



Popular Culture Television Productions & Securitization
Narratives:

A Case Study of Turkey From 2016 Onwards

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Abstract

This thesis project aims to critically analyse implicit and explicit messages within a sample of popular culture entertainment productions in Turkey through a multi-layered macro and micro data analysis methodology. The conceptual framework used to analyse the qualitative data is dependent on Entertainment Education theory, which is a communication strategy that is utilized to formulate and produce entertainment productions that can influence or alter individual and society-wide behaviours as well as perceptions. Furthermore, Securitization theory is also used as part of the conceptual framework for the qualitative analysis because the primary aim of this thesis project is to detect and analyse the underlying securitization narratives within the sample of local popular culture entertainment productions, in relevance to the government securitization agenda and policies, as well as the effects and consequences of such narratives on society, as well as national and foreign policy. Therefore, the primary aims of this thesis project can be divided into three elements:

1. To detect then analyse the securitization narratives within the sample Turkish popular culture productions.
2. To comparatively analyse these securitization narratives in relevance to the government securitization efforts, agenda, and policies
3. To examine the potential effects of such securitization on society, the political environment, and Turkey's regional relations.

This thesis project will be divided into six chapters; first an introductory chapter that focuses on giving a brief of the topic's analytical relevance and importance as well as the reasoning behind the case study choice. Second, the methodology chapter briefly highlights the qualitative analysis concepts appropriately utilized and the variables used for the qualitative data analysis of the chosen sample of Turkish television productions. Third, the conceptual framework and comparative cases chapter offers both an analytical overview of Entertainment Education and Securitization Theory as the foundational theories utilized, while briefly offering some literature review elements, while the comparative cases section is dedicated to examining two case studies from Mexico and the United States where politicization and securitization have shaped narratives within popular culture productions using Entertainment Education theory. Chapter four focuses on critically analysing the role and relevance of Turkish television production in society, the pre-2016 coup attempt television narratives, and then a thorough analysis of existing narratives from the sample television productions. Chapter five critically analyses the government's intervention into television productions and securitization of narratives to counter political competition and regime instability. Finally, chapter six will offer a crucial analysis of the effects of such securitized narratives on the Turkish society on the short and long term as well as on Turkey's regional integration and conflicts.



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I

Introduction

“TV serials can be leveraged as an effective mass communication means that is capable of sneaking into people’s lives, and altering their perceptions, habits and preferences.” (Köksal & Gjana, 2015)

The fields of security studies and popular culture media studies are rarely perceived as intersectional, instead they are rather traditionally perceived as exclusively separate fields. However, this perception is becoming more and more outdated due to the increasing widespread of critical studies where intellectual scholarship has been questioning and challenging the traditional boundaries of different fields within the social sciences discipline. Accordingly, the critical studies phenomenon has extended to challenging the boundaries of international relations and security studies in relation to media and popular culture studies, exploring the relationship between two highly consequential and well-researched fields through a new lens that focuses on their intersectional and mutually affective relationship (Bleiker, 2001; Engret & Spencer, 2009; Grayson, 2009). The critical study of security studies and world politics in relation to popular culture and media studies is genuinely essential because it offers a new dimension of analysis that has previously been overlooked, it is especially substantial today for offering a layer of analysis that is necessary for contributing insights that are much too relevant in today’s highly consumer-oriented world (Hecht, 2009; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Whereas previously popular culture and media studies were perceived as merely holding a potential to reflect on existing or historical events and conditions within the realm of international relations and world security dilemmas, instead through a new layer of critical scholarship, popular culture and media studies are analytically scrutinized for their potential to shape, drive, sustain, and resolve or aggravate interstate or international conflicts as well as intrastate conflicts and security questions (Engret & Spencer, 2009; Strelitz, 2002). Consequently, instead of merely looking back at popular culture entertainment productions

released during or after the World Wars, the Cold War, the reconstruction era in Europe, Kennedy's Assassination, or the September 11 attacks as mirrors of traumatic world events, they would be analysed as potential tools to shape, drive, and sustain specific public opinions through sophisticatedly engineered and formulated narratives within these productions (Bleiker, 2001; Dutta, 2011; Moyer-Gusé, 2008; Grayson, 2009). Although it could sound rather far-fetched, analysing popular culture media productions through new lenses offered by critical studies where the fields could be intersectional leads to new foundations of analyses where entertainment productions are scrutinized and studied as carefully formulated tools to covertly invoke political and social changes or sustain existing ones at times of doubt, which in both cases can very well in turn affect world politics and interstate security conflicts (Engret & Spencer, 2009; Strelitz, 2002).

The role of popular culture media productions whether created for entertainment such as television drama serials, movies, late night talk shows, or information dissemination such as television news broadcasts can in all cases be forms of visual political and conflict imagery construction that in turn could easily build, shape, or confirm specific narratives on both the national and international levels (Engret & Spencer, 2009; Gray, 2009; Hecht, 2009) Consequently, primetime television productions are not only analysed for the ability to covertly and swiftly shape or at least influence individual and society-wide perceptions and understandings of a wide range of socio-political issues including sensitive world and national security questions, but they are also becoming scrutinized for offering new referents of analysis that can contribute to new insights to understand driving forces behind national and foreign policy decisions and therefore changing the international relations and security field that had previously arguably become stagnant due to a macro-political focus (Campbell, 2003; Engret & Spencer, 2009; Thompson, 2007). Instead, this shifts the focus away from traditional levels of analysis and focuses on the agency of individuals and societies in reinforcing and creating political and security rhetoric that leadership can utilize to justify policy agendas, albeit it is critical to remember that states could be -and are- found to be involved in the formulation and production of said influential popular culture narratives (Bouman, 2002; Federica & Hamilton, 2015). This has also become significantly more critical with the exponential increase of productions as the visual media and entertainment industry has grown, while accessibility has also widely increased with the growth of private internet and cable providers as well as the introduction of global dissemination platforms that have transcended borders and other

accessibility obstacles like social media sharing and entertainment content creation platforms that ensure an instant, wide, and catered visual media production dissemination (Campbell, 2003; Dutta, 2011; Grayson, 2009; Thompson, 2007).

A focus on Entertainment Education theory is integral for offering insights into communication theories and effective formulation of influential messages that could be disseminated to large widespread audiences through heavily consumed entertainment productions without outright broadcasting the specific agendas or narratives the entertainment could covertly carry to the audiences' minds. Entertainment Education theory is crucial for the understanding of the sophisticated relationship between popular culture production, socio-political issues, public opinions, and national as well as foreign policies (Bouman, 2002; Brown & Meeks, 1997; Thompson, 2007). Although initially and traditionally utilized to formulate and effectively communicate health or development messages to diverse public audiences without using instructing or threatening techniques, Entertainment Education theory has been comparatively capitalized on in terms of both application and utilization for other socio-economic or political and security messages as well, in which case the theory has also proven to evidently be just as effective in being an influential tool to shape, alter, and sustain perceptions, behaviours and preferences (Bouman, 2002; Brown & Meeks, 1997; Gray, 2009). Consequently, cultures or societies where one or more kinds of popular culture entertainment productions are heavily consumed are not only more liable to become objects of the formulation strategies of entertainment education because their consumption rate would increase the dissemination and success rate, but the level of consumption could also be a critical cue that leads regimes to capitalize on such strategies to significantly control and shape public opinion through entertainment education formulation (Gray, 2009; Hecht, 2009). This is not limited to a certain type of government nor a specific region in the world, nor is it limited to specific socio-economic or political topics, which makes it all the more critical to study due to its worldwide applicability depending on the level of consumption, societal preferences, and effective communication channels (Dutta, 2011; Hecht, 2017; Grayson, 2009).

Accordingly, this is where the intersectional nature of the relationship between popular culture and media productions with international relations and security can be seen as a highly critical and often overlooked analytical layer that has the potential of not only explaining states' national and foreign policies that were previously questionable or unexplainable, but also offer insights into

current events and specific intrastate or interstate questions and their foreseeable policy answers (Hecht, 2017; Strelitz, 2002; Thompson, 2007). This can be done through applying the mechanisms and strategies of Entertainment Education to detect and analyse existing covertly communicated narratives within popular media productions in relation to existing socio-economic or political and security questions. Then analysing the direction dictated within such narratives as well as the consumption rate of said productions would not only lead to an understanding of the leadership or elite position -sometimes also that of powerful opposition parties that have means and access to utilize such strategies as well- on different issues or agendas, but also the communication channels utilized indicate the level of governmental or regime transparency and the level of manipulation utilized to sway public opinion reflects on the regime stability and could possibly outline internal state threats as well (Engret & Spencer, 2009; Strelitz; 2002). Finally, such analysis could also potentially predict the agenda and policies that could be legislated accordingly after widespread audience saturation and narrative ripeness among popular opinion (Coşkun, 2012; Hecht, 2017; Köksal & Gjana, 2015).

Case Study

Despite the rise of critical studies within the social sciences discipline and more specifically the international relations field, there has been little focus on this specific intersectional relationship between popular culture productions and security policies as a new critical field of analysis, which is precisely why this topic was chosen as the focus of this thesis project. Not only is this specific relationship widely relevant to today's entertainment consumer-oriented culture worldwide, but it also highlights a new layer of analysis for two of the fastest growing industries worldwide; the popular culture entertainment production industry and mass-communication and dissemination platforms industry. In the developed and developing world alike, these industries are widely used and relevant to the everyday lives of most populations, therefore their effects can be extensively widespread (Singal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2003). Whereas mentioned beforehand, the narratives formulated, communicated, and influencing public opinion could also offer an insight into the government's or -shaping party's- agenda and accordingly analysis of such narrative could act as a predictive method of national and foreign policies as well as the level of

regime instability and internal threats (Gray, 2009; Moyer-Guše, 2008). Consequently, the main case study chosen for this thesis project is the country that had been found to have the world's highest consumption rate of popular culture television productions, specifically television drama series: Turkey. According to the Radio and Television supreme council of Turkey -RTÜK- and the Turkish National Statistical Institute -TÜİK-, 94.6% of Turks indicate that watching television is their favourite daily activity, while the average time dedicated to watching television for Turkish citizens is 5.5 hours on daily basis according to a 2015 study (Bruijn, 2018). Naturally, the level of consumption and demand for television productions has reflected on an exponentially growing popular culture entertainment productions industry in Turkey, which became increasingly known worldwide for its booming conditions and has reached the worth of 16 billion dollars making it the largest in the Middle East region (Bruijn, 2018). Therefore, Turkey presents an ideal case study due to its high consumption rates of popular culture entertainment productions as well as the lack of existing research focusing on Turkey in concern to the relationship between its popular culture productions and national as well as foreign policies in relevance to politicized and securitized narratives within its highly consumed television productions.

Moreover, Turkey's current socio-economic and political environment under the Justice and Development party known as the AKP has been incrementally deteriorating, while regime stability has been repeatedly threatened as obvious in the latest coup attempt of July 2016, and finally Turkey has been in the epicentre of the Syrian conflict and refugee crisis, which has naturally affected its security conditions and questions (Armstrong, 2017; Chak, 2016). All of the aforementioned reasons have contributed to the decision of choosing Turkey as the main case study of analysis for this thesis with this specific focus on the intersectional relationship between popular culture entertainment productions and national as well as foreign policies with a specific focus on security oriented agendas and the consequential effects on public opinion, level of regime control and stability, the democratization process, and potential interstate as well as intrastate conflict aggravation or resolution. In other words, this thesis project will attempt to analyse the intersectional relationship between popular culture productions and securitization narratives and policies through focusing on Turkey's popular culture entertainment television productions to detect and analyse existing influential narratives concerning the socio-political conditions, especially security framing. And accordingly analyse the regime position according to the

narratives detected as well as the regime connection to the formulation and production process, then analysing the potential consequences of such agendas and narratives on the Turkish society then on Turkey's conflicts or regional relations.

Furthermore, as mentioned beforehand, this thesis capitalizes on a literature gap concerning this specific question in regard to Turkey despite the country's high consumption rates of popular culture entertainment productions. However, due to lack of existing literature on Turkey, other cases will be introduced within the project to offer a comparative perspective and consolidate the argument such as the case of pro-social narratives in Latin America being reflective of a security environment, primetime television torture in the United States following the September 11 attacks normalizing enhanced interrogation methods as well as justifying discrimination against the Muslim minority in the United States, as well as the War on Terror framing for justifying foreign military intervention and mobilization overseas. This case highlights the politicization and securitization of popular culture production narratives, which also shows that regimes recognize popular culture productions as a powerful tool that could contain covert messages to mobilize public opinion or generally as a prominent method of securitization.

Research Questions & Arguments

This thesis project identifies four main research questions: first, whether there are securitization narratives within popular culture entertainment productions in Turkey. Second, whether these securitization narratives are reflective of the current regime agendas or merely of the political and security environment. Third, whether said securitization narratives have influenced or shaped public opinion and social perceptions so far. Finally, what the potential effects and repercussions of such narratives on Turkey's regional and international relations could be. This thesis project will argue that Turkey's regime insecurity, worsening capacity to deal with political competition, and being in the epicentre of the Syrian conflict has led to the government's securitization of the internal Kurdish question followed by a reinforced widespread securitization narrative of siege mentality and a consequential enactment of emergency law as well as regression in the status of democracy in Turkey. This thesis also argues that among other securitization acts, the heavy

consumption rates have been capitalized on by the regime; according to multi-layered qualitative data analysis of a sample from popular culture entertainment productions in Turkey, analysis indicates that the regime pushes securitization narratives portraying Kurds and Western foreign powers as enemies of the state to justify national and foreign policies of violence and war. Finally, this thesis project also argues that despite the huge potential of utilizing popular culture entertainment productions to bridge societal and cultural gaps, resolve conflicts through the exportation of such productions being a powerful tool of soft diplomacy and influential public opinion swaying force, Turkey's current regime has chosen to instead alienate regional powers and isolate the country through a widespread narrative reinforcing siege mentality. The main contribution of this research is to fill a current literature gap in analysis of the effect of popular culture entertainment production narratives as a highly influential tool of securitization, specifically in relevance to the developing world and a country such as Turkey that heavily consumes locally produced entertainment productions such as television series and movies.

