Erdoğan, especially in moments of grandiosity and charisma, as well as archival footage for the news events relevant at the time of the interview or the past.

One symbol that is present in all of these opening sequences is the coat of arms of the Turkish presidency. It is given special prominence, and it is used liberally throughout these sequences. It is even the only symbol or object present in the opening sequence used by CNN-Kanal D joint broadcasts. Noting that the presidential coat of arms is an official symbol, its use by media corporations is subject to approval by official bodies. Thus, given its frequency and even monopoly in certain contexts, its use in these opening sequences seems to be approved and probably even suggested by the president's office.

The use of the coat of arms of the president, and by extension, non-use of other symbols, like the AK Party flag, can be meaningful. The AK Party flag appears in interviews before Erdoğan's presidency when he was the prime minister, predictably, as he was the chairperson of the party at the time. Following his presidency in 2014, the AK Party flag does not appear in panel interviews. At first glance, this can be understood as Erdoğan's compliance with the constitution then, which required the president to be neutral and non-partisan. What makes this an interesting occurrence, is the fact that Erdoğan's then-often-criticized (Sözcü, 2015) disregard (Habertürk, 2014) for that mandate; as he was also actively involved in the 2015 election, asking for votes for AK Party.

The juxtaposition of these two symbols may be telling of two contrasting discourses, two different contexts, and by extension, two different roles given to Erdoğan. Firstly, associated with the AK Party logo, Erdoğan has the role as an eternal prime minister, i.e. a high-level politician that navigates a series of complex spaces including intra- and inter-party politics. The prime minister is exclusively executive – he is mainly concerned with the day-to-day affairs, daily events and small-scale discourses. By contrast, the coat of arms of the president, is representative of Erdoğan as the president. The president is not a politician anymore, he is more of a national leader. While still navigating complex spaces, the presidential affairs are more transcendental, he is no longer concerned with the petty infightings among his staff or the clashes between bureaucrats and the government ministers – he is engaged in a more grandiose discourse.

Of course, the distinction of Erdoğan across his offices may or may not be true. On the contrary, it is very likely that Erdoğan is still engaged in petty intra-party politics. However, the symbolic distinction, the deliberate choice to front the

presidential symbology and the backgrounding and the omission of the party symbology is an attempt at signaling the existence of such a distinction. A chronological non-linearity, observed through the abandonment of the party symbols in the opening sequences and in the interview itself, may also be understood as discursive non-linearity.

The panel interviews exclusively take place either in Ankara or Istanbul. Given that Istanbul and Ankara are the centers of Turkish politics, media, culture, and economy, it is reasonable that these interviews are produced mainly in these two cities. After all, while the president has the means for safe travel across the country, the same convenience may not be available to the journalists or the production teams, who already live in Istanbul or Ankara. However, given that plenty of symbolically relevant and economically active cities with large populations and active media sectors (Bursa, Konya, İzmir, Adana, Antalya) did not see a single interview is still noteworthy. A summary of the interviews in the corpus of the present study can be found in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1. Overview of Venues and Locations for the Interviews

Location	Venue	Number of interviews in the corpus
Ankara	Çankaya Köşkü	4
	AK Party HQ	4
	Beştepe - Presidential Complex	5
Istanbul	Mabeyn Köşkü	3
	Vahdettin Köşkü	1
	Dolmabahçe Presidential Complex	3

The three venues in Ankara are quite straightforward: the AK Party headquarters, the presidential complex at Beştepe as the main center of operations for the presidential government (sometimes referred to as *Saray* or *The Palace* by the critics; or *Külliye* or *the complex* used as a more neutral or favorable term), and Çankaya Köşkü, which used to be the main residence for the president and had been so until Erdoğan built the complex at Beştepe. Meanwhile, the three venues in Istanbul are more worthy of attention as they were either part of an Ottoman royal palace complex (Dolmabahçe Presidential Complex at Dolmabahçe Palace and Mabeyn Köşkü at Yıldız Palace) or are former residences of Ottoman sultans or princes (Vahdettin Köşkü).

These three venues clearly have symbolic values for their connection to the Ottoman Empire and their later use after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. These complexes, and several others were used actively either as residences of the sultans, as guest houses, or as venues for events in the Ottoman Empire. Later on, with the republic, their use for the residences of the sultans was abandoned and they were handed over to the *National Palaces* ("Milli Saraylar") to be used for event venues, museums and so on (Milli Saraylar). The three venues seen in panel interviews are the ones that were converted into *Presidential Work Offices* ("*Cumhurbaşkanlığı Çalışma Ofisi*").

Therefore, the choice of these venues can be understood in two ways. Firstly, along with the conversions of these offices, hosting of the interviews here can be understood as an act of reclamation of the Ottoman-associated spaces, and by extension, an Ottoman-associated identity. Secondly, these venues can be chosen as a means of "revealing" a private space, therefore constructing a sense of exclusivity. As these venues were often exclusionary to the public, broadcasting the interiors of

these spaces, once rather private rooms of Ottoman sultans, can be interpreted as both an association towards the Ottoman identity and even an improvement upon it. It is also worth paying attention to the fact that some of the venues in which the interviews are held have rooms, relatively large ones, dedicated for the occasion at that time. The presidential complex at Beştepe, especially, has a large area shown in these panel interviews, with one more similar area visible in the background, as seen in Figure 4.3.

The fact that no studio owned by any channel or broadcasting corporation hosted Erdoğan in a panel interview makes the location and venues important for the grounding of the study. Other interviews, almost exclusively, have the interviewee visit the TV studio at the channel's territory, thus leaving the interviewee in away territory. The change towards having the interviewer visit the interviewee, especially in exclusive, historical, and high-security areas like the presidential complexes, old Ottoman palaces, and the party HQ, completely reverses this dynamic. As the journalists are not in their home turf anymore, these spaces become apparatuses for the production of a specific discourse. Therefore, while nominally Erdoğan and his interview are the guests to the channels' programming, he ends up as the host for the duration (and possibly before and after the interview as well) of the interview, by the virtue of hosting the journalists, the production team, and other staff engaged in the production.

4.3 The visuals of panel interviews

Figure 4.4 presents an example for the visual language of a panel interview with Erdoğan. There are several key visual elements that distinguish and establish panel interviews as a discrete genre. These include the color palette, the use of formal

symbology, the furniture, studio setup, and the seating arrangement. I will discuss them in the respective sections below.

Figure 4.3. A panel interview with Erdoğan
Source: Interview #5, 4 August 2016 (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2016)

4.3.1 Visual elements

Noticeably, certain official symbols appear frequently in the panel interviews. These symbols are, namely, the flag of the Republic of Turkey, the official coat of arms of the Turkish president, and a flag combining the Turkish flag and the presidential coat of arms. The AK Party flag was also present in older interviews during Erdoğan's premiership, but that has not been in use since Erdoğan's presidency, even after 2018 when Erdoğan had the right to be the leader of his party and the president simultaneously.

In comparison, other interviews do not give any presence to the party symbols or other symbols associated with the interviewees. While dedicating considerable space to official and AK Party imagery on the scene, these broadcasts

rarely include any symbols signaling the brand identity of the channel(s) or the broadcasting corporations. The channel logo(s) and the production corporation, and by extension, the identities of the journalists take a step back during interviews with Erdoğan.

This is in sharp contrast to other interviews where the channel identity, the programming, and the identities of the journalists are kept visible. The 2019 debate between mayoral candidates seen in Figure 4.1 shows a background panel with a special design for the broadcast, used by all of the channels signaling the brand identity of the event as opposed to the individual interviewees or the parties supporting them. The 2023 interview with Süleyman Soylu, as is frequent with interviews of government ministers, is shot in a conventional studio, with a preserved emphasis on the interviewer Mehmet Akif Ersoy and the broadcasting channel, Habertürk. Finally, 1997 interview with Erdoğan, then mayor of Istanbul, is shot in the studio for the show 32. Gün (*32nd Day*) with the logo for the show clearly visible for most of the interview. Thus, the presence of the show's logo, as a strong associate of Mehmet Ali Birand's journalistic identity, reinforces the said identity and establishes the interviewer in a stronger position.

Therefore, it can be said that the substitution of symbols of channel identities can be a way of transforming the context and lay down the grounds for further transformations in discourse. Foregrounding of the state symbols can work as a metaphor for foregrounding of the state itself, thus transforming the interview from the territory of day-to-day politics and media as consumption, to a more transcendent dimension, concerned with issues beyond the daily agenda.

Moreover, the use of symbols related to the office itself can be seen as aiming at borrowing legitimacy to Erdoğan's statements. In other words, the presidential

coat of arms can be a symbol for the office, or the more abstract “president Erdoğan”, instead of the more familiar “politician Erdoğan”. Therefore, any position taken by Erdoğan is presented as the position of the president, thus the position of the state.

4.3.2 Furniture and Studio Setup

Visually, the most distinct and possibly the most deliberate distinction between the conventional interviews and the AK Party-era panel interviews is the emphasis on furniture. At the surface level, the panel interviews have a unique style equipping the palace-adjacent aesthetics. This is partially because of the fact that some of these interviews take place in palaces, i.e. the presidential complex at Beştepe, often colloquially named *saray* or *the palace*, as well as the Ottoman-era palaces maintained or even used by the president’s office. However, although not a palace, AK Party Headquarters is still decorated with similar furniture for these panel interviews.

Another meaning behind the use of palace-adjacent decor is an expression of admiration for the Ottoman monarchy. While this may be framed as an authoritarian and undemocratic attitude (arguably it is), when taken in the context of what has been discussed so far and below, there is further meaning in this visual language. The admiration towards Ottomans and sultans, expressed through the choice of palaces and palace aesthetics even in places not used historically as palaces, is not a mere admiration towards the attached authoritarianism or Islamism, but possibly a negative message towards the messy politics of an electoral democracy. Therefore, the semiotic break between the other interviews and the panel interviews of Erdoğan represent a similar distinction, where Erdoğan is concerned more with being an

eternal national symbol and being beyond the daily politics, akin to an Ottoman sultan.

The aforementioned semiotic break can be seen when employing an analytical approach to the visual elements. Almost all of the panel interviews have the same set of furniture: individual armchairs for the interviewers and the interviewee, usually combined with a carpet in the ground and coffee tables next to the participants' chairs. This, at the first glance may not be significant, however, the significance of this setup becomes much more important when considering what is omitted or modified.

A clearly deliberate and functional element of the visual design is the lack of any tables or lecterns that would break the participants' silhouettes. This is also achieved through the lack of visible microphones, visible studio lights (except for the occasional chandelier that is part of the palace-adjacency), or visible studio elements like wide background screens except for the few interviews where a screen, while present, is clearly not part of the overall visual setup. All of the examples from non-Erdoğan interviews depicted above and interviews with older Erdoğan, show such studio elements. Most prominently, a large table shared by the interviewer and the interviewee, which may be understood as a metaphor of shared ground, is visible in most political interviews. Furthermore, the tables are often crowded with notes and documents, signaling a level of preparedness for the interviews. In contrast, Erdoğan's panel interviews usually do not have such documents in sight; even the journalists appear like they have to make do with simple notebooks.

This visual design is in sharp contrast to pre-Erdoğan interviews and even contemporary interviews with figures other than Erdoğan. There is a symbolic distinction between the office-style, wheeled chairs seen in other interviews as

opposed to AK Party era panel interviews. This distinction mainly comes from connotations: office chairs are associated with work, offices, industrial production, subservience to a work hierarchy and so on. This is also the case for tables in other interviews, which can be associated with similar connotations due to their resemblance to tables used in small conference rooms.

The furniture items seen on Erdoğan's interviews, however, have almost the exact opposing connotations. Armchairs are more associated with homes, relaxation, handcrafting, elegance, and independence and/or authority. Similar connotations are also carried with the coffee tables as well. Besides being luxurious, presumably comfortable, and possibly quite expensive, the furniture choice is also symbolically relevant. The choices represent a preference towards self-distinction from the political interviews, old or new. The choices signal an understanding of the interview as not a political interview, but as a different speech event.

It is important to highlight that the hiding of the studio or production team is clearly a deliberate effort. The logistics of producing such a broadcast involves multiple cameras for the variety of shots, possibly one or more cranes for some of the fly-over shots, discreet lighting and audio equipment, and hardware for live broadcasting, as well as communication and coordination of the production processes. Moreover, aside from operators and directors for all of the equipment, the set also likely houses directors, producers, writers, publicists, artists, an intense amount of security, catering personnel and so on, all of whom have the duty, to an extent, to make Erdoğan and the interview look good on camera, both metaphorically and literally. However, none is visible or implied at any moment of the interview broadcast.

The visual elements as in the symbology, furniture, and the studio setup, taken as a whole, communicate several critical ideas, the most important of which is a clear visual break from the rest of the broadcast. Almost all programs in studios involve constant branding of the TV channel through the screens in the background and foreground, visual effects and so on. During the panel interviews, however, the only remaining mentions of the TV channel are the singular logo placed to the corners of the screen and limited mentions of the channel in the beginning and at the end.

The replacement of the channel branding with Erdoğan's, the presidential office's, or AK Parti's branding is further meaningful in that the two symbologies do not really co-exist or co-appear. This may be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, one may highlight an attempt by the TV channels to maintain their neutrality and independence – rejecting to be profiled as "yandaş" or state-owned, by creating a visual disconnect between their regular programming and the programming with the president. An alternative interpretation arises with the notion of overtaking of the channel by Erdoğan and his team. This may be also a result of AK Party and Erdoğan rejecting to be labeled as favoring certain corporate brands, which may end up being riskier for Erdoğan's image.

All of these taken together direct towards the construction of a sense of "grandiosity". Distinct from the presidential politics and discourses, the day-to-day programming, part of the day-to-day political discourse, involves a variety of visible, autonomous, distinct agents. The journalists have their own agenda as do the politicians that appear on the interview. This discourse is created partially through the resources of the TV channel and the broadcasting corporation, further agents with distinct agendas and stakes in the interview.

However, the presidential discourse is, along with the symbolically and discursively constructed politics of the presidential office, much more uniform. In these speech events, Erdoğan is not only the primary focus, but the only element that is allowed to even be present as distinct. This, in turn, reinforces a sense of grandiosity and transcendence, in which the presidential politics and discourses are presented as relevant across time and space.

4.3.3 Physical positioning

Another important semiotic element that is manipulated in the context of AK Party-Era panel interviews is the physical positioning of the participants, i.e. the seating arrangement. As stated earlier, there is a distinct furniture and studio setup present in the AK Party era panel interviews compared to other interviews. The replacement of the large tables with smaller coffee tables and the office chairs with the armchairs creates logistical limitations. The increased number of furniture items and the inflexibility of the substitutions, along with the aesthetic decisions, imposes the requirement of choosing a seating arrangement and sticking with it for the duration of the interview. These conditions suggest that the layout can be understood as symbolically relevant and meaningful.

4.3.3.1 Layout

In all the interviews, the journalists are in one half of the shot (usually the left-hand side) while Erdoğan is in the other (usually the right-hand side). The interviewers are always in a single row, either organized in a straight line, a quasi-crescent, or a full crescent. Rarely, one interviewer referred to as a moderator may be positioned slightly to the middle while the rest are positioned in a single line. While small

differences exist in the layouts, they remain exceptionally uniform across time, place, and channel.

Table 4.2. Summary of the Seating Arrangement Styles Found in the Corpus

The seating arrangement style		N of interviews
Single row	Straight line	11
	Off-center interviewee	1
	Moderator	1
	Total	13
Crescent	Semi-crescent	6
	Full crescent	1
	Total	7

Comparing the layout with the other interviews is also helpful in analyzing this semiotic aspect. While the lateralization of the participants is frequent in other interviews, it is not the absolute norm. As seen in Birand's 32. Gün interview with Erdoğan from 1997 (Figure 4.2), the journalists could share the same half of the screen with the politicians they interviewed.

The visual grouping of the interviewee and interviewers signifies their distinction from one another. This visual distinction communicates a reinforcement of the president being understood as an individual of a different scale. One half of the screen is dedicated to people dealing professionally with politics, with people engaging in the day-to-day discourses involving many issues. The other is dedicated to a leader, who engages with politics in the context of achieving his ideals, engaging in the discourses beyond the day-to-day scale.

Figure 4.4 A panel interview of Erdoğan with 14 journalists
Source: Interview #9, 13 May 2023 (TV100, 2023)

4.3.3.2 Distance

The second salient feature of the participant's physical positioning is the distance. As stated earlier, the interviewers are often localized to one half of the shot, while the other is reserved for the interviewee. As such, the interviewers are predictably close to each other physically. This is further accompanied by the exceptional and somewhat exaggerated physical distance between Erdoğan and the interviewers. This distance can reach up to approximately 10-12 meters (as seen in Figure 4.5) but is usually kept about 5 to 8 meters for most of the interviews. This is potentially the limit for the interviewers and the interviewee being able to hear one another without further assistance.

This, once more, is in sharp contrast to other interviews. Conventionally, other interviews present a maximum distance of about 5 meters, and this can go down to 1 or 2 meters in some interviews. One such example is an interview is the Birand's 32. Gün interview with Erdoğan, where the interviewee and the interviewer are seated in a distance of about a meter at highest.

Physical distance can be understood as a signal for social distance. To elaborate, the journalists and the politicians in other interviews, by being physically close to one another on camera, signal that they are engaged in the similar public discourses, are concerned with similar issues, and therefore share a space, more or less like equals, or at least in recognition of one another. The immense physical distance in most of the AK Party era panel interviews, on the other hand, signal the opposite. The social distance between Erdoğan and the journalists is symbolized as being large and significant. They do not share the same space anymore, but they are communicating across different, isolated spaces. The professional mutuality has left its place to a more dialogic relationship.

4.3.3.3 Orientation

Another aspect of the physical positioning is the orientation of the speakers, i.e. the directions to which their heads and bodies are turned. Despite being a televised program, Erdoğan and the journalists do not face the main camera (i.e. the camera that has all of the speakers in shot). The only two exceptions to these are one program by which Erdoğan faces towards the main camera and another interview where an interviewer in the moderator position is facing the main camera.

Considering other interviews, this may be seen as a meaningful change. Birand's interview with Erdoğan on *32. Gün* has both speakers turned relatively towards the camera while still keeping them in contact with each other. Another *32. Gün* interview by Birand, this time with then the opposition leader Tansu Çiller is another example where the interviewee is faced towards the main camera.

The distinct layout seen in Erdoğan's panel interviews, thus, can be seen as a meaningful attempt at getting the interviewers and himself to keep eye contact whilst

looking minimally towards the cameras, therefore the audience. This represents a break between the conventional interview and the AK Party era panel interview. The former, by maintaining eye contact and bodily contact, acknowledges the audience.

By extension, in one way, the conventional interview acknowledges the fourth wall and the explicit fabrication of discourse as part of industrial media production processes. AK Party era panel interviews, on the other hand, allude to a rejection of this acknowledgment. The speakers do not form eye contact with the audience except to announce the beginning, the ad breaks, and the ending of the program. Therefore, this specific arrangement, especially the physical orientation of the speakers, communicates a constructed sense of authenticity, or a denial of industrial media production.

4.3.4 Erdoğan's attire

Another important visuo-semiotic aspect of Erdoğan's panel interviews is the attire as worn by Erdoğan and the journalists. Erdoğan always wears a suit, with a jacket, shirt, and trousers. Moreover, his attire often features a tie, as seen in Figure 4.6, thus creating a full set appropriate for political broadcasting. It is worth noting that when Erdoğan wears a suit, most of the time it is a black suit and a white shirt.

Figure 4.5. A close shot of Erdoğan with a tie and suit
Source: Interview #3, 31 May 2015 (Gelincik2023, 2015)

However, Erdoğan may occasionally be seen not wearing a tie. As exemplified by Figures 4.8, this appearance is in contrast to Erdoğan's appearances with ties and suits, as well as the interviewers, among which men are seen wearing a tie and everyone is following a formal dress code. Moreover, as can be seen in Figure 4.6, women are not seen wearing dresses but suits, which indicates a professional dress code for the journalists.


Figure 4.6. A shot of the journalists, highlighting their attire
Source: Interview #15, 11 August 2021 (CNN Türk, 2021)

This dress code is not as strict to Erdoğan, as he may also be seen wearing rather unconventional shirts and jackets, such as those seen in Figure 4.7. The most prominent example of this is Erdoğan's so-called "winner jacket" (Kadıoğlu, 2023), which is a blue jacket with a windowpane pattern on that Erdoğan wore to major rallies during election campaigns. The fact that the "winner jacket" has such a prominence in the attendant discourses regarding politics can indicate that Erdoğan's attire has a distinct place in Erdoğan's political strategy.

Figure 4.7. A close shot of Erdoğan in suit but with no tie.
Source: Interview #4, 30 July 2016 (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2016)

Overall, Erdoğan has two main looks, one with a full suit and a tie and the other with a less formal jacket, shirt, and no tie. The contrast between these two styles is meaningful and can communicate some critical ideas. Firstly, Erdoğan's less formal look makes him appear older. The created sense of age can be understood as an attempt to construct an image for Erdoğan that can have the traditional connotations attached with age, like wisdom or good faith. Secondly, the less formal style is more colloquial in appearance, presenting a distinct style from professional politicians and journalists. This juxtaposes Erdoğan as an informal figure, an outsider to the realm of politics and media, more akin to the common folk that, in Erdoğan's self-image, is represented by Erdoğan himself. Thirdly, Erdoğan's ability to switch between styles

that are more and less formal is in itself an exercise of power. In an industry where the journalists abide by a strict dress code both in their professional environments and in panel interviews with Erdoğan, him exercising his freedom to choose a less formal style, at least on the surface, creates an image of Erdoğan that is powerful and independent from the norms of media and politics.

4.4 Chapter discussion

The overview of the visuals and semiotic elements of the panel interview can be interpreted in several dimensions. Firstly, the uniformity of the style across the interviews is worthy of consideration. Secondly, the relationship between power and the semiotics needs to be discussed. Overall, it is seen that these interviews form a distinct genre of political discourse that makes it impossible to take the language itself as the modality for the construction of discourse that enables the construction of power and policy.

4.4.1 Uniformity

As seen in this chapter so far, there is a colossal uniformity across the years and regardless of the journalists, channels, or the broadcasting corporations. The similarly outlined introduction sequences, the visual and physical organization of the space and the people, and the interview structure remains somewhat identical, whether it is broadcasted on state-owned TRT, the pro-AK Party ATV, or the mainstream Kanal D. These channels have different philosophies, biases, goals, stakeholders and so on. While ATV is extremely pro-AK Party and refuses to publish any story that is harmful to AK Party, Kanal D and CNN Türk may (albeit rarely)

platform such criticisms, and even design programs around quasi-debates with pro-government and pro-opposition commentators.

Considering the wild differences seen in other programs across these channels, the uniformity of the panel interview as a genre requires an explanation. While there is no direct evidence for that, it seems that the presidential offices have a strong role in designing these programs. One option, this uniformity is dictated simply by coercion, as an act of self-regulation in the part of the channels to fall in line with the trendsetters that are pro-AK Party channels. Alternatively, there can be more direct involvement by the presidential office and more specifically, Presidential Communications Office (henceforth, PCO), which deals mainly with Erdoğan's and the government's public relations affairs.

4.4.2 Power

The transformation of the semiotics of political interviews, as well as the broadcast itself, ultimately, serves to empower Erdoğan. There are two ways that political and hegemonic power relates to the semiosis of the symbols discussed so far. Firstly, some of these semiotic elements are a result of Erdoğan's hegemonic power. Erdoğan's access to resources like palaces, old and new, gives him reason to reject a visit to the studios of the broadcasters. Similarly, being the host allows Erdoğan and his staff to design the space where the interview will take place, thus engaging in a cyclical relationship where Erdoğan's hegemonic power is re-invested upon.

As a result of the semiosis achieved through the means of the hegemonic power, the said power is constructed and reproduced in each interview. The appearance of the official symbology, the physical positioning of the speakers, and the construction of the physical and social context that allows for such an interview

to exist, reinforces Erdoğan's power, both over the broadcasters and, by extension, over the audience.

This semiosis also communicates to the broadcasters themselves, in that the appearance of the prestigious president is subject to serious conditions. The channels would be required to leave their control over the physical space, possibly over the topics themselves, and risk sanctions if disobeyed. Therefore, these conditions may act as a filter against channels that would be critical of, therefore risky for, Erdoğan.

4. 5 Chapter summary

The interviews themselves are not mere interactions between two or more people; they occur in a context of broadcasting politics and a conflict over the physical and visual semiotics. Therefore, an analysis of the broadcasting politics and the symbolic context is needed for a complete picture. Thus, an overview of the social and physical context is presented in this chapter.

It can be understood that even an analysis of the elements peripheral to the interview or the speech event itself revealed a prominent construction of hegemonic power on Erdoğan's side. The control over the politics, semiotics, and even the logistics of programming itself, the structuring of the interview, and the ability to perform the essentially the same interview across a variety of channels and broadcasting corporations are the results and, paradoxically, the causes of the exercise of Erdoğan's power.

CHAPTER 5

CONSTRUCTION OF THE FACTUAL DISCOURSE

5.1 Introduction

Factual statements in various forms form the core of Erdoğan's discursive and rhetorical strategy. Besides the fact that Erdoğan may utilize factual statements for the purposes of public information, in Erdoğan's panel interviews these factual statements almost always accompany a broader political rhetoric or any other kind of expressive content. In that regard, factual statements essentially act as a type of currency in Erdoğan's discourse. They may have value on their own, in which case the expressive content is embedded within the factual statement. Alternatively, they also frequently accompany expressive statements that communicate the ideation directly. Nonetheless, while expressive content is often present but sometimes implicit, factual content of Erdoğan's discourse is ever-present and forms the backbone of his discursive strategy.

In this chapter, an overview of the factual discourses present in Erdoğan's panel interviews is provided. Two broad categories pertaining to the emergent types of factual statements are presented and explored in their respective sections. Firstly, achievements, akin to the concept of *icraat* or *hizmet* (service) are explored. Secondly, while making up a much smaller portion of Erdoğan's discourse, internationalism, as in Erdoğan's style of reporting international politics, is explored. The chapter concludes with a brief summary and interpretations.

5.2 Achievements

Achievements are an important part of Erdoğan's discourse. A significant portion of Erdoğan's political communication, even beyond the political interviews, consists of dissemination of AK Party's and Erdoğan's achievements. These achievements are often related to the physical infrastructure, like construction or purchases. While legal and social actions are also occasionally mentioned, it is important to note that Erdoğan's discourse of achievements is mainly focused on construction.

A key component of infrastructure construction is the road construction, about which Erdoğan and AK Party often boasted during the election campaigns. The following excerpt offers an example of how Erdoğan talks about such road construction advancements.

Excerpt 5.1

İşte basit bir örnek olarak vereyim. *O zaman Ulaştırma Bakanımız Binali Bey. Ne yapacağız ne edeceğiz bunları konuşurken, bakın bir taraftan 79 senede 6100 kilometre bölünmüş yol yapılmış ve biz bunun üzerine 14 senede, düşünebiliyor musunuz, 18 bin kilometre bölünmüş yol ilave ettik.* Bakınız nereden nereye*! 14 senede 18 bin kilometre bölünmüş yol ilave ediyorsun, ama 79 senede 6100 kilometre bölünmüş yol yapıyorsunuz!* Bu kadar açık ara bir atak var.

Let me give one as a simple example. *Our then Minister of Transportation, Mr. Binali. As we were discussing what we are going to do, on the other hand, 6100 kilometers of divided roads were built and, in 14 years, can you imagine that we added 18 thousand kilometers of divided roads on top of that.* Look at where we came from and where we went to! *You add 18 thousand kilometers*

6 *of divided roads, but you [plural] build 6100 kilometers of roads in 79 years!*

7 There is such a clear offense.

(Interview #6, 8 March 2017)

Erdoğan starts the turn by framing the example he will elaborate on, typically in an interview discourse where the interviewee shifts from one answer to another. He begins the factual statements by referring to his interaction with the then Minister of Transportation, clearly pinpointing the time frame he is talking about. This also helps him frame the answer in a factual way. He then moves onto his main factual argument, one of the most common in his rhetoric over the course of years, that of building new roads. The terms "14 years" in his discourse referring to the 14 years of AK Party government in Turkey, and "79 years", referring to every government Turkey had since the declaration of the republic position these two periods in opposition to one another. In other words, this comparison serves to position a variety of regimes between 1923 and 2002 and the AK Party regime after 2002 as equivalents, and the former as even inferior to the latter.

Noticeably, factual statements in this excerpt make frequent use of numerical values (i.e. 79, 14 years; 6100 kilometers). This is a common feature in factual statements in Erdoğan's discourse as almost all of the achievements can be quantified in one way or another. It is frequent to see statements regarding the road construction to be accompanied by the length of the roads in kilometers or the average travel times, hospitals with numbers of beds, and hydroelectric infrastructure with energy output values.

However, it is also indicative of a broader discursive strategy in Erdoğan's discourse, which is the deployment of numbers as semiotic resources. This stems from the underlying assumption of factuality being derived from quantity. This is

mainly because quantitative claims are vulnerable for refutations and falsifications in a variety of margins. Therefore, they are not always strategically viable unless the speaker is highly confident of the values. In other words, if a strategy for minimal challenge and falsification is followed, the speaker has high confidence in the numerical values that they state.

Another key point here is the fact that the factual statement is essentially repeated, each time with a different intended message. In the first occasion, the earlier road infrastructure is mentioned in a marginally more neutral light. This is expressed through the use of a passive voice construction with yapılmış (were built) without having a clear subject. The second time the idea is reformulated with an implicit subject through the use of active voice (yapmışsınız; you [plural] have built). While the subject here is not named clearly, the context implies that the subjects are the governments that came before AK Party. At the time of the interview, the only major political party that was a significant part of the government from 1923 to 2002 was CHP . While CHP itself was not a ruling party for most of the 1950-2002 period, as it is the only major party that remains to that day, all of the pre-AK Party political parties' legacy, excluding the National Vision vein in which Erdoğan started his political career, are left to CHP. Therefore, the subject is understood to be CHP and the overall communicates an anti-CHP stance.

Moreover, the fact that the utterance is repeated is worth a closer look. As repetition leads to increased emphasis, possibly for increased retention, it is thus understood that these achievements (projects, openings, works etc.) are not merely reported on here, but they become subjects of a distinct discursive value for rhetorical purposes.

Excerpt 5.2

Salih Nayman: Efendim, dışarıdan görüntüleri zaten izledik. Açıkçası işçilerin siz banttan inerken bir anlamda hücum etmesi, o gururu yaşaması bizi çok duygulandırdı, en azından beni duygulandırdı. Siz içeride ne hissettiniz, çünkü aşama-aşama her şeyine dahil olduğunuzu biliyoruz, ama o an çok önemliydi. Acı hatıralarımız vardı bunlarla ilgili, artık olmayışı, yeni çağın açılması önemli. Çok soru var, ne kadar olacak, mesela makam arabası olarak kullanır mısınız, ama benim en çok merak ettiğim kullandığınızdaki duygularınız?

Erdoğan: *Her şeyden önce orası fabrika değil mi? Hani birileri diyordu ya fabrika nerede, diye, burası fabrika. TOGG burada üretilecek. Önce TOGG'daki bütün mühendisleri, işçileri, teknisyen, tekniker, onlarla bir resim çektirdik, 1300 kişi. Ve ardından fabrikayı gezdik, tabii fabrikada her şey robotik. Yani tabandan tepeye, buyurun şu anda bütün kaynak sistemleri, gördüğünüz gibi robotik işlemlerle yapılıyor, boyahanesi aynı şekilde öyle.* Tabii insan bunu görünce iftihar ediyor, Rabbim bizlere elhamdülillah bunu nasip etti, bugünlere ulaştık.

Salih Nayman: Sir, we have already seen the footage coming from the outside. To be frank, [seeing] the workers rush in a sense as you were coming down the line, [seeing] them feel that pride made us emotional, at least it made me emotional. What did you feel when you were inside? Because we know that you were involved with everything in all of the stages, but that moment was very important. We had painful memories about these, now the fact that this won't be the case, that a new age is upon us is important. There are many questions, how much will it be, for instance would you use it as

your official vehicle, but the one that I am most curious about is your emotions while using it.

Erdoğan: Before everything, that is the factory, right? Some were saying "where is the factory?", that is the factory. TOGG will be produced here. Firstly, we took a picture with all of the engineers, workers, technicians of TOGG, with 1300 people. And then we walked around the factory, of course everything in the factory is automated. I mean from the bottom to the top, see all of the welding systems, as you see, are done by automated robotic processes, which is also the case in the paint shop. Of course, one feels proud after seeing this. My God has allowed us to reach these, alhamdulillah, we reached today.

