The Contemporary Turkish Government, Ideological Strategies and the Symbolic: A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Contemporary Politics of Turkey

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Abstract

The contemporary government of Turkey has been seeing increasing support for several years, and obstacles it has faced have not reduced the number of its supporters by much. This paper emphasizes that the inquiries which interpret this political conjuncture should consider the Turkish ideological atmosphere and discursive arrangements employed by politicians to manufacture consent. The author aims to discover the relation between the success of the ruling party and its discursive strategies while examining its symbolic structure and imaginary constructions using Lacanian psychoanalysis by employing interpretative discourse analysis. The author intends to highlight the nodal points of the hegemonic discourse, seeks to uncover rhetorical patterns, and attempts to explore the applicability of psychoanalysis on political and sociological issues.

Keywords

Jacques Lacan; Political Discourse; Psychoanalysis; Turkey; Unconsciousness

Introduction

Various political traditions in Turkey employ distinct discursive strategies for mobilizing people and manufacturing consent. The current Turkish government, the Justice and Development Party (JDP), likewise utilizes distinct rhetorical patterns for similar reasons. However, the JDP has differentiated itself from other political parties due to its impressive success. In contrast to its antecedents, the contemporary ruling party's discourse has influenced Turkish society a great amount and gained enormous support. This paper therefore intends to trace the discursive patterns employed by the ruling party from a Lacanian psychoanalytic standpoint in order to demonstrate how its dominant ideology and discourse rooted in a symbolic structure strongly contribute to the ruling party's continuing hegemony.

The JDP's discourse has its roots in the discourses of the Welfare Party (WP) and National Salvation Party (NSP), which sublimate old Ottoman times and accuse Turkish modernists of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire while ignoring Islamist and conservative contributions to the modernization process (Yıldız, 2003). The JDP approaches Turkish modernity and the New Turkish Republic from similar standpoints. Thus, the conservative and Islamist movements of today both sublimate Ottoman times and view Turkish modernization as a simple operation, begun by Ittihat Terakki and its successors, while ignoring its intricacies, transformations, and ramifications. This hegemonic discourse positions itself against the center seen to be dominated by bureaucracy, the military, and elites. Similarly, the JDP fetishizes old Ottoman times as a pre-traumatic condition.

This attitude can be analyzed by referring to the locus of conflict between the different political traditions. The conflict occurs mainly between the social democratic tradition, represented by Republican People's Party (RPP) which sublimates Western values, and the conservative-Islamist tradition represented by the JDP which tries to recall old Ottoman times as a perfect moment of Turkish history. This antagonism is strongly contained in the discourse of the ruling party. JDP supporters take a negative attitude toward secular understandings sympathizing with the West while asserting that before the JDP came into power, many people felt frustrated and discriminated against (Lowen, 2017). In other words, they claim that before the JDP government many people had been feeling like black Turks in opposition against white Turks. For instance, one JDP supporter stated:

> "(Erdoğan) He's the only one we can trust. Because of the headscarf, because of our security, for our Qur'an and the mosque. He was the only one who supported us, he always stands beside those who were oppressed" (Kareem, 2017).

The function of the discourse in the mobilization of the masses by the ruling party is crucial in these processes, and the discourse is likewise structured around a central fantasy involving many imaginary elements. Herein, the psychoanalytic method posits itself as a significant tool for an inquiry into the discourse's power due to its usefulness for discovering the structures of fantasies and their role in maintaining certain political realities. The divided structure of the subject which contains a gap due to the alienation is exclusively indicated by psychoanalysis. The alienation of the self starts with the penetration by the law of the father and this process led to a fundamental lack in the subject. While fantasy functions to fill the gap, psychoanalysis directs attention to the inevitability of this very gap and illuminates the structuration of the unconscious in relation to the lack and the phantasmagoric structure of the discourse.

All in all, the situation is reminiscent of contemporary populist rhetoric and policies implemented by rising contemporary right-wing governments around the globe. This paper aims to grasp the essence of these rhetorics and their functions from a psychoanalytic point of view. Psychoanalysis is crucial to discover the characteristics of ideological and discursive strategies due to its emphasis on the functioning of the fantasy. These characteristics – such as the substantiality of the identification with the leader; the split between the elite and the people through the third disruptive element, etc. – also constitute several similarities with the contemporary populist right-wing governments. Hence, the paper starts with a review of previous works which emphasize the role of symbolic structures, unconscious processes, and social imaginaries in the formation and functioning of the social. The second section contains a presentation of discourse analysis as the main utilized methodology and a justification of the employment of Lacanian psychoanalysis in conducting this work. Consequently, the third section emphasizes the role of the identification of people with their leader and tries to discover how this phenomenon functions and what the main consequences of it are. The fourth section examines the representation of the West in the central fantasy of Turkish politics as well as the Ottoman era being represented as a pre-traumatic condition. This section intends to discover the main mechanisms behind the formation of the aforementioned fantasy. The last section investigates nodal points of the discourse as it is anchored in the social imaginary while placing emphasis on the ethics of psychoanalysis.