Project Outline

This thesis project is divided into three main chapters following the methodology, conceptual framework and comparative cases chapters. The first main chapter titled 'The Role & Narratives of Turkish TV productions in Society' will focus on analysing the narratives evident in Turkish television series with a comparative focus on narratives before and after the coup attempt of 2016. This chapter is primarily focused on answering the first research question identified by this thesis project, which is whether there are securitization narratives within popular culture television productions in Turkey. The second chapter titled 'The Government Agenda & Securitization Efforts' will be focused on answering the second identified research question, which is whether the securitization narratives evident in television series are a reflection of a transformed security environment in Turkey or a forceful effect of adherence to regime agenda. This chapter will analyse the internal threats to regime stability, political competition, and external security dilemmas that have shaped regime responses and the AKP party transformation under Erdogan's leadership. Finally, the third chapter titled 'The Potential Effects on Turkish Society, Regional Relations, & Conflicts' focuses on answering the third and fourth research questions which are,

whether and to what extent have the securitization narratives affected Turkish society, and what the effects of such securitization narratives have been on Turkish regional relations and conflicts in comparison to the potential of utilizing entertainment education concepts to bridge cultural and historical conflicts for enhancing Turkey's regional integration. All chapters will be concluded with reflections sections as well as the final ending notes conclusion and reflections addressing the arguments and the potential of future research in relevance to this topic for the Turkish case study.

II

Methodology

The methodology of research utilized in this thesis project is extensive qualitative data analysis, which can be understood as the thorough analysis and interpretation of linguistic as well as visual material that is produced to contain and/or can be used for sending implicit or explicit messages or meanings that affect and reflect on individual or aggregated societal perceptions or further influence behaviours (Bouman, 2002; Brown & Meeks, 1997). The qualitative data analysis in this thesis is based on multi-layered content analysis in combination with qualitative research of the social, economic, and political conditions as well as regime policies in Turkey throughout the period from 2012 to 2019. The methodology is chosen to appropriately answer the four identified research questions of this project which are first; whether there are securitization narratives within popular culture entertainment productions in Turkey, second, whether these securitization narratives are reflective of the current regime agendas; third, whether these securitization narratives have influenced or shaped public opinion and social perceptions; and finally, what the potential effects and repercussions of such narratives as well as this influential tool can be.

First, this thesis is primarily dependent on multi-layered qualitative data analysis of popular culture productions in relevance to securitization narratives and their effects in Turkey. The methods utilized for qualitative data analysis of the popular culture entertainment productions are first; the macro-level focusing on content and narrative analysis of the entertainment production instead of individually selected scenes. Another layer of analysis utilized is the micro-level, which focuses on the conversation, visual, and film effects (Fields, 1988; Hardy & Byrman, 2009). Based on the primary research questions and purposes of this thesis project, the variables chosen for both layers of analysis are as following: visual imagery of conflict; the portrayal of characters based on their citizenship and ethnicity; the emotional build-up of attachment to characters and their stories; spoken scenarios indicating perceptions of different citizenship or ethnicities; portrayal of positive characteristics such as kindness, forgiveness, and happiness versus the portrayal of negative

characteristics such as torture, betrayal, and anger; portrayal of familial bonds and kinship versus portrayal of indiscriminate violence and savagery; acts of heroism or patriotism versus acts of terrorism; language comprehensiveness; perceptions on gender issues, religious issues, and civility; dedicated screen time for diverse kinds of characters; background effects; and direct reflections of current political events or issues. This content analysis is based on approximately 250 hours of monitoring and analysis of locally produced and broadcasted Turkish television series and movies from December of 2018 till July of 2019. After the initial monitoring phase, a sampling strategy was employed and the number of series and movies monitored was filtered down and divided into two categories. First, a pre-coup productions category will analyse six television series, followed by the post-coup productions that will analyse four television series and one movie.

Second, this thesis has also heavily depended on the qualitative data analysis of Turkey's regime instability, internal security threats, policies, and general current events in Turkey in-order to correlate such events and conditions of the socio-political environment to the detected narratives within the popular culture productions analysed.

Finally, this thesis utilized Entertainment Education and Securitization theories as a conceptual framework and foundation of analysis in relevance to the qualitative data analysis of the chosen sample of popular culture entertainment productions as well as the socio-economic and political conditions in Turkey. Furthermore, comparative studies offered throughout the thesis project are utilized to also consolidate the arguments and sub-arguments made and compensate for literature gaps concerning Turkey specifically.

III

Conceptual Framework & Comparative Cases

As previously mentioned, this thesis project identifies four main research questions: first, whether there are securitization narratives within popular culture entertainment productions in Turkey. Second, whether these securitization narratives are reflective of the current regime agendas. Third, whether these securitization narratives have influenced or shaped public opinion and social perceptions so far. Finally, what the potential effects and repercussions of such narratives as well as this influential tool can be on Turkey's regional relations and conflicts. Accordingly, to clearly analyse and attempt to answer these questions, a conceptual framework will be utilized as a foundation of analysis in this project. As the identified research questions highlight, this project will analyse the macro and micro layers of a sample of Turkish popular culture productions, detecting and analysing the underlying implicit as well as explicit influential meanings and messages that could shape or sustain perceptions and behaviours. Therefore, entertainment education, which is specifically used to formulate and produce such narratives will be analysed, along with its history in popular culture productions. The next section will offer a thorough analysis of entertainment education and act as a conceptual framework of analysis for the multi-layer analysis of the sample data in chapter four.

Entertainment Education

Entertainment Education, also known as enter-educate, pro-social entertainment, pro-development entertainment, is in basic terms a concept that has been developed to communicate educative messages through entertainment contents of various mediums for the purposes of betterment and development of perceptions, behaviours, and norms within the targeted audience's society (Gray, 2009). The mediums initially used were radio broadcasts, however, with the development of the television industry and wider accessibility to it, the favoured medium became television series and films due to their larger engagement levels. Entertainment productions specifically custom created for these purposes and through the strategy of entertainment education are sometimes categorized

as edutainment or infotainment productions and supposed to be distinctively known as such, at least initially they were, and were primarily utilized to convey health and development messages to mass audiences (Singal et al, 2003). However, they have later become a strategy to convey political messages as well and have proven to be just as influential of a tool to do so. It is hard to specifically point to a certain production as the turning point when entertainment education strategies were utilized by governments to formulate and communicate government agendas. However, among the most prominent cases of government led propaganda that utilized entertainment productions is that of the pro-Soviet Hollywood movies, also known as the Allied propaganda, that attempted to alter the perception of American viewers of the Soviets in order to justify the government's alliance with the Soviets in World War II to defeat the Nazi threat. But there is much scepticism regarding whether these allied propaganda movies qualified as the turning point in the entertainment education strategy because they were simply too obvious in their aim, while other arguments suggest they do qualify because the key aim of entertainment education, which is to send implicit or explicit messages through an entertainment medium to attempt altering perceptions and behaviours was fulfilled. Nevertheless, the concept's development into a covert influential tool to impact human perception and behaviour has arguably been both coincidental and experimental (Bouman, 2002; Dutta, 2011; Gray, 2009; Strelitz, 2002).

By the late 1950s Walt Disney's experiments in cooperation with the United States government to create family friendly entertainment productions that addressed war confusion and unresolved feelings during and in the direct aftermath of the second world war without being focused on the war due to the nature of targeted audience are arguably the beginning of the turning point where entertainment education strategies were utilized covertly and without any proper disclaiming advisory that their content or narratives incorporated specific influential messages (Gray, 2009; Singal et al, 2003; Thompson, 2007).

In support of the coincidental discovery and shift in utilizing entertainment education strategies, the production of *Simplemente María* in Peru in 1969 is a case in which a Cinderella-like storyline that focused on a young woman from the countryside who leaves to take a job in Lima, the capital of Peru, her adventures and changed life results in massive viewership and impacts human behaviour and perceptions of women's migration, leading to a massive migration of women to urban cities within Peru as well as across borders into other Latin American cities and North

America (Gray, 2009; Thompson, 2007). The coincidental nature of this popular culture production is that it was not strategically formulated using entertainment education concepts to communicate messages, nor was it intentionally created to impact human perceptions or behaviours, yet it influentially succeeded in doing so. At first glance, the answer could be that the success has simply been due to the relevance of its main Cinderella-like character to a mass viewership in combination with an encouraging socio-economic environment that motivated the same 'dream of a better life' migratory movement. However, retrospective analysis of the series after the development of theoretically grounded entertainment education strategy offered a better insight into why this series was effective as an entertainment education production despite not being formulated specifically as one. According to the theoretically grounded entertainment education strategy, formulated entertainment education productions have to contain three specific types of characters to effectively convey the underlying messages and lead to perception and behavioural changes within the targeted audience societies: positive role models, negative role models, and doubters (Gray, 2009; Thompson, 2007). First, the positive role models are characters that represent the central values and hold the perceptions meant to be communicated. Second, the negative role models are characters who reject those core values and actively reflect perceptions that the targeted society would need to eliminate or abandon. Third, the doubters, which waiver between siding with and supporting the positive characters yet regress siding with the negative characters due to public and societal pressures. The doubters are basically representative of the audience's internal hesitations and transformation, they represent the diverse socio-demographic categories of the audience and different stages along the continuum of behavioural and perception changes. The storyline ensures that content shows how the positive role models triumph over the negative role models -figuratively or literally-, while each incident affects a specific segment or group of doubters to gradually show that each doubter shifts their perception and adheres to the new positive central values and becomes a source of the corresponding desirable social change themselves (Gray, 2009; Thompson, 2007; Strelitz, 2002). In the case of *Simplemente María*, these three key characteristics that are used to formulate entertainment education productions existed, which drove audiences into action and changed behaviours instead of merely relating to the characters or the socio-economic environment in the storyline background, which would have categorized the production as a distractive soap opera or television novella like much of the productions at the time.

To conclude, entertainment education is a carefully formulated communication strategy that conveys messages within entertainment mediums such as popular culture television entertainment productions to promote moral education, raise social consciousness, and accordingly act as an educative or re-informing tool through influencing perceptions and behaviours in the targeted audiences. Although its history and development goes beyond the scope of this project's purpose, however, a brief introduction into the coincidental and experimental nature of its development in modern history has been highlighted, while a shift in the nature of messages from merely focusing on health and development purposes to including political influential messages will be analysed in the section focusing on comparative cases.

Securitization Theory

Securitization as a term refers to a process through which a specific topic, question, or issue is transformed by particular entities or actors to a threat and security concern instead of an ordinary publicly debatable issue. This is defined by the Copenhagen School of international relations as a threat construction mechanism that depends on acts of speech, perpetual repetition of the new securitized rhetoric as an existential threat, which is most likely executed by the power elite on a state or international level directing it at a wide targeted audience. There are various specific purposes of securitization, however, the main general aim of securitization is for the political and military elite to legitimize and justify the use of exceptional measures to prevent said identified existential threat without much public debate or criticisms and pressures from public opinions (Federica & Hamilton, 2015; Grayson, 2009). However, the Copenhagen school's primary position and definition of the securitization process as primarily done through speech acts is criticized for being too restrictive as a criteria of analysis, which ignores diverse formats of communication that can be just as effective if not more influential in securitizing an issue and reaching wider audience bases such as popular culture entertainment productions including visual media like television series, movies, news broadcasts, political debate shows, conflict imagery, and documentaries. All of which have become widely accessible mediums and structures of explicit political communication and therefore cannot be eliminated as mediums for securitization narratives as well (Grayson, 2009; Strelitz, 2002).

According to securitization theory, three elements have to exist in-order for the securitization mechanism to work; first a securitizing actor must carry out a speech act repeatedly, which is then identifying the second element being the reference object or issue being securitized, to the third element, which is the audience that absorbs said securitization narrative. The result is the legitimization and justification of otherwise publicly unjustifiable or frowned upon extraordinary measures that are being practiced by the political or military elite, including increasing executive power and skipping lengthy legislative processes. Therefore, the main purpose again of securitization is to identify a referent object of securitization and frame it in a narrative that eliminates it from public debate and criticism due to its threatening nature and accordingly justify measures and policies against or in-response to said identified subject in order to appropriately eliminate it as an existential threat. In the case of speech acts, these three elements would be clearly identifiable and detected, however, within cases of diverse popular culture entertainment mediums they could be more covertly communicated and less detectable yet more influential (Grayson, 2009; Muller, 2008). The problem with the more covert and less detectable securitization narratives within popular culture entertainment productions is that not only are they less likely to be critically analysed before being accepted due to the nature of medium they are communicated through being more efficient in communicating messages directly to the unconscious brain and surpassing the conscious level of questioning and critical thought as well as analysis, but also the less detectable narratives are more likely to be effective on audiences that are normally sceptical of government agendas and pushed-for narratives (Thompson, 2007; Campbell, 2003).

Furthermore, the referent objects of securitization are diverse and accordingly the detection process is also further complicated not only due to the sophistication of covert nature of implicit narratives and underlying messages, but also due to the wide spectrum of referent objects that could be securitized. According to the Copenhagen School, widening of the security threat spectrum would include the macro-level issues such as political, economic, environment, societal, and military security, while the deepening of the security threat spectrum would focus on the micro-level issues -or simply more detail specific issues- pertaining to cybersecurity, biosecurity, energy security, regime security, and human security. Therefore, the issues could be as wide or as specific as the securitizing actor frames them to be, while the audience can also be devised into a primary audience which consists of the political elite, governing officials, and the media, and a

secondary audience, which is the rest of the targeted audience such as members of the public citizenship body (Grayson, 2009). This shows how complex detecting the process of securitization through the multi-layered system of communication can be, especially for an ordinary citizen to critically question and analyse the government's agenda and policies in order to ignore a securitization discourse or at least realize the constructive nature of it would be really hard. Additionally, to confirm, according to the Copenhagen school the securitization process can only be unidirectional top-down from elite to the mass public. However, critical developments in the field of securitization theory analysis have questioned the formulation of long term effects of securitization, which can lead to institutionalized, horizontal, and bottom-up securitization due to societal saturation with a specific securitized discourse that the elite would not be able to de-securitize regardless of change in the initial conditional environment due to the constructive nature of the process. Not only would this effectively lead to intractable securitization, but also in cases where the original referent object of securitization is a foreign state or military conflict, it would arguably transform the conflict into an intractable one (Adamides, 2019). This will be specifically examined in chapter six of this thesis project, focusing on the long-term effects on the government's securitization efforts in Turkey on its intrastate and interstate conflicts in the future.