(Interview #13, 11 February 2022)

In this excerpt, the interviewer Salih Nayman asks Erdoğan about the TOGG, both a partially state-sponsored enterprise working on electric vehicles and the colloquial name given to its first model which is a sports utility vehicle-style car. The question itself is formulated heavily through praises like *her şeyine dahil olduğunuzu biliyoruz* (*we know that you are involved in its everything*) in line 4 and emotion-laden statements like *gururu* (*pride*) in line 2, *duygulandırdı* (*made. . . emotional*) in line 3, and *acı* (*painful*) in line 5. While emotionality and praises are foregrounded, factual issues like pricing and performance, which are issues that receive attention from the public, are subtly backgrounded. This is most evident in line 6, where the question about the price is skipped relatively hastily in favor of the interviewer's question on the user experience.

Despite the question foregrounding emotional and experiential themes, Erdoğan's response begins much more factually. While Erdoğan makes some

expressive statements, he continues to describe the factory, deploying descriptions to strengthen the imagery. Therefore, while the question starts an expressive prosody, Erdoğan drags it back to the realm of factuality. Even the expressive content uttered by Erdoğan is related to a different domain (i.e. the experience and emotionality associated with TOGG versus Erdoğan's criticism of the opposition), thus, Erdoğan drags the expressive content back to the topics that he wishes to discuss. The following excerpt is taken from the continuation of this thread.

Excerpt 5.3

Erdoğan: Yani o imkân da var, ama 160'la sağ olsun, yanımda ayrıca bir beyin var ya, bu işin başına getirdiğimiz arkadaşımız, o sağ olsun, gerçekten işe hâkim, işe sahip. Bu arada galiba ya Honda'dan ya Hyundai'den bir beyin daha aldılar, yani şu anda o iki beyin tümüyle şu anda TOGG'a kumanda ediyorlar, ellerine sağlık, 1300 kişi ve şimdi bu şey arttıkça, oradaki bazı birimler, eleman sayısı da artacak. Tabii buradan 4.8 saniyede sıfırdan 100 kilometreye ulaşabiliyor.

Erdoğan: I mean, that possibility exists too, but thankful for 160, while there is another brain with me too, our friend who we placed as the head of this job, thanks to him, he is familiar with the job. By the way, they also brought in another brain, from either Honda or Hyundai, in other words these two brains are in complete control of TOGG, thanks to them, 1300 people and as the units there grow the number of employees will increase as well. Of course, it can reach from 0 to 100 kilometers in 4.8 seconds.

(Interview #13, 11 February 2022)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan is talking about the management of the TOGG project. Specifically, he is talking about the appointed manager (line 2), other executives (line 4), and total workers (line 5). Besides providing qualitative information, Erdoğan also deploys quantification in line 5, highlighting the number of workers involved with the project. These utterances highlight Erdoğan's supposed knowledge of the managerial system. Moreover, the fact that this information is foregrounded, in contrast to other domains like the budgeting, finance, and technical specification is meaningful, as Erdoğan is involved with the decision making regarding the staff. Thus, TOGG is presented as an achievement that resulted in Erdoğan being the manager of the human resources to an extent. This is further supported by Erdoğan using a quantifiable claim (i.e. total number of people working on the project) to self-present as a hands-on leader.

While in this excerpt Erdoğan is mainly talking about the management, the organization, and the human resources of the TOGG project, in lines 6 and 7 Erdoğan takes a rather sharp turn to switch the topic to the technical capabilities of the TOGG car. This switch is not only a topical one but also a switch to the rhetorical purpose as well. While the management of TOGG can be attributed a bit more directly to Erdoğan, the technical capabilities are less directly related to him. Thus, the topical switch represents the shift from the dissemination of Erdoğan's achievements to the marketing of the TOGG car. The term marketing is not an exaggeration, as the quantification used in line 6, *4.8 saniyede sıfırdan 100 kilometreye ulaşabiliyor* (can reach *from 0 to 100 kilometers in 4.8 seconds*), is a metric that is used frequently in car commercials, especially with the marketing of the luxury cars. While cars can have a lot of quantifiable metrics (especially electric vehicles like TOGG have range, battery life, charging time and such), this is the only statement directly related to the

TOGG. Therefore, the use of this quantification indicates that Erdoğan is not as directly involved with the design of the TOGG car, as opposed to his role in its management and organization.

Excerpt 5.4

Karada yangınla mücadele çok önemli yere sahip olan arazöz sayımızı yüzde 70 –bakın bu rakam çok önemli- *artırarak, 1078'e bunu çıkardık ki* bu arazözler gerçekten çok iş görüyor. *Araç parkında olmayan su ikmal araçlarından 281 tane daha aldık. Yangınlara anında müdahale için 2 bin 270 tane ilk müdahale aracı aldık. İş makinesi parkımızı yüzde 125 büyüterek 682'ye çıkardık. Bunlar nelerdir? Loderlerdir. Bunlar nelerdir? İşte bütün karada yol açmak için kullandığımız greyderlerdir vesaire. Tabii yangınla mücadele hava filomuzu ise çok daha verimli hale getirdik.*

We increased the number of water-tenders, which have an important place in land-based firefighting, by 70 percent -look, this number is very important- *to 1078,* and those water-tenders are really functional. *We bought 281 additional water supply vehicles which were not present in the inventory. We bought 2 thousand 270 first response vehicles for immediate response to fires. We expanded our heavy machinery inventory by 125 percent to 682. What are those? Loaders. What are those? Graders that we use to open roads on land, et cetera. Surely we also made our air fleet for fire response much more efficient.*

(Interview #15, 11 August 2021)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan is seen answering a question about the government's capacity to fight forest fires during the summer of 2021. Specifically, Erdoğan talks about the recent purchases that are added to the inventory of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. An important portion of the factual content comes numbers of fire fighting equipment. Erdoğan lists the number of each type of equipment mostly to the last digit, as seen in line 2 with 1078, line 3 with 281, and line 6 with 682. This level of precision communicates a sense familiarity with the topic, thus establishing him as a hands-on manager, one that would know the details of the inventory of firefighting machinery.

This is followed by the lines 5 to 7, where Erdoğan expands upon the number of certain machinery, providing examples and explaining how the machinery is used. Him using the rather industry term to refer to these machines, like greyder (graders) or loder (loaders), is quite meaningful, since familiarity with this terminology requires some familiarity with the construction industry or municipal works. It is natural to assume that he became familiar with this terminology during his mayorship. This is also partially supported by him not elaborating on the other machines, like water-tenders, as much, possibly because they are not as relevant to municipal operations as the graders or loaders. Moreover, this level of familiarity lends Erdoğan credibility, as he is represented as having first-hand knowledge of the micro-level operations. This is relevant to the construction of an expertise-oriented self-image, where Erdoğan's knowledge of the machinery at the micro level (i.e. individual jobs in construction) can be transferred as the perception of knowledge of the institutional (construction projects) and macro levels (construction policy).

A significant portion of Erdoğan's factual statements is about Erdoğan's and AK Party's achievements, along with occasional mentions of the non-achievements

of present and past opposition governments. Among these, a special place is given to Erdoğan's achievements during his mayorship in 1994, which is frequently referred to in interviews, especially those before local elections. The following excerpt is demonstrative of Istanbul's distinctive role in Erdoğan's factual discourse about achievements.

Excerpt 5.5

Göreve geldiğimde İstanbul'un doğru dürüst doğalgazı yoktu ve 50 bin konutta doğalgaz vardı, bunun dışında İstanbul'da doğalgaz yoktu. Ve ben belediyeden ayrıldığım zaman 1 milyon 250 bin konuta biz o zaman doğalgaz getirmiştik ki onunla İstanbul'un havası temiz hale geldi ve şimdi zaten İstanbul'da doğalgazın neredeyse gitmediği-girmediği semt, ev hemen hemen kalmadı. Zira İGDAŞ, doğalgazda gerçekten İstanbul'da çok büyük bir belediyecilik hizmetini ortaya koydu. *İSKİ, biz göreve geldiğimizde maalesef İSKİ tankerleriyle bazı yerlere su taşınıyordu. Ama ben hep hatırlarım, o çocukların, annelerin ellerinde bidonlarla gidip o tankerlerden su aldığı dönemleri. Daha sonra ne oldu, su istasyonları kuruldu hatırlayın.*

When I came to power Istanbul did not have a proper [access to] natural gas and 50 thousand residences had natural gas, there was no natural gas aside from those. When I left the mayor[‘s office] we had brought natural gas to 1 million 250 thousand residences, with which Istanbul’s air got clearer and now there are almost no neighborhoods, no houses without natural gas in Istanbul. Because İGDAŞ exhibited a great municipal service in Istanbul in terms of natural gas. *İSKİ, when we came to power, unfortunately, water was being transported with İSKİ tankers to some areas. But I always remember the period when kids and mothers would go to those tankers with drums in their hands to purchase water. What happened then, water stations were set up, remember.*

(Interview #7, 24 May 2018)

The narrations of Erdoğan’s achievements are often pre-faced with an orientation to the timeline of his political power. For instance, lines 1, 2, and 6 have expressions regarding when Erdoğan came into power and when he left the office. These exemplify a discursive strategy in which Erdoğan talks about developments and his achievements in a timeline, following a formula of (1) mentioning failures of previous governments (2) establishing a timeline of when he or his party came to power (3) mentioning the achievements (4) mentioning the results and/or the situation after leaving office. While quite predictable, this framing forms the basis of Erdoğan’s dissemination of his achievements.

The inclusion of the previous governments and their non-achievements are not purely informative. Similar to excerpt 5.1, Erdoğan, by positioning himself in opposition to CHP, and by associating the past regimes with non-achievements, aims to discredit it. Through the discourse, CHP is understood to be responsible for past

governments and their failures, regardless of whether they were in power or not, as Erdoğan does not discredit CHP directly, but does so by discrediting past regimes in totality. The following excerpt also demonstrates a similar formula being used by Erdoğan.

Excerpt 5.6

Tabi biz bunu aldığımız anda adeta bir devrim ruhuyla aldık. *Mesela ben doğma-büyüme Kasımpaşalıyım, yani Haliç'in kenarında bir yerde doğdum. Ve haftanın Cumartesi günlerinde, Fener'de bizim okulumuz, İstanbul İmam Hatip Çarşamba'da, oradan Fener'e geçerim sandalla, Fener'den de yürüyerek yukarı çıkardık, ama koku tahammül edilir gibi değildi. . . Ama şimdi benim belediye başkanlığımın sonunda bir taraftan biz Haliç'te o kongre merkezinin temelini attık, benden sonra gelen arkadaşlar da sağ olsun onu tamamladılar ve bugün biz orada bakın bütün sanatsal etkinlikleri yapıyoruz, kongreleri yapıyoruz, çeşitli toplantıları yapıyoruz vesaire.*

Now once we got [the municipality], we got it with a revolutionary spirit. *For instance, I was born and raised in Kasımpaşa, which means I was born near the Haliç [Golden Horn]. And on saturdays, our school was in Fener, İstanbul İmam Hatip was in Çarşamba, I used to take the gondola to Fener, and we would walk uphill from there, but the smell was not tolerable. . . But now, at the end of my mayorship we started construction of the convention center at Haliç, and thanks to our friends who came after me, finished that and now we host all artistic events, hold conventions, hold various gatherings and so on.*

(Interview #7, 24 May 2018)

The formulations of Erdoğan's achievements, as seen in lines 5 to 7, are accompanied by narrations of the older state of affairs in lines 1 to 5, and contextualization towards the timeline of Erdoğan taking and leaving office in lines 1 and 6, followed by the current state of affairs in lines 7 and 8.

While the content of the utterance is clear about Erdoğan's and his party's involvement in the achievements, as well as his opponents' involvement in non-achievements, this notion is reinforced through the discursive organization. The juxtaposition of the old state of affairs with the new one, bridged by Erdoğan's and his party's coming to power and subsequent policies, creates a deeper communication of Erdoğan's achievements. These achievements are not presented as just policies or actions, but as elaborate events that create meaningful change. Furthermore, the change in the state of Haliç is not exclusively attributed to Erdoğan or his party, but also to the achievements themselves. This is seen by Erdoğan thanking and crediting the mayors who came after him in lines 6 and 7. By using the verbs *temelini attık* ("we started the construction") and *tamamladılar* ("they have completed"), Erdoğan communicates that he is the one who started, and further implies that he is the one who had the vision. Moreover, these verbs also suggest that the other mayors' achievements come from being the ones who follow and see the end of Erdoğan's vision. This constitutes Erdoğan as the visionary and the other actors receive credit based on how much they fulfill his vision.

Moreover, narrations of Erdoğan's early life and experiences in Istanbul take on a significant role in discourse. Erdoğan's personal connections to the city and even certain parts of it, are expressed with relatively lengthy stories about traversing the city scape. In other words, Erdoğan's narrations of lived experiences in Istanbul,

are not mere stories, but discursive devices with important roles in the construction of the discourse. This phenomenon is demonstrated in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 5.7

Evet, bir endüstri oluştu ve oralardan giderlerdi, işte parayla suyunu alırdı, bununla da kalmaz, küvetler o satın alınan su ile doldurulur, onunla da banyosunu yapardı, bu hale gelmiştik. Şimdi kalksın da bir CHP'li desin "hayır böyle bir şey yoktu." *Bunları yaşadık, İstanbul'da bunları bize yaşattınız.*

Yes, an industry had formed, and they would go from those places, they would buy their water with money, and they would go on, they would fill their bathtubs with the purchased water, have their baths with it, we were in that situation. Now let us see a CHP member say, "no there was no such thing". *We lived through these; you made us live through these in Istanbul.*

(Interview #7, 24 May 2018)

This excerpt is from the same interview, from an earlier turn, in which Erdoğan talks about the previous government's failure with Istanbul waterworks. Specifically, lines 1 and 2 express Erdoğan's experience with Istanbul's waterworks, or the problems thereof. However, these are not mere mentions of former policies or abolished practices, but they are told as memories, lived experiences of Erdoğan. This is communicated implicitly through the use of past aorist, *giderlerdi*, (they would go) which expresses a first-person, emotion-loaded viewpoint as opposed to second-hand reporting*, giderlermiş* or *gidiyorlarmış*, (*they would go,* and *they were going* in reported speech) and a neutral reporting of past *gidiyorlardı* (they were going). Lines 3 and 4 add up to this notion by explicitly stating the reality of the past

experiences and targeting the opposition CHP as the cause of it. This targeting has an especially aggressive tone via the phrase *şimdi kalksın da* (now let us see a), that indicates a challenge. This challenge and the targeting of CHP is interesting, as it relates to the reduction of the past governments to the present-day CHP, a theme that was discussed earlier.

The use of the past aorist is also akin to an expression of nostalgia, as it expresses a distinction between not only municipal organization or way of managing a city, but the world as a whole. Using first-person reporting, Erdoğan deploys a sense of relatability, presenting himself as humble, i.e. as a person who experienced Istanbul when it was not managed properly, as an everyday citizen, not as a distinct class of person who would not engage in the city separate from people. The following excerpt is from the continuation of Erdoğan's turn.

Excerpt 5.8

1 Ama biz [iktidara] geldik, bir yılda bir defa bu işi ortadan kaldırdık. *Düşünün,*
2 *110 kilometre biz Istranca Dağlarından, 180 kilometre de Melen'den*
3 *İstanbul'a su getirdik. Ve bu getirdiğimiz suyla birlikte İstanbul susuzluktan*
4 *kurtuldu ve suyuna kavuştu, 2040'a kadar da şu anda İstanbul'un ciddi*
5 *manada bir su sıkıntısı olmayacak.*

1 But we came [to power], we removed this issue once in a year. *Think about it,*
2 *we brought water to Istanbul, 110 kilometers from Istranca Mountains, 180*
3 *kilometers from Melen. And with this water that we have brought, Istanbul*
4 *has been liberated from the drought and got access to its water. As of right*
5 *now, Istanbul will not have a serious water problem until 2040.*

(Interview #7, 24 May 2018)

In this excerpt, the criticism of the CHP local governments from the previous excerpt is followed by the reporting of Erdoğan's own achievements in the same domain. Here, factual claims, supported by numerical values in lines 1 and 2. The numerical values this time are the lengths of the pipelines. Interestingly, while the length of a pipeline is still relevant, more technical specifications like the discharge, or the cost of the investment may still be preferred in normal conversation. The choice of the length as a metric can be understood to be meaningful beyond being a numerical value, as it is much more similar to other metrics, like lengths of roads, which are much more prevalent in Erdoğan's political communication, therefore acting as reference points for the audience. The excerpt also demonstrates Erdoğan's use of the narrative as a frame for talking about his achievements. The events, past, present and future, are located around the milestone of Erdoğan's coming to power. This framing is rather supportive of Erdoğan's rhetoric, as it creates a discursive discontinuity between the governments that came before him. This discontinuity allows Erdoğan to take credit, while diminishing the past government's image. Moreover, this discontinuity allows Erdoğan to reduce the past governments as only failures, and his government as the only successful one, since the past achievements or efforts are simply not included in this narrative frame.

Excerpt 5.9

1 Şimdi Banu Hanım, öncelikle seçim sürecinde olsak da deprem bizim
2 öncelikli gündemimiz olmaya devam ediyor. Deprem bölgesindeki
3 vatandaşlarımızın ihtiyaçlarını karşılamaya, şehirlerimizi ayağa kaldırmaya
4 devam ediyoruz. *142 bin konut ve köy evinin inşa sürecini başlattık, 59 binin*
5 *de temelini attık. Deprem bölgesinde 650 bin yeni konut yapacağız. Köy*

evlerinde zaten teslimatlar başladı, bunun bir kısmını ben gittim teslimatını Devlet Beyle beraber yaptım. Bunun 319 binini de 1 yıl içinde inşallah tamamlayacağız dedik. En geç Ekim ayıyla birlikte yüzlerce, binlerce konutun teslimine de başlamayı planlıyoruz. Nasıl inşaatlar gün-gün başladıysa, teslimler de gün-gün gerçekleşecek. *En geç Ekim ayıyla birlikte yüzlerce, belki de binlerce bu noktada konut teslimini yapacağız.* TOKİ'nin birikimi ve ülkemiz inşaat sektörünün gücü bunu sağlamaya yeterlidir.

Now, Ms. Banu, while we are in the process of an election firstly, the earthquake goes on as our priority agenda item. We continue to provide for the needs of our citizens in the earthquake area, and lifting up our cities. *We have started the construction process of 142 thousand residences and town houses; we laid the foundation for 52 thousand as well. We will build 650 thousand new residences in the earthquake areas. The deliveries have already begun with the town houses, I went there and delivered some of those with Mr. Devlet [Bahçeli]. We said that we will finish 319 thousand of these in one year, inshallah. We are planning to start delivering hundreds, thousands of residences at the latest at October.* Just as the constructions began day-by-day, the deliveries will happen day-by-day as well. *Latest with October we will deliver hundreds, maybe even thousands of residences at this point.* The potential of TOKİ and strength of our country's construction sector is enough to achieve this.

(Interview #8, 3 February 2019)

As seen in this excerpt, Erdoğan often takes credit for achievements of the government, through the use of first-person plural for most of the achievements, and his own activity through the use of first-person singular with events that has his own

direct involvement. Especially, the utterance in lines 2 and 3, *şehirlerimizi ayağa kaldırmaya devam ediyoruz*,(*we continue ... lifting up our cities*) communicates credit to Erdoğan for an event that is indirectly, consequently related to his activities. This shift can be understood in two ways. Firstly, the first excerpt is from an interview before the 2019 local elections, in which AK Party lost the mayorship of Istanbul, while the second excerpt comes from an interview before the 2023 general and presidential elections. Therefore, the shift can be chronological and can be understood as part of a broader shift towards self-centrism and aggressiveness in political communication. The second possibility is that, as the interviewers and possible audience are mostly located in Istanbul, Erdoğan may be reluctant to impose on the Istanbul brand. On the other hand, he may be more comfortable imposing upon other cities, possibly due to their smaller perceived personal significance and brand value. Alternatively, a combination of both of these factors may contribute to emergent discourse.

This excerpt also serves to exemplify Erdoğan's reliance on numbers as semiotic and rhetorical resources. Lines 2, 3, and 5 offer numerical values with a delicate specificity. In other words, neither these numbers are uttered to the last digit nor rounded up to an easily memorized number. This delicate specificity, lying on the sweet spot between a half-remembered figure and a number that is read directly from a teleprompter, is expressive of Erdoğan's self-presentation as a hands-on leader. This level of detail communicates direct involvement from Erdoğan's part, with sufficient authenticity, as too much detail and too little detail would compromise this sense of involvement and authenticity.

Excerpt 5.10

Yapım sürecine başladığımız konut ve köy evi sayısı bugün itibariyle 100 bine ulaştı. Toplamda da 650 bin konut ve köy evi inşa edeceğiz. Bunların 319 binini de inşallah 1 yıl içinde tamamlayıp vatandaşlarımıza teslim edeceğiz. Tabii bir kısmı inşallah bayrama kadar bu köy evlerinden tamamlanıp onları teslim etme durumuna geleceğiz. Devletimiz hamdolsun böylesine büyük bir felaketin ardından 60 gün içerisinde bu konutları teslim eder noktaya gelme tezini Van'da ispat etti, Bingöl'de ispat etti, İzmir'de ispat etti, bunun yanında Kütahya'da ispat etti, Malatya'da, Elazığ'da, oralardaki afetlerde ispat etti. Antalya, Manavgat, Muğla, buralardaki afetlerde ispat etti, aynı şekilde Karadeniz'de ispat etti. Yani biz bunları ispat etmiş bir iktidarız, biz söz verdiysek, bunu yaparız. Deprem bölgesinde de evi yıkılan vatandaşlarım bize güvensinler, inansınlar, her birini en kısa zamanda sağlam, dayanıklı konutlara yerleştireceğiz.

The number of residences and town houses that we have started the construction of has reached 100 thousand as of today. In total we will build 650 thousand residences and town houses. We will finish and deliver 319 thousand of these to our citizens within a year, inshallah. Of course, until Eid we will be able to deliver [some] of these completed town houses. Our state, thankfully [to God], has proved the thesis of being able to finish residences after such a massive disaster, in Van, proved it in Bingöl, proved it in İzmir, besides that in Kütahya, in Malatya, in Elazığ, in disasters that happened there. It proved that in Antalya, Manavgat, Muğla, disasters that happened here, same with the Black Sea. In other words, we are a government that has proved these, if we promise, we do it. Our citizens who had their homes

12 destroyed in the earthquake area shall trust us, believe us, we will place them
13 in stable, sound residences as soon as possible.

(Interview #1, 12 April 2023)

As seen with this excerpt, Erdoğan constructs promises through the use of "we" language, making the promise, and taking the credit in advance, for the events of the future. These promises, notably, are followed by the past achievements and further commentary on how Erdoğan and AK Party keep their promises. It is thus seen that achievements, besides being meaningful themselves, are collocated with promises of the future as devices of the discourse. This collocation can be understood in two ways: firstly, as a rhetorical connection, through which Erdoğan establishes a connection of evidentiality between the past and the future, thus using past achievements as proof of their future potential. Secondly, it may be understood as a way of reducing the weight of the imposition of the promise. By referring to the past achievements, Erdoğan may communicate that the promise is not ungrounded or novel, but it is natural and expected, therefore reducing the novelty factor on the new promise.

The second interpretation is further evidenced by the use of *inşallah* in line 3 (inshallah – meaning "if God allows it") and *hamdolsun* (thankfully [to God]) in line 5 as signals for reducing the weight in a similar fashion. Besides signaling the fact that Erdoğan is a practicing Muslim and is an evocation of his Islamic and conservative repertoire, these expressions can be understood as ways of reducing Erdoğan's involvement and imposition in these promises and achievements. *İnşallah* appears to signal a limited margin of error with the promise, attributed to God, or to unforeseen factors. Similarly, *hamdolsun*, appears to take on the duty of limiting human involvement, including Erdoğan, in the achievement of the state. While it is

still understood that it the matter is an achievement of Erdoğan, by attributing it to God's involvement, Erdoğan presents the achievement as a work of God. This possibly aims to strengthen Erdoğan's argumentation, by positioning God's involvement in favor of his projects.

Furthermore, Erdoğan, in lines 5 to 8, lists many cities and areas where he argues that quick rebuilding was achieved. These cities include cities that were hit by earthquakes in the past, but also areas that experienced things like flooding and forest fires. The lengthy list, while the individual elements are not as meaningful, communicates by its length. Erdoğan deploys past achievements, cases where his success can be argued for, whether directly comparable or not, as collateral for his future plans. Moreover, the length of the list, to an extent, diminishes the task ahead of Erdoğan, which are transformed from massive rebuilding projects to just additions to the list.

Excerpt 5.11

Ve benim bir sevdam vardı, aşkım vardı. Diyordum ki, "Biz ne zaman şehir hastanelerini büyükşehirlerden başlamak üzere yapacağız*?" İşte şimdi bunlardan iki tanesini bitirdik; birisi Yozgat'ta, birisi de Mersin'de. Mesela şimdi Mersin'deki hastane tabii Yozgat'a göre çok daha büyük olduğu için, yani 1300 yataklı bir hastane yapmışsınız* ve muhteşem bir hastane. Benim Mersin'de açılışını yaptığımız gün ziyarete gittiğimde, bakıyorsunuz köyden gelmiş olan orada hanım teyzelerimiz, kardeşlerimiz o hastanedeki lüksü görünce, tabii onlar hep şok oldular. Nasıl dualar ediyorlar, nasıl dualar ediyorlar. Bu bizim hakkımız değil miydi, yıllar yılı niçin bunlar yapılmadı acaba? Şimdi bunlar süratle devam edecek. *Önümüzde açacağımız birçok bu*

tür şehir hastanelerimiz var. İlk etapta 30 büyükşehirde bu hastanelerimizi kuracağız.

And I had a desire, a passion. I used to say, "when will we build the city hospitals, starting from the major cities*?" Now we have finished two of those, one in Yozgat, one in Mersin. For instance, the hospital in Mersin is much bigger compared to Yozgat, you have built a hospital with 1300 beds,* and it is a wonderful hospital. When I visited the day we did the opening in Mersin, you see when the older ladies and sisters saw that luxury, of course they were completely shocked. They were praying immensely. Did we not deserve this, why weren't these built over the years? Now these will continue with speed. *We have plenty of city hospitals of this kind that we will open ahead of us. In the first step we will build these hospitals in 30 metro cities.*

(Interview #6, 8 March 2017)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan communicates his plans and promises for building public-private joint hospitals, called city hospitals. Notably, these promises are made in an interesting context. The promise itself is pre-faced with an expression of desire in lines 1 and 2, reporting of previous achievements from lines 2 to 5, and with narrations of encounters with people from lines 5 to 8. The expressions of desire as ideations can have various meanings in discourse, and these are explored more in detail in the following chapter. In this context, we can understand these expressive statements as a means of personalizing the promise and the discourse as a whole by expressing personal investment. The expression of achievements, as seen with previous examples, is a discursive and rhetorical strategy that establishes the connection between past and the future, deploying the past as evidence for future potential. These achievements are further reinforced by narrations of Erdoğan's

experience with the public, reporting of their thankfulness and their contempt for the previous government who did not achieve what Erdoğan and AK Party did. The micro narrations and the reportings of the people, besides serving as evidence of Erdoğan's achievements, is also important in establishing him as connected to the people, essentially self-presenting as the man-of-the-people. Moreover, as criticisms (like in lines 5 to 8) are voiced as quotes from the people, not spoken as direct words of Erdoğan, these utterances are partially communicated to be somewhat distant from Erdoğan himself.

5.3 International politics

Besides talking about achievements, such as construction and infrastructure, Erdoğan also gives prominence to his interactions with international politics and diplomacy. His construction of the discourse follows a specific style that is both unique to him but is also extensions of the colloquial and the professional languages that are used in this domain. The following excerpt exemplifies some of these stylistic choices.

Excerpt 5.12

Erdoğan: *Dünyadan tabii birileri arıyor, özellikle 'darbeye karşı verdiğimiz bu mücadeleden dolayı sizi kutlarız' diyorlar, fakat şu ana kadar ülkeme gelip de birkaç istisnanın dışında,* işte örneğin tabii ilk arayanlar arasında özellikle Katar'ı zikretmem gerekir.

Melih Altınok: İlk onlar aradı, Katar.

Erdoğan: *Evet, Katar Emiri bir kere de aramadı, defaatle aradı, beni aradı, Enerji ve Tabii Kaynaklar Bakanımızı sürekli aradı, "gelişmeler ne durumdadır ve her an yanınızdayız, üzerimize ne düşüyorsa biz varız"*

diyerek. Ve bugün de Dışişleri Bakanını gönderdi, o bazı mesajlarla beraber o da geldi, kendileriyle bir görüşme yaptık. Ha başka ülkelerle olmadı mı? Mesela hemen daha yine ikinci gün Rusya, Sayın Putin aradı, onunla görüşmemiz oldu. Daha sonra Amerika aradı, onlarla görüşmemiz oldu. Avrupa ülkelerinden yine bazı liderler aradı. Fakat arayanlar şunu söylediler: "Yani darbeye karşı verdiğiniz bu mücadeleden dolayı kutlarız"

Erdoğan: *Of course some were calling from around the world, especially saying "we congratulate you for our struggle against the coup", however none came to my country aside from a few exceptions, for instance of course I must utter Qatar especially among those called first.*

Melih Altınok*: They called first, Qatar.*

Erdoğan: *Yes, the Qatar Emir did not only call once, but he also called repeatedly, called me, he constantly called our Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, asking "what is the situation in developments" and saying, "we are always with you, we are there for our part". And today he sent his Minister of Foreign Affairs, he came with some messages, we had a meeting with them. Did this not happen with other countries? For instance, the second day [after the coup attempt], Russia, dear Putin called, we had a meeting with him. Later America called; we had a meeting with them. Some leaders from European countries, again, called. But those who called said this: "We congratulate you for your struggle against coup."*

(Interview #4, 30 July 2016)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan is seen responding to a question about world leaders' reactions to the July 15 coup attempt. Erdoğan begins his utterance by talking about his contact with the Emir of Qatar. By positioning the Qatar Emir as the subject in

the sentence in line 7, Erdoğan assigns agency to the Qatar Emir as the person and as the correspondence in diplomatic negotiations. Similarly, in continuation, Erdoğan puts Putin in subject position, thus assigning agency to Putin as a person.

Later on, however, in line 13, Erdoğan does not specify his correspondence with America, stating that "America called" with no explicit acknowledgment of a person or an office. While possible agents here are limited (i.e. either the president, secretary of state, or ambassador) and the details regarding the correspondence are not as relevant to the rest of the discourse, the style of this statement is interesting.

While metonymic uses like this are not uncommon especially in colloquial and even mediatized political discourse, these kinds of metonymy are not part of a professional, diplomatic discourse that is shaped by highly formal social practices. In other words, Erdoğan's style in describing the correspondence with America is fitting for daily conversations or mediatized discourses even, but not for the non-mediatized situations involving actual diplomatic work, situations with which Erdoğan also engages.

Erdoğan, therefore, deploys a rather colloquial discursive style especially when talking about international correspondence. The following excerpt further demonstrates the use of informal and colloquial styles in Erdoğan's discourse on international relations.

Excerpt 5.13

1 Pelin Çift: Amerika deyince insanın hemen aklına Kudüs meselesi geliyor.
2 Sayın Cumhurbaşkanının da çok büyük bir derdi, davası olduğunu biliyoruz
3 Kudüs'ün. Amerika çok ciddi bir provokasyona imza attı, yani elçiliğini
4 Kudüs'e taşıyarak ve sonrasında İsrail'in de zaten Gazze'de yaptığı katliamı

biliyoruz. Bugün de o kadar çirkin bir fotoğraf var ki, Amerikan Büyükelçisi duruyor, ona bir yardım kuruluşu Büyükelçiye fotoğraf hediye etmiş. Fotoğrafta photoshop var, Mescid-i Aksa'da onun yerine bir Süleyman mabedi dikilmiş. Böyle ikisinin de gülümseyen o fotoğrafla bir karesi, böyle enteresan bir görüntü. Peki, bu işin sonu nereye gidecek, yani İsrail ve Amerika nereye götürecek işi, siz ne öngörüyorsunuz, ne olacak?