The Psyche and the Social

The compatibility between psychoanalysis and the social sciences constitutes a cornerstone of this paper. Likewise, the substantiality of meaning systems, symbolic

structures, and imaginary constructions can be considered as a significant discussion as concerns social and political life. The social is not something reducible to a collection of individuals; it shapes identity, consciousness, and the perceptions of the members of a group. Individual psychic life is not something independent of social structures. Interactions between the two have led to many societal transformations throughout history, and mobilizations of the masses can be analyzed in terms of the social and cultural life of the societies in which they take place.

Historical transformations have given way to changes in the individual psyche through modernization (Fromm, 1965: 53). Fromm (1965: 45) points out that the resolution of primary ties which refer to the hierarchical ties of social organization dominating the Medieval Era, led to anxiety in the individual psyche. These processes further led to the emergence of authoritarian personalities, and finally the rise of authoritarianism in society. In his analysis, Fromm (1965: 72) underlines that the balanced society of the Medieval Era was transformed by novel transformations. Modernity altered the persisting bonds of society by producing new imaginaries, and these affected the psyches of individuals. Similarly, Taylor (1998: 38-39) points out that the modern imaginary brought about a new sort of interaction both within society and also between monarchs and their subjects. Mediated connection between the state and society was replaced in the modern imaginary by new horizontal forms. The policies implemented during Turkey's modernization process likewise sought to replace old communal bonds with a new collective identity based on horizontal access via citizenship (Mardin, 1981: 209). These processes further altered the self-consciousness of the society and the perceptions of its members.

Similarly, Marcuse (1970: 47) underlines that modernization's weakening of the father figure's status and of primordial bonds led to the diminishment of the autonomy of the ego. These processes can cause the ego ideal to be reflected in an external figure like a political leader; they permit an intermingling of psychoanalysis and politics (1970: 48). Therefore, there is a bridge between historical-social transformations and psychological alterations. These changes also appeared alongside the emergence of fascism. Moore (1974: 436) points out that the self-consciousness of landed aristocracy vulgarized because of modernization processes spreading from above, and this gave way to the rise of fascist ideologies. These processes signify the substantiality of existing meaning structures and the ethos of both the totality of society and its segments in politics. As Castoriadis (2005: 117) stresses, society cannot be reduced to its functions since it cannot maintain its existence without symbolic networks and social imaginaries. He asserts that a central imaginary – such

as elementary symbols in totemism, religion in Greek culture, pseudo-rationality in capitalism, etc. – provides the meaning for both social existence and the outer world (2005: 130). Furthermore, these symbolic and imaginary elements constitute the unconscious dynamics of a given society through rituals, practices, sedimented meanings, etc. Unconsciousness, as Freud describes, is not something autonomous from social processes, but rather flourishes through them; thus, Freud (1962: 44) asserts that social regulations deprive the self of pleasure, and that the compensation of this loss is very crucial for the development of the human psyche. The compensation of this very loss is strongly related to the symbolic structure of social life.

The development of the individual psyche is strongly related to historical-social transformations. All the above theorists emphasize the role of symbolic meanings and imaginary constructions on unconscious processes and identity formation. The political climate of an era is inseparable from such characteristics, and the psyche of an individual is not independent of the social and cultural structures of their societies. The aforementioned studies try to bridge the psychic lives of the individual and the social while keeping in mind that the unconscious of an individual is shaped by society. Lacanian psychoanalysis similarly emphasizes the role of the symbolic and the imaginary in such processes. The dead father in the Oedipus Myth qua the symbolic father generates the very law as the ground of the social existence (Lacan, 2017: 132). Lacan (2017: 156) asserts that the father's prohibition of the self from their primordial relation with the desired object led to a castrated subject. It is the symbolic father who frustrates the relation between the self and the desired object through the law. That is, the symbolic function of the father permits the very existence of social by generating a lack in the subject since the self loses its desired object through the father's intervention and enters into the realm of social, namely the realm of law. While Lacan (1978: 107) identifies the symbolic with the human subject; so with culture, the imaginary is characterized with the animality and nature. Imaginary matrix provides a feeling of unity for the divided subject. Yet, the disruption of the primordial structure leads to sublimated imaginary residues due to the fragmentation. Lacanian psychoanalysis provides crucial clues regarding the relationship between the self and the social in relation to the symbolic and the imaginary orders in respect to both imaginary residues, symbolic structuration and the role of desire. However, with the help of Lacanian psychoanalysis, it seems possible to go one step further by rejecting the dichotomy between the individual and society in the realm of the unconscious. Concerning the methodological approach of this paper, the next section contains both the Lacanian understanding of the unconscious as something not consumed

in the particularity of the self as well as the problematization of the compatibility of Lacanian psychoanalysis with social inquiry.