Consequently, as shown the process of questioning securitization narratives and discourses can be too complex for ordinary citizens, which makes securitization narratives communicated through popular culture entertainment mediums all the more complicated to detect and question due to the wide and deep spectrum of issues that could be securitized as well as the nature of the communication in the medium itself being less questionable and more influential. Therefore, this arguably makes securitization narratives communicated through popular culture entertainment productions more dangerous and the lack of literature focusing on this specific topic is potentially detrimental to the progress, inclusiveness, and relevance of this field of critical analysis. Moreover, even in literature focusing on the effects of mass media in relevance to securitization narratives, much of the existing literature currently focuses on the role of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram due to their mass dissemination and interaction capacities, with little focus on television serials and films. Unfortunately, this is due to the popular belief that these digital mediums of mass communication have replaced television productions as entertainment mediums. However, according to this project's research, it argues the opposite. Not only do

television media producers in Turkey utilize these digital platforms to promote their work and create interactions with the viewership base, but what was more shocking was the level of audience-led efforts, where audiences themselves are producing fan communities, diaspora communities coming together to the purposes of discussing television series and movies, pages for specific series in various languages that take charge of voluntarily translating and re-publishing the serials, creating campaigns to invite the actors to their home country, and creating mashups on daily basis (Gardikiotis, 2008; Halabi & Salamandra, 2019). As a result, television entertainment is among the highly consumed mediums and is arguably one the most important to focus on due to the immersive nature that serials broadcasted over months or years can have on audiences, and accordingly television series and films should occupy a place in academic analysis that reflects their significant breadth and reach, which will be further discussed the next chapter.

Conclusively, securitization theory is a sophisticated mechanism where a wide spectrum of discourses could be referent objects of securitization, which according to the Copenhagen School would have to be through an act of speech. However, critical developments have highlighted that securitization can also be done through a multitude of communication strategies not limited to acts of speech and include narratives covertly formulated within popular culture entertainment productions, the most significant of which can be television series and movies. This not only makes detecting and questioning securitization narratives more complicated, but it arguably also makes it more dangerous on the long term due to risks of societal saturation turning unidirectional top-down securitization into institutionalized bottom-up securitization that can lead to intractable conflicts and eliminate chances of de-securitization.

Comparative Case: Television as a Tool of Influencing Society

As previously mentioned in the past two sections, entertainment education as a communicative tool has been originally utilized to convey health and development messages aimed at alleviating social consciousness and morality in order to prompt perception and behavioural changes in the targeted audience. This was widely utilized to spread health messages concerning family planning and HIV awareness in the 1970s and 1980s, in fact the first prominent

case in which entertainment education made recordable impact on society had been in Mexico in the series *Acompañame* produced by Miguel Sabido, who later became a renowned figure in the entertainment education productions industry. The series *Acompañame* focused on a young married woman who had decided she wanted to prevent having more children, she reflected widespread societal norms amongst women that felt severe modesty and embarrassment about discussing sexual matters but nonetheless she resisted and sought advice from a medical professional at a family planning clinic. The storyline includes negative role models who criticize her for seeing a male doctor as well as discussing sexual matters altogether, which is considered to be taboo, to the extent of questioning her decision to prevent further children. Meanwhile, the doubter characters reflect scepticism and hesitation towards the dangers of contraceptives but gradually change sides as the woman advances in her life due to not being over weighed by another pregnancy. The show aired 180 episodes and achieved the second highest viewership ratings, led to a thirty-three percent increase in the year on year number of women who visited family planning clinics and followed contraceptive plans, while an additional 2500 women volunteered to be local ambassadors for the Mexican National Plan for Family Planning in their communities (Singal et al, 2003). From then forward, Miguel Sabido went on to create multiple television series each formulated with entertainment education strategies to communicate specific health issues such as one focusing on HIV awareness or development messages such as one focusing on women's right to join the labour force (Brown & Meeks, 1997). However, it is critical to look beyond the primary produced narrative and examine the political environment at the time of these productions, which could very well offer insights that can be easily missed if the only focus was on the discourse narrative within the productions only. In the aftermath of the second World War, the international community -especially the developed world- had started to put together laws and regulations that could prevent another world war, but more importantly any international threats to humanity as well as any obstacles to the development and implementation of the western democratic capitalist system. This new rhetoric was pushed upon newly independent states as well as underdeveloped states, especially during the Cold War. Among the discourses pushed onto underdeveloped countries in Latin America during the Cold War was the capitalist economic model and anti-communist narratives that encouraged a new global world order led by the democratic capitalist model and its leader being the United States of America. For underdeveloped countries, among the three most prominent policies to be pushed for by the west and accordingly by the political

elite in these countries had been to limit populational growth to avoid increasing poverty, which led to communist tendencies, increase the labour force and consumer oriented capitalist system through encouraging both genders to be part of it in order to ensure full societal commitment into the capitalist model. Lastly, that HIV is not only a high risk threat in Africa, but as it spread in Latin America, right on the border of the United States of America the leader of the free world, the threat had to be dealt with as a national security threat, and therefore, the United States allies had to deal with it accordingly as well (Brown & Meeks, 1997; Singal et al, 2003). In other words, upon examining the international environment during that specific time period of history, it can be deduced that the security concerns at the time had been what we can today categorize as merely health and development issues. Therefore, the abovementioned health and development narratives promoted and communicated through entertainment education productions in the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America, specifically the renowned Miguel Sabido productions were arguably politically influenced narratives, while the issues focused on such as family planning, women's rights to join the labour force, and HIV awareness were in fact referent objects of securitization at the time. The United States had securitized any issues that could lead to states becoming more susceptible to communism such as poverty led by uncontrolled populational growth and lack of commitment to the capitalist model, while HIV was naturally also securitized due to its annual death tolls right on the borders with the United States. Consequently, it can be seen that securitization shaped the health and development narratives formulated and communicated through entertainment education productions in Mexico at the time, despite the primary impression being that they merely focused on pro-social issues (Brown & Meeks, 1997; Singal et al, 2003).

Comparatively, in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, the United States securitized terrorism, created the War on Terror rhetoric, then utilized a diverse multitude of popular culture production mediums to sustain it. First, in the face of growing criticisms against enhanced interrogation methods justified as extraordinary measures under the Patriot Act, the Primetime Television entertainment industry came to the rescue with the infamous television series '24', 'Homeland', and 'NYPD Blue' in its recreated version after the September 11 attacks. These popular culture television productions were primarily focused on reflecting reality at that point in history of the United States, which was largely shaped by the anti-terrorism measures allowed by

the Patriot Act and the Global War of Terror rhetoric. Therefore, these series were predominantly focused on fighting terrorism through catching terrorism suspects and practicing the much-criticised enhanced interrogation methods in order to acquire the information appropriate to prevent the organized terrorist attack or extract information regarding the rest of the terrorist cell (Dershowitz, 2008; Jackson, 2006). All three of these highly controversial yet very popular primetime television series were covertly normalizing enhanced interrogation methods by creating an ‘Us versus Them’ narrative where the protagonists are American males with law enforcement or military backgrounds formulated to reflect the patriotic positive central values that the country needed at the time, while Muslim immigrants and citizens were portrayed as the negative potential enemies after the demise of the country regardless of how educated, peaceful, and friendly they look (Kearns, 2015). Consequently, these popular culture television productions arguably utilized entertainment education strategies to formulate their narratives and built their characters accordingly, with the underlying covert messages being communicated effectively normalizing enhanced interrogation methods including torture against a distinctive minority of society that was established as the potential enemy and suspected current or future terrorist, in fact these series, especially ‘24’ became known for being a primetime torture series (Bleiker, 2001; Froula, 2016). Similarly, in *Homeland*, a spy-thriller series, torture was routinely portrayed as a necessary evil that is practiced because it is the only way to extract the life-saving information from these ordinary looking yet highly trained terrorist soldiers, which promoted the idea of the United States being in War on its own land and efficiently expanded the global War of Terror rhetoric to the ‘homeland’ (Dershowitz, 2008). Comparatively, in ‘*NYPD Blue*’ after its 2001 re-creation, the series follows the New York Police Department counter-terrorism unit while normal crime fighting units are basically side-lined. In all three series, torture eventually became a normal routine occurrence throughout the episodes instead of an infrequent one, framed as being ‘business as usual’ meaning it is a standard of operations instead of a last resort in dire situations. This effectively normalized torture as an acceptable and necessary element of the War on Terror rhetoric that the United States was fighting on its own land, all of which was implicitly and explicitly communicated through popular culture television productions (Campbell, 2003; Dershowitz, 2008; Jackson, 2006; Kearns, 2015).

Furthermore, perhaps more problematic than the effect of such normalization on American public opinion, values and behaviours, is the effect on domestic interrogation techniques country wide, where arrests and interrogation techniques defied the basic law and order values in dealing with suspects since the introduction of the Miranda rights (Kamin, 2006; Silver, 2015). This is largely because what is not included is just as critical as what is included in the framing and depictions within popular culture productions; in this case the lack of depictions of evidence that coercive techniques of interrogations have rarely led to extraction of accurate information or suspect cooperation is just as critical for maintaining the securitization and War on Terror narrative. If such evidence were to be shown, depicted, or even implied throughout the narratives, then it would lead to audiences questioning the effectiveness and necessity of enhanced interrogation methods and the narrative would not be able to sustain the War on Terror rhetoric anymore (Coşkun, 2012; Kearns, 2015; Robinson & Schulzke, 2016). Accordingly, it is essential to examine and attempt to detect both the existing and missing depictions to formulate a full comprehensive picture of the underlying narrative with as many details as possible.

Conclusively, this chapter has critically analysed the two foundational theories that will be used as a conceptual framework throughout this thesis project. Furthermore, a brief analysis of two case studies that will be comparatively utilized in the coming chapters has also been introduced and critically analysed using the same conceptual framework that shall be used in the analysis of the Turkish case study. This chapter has shown how critical the formulation of Entertainment Education productions can be for communication of implicit and explicit messages that have the power to impact societal norms and behaviours merely through broadcasting a popular culture entertainment television production. This is highly relevant as well as dangerous if the society targeted highly consumes such productions, such as the case in Turkey, where the multi-layered narratives contained within television productions are critical for the future of Turkish society's inclusiveness, tolerance, acceptance of violence, and loss of civil liberties, which will be critically analysed in detail within the next chapter.

IV

The Role & Narratives of Turkish TV Productions in Turkish Society

As previously mentioned, Turkish society consumes their locally produced popular culture television entertainment productions more than any other nation in the world; according to a study conducted by the Turkish Radio and Television Supreme Council -RTÜK-, the daily average television time in Turkey is 5.5 hours, which is currently the highest daily consumption rate of television worldwide. While according to the Turkish National Statistical Institute -TÜİK-, 94.6% of Turkish society prefer watching television as their favourite daily recreational activity (Bruijn, 2018). Accordingly, television in Turkey has been considered the main information dissemination and communication tool, which in turn makes analysing this communication medium through which the ordinary Turkish citizen gathers their information, shapes their perception, and could change their behaviours a critical aim.

As aforementioned, this thesis project has identified four main research questions: first, whether there are securitization narratives within popular culture entertainment productions in Turkey. Second, whether these securitization narratives are reflective of the current regime agendas. Third, whether these securitization narratives have influenced or shaped public opinion and social perceptions so far. Finally, what the potential effects and repercussions of such narratives as well as this influential tool can be. This chapter will be divided into three main sections that together achieve the aim of answering the first research question. The first section will focus on analysing the level of relevance and penetration of popular culture television productions into the Turkish society and accordingly relate to the level of effect any framed narratives could potentially have on the society. This will be followed in section two by a critical analysis of the politicization process of television popular culture productions ahead of the 2016 coup and the various narratives that existed. Then section three will solely focus on examining the previously mentioned variables chosen for the multi-layered data analysis methodology to analyse the chosen sample of popular

culture television productions in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt. Finally, all three sections will be comparatively analysed in the reflective conclusion at the end of this chapter.

Relevance & Penetration

Television dramas have long been utilized and exploited by governments for a wide spectrum of politicized purposes, from building national identities through portraying depictions of the ideal citizenship, mobilizing national sentiments during hardships, to rallying public opinion one way or another for specific national issues ahead of elections or referendums (Cetin, 2016). Although digital platforms are more focused on today as the most relevant and penetrative mediums of socio-economic and political communications amongst societies in the developed world, this is not the case in Turkey or the Middle East where television drama has been the non-challengeable source of socio-political communication and remains to be today. If anything, digital platforms have strengthened and intensified the relevance and penetration levels of television dramas in Turkey because they enable binge-watching and have brought audiences closer to the production process through communication channels to the official pages of different series and their fan-base (Halabi & Salamandra, 2019; Hecht, 2009).

This is especially true in Turkey, where television as previously mentioned is the preferred recreational activity for 94.6% of the population with a constantly increasing nationwide daily average of viewership time; according to the 2015 report it was 5.5 hours, which had previously been 3.5 hours according to the 2010 study conducted by Radio and Television Supreme Council, which also identifies Turkish television series as the largest constitutive element of that consumption rate (Brujin, 2018). Naturally, this reflects the increasing relevance and penetration rates of television series, which accordingly have a central and very critical influential role in social life and often contribute and shape social discourse regarding political issues such as the Cyprus question, the Kurdish dilemma, the Syrian conflict, the struggle between Kemalist ideologies versus rising opposition of the Islamist movements that had been marginalized from the public - and especially political- sphere until the early 2000s (Chamieh, 2016; Öztürkmen, 2018). Having said that, the reason behind this vast success of locally produced Turkish television productions in

being the most favourable source of entertainment for most of the population is critical to understanding both the reach and the politicization of such productions.