Erdoğan: Şu anda Amerika ile İsrail'in almış olduğu bu karar bir defa kıymeti harbiyesi olmayan bir karardır. Amerika bir defa itibarını tamamen adeta sıfırlamıştır. *Nitekim Birleşmiş Milletler'de bizim Yemen'le birlikte attığımız adımda biliyorsunuz yapılan oylama neticesinde o zaman 128 ülke hayır dedi. Dokuz tane adını sanını duymadığım ki ikisi zaten Amerika ile İsrail'di,* diğerleri de herhalde kasaba devleti gibi bir şeydi, *onlar onların yanında yer aldı*.

Pelin Çift: When we say America one remembers the issue of Jerusalem. We know that Jerusalem is also a major issue, a major cause of the Dear President. America has signed a very serious provocation, by moving its embassy to Jerusalem, and then we also know of the massacre that Israel is committing in Gaza. Today there is such an ugly photograph, American Ambassador is standing, a charity has gifted the Ambassador a photograph. The photograph is photoshopped, instead of Masjid-al-Aqsa a temple of Solomon has been placed there. The two have a shot with that photograph, smiling, such an interesting sight. So, what is the end point here, where will Israel and America take this issue to, what do you foresee, what will happen?

Erdoğan: Now, the decision by American and Israel is firstly a decision without strategic value. America has now nullified its reputation. *Thus, with*

13 *the step we took with Yemen in the United Nations, 128 countries said no as a*
14 *result of the vote as you know. Nine [countries] that I had not heard the*
15 *names or the fames of before, two of which were America and Israel,* others
16 were probably things like village-states, they stood beside them.

(Interview #7, 24 May 2018)

While mentioning the countries that supported the UN vote, Erdoğan uses the term *adını sanını duymadığım* (*I had not heard the names or the fames of before*) to refer to the countries that opposed the UN resolution, which were mainly countries from Caribbean and Pacific. This use, primarily serving as a way to delegitimize and diminish the significance of these countries in the context of the UN resolution, also demonstrates an interesting stylistic choice by Erdoğan. It is very likely that Erdoğan is exaggerating his non-familiarity with these UN member states, knowing that he participates in multiple global events every year including the UN. Therefore, this style is deployed to communicate directly with the audience.

A style that is this colloquial being used by an agent in global diplomacy is not plausible, but this style is rather prevalent in the daily language of the audience. Therefore, this expression can be understood as a way of reflecting the people's language, thus reflecting people's perceptions, in this case of smaller nations in the Pacific and Caribbean, while such perceptions are possibly not actually held by Erdoğan himself.

This is carried to the next level by the expression *kasaba devleti* (*village-state*) in line 16. Similarly, this expression also has the rhetorical purpose of delegitimizing, and the discursive goal of reflecting the audience. This expression is rather face-threatening for a diplomatic, professional language. The explicit colloquiality of this statement essentially communicates Erdoğan to be fluent with

the language of the people. Moreover, the ability to introduce unconventional discourses to a heavily professional and formalized domain is, in essence, an exercise of power, both in the interaction itself and the broader reach of the interview.

The following excerpt serves to further demonstrate Erdoğan's discourse in international affairs, highlighting the features of personification and the deployment of similarly unconventional forms.

Excerpt 5.14

Şimdi ona geleceğim. Bizim şu iç terör olayında bu mücadelede İHA'lar ve SİHA'lar bizim çok büyük işimizi gördü. İHA'larla koordinatlar, F15'lerle de F16'larla da oraları vuruşlar. Aynı şekilde SİHA'larla zaten o hem görüyor hem vuruyor, acayip bir şey onlar. *Bize İsrail, Amerika bunları vermedi. İsrail bize 10 tane verdi, ondan sonra onların tamir bakımı, bilmem neyi bize can çekiştirdiler. Ama şimdi onların o derdinden kurtulduk.*

Now I will come to that. In regard to our domestic terror issue, UAVs and Armed UAVs really helped us out in this struggle. Getting the coordinates with UAVs and hits with F15s, F16s. Similarly, Armed UAVs, they see and hit, they are weird things. *Israel, America did not give those to us. Israel gave use 10, and they made us suffer with the repairs, maintenance and so on. But now we are free from their nuisance*.

(Interview #7, 24 May 2018)

An important feature of the discourse is the positioning of Israel and America in the subject positions and to an extent, personification thereof. In line 4, these two countries are presented as agents, similar to people. While this use is not unseen the discourse of international politics, it is still worth noting that the agents are presented

as the whole nation, without any specific agent (i.e. the Israeli Parliament or the American Presidency etc.). However, the personification, beyond the accepted limits of the political discourse, is seen in lines 5 to 6, where Erdoğan uses *bize can çekiştirdiler* (*they made us suffer*) in reference to the UAVs given by Israel. Here, the personification is not seen in association with a political or diplomatic event, but it is used with an exaggerated statement on their reliability. These allow Erdoğan, to an extent, to blur the distinction between governing bodies and the countries themselves, and further solidify the complex networks of governments and agents under the label of their respective countries.

Put simply, this use can be understood as a strategy of simplification, which may have several purposes. Firstly, it can be a tool for cognitive simplification, thus making it easier for Erdoğan to memorize the content of his utterance. Secondly, it can be used as a discursive strategy, thus making an argument for the non-distinction between countries and their governing bodies. Thirdly, this may be an implicit or intentional way of communicating a Turkey-centered perspective to world politics, thereby presenting Turkey as a unified agent in international relations, similar to the other countries. I believe that each of these three factors, to an extent, have a role in the production of discourse the way it does.

Finally, while it is part of an expressive statement evaluating the performance of the UAVs, the use of the expression *acayip bir şey* (*weird things*) in line 4 is an interesting switch to a colloquial language. This switch I believe represents his continued contact with the language of the people, where he deploys colloquial forms as part of his repertoire in panel interviews. The ability to switch between various forms, in a way that would not be inappropriate for any other figure, is a core tenet of Erdoğan's construction of power in these interviews.

Erdoğan's discursive strategies in the context of discourse related to international politics are further demonstrated in the following excerpt, where Erdoğan refers to the personal aspects of international diplomacy.

Excerpt 5.15

Bildiğiniz gibi dörtlü zirveyi burada yaptık, yani Sayın Putin, Merkel ve Macron'la olan dörtlü zirvemiz. Suriye'ye yönelik olan o zirveyi şu anda bulunduğumuz konumda onlarla bir araya geldik. Tabii dışarıda boğaza yönelik ayrıca fotoğraf çekimlerimiz falan olmuştu; ama burada da çok kararlı bir müzakereyi gerçekleştirdik. Malum Birleşmiş Milletler'den De Mistura'nın da katılmış olduğu o zirvede biz bütün belirlediğimiz başlıkları onunla paylaştık ve o süreç o yönüyle de devam ediyor.

As you know we held the summit of four here, our summit of four with dear Putin, Merkel, and Macron. In that summit, which was about Syria, we came together in the location that we are at right now. Of course, we also had photoshoots and stuff outside towards the Bosphorus, but we also held a very decisive negotiation here. In that summit in which also De Mistura from United Nations had attended as you know, we shared all of our headlines with him, and that process also goes in that way.

(Interview #8, 3 February 2019)

It is worth noting that Erdoğan, in line 4, mentions photoshoots that took place during the diplomatic negotiations. This reference emphasizes the photoshoots as an important event that happened alongside another, slightly more important event; instead of being just a component of the important event. This is demonstrative of Erdoğan's approach to these types of events, in which the entirety

of the event -diplomatic decisions, personal contact, and social activities- are weighted similarly, and a special emphasis is given to the personal and social side of diplomatic relations. This is especially evidenced by Erdoğan's use of last names for the world leaders (who are rather popular), diplomats, and bureaucrats (who are not often as known) in lines 1, 2, 5, and 6. In Erdoğan's discourse, people's titles and sometimes even their affiliations take a backseat to their names. While the world leaders mentioned in lines 1 and 2 are familiar to the most members of the audience, Erdoğan also settles with the last name of an UN diplomat, only mentioning that that person is *from the United Nations* (*Birleşmiş Milletler'den*).

This is demonstrative of Erdoğan's approach to international politics, where these personal relationships and social activities are the primary content of the diplomatic formalities. This, while possibly also reflecting Erdoğan's actual beliefs towards international politics, is also an exercise in power, where Erdoğan holds first-hand accounts as to the less known sides of international diplomacy. Moreover, these accounts are exclusively to him firstly by the actual exclusivity of these events and secondly through this discourse being exclusive to him in these interviews. In other words, only Erdoğan is able to frame international politics as social events because, firstly it partially is a social event to him, and secondly, only he would be able to talk about, or at least give prominence to the social side of international politics.

Erdoğan's strategies in the discourse of international politics are further demonstrated in the following, where Erdoğan this time moves outside of the domain of international diplomatic formalities to discuss the issue of international aid.

Excerpt 5.16

Yani her şeyden önce başta Rusya, Azerbaycan, İran, daha sonraki safhada Avrupa Birliği'nden İspanya, onlar da desteklerini verdiler ve bu süreç içerisinde yine aynı şekilde yangın sürecinde onlarca ülkeden destekler geldi, örneğin Ukrayna sağ olsun desteğini verdi. Ayrıca, Ukrayna tabii 3 tane uçak gönderirken, 4 tane helikopter ile devreye girdi. Kazakistan, Gürcistan, buralardan destekler geldi. Moldova, Belarus, Polonya, Avusturya, Fransa, onlar da birer helikopter gönderdiler bu süreç içerisinde. . .Ve yangın sürecinde onlarca ülkeden ve uluslararası kuruluştan geçmiş olsun dilekleri ve dayanışma mesajlarını aldık. Ve ben de şahsım, milletim adına bu ülkelere en kalbi duygularla selam, sevgi, saygılarımı gönderiyorum**.**

First of all, Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, then in the later stages Spain from the European Union, they gave their support too and, in this process, similarly, support arrived from tens of countries during the fires, for example Ukraine, thankfully, gave its support. Besides, of course Ukraine, while sending 3 planes, got engaged with 4 helicopters. Kazakhstan, Georgia, support arrived from these. Moldova, Belarus, Poland, Austria, France, they too sent one helicopter each in this process. . . And throughout the fires we received condolences and support messages from tens of countries and international organizations. And I send my greetings, in my own name and in the name of my nation, love, respect to these countries with the most passionate feelings.

(Interview #15, 11 August 2021)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan is, once again, seen personifying the countries as homogenous entities. In this instance, Erdoğan deploys this discursive strategy with a more positive connotation and a tone of thankfulness, which is expressed explicitly

with the expressive statements in lines 9 and 10. All of the countries mentioned in lines 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 are in subject position, and the only the name of the country itself, with no added entity, government, or agent specifier, is present in these sentences.

It is seen here that, Erdoğan's personification is not only a tool of delegitimizing and disempowering, but it is representative of a broader worldview that all countries, including Turkey and others, are homogenous entities in the world diplomatic stage. These are not presented as the actions of the Russian government, Azerbaijani military, or the Spanish ministries, but as actions of the countries as a whole.

Another important feature seen in this excerpt is Erdoğan's construction of a balanced diplomatic strategy through discourse. When Erdoğan starts listing countries in line 1, he lists three countries which can be considered more on the eastern bloc. Then, when he mentions Spain, he does not merely mention the country but inserts the fact that Spain is in the European Union in line 2. This brings an added emphasis to the fact that Spain is in the European Union. This indicates that it is not mentioned purely on its own merits, but it is listed as the representative of the European Union. Through this acknowledgement, Erdoğan implicitly recognizes that the countries he mentioned before Spain were in a different camp than the European Union. Moreover, by mentioning the European Union in that context, Erdoğan offers credit to the European Union, which is understood as a way of counter balancing Erdoğan's credit to the eastern bloc nations listed in the previous line.

5.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the formulations of factual statements, through the use of discourse strategies, semiotic resources, and rhetorical devices, were described and analyzed. Understanding the discourse analysis as the interaction between communication and social action, the analysis highlights three important actions that are performed through the factual statements in Erdoğan's panel interviews.

Firstly, the overview of Erdoğan's discourse of achievements and international politics reveal that these factual statements essentially act as currency. Achievements allow him to deploy his and his party's actions, and his opponents' lack thereof, as support for his ideations and his broader image. His discourse in international politics essentially serve to present Erdoğan as having access to exclusive social contexts and construct his power both through the exclusivity of the knowledge itself and the exclusivity of the discourse symbolic of it.

Secondly, even though it is very strongly communicated, through the semiotics and the organization of the discourse that Erdoğan is not an everyday citizen but the most powerful person in the country, he still maintains his connections to both his past as an everyday citizen and common people that exist at the present. Through narrations, voicings, reportings he frequently evokes his past life before his political career, which establishes him as a relatable and humble figure. Moreover, such connections to the common people distinguish him in an interview with journalists, who are exclusively media professionals – who are themselves disconnected from the common people through institutional and ideological forces. The broader context, as a result, leads to Erdoğan being the most connected with the common folk on camera. This presents Erdoğan as the man-of-the-people, not only

when compared to other politicians or public figures, but also when compared to the very people who interview him.

Last, but definitely not least, is the semiosis of achievements, and all of the discourses being associated with them, into discursive and rhetorical devices through Erdoğan's panel interviews. The achievements are transformed from subjects of public communication to essentially objects of political communication. The interviews, a genre of discourse that has the general expectation of challenge and criticism, are platforms through which Erdoğan mostly talks about his and his party's achievements and criticizes non-achievements of his opposition. Achievements are not talked about as a matter of public information, but as arguments for the power and potential of Erdoğan and his party. Simply put, achievements, openings, completed projects are currencies, that Erdoğan presents as collateral to turn in investors, which is the audience. Besides hinting at the elections and potential voters, the collateral also serves to intimidate the opposition and critiques and empower his supporters.

Furthermore, besides the transformations themselves, the discursive elements accompanying the factual statements are also in interaction with the content of his statements. While expectedly serving as evidence for Erdoğan's achievements, the accompanying elements also take on different roles. Narrations and quotes also serve to establish Erdoğan as a person connected with the people; the numerical values simultaneously quantify the achievement itself and present Erdoğan as a hands-on, authentic leader. Therefore, there are observable transformations in all levels: discursive elements and strategies are transformed as supporters of Erdoğan's image and his achievements; the achievements themselves are transformed from matters of public information to the backbone of the discourse in the interviews; and interviews

are transformed, in ways more than one, to a medium through which Erdoğan's achievements, arguments, and so on, are communicated uninterruptedly.

In conclusion, even in the context of a transformed interview format, distinct from the conventional interview, Erdoğan uses a variety of discursive strategies when navigating these political discourses. His deployment of these strategies is not merely rhetorical, but also transformative of the discourse and the genre as a whole, presumably affecting the broader political discourse strategically. This level of depth and variety is, at the very least, clearly pointing towards Erdoğan not being just a politician who happens to be positioned in an interview under favorable conditions, but also a strategist who is choosing the battles under all circumstances.

CHAPTER 6

CONSTRUCTION OF THE EXPRESSIVE DISCOURSE

6.1 Introduction

Expressive statements are an essential part of Erdoğan's discourse in panel interviews. They are, fundamentally, interpretations, comments, arguments, and categorizations of the self and the other, often but not always accompanying factual statements. The fact is, the construction of Erdoğan's discourse relies not on individual facts or ideations, but an interplay between these two. Therefore, besides focusing on the individual expressive statements, a special emphasis is given to the synergy between factual and expressive statements as well.

This chapter is divided into four sections, each representing one major expressive subtheme found in Erdoğan's discourse in panel interviews. Firstly, how Erdoğan constructs the discourse regarding his achievements, his services, and his self-representation as an expert is explored. This is followed up by an overview of the discursive construction of Erdoğan's commitment and celebration of democracy, and his stance against anti-democratic practices. The chapter then continues to analyze how Erdoğan constructs himself as a Muslim, and how the Islamism is deployed as a resource in Erdoğan's discourse. After a look into Ottomanistic themes in Erdoğan's discourse, the findings are summarized and discussed briefly.

6.2 Achievements, service, and expertise

The most prominent discourse constructed by Erdoğan in the panel interviews is related to his achievements, services, and expertise, and by extension, lack of these qualities in his opposition. While achievements are primarily a factual matter,

Erdoğan's discourse also features plenty of ideation related to these achievements, often connecting them to the broader discourses of service and expertise. These ideations can exist in a variety of levels, and they may be rather implicit in associating the achievements with Erdoğan directly. Excerpt 6.1 demonstrates such an instance:

Excerpt 6.1

Bu şu anda da böyle, yani her şeyi serbest bıraktık diye, bu iş bitti anlamına gelmez. Yani Allah göstermesin, şu anda işte ben bugünün rakamlarını da buraya gelirken aldım, şimdi bugünün rakamlarına baktığımız zaman; şimdi vaka düştü, tamam. Nereye? 989'a vaka şu anda düşmüş vaziyette. Vefat 18'e kadar inmişti biliyorsunuz, bu defa 19, *fena sayılmaz.* Yoğun bakımda 625, *tabii biz artık yoğun bakımda da 625'i görmek istemiyoruz, yani burası da artık daha da aşağı insin istiyoruz.* Ama entübe 261, *burayı da daha da aşağıda görmek istiyoruz;* temennimiz, arzumuz bu. *Bugün iyileşenlerin sayısı güzel,* 3411, *yani bu olumlu bir sinyal. Tabii test bayağı yüksek*, 39.361 test var. *Bütün bunlarla beraber tabii ben daha çok vefata da bakıyorum. Yani vefatın ne kadar sıfırlamaya doğru gidersek, sıfırlarsak, o zaman çok daha tabii mutlu olacağız. Ama gelişmeler bu noktada fena değil.*

This is the situation now too, just because we have lifted restrictions does not mean this job is done. May Allah not show us, I have just got today's numbers on the way here, now when you look at today's numbers, now the cases have fallen, okay. To where? The cases have fallen down to 989. Death [count] was as low as 18 as you know, this time 19, *not bad*. 625 in intensive care, *of course we do not want to see 625 in intensive care as well*, I mean we want to

see this number fall down even lower. But intubated [patients] are at 261, *we want to see this one even lower too*; *that is our wish, our desire. Today's recovered number is beautiful,* 3411, *this is a positive signal. Surely test counts are pretty high,* there are 39361 tests. *With all that of course I am looking more at the death count. The closer we get that to zero, if we get it to zero, then surely we will be much happier. But developments are not bad at this point.*

(Interview #11, 8 June 2020)

This excerpt is taken from an interview with Erdoğan during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Erdoğan here answers a question about lifting of the restrictions by reflecting upon that day's infection, recovery, and fatality rates. While Erdoğan is tasked primarily with a very transactional role, that is the declaration of the day's statistics, it is noticeable that he engages in a very expressive turn. In fact, every factual statement by Erdoğan is accompanied by a much longer expressive statement. Erdoğan starts his turn with an expressive statement, a statement of policy for the future. After that sentence, he lists several facts regarding the new cases and the death rate for two sentences. Following the revelations of the day's death count, Erdoğan inserts the first comment, very briefly tagging along "fena sayılmaz" ("not bad"). Following this comment, the style flips completely - Erdoğan starts inserting facts among his comments and expressions of his desires and wishes.

This exemplifies Erdoğan's strategy of accompanying all facts with an interpretation, explicit or implicit. In the previous chapter, factual statements were understood as rhetorical strategies, and it was shown that they served to legitimize certain ideations, even when they stood alone as mere facts. This excerpt shows another dimension of possibly the same phenomenon, by which Erdoğan is not

providing factual claims without an accompanying expressive element. Consequently, it is understood that not all factual statements can be made standalone, especially without much direct rhetorical value, or without much association with the discourse of achievements. In other words, factual statements that cannot be understood as Erdoğan's achievements or his opponents' non-achievements are not used alone in Erdoğan's discourse – they need to be dressed with an interpretation, which is where these expressive statements come in handy.

Erdoğan's ideations do not always accompany factual statements. Excerpt 6.2 shows an example for a turn of Erdoğan that consists mostly of expressive content:

Excerpt 6.2

Fatih Er: Vaatleri soracağım, gerçekçi buluyor musunuz? ÖTV'yi düşüreceğiz, işte asgari ücreti artıracağız, benzin fiyatlarını düşüreceğiz.
Erdoğan: *Benim ayaklarım yere basıyor bak, sağlamdayım. Ayaklar yere basmadan bu iş olmaz. Kaç tane ağaç diktin diye sormak lazım. ÖTV'yi kaldıracaksın; neyi kaldırıyorsun ya? Onun yerine neyi koyacaksın? Böyle saçmalık olur mu? Yani vergisi olmayan bir devlet mi var dünyada, KDV'si olmayan bir devlet mi var? Ha bunu azaltırsın, o ayrı mesele. Ama kaldıracağım dediğim zaman, şu anda tabii sırtında küfe yok, atıyorsun. Bunun yerine koyacağını söyle. Ama benim vatandaşım inan bunlardan iyi bu hesabı biliyor. Böyle bir şey olur mu, olmaz mı. Kaldı ki, onun geçmişindeki o zihniyet böyle bir yapamadı ya, o nasıl yapacak?* Onların önündeki o büyükleri CHP'nin o eski temsilcileri, onlar biliyorsunuz karneyle bize ekmek veriyorlardı. Bize sana yağını karnede mühürlerle veriyorlardı, gazyağını mühürlerle veriyorlardı. *Kim bu? Eski CHP. Kime yutturacaklar*

bunu ya? Ben o değilim. İster ol, ister olma, ama sizin cemaziyülevveliniz bu. Şimdi nasıl olsa sırtında küfe yok, kurusıkı at. Önce bir defa ispatı vücut etmeden bu işler olmaz.

Fatih Er: I will ask about the promises, do you find [them] realistic? We will reduce Special Consumption Tax, we will increase the minimum wage, we will reduce the gas prices.

Erdoğan: My feet are standing on the ground, I am in stable grounds. This job does not happen without standing on your feet. It is necessary to ask, "how many trees have your planted?". You will remove SCT (special consumption tax); what are you removing? What will you put in its place? Is such non-sense possible? I mean, is there a country with no taxes, is there a country with no VAT? You can reduce it, that's a different topic. But when you say "I will abolish it", of course you do not have any burden your back, you are making it up. Say what you will out in its place. But my citizens, believe me, know this calculation better than those. Is such a thing possible or not? Besides, the mentality in his past did not do that, how will he do it? *Their elders in front of them, that old representatives of CHP,* you know they used to ration bread. They used to ration margarine, they used to ration lamp oil. *Who is this? Old CHP. Who will they fool? I am not that. Be it or not, that is your cemaziyülevvels. Now you have no burden on your back, you can just shoot blanks. These things cannot be without appearing in person.*

(Interview #7, 24 May 2018)

Each interview features 2 or 3 turns of Erdoğan where he relies primarily on expressive statements, often directly prompted by interviewers' questions. One way that these lengthy expressive turns differ from other expressive statements is the

depth of these statements. In conventional expressive statements, Erdoğan is likely to give out more agreeable commentaries – labeling the achievements as such, giving credit to helpers, criticizing opposition policy. In this turn, however, the expressive content, in this case the opposition, is explored much more in depth. Expressive statements with criticisms of the opposition often limit to criticizing one aspect, like the character, the past failures, or the implausibility of the promises. In this excerpt, Erdoğan is critical and in offensive to the character, with *sağlamdayım* (*I am in stable grounds*) in line 3; the discourse and rhetoric, like *Böyle saçmalık olur mu*? (*Is such non-sense possible?*) line 5; the powerlessness with *Sırtında küfe yok* (*You have no burden on your back*) in line 15; the non-plausiblity, with *Ama benim vatandaşım inan bunlardan iyi bu hesabı biliyor*? (*But my citizens, believe me, know this calculation better than those*) and *Kime yutturacaklar bunu ya?* (*who will they fool?*) in lines 9 and 14 respectively; and the past failures ("Eski CHP" - "the old CHP").

Therefore, longer turns with an increased quantity of expressive content translates into a transformation, a deepening of the quality of the expressive content as well. This transformation is not limited to topics and the content but is also visible linguistically and stylistically. These expressive statements are made through a variety of figurative, informal, slang, and in general strongly culturally embedded repertoires, to the level that may be seen unfit for official or public discourse. For instance, the metaphor of physical stability, relating to political and discursive stability, is evoked in lines 3 and 5 with *Benim ayaklarım yere basıyor* (*My feet are standing on the ground*). Similarly, employing a metaphor for the lack of responsibility, Erdoğan evokes the imagery of weight carrying in line 7 with *Sırtında küfe yok* (*you have no burden on your back*). Lines 7 and 14 further present slang

expressions, such as *atıyorsun* (*you are making it up*) and *kurusıkı at* (*shoot blanks*), essentially meaning “making it up”.

Moreover, the term “cemaziyülevveliniz” (“your cemaziyülevvel”), in line 13, refers to the fifth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is colloquially used to essentially mean “a dirty past” (TDV, 1993, p. 319) akin to the phrase “skeletons in one’s closet” in English. Another such colloquial, yet non-slang term, this time from the Ottoman Turkish, is “ıspat-ı vücut”, which can be translated as “proof of one’s existence”. Simply put, there is an exceptional amount of ideologically and socio-culturally loaded styles and registers that are being switched to and thus deployed throughout this turn.

The co-existence and adjacency of various charged styles (Ottoman Turkish, Islamic lore, Turkish slang) in a single turn expresses a discursive style, through which the obscure and charged forms appear together in ideation-heavy statements; only appearing in bits and pieces or only in surface level in factual-ideation mixes or factuality-oriented statements. This is constructed through a strategy of compartmentalization, which leads to certain turns having much more expressive content, quantitatively and qualitatively, than others. In turn, the interviews have smaller parts that are constructed through heavily informal, aggressive, culturally charged discourses, while the majority of the interview is filtered of this language. Besides talking about his own achievements, Erdoğan also constructs his expressive discourse through broader statements of beliefs. The following excerpt provides an example for such a belief:

Excerpt 6.3

Evet, dünyada bazı devletler değil orta boylu devletler artık bu nüfusta, yani İstanbul bir devlet. Şimdi böyle bir şehri yöneteceksiniz, böyle bir şehri yönetirken 'çöp benim sorunum değil' diyemez bir belediye, hayır senin sorunun. 'Yollar benim sorunum değil' diyemezsin, 'hava kirliliği benim sorunum değil' diyemezsin.

Yes, not only some states but middle-sized nations in the world have this population, in other words Istanbul is a country. Now you will administer such a city, a municipality cannot say "waste is not my problem", no it is your problem. You cannot say "roads are not my problem", "air pollution is not my problem".

(Interview #8, 3 February 2019)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan utters a statement of belief regarding the duties of local governments, stating that waste, roads, and pollution are matters concerning them. As seen here, this belief is not phrased explicitly as such but uttered as almost a statement of fact. Moreover, Erdoğan uses quotes here as a discourse strategy to add a more realistic tone to his argument.

The fact that he does not need to signal a transition from fact to ideation possibly stems from the context not requiring him to do so. As his political communication does aim to blur the line between factual and expressive discourses, transmitting as much ideation as possible packaged along with factual statements can be a goal of Erdoğan during these interviews. This is further deepened by the context, as neither the journalists themselves nor any of the other stakeholders would dare to re-interpret, let alone challenge or oppose Erdoğan. This means that, all of the highlighted factual statements and the accompanying ideations, beliefs, arguments,

criticisms and so on, end up being curated by Erdoğan. Awareness of this context, understandably, leads Erdoğan to stop acknowledging ideations as matters of opinions.

Expressive content often parallels the statements of achievements and plans by Erdoğan. For an example, consider the excerpt below:

Excerpt 6.4

Yine bunun yanında Gaziantep'te stat yaptık. Eski stadı şimdi bu noktada diyoruz ki bir Millet Bahçesi haline dönüştürelim. Yani birçok şu anda yapılmış olan statları, onların eski statlarını buna dönüştürelim diyoruz. Ve buralar artık yemyeşil halkımızın gidip geleceği yerler olsun. Mesela İstanbul'da yine ilginç olan yerlerden bir tanesi de, Maslak'ta bir alan var, orada yine dev bir alan, orasını da yine buna çevirme, bir dönüşüm yaparak orayı da bir Millet Bahçesine dönüştürelim istiyoruz. Yani halkım bu tür yerlere rahatlıkla gitsin, gelsin. Çocuklarıyla beraber oralarda yesin, içsin, yuvarlansın, bunlara ihtiyaç var. Hep beton beton beton, belediyecilikten de geldik ya, bunlar artık bizim işimiz, bunları da yapacağız.

Besides that we built a stadium in Antep. Now at this point we say let's convert the old stadium to a Nation's Garden. We say, let us convert the built stadiums, old stadiums to these. And let these places be green places that our people come an go to. For instance, one of the interesting places in Istanbul, an area in Maslak, another giant area there, we want to turn that area to a Nation's Garden through a transformation, renewal. My folk shall easily come and go to these kinds of places. They shall eat, drink, roll over with

their kids, those are needed. Always but always concrete, since we came from municipalities, these are all our jobs, we will do those too.

(Interview #7, 24 May 2018)

In this excerpt, a distinct discursive construction is found in terms of the organization of factual and expressive statements. The main expressive element of the excerpt is expressed in the phrase “belediyecilikten geldik” (“we came from municipalities”), which can be understood as self-identification as an achiever and an environmentalist. Erdoğan pre-faces that statement with his desire for public green spaces. This co-occurrence creates a causal relationship between the two – most plausibly coming from municipal work is implied to be the reason behind the environmentalism.

In a similar fashion, Erdoğan’s plans and wishes towards more parks is co-occurring with Erdoğan’s statement of environmentalism. While Erdoğan’s rhetorical strategy is reliant mostly on the use of factual statements, like expression of his achievements, as evidence for expressive statements, like declarations of beliefs, this shows a different relationship. In context, it appears that the expressive statement (Erdoğan’s environmentalism and praise for green spaces) is the evidence, or at least the cause, of the factual statement (the plans for new parks).

These two examples go on to show that, besides their primary use as evidence for expressive content, in Erdoğan’s discourse, factual content can also be evidenced by expressive content. Similarly, different levels of expressive content (e.g. beliefs with wishes and plans) can also exist in a rhetorical relationship constructed through discursive organization. Taken together, these go on to show Erdoğan’s capability to manipulate the factual and expressive elements and deploy them creatively for the

construction of a variety of discourses and rhetorical relationships. Moreover, consider the following example:

Excerpt 6.5

Kanal İstanbul, maalesef gecikti o, verilmiş sözümüzdü gecikti. Kanal İstanbul muhteşem. Kanal İstanbul'u yaptığımız zaman, bir de Kanal İstanbul'la beraber her iki yanda adeta yeni şehirler kuracağız. İstanbul onlarla da ayrı bir güzel olacak. Sadece yeni havalimanının yakın bir mesafesine yaklaşık 10 bin konutluk bir yer kuruyoruz ki, oranın personelinin gidiş gelişini zora sokmayalım. Orada da zemin artı dört konutlar yapalım ve oradan icabında bisikletiyle, icabında işte otomobiliyle hemen üçüncü havalimanına rahat rahat gitsin gelsin. Şehircilik anlayışı budur, öyle herkesin anlayacağı iş değil bu iş. Öyle kuru kuruya konuşmakla da bu işler olmuyor, icraat icraat.

Istanbul Canal, unfortunately it got delayed, it was our promise, it got delayed. Istanbul Canal is great. When we build the Istanbul Canal, we will also build new cities to both sides of it. Istanbul will be exceptionally beautiful with those. Just, near the new airport, we are building an area with 10 thousand residential capacity, so that there are no difficulties with the commute of the personnel there. We shall build surface plus four [floors] houses there and [the personnel] can easily travel back and forth from the airport whether with their bicycles or their cars. This is urbanism, it is not a job that everyone can understand. These things do not happen just by dry talk; achievements, achievements.

(Interview #7, 24 May 2018)

The first half of the turn seen in this excerpt is demonstrative of a rhythm of factual and expressive statements. The statement on the canal is followed by an evaluation of the canal; the factual statement on the new developments around the canal is followed by an evaluation thereof; statement on the planned housing around the airport is followed by a statement on his wishes for convenience for the airport personnel. This back-and-forth between the factual and expressive statements conclude with a slightly longer expressive statement. This excerpt demonstrates the typical rhythm for Erdoğan's co-deployment of factual and expressive statements. Factual statements often accompany similar expressive statements, with the turn or concluding with a longer expressive statement, with the later statements functioning as the extrapolation of the previous ones. Turns often end with more memorable and generalized statements acting as abstracts or takeaways from the rest of the turn. Erdoğan also engages in more negative ideations, like criticism of his opposition. Consider the following excerpt as an example of how those ideations are constructed:

Excerpt 6.6

Yani ben bu zatı muhatap almaktan artık utandım, ama onda utanma yok, tabii ortağı da öyle ve "Fabrika nerede" diyor. İşte fabrika. "Otomobil nerede" diyor, işte otomobil. Ve muhalif liderlerden de o gün sağ olsun açılışa katılanlar vardı, her ne kadar ikisi gelmediyse de ortağın bir elemanı oradaydı. Fakat muhalif medyadan olanlar, takip edenler de vardı, onlar da takdir ettiler. Fakat hani eser dersin, ya eser ortada. Bunun yanında üretilen otomobil dersin, o da ortada ve şu an itibariyle 1300 kişinin ortaya çıkardığı bir eser var ve sen bu eseri hala görmüyorsun. İşte Allah'ın hükmü aynen

tecelli ediyor; gözü var görmez, kulağı var duymaz, dili var hakkı söyleyemez, çünkü onların kalpleri mühürlüdür, işte aynen tecelli ediyor. "Biz üretemezsiniz demedik, satamazsınız dedik" diyorlar şimdi, bu başladı. Esasında bizim bunların hepsine verilecek cevabımız var, ama inanın buna vaktimiz yok ya, yazıktır.