Lacanian Psychoanalysis as a Method of Analysis

This paper tries to conduct an interpretive discourse analysis based in Lacanian psychoanalysis in order to discover the relationship between textual gestures, discursive arrangements, and the contemporary Turkish social context. Such an analysis must also contain theoretical discussions related to the appropriateness of using Lacanian psychoanalysis in the social sciences. This paper therefore aims to discover the substantiality of Lacanian psychoanalysis when it comes to analyzing the populist ideology of contemporary Turkish politics while trying to justify the application of Lacanian categories in social analyses.

Discourse analysis has been chosen as the main method for several reasons. First of all, the paper examines the implication certain ideological processes have on Turkish political life. Here, Althusser's conceptualization of ideology presents itself as a significant tool towards understanding such a process since, in his understanding, ideology forms subjects through interpellation (Althusser, 1971: 174). This process is centered around a third dimension, the Other Subject, which is, in the Turkish context, reminiscent of the country's ruling party. Althusser's conceptualization illuminates the tripartite relation between the Other Subject, ideology, and subjugated subjects; he emphasizes the dissemination of ideology through practices, rituals, etc. (Althusser, 1971: 178). Yet, it is limited in the sense that Althusser avoids discussing the cognitive dimensions of ideology in relation to knowledge. Herein, Eagleton (1991: 43, 49) criticizes the Althusserian understanding while maintaining that ideological practices coexist with beliefs and arguments. The rituals and practices of people are fused with cognitive dimensions such as thoughts, ideas, convictions, etc. As such, discursive gestures emanating from the Other Subject are significant dimensions of ideological formations, something this paper intends to discover. Such a study necessitates a discourse analysis rooted in an interpretative methodology. To conduct such work, it is a must to begin with possible objections against the employment of Lacanian psychoanalysis in analyzing social phenomena.

Even if Lacanian psychoanalysis is being used frequently in postcolonial research and by some scholars of contemporary cultural studies (e.g. Frantz Fanon (1986), Hommi K. Bhabha (1994), Saul Newman (2007), Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001), etc.), there may possibly be several objections to the application of Lacanian categories to bigger social structures since the categories are rooted in the relationship between the analyst and the

analysand. Also, Lacan himself did not allow the application of his theory outside of the clinical experience (Badiou and Roudinesco, 2014: 20). However, there are several significant reasons which help justify the application of this psychoanalytic method in social and political studies. First of all, the Lacanian unconscious is not something belonging to the self but rather it is constituted in large social processes. When Lacan mentions the unconscious, he states that: "To that which goes unnoticed, the word everywhere applies just as well as nowhere" (Lacan, 1990: 5). In other words, the Lacanian unconscious is a non-place as well as an all-place. Lacan's famous sentence, "the unconscious…is structured like a language" (Lacan, 2006: 737), signifies that the unconscious is developed through social and cultural processes because it is based on the symbolic which transcends the imaginary self. Furthermore, while the Lacanian understanding of the self just refers to an imaginary product, he points to the Merleau-Pontian primordial body and analyzes things as if they constituted a totality (Lacan, 1978: 71-72). Furthermore, Lacan relates the unconscious to socialization types, cultural constellations, and historically formed categories of understanding rather than to an imaginative singularity.

Another possible objection to the use of Lacanian psychoanalysis in social studies is that if political analyses get stuck in the ideological stage, insufficient information may result because hegemony has several sorts of techniques for manufacturing consent other than ideology and discourse. Eagleton (1991: 33) points out the example of Thatcher in which Thatcher did not gain support just with the help of ideological apparatuses, but rather many kinds of policies were implemented to support the process. However, it seems that ideological apparatuses and discursive strategies have been more critical in the case of manufacturing consent in Turkey due to the intensity of their rhetorical effects. An indicator of this situation is the increasingly monopolized media in Turkey which distributes an enormous amount of propaganda. Tokdoğan (2018: 74) asserts that the JDP can be differentiated from its antecedents because while other parties from a similar political tradition could not gain this amount of support, the political narrative of the glorious Ottoman-era as reinforced by the JDP has been settled throughout society and becoming banalized since the 2000s. The JDP has therefore affected many parts of Turkish society and has maintained its hegemony for several years by the means of discursive strategies. The conservatism which the JDP represents is not a stationary movement but rather it constitutes a more complicated picture; that is, conservatism should be regarded by referring to the continuous reproduction of the sacred, the ancient, and the traditional (Bora, 2015: 54). This reproduction process necessitates various sorts of discursive arrangements. To understand

this complex picture, it is necessary to consider the reproduction process through its various rhetorical strategies.