Turkish television, which was introduced during the 1970s while colour television was introduced in the early 1980s, was monopolized by the state-owned TRT, a producing and broadcasting network until 1989 when satellite broadcasting became an option and the first competitor Star TV started broadcasting Turkish television entertainment from Germany until the official broadcasting monopoly was lifted in 1993. Although this bit of history may sound merely descriptive, however, it is rather critical to the initial structuring of television entertainment being a communicative tool for the government through building societal relevance, deep penetration, and producing politicized content. Turkey's socio-political environment during the 1970s and 1980s was shaped by rising instability, political violence between competing parties, lack of legitimacy of elected governments, enacted emergency law in some areas of Turkey to curb levels of violence, all of which culminated in the September 1980 military coup that dissolved all political parties and overtook control of the government in preparation of a re-structuring phase. This socio-political confusion and instability phase with increased levels of violence and crime on streets in combination with the introduction of television as an in-house entertainment medium led to immediate popularity of the outlet (Brujin, 2018; Krajeski, 2012; Cetin, 2016). But more importantly, in people's newly formed dependence on television for entertainment, it also became a medium that the ruling government could capitalize on to reach audiences and attempt to enlarge its legitimacy and support base. However, due to the state-owned monopoly of broadcasting, this privileged access to audience through visual broadcasting, which was known to be immensely more effective in building rapport than radio had been, was only preserved to the ruling government party. Therefore, not only did it immediately replace radio as the primary medium to follow the fast-changing political environment, but it also created another reason for competition that political parties fought to gain access to in attempt to voice their socio-political positions and address wider audiences, in-order to become more relevant through visual broadcasting than merely being a pictureless voice on the radio and accordingly gain more support in hopes of becoming the legitimate government (Brujin, 2018; Cetin, 2016). The prominence of television as an essential communicative tool for political parties to reach audiences and gain support was further confirmed after the military overtook the government in 1980, it allowed the three newly

formed parties that were to compete in the 1983 elections to each gain limited access to broadcasting their opinions on socio-political issues through short campaign-like televised broadcasts. Meanwhile, the military itself utilized politicized television during the three-year stretch of military rule -after it had taken over the state-owned TRT group- to produce short entertainment productions that implicitly and explicitly showed the advantages of military rule such as stability and decreased rates of violence, and better economic conditions due to stability and military funded industries (Cetin, 2016; Kadercan & Kadercan, 2016). Television productions also focused on the importance of unity, the Turkish republic's achievements and prestigious status among the international community in order to build up the societal morale and overcome the crisis mentality that society had fell into as a result of the instability and violence. Finally, the military exploited television productions to frame its own narrative for the advantages as well as necessity for updating the constitution in-order for it be the source of progress and prospering as the founding father of the Turkish republic had meant it be. This was in preparation to rally public opinion to support the constitutional amendments of 1982, which in fact proved to be effective as voter turnout to the referendum was recorded at 76% with almost 55% in-support of the constitutional amendment (Brujin, 2018; Kadercan & Kadercan, 2016).

However, as the constitutional amendments were enacted and the general elections had come to an end in 1983, television viewership ratings of explicitly political productions fell and audiences preferred television dramas of distractive nature, ones that did not reflect the confusing political environment or worsening economic conditions during the world recession of the 1990s but instead offered a temporary fictional ideal that enabled viewers to be distracted from their reality for short increments of time. Meanwhile, the government remained highly reliant on television as a primary communications medium, rallying, and legitimizing tool for public opinion. These conflicting needs, first the society's aggregated demand for what can be categorized as distractive television productions to escape into a fictional world, in combination with the political elite's dependence on television to reach their constituents base led to a dramatic change in the television production industry by the late 1990s (Cetin, 2016; Doruk, 2016). First, as more private satellite channels started broadcasting their productions without much legal framework of control as they broadcasted out of Germany or Greece, TRT -the state-owned network- suffered decreasing viewership ratings. This was largely due to the government's insistence to produce and broadcast

politically focused content while private satellite channels did not have a politicized agenda and were focused on profit and building a loyal audience base, and therefore competitively offered a continuous supply of television series of the distractive nature that audience demanded, which later became termed the dizi genre that can be compared to Latin America's telenovelas; fiction based drama series that lightly touch upon societal dilemmas (Öztürkmen, 2018). Furthermore, as television series productions overtook more than 60% of broadcasting time, and the industry also gained more power and popularity, series became a profitable commodity that eventually gained longer viewing time so instead of 45 minutes, episodes ran for 90 minutes excluding the highly profitable commercial breaks. The longer running times enabled the series to not only become more immersive in nature but let audiences develop a deeper connection to the storyline and characters involved, all while the government had no control over the productions or broadcasts and TRT became side-lined in the television industry (Strelitz, 2002; Öztürkmen, 2018). Consequently, the Radio and Television Supreme Council was established in the late 1990s in attempts to regulate private channels, but only became effective in 2006 after the Justice and Development Party took government in a sweeping victory. The critical point here is that the Justice and Development Party had utilized private channel productions to promote the neo-Islamism or modern Islamism narrative through television dramas as opposed to the conservative Kemalist republican government that had been in power, which had been in control of the side-lined TRT. Moreover, the Justice and Development party -known as the AKP- was the first to clearly state its intention to be more closely involved in the television and media production industry and campaigned accordingly. This led to another dramatic change in the television series and film industry during the 2000s as the AKP took power, which arguably became recognized as the re-politicization of television with a specific focus on the massively consumed series, which will be thoroughly analysed in the next section. It also arguably led to the Gulen Movement's controlled Samanyolu production and broadcasting group to utilize television series productions to voice their side of the story in 2014 as the fallout between the AKP and the Gulen movement almost came to its pinnacle (Ozsoy & Karakaya, 2019; Krajeski, 2012; Doruk, 2016).

But to briefly reflect on the abovementioned analysis of the background on relevance and penetration of Turkish television in Turkish society, it is arguably critical to understand that Turkish society repeatedly proved how affected it is by television as a socio-political

communication tool; first during the military campaigns for constitutional amendments that effectively led to high voter turnout in favour of the amendments, then again as the Justice and Development Party utilized television series to covertly build support for modern Islamist parties and had a sweeping electoral win in opposition to the conservative Kemalist government that was not as strategic in utilizing television series for its narratives. This arguably leads to a conclusion that the society also decidedly shaped how political elite had to covertly communicate socio-political narratives through the highly demanded television series within a distractive genre to balance their need to utilize television as political communication tool with the society's consumption demands. Finally, the AKP's clear agenda to be more involved in the television production and broadcasting industry highlighted the party's understanding of how crucial the industry is as a socio-political communication tool and arguably led to the politicization of Turkish television series in the 2000s.

Background on Pre-2016 Coup Television Productions

During the expansion and popularity of Turkish television, there were several controversial channels that represented different opposing political narratives and were each distinctly known to be associated with a movement or party. Among the most controversial private television production and broadcasting networks had been the one that supported the Justice and Development party's modern Islamic narrative and anti-secularist discrimination framing. Samanyolu was the first to produce and broadcast dizi genre television series with an underlying religious narrative. The channel is part of a large media conglomerate owned by Feza Gazetecilik Group, which was known to be closely associated with the Gülen movement; a transnational social movement based on the religious teachings of Islam under the leadership of Fethullah Gulen of Turkey. Samanyolu as a channel was one of the first private channels to defy self-censorship in order to conform by the western secularist social environment during the early 2000s. Instead, the channel specifically created television drama series that discussed socio-political issues from the perspective of Islamic religiosity, which addressed and catered to a part of society that had been silenced for decades (Brujin, 2018; Cetin, 2016). From 2001 until 2013, Samanyolu and Kanal 7 co-produced and broadcasted distractive dizi genre television series that accounted for 40% of

annual series productions and ranked within the top five most watched channels in Turkey. Their series were distinctively fictional with some even venturing into the fantasy category and mainly addressed the headscarf question and religious morality without initially being outright critical of secularism. This was rather helpful for the AKP to gain more support during the party's rise to power in 2002. However, as the AKP took government it signified a rise of political Islamism in Turkey, which led the secular parties as well as those who feared political Islamic rhetoric affecting Turkey to start producing and broadcasting their fears and concerns through television series as well (Chak, 2016; Hecht, 2009).

By 2004, there were two very distinct narratives being framed within Turkish popular culture television series productions; the first representing a pro-Islamic narrative focusing on Islamic morality being a solution to many societal problems, the second representing the dangers of Islamization and the privileges Turkish society enjoys for being a secularist western society. These two narratives overtook television series from 2004 till 2013, with some of the most popular television series from the secularist side being 'Gümüş', 'Muhteşem Yüsil', and 'Yabancı Damat', while on the religious side they were 'Şubat Soğuğu', 'Dirilis: Ertugrul', and 'Tek Türkiye.' These series not only reflected and dramatized specific fears within their narratives and framing, but they also were in at least one case responsive of each other; which is the case of 'Muhteşem Yüsil' - The Magnificent Century and 'Dirilis: Ertugrul' -Resurrection: Ertugrul, both being set in the Ottoman Empire era and focusing on the great time of Turkish glory. However, the controversial contrast is in the way said greatness is portrayed and the specific characteristics and issues that each narrative focused on or ignored altogether being the most telling and critical key to understanding the battle of narratives within television series (Rhode, 2012).

As 'Muhteşem Yüsil' -The Magnificent Century focused on the glorious days of Sultan Suleiman, it also highlighted how the Ottoman society had been Muslim but very openly non-religious with public drinking, pre-marital sexual relationships, and marriage to non-Muslims very normal and accepted. The series also signified the Sultan's military prowess and legal reforms that granted Christians and Jews basic rights among a Muslim society and highlighted how people of different origins lived peacefully among each other with a focus on the economy, education, and art, without any religious constraints or public displays of religious piety. The series became a source of controversy in Turkish society with religious conservative figures criticizing the production for

tainting history and highlighting irrelevant aspects of the Ottoman's glory, while proponents of the series highlighted how it reflected on a current question within society and could act as a lesson that Turkish society needed to be reminded of, which according to proponents was that not only had Turkish society in its roots always been secular and non-religious, but that at the peak of its magnificence it was not concerned or focused on religion and its constraints. (Brujin, 2018; Rohde, 2012). As Erdogan himself criticized the series the series "an attempt to insult our past, to treat our history with disrespect and an effort to show our history in a negative light to the younger generations", while the series producers insisted it was merely a historical soap opera and that the AKP was trying to read and find ways to criticize any forms of expression that did not abide to their own rhetoric. In response, just as the Magnificent Century series ended, the 16th century focused Ottoman 'Resurrection' was debuted. The 'Resurrection: Ertugrul' portrayed a very different image of the Ottoman society, focusing on religious morality, limitations between people of different religions in mixing and more so between genders, it highlighted how the protagonist's piousness was the source of his success and power, which could be reflected on a much broader scope onto society itself and the Ottoman era in light of this series' narrative. The series itself was highly advocated by the AKP and supporters while secularists criticized it for being merely a political response and lacking any admirable creativity (Rohde, 2012; Armstrong, 2017)

Similarly, the secularist narrative series 'Gümüş' portrayed the story of a large wealthy family in Istanbul that marries off their lost rebellious grandson to the granddaughter of a distant family friend from a rural village. All women in the series are unveiled while the villager is the only veiled main character. The storyline follows Gümüş, the lucky protagonist who marries the handsome grandson, as her perceptions and life change; she furthers her education, supports other women to do so as well, pursues a fashion design career, has a successful marriage with a husband who supports her independence and career. At a point during the storyline development, Gümüş who originally felt homesick finally returns to her rural village, only to realize she no longer belongs there because she could not accept how women were marginalized in the public sphere and how many limitations she would face to pursue her career if she chose to stay, she promptly returns to Istanbul where she has an insightful conversation with a friend about how regressive society in her old village is because it is holding on to ancient norms and refuses to open up to development (Brujin, 2018). The series also highlighted the non-pious nature of the well-educated wealthy class,

while only the regressive villagers were the ones holding on to religiosity and discriminating against women, which is a narrative that could only be clearly reflective of secularist fears in response to increasing Islamic rhetoric in government, but more than anything it portrays a very limited narrative that in many ways does not reflect reality in Istanbul nor many rural villages accurately or fairly (Rohde, 2012). Furthermore, the series *Yabancı Damat* -the foreign Groom- focused on an independent university student who had been studying and traveling in Cyprus when she met and fell in love with a man only to later find out he was Greek Christian. The storyline then follows the couple as the man converts to Islam in order to marry her but struggles with what was portrayed and discussed as superficial religious traditions and societal pressures not to drink or display his affection to his wife or other women publicly. It also shows how their families accept each another for their differences and build a close relationship based on that acceptance, while others in society question their ability to tolerate each other. The series highlighted the Cyprus question covertly at a time it was a governmental focus, but more than anything it focused on how generations perceive the conflict differently, women who are independent and well-educated can make their choices in marriage, and how the well-educated do not have issues with diversity and tolerance despite religious and cultural differences (Doruk, 2016; Gardikiotis, 2008). The series was also praised for being a positive tool of soft-diplomacy with Greece and Cyprus when it was aired abroad, which will be further discussed in section three of chapter three.

Contrastingly, series from the non-secularist or neo-Islamist side focused on very different issues in their storylines. For example, the very popular production ‘*Şubat Soğuğu*’- Cold February, focused on highlighting the historical corruption of intelligence and law enforcement forces in direct involvement and strong ties with organized crime entities such as drug and weapon trafficking mafias and the ultra-nationalist extreme right wing political parties with violent youth movements such as the *Bozkurtlar* -Grey Wolves. This narrative focuses on highlighting the corruption and violent downfalls and discriminative policies of old secularist Kemalist regimes and their supporters to increase criticism of current political forces and act as a reminder of the fears and horrors experienced during their ruling periods, which in turn effectively decreases their public support and chances of building a larger voter base using what is identified as deep state corruption and connection to criminal organizations. This narrative has been consistently utilized throughout productions released from the late 2000s to date that it can be identified as a distinct

sub-category of ‘deep state’ focused action television series within the distractive series genre, because such series remain apolitical at first glance, merely showing another societal or historical issue without obviously addressing a specific political question. However, this distinct category is heavily underlined with covert political messages that reflect on the current political competition environment, which makes it highly relevant, while it has gained popularity due to its faster more thrill based content, making it an efficient tool of covert political communication due to its immersive nature and popularity (Doruk, 2016; Chamieh, 2016).