I am now embarrassed of having to engage with that person, but he has no sense of embarrassment, so is his partner as well and he says "Where's the factory?". Here's the factory, he says "Where's the automobile?" here's the automobile. And there were some of the opposition leaders who attended the opening, although two of them did not come one member of the partnership was there. There were those from the opposition media who followed the events, they congratulated too. But you know what you call work of art, there's the work of art. What you may call the automobile that we produce, it is also seen and there is a work of art that 1300 people worked for yet you still do not see this work of art. Here Allah's judgment manifests as it is: eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear, tongues that cannot tell the truth, because their hearts are sealed, here it manifests exactly. "We did not say you cannot produce it, we said you cannot sell it" they say now, this has begun. In actuality we have answers for all of these, but believe me we do not have time for this, please have mercy.

(Interview #13, 11 February 2022)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan deploys several strategies in the construction his own expertise and achievements. Firstly, by claiming to be "embarrassed" in line 1 and that he has no time for responding to the critiques (in that case, Kılıçdaroğlu), Erdoğan indirectly constructs a self-image of servantship. These avoidances of

responses, while themselves being part of responses, is a part of broader communicative strategy of Erdoğan, where work and achievements are argued to be the main qualities of a politician, while talking and criticizing are presented in a negative light.

Secondly, the use of the term *eser* (*works of art*) is a deliberate and meaningful choice that aims for the glorification of Erdoğan's achievements, qualifying them as works of art, having features like being unique and being products of creative processes. Moreover, establishing these achievements as *eser* synergizes with the third main ideation found in this excerpt, which is the claimed non-recognition by the opposition. By repeating the same idea, through factual and expressive statements, and even deploying a quote from Quran in lines 8 and 9, Erdoğan twists the discourse on his achievements to a discourse of criticizing his opponents.

6.3 Commitment to democracy

An important theme in Erdoğan's discourse is his frequent commitment and admiration for democracy. It is a theme that emerges with a variety of sub-themes and ideations, like a stance against coups or the celebration of voter turnouts in elections. The following excerpt exemplifies an ideation against coups following the July 15 coup attempt.

Excerpt 6.7

1 Yine burada Jandarma ile bizim aramızdaki bölgeye yine 15 Temmuz Şehitler
2 Kavşağı, yanılmıyorsam o ad veriliyor. Böylece bunu unutturmayacağız,
3 çünkü bu hatıra eğer unutulursa yazık olur. Çanakkale şehitleri bizim için

nasıl unutulmazsa ve Meclis kavşağı mesela 15 Temmuz Kavşağı olarak orası da yine anılacak ve böylece buralarda hep şehitlerimizi unutmayacağız, hem onları Fatiha'larla sürekli yad etme imkânını bulacağız. Ve böylece darbelere kalıcı olan duruşumuzu kalıcı kılmanın da vesilelerini hazırlamış olacağız.

Again to the area between here and the gendarmerie, Martyrs of July 15 Intersection, I think that is the name being given. This way we won't let this be forgotten, because it would be a shame if this memory is forgotten. Just as the way the martyrs of the Çanakkale are not forgettable for us, and the parliament junction will be named as July 15 Junction and we will never forget of our martyrs here, and we will always have the opportunity to pray for them, to recite Fatiha for them. Thus, we will have prepared the foundations of making our permanent stance against coups permanent.

(Interview #4, 30 July 2016)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan mentions several name changes in commemoration of the July 15, making factual statements about the planned changes and expressive statements as to how these name changes will contribute to the memory of the July 15. Finally, at the end, Erdoğan provides a broader ideation related to a general stance against coups, and, indirectly, a stance for democracy.

Notably, the two ideations found in lines 3 and 5 deploy *Çanakkale* as a memory-worthy event and reciting the Fatiha as an act of memorization. The former can be partially understood as part of a nationalist discourse and the latter as part of an Islamistic one. In this framing, nationalistic and Islamistic discourses exist in a hierarchy, getting limited prominence below the broader pro-democracy ideation of stance against coups.

Another sub-theme of Erdoğan's pro-democratic discourse is the desire for inter-party collaboration. Excerpt 6.8 shows an example of that discourse is constructed:

Excerpt 6.8

8 şehit dün verdik. Şimdi bu terör eylemlerini bir kenara koyabilir miyiz, yani bunu yok farz edebilir miyiz? Bizim şu anda darbe girişimine karşı verdiğimiz mücadelenin bir taraftan da aynı şekilde şu anda terörle mücadelede devam etmemiz lazım. Burada hem darbe, hem terörle mücadelede bizim bir ve beraber olmamız lazım. Bu konuda ben inanıyorum ki gerek CHP, gerekse MHP, iktidar partisiyle beraber hareket edecekler. Çünkü onların da terörle mücadele konusunda hassasiyetlerini biliyorum, o günkü görüşmede de zaten bunlar açıkça ortaya kondu.

We had 8 martyrs yesterday. Now, can we put aside these acts of terror? I mean can we assume that these do not exist? Besides our struggle against the coup attempt we should continue our struggle against terrorism exactly. We should be one and together in the topics of coup and war on terror. In this regard, I believe that both CHP and MHP will act with the ruling party. Because I know of their sensitivities regarding the war on terror, this was clear in our meeting that day.

(Interview #4, 30 July 2016)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan uses primarily expressive statements for his standpoint in terms of terrorism and the Gulenist organization following the July 15 coup attempt. This demonstrates another subtheme of Erdoğan's pro-democracy ideation, that is the calls for inter-party collaboration.

An important feature of the language of this ideation is Erdoğan's use of verbs to make the expressive content explicit. The use of the phrase "Ben inanıyorum ki" ("I believe that") in lines 4 and 5 carries an acknowledgment of expressivity of the statement, recognizing that it is a belief or a personal opinion. Moreover, using the first person pronoun in the subject position, which is optional in Turkish grammar, further reinforces that meaning and implies a level of personal investment. Similarly, lines 6 and 7 show Erdoğan's acknowledgment of the other parties' sensitivities through a rather absolute phrasing that put Erdoğan in line. Through the use of "biliyorum" ("I know") and "açıkça ortaya kondu" ("this was clear"), Erdoğan provides legitimacy and authenticity to his opponents by placing himself as a witness, essentially as collateral.

This excerpt is demonstrative of Erdoğan's use of language in topics regarding his opponents. While Erdoğan does not necessarily shy away from personal insults and overall an aggressive discourse towards his opponents, especially Kılıçdaroğlu and CHP, he deploys a more neutral and even friendly language as part of his argument for collaboration. Even if there is a debate whether the call itself was genuine, the use of these strategies indicate a heavy investment in Erdoğan's part. This investment may be part of a genuine call for collaboration or an inauthentic attempt at Erdoğan's for self-presentation as a democrat; both of which indicate that Erdoğan deploys language strategically based on the needs of his rhetoric.

That call was apparently not answered by the leaders of the opposition parties as Erdoğan makes a similar call, this time towards the voters of the opposition:

Excerpt 6.9

Tabii ben şu anda dikkat ederseniz, tavandan ümidimi kestiğim için tabana hitap ediyorum. Yani Yenikapı ruhunu tabanda şöyle teessüs ettirelim istiyorum. Onun için AK Parti'ye gönül vermiş kardeşlerime diyorum, Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi'ne gönül vermiş kardeşlerime diyorum, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi'ne, HDP'ye, Saadet Partisi'ne, Büyük Birlik Partisi'ne gönül vermiş kardeşlerime diyorum: Gelin bu liderlerin gerçekleştiremediği bu reformu hep birlikte inşallah 16 Nisan'da sandıkta gerçekleştirelim. 339 milletvekili AK Parti ve Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi'nden olmak üzere bu halk oylaması kararını aldı. Parlamentoda bu iki partinin omuz omuza vermesiyle böyle bir adım atıldı. Tabii bu yeterli değil, yeterli olan 367'ydi. Bunu sağlayamadığımıza göre şimdi iş asillere kaldı, o da millet. Milli irade zaten en önemlisi.

Of course if you pay attention, since I gave up my hopes from the ceiling I am talking to the floor now. Let's manifest the Yenikapı spirit in the floor. For that, I am calling my brothers and sisters who gave their hearts to AK Party, who gave their hearts to the Nationalist Movement Party, who gave their hearts to Republican People's Party, HDP, Felicity Party, Great Unity Party: Come and let's realize the reform, that the leaders could not realize, on 16 April in the ballot box, inshallah. 339 members of parliament, from AK Party and Nationalist Movement Party, have made a decision for a referendum. This step was taken through the shoulder-to-shoulder collaboration of these two parties. Of course this is not enough, 367 would have been enough. Since we could not provide that now the job is on the royals, which is the nation. National will is the most important one.

(Interview #6, 8 March 2017)

This interview takes place several months after the July 15 coup attempt, before the 2017 referendum for the constitution change that would establish the presidential government system in Turkey. By acknowledging his past calls for collaboration, similar to the previous excerpt, Erdoğan states in line 1 that he is attempting to communicate with the "taban" ("the floor"), a frequent term in political discourse that can be translated as "the voter base", as opposed to the "tavan" ("the ceiling"), a term for "party administration" that is much more infrequent and that has negative connotations.

Erdoğan also employs intertextuality by implicitly referring to his earlier calls in lines 1, 5, and 6 in order to reinforce the notion that he is communicating with the voters, not the politicians. Moreover, by the use of "kardeşlerim" ("brothers & sisters"), he deploys a sense of community with the voters of his opposition. Similarly, by making a call for joint action through the use of "Gelin ve ... gerçekleştirelim" ("Come and let's realize") in lines 5 to 7 Erdoğan strengthens his call by creating an inclusive invitation.

These calls are further reinforced by Erdoğan's transition to a factual discourse in lines 7 to 9 by elaborating on the technicalities of passing a constitutional amendment in the parliament. This essentially acts as a statement of contextualizing the topic of referendum, by reminding the facts to the listeners. Furthermore, when taken in context, this can be understood as a statement of failure, possibly to highlight the failures of the party administration and politicians to reinforce the "tavan" - "taban" distinction as a rhetorical strategy.

Excerpt 6.10

Doğrusu, 14 Mayıs'ta rekor katılımla milli iradeyi sandığa yansıtan tüm vatandaşlarıma teşekkür ediyorum. Sandık başına giden her vatandaşımıza tercihini ne yönde yapmış olursa olsun şükranlarımı sunuyorum. Türkiye'mize yakışır büyük bir demokrasi şöleni yaşadık. Dünyada belki de eşi-benzeri yok. Milletimizin sergilediği olgunluk her türlü takdirin üzerindedir, yüzde 90'a varan bir katılım. Siyasal katılımı artırmak, demokrasiye sahip çıkmak için çaba gösteren tüm siyasi partilere, adaylara, basın-yayın kuruluşlarına ve seçim sürecinde görev yapan güvenlik güçlerinden yargı çalışanlarına, tüm kamu personeline ayrıca teşekkür ediyorum. Yeni dönemde milletvekili seçilen tüm isimleri şimdiden tebrik ediyorum, kendilerine başarılar diliyorum.

In fact, I thank to all of my citizens who reflected the national will to the ballot box with a record-breaking turnout in May 14. I deliver my thanks to each one of our citizens who went to the polls regardless of their preferences. We experienced a great feast of democracy that is worthy of our Turkey. Maybe there are no matches in the world. The maturity of our nation is above any kind of appreciation, approximately 90 percent turnout. My thanks go to all of the political parties, candidates, media institutions who struggle to increase political participation and to protect democracy, and to additionally to all security forces to judiciary workers, public personnel who worked throughout the election process. I congratulate ahead of time, all of the names who got elected as members of parliament, I wish success to them.

(Interview #10, 16 May 2023)

This excerpt is taken from an interview shortly after the first round of the 2023 elections. Using “demokrasi şöleni” (“the feast of democracy”) in line 4 and the extensive thankfulness and congratulations in lines 5 to 10 express another subtheme of his pro-democratic ideation, that is the celebration of democratic elections.

Erdoğan also adds a factual statement regarding the voter turnout in line 5 in order to support his expressive statements. Despite being a factual statement, the synergy and the context attributes expressive connotations to the statement, thus essentially taking on a meaning that leads to the statement being interpreted as a celebration of the voter turnout. It is important to note that, while there may be debate as to the authenticity of Erdoğan’s celebration of this election, especially when this celebration is made partially through expression of thankfulness for his opponents, the fact that this was given prominence is still meaningful.

6.4 Islamism

While Erdoğan’s relationship to Islamism as a political is more complicated than it is reflected in the scholarship, Erdoğan does not try to hide that he is a Muslim and often deploys Islamistic discourses in a variety of levels. These can be in the way of celebrating Islamic religion, disgracing non-Islamic practices, and recognizing his own religious beliefs.

For an example of how Erdoğan self-identifies as a Muslim and consequently criticizes the western countries, consider the following excerpt:

Excerpt 6.11

1 Tabii biz Müslüman olarak, yani ırk, renk, din, dil ya da inanç ayrımı
2 yapmaksızın tüm insanlığın haklarını korumak için mücadele vermeye devam

ediyoruz, edeceğiz. Tabii özellikle Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde ve bazı Avrupa ülkelerinde siyahilere ve mültecilere karşı olan tavır herkesin malumudur. Mesela ben özellikle de şunu çok merak ettim: Sayın Obama'yla bizim çok çok iyi günlerimiz oldu, ama Sayın Obama bir siyahi olarak 8 yıllık Başkanlığı döneminde acaba Amerika'daki siyahilere yönelik ne gibi adımlar attı, bu önemli. Tabii bu kültürel birikim ve insana bakışla ilgili olan konudaki tavırlar çok çok önemli.

Of course we, as Muslims, are struggling and will struggle, to protect the rights of all humanity without discriminating for race, color, religion, language or faith. Of course everyone knows of the attitude towards black people and refugees in the United States of America and some European countries. For instance, I am especially curious about this: We had very very good days with Mr. Obama, but what kind of steps did Mr. Obama take towards black people in America in his presidency for 8 years as a black person, that is important. Surely this cultural accumulation and attitudes regarding perspectives to the people are very very important.

(Interview #11, 8 June 2020)

Erdoğan utters this turn following a question about riots in America and Europe following the murder of George Floyd in 2020. He starts with an indexical term in line 1, "Müslüman olarak" ("we, as Muslims"), categorizing himself, and by extension, his party and possibly his supporters as Muslims. Therefore, the following ideation regarding his struggle and commitment for non-discrimination is established to be associated with this indexicality. Thus, Erdoğan, besides defining himself as a Muslim and a supporter of non-discrimination, also defines Muslims as anti-discrimination.

This discourse is then followed by further evaluations about the contrary attitudes in the West and the lack of initiatives from Obama period. This juxtaposition between Erdoğan's own definition of Muslim attitudes and attitudes of the West serves as a definition of the western attitudes as non-Muslim and by extension, not as anti-discrimination. It is important to note that Erdoğan's statement on the western attitudes is not explicitly about the said attitudes being pro-discrimination and/or racist; but by positioning these two ideations next to one another, Erdoğan creates this implication. This answer then continues as follows:

Excerpt 6.12

Peygamber Efendimiz Aleyhisselatü Vesselam; "Beyazın siyaha bir üstünlüğü yoktur, siyahın da beyaza bir üstünlüğü yoktur" diyor. Biz bu ilkeyi yüzlerce yıldır kendimize şiar edindik. Dolayısıyla bu gelişmeleri şöyle gördüğümüz zaman bunlarda vicdan yok, bu nasıl bir tavırdır, nasıl bu insanlara bu şekilde yaklaşılır? Tabii George Floyd'un öldürülmesi üzerine bu Amerika'daki protestoların büyümesi ve dalga dalga farklı ülkelere yayılması, bu ırkçılık karşıtı protestolarla meydana gelmişti ve bu şekilde de tabii devam ediyor.

Our messenger, peace be upon him says "The white has no supremacy over the black, and the black has not supremacy over the white". We took this principle as a slogan for ourselves for hundreds of years. Therefore when we see these developments like this, these do not have conscience, what kind of attitude is this, how do you approach these people this way? Of course the growth of these protests in America and its spread to different countries in waves following killing of George Floyd, it was possible with these anti-racism protests and it continues this way as well.

(Interview #11, 8 June 2020)

Erdoğan starts this utterance with a quote from prophet Muhammad, specifically from the Muhammad's final sermon (TDV, 2012). This essentially acts as a statement of an anti-racism stance, once again indexing both Erdoğan himself and the Islamic faith in general, as anti-discrimination. The following expressive statements in lines 3 and 4 are essentially Erdoğan's negative evaluation of the police violence in the west, without directly naming so as it would be easily understood from the context. Thus, the utterance serves to once again reinforce the West – Muslim distinction and the subsequent evaluations of each of these camps.

Erdoğan deploys references to Islamic texts for a variety of purposes. The latest excerpt demonstrated an example for the ideation of equality and anti-racism. These references are also used for the communication of a humanistic ideation, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 6.13

1 Ama biz yaratılanı Yaradan'dan ötürü sevdik, asla böyle bir ayrıma, böyle bir
2 bölücülüğe fırsat vermedik, bundan sonra da vermeyeceğiz. Kimlik siyasetini
3 biz değil terör örgütü ve onun uzantısı olan parti yapıyor.

1 But we loved the creation for the sake of the Creator, we never gave any
2 chance to any discrimination, any separatism, and we never will after this
3 point to. It is not us who does identity politics, it is the terrorist organization
4 and the party that is its extension.

(Interview #9, 12 May 2023)

Following a question about Kurds and the activities of PKK, Erdoğan expresses a disagreement with the HDP, a political party mainly concerned with the

Kurdish issue. In order to reinforce that disagreement, Erdoğan deploys a reference to Yunus Emre, a prominent Sufi poet from 13th century in line 1. While not an original Islamic text like Quran or hadith, this line especially has become to be sloganized as such, as the line itself makes a reference to the Islamic god as a creator.

This reference is used a resource to reinforce Erdoğan's argument against HDP, while acting as an attempt to define HDP as separatist and, more importantly, an attempt to define HDP and separatism as opposites of the philosophy expressed through Yunus Emre's line.

Erdoğan may also deploy Islamic references in relation to the achievements as well as statements of policy. The following excerpt demonstrates such a use:

Excerpt 6.14

Şimdi bu bir şeyi gösteriyor, geldiğimizde çünkü işe oradan başladık, dedik ki, temizliği biz öne çıkaracağız ve bu temizlikle beraber de dünyada örnek bir şehir haline geleceğiz. Bir taraftan bizim medeniyetimizde, dinimizde 'temizlik imandandır' diyeceğiz, ee, ondan sonra temizlik diye bir şey olmayacak; olur mu? Temizliği bizden onların görmesi, öğrenmesi lazım, onun da gereğini yapmamız lazım. ...Ve o gün, bugündür İstanbul hakikaten genelinde bu işte o başarıyı sürdürüyor.

Now this shows something, because we started from that we came into power, we said, we will put hygiene to the foreground and with this hygiene we will be a city exemplar to the world. On one hand, in our civilization, in our religion we say "hygiene comes from faith" on the other there will not be anything called hygiene; is it possible? They should see and learn hygiene

6 from us, we should do our part for that. . . And from that day onwards

7 Istanbul in general really continues that achievement.

(Interview #8, 3 February 2019)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan replies to a question about the municipal policies of Erdoğan and AK Party. In his response, Erdoğan highlights the role of hygiene as a municipal policy, referring to his own mayorship and the following AK Party mayors across the country. The Islamic ideation in this excerpt is mainly expressed in lines 3 and 4, through "dinimizde 'temizlik imandandır' diyeceğiz" ("in our religion, we say 'hygiene comes from faith'"), which is a reference to a hadith (TDV, 2011). The hadith, here as well, serves to both index Erdoğan and his supporters of Islam, and hygiene as an issue of religiousness. This statement of policy is then followed by an expressive statement of his and his party's achievements.

Notably, the actual hadith itself is more accurately translated as "temizlik imanın yarısıdır" ("hygiene is half of the faith") (TDV, 2011, p. 427). In other words, Erdoğan utilizes the more popularized but arguably less accurate version of the hadith in his utterance. It is possible to argue that, given Erdoğan had a religious upbringing and studied in an Islamic high school, this choice is partially deliberate. Regardless of the deliberateness, the choice to use the version that Erdoğan does is a signification towards these references being concerned with rhetoric and public communication, and not with complete scholarly accuracy.

It is important to note that Erdoğan is, predictably, quite careful about the references he makes to Islamic texts. Both the chosen message and how it is contextualized in the discourse is deployed strategically so that Erdoğan is communicated to be a Muslim, but not an Islamist: to be a conservative, but not a

fundamentalist. Thus, the messaging is often moderate, humanistic, and agreeable: communicating ideations like equality, anti-discrimination, and even hygiene.

6.6 Ottomanism

In contrary to the previous literature (e.g. Çakmak, 2021) Ottomanism, references to Ottoman values, celebration of the Ottoman heritage, and the defense thereof, as a less prominent theme in Erdoğan's discourse in the panel interviews. In these, direct references to Ottoman values were found to occur only once, as seen in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 6.15

Hani halk içinde "muteber bir nesne yok devlet gibi, olmaya devlet cihanda bir nefes sıhhat gibi". Bir sağlıklı nefese Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniye'yi feda etmeyi göze alan bir ecdadın torunlarıyız biz ya. Şimdi aynı biz yapacağız ve yapıyoruz ve bunların projeleri de güzel.

You know people say, "there is no object as honorable as the state, but there is no state in the world like a breath of health". We are grandchildren of an ancestry who would sacrifice the Sublime State of Ottomans for a healthy breath. Now we will do the same and we are doing, and projects for those are nice as well.

(Interview #7, 24 May 2018)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan engages in ideologically charged discourses in ways more than one. Firstly, by stating his allegiance to the philosophy attributed to the Ottomans, Erdoğan takes an Ottomanist position explicitly, stating that he is taking on the heritage of the Ottomans. Moreover, by deploying various forms, Erdoğan

also deploys Ottomanism less explicitly; the use of the word “ecdad” (“ancestry”) that is more associated with the connections with the Ottomans, use of the full name of the Ottoman state, and the use of the proverb in the beginning of his turn, all direct towards an admiration towards Ottomans in general.

An interesting element here is the fact that these forms themselves are so embedded and recognized as signals of an Ottoman-adjacent discursive space that Erdoğan’s turn is somewhat redundant for the purposes of signaling an admiration for Ottomans. Each individual one of these elements (the proverb, the interpretation with the full state name, or even the word “ecdad”) is more than sufficient to signal such a perspective. Therefore, it is plausible that this redundancy is achieved for a certain goal.

I argue that this is due to the weight of the rhetorical imposition of the utterance. To elaborate, the turn, in its entirety, is essentially a pro-Ottomanism argument, thus indexing Erdoğan as an Ottomanist. However, this is not the only argument made here, as the argued subject is not part of the conventional Ottomanist discourse, Erdoğan is also making an argument that his proposal (i.e. the construction of hospitals) is pro-Ottomanism. Furthermore, he is also arguing that the underlying ideation is also pro-Ottomanism. Thus, there are two parallel discourses here: firstly, he is presenting Ottomanism in a good light to the audience and the interviewers, secondly he is constructing, defining, and expanding Ottomanism at the spot. The complexity and the weight of the task of both arguing for Ottomanism and defining the Ottomanist ideology can thus be the reason behind the redundant deployment of associated forms.

While Erdoğan rarely engages directly with values associated with Ottomanism, he much more frequently interacts with other tenets of Ottomanism. For

an example, new television shows celebrating certain Ottoman sultans, like Diriliş: Ertuğrul ("The Revival: Ertughrul"), often broadcasted on state-owned channel TRT or pro-AK Party channels like ATV, can be found in Erdoğan's discourse, occasionally. The following excerpt demonstrates how Erdoğan talks about such a show:

Excerpt 6.16

Pelin Çift: Siz şimdi Halil İnalcık'tan okudunuz, tabii çok ilerleyen yaşlarında kaybettik yakın bir zamanda, Allah rahmet eylesin. Bizim kendi kadim tarihimizden alacağımız çok dersler var. Selçuklular, Osmanlılar, bugün Türkiye Cumhuriyeti onurla taşıyoruz ve yaptığımız programlarla da bunu hatırlatıyoruz. Sayın Cumhurbaşkanım, birazdan Diriliş başlayacak, sizin de tarihe olan ilginizi biliyorum ve Diriliş'i de özellikle seviyorsunuz. Belki bir noktada küçücük buna dair bir şey söylemek istersiniz, öyle tatlı bağlayalım, kapatalım istiyorum.

Erdoğan: Şimdi tabii Diriliş, son dönemlerde özellikle gerçekten 7'den 70'e bütün halkımızın, milletimizin hayranlıkla izlediği bir dizi. Yapılamaz, yapamayız, edemeyiz diyenlere karşı aslında Diriliş çok önemli bir cevap olmuştur; demek ki yaparız. Ben inanıyorum ki bu ekip bundan sonra çok daha farklı dizileri arka arkaya getirecektir. Benim 13 yaşında torunum sadece yayınladığı akşamı izlemiyor, bir de tekrarını izliyor. Daha küçük torunlarım var, aynı şekilde izliyorlar. Şimdi bununla biz onlara özgüven kazandırıyoruz, bu çok önemli.

Pelin Çift: Now you have read from Halil İnalcık, who we lost recently at a very senior age, may Allah show mercy to his soul. There are many lessons to

learn from our own grand history. Seljuks, Ottomans, today we carry the Republic of Turkey with honor and we remind that with our programming. Dear president, Revival will begin in a moment, I know of your interest to history and you especially like Revival. Maybe at this point you want to say something small, I wish to then wrap the program nicely.

Erdoğan: Of course now, Revival is really a show that all of our people, our nation from age 7 to 70 watch with fascination. Revival is a very important answer for those who said, "it cannot be done, we cannot do it", that means we can do it. I believe that this team will bring about many more different shows back-to-back from this point. My grandkid of 13 years of age does not only watch it in the evening, but he is also watching the repeat. I have younger grandchildren; they watch it the same way. Now we feed their self-esteem this way, this is very important.

(Interview #6, 8 March 2017)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan responds to a question about the show, in an interview that takes place on TRT, in which the show is broadcasted. In fact, the interview itself is broadcasted just before the show is aired. In his reply, Erdoğan talks about the show, congratulating the producers and positively evaluating the show's merits, highlighting its role in "self-esteem" of the next generation. By implying that the show was produced against all odds by quoting a vague person in line 10, Erdoğan acknowledges a possible negative perception towards such a program. This acknowledgement is likely a reference to the show's pro-Ottoman and nationalistic themes, since there are no other exceptional weak points to the show itself. Therefore, with this acknowledgment of pro-Ottoman and nationalistic themes being successful, Erdoğan praises the show, not for the merits of its production, but

for aiding in the dissemination of the pro-Ottoman and nationalistic ideals. In other words, the expressive content relevant to the praise of the show is in essence, a praise of the Ottomanist and nationalist ideas themselves.

In the discursive construction of this ideation, Erdoğan deploys brief stories regarding his grandchildren as factual statements. These statements serve to add a level of emotionality and to personalize Erdoğan's experience with the show, thus contributing to the authenticity of his praise of it. His turn continues as follows:

Excerpt 6.17

Şimdi mesela yeni bir adım daha atılıyor, Sultan Abdülhamid'le ilgili. Mesela bunların da ben ses getireceğine inanıyorum. İşte Kut'ül Amare'yle ilgili yine bir çalışmanın olduğunu biliyorum, bunların da ses getireceğine inanıyorum. Biz tarihimizden ilham alarak geleceğe çok daha farklı bir özgüvenle bakacağımızın inancı içerisindeyim.

Now, for instance, a new step is being taken, about Sultan Abdulhamid. I believe these will be influential too. I know also there is ongoing work about Kut-al-Amare, I believe these will be influential too. I am of the belief that we will take inspiration from our history and look into the future with a very different confidence.

(Interview #6, 8 March 2017)

Following his statement on Diriliş, Erdoğan goes on to talk about other projects, revealing other relevant shows that are in pre-production stages. It is important to note that Erdoğan does not mention TV shows, movies, or other similar media products in his interviews, and aside from the three shows here, no other show

is ever mentioned by Erdoğan in any other interview. Therefore, Erdoğan's referral to these are deliberate and meaningful.

In the excerpt, Erdoğan utilizes factual statements to reveal two shows are in production, accompanying each statement with ideations regarding his faith in their future success. He then concludes with a broader expressive statement as to the role of these kinds of shows in creating self-esteem. With the conclusive ideation, Erdoğan also reveals the broader goal of the shows and thus assigns praise to them.

The two shows mentioned in Excerpt 6.17 are based on historical issues that are somewhat controversial and contested during Erdoğan's period (Çakmak, 2021). The two topics have a complicated history, especially following the declaration of the Republic, that Erdoğan has given prominence to both in his discourse (Çakmak, 2021). Simply, the issues can be understood partially as Erdoğan's resources for argumentation and legitimacy. However, in the context of this excerpt, the relationship is different. In this interaction, Erdoğan is not drawing legitimacy from these issues, but he is borrowing legitimacy to the TV shows in production about these issues, which may have the goal of shifting the historical narrative or at least drawing legitimacy to Erdoğan and his policy and discourse.

Erdoğan's callback to the history of the Ottomans, as well as other historical events can be exemplified in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 6.18

1 Bu meydanlarda adeta 1071'den bu yana gelişin izleri vardı ve 1453'ün izleri
2 vardı, Çanakkale'nin ruhu vardı bu meydanlarda, İstiklal Savaşı'nın ruhu
3 vardı. Tabii bütün bunlarla beraber istikbale bir yürüyüş vardı.

These square had the traces of the coming since 1071 and the traces of 1453, there was the spirit of Çanakkale in these squares, there were the spirit of the War of Independence. Of course, along with all of these, there was a walk to the future.

(Interview #5, 4 August 2016)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan describes the anti-coup protests after the July 15 coup attempts, which were gathered as a result of Erdoğan's calls for such gatherings. As a way of emphasizing the ideas of unity and patriotism, Erdoğan refers to several historical events, like 1071 Battle of Manzikert, the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the battle of Gallipoli in 1915, and the Turkish War of Independence from 1919 to 1923. Understandably, these events are chosen deliberately as examples of national unity. Regardless of the actual historicity of that suggestion, these events and dates are popularly recognizable as such. Thus, Erdoğan attempts to derive legitimacy from these familiar events to the protests that he contributed to rally.

These excerpts so far exemplify that Ottomanist ideations and Neo-Ottoman policies and discourses are not as prominent in Erdoğan's discourse. Moreover, aside from sources of legitimacy and discursive strategies for emphasis and positivity, Ottomanist ideations have very little relevance in Erdoğan's discourse in panel interviews. There are some exceptions, however, where Erdoğan deploys certain Ottomanist ideations in relation to his broader discourses. For an example, consider the excerpt below:

Excerpt 6.19

Ama hepsinden öte, tabi ki en önemlisi gençlik yıllarımın özlemi ve Sultanahmet Meydanında Ayasofya'nın önündeki gençlik mitinglerimiz olmuştur. Ve o gençlik mitinglerimizde hep şunu söylerdik: Ayasofya açılacak derdik, zincirler kırılacak, Ayasofya açılacak. Allah'ımıza hamdolsun, Ayasofya'yı açmak bize nasip oldu, bunu unutmak mümkün değil.

But, beyond all, of course it is the yearning for my youth years, and we had youth rallies in Sultanahmet Square, in front of Hagia Sophia. And in those rallies we always used to say this: "Hagia Sophia will open, the chains will be broken, Hagia Sophia will open". Thanks to our Allah, opening Hagia Sophia was in our fate. It is not possible to forget this.