As was aforementioned, Lacanian psychoanalysis was chosen as the method of analysis in this paper for several reasons. First of all, political reality is established at the symbolic stage and the maintenance of it is reinforced by fantasy (Stavrakakis, 1999: 71). Hence, the psychoanalytic approach can enhance our understanding of how fantasy is structured to support a social reality. The condition of Turkey especially constitutes a prime case for this since the elements of fantasy serve a crucial function here. This can be observed in reflections made by the media, discourses among the people, and in the enormous impact political rhetoric has had on the society. Moreover, the function of fantasy is directed to occupy the gap between enunciation and symbolic representation (Zizek, 1998: 76); that is, it is oriented to suppress the occurrence of the real. Several cases in the rhetoric of the ruling party have exemplified this issue. For example, when crises have occurred in Turkey as an expression of the real, the discourses which work to strengthen the fantasy have intensified. Lacan (2007: 107) asserts that the surplus *jouissance* produced by the process of representation always occurs due to an excessive element provided by the slave. The unessential consciousness of the slave which is characterized with the consciousness for another is defined with the service for the essential consciousness and this service combined with its work leads to an excess (Hegel, 1977: 115). The essential consciousness can relate with itself only through the mediation of the unessential consciousness. The subject's imaginary relation with the *objet petit a*, the surplus lost object, constitutes the formula of the fantasy. Moreover, the fantasy must fill the gap of the place of the lost object and support the discourse; otherwise, the symbolic structure it seeks to uphold can be seriously damaged. There is a barrier between the divided subject and the object, and their impossible relationship is articulated by the very fantasy, as indicated by Lacan (2007: 108). The necessity of the fantasy in this process appears similarly in political situations as is the case with Turkey. Psychoanalysis is therefore exclusively crucial for grasping this issue and for reflecting on its rhetorical patterns.

On the other hand, psychoanalysis can provide us with substantial clues regarding the role of ideology. In their early writings, Marx and Engels (1998: 67-70) analyze ideology as a process of alienation, referring to that of the conscious from material historical reality. Zizek (2008: 24) asserts that the orthodox formula of ideology is "*Sie wissen das nicht, aber sie tun es*– they do not know it, but they are doing it." This statement affirms that the conscious becomes false by being alienated from reality. However, the "social imaginary... is more real

than the 'real'," as is described by Castoriadis (2005: 140), and the reduction of ideology into a mere problem of false consciousness ignores the complex interactions between symbolic structures, the social imaginary, and practical existence. In contrast to the reduction of orthodox understandings, Althusser (2014: 156) asserts that ideology is rooted in habitual practices while giving priority to ontology. Yet, such an approach likewise contains its limitations as is mentioned above. However, Lacanian psychoanalysis constitutes a mixture of these two approaches – ideology as a problem of practices and as a problem of consciousness – by emphasizing the role of ideology as concerns the gap between the symbolic and the imaginary. In other words, while accepting the practical role of ideology, psychoanalysis aims to provide clues for the subversion of the master discourse through the discourse of the analysand. Zizek (2008: 43) criticizes Althusser by insisting that the Big Other is also incomplete due to the ambiguity of its desire, and this very gap permits the critique of ideology. However, he likewise criticizes the Orthodox understanding of false consciousness. While Zizek quotes Sloterdijk's definition of ideology as "They know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it" (2008: 25), he revises this conceptualization by emphasizing that ideology is rooted in practical existence. It is therefore not possible to subvert a dominant ideology by way of a mere enunciation of the truth. To illustrate, when people look at gruesome pictures from slaughterhouses and see animals being tortured, they feel disgusted, but the feeling generally does not project itself to how they view meat on a dinner table. Even if they know the facts of where it came from, they prefer to ignore them. This is also the case with political orientation. When people are faced with actual problems like claims of corruption, whether the people accept these claims or not, they prefer to ignore them and claim things like "They steal but they work, too", these sorts of statements were very popular during the days of the corruption claims. Ismet Akça (2014: 28) claims that people in Turkey are aware of the government's corruption but they prefer to discount it because they do not want to break up their relationship with the ruling party which is materially and spiritually satisfying their desires. A significant part of this process seems to involve the identification of the masses with their political leader. Lacanian psychoanalysis can provide crucial clues about the functioning of this identification.