Another type of narrative that has also been utilized by the modern Islamist side has been that focusing on the social services that the Gulen movement and its followers offer and advocate for mainly to showcase the movement’s benefits to society as well as the previous government’s failure to deliver such services itself. Among the most popular television series to showcase this narrative has been ‘Tek Türkiye’ – One Turkey or United Turkey, which also highlighted the Kurdish question during a time of peace negotiations between the AKP government and the Kurdish Worker’s Party known as the PKK. First, the series followed the journey of a doctor who visits a poverty stricken rural village in the southeast region of Turkey, a region known for being mainly populated by Kurds, where he discovers the lack of presence of any Turkish security and law enforcement forces, as well as lack of accessibility for any governmental services such as primary educational institutions and healthcare facilities. As the main protagonist decides to make it his life’s mission to stay in this village and become the first in-village doctor, the storyline focuses on the villagers’ initial resistance to his presence as an outsider as well as their resistance to accept his healthcare services and efforts to open a local primary school for educating children. The protagonist consistently refers to his belief in and belonging to the Gulen movement, which he explains to the villagers is his main inspiration behind making it his life’s mission to serve them as well as his moderate Islamic beliefs (Rohde, 2012; Brujin, 2018). By the third season of the series, there is direct references to the Kurdish question, where the societal division of those pro and against the PKK is shown; the reason some support the PKK is due to both their fear of PKK violence if they resist as well as the lack of governmental presence to protect them so their support is shown as a last resort solution to avoid consequences of resistance, while those against are portrayed as the more educated and pious who do not fear the PKK and believe the Kurdish population must co-exist within Turkey, while the separatist goal is pushed for by ‘deep state’ and

foreign powers working to undermine Turkey's sovereignty (Brujin, 2018). Moreover, among the memorable direct references to real life events had been the villagers hesitation and resistance to education, which is explained as due to their fear of PKK attacks, when in reality the PKK had actually launched a targeted campaign against village schools and teachers under the justification that Turkish education was an act of 'cultural genocide' that was meant to undermine and erase Kurdish identity. As a result, the educated children were also forcefully recruited and taken away from their parents as a consequence as well as under the pretext of re-integrating them into their original Kurdish identity, but overall the experience acted as a socially engrained trauma that prevents future attempts to seek education within these societies (Brujin, 2018). Conclusively, this television series had a heavily politicized narrative within a distractive soap opera storyline that highlighted past and current political questions as well as reflected on real events for the purposes of showcasing the social transformative nature of the Gulen movement and the commitment of its volunteers as the positive characters, while the negative characters were depicted as those who supported the PKK, and the doubters were the majority of the villagers who had hesitations due to fears of violent PKK responses as well as the recurrence of past traumas. The last reason for hesitation and fear among the doubters had been the most controversial -and a reflection of the beginning of the fallout between the Gulen movement and the AKP ruled government-, which was the lack of governmental presence in the region to protect the villagers against the PKK and its failure to offer stable social services, in which case the alternative providing party became the Gulen movement with its widespread social transformation services focusing on healthcare and education, basically providing what the government could not, therefore supposedly gaining social-eudemonic legitimacy and becoming a competitor for the AKP ruling legitimacy (Yavuz & Koc, 2016; Chak, 2016). This underlying message was specifically controversial because at the time this series was airing from 2007 until 2011, the relationship between the Gulen movement leadership and the AKP leadership had been one of public alliance, but due to this suggestive narrative of the Gulen movement being more deserving of political legitimacy on the basis of its penetrative and widespread social-eudemonic legitimacy the relationship quickly transformed into one of scepticism and the AKP quickly started viewing the Gulen movement as a dangerous political competition instead of the supportive ally it had been during the first decade of AKP government (Yavuz & Koc, 2016). The controversy was evident and confirmed in Samanyolu's production of the mini-series 'Karar Kurulu -Decision board', which focused on deep state

meetings with covert signals that the powers around the table included corrupt Turkish powers in cooperation with foreign powers. In the episodes, their meetings revolved around plotting to create terror and chaos in Turkey while eliminating the Gulen movement's powers, with direct references to current events such as celebrating closing the Dershane's, which were Gulen movement voluntarily run test and study preparation centres and were closed down by the AKP in late 2013. Unsurprisingly, various scenes from the fictional television series were then utilized as parts of Samanyolu's main news bulletin, mixing fiction with reality in unprecedented ways and reflecting the deeply politicized and highly relevant nature of the television series narratives produced (Brujin, 2018).

Finally, it can be concluded that the narratives created within popular culture television productions before the July 2016 coup attempt could easily be divided into pro-secularist narratives that highlighted the dangers of political Islam as well as public enforcement of Islamic traditions on Turkish society, while on the other hand pro-Islamism or anti-secularist narratives highlighted the discriminative nature of secular regimes against religious freedom and practicing Muslims, the security forces' corruption and association to deep-state criminal entities, and finally, the historical and current governmental failure to deliver social services in the Kurdish populated southeast region of Turkey. Most importantly to note is the absence of active conflict or war focused narratives during this period, which is a dramatic change that could be detected in the post-coup attempt popular culture television productions, which will be thoroughly analysed in the next section.

The Narratives within TV Productions 2016 to 2019

The increasingly unstable political environment during 2015 and 2016 in Turkey culminated an infamous coup attempt on July 15th of 2016. In addition to numerous consequences affecting the political and social environment as well as curtailing civil liberties, the television entertainment production industry also witnessed a rather noticeable change in the narratives produced in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt. The industry suddenly produced heavily

militarized narratives within the massively consumed popular culture television series and films. An increase of 60% in 2017 from 2016 in terms of military or conflict-based television productions, followed by another 30% increase in 2018 of the same genres, which is a rather substantial increase over two years and is crucial to understanding the current political and social environment in Turkey (Tage & Mumin, 2018). These series also utilized specific hashtag activations referring to real Turkish military conflicts such as operation olive branch or Afrin within the social media advertising of the episode trailers, which is highly indicative of the series both being produced as a reflection of the Turkish conflict as well as a tool to shape perceptions in regards to the conflicts through fictional productions, which is essentially confusing at best and manipulative at worst (Öztürkmen, 2018; Tage & Mumin, 2018; Doruk, 2016).

Söz – The Oath

First, one of first heavily militarized series to be produced and aired has been ‘Söz – the Oath’, which focuses on a group of special forces soldiers on a long-term assignment for a counter-terrorism mission on the south-eastern Turkish border to fight off increasing influence and recruitment of the PKK. The first episode of the series shows an organized terrorist attack on a shopping mall in Istanbul, where one of the main protagonists and on ground team leader of the special forces group is attacked and witnesses his fiancé dying in a suicide bombing -as a secondary attack- after she refused to escape in order to save a child.¹ The same episode shows the mission leader’s daughter get kidnapped and tortured by PKK affiliates for ransom, which is portrayed as a routine ‘business as usual’ method for sourcing income for these organizations. Finally, the episode shows as a third soldier from the unit is also suffering to bid his pregnant wife goodbye in order to travel back to support his unit, explaining that the unit’s noble counterterrorism mission to save the nation is a holy mission and that he entrusts god with his family as he goes back to war. Therefore, the series starts off with highlighting how close terrorism is to the centre of the nation, then showcases the personal sacrifices each of the soldiers shown makes in order to protect the homeland from terrorism and accordingly building an emotional attachment and humanized story around these characters and their families. To provide a precise and insightful analysis, the

¹ For a brief glimpse into the series, review the international trailers cited under Söz Dizi. (2017).

aforementioned multi-layered analysis will be applied, the macro-level will first be analysed, followed by the micro-level analysis of diverse variables that were strikingly evident in this series.

In this case, the macro-level analysis of storyline and narrative indicates that *Söz* has a consistent storyline scenario that focuses on the lives of soldiers in counter-terrorism missions against the PKK in Turkish border villages. Its narrative focuses on the necessity of counter-terrorism to eradicate PKK terrorism in Turkey and put a stop to its penetration into Turkish villages, while highlighting the personal sacrifices the group of soldiers make at a time of war for their homeland. Closely following the stories of the seven soldiers within the counter-terrorism special forces unit, highlighting their personal characteristics and sacrifices, which according to the micro-level analysis of the series indicates a focus on five positive characteristics. First, their unquestionable patriotism for their homeland above all, which is repeatedly verbalized throughout episodes in the form of motivational speeches given by the unit leader -Yavuz- before each on ground mission the unit is tasked to go on. Second, the religious martyrdom rhetoric is also consistently highlighted throughout the episodes whereas the soldiers' religious piousness is showcased in their recital of prayers to God as they enter into battles but also in their unit leaders' framing of each mission as a holy duty and a potential pathway into the holy sacrifice of martyrdom. Third, the portrayal of the strong bonds each of the soldiers have with their families as well as amongst themselves as a unit, where they perceive and call one another 'brother' highlights a bond of brotherhood, both familial bonds are inherent in Turkish society as essential bonds to Turkish societal fabric. Fourth, despite the savage nature of the conflicts the unit gets into with foreign intervening forces as well as Kurdish PKK fighters, the soldiers within the unit remain civil and humane in their actions, which is also repeatedly showcased and highlighted through a focus on their lack of responsive violence and their civility towards non-combatants or injured fighters. Finally, the fifth focused upon characteristic is the soldiers' kindness, forgiveness, and peacefulness despite the harsh conditions of the conflict and the location of their unit base. It is repeatedly portrayed throughout the episodes how they attempt to cheer one another up by playing adolescent Turkish games and pranks as well as singing traditional patriotic or classical songs and even performing popular traditional Turkish dance moves and having movie nights. This is comparative to the United States' troops in Iraq as they followed similar strategies to raise morale and maintain their mission rationale by watching US war movies (Huiskamp, Dorzweiler & Lovely, 2016). Additionally, in

terms of the negative characteristics, analysis indicates a focus on three narratives. First, the Kurds are generally portrayed as uncivilized, uneducated, helpless and brainwashed villagers that are easily manipulated into joining the PKK terrorists or forced into acting as a front for their smuggling operations as well as providing cover for them in their homes in case the Turkish special forces attempt to conduct a search. The Kurds throughout the episodes are increasingly portrayed as weak-willed and motivated by fear rather than any belonging or patriotic inclinations towards the Turkish homeland. This limited spectrum of diversity in character ensures that viewers cannot form emotional attachment to the characters due to their lack of humanization, which is also similar to how war on terror video game narratives disable the storyline for players when choosing to play as the Taliban or a potential terrorist in order to take away the rationality of the character, instead portraying it as an arbitrarily violent one, which ensures the viewer or player cannot empathize with it (Schulzke, 2013).

Additionally, the helplessness rhetoric in which the Kurds are shown also highlights their dependence on the patriotic Turkish special forces unit whose soldiers heroically rescue and liberalize them from the hands of the savage terrorists, which is precisely the promoted narrative during the War on Terror for the invasion of Iraq being framed a liberalization mission of the people (Robinson & Schulzke, 2016; Froula, 2016). However, this is not the case for how all Kurds are portrayed, which can be categorized as the second negative characteristic: the series utilizes a gradualism process in which an incrementally worsening perception can be detected. Initially, the general overview of Kurds is as mentioned, then as the storyline develops, some Kurds are instead portrayed as active participants in the terrorist organization, feigning innocence and weakness to draw the soldiers or other villagers before carrying out a surprise attack or suicide bombing. In this case, the Kurds are portrayed as potential terrorists regardless of gender or age, although the narrative is repeated throughout the series, there are three memorable scenes that must be mentioned to understand the dramatic portrayal of Kurds as terrorists regardless of gender and age. First, a dramatic scene from episode three focuses on a Kurdish bride whose wedding is attacked by PKK fighters and the special forces unit of protagonists arrives to secure the parameter, the unit then advises women and children to take cover in a house along with the bride. The scene turns gruesome when the bride herself pulls out an automatic weapon and handgun then dramatically goes around the room shouting profanities and killing all the women and children present in the

house until the special forces break into the house and find she has taken one final hostage -the village doctor- then is promptly stopped by a headshot. The same narrative is then repeated throughout the series but most remarkably was a second scene from episode twenty-one where one of the soldiers' wives who had just become a mother is kidnapped by a female Kurdish villager who had joined the PKK and returned to murder her family who disapprove of her behaviour. The hostage is then silenced as her mouth is taped shut, dressed in a burka, and her hands glued to a rifle then she is sent outside of the female terrorist's house while the special unit arrives. The soldier Hafez, whose wife is forcefully disguised, ends up shooting the woman waving the rifle around to neutralize the threat only to discover it is his wife who had fallen victim to the terrorists' ploy, this dramatic twist in this scene is shocking especially because the storyline had specifically focused on this couple's love and how they had just welcomed their new born son, which makes the scene rather influential in delivering both the savage perception of even female PKK terrorists in contrast to the soldier's loving devoted wife and mother. The third key scene takes place in episode forty-seven, a young girl seeks the help of four soldiers' wives and draws them into a house to help her supposedly sick mother and sister, only for the women to be taken hostage and the PKK commander to congratulate the child then instruct her to shoot the women in order to complete her first assignment and prove her commitment to the movement. The child then decidedly shoots to kill the first hostage only for the commander to laugh and congratulate her again on passing her test and explain that the handgun only held blanks because they have other plans to use the women. This scene focused on the child's lack of hesitation and humanity compared to the women who followed her to help strangers in a high-risk conflict environment, which shows the contrast between savagery and humanity and in a way also covertly reflects on the ethnicity of the contrasting mindsets.

Perhaps even more disturbing is a recent creation of a *Söz Çocuklar* -The Oath Children-, a YouTube mini-series that enacts militarized conflict narratives with children that could not be more than twelve years old. The child actors dress up as Turkish soldiers and some as Kurds or PKK terrorists -although the distinction is not explicit in the mini-series-, and then play a smaller scale of the narratives in the original *Söz* series. This not only highlights the penetrative popularity of the series but also its effects on young children who follow the original conflict-based series and evidently aspire to enact the same controversial and highly influential narratives. There is no

doubt that the effect of such narratives on young generations who are yet to develop critical questioning skills and differentiate between fiction and reality can be critical for the future societal perception of conflict and the Kurdish population as a whole within Turkey.

Savasci – The Warrior

Another military conflict based series that became popular during 2018 had been Savasci – The Warrior, which also directly utilized real conflict hashtags such as operation Afrin and Turkish special forces as well as real geolocations for the conflict area in the official series social media page for their marketing campaigns of the episode trailers and scenes. To reflect on how confusing this can be, imagine watching an episode of ‘24’ the infamous counter-terrorism unit series where the official series social media page geolocates an advertised scene in the Metropolitan Correctional Centre, not only does this immediately showcase the scene as more fact or real-life rather than a fictional production shot in a studio, but it also confuses social media users who get shown the scene upon searching a specific geolocation. Similarly, Savasci’s utilization of Turkish special forces and operation Afrin hashtags as well as geolocations in most of its social media postings not only confuses social media users but is also arguably a strategic tool to confuse fiction with reality in attempt to consolidate the produced narratives as facts of the conflict and issues portrayed.