(Interview #13, 11 February 2022)

In this excerpt, as a continuation to his reply to a question about his favorite memories as a politician, Erdoğan cites the opening of Hagia Sophia as a mosque as an unforgettable event in his life. In lines 3 and 4, Erdoğan embeds ideations regarding the so-called liberation of the Hagia Sophia within a factual statement about the slogans he used during his rallies for the opening of it.

While the expressive content is embedded within a factual statement, the intention here does not appear to be a mere recitation of Erdoğan's memories as an activist, but to express the expressive content. The Ottomanist discourse, besides having the opening of Hagia Sophia as a topic, is also reinforced by the metaphor in line 3, expressed in "zincirler kırılacak" ("chains will be broken"). This metaphor posits the republican policy of converting Hagia Sophia into a museum as an unjust one, thus incriminating the republic in general. By extension, as the re-opening as a mosque is framed as a liberation, the re-opening policy is further legitimized and is

positioned in contrast to the republican policy. Therefore, Erdoğan, through discourse, re-produces a broader "Ottomans versus republicanism" ideation, emphasized through metaphors.

These ideations are then further developed into Erdoğan's own achievements, as seen with the following excerpt:

Excerpt 6.20

Tabii bir diğeri de… Elhamdülillah Ayasofya açıldı, zincirler kırıldı, ama bu Avrupa Yakasındaydı. Orada da dikkat edin kimler çıldırdı? Başta yine Yunan, hemen çıldırdı. Ama bir de Anadolu Yakasına dedik bazı mühürleri vuralım. Bunların da tabi en önemlisi Büyük Çamlıca Camiiydi. O da Anadolu Yakasının oradan Avrupa'ya, Avrupa'dan oraya bakışta bir simge, bir semboldü.

Of course, another one, alhamdulillah Hagia Sophia is open, chains are broken, but that was on the European side. Pay attention to who turned crazy there? Firstly, once again, Greeks, they turned crazy. But we said, let's place our seal to the Anatolian side as well. The most important of these was the Great Çamlıca Mosque. It was a sign, a symbol from the Anatolian side to the European side, when looking there from the European side.

(Interview #13, 11 February 2022)

In this excerpt, Erdoğan continues his reply from the previous excerpt, this time transitioning from Hagia Sophia to Çamlıca Mosque. The expressive content firstly expresses criticisms and outcries against the opening of Hagia Sophia, led with the generic "Yunan", ("Greeks") as opponents of Hagia Sophia. Secondly, Erdoğan makes the transition to Çamlıca Mosque, using the European and Anatolian sides of

Istanbul as discursive organizers in lines 1 to 3. Thus, by referring to the Çamlıca Mosque, Erdoğan attempts to essentially construct an image of Çamlıca Mosque that is akin to a "Hagia Sophia of the Anatolian side".

Therefore, Erdoğan's ideation about his past activism, the significance of Hagia Sophia, and his positive evaluation of its re-opening as a mosque, in culmination, serve to legitimize the Çamlıca Mosque in this conversation. While these may not be the only purpose of mentioning Hagia Sophia, it is definitely an attempt at transferring legitimacy from Hagia Sophia to Çamlıca Mosque, which may not be recognized as significant by the public.

This excerpt, along with many examples here, shows that Erdoğan deploys Ottomanist ideations and constructs a pro-Ottoman discourse, in essence, to serve as legitimizers his own achievements and policies. While Ottomanism is evoked occasionally to support Erdoğan's own policies and projects, the relationship is never established the other way around. In other words, Erdoğan does not really argue for Ottomanism and from his discourse it can be argued that pro-Ottoman notions are assumed to be present in the audience, thus, Ottomanism is only used to support what Erdoğan already believes or does.

6.7 Chapter summary

This chapter provided an analysis into Erdoğan's construction of expressive discourses, along with an overview of the synergy between factual and expressive statements. While Erdoğan has a lot of major expressive themes apparent in his discourse, this chapter focused on four major ones in order to provide a complete and diverse picture in his use of factual and expressive discourses.

The interplay between factual and expressive discourses are the strongest in the topic of achievements and expertise. Erdoğan deploys achievements prominently as discursive resources and collocates these achievements with relevant ideations. Most times these ideations are celebrations of Erdoğan's achievements and his expertise, including his negative evaluations of (non-)achievements of his opponents and his dedication to servicing his people. This is the most frequent expressive theme, as the panel interviews, as a genre of public communication, are focused on broadcasting Erdoğan's achievements and using them as rhetorical resources. Erdoğan's commitment to democracy is another important ideation that is constructed in discourse. This is second only to Erdoğan's ideations related to achievements and services. While Erdoğan's construction of pro-democratic ideations are not filtered from populistic discourses, his explicit and abundant ideation of democracy hints at a strategical approach to the panel interviews. Noticeably, the genre may be an important element of Erdoğan's choice of ideations, as previous research on Erdoğan's speeches and so on report of discursive construction of authoritarianism and other anti-democratic strategies like alienation. Erdoğan makes it abundantly clear that he is a practicing Muslim, and this is also reflected in his language. Moreover, besides using a conservative Muslim language, Erdoğan also refers to Islamistic ideations occasionally, in order to justify and legitimize his policies and actions that may not be directly related to religious practice. In that regard, it is important to highlight that Erdoğan is rather delicate in deploying Islamistic ideations, often following a moderate and agreeable line.

Erdoğan's deployment of Ottomanism is an interesting case, as Erdoğan does not explicitly refer to himself as an Ottomanist or his policies as Ottomanistic, he speaks favorably of Ottomanism. Presenting Ottomanism in a positive light, he

almost always follows that ideation with an attempt to legitimize his own achievements or policies. Ottomanism as seen in Erdoğan's discourse in panel interviews, is deployed exclusively for rhetorical purposes.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the analyses and the findings from the previous chapters will be discussed. Firstly, a general discussion will be presented through the summary and the interpretation of the findings. Then, the findings will be placed in a broader context in relation to the context of the study and past research. Following further discussion regarding the role of discourse in the construction of power, the limitations of the present study and possible directions for future research will be presented. Finally, the chapter ends with concluding remarks concerning the entirety of the thesis.

7.2 General discussion

Erdoğan's panel interviews rely heavily on the semiotics and social organization of the interview. The prominence symbols associated with Erdoğan's office (First AK Party, then Turkish presidency) signify his presence and construct him as the host and the owner. Moreover, the physical organization of the space indicates the primacy of Erdoğan and the physical distance between the interviewers are symbolic of the social and political distance between the interviewee and the interviewer. In other words, Erdoğan constructs a multimodal discourse in which he is not sharing agency with other participants in a space of political discourse, but he is taking up superiority while the interviewers are subservient to his monologic communication.

As seen in Chapter 4, the features of the multimodal discourse of panel interviews are distinct from the past and contemporary examples of political

interviews, which are much more similar to the conventional interviews. Therefore, a transformation of multimodal resources in political interviews has been observed in the last two decades. This transformation serves to break the continuity in the semiotics of political discourse, thus creating a semiotic break between the pre-Erdoğan and Erdoğan-era media. The emergent discontinuity can be understood as a way of signaling a broader transformation of political communication and policy.

When it comes to the analysis of Erdoğan's language, it was found that factual and expressive statements had an important role in the construction of his discourse. Factual statements, mainly consisting of Erdoğan's and AK Party's achievements, followed by the non-achievements and inactions of their opposition, and then general factual statements are important resources in Erdoğan's discourse. The factual statements have a particular construction, often deploying numerical values as semiotic resources, as seen in Excerpts 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.8, and 5.9. The act of quantifying a factual statement itself is a performance of knowledge and power, through being able to make those statements and not being challenged in any aspect including the technical nuances.

The factual discourse seen in Erdoğan's panel interviews coalesce around two major modes. Primarily, Erdoğan is seen deploying factual statements to disseminate his and AK Party's achievements. This is by far the largest factual theme seen in Erdoğan's discourse, as the interviews themselves apparently have the goal of communicating these achievements as a public communication strategy. In this mode, Erdoğan is deploying strategies that promote his own image and his party's image, often at the cost of the opposition's image.

Secondly, Erdoğan may be seen engaged in the discourse of international politics. This is a distinct mode of discourse, as it has distinct discursive strategies,

like personification or highlighting of personal relations. In this mode, Erdoğan is not giving much space to the criticisms of others, emphasizing both his own achievements and his collaboration with international figures. In this discursive mode, Erdoğan does not have a defined "other" or he is not self-promoting as opposed to an opposition. The discourse is still promotional of Erdoğan as a leader and an expert, but he is also avoiding threatening face against international politicians.

The factual statements often accompany some expressive content, as explored in detail in Chapter 6. These ideations can range from simple commentaries and takeaways to linguistic construction of various beliefs and ideologies, and to explicit statements thereof. For instance, *temizlik imandandır* (*hygiene is part of faith*) in Excerpt 6.14 is a more explicit statement of belief, referring to the religious faith directly, while *Bu kadar açık ara bir atak var* (*there is such a clear offense*) seen in Excerpt 5.1 uttered in the context of road construction is more of a commentary on the factual statements uttered before that.

Notably, the expressive and factual discourses do not just co-exist, and their relationship is beyond rhetoric. While factual statements often act as evidence to the expressive statement (and sometimes vice versa), factual statements themselves are also valuable here. Their prevalence, especially in the form of statements of Erdoğan's achievements, indicates that the interview, to an extent, is geared towards dissemination of these factual statements. Erdoğan's control over the situation and his primacy in the interview, both communicated partially through the visual discourse, allow him to own a monopoly over the factual content present in the interview. The same factors also contribute to Erdoğan having a monopoly over the expressive content as well, since Erdoğan has the freedom to also interpret the

factual content in the way he chooses and to make any expressive claim that he needs at the time. Moreover, besides the conversation being mainly a monologue by Erdoğan, the fabricated context disables any meaningful input by the interviewers, especially contributions that do not benefit Erdoğan's rhetoric. Therefore, Erdoğan's monopoly over the factual and the expressive content is only possible through a transformation of the context that is constructed partially through the visual aspects.

The present study is the first of its kind to investigate Erdoğan's discourse in interviews that acknowledged the role of multimodal discourses and attempted to analyze the interaction from a data-driven perspective. The findings of the present study are the first to document Erdoğan's deployment of multimodal resources, factual and expressive statements, and a variety of other discursive and linguistic strategies for the construction of his hegemonic power through a ground-up approach. In that regard, it fills an important gap in research and hopefully will inspire further research into the language of politics in Turkish context.

The past research on Erdoğan's discourse, especially in political interviews, is rather limited. Moreover, there are no studies that can serve as direct comparisons with the present study. Nonetheless, the present study is mostly confirming of the literature on Erdoğan. When compared with the findings of Ünan Göktan (2022), while the questions took a backseat in the present study, I can also confirm the notion of non-criticality and favorability constructed through the interviewers' questions. Similarly, the present study does not report on face-threatening questions as they do not appear in the corpus. Moreover, recognizing Ünan Göktan's commentary on these types of questions framed as challenges and a limited adversariness, the non-existence of these types of questions can be understood as a non-challenge and a friendly interview.

Erdoğan's discourse in the past research has been analyzed through the construction of authoritarian, anti-feminist, and/or populist discourses (i.e. Gülel, 2020; Jovanović & Đidić, 2020; Zararsız & Seyhan, 2014; Aydın-Düzgit, 2016). While the present study does not disagree with the past findings, it is important to highlight that categorizing Erdoğan in discursive dichotomies is a reductive approach to analyzing the discourse. For instance, while Erdoğan's speeches, as reported in past research, make use of populist discourses, a complete picture needs to acknowledge the contrastingly elitist discourse constructed through Erdoğan's ideations of the expertise and multimodal resources like physical organization and the palace-like visuals apparent in these interviews. For instance, Erdoğan may emphasize the fact that he is in a position of power and responsibility, as a way of criticizing the idealism and the inexperience of the opposition. This act may accompany colloquial phrasings, such as *sırtında küfe yok* (*you have no burden on your back*) seen in Excerpt 6.2. Similarly, statements like *Öyle kuru kuruya konuşmakla da bu işler olmuyor, icraat icraat* (*these things do not happen by dry talk, achievements, achievements)* highlight Erdoğan as a doer and as an expert, while positioning the opposition as a mere talker with no achievements. This positioning can be argued to have an elitist undertone, as the elitist discourses often highlight a class of experts and portray the opposing populists as mere talkers.

Similarly, Erdoğan's authoritarian discourses co-exist with his expressive statements in favor of representative democracies and his stance against military coups. This is seen in the extensive space dedicated to these ideations in section 6.3 of Chapter 6. This indicates that Erdoğan is able to navigate complex ideological spaces, engaging in discourses that would be considered categorically incompatible. His profession in hybridity and the space that is created for him allow him to engage

in contrasting and incompatible ideations, as well as linguistic and semiotic repertoires that would normally be considered incompatible with the conventions of the political interview.

7.3 Panel interviews as a distinct genre

The present thesis study provides a picture of the panel interviews as a distinct and unique genre, one that is significantly different from the conventional political interview. In this regard, I will discuss the findings in the context of three approaches: Genre theory (Bhatia, 1993), participation framework (Goffman, 1981), and the types of political interviews (Hutchby, 2022).

7.3.1 Genre theory

Following Bhatia's (1993) definition of a genre, it is possible to trace findings of the present thesis study in relation to the construction of panel interviews as a distinct genre. Firstly, the conventions of the panel interview are unique and recognizable, distinct from conventional political interviews. As explored in Chapter 4, the visual semiotic dimension of panel interviews is strictly uniform across a variety of contexts. These conventions include the prevalence of symbology that is affiliated with Erdoğan and the prominence of Erdoğan himself in the physical space, which is mirrored by the reduction of the journalists, the broadcasters, and the affiliated symbology in the visual domain. The interaction and the discourse in the linguistic modality are also heavily conventionalized. Questions seen in excerpts like 3.1, 5.1 and 6.1 demonstrate that almost all of the questions by the journalists are prefaced, with lengthy praises and overall, a prosody that is biased favorably towards Erdoğan. The turn taking structure, while not analyzed in detail in the present thesis study,

follows a main question-main answer-follow-up question-short answer-next question format which is heavily conventionalized. Finally, Erdoğan's responses, as seen with the interplay between the factual and expressive discourses in his utterances, follow recognizable conventions, such as the reliance of quantifiable statements or past achievements in the factual domain.

These conventions are not only stylistic choices, but they are manifestations of the embedded understanding of the communicative purpose. I argue that the communicative purpose of the panel interviews is related to the presentation of Erdoğan as a competent leader, as opposed to the incompetent opposition, essentially functioning as propaganda pieces. This is in sharp contrast to the conventional interviews, which are purposefully designed around accountability and public information. Almost all elements of the discourse of panel interviews signal a shift in communicative purpose from conventional interviews.

The uniformity of the visual semiotic domain beyond randomness indicates intentionality towards foregrounding and empowerment of Erdoğan. Similarly, the understanding of the communicative purpose is evidenced by the uniformity of the question conventions and possibly the extent to which the structure differs from conventional political interviews. Even if the extreme view towards the scriptedness of the interview (the idea that all questions are written beforehand and the interviewers just repeat verbatim) is true, that level of preparation still requires a level of intentionality that can only be understood with the notion of communicative purpose. Lastly, Erdoğan's reliance on quantification and achievements, part of Erdoğan's stylistics in general, can be interpreted as Erdoğan's resources for the accomplishment of the communicative purpose related to his image as a competent leader.

I would like to further argue that these conventions and the related communicative purpose are acknowledged by almost all of the parties involved. Erdoğan and people invested in his image, like public relations specialists, are working on this elaborate genre of media, as well as the journalists and other members affiliated with the broadcasters. Moreover, I believe that most of the audience also recognizes the panel interview (although possibly not using this name) as a unique genre that is separate from conventional political interviews. The notions of scriptedness and the lack of journalistic integrity are frequent in both opposition media and the public that is consuming it (i.e. Halktv, 2021). While I cannot find evidence for or against it, it is plausible that many members of the audience of these interviews also recognize this fact.

7.3.2 Participation

The discussion on the genre, recognizing that genres are definitionally associated with their participants, needs to follow upon its participants. To that end, a critical perspective like Goffman's (1971) participation frameworks are useful in understanding the complex relationships between intentions and participations. Goffman (1971) states that the conversation does not include a mere hearer and a speaker, but a whole range of ratified and unratified participants. Among the ratified participants, addressed recipients are the direct, intended recipients of a message, while unaddressed participants are the indirect recipients despite being recognized as active participants in the speech event. In the context of the present thesis study, ratified participants are Erdoğan, the journalists, and the audience who watches the program. The former two are clearly evident from the interaction itself, while the latter is evidenced through occasional references to the members of the audience.

The sequences in which journalists (mainly those who are moderators) open and close the program include talk that is often directed towards the audience. The recognition of the audience as a ratified participant is also evident in various expressions, like *Ekranları başında bizi izleyen aziz milletime… şükranlarımı sunuyorum* (*I offer my thanks . . . to my grand nation who is watching us from their screens*) (Interview #4, 30 July 2016). In a more implicit fashion, I believe that the construction factual and expressive discourses also serve the construction of the audience as a ratified recipient. Erdoğan's persuasive tone and his deployment of these statements following a rhetorical strategy is indicative of a talk not solely directed towards the journalists but towards the audience as well. Therefore, all parties directly involved in the interview are ratified participants, along with the most members of the audience.

This idea can be taken one more step ahead, as the audience is also the most prominently addressed recipient. While Erdoğan, in theory, answers the questions by the journalists, in most panel interviews there is no direct reference to the questions themselves. This suggests that as long as Erdoğan's utterances are concerned, there is no specific individual addressee among the panel of interviewers. While references to the journalists are rare, Erdoğan (and the journalists, for that matter) makes more references to the audience, thus positioning it in a more direct addressee position than the journalists in the context of linguistic utterances. This is in contrast to the body language and overall visual semiotics, which clearly position Erdoğan as in conversation with the interviewers. This contrast may seem reductive of the role of the interviewers or the audience, but I would like to propose an alternative reading. I believe that the panel interviews attempt to position the audience as the addressed recipient, which reinforces the role of the genre as a means of propaganda, while

deploying the ironically unaddressed recipients, the interviewers, as the channels through which that communication occurs.

The involvement of the audience as part of the ratified participants is, I believe, a divergence from the conventional political interviews. While the opening and closing sequences are an essential part of basically all television programming, the interjections of the acknowledgement of the audience is a new addition of panel interviews. Conventional political interviews, both from the past and the contemporary, feature little to no reference to the audience directly that positions it as the addressee – at best it can be considered unaddressed at most times. Therefore, the panel interview, as a genre, contains a distinct participation framework from the conventional political interviews.

Unratified recipients include overhearers (participants without intending to do so), eavesdroppers (unratified participants who intend to participate), and bystanders (unintentional participants whose participation is limited). There may be many unratified participants (although, it is arguable how "unratified" a recipient of a televised interview can be) of the panel interviews, such as overhearers who happen to come across the broadcast in a public space or so on. There is a type of unratified recipient that is acknowledged implicitly – the recognition of which affects the discourse -, which is the type of audience members who scrutinize the content of the interview. These can be members of the media, public relations specialists, opposition members, people interested in specific issues etc. that can bring about a critical perspective to Erdoğan's factual and expressive claims.

The fact that no specific group or section of the audience is named in their talk towards the audience shows that they are not recognized explicitly. However, I argue that these groups are recognized more implicitly in certain features of

Erdoğan's discourse. Primarily, Erdoğan's use of quantification in factual claims is a worthy example of this recognition. Quantification in Erdoğan's factual claims, when talking to a broader, non-expert audience only needs to be impressive (possibly by being a large number) and somewhat specific, to assist with Erdoğan's image as a hands-on leader. However, accuracy in these quantifications, as well as added specialistic information, is of little benefit to Erdoğan's image for the most members of the audience, but they are plausibly really effective towards non-named, specialist, and critical members of the audience. For instance, Erdoğan's clarification of the machinery and its function in Excerpt 5.3 demonstrates one such use. In that instance, Erdoğan is less likely working to inform the public or the journalists as to which machine is used for what, but to demonstrate his own familiarity and knowledge to a possibly smaller subsection of the audience that can actually fact-check Erdoğan's claims, possibly with prior knowledge. In this instance, this subsection can range from construction workers to engineers to businesspeople and contractors, thus hitting a wide range of social classes and education levels.

7.3.3 Types of political interviews

Previous research had highlighted three main types of political interviews, namely political, hybrid, and adversarial (Hutchby, 2022). These categories are defined by the adherence to the norms of the political interview and the cooperativeness of the interviewee. As it is understood through an overview of the discourse, Erdoğan's panel interviews do not truly fit into any of these categories. As these panel interviews have, with no exaggeration, no adversariness or aggression, they cannot be considered adversarial or hybrid interviews. In strict terms they can be considered conventional interviews since the format, in its simplest form, follows a question-

answer-next question structure. A deeper look, however, reveals that follow-up questions are organized in a hierarchy, serving to continue the topical thread that was started with a heavily marked main question. Thus, along with their content, the follow-up questions are not means of clarifying, criticizing, or challenging the answer or the interviewee: they are supportive of Erdoğan's answer, or at least serve to help Erdoğan elaborate.

That is the reason why I argue that categorizing Erdoğan's panel interviews as a conventional interview would overly expand the borders of the concept. This approach places Erdoğan's panel interviews alongside other interviews where journalists at least try to appear neutral and frequently challenge the interviewee through strategies like self-assertion and face-threatening questions. These strategies, put simply, do not appear in Erdoğan's panel interviews. Adversariness found in conventional interviews in other contexts has left its place to friendliness and co-operation in Erdoğan's interviews. While there was a time in the past when the panel interviews would be considered a form of conventional or even hybrid political interviews, like the 2011 interview when interviewers were able to ask face-threatening questions (Ünan Göktan, 2022), this time has certainly passed and the panel interviews, as they exist now, are a distinct genre of political interview that do not have any trace of neutrality, let alone antagonism.

This further demonstrates an important limitation in past research, which is the fact that most of the research in political interviewing, especially those who influence theoretical perspectives, are conducted in contexts that are not universal. In other words, the over-representation of western contexts where the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee can be considered adversarial or at least neutral has led to an over-representation of the emergent features of these discourses

in shaping of the modern theory on political interviews. I believe that the present thesis, as a snapshot of a context that does not fit the contemporary research on political interviews, is an important piece for highlighting these issues.

It is important to emphasize the fact that, for a variety of reasons, Erdoğan's panel interviews are not as relevant in the public discourse. This is not to suggest that they are unimportant, on the contrary, they clearly have an important role in Erdoğan's public communication strategy and the journalists, both within and without the interview, are looking into these interviews as potential sources for generating headlines. However, these interviews may not be as significant to the broader audience. Reportedly, when the Interview #9 aired on May 12, 2023, 2 days before the general elections, the program's ratings was not in the top 10, lagging behind the news broadcasts of the major channels, high profile serials that aired that day, and even an interview with his closest opponent, Kılıçdaroğlu (Cumhuriyet, 2023). This suggests that Erdoğan's interviews are not viewed as much. Moreover, there is a downwards trend in television viewership in Turkey (RTÜK, 2018) and in Turkish youth (RTÜK, 2022). Even though the news programming is still the genre that is watched the most, it is followed closely by local serials, sports matches and programming, and morning shows. Conveniences like mobile devices, video on demand, and easy access to pirated broadcasts of otherwise paywalled content like the Turkish Super League matches possibly undermine the television, leading to an ongoing decrease in the preference of conventional television.

There is certainly a correlation between the downwards trend of television viewership and the transformation of the panel interview along with the other television content with Erdoğan. While I believe it is not possible to claim a direct causal link between the two, it is very plausible that the causes and the effects of

these two phenomena are interrelated. The panel interviews exist in a context of market calcification, consolidation, editorialism, partisanism, and clientelism. Some of these are the direct result of actions of AK Party and Erdoğan, such as the case of Doğan Group (Yeşil, 2016) and the others are the results major historical forces, like the market calcification that emerged as a result heavy market control up to the 1980 coup. These factors, while in part contributing to Erdoğan's use of panel interviews, may also be associated with the recent trend of falling television viewership.

It is an important sign that people in the past who challenged Erdoğan in political interviews and people who did report on Erdoğan with a critical perspective are now distant from mainstream televised media. People like Uğur Dündar can only appear in left-leaning television channels, which, in general, have significantly less viewership than the state-owned TRT and pro-AK Party ATV. Ruşen Çakır and Fatih Altaylı, two journalists who had interviewed Erdoğan in hybrid and even somewhat antagonistic interviews, are now appearing only on YouTube. It seems that the mainstream media sector has grown allergic to people with critical approaches to the AK Party regime or possibly an overall sense of journalistic integrity. The opposite is also true, the mainstream media has been filled with journalists who are supportive of the AK Party regime and who are satisfied with engaging in panel interviews. Another important note in regard to Erdoğan's political communication strategy is the fact that Erdoğan did not appear in any interviews during the campaign period for the 2024 local elections. This is the first election in Erdoğan's political career that he did not appear in an interview in the weeks leading up to an election. If this is to be understood as meaningful, it can mean several things. Firstly, it can be so that the political interviews are no longer seen as profitable, thus, they were not deployed for this election season. Alternatively, it may be seen as a genre that has fulfilled its life

with the 2023 elections. Secondly, Erdoğan and his staff may have felt reluctance towards appearing on television, as this was the period with the lowest approval rates of Erdoğan and the first election where AK Party did not come in first place. Finally, Erdoğan may have felt reluctant to appear on television to give space to his candidates, as this was a local election, or to avoid triggering a sense of Erdoğan-fatigue in the audience following the intensive campaigning for the 2023 general and presidential elections. All of these possibilities are rather unprecedented and contrast Erdoğan's approach to media.

7.4 Construction of power

Panel interviews play an important role in Erdoğan's political communication and overall strategy for discursive construction of power. There are several levels to the construction of power through interviews, which are discussed below.

Firstly, the non-friction between the interviewers and the interviewee enables Erdoğan to engage in a discourse that makes him appear powerful and competent. The fact that the interviewers do not challenge or antagonize him allows Erdoğan to freely engage in lengthy turns with a lot of factual and expressive claims. The lack of a critical perspective allows these claims to be uttered without any hurdles. Moreover, these lengthy turns give Erdoğan space to memorize at least chunks of his replies, thus preserving energy and attention from the creativity that would be necessary in otherwise challenging contexts. Besides saving face and energy, these lengthy replies can also contribute to Erdoğan's image as a proficient speaker. The visual and broadcasting elements along with the positive and respectful attitude from the journalists serves to further improve Erdoğan's image.

Secondly, I would like to argue for the role of the subversion of interviews as a means of constructing power. Interviews, as a categorically dialogic genre of discourse, and political interviews, a genre of interview that is seen in the world and in the past in Turkey as challenging and antagonistic, are completely clean of these qualities in the context of panel interviews. Therefore, the mere existence of panel interviews is demonstrative of Erdoğan's and AK Party's transformative power over the media. The uniformity of the interaction and semiotics across channels and conglomerates is further proof of that notion, as Erdoğan's reach is felt not only in state-owned media or pro-AK Party channels, but also in mainstream channels with a generally less visible or an indirect bias towards AK Party. Erdoğan and AK Party's power to sanction the non-collaborating parties through antagonizing or embargoes, and their power to reward the collaborating ones through favorable tenders and such (Yeşil, 2016) manifests itself in the discourse in panel interviews.

However, this leads to a deeper question about the choice of panel interviews as a political discourse strategy. The reason why Erdoğan engages in simulated quasi-dialogues while he has almost unrestricted access to monologues as a public communication strategy is worthy of discussion.

By the virtue of being the most prominent figure in a country, Erdoğan's appearances on televised interviews are inevitable. Therefore, it is strategically viable for Erdoğan to reject engaging in interviews where he is not in an advantageous position. Given that Erdoğan has the resources to cultivate a space where he has the advantage, it is only natural for him to choose the path of least resistance and appear only on pro-AK Party channels and/or only talk with pro-AK Party journalists. However, the transformation of the panel interview to the extent outlined in this thesis is not the path of least resistance, as complex and expensive logistics come

into the play for the production of panel interviews of this style as opposed to the conventional interview. Therefore, the question remains as to the cause of the panel interview.

One possible answer can be reached through the notion of "interview society" (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). While this notion has been rather limited to a criticism of the over-reliance on interviews in social science research (Silverman, 2007), I think this can help us understand the interview or the interrogative dialogue in a variety of other fields, including political communication. There is a chance that Erdoğan or his publicists believe that a simulated dialogue, a strongly controlled interview is preferable to a monologue. Even when the goal of the interview is the dissemination of AK Party and Erdoğan's achievements, projects, and arguments to the wider public, they go out of their way to present these in the interview format instead of a much more straightforward monologue like an address to the nation or even a press conference. Therefore, relating to a notion of "interview society", Erdoğan possibly believes in an exceptional power attributed to the interview format that justifies this level of inconvenience.

This hypothetical power is very strongly related to the pitfalls of interview methodology in social sciences criticized by Atkinson & Silverman (1997; Silverman, 2007). They criticize the assumption of authenticity attributed to the experience, which may also be attributed by the audience to the interviews of Erdoğan. In other words, the simulacra of a political interview can appear much more authentic than a mere monologue about Erdoğan's projects.

The final issue regarding the multimodal and linguistic resources in the context of Erdoğan's panel interviews is the inherent contrast that exists between the discourse and the actual content of the interviews. Importantly, the semiotics of the

interview and certain expressive components aim to construct a grandiose discourse, a sense of transcendentalism that distinguishes Erdoğan from day-to-day politics. The multimodal elements, such as the space and the visuals, as well as certain expressive components such as the callbacks to the Ottomans or evocations of Islamic religion are examples of resources serving to construct grandiosity in Erdoğan's discourse.

The content itself, the topics seen in the interview, however, are usually deeply embedded in the day-to-day politics. In the magnificent halls of Ottoman palaces, Erdoğan is asking for support for the local elections or a military operation into Syria. The callback to the Ottoman philosophy is used to legitimize the city hospitals scheme, essentially private-public joint ventures for building hospitals. Erdoğan refers to the Islamic hadith to promote his policy for garbage collection and waste management in the urban municipalities. Even when Erdoğan is deploying lengthy and deep ideations, these ideas essentially serve to call for support for AK Party's local governments, the financial or foreign policy, or to de-legitimize opposition.

In spite of all of the effort put into the linguistic and multimodal construction of this grandiosity, it seems that the banality of the day-to-day politics of Turkey, inter-party fights, or other seemingly distant issues are once again situated closely to Erdoğan. Thus, this juxtaposition between the presentation and the content may need an explanation, albeit rather speculatively. I believe there are three possibilities, not mutually exclusive, for this juxtaposition.

Firstly, this juxtaposition may be a deliberate strategy for maintaining attention, as a way of supplementing more "interesting" content to assist disseminating possibly mundane political discourse. Alternatively, it can act as a

filter, thus serving to essentially gatekeep people who are engaged in politics from watching the interview. Another goal for such a strategy may be the consumption of this grandiose discourse along with the mundane politics. This can serve to demonstrate to the members of audience and possibly media professionals who are interested in the mundane, political content the power of Erdoğan as a speaker and as a leader, communicated through the more grandiose aspects of the discourse.

The second possibility is that this can be a deliberate strategy, but not towards the audience but towards the self-perception of Erdoğan. As he recognizes himself as a veteran and an expert after about three decades in politics, he may wish to distance himself from the banality of the day-to-day political discourse. Therefore, grandiosity may serve as a way of self-satisfaction or a medium to distance himself from his past as a person who engaged in the mundane. While I find this possibility to be the least likely one, it may also help explain Erdoğan's and AK Party's (often criticized) tendency towards luxury and opulence.

The third and final possibility is that this may not be deliberate at all, at least not directly. Partially related to the second possibility, it is known that Erdoğan's day-to-day management and his public relations affairs are managed through dedicated offices, namely his executive secretariat and Presidential Communications Office. Therefore, it is possible that Erdoğan may not be as involved in the aspects of multimodal discourse seen in the panel interview, taking on a more passive role during the planning and preparation stages of the interviews. I believe that these three factors, to varying degrees, have some role in the juxtaposition of grandiosity and mundanity of Erdoğan's discourse in the panel interviews.

7.5 Limitations and future research

While I attempted to reach representativeness and rigor as much as possible for this study, there are some limitations to this study. Primarily, the present study does not cover all of Erdoğan's panel interviews. This is primarily due to the fact that not all broadcasts are as easily accessible. Especially Erdoğan's interviews before his presidency, as their records are not kept as properly as those after his inauguration, are almost lost to history. It is plausible that these recordings exist in the broadcaster's archives or the records are kept by some third parties, but there are some interviews that are not accessible publicly. There are also several interviews, records of which are kept publicly, but the recordings are incomplete; often limited to several short clips. Even in the age of digital recordkeeping and internet archives, it is likely that, in the domain of Erdoğan's panel interviews, there are some media that are lost to history.