Construction of Identification

The main elements of the JDP's speech involve apparent identity politics which embrace different sorts of identity groups (Doğanay, 2007: 66). While the discourse is based on a critique of persistent political paradigms like Kemalism and the dominance of the army, the JDP also embraces the lower classes and takes a position against elitism. This point is

apparent in the following words of Erdoğan: "In this country, there is a segregation of Black Turks and White Turks. Your brother Tayyip belongs to Black Turks" (Heper and Toktaş, 2003: 162). Herein, while white Turks are referred to as those who are from the middle class, have Western-oriented values, and are bound to secularist ideals, black Turks are referred to as those who are underprivileged and who feel others under persistent regimes, e.g. being religious groups, ethnic minorities, and mostly members of lower classes. This division is apparent in the analyses of Bali (2018: 329), whereby the notion of white Turks refers to individuals living in Istanbul and possessing cultural capital while the notion of black Turks refers to individuals from Anatolia who lack similar cultural possessions. The illustrated situation seems to be compatible with the main characteristics of populist politics. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013: 500-501) underline the dichotomy between the elite and the people as employed by these politics. Contrasting themselves against the "corrupt elite," the JDP claims to represent the authentic community of people who are segregated and excluded.

One of Erdoğan's supporters has stated that "Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is one of us," "Before, all the leaders were rich kids or high class. He's not like that," and "He speaks our language, gets aggressive like we do – and tells the world what we want to say" (Lowen, 2017). Erdoğan always portrays a populist image: he is from Kasimpasa which is a lower class area of Istanbul, he graduated from Imam Hatip – high schools in Turkey which provide many religious courses in addition to the regular curriculums, these schools were strongly being criticized by the opposition parties during those days because they claimed that the schools violate the secular principles – , he does not prefer to wear eye-catching clothing, and so on. He has also stated, "I love your voices, because I am one of you" (Heper and Toktaş, 2003: 165). On the other hand, Dindar (2014: 194) mentions that the motto of the JDP was "We walked in the same road together," and that Erdoğan referred to his voters as his brothers and sisters. Yet, this form of discourse evolved to have an increasingly authoritarian attitude when Erdoğan became a more dominant figure and began calling people his reeves or his officers. In other words, over time, Erdoğan has more and more taken on the role of a father figure. The initial discursive pattern has been sublated into the newer one with the main point of the discourse being to lead the masses to identify with his personality. Through identification with the father figure, the subject – in this case the masses – replaces a potential physical loss through symbolic gains (Nasio, 1998: 73).

The definition of ideology is central to understanding identification after separation. Also, it is a remarkable point for understanding loyalty to Erdoğan. In this sense it is possible to turn to a reference made by Zizek (2000: 323) to a Marx Brothers' film: "...Groucho Marx,

caught in a lie, answers angrily: 'Whom do you believe, your eyes or my words?' This apparently absurd logic expresses perfectly the functioning of the symbolic order." This is to say that we prefer to accept our fantasies even in their absurdity since it is the very function of fantasy to do so. Fantasy constructs reality itself, and people cannot give up this founding element of their reality. This point can be exemplified through several cases such as the corruption claims against the rule of the JDP and Erdoğan, the emerging political and fiscal crisis, the anger of the *Gezi* protests, the rise in bomb attacks after the 2015 elections, Wikileaks documents, the dramatic decline of the value of Turkish currency, etc. On the other hand, rival parties generally condemn the ruling party for illegalities or they publish documents like videotapes against the government. This kind of rhetoric reminds university discourse which is unable to subvert the master's position. In other words, they try to falsify the hegemonic discourse by claiming that the ruling party is deceiving society, but these claims generally annoy JDP supporters rather than decreasing their support. For instance, while dissidents argued that the coup attack was not an actual attempt to overthrow the government but was in fact coordinated by the JDP, supporters of the ruling party blamed the dissidents angrily on many social websites for being traitors.