Furthermore, the macro-level analysis of this storyline and content is highly comparable to that evident in Söz in terms of the Turkish patriotic rhetoric and the necessity of counter-terrorism in which case the focus is on another front-line special force unit directly in combat on the border, with the addition of a spy and intelligence factor.² While the micro-level analysis is also rather similar in the five aforementioned positive characteristics, there is an addition. In Savasci, the special forces soldier protagonists and main spy are depicted as highly educated men from middle and upper socio-economic classes that voluntarily enlisted based on their personal conviction, patriotism, understanding of the conflict, desire to join the prestigious and highly selective special forces. Accordingly, this depiction influences the perception of soldiers’ status in the eyes of

² For a brief glimpse into the series, review the international trailer cited under Fox. (2017).

audiences and especially the younger men of recruitment age essentially making it a marketing and recruitment tool for the Turkish military. As for the negative characteristics, they are also similar with a slight difference in the details within depiction. As opposed to Söz, Savasci's micro-analysis of narratives indicates a worse portrayal of Kurds, where they are repeatedly explicitly referred to as traitors, an ungrateful group -referring to a whole ethnic group as traitors or ungrateful is shockingly discriminative. Furthermore, categorizing Kurds as a group consolidates an 'Us' versus 'Them' rhetoric that is dangerous for societal perceptions and intrastate conflicts. Additionally, the series also focuses on framing the PKK and Kurds as puppets of foreign powers that are attempting to cause chaos within Turkey and undermine its sovereignty, which is a narrative that usually only existed within distractive series that focused on 'deep state' organizations. However, this highlighted a cross-over or hybridization of genres that can influentially deliver various narratives, all of which are pushing an 'Us' versus 'Them' mentality and justifying a necessity for counter-terrorism missions as self-defence to protect the homeland against the PKK as well as foreign powers while attributing positive and negative characteristics to each side according to ethnicity, which is exactly what securitization of identities is (Calulli, 2016).

Çan Feda -The Soul Sacrifice

Aside from television series, conflict and military based popular culture productions also shaped locally produced and heavily consumed movies, which also utilized real life hashtag activations such as Operation Afrin and Turkish special forces. One of the most popular and striking movies produced in the aftermath of the coup attempt has been Çan Feda, which is set in what is explicitly stated to be the most dangerous area of conflict in southeast region of Turkey on the border with Syria. The movie focuses on another Turkish special forces unit joined by a Turkish air force pilot, who are tasked with a mission to go beyond enemy lines in order to neutralize the threat on the Turkish border. The unit is separated from its pilot who then discovers a trap the enemy PKK terrorists had prepared to ambush Turkish soldiers in route to free a village from PKK control, at which point the pilot mentions that the weapons they had stockpiled must be supplied by the West based on the amount of supply and origin of manufacturing. According to macro-level analysis, Çan Feda promotes the same narrative of existing threat of foreign interference and support for the Kurdish PKK terrorist organization, which justifies the military conflict and

necessity for the active defence of the homeland. The trailer of the movie alone showcases the main patriotic rhetoric that is consistently pushed throughout the two hour movie; a glimpse of the motivational speech the unit leader gives as he addresses his soldiers before the mission saying that the world will again see that the homeland is wherever the soldiers are capable of standing, the homeland will stand because the soldiers would rather sacrifice their souls than their homeland, and that they are going on a mission of martyrdom so the Turkish nation can survive, which is consistent with the narratives of patriotism evident in the television series as well³. Moreover, the micro-level analysis concludes that similar positive and negative characteristics as those evident and highlighted in *Söz* and *Savasci* are also present. However, in comparison to the television series mentioned the movie depends on highly immersive visual and sound effects, which is to be expected in a movie in order to deliver its storyline and narratives effectively and be capable of influencing audiences without the advantage of prolonged exposure and attachment that television series have.

İçerde -The Insider and Çukur -The Deep Pit

On the other hand, distractive genre television series with a focused ‘deep state’ narrative not only also increased in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt, but they became more detailed in terms of their references to political entities as well as foreign interference into Turkish politics. This can arguably be a reflection of the AKP government’s rising suspicions of different political and security entities as well as consistent regime focus on potential foreign interventions and power struggles in the region in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt of July 2016. However, it can also be seen as a pushed fictional narrative that aids in covertly consolidating the regime’s siege mentality rhetoric. Undoubtedly both arguments have merit, however, this section as well as the next chapter will analyse the possibility that it is in fact a combination of both or in other words a matter of demand for reflective series that can explain and be relevant to the current political environment while the production companies choose to repeat and adhere to the current regime narratives in order to avoid regime backlash or repercussions.

³ For a brief glimpse into the movie, review the international trailer cited under TAFF Pictures. (2018).

Among the most popular ‘deep state’ focused television series produced in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt were İçerde -The insider, and Çukur -The Deep Pit- a spin-off series that continued and expanded the original narratives held in İçerde using one of the main protagonists from the original series as well who became the primary protagonist in Çukur⁴.

According to the macro-level analysis of both series, their storylines and content indicate a focus on the corrupt relations that several Turkish security forces including the law enforcement police, military and intelligence have with local and international criminal organizations, as well as being penetrated by forces from other foreign governments. The micro-level analysis however indicates that Çukur has more thorough and focused narratives formation that reflect on the extent of corruption within the military and intelligence leadership being close affiliates of crime lords and international foreign powers. Neither the criminal organizations nor the foreign powers are explicitly named or referenced despite the heavy focus on either one always being the centre of planning for chaos and criminal activities that endanger civilian lives and undermine Turkish sovereignty through indirectly attacking the government’s legitimacy or directly threatening border security by conducting criminal activities and highlighting government failure to stop them. Instead of positive and negative characteristics, these series depend on narratives that build scepticism of political and security entities that are portrayed as potential enemies of the state because they seek the demise of its legitimate government and threatening internal as well as border security and stability. The micro-analysis of narratives also indicates there is a primary focus on doubters who gradually shift their perception after hesitation and questioning. The narratives showcase how doubters question the connection between the much respected political and security entities to criminal organizations or their susceptibility to influence from foreign powers, yet one by one the doubters are shown as they either seek and find the truth or coincidentally stumble upon it. At which point there is a secondary focus on the behaviour of exposed parties who belong to Turkish security and intelligence forces as highly sophisticated criminal minds or foreign motivated missionaries that do not have any remorse, sympathy, or national belonging and loyalty to their Turkish homeland. This of course serves to not only build societal questioning and doubt of formerly respected and unquestionable political and security entities, but it also acts as a strong justification for the current regime to suppress previously

⁴ For a brief glimpse into both series, review the trailers cited under İçerde. (2016). & Çukur. (2017).

autonomous government entities or retain their leadership and powers such as the case with the military and intelligence leadership in the aftermath of the coup attempt (Armstrong, 2017; Kardas & Balci, 2019).

Reflections

In order to conclude the abovementioned data analysis onto the first research question, which is whether there are securitization narratives within popular culture television productions in Turkey, this section will conduct comprehensive compacted analysis.

First, the purpose of this chapter has been to analyse the role of Turkish television productions in communicating politicized and securitized narratives to society after the 2016 coup attempt through analysing the level of relevance and penetration, followed by an analysis of the narratives before and after the coup attempt. Accordingly, the first section highlighted the influential and highly penetrative nature of Turkish television productions, which was only intensified through the advancement of digital streaming and social media platforms that have allowed further attachment to the storylines, creation of fan communities, binge-watching, and widespread audience immersion due to higher accessibility and communication with the cast through social media. Therefore, if anything, digital advancement in communication platforms has increased the relevance and penetration levels of television productions instead of replacing television as a primary tool of communication with society. Second, upon analysis of the predominant narratives in television series productions during the early 2000s until 2015, a clear distinction between two opposing narratives could be detected. The secularist side promoted narratives that focused on highlighting the dangers of political Islam and the historical nature of Turkish society being secular or non-religious in public and moderately pious in private in attempt to mobilize public opinion against the rising AKP government policies of moderate public Islam. On the other hand, the modern Islamist side or non-secular side showcased responsive narratives that focused on the advantages of modern Islamism in uplifting society to its best potential and morality, while also highlighting the failures and discriminative policies of the secular governments preceding the AKP rise to power. These narratives clearly contained political messages and confirm that television

series are and have been politicized as well as utilized as a communicative tool for political messages with society. The transformation in the aftermath of the 2016 coup reflects a rather conflict and military focused political environment, with the production of more security-oriented television series that solely focus and reflect on the Kurdish question as well as the military operations in the southeast Kurdish populated region of Turkey. The shift in nature of narratives unquestionably directly reflects the changed political and security environment in the aftermath of the coup, whereas the politicization of television series was merely transformed to adapt to a more security-oriented environment. Upon conducting the multi-layer analysis of the sample series, the existence of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ narratives, which identify homeland versus potential enemy, in addition to attributing positive characteristics to soldiers while Kurds are generalized under an umbrella of negative characteristics is evidently in line with what could only be described as securitization narratives that can and are potentially meant to justify military conflict and shape audience perception of the conflict and issues addressed. Consequently, this answers the first research question that television series not only do contain security-oriented narratives, they also became a highly influential platform for securitization within Turkey due to their widespread penetrative nature. The next research question this thesis project is concerned with is whether the existence of securitization narratives in series is merely a reflection of the changed political and security environment or an involuntary transformation that adheres to and is part of the current AKP government’s securitization agenda, which will be thoroughly analysed in the next chapter in-order to answer this question.

V

The Government Agenda & Securitization Efforts

Although political parties are considered to be conservative entities that are especially resistant to change, they inevitably do change due to a range of factors such as internal disputes, leadership and electoral struggles, and national legitimacy or security crisis. All of which can sometimes force parties to drastically change in order to survive or maintain power. This change can either translate into more party moderation and an inclusiveness strategy if forced by the political and democratic electoral system openness, while the more troubling option can also occur as a result of the ability to hinder the democratic and political competition while in power, instead leading a party to radicalization. This section will critically analyse four Turkish domestic shocks to the regime as well as two security dilemmas that triggered the transformation of the AKP as a party as well as government under Erdogan's leadership. This section will focus on answering the second identified research question, which is whether the securitization narratives evident in Turkish series studied are reflective of the current regime agendas and are utilized as mass securitization or propaganda tools in Turkey or merely reflective of a transformed environment.

Political Competition & Regime Instability

Campaigning and gaining a large constituency based on being a new 'Muslim democratic party', the Justice and Development Party -AKP- was regarded as the first successful party to steer in a new era of moderate Islamism in the Middle East. The AKP had publicly rejected the hard-line Islamist ancestry and effectively distanced itself from such ideologies, instead championing behaviourally and ideologically moderate Islamic policies. Following the AKP's rise to power in 2002, the party largely stood for its promises and proved to be the first representative party of moderate Islamism. Yet over the past few years, since 2013 to be precise, the party gradually then drastically radicalized as a result of threats to its primary goal while in power; to gain hegemony

(Bashirov & Lancaster, 2018). There were four internal shocks to the regime: the Gezi Park protests in May of 2013, the December 2013 Investigation scandals, the June 2015 elections, and the July 2016 coup attempt as a final trigger for party radicalization.

First, although the Gezi Park protests in May of 2013 were initially against the replacement of the Gezi central park in Istanbul with a commercial urban development project, the wave of protests quickly became more focused on the AKP government's violent crackdown on the peaceful sit-in at Gezi Park as well as curtailing freedom of speech, association, and secular civil liberties (Uzgel, 2013). It was a delayed response to the AKP's rallying for policies against abortion and alcoholic consumption in addition to new restrictions against alcoholic sales and marketing, as well as the general secular way of life that many within Turkish society had feared losing. The protests brought together diverse segments of Turkish society including leftists, liberals, Kemalists, environmentalists, along with many conservative Muslims who felt the AKP government was on the verge of violating its promises of moderate Islamism and curtailing what many in Turkey perceive as standard civil liberties and hard-earned results after years of democratization (Uzgel, 2013). Consequently, as the Gezi Park protests became the biggest mass civil movement in the Turkish republic's history, they were quickly identified as the AKP's most significant challenge for maintaining its hegemony over the social sphere, which the AKP had acquired throughout its first two terms in government then consolidated after its fifty percent landslide victory in the 2011 general elections (Kandil, 2016). The landslide victory arguably transformed the AKP from a vote-seeking party to a dominant party, which is highly relevant for understanding the party's primary goal and policies transformation; vote-seeking parties are usually populist centrist in nature without locked-in policies instead relying on easy re-wording and restructuring in order to secure and maximize support. On the other hand, as a party secures steady majority support such as the case with the AKP, it transforms into a dominant party that identifies hegemony-seeking instead of vote-seeking as its primary focus (Bashirov & Lancaster, 2018; Türk, 2018). Moreover, acquiring monopoly over the national political agenda with the landslide victory also allowed the AKP more freedom from structural constraints of the secular bureaucrats and military institutions. While monopoly over public policy, hindering development of opposition parties, and monopolizing public dialogue and rhetoric became means to the primary end that is maintaining political and social hegemony. This transformation and newly found

freedom also prompted a change in policy narratives, where the AKP had more boldness to abandon its moderate Islamism rhetoric that was considered centrist replacing it with more Islamist ideals under the context of raising more ‘pious generations’ along Sunni lines, which would dismiss secular fears and voters to consolidate support of more conservative rural voters. Accordingly, as a hegemony-seeking party that was threatened by the Gezi Park protests in the midst of the Arab Spring revolutionary wave, reminded of the party’s insecurity against secular social revolution, and the fragile nature of its grip on Turkish society and politics, the AKP’s fear-driven response was to radicalize and repress the protests in-order to dismiss the threat. Although, this sounds strategically misguided for the AKP to have chosen, it must be understood through a historical lens of a party that had evolved and struggled to reach power and once it transformed into a dominant party it could not abandon the hegemony-seeking purpose, which would have been required in-order to reconcile the demands of the secular segments of society and the Gezi Park protests as a whole (Bashirov & Lancaster, 2018; Türk, 2018). This strategy of repression only worsened with the next internal threat.