While Erdoğan's discourse in various media receives attention, I believe that there are certainly more genres and events that are worthy of analysis. Erdoğan's interviews that are outside of the panel interview genre, Erdoğan's audience-integrated interviews, and so on are interesting contexts that may further reveal the relationship between language, communication, and social action. Moreover, there is almost no research on the interviews of figures other than Erdoğan, such as prominent AK Party politicians, politicians from the other parties, and other public figures in Turkey. I believe that more research is needed in the evolution of panel interviews (or interviews in general) in the last decade following its transformation with Erdoğan. The last two years have seen some opposition politicians (Kılıçdaroğlu, İmamoğlu, and Özel) engage in interviews that somewhat resemble Erdoğan's panel interviews. These investigations can help further conceptualize the

notion of "Erdoğanization" (Selçuk et al., 2019) and seek to establish it as a discursive style in Turkish political discourse. Moreover, as Erdoğan's panel interviews exist in a context of political polarization, media consolidation, and democratic backsliding, it is surely worth looking into interviews from other countries and time periods with similar contexts. The west-centricity of the research on political interviews has led to a reduced emphasis on contexts of hybrid regimes and systems with limited democracy, like competitive authoritarian regimes (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016). While at the first glance the reduction of the interviewer and the monologic nature of the conversation make it appear not worthy of investigation, a deeper look into the discourse in these contexts is surely to yield interesting findings. Finally, past research on political interviews has analyzed the interactions, naturally, from a conversation analysis perspective. Similarly, research in political discourse in Turkey mostly relies on critical discourse analysis and Foucauldian perspectives on discourse. These approaches are crucial in understanding and bringing a critical approach to the political communication as a whole, but there is a noticeable lack of studies employing approaches taking the language and semiotics to the center. The language itself is rarely problematized and the multimodal resources are often taken for granted. I believe that this is an important gap in research and one that should be bridged in the future for the sake of a complete understanding of Turkish political communication.

7.6 Conclusion

Erdoğan and AK Party's rule in Turkey for 22 years has been transformative in many domains, including the media and more specifically political interviews. Erdoğan and AK Party always had a distinct approach to public communication, such as an

explicit rejection of appearing with opposition on television, and in the context of media consolidation, it ended up so that Erdoğan's only interactive appearance on television became the panel interviews, especially after being elected as the president in 2014. The panel interviews take place in spaces that are friendly to Erdoğan and the interaction itself, along with the questions of the interviewers, is designed around improving Erdoğan's image and to give him space to essentially convert the interview into a monologue.

In these de facto monologues, Erdoğan deploys expressive and factual statements, often in interplay, as resources for his rhetorical strategy and his discursive construction of hegemonic power. Being given the opportunity for a monologue and his subsequent use of this opportunity to platform his achievements and to deploy various expressive themes essentially gives him a monopoly over the factual and the expressive content in the interview. This monopoly is the backbone of Erdoğan's construction of power in political interviews.

The findings of the present study complement past research on Erdoğan, highlighting important gaps like the construction of the multimodal discourse and Erdoğan's engagement in a hybrid discourse. Moreover, the present thesis adds to the past research on political interviews, presenting a distinct and underrepresented context. The context in the present study is so distinct that it may even be worth conceptualizing it as a distinct genre, although, more research into the Turkish context and other similar context is definitely needed for a more universal understanding of political interviews.

In conclusion, the present thesis offers a study of how discourse and language can be deployed, in the mediatized contexts, for the purposes of constructing power. The particular relationship between the medium, context, and language captured in

this snapshot of place and time can work as a gateway of understanding how explicit political power translates to discursive power, and vice versa. I believe that a critical perspective towards political discourse promoted in the present study will benefit further research, and the present study will be informative for understanding the ever-ongoing transformation of the political discourse.

APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW WITH CODINGS[4]

Interview #6, 8 March 2017

TRT Haber

Pelin Çift, Fahrettin Altun, Burhanettin Duran

PELİN ÇİFT: İyi akşamlar sayın seyirciler, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi'nden özel bir yayınla karşınızdayız. Bu akşam bizler için önemli, heyecan verici bir akşam. Zira halk oylamasına giderken Sayın Cumhurbaşkanı ilk kez bir canlı yayına katılıyor ve bizlerin sorularımızı yanıtlayacak. Sistem değişikliğiyle ilgili olarak hepimizin aklında birtakım soru işaretleri var. Neden böyle bir değişikliğe gidildiğini merak ediyoruz. Sayın Cumhurbaşkanı bu gece bu sorulara cevap verecek. Tabii vaktimiz el verdiğince diğer konulara da gireceğiz; Almanya'dan, Suriye'den, Rusya'yla, Amerika'yla ilişkilerden bahsetmeye gayret edeceğiz. Çok teşekkür ederiz efendim bu yayın talebimizi kabul ettiğiniz için. SETA Genel Koordinatörü Burhanettin Duran ve Sabah Gazetesi yazarı Fahrettin Altun da bizlerle birlikte. Tabii 8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar Günü olması vesilesiyle ilk soruyu ben sormak isterim müsaadenizle.

RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN: Buyurun.

P.Ç: Şimdi efendim, neden ihtiyaç duyuldu, yani mevcut sistemde eksik olan neydi? Yolunda gitmeyen neydi de böyle bir ihtiyaca başvuruldu? Siz neden istiyorsunuz sistem değişikliğini?

[4] Expressive statements are italicized.

R.T.E: *Öncelikle TRT ile böyle bir programı gerçekleştirmiş olmak bizler için tabii anlamlı.*

İki; gerçekten Dünya Kadınlar Gününde böyle bir programı gerçekleştirmek ikinci bir anlamı taşıyor. Fakat bizim tabii bir farklılığınız var; bildiğiniz gibi, bizim için her gün kadınlar günüdür. Fakat bu kadınlar gününde ne yazık ki bir töreni burada yapmayı planlarken Bursa'dan Ankara'ya gelmekte olan otobüsün geçirmiş olduğu kaza neticesinde 7 hanım kardeşimiz rahmetli oldu ve 30'u aşkın hanım kardeşimiz yaralandı. *Ben ebediyete intikal eden bu hanım kardeşlerimize Allah'tan rahmet diliyorum, ailelerine başsağlığı diliyorum. Tüm Türk Metal İş Sendikası camiasına aynı şekilde başsağlığı dileklerimi iletmek istiyorum. Yaralılara Allah'tan şifalar diliyorum. Her şeyden önce Başkanlık sistemi, şu 14 yıllık geçmişimizde bize birçok gerçekleri öğretti. Nerede sıkıntı yaşıyoruz, nerede rahat bir çalışma zemini yakalıyoruz, bunları öğrenme fırsatını bulduk.* Bildiğiniz gibi bizler çok ciddi sayıda milletvekilleriyle parlamentoya girdik. Örneğin ilk seçimde bizler yüzde 34,4 almak suretiyle neredeyse başa baş anayasayı değiştirme noktasına geldik. Ama buna rağmen birçok sıkıntıyla karşı karşıya kaldığımız için orada da bunu başaramadık. *Çünkü zaman oluyor içinizden de fire verebiliyorsunuz, böyle bir durumla da karşı karşıya kalabiliyorsunuz*. İkinci seçimde oranımız çok daha yükseldi, fakat tabii bu defa milletvekili sayısında bir düşüş söz konusuydu. Üçüncü defa yüzde 50'ye neredeyse dayandık. Orada da milletvekili sayımız biraz daha düştü ve yine bu anayasa değişikliği hedefimiz olmasına rağmen gerçekleştiremedik. *Peki, neden? En önemlisi, muhalefet şöyle bir yaklaşım tarzı içinde bulunuyor: Siz beyaza beyaz diyorsunuz, muhalefetin huyudur özellikle bizde, siz beyaz diyorsanız o siyah diyecektir. Bunun yolu nedir? Bunun yolu sadece parlamentoda bu işi tartışmak, konuşmak değil.* Ya, hemen bazı bakanlarımız hakkında bakarsınız bir hafta, iki hafta

içinde bir gensoru gelir ve bu gensoruyla siz tabii parlamentoda tıkanıyorsunuz, sizi çalıştırmıyor. Biliyor ki bu sayım benim yeterli değil, bu geçecek, ama buna rağmen o gensoruyu vermek suretiyle orada bir tıkanmayı, bir patinajı meydana getiriyor. Aradan bir müddet geçiyor, bakıyorsunuz tekrar bir gensoru. Güven oylaması olaylarında benzer sıkıntılar yaşanıyor. *Bütün bunların yanında ülkede istikrarı tehdit ediyor mevcut sistem. İstikrar ve güven aslında kalkınmanın olmazsa olmazıdır, başarının olmazsa olmazıdır. Eğer biz bugün başarılı olabilmişsek, başarılı olabilmemizin arkasında yatan gerçek şudur: O da, biz yani aynı ekolden gelen insanlar olarak gerek Sayın Gül ve benim başbakanlığım dönemi, benim başbakanlığım ve Sayın Davutoğlu, Sayın Binali Bey dönemi, biz tabii aynı ekolden geldiğimiz için bizde sıkıntı söz konusu değil*. Ancak Sayın Gül'den önce Sezer döneminde biz bazı sıkıntıları yaşadık. *Bu sıkıntılar bize bazı şeyleri öğretiyor. Nedir? Aynı ekolden gelmediğiniz zaman bakıyorsunuz bir dayatmayla karşı karşıyasınız.* Örneğin, aynı ekolden olmalarına rağmen bir anayasa kitapçığının fırlatılması olayının, merhum Ecevit olayında nelere mal olduğunu, hemen ertesi gün ekonomik olarak Türkiye'nin ne gibi bir inkırazla, adeta bir çöküşle karşı karşıya olduğunu unutamayız.

P.Ç: Yazarkasa fırlatıldı, o da sembol.

R.T.E Ayrıca, onlar tabii Başbakanlığın önünde yaşanan olaylar, o ayrı bir konu. *Mesela yine benim bazı atamalarda istediğim neticeyi alamıyorum. Halbuki Cumhurbaşkanı öyle şeye ret vermeli ki veya kabul etmemeli ki, o da nedir?* Gerçekten sizin teklif ettiğiniz isim o makama layık bir isim değilse, bunu dersiniz şu şu nedenle bunu kabul etmiyorum dersiniz. Ama biz öyle şeylere rastlamadık, tam aksine çok çok layık olan arkadaşlarımız, mesela reddedilmiştir, veto edilmiştir. Bunlardan bir tanesi, örneğin Mehmet Şimşek'tir. Mesela Mehmet Bey, yani

Avrupa'da gayet iyi yetişmiş bir arkadaşımız olmasına rağmen, işte dünyanın en önemli kuruluşunda üst düzey yönetici olarak çalışmış olmasına rağmen aynı şekilde hiçbir gerekçe sunmadan, ben böyle istiyorum. *Ben böyle istiyorum demekle siz bir Başbakanın, ki icranın neredeyse başında o, onun önünü keserseniz, bu ülkenin istikrarına hizmet etmez. Ülkedeki güvene ekonomide hizmet etmez, bunları yaşadık.* Bu benim verdiğim basit bir iki örnek. *Bizim ise hıza ihtiyacımız var. Ve biz şu dönemde 14 sene içerisinde dikkat ederseniz ekonomide diğer ülkelerle, Batı ülkeleriyle çok ciddi bir yarışın içine girdik.* Biz görevi devraldığımız zaman kasa tamtakırdı. Bizden önceki yönetimlerin sözlerini hatırlayalım. Delikli paraya ihtiyacı vardı ülkenin, maaşlar ödenmiyordu. 6 ay, 7 ay, 8 ay memurların, işçilerin kamuda maaşları ödenmiyordu. Böyle bir dönemden biz bunu devraldık ve devralır almaz da sadece bırakın bu tür maaş ödeme sıkıntılarını aşmayı, biz bir taraftan da süratle yatırımlara girdik ve *bu yatırımlarla beraber Batı'nın, dünyanın hayranlığını kazandık.* Ve bunu Batı o zamanlar kendi diliyle, hani şu anda bize o çirkin yaklaşımlar gösteren Batı kendi diliyle ne diye ifade ediyordu?: "Türkiye bir sessiz devrim gerçekleştirdi" Bunu ben söylemiyorum, onlar söylüyor. Ve bu sessiz devrimi biz, işte o aynı ekolden gelen ekip olarak aramızdaki dayanışmayla bir atağa kalktık ve bu kalktığımız atak neticesinde süratle Türkiye hakikaten netice almaya başladı. İşte basit bir örnek olarak vereyim. O zaman Ulaştırma Bakanımız Binali Bey. Ne yapacağız, ne edeceğiz bunları konuşurken, bakın bir taraftan 79 senede 6100 kilometre bölünmüş yol yapılmış ve biz bunun üzerine 14 senede, düşünebiliyor musunuz, 18 bin kilometre bölünmüş yol ilave ettik. *Bakınız nereden nereye!* 14 senede 18 bin kilometre bölünmüş yol ilave ediyorsun, ama 79 senede 6100 kilometre bölünmüş yol yapıyorsunuz! *Bu kadar açık ara bir atak var.* 25 tane havalimanı varken Türkiye'nin, biz bunun üzerine 30 tane havalimanı ilave ediyoruz.

Bu arada, şimdi 55 tane bizim havalimanımız var. Bir tane, sadece Türk Hava Yolları varken, şimdi 6 tane, 7 tane şirket var. Bunların hepsi birbiriyle adeta rekabet ediyor. *Bu tabii ulaşımda atılan adımlar.* Geliyoruz eğitime… Eğitimde bakıyorsunuz 250 bin civarında derslik yapmış bir Türkiye var, bu noktadayız. Bunun yanında şu anda Türkiye'nin 81 vilayetinde artık üniversitelerimiz var. 79 üniversiteden devraldık, şu anda 181 yanılmıyorsam üniversitemiz var. *Böyle bir noktaya geldik. Bunlar durup dururken olmadı.* Sağlıkta ciddi bir reform yaptık ve bu yaptığımız reformu şu anda dünyaya örnek hale getirdik. Bakın, Batı Avrupa'nın değişik ülkelerinden hastalar Türkiye'ye getiriliyor, burada tedavileri yapılıyor. *Biz oradaki bağnazlığı da ortadan kaldırdık. Neydi o bağnazlık? Devletçilik anlayışına teslim olmuş bir yapı vardı* ve bu yapıda hatırlayın memurların hastanesi ayrıydı, işçilerin ayrıydı. Devletin içindeki kurumların kendilerine ait hastaneleri vardı. Mesela PTT'nin ayrı hastanesi vardı, Denizyollarının ayrı hastanesi vardı, bunların böyle kendilerine ait hastaneleri vardı. İşte SSK'nın başında da malum belli süreler şu anda muhalefetin başındaki zat vardı *ve onun döneminde de SSK hastanelerinin ne halde olduğunu, zaten yaşayanlarınız var, ben çok iyi yaşadığım için gayet iyi biliyorum. Hele hele Savaş Ay'ın, rahmetlinin programını izleme durumunda olanlar varsa, o dönemde neler yaşandığını, hangi çileleri çektiğimizi çok çok iyi biliyoruz. Şimdi ise biz bütün bunları değiştirdik ve bütün illerimizde, hatta büyük ilçelerimizde hastanelere kavuştuk. Ve benim bir sevdam vardı, aşkım vardı. Diyordum ki, "Biz ne zaman şehir hastanelerini büyükşehirlerden başlamak üzere yapacağız?* İşte şimdi bunlardan iki tanesini bitirdik; birisi Yozgat'ta, birisi de Mersin'de. Mesela şimdi Mersin'deki hastane tabii Yozgat'a göre çok daha büyük olduğu için, yani 1300 yataklı bir hastane yapmışsınız *ve muhteşem bir hastane.* Benim Mersin'de açılışını yaptığımız gün ziyarete gittiğimde, bakıyorsunuz köyden gelmiş olan orada hanım teyzelerimiz,

kardeşlerimiz o hastanedeki lüksü görünce, tabii onlar hep şok oldular. *Nasıl dualar ediyorlar, nasıl dualar ediyorlar. Bu bizim hakkımız değil miydi, yıllar yılı niçin bunlar yapılmadı acaba? Şimdi bunlar süratle devam edecek.* Önümüzde açacağımız birçok bu tür şehir hastanelerimiz var. İlk etapta 30 büyükşehirde bu hastanelerimizi kuracağız. Adalet sarayları, emniyet sarayları, yolların yanında, enerjide çok ciddi bir güce ulaştık. Yani biz geldiğimizde 30 bin megavat gücümüz varken kurulu güç, şu anda yine 80 bin megavat kurulu güce sahip olduk, böyle bir konuma geldik. *Eskiden elektrik kesintilerinden, biliyorsunuz, geçilmezdi. Şimdi rahmetle anacağım tabii,* Sayın Özal cep telefonunu getirdi *ve onunla birlikte bu süreç çok daha farklı bir aşamaya geldi. Gıda, tarım da aynen o şekilde. Ormanda, barajlarda hiçbir dönemde yapılmamış barajlar ve göletlerle şu anda biz Türkiye'yi donatıyoruz ve donatmaya da devam edeceğiz. Yani bütün bunları bu kadar istikrarlı bir şekilde sürdürmenin en önemli yolu, tabii bunu şahsa bağlı olarak konuşmuyorum, sisteme bağlı hale getirirsek bu çok daha ideal bir şekilde gidecektir. Onun için sisteme bağlı bir istikrar, sisteme bağlı bir güven, inşallah bu 16 Nisan müjdesiyle bence rayına oturacaktır diye düşünüyorum.*

FAHRETTİN ALTUN: Efendim, Cumhurbaşkanlığı sisteminin Türkiye siyasetindeki kaynaklarıyla ilgili olarak bir soru sormak istiyorum.

15 Temmuz'da bu ülke çok büyük bir badire atlattı. Türkiye halkı çok büyük bir kahramanlık sergiledi ve gerçekten destan yazdı. Bir taraftan 15 Temmuz ruhunun, siz de zaman zaman ifade ediyorsunuz, 16 Nisan'daki referandumda ortaya çıkacağını belirtiyorsunuz ve bir anlamda dönüşümün kaynağında 15 Temmuz ruhunun önemli bir yeri olduğunu vurguluyorsunuz. Fakat bir taraftan da 1970'lerden bu yana, özellikle vesayet odaklarıyla mücadele eden siyasetçilerin sıklıkla yeni hükümet sistemine, başkanlık sistemine vurgu yaptıklarını ve hükümet başkanı ile

devlet başkanının birleştirilmesi gerektiğini vurguladığını da biliyoruz. Bu anlamda baktığımızda bu iki kaynak, gerek 15 Temmuz sonrası yaşanan süreç, gerekse 1970'lerden bu yana yaşanan süreç, hali hazırdaki Cumhurbaşkanlığı sistemi önerisine ne şekilde yansımıştır? Bu konudaki kanaatleriniz nelerdir efendim?

R.T.E*: Tabii bize 15 Temmuz aslında çok çok önemli bir şeyi de öğretti. 15 Temmuz kısa bir sürecin tabii neticesi değil. Geçmişe doğru baktığımızda, yani bana göre nereden bakarsanız bakın bu işin 40 yıllık bir mazisi var. 40 yıllık bir mazinin bu bir neticesidir. Peki, o gece yapılan bu kalkışma hareketi karşısında bizim milletimizin duruşu, acaba o neyin ifadesiydi? Ona geldiğimizde, orada ben milletimizin imanını görüyorum, vatan sevgisini görüyorum, millet sevgisini görüyorum ve onların sadece bizim yaptığımız bir davetle meydana dökülmesini, havalimanlarına dökülmesini bu aşkın bir neticesi olarak görüyorum. Eğer bu inanç olmazsa zaten siz böyle bir neticeyi alamazsınız. Meydanlarda söylüyorum, hani özellikle Akif'in "Siper et gövdeni dursun bu hayasızca akın" ifadesinde kendini bulan, gövdesini tankların önüne gelip de –ekranlarda izliyoruz- koyan bir nesil var.* Bakıyorsun iki paletin arasından Sabri kendini atıyor, oradan kurtarıyor. İkinci tank geliyor, ikinci tankın iki paleti arasına kendini tekrar atıyor. *Şu inanca, şu anlayışa, şu gözü pekliğe bak! Ve Rabbim kendini tabii hıfzediyor, koruyor ve* Sabri oradan çıkıyor. Ama bunun yanında paramparça olan benim hanım kardeşlerim de var bu tankların sıkıştırması neticesinde. 11 hanım kardeşimizi ne yaptık, şehit olarak verdik ve 249 şehit var. Sadece şu Külliyenin çevresinde 29 şehit verdik, 36 gazimiz var burada. Türkiye genelinde 2193 gazimiz var. *Bütün bu direniş işte bir şeye yönelmekti. Neydi? Bu vatanı teslim almak isteyenlere karşı "Biz bu vatanı sizin gibi hainlere, sizin gibi katillere, sizin gibi alçaklara asla teslim etmeyeceğiz" dediler. Ve o aslında farklı vesayet odaklarına da benim milletimin çok çok farklı bir cevabıydı ve o cevabı en*

güzel şekilde o gece onlar verdiler. Ve çok daha ilginci, tabii o gece her şey belli oldu, yani ak sütün içindeki o ipliği ayırır duruma geldi benim milletim. Ve o kararlılık hala devam ediyor. Bakın bitirmedi işi, şimdi nereye gidersek, hangi meydana gidersek gidelim artık on binler, elli binler bakıyorsunuz o meydanlarda. Daha büyük meydanlara gitmedik. Oralarda da inanıyorum ki yüz binler bizleri bekliyor. Çünkü bir şeyin kararını veriyor, "Şimdi 15 Temmuz'un anayasal bir teminat altına getirilmesini istiyoruz" diyor. Niye diyor bunu? Şimdi kim 'Hayır' diyor bakıyor. Kandil'deki teröristler 'Hayır' diyor. Kim bunlar? PKK. *Beyanatlarını veriyorlar ve diyorlar ki "Hayır deyin". Kim diyor? FETÖ'cüler diyor 'Hayır deyin.' Bunlar değil miydi 15 Temmuz'da benim milletime karşı bu darbe girişiminde bulunanlar? Benim vatanımı parçalamak isteyenler bunlar değil miydi? Şimdi hesaplaşma günü ne zaman? Hesaplaşma günü inşallah 16 Nisan. Demokratik hakkını o gece nasıl demokrasiye sahip çıkarak benim vatandaşım koruduysa, şimdi o gecenin devamı anlamına inşallah 16 Nisan'da da sandıkta demokratik hakkını çok daha güçlü bir şekilde inşallah kullanacaktır diye düşünüyorum.*

B.D: Sayın Cumhurbaşkanım, burada tabii 'Yenikapı ruhu' aslında önemli. Zaten bu anayasa değişikliği de hemen 15 Temmuz darbesinin bastırılmasıyla birlikte Yenikapı ruhuyla mümkün oldu, bir uzlaşma ortaya çıktı. Siz de mesajlarınızda farklı parti seçmenlerine de bu çerçevede hitap ederek bunun tüm Türkiye'nin meselesi olduğunu ve bu yönde evet söylenmesi gerektiğini ifade ettiniz. Şimdi biz biliyoruz, bizim eskiden beri bir sivil anayasa anlayışımız var Türkiye'de. Ne yazık ki siviller bir anayasa hazırlayamadı. Bu kapsamlı bir değişiklik ve siviller eliyle yapılıyor. Böyle baktığımızda bunun devamı gelir mi? Yani Cumhurbaşkanlığı sistemine geçişle beraber Türkiye reform, demokratikleşme yolunda yürür mü? Yoksa söylenildiği gibi otoriterleşme mi ortaya çıkar, Hayırcıların eleştirdiği gibi?

R.T.E *Şimdi aslında hassas bir noktaya burada temas ettiniz. Tabii Yenikapı ruhu ne yazık ki süreklilik arz etmedi. Gönlümüz arzu ederdi ki, Yenikapı ruhu yani o 7 Ağustos'ta kalmasın, devam etsin. Niçin derseniz, bizim bu anayasa yapılışıyla ilgili Sayın Başbakanın yaptığı ziyaretler olsun, daha sonra bir araya gelmek suretiyle bazı çalışmalar olsun ne yazık ki tavanda bu işin sürmediğini bize gösterdi. Şimdi tavanda bu iş sürmeyince siz bu adımları ne yapamıyorsunuz, hayata geçiremiyorsunuz. Tabii ben şu anda dikkat ederseniz, tavandan ümidimi kestiğim için tabana hitap ediyorum. Yani Yenikapı ruhunu tabanda şöyle teessüs ettirelim istiyorum. Onun için AK Parti'ye gönül vermiş kardeşlerime diyorum, Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi'ne gönül vermiş kardeşlerime diyorum, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi'ne, HDP'ye, Saadet Partisi'ne, Büyük Birlik Partisi'ne gönül vermiş kardeşlerime diyorum: Gelin bu liderlerin gerçekleştiremediği bu reformu hep birlikte inşallah 16 Nisan'da sandıkta gerçekleştirelim.* 339 milletvekili AK Parti ve Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi'nden olmak üzere bu halk oylaması kararını aldı. Parlamentoda bu iki partinin omuz omuza vermesiyle böyle bir adım atıldı. Tabii bu yeterli değil, yeterli olan 367'ydi. *Bunu sağlayamadığımıza göre şimdi iş asillere kaldı, o da millet. Milli irade zaten en önemlisi.* Zaten parlamentoda Başkanın arkasında da o yazıyor: "Hakimiyet kayıtsız şartsız milletindir.*" Şimdi biz bu hakimiyetin gerçek sahibi olan milletimize diyoruz ki, gelin siz tabanda el-ele millet olarak, ey parlamentodakiler siz yapmadınız, ama şimdi biz bu anayasanın en azından Cumhurbaşkanlığı sistemine yönelik olan boyutunu biz halledeceğiz. Şimdi burada biliyorsunuz, anayasanın tümüyle bir değişikliği söz konusu değil. Sadece Cumhurbaşkanlığı sistemine yönelik olan boyutu söz konusu. Bunu biz yapacağız, onun için de ben milletime inanıyorum. Milletim bu eksik kalan kısmı inşallah 16 Nisan'da sandıkta gerçekleştirecektir, bu*

güvenim var. Bunu meydanlarda şu anda gittiğim her yerde okuyorum ve milletim bizi mahcup etmeyecek diye de inanıyorum.

P.Ç: Şimdi Sayın Cumhurbaşkanım, bunlar tabii sizin hem ilk soruda vermiş olduğunuz, ortaya konan icraatlar itibariyle veya sizin şahsınızda size olan halkın sevgisi, desteği. Şimdi bunlar bir tarafa, ama ben elbette hainlerin sizin söylediğiniz gibi, hani FETÖ'cülerin olsun, PKK'lıların olsun, onlara destek verenlerin olsun ikna edilmesi noktasında sormuyorum, ama meseleye biraz daha mesafeli, soğuk duranlar açısından. Şimdi diyorlar ki; biz Cumhurbaşkanımıza güveniyoruz, kendisini de seviyoruz, ama mesela ondan sonra ne olacak veya en çok verilen örnek, muhakkak sizin kulağınıza da gelmiştir. Diyelim ki bir yurt dışı gezisine çıktı ve vekil olarak, yani vekaleten onun görevinde bulunan kişi de hain çıktı. Peki, böyle bir durumda biz kendimizi güvencede hissedebilir miyiz? Bunu dillendirenlere ne cevap verirsiniz?

R.T.E*: Şimdi Pelin Hanım, onu dillendirenlere ben zaten meydanlarda bu cevabı aslında veriyorum. Ama şimdi siz yurt dışı dediğiniz için, hemen ben yurt dışından gireyim işe önce.* Şimdi diyelim ki bir veya iki tane yardımcım olacak, eğer ben isem veya bir başkası ise onun bir veya iki tane yardımcısı olacak. Yurt dışına çıktığı zaman da o ne yapacaktır? O ikiden birini veya bir taneyse atadığı yardımcısı, o zaten onun vekili anlamınadır, o vekili yönetecektir. *Biz onun için de bunu hükümet ucu açık bıraktı.* Yani iki tane de olabilir, bir veya iki. *Niye? Burayı sağlama alabilmek için. Şimdi işin bu tarafı böyle… Şahsımla alakalı söylediğiniz soruya gelince… Bu sorunun cevabı da bana göre çok çok önemli. Ama çok da diyorum değerler silsilesi içerisinde bana göre basit. Niye? Benim 16 Nisan'a kadar ömrümün olduğunu bana kimse garanti edemez. Burada olan arkadaşlarımın aynı şekilde garanti edemez. Bak bugün 7 tane hanım kardeşimiz neşeli bir şekilde*

Ankara'daki Kadınlar Gününü anmak için geliyorlardı. Ama 7 hanım kardeşimizi kaybettik, ebediyete uğurladık. Samimi olmamız gerekiyor. Bunlar bana göre samimiyetsiz bir yaklaşımın ifadesidir. Biz ne diyoruz? Kendimize bir sistem yapmıyoruz, biz ülkemizin geleceği için bir sistem inşa ediyoruz. Ve bu sistem geleceği kurtarmak, geleceği sağlama almak için kurulan bir sistemdir. Bakın parlamenter demokrasiyle ülkemiz yönetilmedi mi? Yıllar yılı parlamenter demokrasi içerisinde biz koalisyonlar görmedik mi?

P.Ç: Çok gördük.

R.T.E Biz bu süreç içerisinde darbeler görmedik mi? *İstikrar var mıydı? Yoktu. Güven var mıydı? Yoktu. Bakın burada bir örnek vereceğim sizlere. Hakikaten burası çok çok önemli, o da şudur: Sürekli olarak hükümetlerin değiştiği dönemler yaşadık ve bu sık sık hükümetlerin değişmesi ülkemizde istikrarsızlığın en önemli boyutu oldu.* Bakınız ülkemizde 1950'den bu yana 67 yılda kaç hükümet kuruldu biliyor musunuz? 48 hükümet kuruldu.

P.Ç: Ben de not almıştım, 94 yılda 65 hükümet, yani ortalama 1 yıl 4 ay.

R.T.E 16 ay. Şimdi ben bir örnekleme yapacağım. İngiltere'de ne kadar? 15 hükümet kurulmuş bu süre içerisinde. Almanya'da 24 hükümet kurulmuş. Amerika'da 17 başkan seçilmiş. Fransa'da 11 Cumhurbaşkanı görev yapmış. İtalya'da 41 hükümet kurulduğu için, çözümü tek parti iktidarını zorunlu kılmakta buldular biliyorsunuz, son yaptıkları seçimle. *Bu bir gerçeği gösteriyor; artık bu iş böyle yürümez. Bizim ne yapıp yapıp, burada bu sistem değişikliğini… Dikkat edin, şimdi bunlar ne yapıyor? CHP işi saptırıp, bunlar diyor rejim değişikliğine gidiyor. Ya bizim böyle bir derdimiz filan yok, bu iş 1923'te bitmiş, Türkiye'nin artık rejimle ilgili, alakalı attığı bir adım yok. Artık sadece bir sistem değişikliğiyle biz ülkemizde geleceği inşa etmenin adımını atıyoruz, yapılan iş bu. Biz de faniyiz, dolayısıyla fani olan değil, baki olan*

bir yapıyı oluşturalım. O da nedir? Bu sistemdir. İnşallah bu milletin, bu devletin bekası bu kurulacak olan sistemle devam eder.

F.A: Efendim, siz 2002'den bu yana, önce Başbakan olarak, sonra Cumhurbaşkanı olarak iktidardasınız ve ciddi anlamda reform hareketlerinin arkasında yer aldınız ve bu reform hareketlerinde sürekli olarak halkın iknasını temel alan bir yaklaşım içinde oldunuz ve bütün bu reform hareketleri aslında halkın iknası neticesinde oluştu. Halihazırda, 16 Nisan'da önümüzde bir referandum var ve oldukça kritik bir dönemeç bu, Türkiye açısından. Biz yapılan kamuoyu araştırmalarına baktığımızda, halkın şu an itibarıyla en önemli iki mesele olarak terörle mücadeleyi ve ekonomik sorunları gördüğünü görüyoruz. Yani ekonomiyi ve terörle mücadeleyi temel sorunlar olarak görüyor ki, 15 Temmuz'dan sonra terörle mücadele çok daha yüksek oranda temel bir mesele olarak görülüyor. PKK terörüyle mücadele, FETÖ terörüyle mücadele en kritik hususlar olarak öne çıkıyor efendim. Mevcut Cumhurbaşkanlığı sistemi önerisi eğer geçerse, bu takdirde terörle mücadele ve yine Türkiye'nin ekonomik gelişmesi, büyümesi anlamında ne tür değişiklikler olacak, ne tür yeni imkânlar Türkiye efendim?