In his work, Zizek (2000: 329) mentions the relationship between Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, affirming that even if everybody knew there was a relationship between them, they would still prefer to ignore this fact because of its distance from the big Other's gaze, rendering it impossible for it to inscribe itself upon reality. On the contrary, the matter of the relationship is something that could stimulate an identification process. Zizek suggests that identification with a leader becomes stronger when the leader's shortcomings are visible as was the case with Hitler who always presented many weaknesses such as losing himself and crying in front of audiences (Zizek, 2000: 391). These weaknesses make identification much easier. They exhibit shortcomings in the Other and provide something for onlookers to identify with. Erdoğan also loses himself in his speeches, experiences crying jags, and behaves in a much more bitter manner than a typical politician. It is important to note therefore that emphases on the weaknesses of a leader or the underlining of corrupt practices of a party do not reduce support for either, but rather can contribute to identification of the onlookers with the leader or the party. To illustrate this, despite corruption claims having gained traction, dialogue has become popular among the people whereby they postulate that they would potentially steal a bit of money for themselves too if that if they were the president of the country. Erdoğan supporters believe that he is improving the conditions of Turkey so much that stealing a bit of money is not a big problem because anybody might do

this. In other words, Erdoğan's weaknesses do not lead to a reduction in support for him but rather increase it day by day by fostering identification with him. This identification contains strong phantasmagoric elements: it represents a complex phantasmagoric relation between the symbolic role of the father – represented by the West – and the primordial fantasy of the pre-traumatic condition – represented by the glorious ages of the Ottomans – and the oriental subject.

Fantasy and the Image of the West

> "With this temporal reconfiguration, the past becomes a time of suffering, trauma, and silence, and the present an ideal moment in which to launch a collective process of remembering and healing that opens the door to a future of restored health and well-being. As a therapeutic language of memory, 'coming to terms with the past' challenges official Kemalist history by bringing to light repressed memories" (Kaya, 2015: 682).

The ruling party's discourse makes an attempt of drawing a boundary between New Turkey and the old one. Açıkel's critique (1996: 158), as one of few psychoanalytic analyses concentrating on Turkish politics, stresses that interpellation in the Turkish context is realized with the psychopathology of sacred oppression while characterizing the process using the Hegelian notion of negation of negation – a moment which yields novel results than the previous shape of consciousness – in which masses project their will into contemporary discourse and policies. He asserts that sacred oppression is the dominant ideology of crowds who feel that their ego-ideal is under threat, and it is a false consciousness of a false reality whereby the falseness refers to the incompatibility between the ego-ideal and the discourse of the subject. All of these ideological mechanisms have advanced through the New Turkey discourse.

New Turkey is associated with the growing power of Turkey and the recovery of Ottoman times. The dialogue that took place between Shimon Peres and Erdoğan during the annual meeting in Davos in 2009 illustrates this point. Erdoğan objected against Peres and this deeply affected Turkish society because the issue was perceived as an act of Turkish intervention on the international arena. The perception of the State of Israel by Turkish society reinforces the importance of this event since the significant portion of the society perceives Israel as an imperialist state which is established by the USA for invading and weakening Muslim states of the Middle East. Tokdoğan (2018: 140-141) considers this issue to have been a turning point for Turkey because it was regarded by several segments of society as a revolt of the subaltern. Many newspapers published articles about this incident with wording referring to the power and courage of Erdoğan. Furthermore, the components

of the phantasm generated by the hegemonic ideology of the JDP emphasize the rising strength of Turkey both internationally and nationally. As an example, many people have started to see Erdoğan as both the leader of the Middle East and the leader of the world.

On the other hand, many speeches also point out how Turkey has developed under the JDP government. Emphasis, for example, is placed on new modern multi-lane roads, airports, and trains as a demonstration of Turkey's rising power and technological advancement. At one of the JDP's political rallies in 2016, Erdoğan stated: "The West is jealous of our dams, bridges and subways" (Sönmez, 2016). These constructions are not just solid objects occupying space, but rather something that creates webs of meaning. This can be observed in the occurrences of Gothic architecture, the constructions of the Nazi period, and in the monumental buildings built by the Soviets. These constructions represent phalluses in space in order to generate an impression of power. Recent buildings in Turkey from new shopping centers to bridges, mosques, and a palace follow this example.

Apart from Açıkel's article, the work of Somay is another Lacanian political analysis published in Turkey. He stresses that the splendorous image of the Ottoman era, sublimated family values, sincerity of local folk music, and community spirit have become objects of desire connected to glorious ages because the glorious era of the oriental subject has been strongly damaged by the growing power of the West (Somay, 2011: 55). Therefore, the West draws the image of the omnipotent father and is seen as a separator symbol splitting the subject from its ultimate object of fantasy. The image of separation is effective throughout the process because the fantasy of pre-castration always reflects itself in several elements of the discourse.