Second, in the wake of the crackdown on the Gezi Protestors and their associates, the 17th and 25th of December investigation scandals broke out and further fuelled the AKP’s violent repression of opposition as well as any perceived threats to the regime. The scandals implicated multiple ministers from the AKP and their associates -including Erdogan’s son- on cases of corruption in connection to criminals who ran money laundering and drug trafficking schemes. However, despite a multitude of evidence, the AKP’s response under Erdogan’s leadership was to shift the blame onto the Gülen Movement, claiming that Gülen traitors -as they were labelled- had infiltrated the police and intelligence forces, corruptly funded for the investigations, and fabricated evidence in attempt to delegitimize the AKP’s leadership and replace its government (Cengiz, 2017). Moreover, the ‘deep state’ narratives within the aforementioned television series ‘Karar Kurulu’ were also referenced by AKP politicians as evidence that the Gülen movement through Samanyolu lived in a fictional fabricated world where the government can be involved with criminals, while they themselves were the traitors who are seeking to create the internal chaos they narrate in their series through fabricating evidence against a government in a power-grab attempt (Brujin, 2018; Yavuz & Koc, 2016). Consequently, the AKP under Erdogan’s leadership was also capable of dismissing the corruption allegations and scandals due to their monopolization of public

dialogue, which Erdogan utilized media access to in order to label the Gülen movement and its supporters as traitors of the Turkish homeland, posing as do-gooders in order to infiltrate the respectable Turkish national institutions and create chaos so they are therefore enemies of the state. This justified his purge of a large number of public prosecutors and law enforcement officials that had been involved in the investigations; all Gülen movement members as well as supporters, in addition to the previously targeted journalists and non-government organization workers all of who were labelled as traitors receiving foreign funding to create chaos in Turkey were fired and their businesses seized (Aytac, Schiumerini & Stokes, 2017; Cengiz, 2017; Perker, 2015). All purged bureaucrats were replaced with Erdogan loyalists, while police power was limited and executive power increased over law enforcement institutions including the National Intelligence Agency, which operated under Erdogan's leadership as well. At that point, the AKP itself had also become more Erdoganized; in fears of internal struggles of power within the party after the scandals, Erdogan dismissed doubters and appointed the party's political elite from his close acquaintances or family (Bashirov & Lancaster, 2018; Yilmaz & Bashirov, 2018). Therefore, this showed the party's worsening condition of radicalization due to resorting to increased repression and reframing regime threats as national security threats, which means securitizing said threats and justifying the extraordinary measures.

Third, this was only made worse with the loss of the parliamentary majority in the 2015 general elections, which consolidated the AKP's existential insecurity and the fragility of its hold on power, in turn leading to further radicalization within the party as well as in its framing and policies. The electoral loss was not merely due to the increasing criticism of Erdogan's authoritarianism, but also due to the AKP-led Kurdish Peace Process, which ultra-nationalists regarded as a catastrophic for Turkish nationalism. But perhaps most shocking was the loss of Kurdish voters who regarded Erdogan's peace initiative as insincere and therefore the peace initiative was a net loss for the AKP on two sides, which led the party -in an unconstitutional move- to force snap re-elections in order to regain parliamentary majority. As Erdogan saw the Kurdish response as a betrayal, he reframed the Kurdish question as another threat to national unity and security while marginalizing the Kurdish People's Democratic Party -HDP-, and in the process also worked on regaining the ultra-nationalist voters by following the ultra-nationalist rhetoric. This third shock to the AKP regime led to further radicalization through the securitization of the

Kurdish question, identification the Kurds and HDP as the next standing rival against the AKP, (Alaranta, 2018; Bozarslan, 2018; Gunter, 2013; Ozkahraman, 2017). and further polarization of Turkish society along ethnic Turkish-Kurdish lines, which will be further explored in the next chapter.

Finally, the last internal trigger for the AKP's radicalization under Erdogan's leadership had been the July 2016 coup attempt, which allowed the AKP regime to conduct unprecedented crackdowns to eliminate any and all opposition under the context of being either Gülen movement supporters seeking revenge against the AKP, foreign-funded puppeteers paid to undermine Turkish sovereignty, Kurdish traitors undermining the AKP legitimacy, or military elite corrupted by one or more of those groups (Nassar, 2016; Kardas & Balci, 2019; Altinordu, 2017). Although the concept of a coup attempt was not shocking in and of itself due to Turkey's history with frequent coups, however, it still signified to the AKP how weak its grip over the military and intelligence structures has been (Gürsoy, 2016; Sarigil, 2014) But just as it dealt with the previous four shocks, the AKP government utilized the coup to purge all opposition from all spheres of society such as military and intelligence personnel, bureaucrats, academics, journalists, media producers, civil society activists, and the judiciary (Tremblay 2014; Tremblay, 2017; Yackley & Istanbulu, 2015; Weise, 2017; Yetkin, 2017). Moreover, framing the coup attempt as a national security threat instead of a regime threat, the government was able to enact a 'state of emergency' that allowed it undisputed power to justify forceful action and issue executive orders with little to no parliamentary scrutiny. Said executive decrees were used to permanently close or seize opposition NGOs, media, and Gülen movement businesses such as Kanal Turk and Samanyolu television production and broadcasting networks, Zaman and Hürriyet newspapers and the Koza-Ipek group for written media, and four radio channels. Some of which were not closed but instead their leaderships changed or seized and resold to pro-Erdogan business elite within the same industries such as the case with formerly owned Gülen media outlets which were taken over by Turkuvas group, whose chairmen is Erdogan's son in law's brother, and the giant conglomerate's owner is Ömer Faruk, Erdogan's close friend (Turkey Purge, 2017; Yetkin, 2017). Consequently, Erdogan not only controlled state-owned media outlets at that point, but he had also ensured that opposition media outlets turned into pro-government outlets overnight through his seize and redistribute method, which confirms that media narratives were either already reflective of the regime's agenda

and framing or forced to adhere to it after redistribution or finally possibly voluntarily turned pro-government in order to avoid being seized and to survive. Erdogan's focus on media outlets also shows how prominent television media is as a regime political communication tool, while his need to secure and unify the narratives shaping public opinion in the aftermath of the coup, especially considering the external security pressures the regime perceived as well shows how influential such narratives within fictional series are (Göksal, 2018; Yackley & Istanbulu, 2015; Sputnik, 2017; Turkey Purge, 2017).

Security Dilemmas

There were two external factors that also triggered the AKP party radicalization by 2017; the Syrian crisis and the increasing threat of the PKK in relevance to the internal Kurdish question. First, it was not the substantial influx of Syrian refugees that posed a threat to the AKP regime but rather the instability within Syria that led to the proliferation of the Islamic State terrorist group - ISIS- and the United States' strategic partnership with a militant Kurdish group -YPG- to counter ISIS that threw the AKP into a whirl of panic. Second, in response to the growing strength of the foreign funded and armed -YPG- right on Turkey's south-eastern border, the PKK within the south-east Kurdish populated region of Turkey was also emboldened to mobilize again, which in reference to the already securitized Kurdish question after the 2015 elections, the AKP perceived the PKK mobilization as a growing threat and framed it as such in-order to justify further crackdowns on the Kurdish population (Totten, 2015; Alaranta, 2017; Göksal, 2018; Gürbüz, 2016). These external threats also fuelled the foreign powers conspiring against Turkey to undermine its sovereignty narrative that Erdogan had created.

Reflections

Consequently, tackling the internal and external threats, the AKP regime under Erdogan's leadership quickly and critically reframed all threats and strategically eliminated political opposition as well as any criticism through creating a siege mentality where the nation is under

attack from conspiring foreign powers and internal traitors that are seeking to create chaos within Turkey, undermine the AKP government's legitimacy, or Turkish sovereignty altogether (Göksal, 2018). Doing so all internal and external threats to the regime were efficiently transformed through securitization framing into national security threats that could justify the extraordinary measures of military operations as well as repressive and authoritarian AKP governance. It is also obvious that the securitization narratives existing in television series in the aftermath of the 2016 coup were similar to the AKP government's framing of the internal and external threats either being based on conspiracy from foreign powers, or criminal and terrorist organizations. Moreover, the government's reframing of the Kurdish question after losing the Kurdish votes in the 2015 elections and halting the peace process to enforce the ultra-nationalist rhetoric of Kurds along the lines of not being Turkish enough and internal traitors of the Turkish republic could directly be seen in the television series narratives addressing the Kurdish question and the portrayal of the Kurdish minority in these television narratives as well (Gunter, 2013; Ozkahraman, 2017; Tas, 2016; Alaranta, 2018) Whereas the PKK threat was also exacerbated in the television series narratives just as it was through the AKP government's perception and securitized framing (Göksal, 2018; Armstrong, 2017). Similarly, the way operation Afrin -Operation Olive Branch- was portrayed as a necessary cross-border military operation to counter the growing threat of terrorism on and across the border caused by the emboldened PKK and YPG after the strategic partnership with the United States. All of which was framed within the series as foreign western powers manipulating the Kurdish terrorists and population to undermine Turkish sovereignty and in response the Turkish special forces are sacrificing their lives in order to protect the homeland from such growing terrorism and conspiracy threats such was the case the narratives found in Söz, Savasci, and Can Feda is very indicative of reflecting the government's specific securitization narratives (Armstrong, 2017; Chak, 2016; Ureven, 2018).

Furthermore, Erdogan's direct reference to the popular television series *Mehmetcik Kutul Amare* that focused on the Çanakkale battle during his speech on Çanakkale Victory and Martyrs day highlights how reflective television series narratives are of the AKP government's agenda and how fictional narratives are utilized to communicate political messages in reality. Erdogan said -as quoted in Goksal: "As Mehmetcik Kutul the homeland protector has shown what happened in Çanakkale is happening in Afrin. Just like we defeated those who were poised to celebrate their

victory in Çanakkale, so will our soldiers defeat those who thought they were establishing a corridor of terror on our borders”, President Erdoğan told the crowds. “The wave of terror against Turkey is nothing other than an effort to revive the Çanakkale campaign a century later” (2018). The direct analogue between a fictional historical series and real conflict military operations highlights how Erdogan utilizes series to communicate political messages, which should not be surprising since the AKP had utilized and been closely connected to media production since its campaigning and rise to power in early 2000s (Behlil, 2010) Moreover, this also confirms how the narratives adhere to the government’s agenda, and how such narratives can cultivate a siege mentality that the Turkish republic is currently in a state of conflict under attack from conspiring parties internally and externally (Öztürkmen, 2018; Yavuz & Koc, 2016).

Finally, this section had aspired to answer whether the securitization narratives evident in television series in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt were merely reflective of the transformed political and security environment or an involuntarily transformation that adheres to and is part of the current AKP government’s securitization agenda. Consequently, this chapter has shown the AKP’s radicalization process in terms of its framing and securitization as well as its repressive policies and crackdowns on media outlets and productions in order to eliminate anti-government narratives. Accordingly, it can be deduced that the appearance of securitization narratives cannot merely be a reflection but is a direct result of government involvement into media productions and silencing any opposing narratives, only allowing narratives that adhere to its securitization framing of issues in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt. This has undoubtedly had repercussions on societal perceptions, democratization, as well as Turkey’s regional relations, which will all be thoroughly analysed in the next chapter.

VI

The Potential Effects on Turkish Society, Regional Relations & Conflict Resolution

As the AKP regime under Erdogan's leadership radicalized in response to internal and external threats Turkey lost much of its hard-earned democratic gains and civil liberties. While the framing of the Kurdish question by the government as well as in post-coup television narratives led to societal division along ethnicity lines and exacerbated discrimination against the Kurdish minority in Turkey. Finally, Erdogan's framing of foreign powers conspiring against Turkey to enforce a siege mentality evident in television series has also had repercussions on Turkey's regional and international relations. This chapter will critically analyse the abovementioned points in order to answer the last research questions of this thesis project, which is to identify the potential effects and repercussions of such narratives as well as this influential tool on Turkey's domestic socio-political environment and international relations.

The Domestic Effects on Democracy & Civil Liberties

As a result of the AKP's radicalization under Erdogan's leadership in response to internal regime threats including the 2016 coup attempt, securitization created a siege mentality that effectively justified government extraordinary measures to deal with threats under the pretext of being national security threats and legislating policies that are restrictive under the justification of protecting Turkey. The categorization of any and all threats or opposition to the regime as national security threats allowed Erdogan -in his capacity as prime minister then president- to increase executive power, limit judiciary and legislative powers, and enact repressive authoritarian regimes, especially after the declaration of state of emergency in the aftermath of the coup attempt in 2016 (Haliloglu, 2017; Göksal, 2018; Yetkin, 2017). In addition to the aforementioned purges of judiciary, military, and law enforcement officials, Erdogan also assigned himself as the head of

the National Intelligence Agency in order to both secure the loyalty of the intelligence to him above all else and to create what analysts have labelled a new spy state. The purpose of this new intelligence-led spy state Erdogan built has been to focus internally, detecting threats to the regime and quelling them before materializing. This has led to the norm becoming an environment characterized by arbitrary arrests and jailing of regime critics based on fabricated terrorism charges and a climate of extreme media as well as societal censorship (Haliloglu, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2019; Tremblay 2017; Weise, 2017; Yetkin, 2017; Kayaoglu, 2017)

Consequently, Turkish citizens have lost civil liberties that are basic human rights such as freedom of expression, association, and from arbitrary arrests. Even as the two-year state of emergency law came to an end in July of 2018, hope that repression would end as well has been lost as Erdogan's regime maintained a tight grip on society, cracking down on any and all opposition before mobilization. Effectively devastating any hope that the lift of state of emergency would mark a return to Turkish democratic values as well as the respect of civil liberties, human rights and rule of law, all of which have been lost during the radicalization of Erdogan's regime and AKP government in the transformation to an authoritarian repressive rule that is hegemony-seeking with a primary goal of survival and eliminating any threats (HRW, 2019) Despite arguments that the last elections, with the AKP losing majority in urban centres, indicates the Turkish people have had enough, the voter decision according to public opinion polls indicate the reason for not choosing the AKP is that people feel it is too populist and not specific enough in terms of economic and social policy, which only indicates people have not primarily made their decision based on the AKP's repressive policies during the last two years (Dogan, 2019; Göksal, 2018). This is critical in relevance to the securitization narratives within popular culture television series, this authoritarian and repressive environment is more problematic because not only are people exposed to one type of narratives due to the regime's control over productions and heavy censorship. But the absorption of only conflict and conspiracy based narratives aids in normalizing and immersing society into Erdogan's framed siege mentality, where society is eventually nurtured into buying that the nation is under attack and in war against internal as well as external enemies and accordingly can be relatively passive in accepting the securitization under the context of being a temporary or conditional environment for the sake of unity especially during a state of war (Göksal, 2018; Haliloglu, 2017)

This is precisely the danger of societal absorption of securitized conflict-based narratives through television series or popular culture productions such as video games, which was the case during the War on Terror rhetoric in the United States and effectively led society to not only believe but actively defend the government's discrimination against Muslim or ethnic minorities under the pretext of being potential terrorists during a critical time where the United States is under attack (Strelitz, 2002; Celiker, 2009) Societal absorption of securitized narratives through popular culture entertainment productions can have long-term effects on perceptions of ethnic divides and minorities due to the immersive and non-suspicious nature of this format of socio-political communication specifically being able to bypass the conscious level of critical questioning and influencing the subconscious through covert underlying messages as previously mentioned.