R.T.E İsterseniz buna önce terörden başlayalım. Görüldüğü gibi, terörde şu son birkaç ay içerisinde gerçekten devletimiz hükümetiyle ve askeriyle, polisiyle, güvenlik korucularıyla, bugüne kadar görülmemiş bir operasyonlar zincirini devam ettiriyor. Şu anda Güneydoğu, Doğu bölgesinde bugüne kadar girilmemiş veya çok az girilmiş olan bölgelere şu anda askerimiz, polisimiz ciddi bir dayanışma içerisinde giriyor. Aynı şekilde güvenlik korucularımız giriyor ve ciddi başarılarla da oralardan dönüyorlar. *Ve sık sık bu müjdeleri alıyoruz, lider kadrolar oralarda ele geçiriliyor. Ve bu inanıyorum ki, yeni sistemle, Cumhurbaşkanlığı sistemiyle biz terörle mücadelede çok daha seri neticeler alacağız. Niye? Bakınız, şu ana kadar arkasında*

bölücü terör örgütlerini gören eş başkanlar vardı. Çıkıyor açık açık "Bizim arkamızda PKK var" diyor, "Bizim arkamızda YPG" var diyor, "Bizim arkamızda PYD var' diyor, "Bizim arkamızda DHKP-C var" diyor vesaire... *Ne kadar terör örgütü varsa bunları sayıyor. Şimdi tabii bütün bunlar sayılıyor ama öyle bir yapı var ki bu yapı içerisinde bunlara anında bir müdahaleyi yapamıyorsunuz. Ama Başkanlık sisteminde olay burada olmaz. Başkanlık sisteminde bunun kararını net, hemen kesin verir ve adımı atarsınız. Çünkü bu işler öyle gecikmeye tahammülü olan işler değil. Ve şu anda hükümetimizin hakikaten bu konudaki kararlı adımlarıyla atılan adımlar var.* Anayasanın amir hükümleri bu işe yol veriyor, yasalar bu işe yol veriyor ama bu işletilmedi. *Şimdi işletilince bakınız birçok taşlar yerli yerine oturmaya başladı. Bu parlamento için de geçerli, bu yerel yönetimler için de geçerli.* Çünkü yerel yöneticilerin, biliyorsunuz dokunulmazlığı da yok. Parlamentodakilerin dokunulmazlığı vardı. Dokunulmazlığın kaldırılmasını kendileri talep etmişti, tamam. Dokunulmazlıklar kaldırıldı ve dokunulmazlıklar kaldırıldıktan sonra kendilerine davet yapılan milletvekillerinin bir kısmı gittiler ifadelerini verdiler serbest kaldılar ama bir kısmı ise kaçtı. Şu anda yurt dışında olanlar var ama bir kısmı da yakalandı ve ifadeleri alındıktan sonra da şu anda içeride. *Bütün bunların yanında, yerel yöneticilerde çok ciddi yolsuzluklar var, bunları biz defaatle açıkladık. Neydi bu yolsuzluk? Devletin bu yerel yönetimlere vermiş olduğu parasal destekler var. Hepsinin nüfusa dayalı olarak devletten aldığı belli bir yardım var ama bu yardımlar oraya hizmete gitmiyor. Nereye gidiyor? Dağa gidiyor. Şimdi ben ekranları başında bizi izleyen tüm milletime sesleniyorum.* Bu paralar nerede harcandı? Bu paralar ne yazık ki, maaşlara varıncaya kadar alınan ücretlerin yarısı terör örgütüne, yarısı kendilerine verildi ve bunun yanında da bütün bu çukurlar, kanallar, bütün bunlar devletin araç gereçleriyle oralarda açılmadı mı? Oralarda

bunlar açıldı. Ve bütün bunların bu şekilde açılmasıyla birlikte maalesef Güneydoğu insanca yaşamanın imkânlarını kaybetti. *Benim Güneydoğu'daki Kürt kardeşimin insanca yaşama hakkı yok mu? Zaza kardeşimin insanca yaşama hakkı yok mu? Arap kardeşimin insanca yaşama hakkı yok mu?* Bir kısmı şehirlerini terk ettiler. Mesela şimdi Siirt, orada çok Arap vardı, boşaldı. Aynı şekilde Şanlıurfa'ya geliyorsunuz, Arap kardeşlerimiz var, bir kısmı boşaldı. Mardin'de hakeza öyle, terk ettiler. Niye*? Can korkusu sebebiyle terk ettiler. Ya buna hakkınız var mı? Bir taraftan biz onların temsilciyiz diyeceksiniz, öbür taraftan kan gövdeyi götürüyor ve silah zoruyla oy alacaksınız. Yani bunlar demokratik bir süreç içerisinde alınmış oylar değil, silah zoruyla alınmış oylardı. Şimdi biz diyoruz ki, işte 16 Nisan aynı zamanda bu işin barışla bu darbe tehdidin vesaire birbirinden tefrik edildiği, ayrıştırıldığı gün olacak. Artık benim vatandaşım, benim milletim milli irade olarak iradesini rahatlıkla huzur içinde gelip sandıkta ortaya koyabilecektir.* Ekonomiye gelince; Türkiye koalisyonlar döneminde ortalama yüzde 4, tek parti veya tek hükümet döneminde, onların iktidarları döneminde yüzde 5,5 büyüme kaydetmiştir. Şimdi biz bunu 1991'den bu yana hep tek parti veya tek hükümetler dönemini şöyle ele alırsak, milli gelirimiz 2 kat fazla büyüyecekti. Tabii bugünkünden 2 kat daha zengin olacaktık ama bunu ne yapamadık? Yakalayamadık. Enflasyona baktığımız zaman; enflasyonda da koalisyon dönemlerinde tek parti hükümetleri döneminde de 2,5 kat daha fazladır. Koalisyon dönemleri ciddi zayıf, ama mesela bizim dönemlerimizde bu 2,5-3 kat daha fazla olmuştur. Şimdi bütün bunların mesela faizde, faiz oranları bakımından koalisyon dönemleriyle tek parti dönemleri arasında 5 kata yakın fark vardır. Bugünle karşılaştırdığımızda bu fark 10 katı geçiyor. Örneğin, biz göreve geldiğimizde devletin borçlanma faizi yüzde 63'tü, şimdi tek haneli rakamda. Hatta bir ara, yani bu Gezi olayları öncesi 4,6'ya kadar düşmüştük. *Bunu hazmedemeyenler*

ne yaptılar? Türkiye'yi işte Gezi olaylarıyla böyle bir tehdit ve böyle bir sıkıntıya soktular ve tekrar çift haneli rakama doğru Türkiye ne yazık ki o dönemde yöneldi, böyle bir durumla karşı karşıya kaldı. Ve tabii yüzde 63 devletin borçlanma faizinin olduğu dönemde de bir durumumuz daha vardı. Mesela o zaman enflasyon yüzde 30'du, daha sonra enflasyon da tek haneli rakama düştü. Faizin düşüşüyle beraber onun da böyle bir rakama indiğini görüyoruz. *Uluslararası yatırımlara gelince; bu noktada çok ciddi bir hedef yakaladık. Türkiye artık güvenli bir liman oldu*. Bakınız o günden bugüne dev yatırımlar noktasında bu bölünmüş yolların ciddi bir kısmı otoyollar statüsünde yapılmış yollardır. Barajlar aynı şekilde bu dönemlerde yapıldı. Örneğin köprüler; Osman Gazi Köprüsünü böyle yaptık. Aynı şekilde bir Yavuz Sultan Selim Köprüsünü böyle yaptık, bir Avrasya Tünelini bu şekilde yaptık. Bu 30 tane havalimanının büyük bir kısmını yine çeşitlendirmeyle biz bu dönemde bu şekilde yaptık. *Yoksa biz geçmiş dönemdeki mantıkla olsaydı, biz kendi kasamızdaki paralarla bunları yapacağımızı zannetseydik yapamazdık. Ama öyle güvenli hale geldik ki, bize yabancı sermaye şöyle baktı: Benim burada yaptığım yatırımda ben kaybetmem, ben kazanırım dedi. Öyleyse ben burada bu yatırımı yapabilirim dedi. Yani güvenli bir liman olmak ekonomide bu demek ve bu bundan sonraki dönemde de geçecek. Bakın ben daha önce de hatırlarsanız söyledim, teğet geçecek dedim; geçti. Şimdi aynı şeyi yine söyledim. Hani bu kredi derecelendirme kuruluşları birçok şeyler söylediler; şöyle olacak, böyle olacak, aynı şeyi söyledim. Şimdi bakın olumlu sinyaller gelmeye başladı. Bu ülkenin ekonomi kaderini onlar değil biz belirleyeceğiz.* İş adamlarına çağrı yaptım, dedim ki gelin işte Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği, diyorsun ki benim 1,5 milyon veya 1 milyon 400 bin üyem var. En az 1 işçi istihdam etse 1 milyon 400 bin yapar. Ama sizin içinizde öyle firmalar var ki bırak 1'i, 100, 200, 300, 500, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000 kişi alabilecek noktadasınız.

Ben vasıflı elemandan bahsediyorum ha, düz elemandan bahsediyorum. Bakın şu anda yoğun bir şekilde bu alımlar devam ediyor. Şimdi bir şey daha geliyor, nedir? O da, mevsimsel istihdam süreci geliyor, yani hizmet sektörü, yani oteller şimdi onların alımları başlayacak. *Onların alımlarıyla beraber istihdamdaki bu sıkıntıyı da biz süratle aşacağız ve tek haneli rakama inşallah ideal bir şekilde orada da ineceğiz diye düşünüyorum. Yani ekonomide Türkiye'nin herhangi bir zaafı, herhangi bir sıkıntısı kesinlikle yoktur ve kararlı bir şekilde yolumuza burada da devam ediyoruz, devam edeceğiz.*

B.D: Sayın Cumhurbaşkanım, ekonomi, kalkınma, terörle mücadele Cumhurbaşkanlığı sisteminde çift başlılıktan tek bir kişinin seçilmesiyle hallolacak diyorsunuz. Fakat, tabii insanların aklına başka sorular da geliyor. Cumhurbaşkanlığı çok güçlenecek. Acaba meclis, Türkiye'nin tarihinde çok önemli yeri olan meclis zayıflayacak mı, milletvekilleri etkisizleşecekler mi, insanlar dertlerini anlatmak için milletvekillerine ulaşacaklar mı, ulaşsalar ne anlama gelecek? Çünkü bakanlar meclis dışından seçileceği için bu tür sorular zihinlere geliyor. Ne dersiniz efendim?

R.T.E *Şimdi onu şöyle değerlendireyim: Tabii burada da bu 18 maddeyi iyi okumayan bazı siyasilerin yaklaşımını görüyorum. Aslında çifte başlılık ortadan kalkıyor, karar merci tek oluyor. Sizler de belki yayınladınız veya yayınlıyorsunuz bilemiyorum. Sayın ana muhalefetin başının arka arkaya yaptığı gafları gördünüz. İşte Başbakan bir partiden, Cumhurbaşkanı bir başka partiden olursa burada doğacak çelişkiler millete niye anlatılmıyor gibi böyle bu tür maalesef saçmalıklarla karşı karşıya kaldık.* Dün akşam bir gençlik programındaydım, orada bu radyo programını, Sayın Kılıçdaroğlu'nu dinlettim. Şimdi gel şunu bir oku ya, şu 18 maddeyi bir oku, burada ne var? Burada bir defa Cumhurbaşkanlığı ile Başbakanlık birleştiriliyor. Artık Başbakan yok, artık sadece Cumhurbaşkanı var ve

Cumhurbaşkanının da takdir edeceği bir kabinesi var. Ve bu kabine de tamamen dışarıdan. Eğer içeriden olursa içeriden olması halinde milletvekilliği ne oluyor? Düşüyor. *Mesela, benim oradaki arzum, niyetim şuydu: Diyordum ki ben düşmemeli, milletvekilliği de icabında orada kalabilmeli veyahut da partiler yedek milletvekili koyabilmeli. Parlamentodan birisini alması halinde kendi partisinden, yine o partiden bir kişi o kabineye girenin yerine Meclis'e girmeli, olmadı. Şimdi artık bu sistemle dışarıdan bir kabine oluşuyor ve bu kabineyle de tabii ki bu süreç işleyecek. Ama asıl önemli olan şey nedir? Artık Sayın Kılıçdaroğlu, Başbakan yok. Artık sadece Cumhurbaşkanı var ve Cumhurbaşkanının kabinesi var. Yani buradaki hüküm verme, yürütme kimde? Yürütme artık Cumhurbaşkanında*. Burada yanımda Halil İnalcık Hoca'nın bu konuya değinen bir ifadesi var.

P.Ç: Tarihçilerin kutbu kendisi öyle adlandırılır ya.

R.T.E Evet, öyle anılır. Şimdi o da şöyle: Halk tarafından doğrudan seçilen başkan icra yetkisine sahiptir. Sistemde idare, yani kanunların uygulanması ve devlet işlerinin yürütülmesinde yetki Cumhurbaşkanına verilmiştir. Başkan devlet içinde otorite birliğini temsil eder, yani bu bölünmeyi de ortadan kaldırıyor. Onun etkinlikleri iki meclisin oluşturduğu kongre ve yüksek mahkeme tarafından denetlenir. Tabii o senato ve meclisin olduğu yerler ki Amerika'yı hedef alarak söylediği bir şey. Böylece devlet işlerinin yürütülmesinde otoritenin keyfi olarak kullanılması tehlikesi*, yani burada şimdi meclisin önemine vurgu yapıyor ki şu anda bizde o oluyor*. Kuvvetlerin dağılımı ve birbirini kontrolüyle önlenmiş, fakat öbür yandan başkanın temsil ettiği icrada devlet otoritesinin birliği prensibi korunmuştur. İşte modern demokraside devlet otoritesinin birliği konusunda bulunmuş en geçerli sistem böyle bir dengeleme mekanizmasıyla sağlanmıştır. Halk tarafından seçilen başkan icrada harp ilanı gibi bazı hayati kararlar hariç, tek söz sahibi ve tek

sorumludur. Böylece devlet işlerinde dağınıklık ve kuvvetler arasında kilitlenme önlenmiştir. Buna karşı parti ayrılıklarına tabi parlamento sisteminde icra sürekli bir istikrarsızlık karşısındadır. Türk devletinde icrada otoritenin birliği prensibi öyle görünüyor ki Başkanlık veya Fransa'da olduğu gibi bir yarı Başkanlık sistemiyle garanti altına alınabilir. İdarede karşıtlık, dağınıklık ve istikrarsızlık ve darbelere yol açan kilitlenmeler önlenebilir. Öyle sanıyorum ki, Türk demokrasisi bugün böyle bir istikrarsızlık içindedir. Bu Halil İnalcık Hoca'nın 'Söyleşiler ve Konuşmalar' kitabından. Şimdi burada şunu çok konuşuyorlar: Parlamentonun yasama yapma yetkisi kalkıyor. Böyle bir şey yok, aynen korunuyor aynen var. Tam aksine güçlendiriyor. Nedir o? Parlamentonun denetim gücü daha da artırılıyor, bu var. *Buna hiç dokunma diye bir şey yok, böyle bir şey kesinlikle söz konusu değil.* Aynı şekilde diyelim ki bir seçim kararı mı alma noktasında adım atmak ister parlamentonun bu yetkisi yine aynen var. Ama böyle bir karar alındığı zaman o zaman bu Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimiyle ne yapılacaktır? Aynı günde yapılacaktır. Cumhurbaşkanı böyle bir adım atacak olursa, Cumhurbaşkanı, tabii orada da oran var. O oranın olması lazım, o oran olmadan olmuyor. Ve aynı şeyi Cumhurbaşkanı yapacak olursa yine aynı günde hem cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimi hem de parlamento seçimi olacaktır. *Yani bunları tamamen bir kenara koymak suretiyle bu tür adımların atılması gerçekten insanı tabii ciddi manada üzüyor.* Ben burada özellikle şeyi de söylemek isterim, yani 13'üncü madde de bununla ilgili olarak zaten bu kısım var. Burayla ilgili olarak oran itibariyle belli bir oranı yakalamak suretiyle seçime gitme imkanını yakalayabiliyor ve bu halde kimsenin de buna itiraz vesaire etme hakkı söz konusu değil.

P.Ç: Siz şimdi Halil İnalcık'tan okudunuz, tabii çok ilerleyen yaşlarında kaybettik yakın bir zamanda, Allah rahmet eylesin. Bizim kendi kadim tarihimizden alacağımız

çok dersler var. Selçuklular, Osmanlılar, bugün Türkiye Cumhuriyeti onurla taşıyoruz ve yaptığımız programlarla da bunu hatırlatıyoruz.

Sayın Cumhurbaşkanım, birazdan Diriliş başlayacak, sizin de tarihe olan ilginizi biliyorum ve Diriliş'i de özellikle seviyorsunuz. Belki bir noktada küçücük buna dair bir şey söylemek istersiniz, öyle tatlı bağlayalım, kapatalım istiyorum.

R.T.E Neyi kapatıyoruz, program bitti mi? Diriliş kaçta başlıyor?

P.Ç: Bizim programdan sonra, daha bitirmedik.

R.T.E *Şimdi tabii Diriliş, son dönemlerde özellikle gerçekten 7'den 70'e bütün halkımızın, milletimizin hayranlıkla izlediği bir dizi. Yapılamaz, yapamayız, edemeyiz diyenlere karşı aslında Diriliş çok önemli bir cevap olmuştur; demek ki yaparız. Ben inanıyorum ki bu ekip bundan sonra çok daha farklı dizileri arka arkaya getirecektir.* Benim 13 yaşında torunum sadece yayınladığı akşamı izlemiyor, bir de tekrarını izliyor. Daha küçük torunlarım var, aynı şekilde izliyorlar. *Şimdi bununla biz onlara özgüven kazandırıyoruz, bu çok önemli.* Körfez seyahatindeydim. Körfez ülkelerinde gerek Burhanettin Bey, gerek Fahrettin Bey, onlar da vardı. Belki sizler de orada bunların konuşmalarını dinlemişsinizdir. Herkes şunu söylüyordu: Çok güzel bir dizi, bunları biz de alalım. Zaten bazıları kendi dublajlarını kendilerini yaptırıyorlar orada izlemek için. Şimdi mesela yeni bir adım daha atılıyor, Sultan Abdülhamid'le ilgili. *Mesela bunların da ben ses getireceğine inanıyorum.* İşte Kut'ül Amare'yle ilgili yine bir çalışmanın olduğunu biliyorum*, bunların da ses getireceğine inanıyorum. Biz tarihimizden ilham alarak geleceğe çok daha farklı bir özgüvenle bakacağımızın inancı içerisindeyim. TRT burada çok önemli bir adım attı. Hele hele şimdi büyükçe platolarını vesaire kurduğu zaman inanıyorum ki ellerindeki bu insan unsurunu, yani artistleriyle vesaire çok daha zenginleştirecektir. Zenginleştirdiği zaman bu tür dev*

projelere girebilecektir ve bu şansı da şu anda yakalamış vaziyettedir diye düşünüyorum.

P.Ç: Aslında beşerî hafıza hep yaşıyor. Yani mesela Diriliş'in bugün yurt dışında görmüş olduğu bazı ülkelerdeki ilgi, ama bir taraftan da yaratılan rahatsızlık.Yani hani dış ülkelerde bu referandum sürecinin de bu kadar dikkatle takip edilmesi, hani meselenin sadece içeriyi ilgilendirmediğini, dışarıyı da ilgilendirdiğini gösteriyor. Bu bizim tarihten bugüne taşıdığımız bir miras. İnşallah devamında da göreceğiz. Almanya meselesiyle devam edelim mi, nasıl istersiniz?

B.D: Sayın Cumhurbaşkanım…

R.T.E *Yalnız şurada eğer şey yaparsanız, hani konu ağırlıklı olarak Başkanlık sistemi olduğu için şöyle birkaç konuyu süratle ekranları başında bizleri izleyen milletimizin bilmesinde fayda var.*

Şimdi mesela bunlardan bir tanesi, niye sayı 550'den 600'e çıktı. *Şimdi bunlar bu ülkede, az önce hafızadan bahsettiniz, hafızayı beşer nisyan ile maluldür.* Bakınız şimdi burada özellikle ona bir gireyim. 20 Temmuz 1961, o zaman senato var, kuruldu. Senatonun kuruluşuyla beraber biliyorsunuz kontenjan senatörleri 15 civarında filan, toplam 165 senatör var. Milletvekili sayısı o zaman 450, toplamda 615 kişiden oluşan bir parlamento var. *Şimdi onun bu ifadeleri, şu 600'ü yadırgayanlar konuşmuyor ki o günden bugüne nüfus, tabii temsilde adalet noktasında şu anda çok* daha büyük bir rakama sahibiz. *Dolayısıyla 600 rakamı temsilde adalette çok daha önemli bir yere oturuyor* ve 600 de tek kamaralı sistem. Yani şimdi bunda senato yok, sadece milletvekili var; böyle bir sisteme geçiyoruz. *İkincisi, milletvekili sayısının bu noktada olmasının ötesinde yargının bağımsızlığı meselesi. Yargının bağımsızlığını bir defa şu anda tarafsızlıkla güçlendiriyoruz. Bu da yargıya şu anda ayrı bir özgüven getirecek.*

F.A: Buradaki ayrım nedir efendim, yargının bağımsızlığı ve tarafsızlığının birlikte ele alınıyor olması, yargının bağımsızlığı dışında?

R.T.E*.: Bağımsız olur, ama tarafsız olmaz. Olmaz mı, peki kardeşim onu da getiriyoruz; hem bağımsız olacak, hem tarafsız olacak. Buna rağmen bağımsızlık ve tarafsızlık ilkesini çiğniyorsa bir yargıç, artık ona da diyecek bir şeyimiz yok*. Bizim görevimiz nedir? Parlamentoda bu tür yasaları düzenlemektir ve şimdi anayasa bunu düzenliyor. *Bir diğer başlık ki bana göre en önemlisi o ve 16 Nisan aslında gençliğin seçimi olacak.* Biz seçilme yaşını 30'dan aldık 25'e indirdik. Şimdi de 25'ten nereye indiriyoruz? 18'e indiriyoruz. *Şimdi bazıları ne diyor? 18 yaşta işte bunlar kendi yakınlarını oralara koymanın gayreti içindeler diyorlar. Şimdi ben şuna inanıyorum: Gence ufuk vermek şart. Bu gence değer vermekle olur, onun önünü açmakla olur. Eğer biz gençliğimizin önünü açarsak, işte o zaman bu gençlik inanıyorum ki dağlara taşınan gençlik olmayacak. Bu gençlik kalemiyle, kitabıyla, bilgisayarıyla haşır neşir olan bir gençlik olacak. Sosyal hayatın içerisinde, siyasi hayatın içerisinde aktif olan bir gençlik olacak ki* 7 milyonu aşkın 18 ile 25 yaş arası bir gençlik bu seçimde oy kullanacak ve bunlar aynı zamanda seçilme hakkına da sahip olacak. Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimi bundan önce olduğu gibi milletvekili seçimi de 4 yıldı biliyorsunuz, Cumhurbaşkanlığı 7 yıldı. Şimdi her ikisi de 5 yılda bir olacak. Ama Cumhurbaşkanı 5+5 seçilebilir, o da tabii halk kendisini tekrar seçerse ikinci defa seçilebilir. Seçmediği takdirde zaten seçmeyecektir.

Meclisin Bakanlar Kuruluna kanun hükmünde kararname çıkarma yetkisi verilmesi iptal ediliyor. Güvenoyu uygulaması da kaldırılıyor. *Bu da önemli bir yeniliktir şu anda.* Mesela az önce sizlere de ifade ettim, gensoru belası, artık parlamento bu gensoru belasından kurtuluyor, bu yok. *Asıl gensoru sahibi kimdir? Millettir.* Millet diyecek ki, 5 sene sonra bana gelecek, ha ben gensorumu veririm. Eğer bu hükümete

ben dur diyorsam, gönderirim, devam dersem devam eder. Bir diğer adım, o da Cumhurbaşkanıyla Başbakanın yetkileri dedik, birleştiriliyor. Bunu zaten az önce ifade ettik. Ve bir diğer konu da, özellikle Cumhurbaşkanı vatana ihanetten yargılanıyordu, bunun dışında hiçbir sorumluluk yoktu. Şimdi ise hangi suç olursa olsun bunların hepsinden yargılama, belli nispetler geliyor, o nispetlerle mümkün olacak. Bir başka olay da şu: Cumhurbaşkanı hükümet kurarak tamamen kendisine karşı sorumlu olan cumhurbaşkanı, yardımcısını ve bakanları kendisi atıyor. Ve eğer 1'se o ona zaten aynı zamanda vekildir. 2 ise, yurt dışı seyahate mi gidiyor, 2'den 1 tanesini kendi yerine vekil olarak tayin edebilir. Meclis üye tam sayısının 5'te 3'üyle seçimlerin yenilenmesine karar verebilir, bu geliyor. Mesela halen Bakanlar Kurulunda olan OHAL ilanı yetkisi cumhurbaşkanına veriliyor. Sıkıyönetim uygulaması tamamen kaldırılıyor. Disiplin mahkemeleri dışında askeri mahkemeler kaldırılıyor, artık askeri mahkeme yok, onlar da aynen normal sivil mahkemelerde yargılanacak. Hakimler Savcılar Kurulunun üyesi 22'den 13'e düşürülüyor. Üyelerin görev süreleri 4 yıl olarak belirleniyor. Kurulun 4 üyesini cumhurbaşkanı, 7 üyesini meclis seçiyor. Diğer iki zaten kabineden geliyor. Ve cumhurbaşkanının hazırladığı bütçe meclis onayıyla kabul ediliyor. Yine nereden geçiyor? Meclis'ten geçiyor. Başbakanlık, Bakanlar Kurulu, sıkıyönetim, askeri mahkemeler gibi ifadeler kanunlardan ayıklanıyor, yerine yeni sisteme uygun ifadeler konuyor.

Askeri yargı temsilcileri çıktığı için Anayasa Mahkemesi üye sayısı da 17'den 15'e iniyor. Süreleri dolduğu zaman, şu anda işleyen bir süreleri var, o süre dolduktan sonra da o şey yapıyor ve halk oylaması yürürlük ve seçim tarihlerine ilişkin hükümleri de içeriyor.

B.D: Sayın Cumhurbaşkanım, Almanya'yla ilgili bir soru soracaktım ama ondan önce sizin bu anlattıklarınız dışında şöyle bir soru aklıma geliyor: Şimdi bu

referandumun çok kritik olduğunu anlattınız, Türkiye'ye neler getireceğini anlattınız. Fakat bir taraftan da değişimden bazı insanlar korkabilir. "Ya ne gerek var zaten AK Parti, Sayın Cumhurbaşkanımız iktidarda. Hayır çıksa ne olur, yine aynı Cumhurbaşkanımız ve aynı AK Parti iktidarı devam edecek. Kendimizi bu kadar sıkıntıya sokmayalım" şeklinde bir değerlendirme oluyor. Bu da özellikle kararsızlar açısından önemli bir sorun. Ne dersiniz efendim?

R.T.E *Şimdi az önce de ifade ettiğim gibi biz damdan düştük. Biz halkımıza daha iyi bir hizmeti nasıl verebiliriz bunun gayreti, derdi içerisindeyiz ve güçlü bir sisteme ihtiyacımız var, 'Lider ülke Türkiye' anlayışına ihtiyacımız var. Bunu başarabilmemiz için de tabii ki çok daha güçlü yasal zemine sistemi oturtmamız lazım. Bunun yanında da tabii lider gerçekten o güçlü yasal zemine icraatlarını yapması gerekir. Birçok yerde ben patinaj yaptım, özellikle bürokratik oligarşi birçok yerde önümüzü kesti. Bürokratik oligarşiyle, inanıyorum ki mevcut sistemle çok daha fazla ileri gidemeyiz. Ama Reis-i Cumhurluk sistemiyle bu bürokratik oligarşiyi çok daha farklı bir şekilde tanzim etmek mümkün. Bunu başardığımız anda Türkiye o zaman gerçek sıçramasını yapacaktır. Çünkü bizde o potansiyel var, Türkiye'de o güç var. Ve bunu başardığımız anda inanın, hani o hedefimiz var ya; 2023 ilk 10 diyoruz, işte biz o ilk 10'na gireriz.*

F.A: Efendim, hayır kampanyasını yürüten siyasal cenahla ilgili bir soru sormak istiyorum, özellikle CHP ve HDP bloğu. Anayasa değişikliği konusu Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'nin gündemine geldiğinde çok açık ve net bir şekilde çok sert bir muhalefet yürüteceğiz dediler ve bunu neredeyse şiddete varan boyutlarda da hayata geçirdiler. Fakat sonrasında referandum süreci başladıktan sonra yeni bir süreç başladı, daha düşük profilli bir muhalefet sergilemeye başladılar. Öyle anlaşılıyor ki bu bir siyasal iletişim kampanya tarzı olarak ortada. Bunu siz nasıl

değerlendiriyorsunuz? Bu yönüyle yürüyen bu kampanya tarzı aslında yine bu bloğun, bu cenahın temsil ettiği pek çok düşünceyi de açıktan ifade etmemelerini beraberinde getiriyor. Bu devam edebilir mi bu yaklaşım? Sizin kanaatiniz nedir efendim?

R.T.E *Şimdi Fahrettin Bey, biz bunların biliyorsunuz cemaziyülevvelini biliriz. Bunların eline zamanı gelmiş, imaj makerları saz tutturmuşlardır, zamanı gelmiş bunlara işte şarkı, türkü çaldırtmışlardır. Zamanı gelmiş bu dediğiniz şekilde ifadeleri bunlara kullandırtmışlardır ve yine biliriz ki bunların bütün bu yaklaşımlarıyla beraber bunların asılları neyse bugünleri, yarınları da aynı olacaktır. Çünkü can çıkar huy çıkmaz, bunların durumu bu. Ve aynı zatın, yani şu anda ana muhalefetin liderinin "Kan gövdeyi götürür' dediği toplantılarını biliyoruz, bunları söyleyen insan bu. Ve "Eğer böyle bir netice çıkarsa sokaklarda şu olur, bu olur" bunu diyen. 7 Haziran seçimlerinden sonra olanları görmediniz mi arkadaşlar? 7 Haziran seçimlerinden sonra Diyarbakır'da 53 kardeşimizin nasıl öldürüldüğünü görmedik mi? Bunları nasıl unuturuz? Bunların hepsini biliyoruz. Ve şu anda da yine göreceksiniz tehditler ardı ardına gelecektir. Bunlar sadece buzdağının bir yüzüdür. Gerçek yüz o değil, gerçek yüz çok farklı. Çünkü bunlar bugüne kadar hep korku imparatorluğu üzerinde işlerini yürütmüşlerdir, halkın kalkıp gönlünü alarak veya halka hizmet ederek değil. Biz ise tam aksini hep bugüne kadar savunduk. Biz ne dedik? Biz bu millete efendilik etmeye değil, hizmetkar olmaya geldik. Onun için de 14-15 yıllık bu süreç hep hizmetkar olarak geçti ve böyle de geçecek, bundan sonraki süreç de böyle olacak. Çünkü biz biliyoruz ki halka hizmet Hakk'a hizmettir ve bu anlayışla yürüyeceğiz. Biz ülkemizin barış potansiyelini, sevgi potansiyelini nasıl artırırız bunun gayreti içerisindeyiz. Bunun için de tabii, 7'den 70'e bu güveni biz halkımıza vermemiz lazım, bunun gayreti*

içerisinde olacağız. Eğitimde, sağlıkta, adalette, emniyette, ne bileyim ulaşımda, gıda tarımda, aklınıza ne gelirse her alanda bunu yapmamız lazım ve muasır medeniyetler seviyesinin üstüne de çıkmamız lazım.

B.D: Efendim, bu yani Türkiye'nin referandum süreci aslında sadece Türkiye'yi ilgilendirmiyor galiba? Yani anladığım kadarıyla Avrupa'da, Almanya'da da tepkiler oluşuyor. Zaten bir süredir bir Türkiye aleyhtarı kampanya var medyada. Fakat bu seçimlerle ilgili, yani referandumun siyasi kampanyasıyla ilgili de bir tavır geldi. Çeşitli sebeplerden dolayı bakanlarımızın oradaki konuşmaları iptal edildi. Ne oluyor, Almanya'da ne oluyor? Yani nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

P.Ç: Nedir tepkilerinin sebebi?