Furthermore, Lacanian perversion can be decisive for analyzing attitude. The fantasy of the pervert is fixated on imitating the big Other and its power. Fink (2009: 67) affirms that while the function of the neurotic is repression, the pervert is defined through disavowal. So, the pervert is the one who imitates the Other's desire without questioning it because the pervert cannot be separated from the *mOther* – symbolic mother as a Big Other – exemplified in this case in the glorious Ottoman era – and fails to constitute signification by occupying a proper position on the symbolic level. In other words, the pervert cannot constitute itself in the position of its father on the symbolic level, but rather continues to be an imaginary object of the *mOther*. Lacan asserts that the pervert imitates the role of the omnipotent being word for word (2013: 76). It seems to resemble contemporary discourse, which fails to take a position in the contemporary world order by ordinary means, but rather prefers to imitate old Ottoman values and attitudes word for word.

The nostalgia for pre-castration mainly signifies the fantasy of the pervert. Yet, while the pervert imitates, it can only replicate the powerful condition as a poor caricature or a bad likeness. Note that while the Turkish currency was declining from day to day, many politicians were speaking of the Turkish economy's development. Ridiculous innovations and useless buildings in Turkey can be exemplified in this regard as well. Furthermore, the conservative discourse in Turkey generally prefers to refer to the country's past status of power when a problem arises between Turkey and the West. The insistence on the omnipotence of the Turkish nation is a major element in these discursive strategies, but contemporary reality paints a picture of poor economic conditions, ongoing conflicts, and slow technological advancement. However, while the conservative discourse ignores these poor conditions and blames imaginary enemies, it also establishes a fantasy based on an internal strength ascribed to the Turkish nation in general. It therefore also produces the acceleration of primitive nationalist tendencies and resembles the function of disavowal in perversion.

The mainstream tendency of critiques against the JDP regime goes hand in hand with concepts based in European modernization, e.g. individual rights, humanitarianism, freedom, and so on. These kinds of discursive strategies generally fail because their origins are in different symbolic systems. This is to say that the meaning and structure of words bear different significations and implications across contexts. One JDP supporter asserted the following: "If the EU respects democracy it will accept people's will..." but the conceptualization of the term "democracy" differs contextually (Al Jazeera, 2016). Wendy Brown's critique (2010) can be repeated here, democracy constitutes nothing other than an empty signifier in the contemporary world. Hence, two distinct discourses have arisen in Turkey around the ambiguous meaning of the concept of "democracy." While one of them accuses the JDP of anti-democratic policies, the JDP always justifies itself using the discourse of democratization. Words like "democracy" and "national will" are among the most popular in the hegemonic discourse. For example, the day of the attempted coup of the government, July 15, began to be celebrated as a national holiday, that of Democracy and National Unity Day. The employment of the term "democracy" by the JDP conforms to the general tendency of populist parties since populists pretend to behave as if they are the mere source of democracy and representation (Müller, 2016: 174). They try to exclude other parties from the political arena by dominating the media or weakening civil society. On the contrary, the opposition parties try to adopt a more liberal understanding of democracy.

The discourse of New Turkey has become much more persistent recently. At this point, New Turkey is a project aiming to shut the door on the old, poor conditions of Turkey and make it great again (Bora, 2018: 12). Moreover, the JDP introduced its July 15 (post-coup) victory as a Turkish independence war victory, illustrating it as an imaginary catastrophe characterizing the recreation of the old good days. Furthermore, the JDP celebrates the public resistance of July 15 as if it were an epic drama; it has been inscribed around many places throughout the country. They have also introduced many photo exhibitions and competitions relating to July 15 all over the country, especially in high schools.

To conclude, the discourse of New Turkey is bound up with nostalgia for Ottoman times as was exemplified using several points. However, it is not simply a backwards attitude but rather a focus on the re-creation of the old in a new form. There has even been a higher rate of production of TV series about Ottoman emperors and social life in Ottoman times. Also, there are many elements in Erdoğan's discourse implying the new powerful condition of Turkey. Several examples can be given to this end such as Erdoğan's speech about the dialogue between himself and foreign tourists in which the tourists appreciated Turkish health reforms by expressing their admiration for the development of Turkey (Akşam, 2015). This strategy has constructed a perception of a powerful state and it has increased sympathy towards the JDP regime. Furthermore, many other discursive elements anchored in the imaginary are accompanied by this primordial fantasy, and these elements appear with meaning sedimentations through the freezing of words.

Frozen Words and the Ethics of Psychoanalysis

Erdoğan posits that the country's enemies want to take Turkey back into the old days when Turkey was poor (İnternethaber, 2015). His hegemonic discourse indicates that the country is surrounded by both internal and external enemies. The discourse provides imagination for the subject and in this way the effects sourced from the real which disorder the subject can be attributed to this external figure. In other words, the situation reminds us of the figure of the Jew who is responsible for all disasters. In relation to this notion Judis (2016, 21) points out the triadic structure of right-wing populism since right-wing populists condemn the elites for cooperating with a third element like immigrants. The position of the third element seems to be occupied primarily by the West in the Turkish case. Thus, the elites are generally accused of being pawns of Western powers.