R.T.E Yani bizim seçim aslında Almanya'da yapılmıyor, burada yapılıyor da, fakat orada tabii bizim yaşayan vatandaşlarımız var. Onlar yıllar yılı, benim o çilekeş yurt dışındaki vatandaşlarım, 'ben ne zaman bu demokratik hakkımı kullanacağım' diye her gidişimizde bize bunu söylerlerdi. *Şimdi ekranları başında bizi onlar izliyor. Ben Ankara'dan, başkentimizden tüm yurt dışındaki vatandaşlarımıza, hepsine kalbi selam, sevgilerimi gönderiyorum. Artık diyorum, bu hakkınızı kazandınız*. Şimdi ilk kez değil, bundan önce milletvekili seçiminde de oylarınızı kullandınız ama bu defa cumhurbaşkanlığı seçiminde ilk kez oy kullanacaksınız. Dolayısıyla, bu seçimde önünüze birçok engeller geldi, bakanlarımızı konuşturtmadılar. *Benim de arzum var, onlarla bir araya gelmeyi çok arzu ediyorum ve şu anda arkadaşlarımız çalışmaları yürütüyorlar ama ekrandan sesleniyorum. Diyorum ki, hangi engeli koyarlarsa koysunlar sizler, sizler için ilan edilen tarihler içerisinde sandığınıza giderek oylarınızı muhakkak kullanın. Kullanacağınız oylar Batı'daki tüm ülkelere, dünyadaki tüm ülkelere en güzel cevap olacaktır. Sizin iradenizi kimsenin ketmetmeye, kimsenin engellemeye hakkı yoktur.16 Nisan inşallah Batı'da, tüm*

dünyada önüne engel konulan vatandaşlarımın da sevindiği günler olacaktır diye düşünüyorum.

P.Ç: Aslında Türkiye'nin çok büyük bir potansiyeli var. Siz tabii rakamı daha iyi biliyorsunuzdur da, Avrupa'da Türk kökenli 5 milyonun üzerinde insanımız var ve onlarla bir gönül bağımız var. O potansiyelin kullanılması ve onların birer gönüllü elçi olması çok önemli. Belki de bu noktada bir rahatsızlık duyuluyor da olabilir.

R.T.E *Kıskanıyorlar. Onların bizlerle olan gönül bağını çok iyi biliyor onlar. Onu bildikleri için zaten bunu engellemek istiyorlar.* Çünkü biz orada hangi kapalı salona gitsek, stadyuma gitsek oraları biz tıklım tıklım doldurduk, bunu biliyorlar. *Bunu bildikleri için de engellemenin yolunu arıyorlar. Ama bizim Avrupa'da olsun, tüm dünyada olsun vatandaşlarımızla gönül bağımızı kimse kopartamaz. Biz onları Allah için sevdik. Türküyle, Kürdüyle, Lazıyla, Çerkeziyle, Gürcüsüyle, Abhazasıyla, Romanıyla kim varsa Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşı bütün kardeşlerimizi hepsini biz gönülden sevdik ve bu bağ kopmayacak. Ama benim onlardan Cumhurbaşkanı olarak tek ricam, milletim adına sandığa gidin. O iradenizi ortaya koyun. Hakkınızı en güzel şekilde kullanın.*

P.Ç: Artık son dakikalarımıza yavaş yavaş giriyoruz. Çok kısacık 8 Mart'la başlamıştık da ben kişisel olarak merak ettiğim bir cümlenizi açmanızı rica edeceğim. Siz demiştiniz ki, benim siyaseten kadınlara borcum var. Ne demek isteniz orada ve bu borç nasıl ödenecek acaba?

R.T.E *Şöyle: Yani siyasi hayatta aktif olarak rol aldığım andan itibaren ki bunun en önemli adımı 1989 Beyoğlu yerel seçimleridir.* Ben 1989 yerel seçimlerinde Beyoğlu'ndan belediye başkan adayı olmuştum. O zaman aynı zamanda da partimin merkez karar yönetim kurulu üyesiydim. Ben rahmetli Erbakan Hocamıza 'Beyoğlu'ndan aday olmama nasıl bakarsınız' dediğim zaman, *çünkü Kasımpaşa*

çocuğuyum ya Beyoğlu'nu da iyi bilirim, iyi tanırım filan. Yani "Partinin en üst kademesindesin, Beyoğlu ilçesinden böyle bir aday olman doğru olmaz" filan demişti. "Hocam, müsaade edin ben oradan aday olayım" dedim. Neyse, sonunda bana müsaade etti. Aday olduk ama bizim tabii orada oy oranımız o zaman yüzde 2,7 veya yüzde 3, o civarlardaydı. Tabii çok farklı bir politika uygulamamız gerekiyor dedik. İlk defa biz hanımları o zaman siyasette bizzat aktif olarak sahaya sürdük ve sağ olsunlar tüm hanım kardeşlerim o zaman Beyoğlu'nun dört bir yanında hepsi aktif bir çalışmanın içerisine girdiler. Ama bu arada, bir de o dönemde 75 öğrenciyi biz kamuoyu araştırması yapmak üzere onlarla anlaştık. Bunların yarıya yakın kızdı, yarıya yakını da erkek öğrenciydi. Hepinizin de şu anda tanıdığı bir arkadaşımıza, sen dedim bunu yöneteceksin. Ve onlar da yoğun bir çalışmanın içerisine girdiler. Fakat son haftaya girdiğimizde o genç kızlar, "Başkanım" dediler, "bize müsaade edersen, biz bundan sonra yevmiye almayacağız." Her gün belli bir yevmiye veriyorduk. Ne olacak? "Biz" dediler, "ücretsiz olarak şu anda bize vereceğiniz görev neyse biz onu yapacağız" dediler. Ve son hafta onlar yoğun bir çalışmaya, kapı kapı dolaşarak, detayına girmeyeceğim, diğer hanım kardeşlerimizle beraber çalışmaya katıldılar. 1,3 gibi değişik oyunlarla bir oy farkıyla Beyoğlu'nda ben 89'da o seçimi kaybettim öyle veya böyle. Ve o gece Seçim Koordinasyon Merkezinde o bayan kardeşlerimiz, hanım kardeşlerimiz, o üniversiteli genç kızlarımız nasıl ağlıyorlar, nasıl ağlıyorlar. *Emek vermek, hele hele bunu heyecanla, aşkla gerçekten vermek başka bir şey.* Ondan dolayı onunla başlayan süreç daha sonra gelişerek, genişleyerek hakikaten arttı *ve mensubu bulunduğum o zamanki partide de kadın hareketini biz çok geliştirdik. AK Partiyi kurduğumuz zaman da bu işe çok önem verdik. Şu anda biliyorsunuz, Türkiye'de aslında kadın hareketi noktasında en güçlü kadın*

potansiyeline de AK Parti sahip. Yaklaşık 4,5 milyonu aşkın üyesi var bildiğim kadarıyla. Böyle bir noktaya geldi.

Dolayısıyla da dikkat edilirse, kadın hakları noktasında iktidarımız döneminde, Başbakanlığım döneminde olsun, benden sonra olsun, bizler kadınlara istihdamda çok ciddi kapılar açtık. Kadın istihdamı yüzde 20'de iken şu anda yüzde 33'e filan ulaştı. *Aynı şekilde eğitim-öğretimde çok ciddi bir noktaya şu anda ulaşmış vaziyette ve artış hala da devam ediyor*. Mesela babaanne ücretleri veriliyor artık, buralara geldi. Evlerde bakım noktasında verilen ücretler filan. *Bunlar bizim hanım kardeşlerimize olan bu borcumuzu inşallah yerine getirme adımlarıdır diye düşünüyorum. Bir de tabii eğitim öğretimde onların önünü ciddi manada açtık, o da hızla devam ediyor.*

F.A: Efendim, son olarak vaktimiz varsa eğer dış politika hakkında bir soru sormak istiyorum. Türkiye'de iç politikada gerçekten çok yoğun bir gündem yaşıyoruz ama diğer taraftan dış politika gündemimiz de devam ediyor. Siz yurt dışı ziyaretlerinizi sürdürüyorsunuz. Pakistan ziyareti gerçekleşti. Ondan önce Körfez Ülkelerine ziyaretiniz gerçekleşti. Bu Cuma günü de Rusya'ya bir ziyaret gerçekleştireceksiniz. Rusya ziyaretinizin gündeminde ne var? Bir taraftan da yine merak edilen bir konu, Antalya'da dün üçlü zirve gerçekleşti. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Rusya ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Genelkurmay Başkanları bir araya geldiler. Gündemlerinde de çok büyük ihtimalle Suriye ve Irak vardı. Oradan ne tür bir sonuç çıkmasını umuyorsunuz? Ne dersiniz efendim?

R.T.E Şimdi bizim Sayın Putin'le Cuma günü yapacağımız bu görüşme, ziyaret, aslında Başbakanlığım döneminde kurduğumuz Yüksek Düzeyli Stratejik Konsey toplantılarının bir devamı mahiyetinde olacak. Tabii burada hem Rusya-Türkiye ilişkilerini getirdiğimiz nokta; şu ana kadar neredeyiz, bundan sonra neler yapmamız

lazım, bunları görüşme imkanımız olacak. *Tabii burada gerek enerji noktası, gerekse bölgedeki sorunlar bizim en önemli başlıklarımızı teşkil edecek diye düşünüyorum.* Şu anda bununla ilgili de zaten arkadaşlarımız çalışmaları yürütüyorlar.

Ama burada birinci sırada nedir diye sorarsanız, tabii ki Suriye'deki gelişmelerdir. Suriye'de şu anda Rusya'nın, Türkiye'nin burada önemli bir konumu var, yeri var, Amerika'nın başını çektiği koalisyon güçlerinin tabii ki önemli bir yeri var. Bu konuları bizim orada masaya yatırmak suretiyle, 3 Genelkurmay Başkanımızın geldiği noktayı da orada bir değerlendireceğiz. İşte Genelkurmay Başkanımdan gerekli bilgileri aldım ve zaten seyahatte o da heyetimizin içinde yer alacak. Ve orada biz neler yapabiliriz? *Özellikle Münbiç'teki gelişmeler tabii şu anda önemli bir yer tutuyor ve burada insani yardımla iş sanki telafi ediliyormuş gibi bir havada gösteriliyor ama olayın sadece insani yardım boyutundan bahsedemeyiz. Çünkü oranın gerçek sahipleri kimse Münbiç'e onların yerleşmesi başından itibaren bizim tezimizdir.* Ben bunu Sayın Obama'ya başkanlığı döneminde zaten defaatle söylemiştim. Oradaki işgalci güçlerin, yani YPG gibi, bunların Fırat'ın doğusuna gitmesi konusunu hep işlemiştik. *Şu anda da tezimiz bizim bu noktada budur. Burada bir değişiklik söz konusu değil. Gerçek sahipleri kimse onlar Münbiç'e yerleşsinler. Cerablus'taki insanlar nasıl şu anda topraklarına yerleşmenin huzurunu yaşıyorsa, Rai'dekiler nasıl toprağına yerleşmesinin huzurunu yaşıyorsa, oradakiler de bunu yaşasın diye bir tezimiz var.* Ve bu üçlü görüşmeler de bu akşam Sayın Genelkurmay Başkanımdan aldığım bilgiye göre iyi geçti ve yarın detayını da kendisiyle zaten konuşacağız. Bunu da Moskova'da Sayın Putin'le değerlendirme imkânımız olacak.

P.Ç: Teşekkür ediyoruz.

B.D: Soruya vakit kalmadı herhalde.

P.Ç: Tabii çokça soru var aslında da, sorulması gereken…

Çok teşekkür ederiz vakit ayırdığınız için ve bize anlattığınız için.

R.T.E Estağfurullah, sağ olun.

P.Ç: İlk kez bu süreçte bir canlı yayında soruları yanıtladınız.

Şimdi Diriliş Ertuğrul meraklıları da ekran başında bekliyorlar. Yeni bölümü

birazdan TRT1 yayını Diriliş'le devam edecek.

Biz Külliye'den özel yayınımızı buradan noktalıyoruz.

Tekrar teşekkür ediyoruz ve 16 Nisan'ın ülkemize güzellikler getirmesini diliyoruz.

R.T.E Ben de ekranları başında bizi izleyen tüm milletime en kalbi duygularla selam,

sevgi, saygılarımı sunuyorum. 16 Nisan'ı ihmal etmesinler. Evet'te buluşalım.

P.Ç: Hoşça kalınız.

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF THE CORPUS

Interview no.	Date	Interviewers	Channels (Broadcaster)
Interview #1	12.04.2023	Ahmet Hakan Hande Fırat, Abdulkadir Selvi, Zafer Şahin, Fulya Kalfa	Kanal D & CNN Türk (Demirören)
Interview #2	03.10.2013	Murat Akgun, Erdal Şafak, Sevilay Yükselir, Hasan Celal Güzel, Mehmet Barlas	ATV & A Haber (Turkuvaz)
Interview #3	31.05.2015	Nasuhi Güngör, Hilal Kaplan, Nuh Albayrak	ATV & A Haber (Turkuvaz)
Interview #4	30.07.2016	Melih Altınok, Hilal Kaplan	ATV & A Haber (Turkuvaz)
Interview #5	04.08.2016	Erhan Çelik, Yaşar Taşkın Koç	TRT
Interview #6	08.03.2017	Pelin Çift, Fahrettin Altun, Burhanettin Duran	TRT & TRT Haber
Interview #7	24.05.2018	Pelin Çift, Fatih Er	TRT
Interview #8	03.02.2019	Sermin Baysal Ata, Serdar Karagöz	TRT
Interview #9	12.05.2023	Canan Reçber, Murat Çiçek, Ünal Kaya, Zafer Şahin, Cansu Canan, Merve Başkurt, Seda Öğretir, Sinan Burhan, Başak Şengül, Ercan Seki, Cansu Canan	24 - Bengü Türk - CNN - TV 100 - TVNET - Akit TV - Ülke TV - Habertürk - A Haber - NTV - Global - TGRT

Interview #10	16.05.2023	Ahmet Hakan, Hande Fırat	Kanal D & CNN Türk (Demirören)
Interview #11	08.06.2020	Sermin Baysal Ata, Okan Müderrisoğlu, Burhanettin Duran	TRT
Interview #12	24.10.2019	Pelin Çift, Andrea Sanke, Serdar Karagöz	TRT
Interview #13	02.11.2022	Salih Nayman, Hilal Kaplan, Melih Altınok, Şebnem Bursalı	ATV & A Haber (Turkuvaz)
Interview #14	28.09.2022	Fulya Kalfa, Hande Fırat, Ahmet Hakan, Abdülkadir Selvi, Zafer Şahin	Kanal D & CNN Türk (Demirören)
Interview #15	11.08.2021	Fulya Kalfa, Abdülkadir Selvi, Deniz Bayramoğlu, Zafer Şahin	Kanal D & CNN Türk (Demirören)
Interview #16	24.12.2021	Salih Nayman, Hilal Kaplan, Şebnem Bursalı, Özlem Doğaner	ATV & A Haber (Turkuvaz)
Interview #17	05.01.2020	Ahmet Hakan, Başak Şengül, Buket Aydın	Kanal D & CNN Türk (Demirören)
Interview #18	09.12.2019	Pelin Çift, Zeynep Bulut Şenel, Serdar Karagöz	TRT
Interview #19	03.06.2014	Murat Akgün, Mehmet Barlas, Mahmut Övür, Rasim Ozan Kütahyalı, Erdal Şafak	ATV & A Haber (Turkuvaz)
Interview #20	28.12.2012	Taha Özhan,İsmet Berkan, Mustafa Karaalioğlu, Hatem Ete	TRT

APPENDIX C

AN OVERVIEW OF MAIN AND FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Interview #3, 21 May 2015

Question Number	Topic	Question	Speaker
1	Yıldız Palace	Efendim, hazır tarihten başladık, Yıldız Sarayı Mabeyn'inden bahsettik, dün tarihe damga vuran bir başka gündü, fetih şöleni vardı, ki İstanbul muhteşem bir gün yaşadı, aslında yayınlarla birlikte bütün Türkiye güzel bir gün yaşadı. Biraz ondan söz edelim, nasıl bir atmosferdi, neler yaşandı?	Nasuhi Güngör
2	Presidential System	Başkanlık sistemi tartışmasıyla başlayalım isterim. Bu seçim döneminde de tartışıldı, mitinglerde dile getirildi, seçim sonrasında da gündemimiz olacak başkanlık sistemi, siz de buna ilişkin görüşlerinizi paylaşıyorsunuz. Seçim sonrasındaki, tabi Meclis aritmetiğiyle ilgili olacak ama, sizin öngörünüz nedir, başkanlık sistemi nasıl bir süreç ilerleyecek ve başkanlık tartışmalarını bu anlamda nasıl değerlendirmek gerekir seçim sonrasına ilişkin?	Hilal Kaplan
2.1		Sayın Cumhurbaşkanım, gerçi siz vurguladınız benim meselem değil diye ama, ben orayı biraz daha açmak istiyorum. Bahsettiğiniz konularda kimse karşı çıkamıyor başkanlık sisteminin gerekliliği konusunda, hatta Cumhurbaşkanını halkın seçmesinden sonra zaten parlamenter sistemi yürütme şansı pek kalmadı. Fakat tek muhalefet olarak bu konuda özellikle muhalefet, sizin başkanlık sistemini kendi şahsınız için istediğiniz üzerinde yoğunlaşarak böyle geçiştirmeye çalışıyorlar. Siz başkanlık	Hilal Kaplan

		sistemini kendi yetkinizi artırmak için mi istiyorsunuz? Bunu ben tekrar vurgulamak istiyorum.	
3	Gulenist Organization	Bu turda izniniz olursa bir başka konuya, sıcak gündeme damgasını vuran bir başka konuyla devam edelim. Bir çerçeve sorusu izninizle arz etmek istiyorum. Paralel terör örgütü bir yapı var karşımızda. Şimdi Ana Muhalefet Partisi yakın geçmişte bir lider değişikliği yaşadı bir kaset operasyonuyla. Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi bir başka kaset operasyonuna uğradı yıllar önce, bir başka siyasi partinin o zamanlar BDP adı altında seçilmiş insanları, belediye başkanları zincirlere vurdular, kelepçelere vuruldular diziler halinde, bir diğer siyasi partinin lideri hala kuşkulu, yine paralel terör örgütünü işaret eden bir kazayla hayatını kaybetti. Bir diğeri, rahmetli Erbakan Hocaya bu kadar hakaretler eden bir yapıya rağmen, oturdu onların çerçevesinde bir ittifakla seçime giriyor. Siyasetteki bu esaret nedir efendim? Siyasetin neredeyse yarısı olup biten bunca gelişmeye rağmen, az önce ifade etmeye çalıştığım, niçin böyle bir böyle bir blokta, bir yapıda yer alıyorlar?	Nasuhi Güngör
4	MIT Trucks	Paralel yapıdan devam edersek, MİT tırlarıyla ilgili, MİT tırlarının durdurulması, silah zoruyla işte MİT mensuplarının darp edilmesi vesaire gibi, 17-25 Aralık'taki süreç yine çok yakın bir dönemde bir gazete bunu manşetten MİT tırlarıyla ilgili bir haber verdi. Siz de bunu konuşmanızda en son casusluk ve ajanlık faaliyeti ve bunun nedeniyle açık edilmesi ve hesabı sorulacaktır şeklide dile getirdiniz. Ve tam da seçim öncesi bunu manşete taşıması ayrıca zamanlama açısından da ilginçti. Biraz daha açar mısınız bu hususstaki görüşünüzü?	Hilal Kaplan

4.1		Bugün de bir açıklamaları oldu, yani Türkiye'nin yardımı olmasaydı dedi 1 milyon Suriyeli Türkmen ölüme terk edilmiş olacaktı dedi Suriye Türkmenleri eski Başkanı.	Hilal Kaplan
5	Gulenist Organization	Efendim, paralel yapıyla mücadele dönmek istiyorum tekrar. Uzun bir süreden beri bu mücadele devam ediyor. Sayın Başbakan bugün Diyarbakır'daki konuşmasında da 8 Haziran'dan itibaren bürokraside ve tekrar yeniden bir yapılanma olacağını, yargıya güven sağlanacağını söylemişti. Şimdi bu mücadelede paralel örgüt üyesi olup da şu ana kadar ortaya çıkmayan çok sayıda kişi olduğu söyleniyor. Bunlarla ilgili bu mücadele nasıl yapılacak? Bunlar nasıl tespit edilebilecek; bir? İkincisi de; paralel örgütün kumpası sonucunda cezaevine giren tutuklu veya işte hüküm giyen birçok bürokrat vardı, bunların çok kısmı tahliye oldu ama, devam ediyor, görevlerine dönemediler, yani mağduriyetleri devam ediyor. Bunlarla ilgili de bir çalışma düşünülüyor mu? Bunu öğrenmek istedim.	Nuh Albayrak
5.1		Bir kısmı yurt dışına kaçtı.	Nuh Albayrak
5.2		Yeni siyaset belgesinde, mücadelede kırmızı kitaba girmesinin bu örgütün.	Nuh Albayrak
5.3		Efendim, bu paralel yapıyla mücadele sizin çok dikkat çekici bir ifadeniz var, hukuk çerçevesinde mücadele. Bu konuda bir şey sormak istiyorum, bu yapıyla birlikte alınan bir bankaya önceki gün itibariyle tamamen el konuldu, TMSF'ye tümüyle devredildi. Bu durumun mesela Türkiye'nin yabancı yatırımcılar nezdinde itibarını sarsacağını öne sürünler var, farklı tezleri olanlar var. Siz nasıl bakıyorsunuz efendim?	Nuh Albayrak

6	Elections	Seçimlerle de ilgili bir şey soracaktım. HDP'ye gelmeden, genel olarak bir değerlendirmeniz vardı geçtiğimiz haftalarda, mitinglerde genel bir heyecansızlık görüyorum, bir rehavet görüyorum demiştiniz, ki kararsız seçmen noktasında da geçtiğimiz seçimlere göre daha yüksek rakamların anketlerde çıktığı söyleniyor. Bu hususta, son geçtiğimiz işte 2 hafta da o açıklamanızın üzerinden geçti, bir değişiklik görüyor musunuz, farklı bir değerlendirmeniz olur mu?	Hilal Kaplan
6.1		Rehavet ifadeniz farklı yorumlandı.	Hilal Kaplan
6.2		Efendim, bir-iki dakika içinde reklama gideceğiz ama, şöyle yapalım izniniz olursa: Şimdi siz rehavet dediniz ama, ben sizle bir seçim gezisi hatırlıyorum bir ilçede, orada Belediye Başkanına dönüp şöyle dediniz: Sahaya baktınız ve dediniz ki, Başkan, çalışmamışsın. Ve Başkan orayı çok az bir farkla kaybetti. Şimdi çok eski yıllardan, gençlik yıllarınızdan beri teşkilat tecrübeniz var, sahaya baktığınızda neyi görüyorsunuz, saha size ne söylüyor?	Nasuhi Güngör
6.3		Efendim, kaldığımız yerden devam edelim, seçim sürecinin o sıcak atmosferine yavaş yavaş giriş yapmıştık, meydanları sorduk. Siz tarafsız kaldınız ya da yorum yapabileceğiniz alanların sınırını bize ifade ettiniz. Ama seçimlerin çok konuşulan bir konusu var. Çözüm süreciyle birlikte isterseniz bu başlığı açalım. Bir siyasi partinin barajı geçip geçememesinin Türkiye'nin kaderini belirleyeceğine kadar gelen bir tartışma bu. Siz de öyle görüyor musunuz gerçekten, yani yoksa farklı bir bakış açınız var mı?	Nasuhi Güngör
7	Peace Process	Çözüm süreciyle ilgili, bu konuyla ilgili bir sorum var ama, ben bir önceki turdaki o meydanlarla ilgili sorumu sorma	Nuh Albayrak

		istiyorum. Çözüm süreciyle ilgili son dönemde bir tabiri caizse bir tehdit sürekli pompalanıyor. Eğer HDP Meclis dışında kalırsa çözüm süreci zedelenir, devam etmez gibi bir algı oluşturulmaya çalışılıyor. HDP eğer barajı aşamazsa çözüm süreci etkilenir mi; bu birincisi.	
7.1		Sayın Cumhurbaşkanım, meydanlarda bu seçimlerde gördüğümüz bir şey de, son seçimlerde pek görmüyorduk; bütün muhalefet bol miktarda vaatlerde bulunuyorlar, adeta yarışıyorlar vaatlerde. İlginçtir, kaynak olarak da çok basit şeyler gösteriyorlar. Mesela bunlardan bir tanesi sizin işte isminiz çok geçiyor ve Cumhurbaşkanlığı Sarayı kaynak olarak gösteriliyor, oradaki harcamalar. İşte sizin orada bilemiyorum altın kaplamaları klozetler kullanıyormuşsunuz, işte 1 milyon liralık bardaklar kullanıyormuşsunuz. Oranın ödeneğini keserek bu vaatler karşılayacaklarını söylüyorlar. Bunlar gerçekçi midir? İkincisi de, bu dönemde çok vaatte bulunulmasının sebebi, acaba biraz da Hükümetin ekonomik istikrar konusunda çok aşırı, ekonomik disiplini korumak için aşırı biçimde şey yapmasının sebebi midir bu acaba, çabasının sonucu mudur?	Nuh Albayrak
8	Poverty	Nuh Beyin bıraktığı yerden, senin HDP ve çözüm süreci sorun saklı kalsın ama, bir parantezle devam etmek istiyorum. Şimdi Ana Muhalefet Lideri bunları söylerken işte altın kaplamalar, pahalı bardaklar, bir de 17 milyon yoksul vurgusu yapıyor; birincisi bu. İkincisi; burada Külliyenin inşa sürecinden de başlayan, şahsınızla ilgili, başkanlık sistemiyle ilgili ifade ettikleriniz üzerinden de başlayan, sanki böyle bir tevazuu kaybetme tartışması falan da var. Yani yoksullara sırtlarını döndüler unuttular. Şimdi Sultanbeyli'de yoksul sofrasına oturan Cumhurbaşkanı Tayyip Erdoğan, başka bir	Nasuhi Güngör

		yerde bu konuda farklı mı davranıyor, nedir efendim buradaki tavır?	
9	Minimum Wage	Aslında bu bağlamdan devam edelim istiyorum biraz. Bu seçimde ekonomik işte noktada bazı vaatler çok fazla ön plana çıktı. Asgari ücret noktasında da işte 1500 vadeden var, 1800 vadeden var, 5000 vadeden var, böyle bir durum söz konusu. Sizin bu seçim vaatleri hakkında asgari ücret noktasında görüşünüz?	Hilal Kaplan
9.1		MÜSİAD'ın bugün bir tam sayfa ilanı vardı gazetelerde efendim bu vaatler konusunda. Hatta bir imza kampanyası başlattılar, bu vaatlerin çok yerinde olmadığı konusunda…	Nuh Albayrak
9.2		Evet, o endişelerini dile getirmişler.	Nuh Albayrak
10	Constitution	Efendim, seçim gündemiyle devam edersek, şimdi meydanlarda başkanlık sistemi özellikle muhalefet tarafından zaten dile getirilmiyor, bu ekonomik vaatler havada uçuşuyor, dış politika neredeyse yok. Ama bir de bir anayasa konusu var Türkiye'nin gündeminde, aslında başkanlık sistemiyle de çok yakından ilgili. 7 Haziran'dan sonra bu konuda Türkiye'yi nasıl bir gündem bekliyor efendim ya da sizin kafanızda nasıl bir takvim var?	Nasuhi Güngör
11	Peace process	Ben yine çözüm süreci ve HDP bağlamında bir soru sormak istiyorum. Geçtiğimiz 2 hafta önce yanılmıyorsam bir röportajda söylemiştiniz, HDP'nin parti olarak seçime girmesi kararında, benim edindiğim bilgiler çerçevesinde İmralı'nın dışında gelişen bir durum, dağı arkalarına alarak dışarıda olanların böyle bir kararı var ve üst akılın da burada etkisi olduğundan bahsetmiştiniz. Biraz açmak ister misiniz?	Hilal Kaplan

12	Office of Religious Affairs	Şimdi azıcık havayı değiştirelim efendim. Az önce Diyanet'le ilgili konuşurken Diyanet'in itibarıyla ilgili bazı ifadeleriniz oldu, protokoldeki yerinden tutun da konumuna kadar, başkanına göstermesi gereken hürmete kadar. Diyanet bölgemizde de daha itibarlı hale geliyor, uluslararası düzeyde faaliyetleriyle de bambaşka bir hüviyete bürünüyor. Şimdi bununla ilgili güzel bir örnek var, TİKA ve Diyanet, iki kurumumuzun işbirliğiyle Filistin'de 2 bin gencimize nikah kıyılıyor, bir görüntümüz var efendim, onu izleyelim ondan sonra sizinle konuşalım. Çok güzel görüntüler geliyor ekrana, bambaşka bir atmosfer gördüğünüz gibi. Evet, bir statta 2 bin tane gencimize, bizim gençlerimiz…	Nasuhi Güngör
12.1		Güçlü bir Türkiye'nin nerelere dokunabileceğinin de çok güzel bir manzarası herhalde efendim bu.	Nasuhi Güngör
13	Egypt	Bu görüntüler devam ederken efendim, bölgede İslam coğrafyasında sizin hassasiyetle üzerinde durduğunuz bir başka konu, ki doğrudan da size yönelik bir başka gündemi getirdi haberinde, Mısır'da seçilmiş Cumhurbaşkanı Mursi ve arkadaşlarına yönelik alınan gayri meşru kararlar. Siz zaten darbe sürecinin başından beri çok net bir duruş sergilediniz, aslında gerek İslam dünyasında, gerekse Batıda buna benzer duruşlara pek de rastlayamadık doğrusunu söylemek gerekirse. Önce bu duruşunuzu biraz konuşalım, ardından Türkiye'de bir medya grubu sizin de Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimlerinden aldığınız oydan hareketle bir tuhaf benzetmeyle bu işi gündeme getirdi, onları konuşalım.	Nasuhi Güngör
13.1		Kaygılıyız, o kadar.	Hilal Kaplan

14	Presidential System	Yine iç politikayla alakalı o zaman bir şey sormak istiyorum ben de. Çok sık gündeme getirildi bu muhalefet tarafından defaatle söyleniyor, hani halkın seçtiği Cumhurbaşkanı olmanız hasebiyle böyle bir farkı da teslim etmeden, işte tarafsız Cumhurbaşkanı olmalı, Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan tarafsızlık ilkesine göre davranmıyor vesaire gibi eleştiriler öne sürülüyor. İşte bu açılışlar, bu toplantılara yönelik de hani halkın huzuruna çıkmamanız gerektiği gibi neredeyse bir algı yaratılmaya çalışılıyor. Bu hususta ne dersiniz?	Hilal Kaplan
15	Syria	Efendim, hükümetleriniz döneminde uyguladığınız dış politikalarınız eleştirildi hep. Oysa gelinen noktada sadece Suriye konusunda çok insani bir tavır ortaya konduğu ortaya çıktı şu anda ve başka ülkeler desteklememesine rağmen Türkiye onurla bu misafirleri ağırlamaya devam ediyor. Gelinen noktada Kılıçdaroğlu gene o vaatlerin bir kısmını da kaynak olarak bu Suriyeli vatandaşları ülkesine göndereceğini, ama Ortadoğu meselesini çözüp göndereceğini söylüyor. Bunu nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?	Nuh Albayrak
16	Guardianship	Efendim, son 5 dakikaya giriyoruz ama, ben 7 Haziran'ı da merkez alarak bir şey sormak istiyorum. 27 Mayıs'ın üzerinden tam 55 yıl geçmiş, birkaç gün önce 55 yılı doldurduk. Türkiye hala bürokratik vesayeti, paralel terör örgütünün vesayetini, başka vesayetleri konuşuyor. 7 Haziran'da ortaya çıkacak tablo, koalisyon senaryoları bu vesayetler odakları üzerinden. Ne söylemek istersiniz efendim, bizi nasıl bir gelecek bekliyor?	Nasuhi Güngör
17	Football	Efendim, arkadaşlarım kulağıma fısıldayıp duruyorlar, galiba ben Fenerbahçeliyim diye söylemeyeceğim diye zannediyorlar ama, geçen hafta lig bitti, şampiyon belli, şu	Nasuhi Güngör

		anda da Galatasaray'ın kutlamaları devam ediyor, onunla tamamlayalım dilerseniz.	

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