Moreover, when a subject faces off with the Other, it gets rid of the vague desire for it. Imaginary *point de capiton*s emerge for anchoring meaning in frozen imaginary spots. This

process creates a frozen subject in which the Lacanian category of desire no longer functions because the very desire itself refers to the displacement of the Master signifier. Desire is the function of the unconscious, which provides the appearance of the subject in the language with lapsus, slipping off the tongue, so it opens a place for subjectivity. Hence, the appearance of the subject can only be possible with the jump of the real into speech (Lacan, 1997: 321-322).

One of the main strategies of the ruling party is the creation of some sedimentations and the fantasy of besetment. When Erdoğan reads poems in front of people and experiences crying jags, these sedimentations actualize. For example, he started one of his speeches with these verses in Siirt:

> "Minarets are bayonets
> Domes are helmets
> Mosques are barracks
> Believers are soldiers" (Heper and Toktaş, 2003: 171)

Political discourses accompanied by poems create an atmosphere where meaning freezes. Socrates critiqued poets of Homer's era because they fixed meaning in particular points which caused the prevention of grasping a block by block understanding of things (McLuhan and Fiore, 1967: 114). Many of the JDP's commercials use the same strategy, and they involve many poetic elements. The commercial for the 2004 presidential elections contains many poetic elements, e.g."Do not blame fate, there is a predestination even for fate. Whatever they do is vain, there is a decree that comes from heaven" (AKP, 2014). The verses repeat fantasies similar to the fantasy of besetment but also refer to a god-like power that will rescue Turkey.

Lacan locates his ethics outside of the service of the goods by situating it beyond the pleasure principle (O'Sullivan, 2010: 58). Lacanian desire is nothing other than the metonymy of the object and the coming into being and passing away of the subject. The primary similarity between Marxism and psychoanalysis rooted in the locus of desire is that they both favor praxis over frozen fantasy. Furthermore, while Lacan (1990: 3) states that "saying it all is literally impossible: words fail," Badiou situates his ethics according to the Lacanian scheme. Herein, Badiou (2004: 67) states: "Evil is the desire for 'Everything-to-be-said.'" An assertion about the omniscience of a paradigm ignores the irreducible experience of the real and totalitarian ideologies are rooted in that reduction. Words lose their syntagmatic positions in the sentences and gain independence. This is also the case in the contemporary political situation of Turkey which is connected to the fixation of the pervert that loses its subjectivity in the fantasy of the pre-traumatic condition. Hence, the subject cannot come

into being and pass away because the founding component of the fantasy is always filled by the master signifier (Lacan, 1997: 321-322). It is the pre-traumatic, desirable Ottoman conditions in the Turkish case.

Conclusion

The contemporary ruling party of Turkey has seen rising support, except for some fluctuations, since its founding. Apart from the RPP government which held power from the foundation of the Republic till the 1950s, the JDP has governed the country for the longest duration of any party in the history of Turkey. To understand the success of the JDP, it is a must to consider the function of its ideology and hegemonic discourse in relation to the symbolic structures and imaginary elements contained therein. The nodal points of the ideology can be discovered using psychoanalysis since it contributes to the illumination of the fantasy. The construction of identification with the leader is exclusively emphasized since psychoanalysis points out that some gestures, which appear as weaknesses, can actually contribute to building the identification process, in contrast to common sense. On the other hand, such an analysis can provide significant clues for counter-discourses because it helps to reveal the implications of several discursive patterns on the unconscious level.

All in all, the discourse of the ruling party can be analyzed in reference to three main elements from a psychoanalytic approach. First of all, a considerable proportion of the society enters into the identification process with Erdoğan and many of the weaknesses which Erdoğan exhibits do not diminish this support but can rather strengthen the identification. Secondly, the narrative employed by the ruling party sublimates the pre-traumatic condition, while focusing on both the external split between the West and Turkey and the internal split between the elite and the will of the people. Lastly, words and images come to have independent positions and create meaning sedimentations rooted in the rhetoric of the ruling party. These discursive strategies contribute to the maintenance of the ruling party's hegemony. Hence, all these points and many others function together for maintaining political support for the JDP, and further investigations must be conducted to understand this complicated picture. For further research, the dominant discursive patterns of the opposition can be considered to examine problems that inhibit the construction of the counter-hegemony against the prevailing regime, and to discover possible alternative discourses that can mobilize various segments of the society.

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