The Long-term Effects on Minorities & Societal Division

Securitization is often understood and focused on as a top-down unidirectional process where leadership or political elite can categorize an issue through a speech act and accordingly the perception of said issue would be transformed through repetition of the new framing. Rarely is securitization studied as an institutionalized or bottom-up process where public opinion can maintain securitization framing or resist de-securitization of an issue based on the penetration level of the original securitization framing as well as the period of absorption of said framing (Adamides, 2019). This becomes critically relevant in the case of the Turkish society due to the highly penetrative nature of the popular culture television series that had contained the securitization narratives. It is also especially dangerous in cases where securitization framing targets a minority within society and categorizes it as 'the other' or the enemy, in which case society absorbs the securitized narratives enough to accept the framing of the 'other' as an existential threat to the survival of the 'us.' This effectively leads to an 'us versus them' competition for survival and the framing of the other as an enemy or existential threat becomes inherent to the formation of identities for each side, at which point society maintains the securitization of the 'other' regardless of political elite or regime securitization of it or not (Erjavec, 2003; Strelitz, 2002). Society nurtures and passes down the securitized narratives through generations, effectively cultivating and continuously exacerbating a societal division along ethnic, religious, or nationality lines such

as the case with the Syrian sectarian conflict, the Sunni versus Shiite conflict, the Arab- Israeli conflict, or the Cyprus conflict. All of which are cases where securitization narratives have penetrated the societies affected deeply enough to become part of the inherent characteristics shaping the identities, which evidently have made these conflicts intractable in nature (Calculi, 2016; Celiker, 2009).

The risk of the Kurdish issue in Turkey becoming a case of institutionalized securitization is highly likely due to the nature of the securitization platform utilized as well as the nature of issue itself. Issues with the highest risk of becoming institutionally securitized are ones where the threat is not only persistent but the entire process of securitization including the referent objects, sources of threat, the securitizing actors, audience, and the securitization method or platform evolve into a semi-permanent -or worse a permanent- feature within the affected society's political and social identity and routines (Adamides, 2019). This can be directly applied to cases where the securitization framing is penetrating society through a highly consumed platform that is part of the society's daily routine such as the case of television series within Turkish society being a prominent tool of securitization framing as indicated by Erdogan's focus on controlling it as well as censoring the narratives contained within the popular culture entertainment television productions and his references to state-promoted and produced series during his speeches. Moreover, Turkish society has absorbed the securitization of Kurds and the Kurdish question enough throughout the past decade that Erdogan's peace process with the PKK and attempt to de-securitize the Kurdish issue while winning over the liberals and Kurdish votes had failed (Alaranta, 2018; Smets, 2015; Gunter, 2013). In response to Erdogan's attempt, public opinion surveys conducted in the midst of the peace process indicated that Turkish citizens of middle to upper class with ages ranges 40 to 60 rebuke the de-securitization of the Kurdish minority as an inherent offense to Turkish nationalism and threat to the unity as well as values of Turkish society due to their lack of Turkishness. Meanwhile, the age group 20 to 35 expressed criticism against Erdogan's proposal of accepting PKK militants back into Turkey after the ceasefire on the condition that said fighters would lay down their weapons ahead of crossing the border, in which case this age group feared the re-integration of former PKK fighters into society on the basis of the possibility they would re-radicalize and conduct terrorism acts within Turkey or spread their terrorist ideologies within the vulnerable among society (Alaranta, 2018; Gunter, 2013). Unsurprisingly, the latter age

group also referred to television series narratives in ‘Tek Türkiye’ addressing the inherent susceptibility of the Kurdish minority to radicalize and conduct terrorist acts due to fear, lack of education, and lack of civil integration into the Turkish identity and values. Meanwhile, the former age group referred to the historical persistence of the conflict, expressing that the Kurdish minority would never give up its claim for an independent Kurdistan and would only be biding its time and strengthening its forces against Turkish sovereignty from within if allowed to (Celiker, 2009; Tas, 2016; Bozarlan, 2018). Consequently, this highlights how attempts of de-securitization can be met with resistance and in fact that securitization itself can be a bottom-up process in which society decidedly securitizes or maintains securitization framing of a minority along ethnicity or religious sectarian lines due to the ontological base of identity of each side being built on the perception of the other as an inherent threat (Celiker, 2009; Smets, 2015; Suncern & Can, 2016). However, despite the complex nature of intractable societal conflicts, there are potential resolution mechanisms, one of which is also a tool of securitization and in this case the primary communicative tool of securitization narratives; highly consumed popular culture productions can have a high potential in resolving intractable identity conflicts through bridging identities and highlighting commonalities instead of differences over time.

The Potential for Regional Integration or Conflicts

Finally, it is important to understand that as the Turkish television entertainment production industry grew in popularity within Turkey, it also became a highly lucrative export commodity abroad. In fact, Turkish television series were the country’s largest export during the period from the early 2000s until 2016, followed by a slow deterioration in the exportation then a sudden halt in demand from several Middle Eastern and Balkan countries. Additionally, more than being highly lucrative, the mass exportation and popularity of Turkish television series was a particularly powerful tool of soft diplomacy for Turkey, being labelled the ‘Soap Opera Colonialism’ due to the increased regional power, prestige, and integration that Turkey had gained as it capitalized on the exportation of its series (Ureven, 2018; Al-Ghazzi & Kraidy, 2013). As Turkey started to sell its popular culture television series productions to the Middle East and Balkans, the exported series rapidly became highly consumed and favoured sources of entertainment to the foreign audiences

in said regions (Aksoy, 2000; Bucciante, 2010; Köksal & Gjana, 2015). This massive popularity of Turkish television series in the Middle East and Balkans led to an exponential increase in numbers of tourists from said regions seeking to experience the beauty of Istanbul, Bursa, and Antalya as the series portrayed them, a demand so noticeable that Turkish tourism agencies started offering tours based on famous series shooting locations as monuments of the cities. Furthermore, Turkish embassies also noted an obvious increase in the interest to register for Turkish language classes, even though the series were translated or dubbed in the importing countries' languages, but the demand most likely reflected a desire to be immersed in the language and Turkish lifestyle upon visiting, which is a sign of increased soft power as well. Similarly, Turkish embassies as well as the ministry of foreign trade noted an increase in the number of businessmen seeking commercial trade opportunities such as franchising Turkish cuisine restaurants and fast food chains as well as fashion retailers or straight from factories because they could market it in their home countries and demand would be guaranteed. All in all, it was the age of everything Turkish; food, entertainment, and fashion, especially in the Middle East countries where entertainment production and fashion industries were not as developed or diverse (Al-Ghazzi & Kraidy, 2013; Constantinou & Tziarras, 2018; Yörük & Vatikiotis, 2013).

However, from 2011 until 2014 when the Arab Spring was sweeping across the Middle East, Turkey's increased regional influence and power emboldened the regime to take decisive public stances with or against the affected and involved regimes, which signified Turkey's desire to further its role and hegemony in the region. With Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Syria being at the epicentre of the revolutionary wave, while the GCC states were largely pre-occupied with the sectarian conflict in Yemen and countering the revolutionary waves within Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, Turkey capitalized on the regional power gap and tried to intensify its hegemony through decidedly taking political and security stances. Competition over regional power came to head between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Qatar Crisis, Saudi-Iranian cold war, and positions on the Syrian conflict (Constantinou & Tziarras, 2018; Yörük & Vatikiotis, 2013). This brewing contest for regional leadership and hegemony all led to worsening diplomatic conditions between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, the prominence and penetrative nature of Turkish television series in the importing societies, especially considering the transformation in narratives of the series in the aftermath of the coup attempt as previously mentioned led to increasing criticism of

the politicized and securitized narratives, leading to censorship of what series are allowed to be bought, dubbed, and broadcasted. This censorship was rather easy to enact since the Middle East region-wide broadcasting rights were solely bought by the Saudi owned MBC broadcasting group, which from a critical analysis point of view was strategically expected to happen since in the midst of a revolutionary wave sweeping across the region, Saudi Arabia could not risk politically saturated or securitized narratives to influence public opinion in already vulnerable societies across the unstable region (Khalaf, 2018). Furthermore, the significance of Turkish television productions as a soft diplomacy tool was arguably consolidated as Saudi Arabia broke off the MBC broadcasting contract and banned all Turkish productions from MBC group as well as state owned channels across the GCC countries after diplomatic deterioration when Turkey sided with Qatar during the Qatar-GCC crisis (Aljazeera, 2017; Gulf News, 2018). In addition to banning all Turkish television series, the GCC -with the exception of Qatar- and Egypt enforced multiple new regulations that intentionally make travelling to Turkey much harder, arguably under the context of strategically censoring the number of travellers that can be exposed to Turkish politicized and securitized narratives and potentially disseminating such ideas upon their return. This further affected students and expatriates more than tourists, arguably due to the longer length of stays within Turkey translating to further immersion into and exposure to the influences said countries wanted to repress in their societies (Khalaf, 2018; Nassar, 2018) Since then, Erdogan has referenced the political leaders of Egypt and Saudi Arabia in a negative light. Hence, instead of capitalizing on its increased soft-diplomacy to continue building alliances in the region, the nature of politicized and highly securitized narratives within Turkish television series in addition to the regime's opposition stances effectively alienated Turkey from regional integration and furthering its strategic goals within the Middle East (Yörük & Vatikiotis, 2013; Constantinou & Tziarras, 2018).

Similarly, Turkey's relationship with its NATO ally the United States has evidently deteriorated over the past three years due to conflicting strategic positions and perceptions in regard to the Syrian conflict, countering the ISIS threat, and partnership with Russia on defence weaponry systems. The deteriorating relationship could be seen within Turkey's carefully produced securitized narratives where western powers who are supplying weapons to the Kurdish terrorists are also the ones conspiring to undermine Turkey's sovereignty, which as the United States is the

one arming the YPG Kurdish fighters to counter ISIS is a considerably explicit narratives addressing the United States' intervention in the region and effectively justifies Erdogan's opposition to US foreign policies and provides an insight into the worsening relations (Johnson & Gramer, 2019; Constantinou & Tziarras, 2018).

Contrastingly, Turkey's television series exportation could have been utilized to potentially bridge conflicts through gradual penetration of the importing societies and highlighting the similar cultural or ideological values, which has been the case in Albania and Greece, where as previously mentioned the Turkish series 'Yabancı Damat' highlighted the similarities between the two societies and how two families could overcome the historical conflict by focusing on these similarities and accepting the differences (Mihalakopoulos, 2013; Gardikiotis, 2008; De Cremer, 2004; Anastasio, Rose & Chapman, 2005). Whereas, in Albania the exposure to highly consumed Turkish series has led to political leaders referencing series and storylines to highlight the cultural similarities of historically connected nations during the Ottoman times (Balaban, 2015). Therefore, this showcases how Turkish series could have the potential to strengthen Turkey's strategic regional alliances but due to the nature of heavily politicized content in addition to the regime's political stances have instead alienated previous allies and limited Turkey's chances of capitalizing on the positive potential on such influential soft-power tool.

Reflections

Conclusively, this chapter has critically analysed the consequences of Turkey's AKP regime radicalization into a repressive and authoritarian one under Erdogan's leadership. The transformation of any and all potential threats to the regime into national security threats has led to the justification of repressive policies, increased arbitrary arrests, constant purges and crackdowns on all sectors, decreased autonomy for the military, national intelligence agency, judiciary, and legislative powers under the context of counter-terrorism and being a nation under attack. Furthermore, the lifted state of emergency has not signified any hope for the end of repression, which marks a dire regression in the status of democracy, rule of law, and civil liberties in Turkey due to Erdogan's securitization narratives and framed siege mentality for the nation.

Additionally, such securitization narratives also have long-term effects on societal division along ethnicity or religious sectarian lines, in which case the Kurdish question has been a repeatedly and persistently securitized issue to the extent that Turkish society is capable of maintaining the securitization of Kurds on its own due to the level of penetration and absorption of securitization narratives focusing on the Kurdish minority throughout the years. This leads to institutionalized and bottom-up securitization, where society is resistant to de-securitization of an issues and can lead to long-term marginalization of minorities and significant societal division along the securitized ethnicity lines. Finally, despite the extensive potential for utilizing Turkish television productions to increase regional integration and bridging historical conflicts through winning the hearts and minds of foreign societies that follow the exported television series, Turkey alienated its Middle Eastern and Western former allies due to hegemonic competition and their fears of politicized narratives contained within Turkish series. This chapter has evidently highlighted the answers to the last two research questions identified by this thesis by analysing the current and potential long-term effects of securitization of the domestic political environment and societal divisions, as well as showcasing the potential Turkish television series had for bridging foreign conflicts and increasing Turkish integration, however, in reality Turkey has alienated its former allies and decreased its regional and international integration due to the regime's framed siege mentality rhetoric evident in television series' narratives.

VII

Conclusion

Popular culture productions are a critical industry to analyse, reflect on, and gain insights from about not just socio-political issues but in case such as Turkey, to gain insights into the narratives shaping political competition and regime agendas. In Turkey, television productions can be used a highly analytical foundation for understanding the socio-political environment, detecting politicization and securitization narratives, as well as relating the narratives within productions to societal divisions and identity formations. Utilizing conceptual frameworks of entertainment education theory and securitization theory, in addition to comparative case studies from Latin America and the War on Terror in the United States has conveniently offered a foundation of analysis to compensate for lack of literature in relevance to this topic and the Turkish case study. This thesis project has identified four main research questions: first, whether there are securitization narratives within popular culture entertainment productions in Turkey. Second, whether these securitization narratives are reflective of the current regime agendas as a result of a transformed political and security agenda or forcefully censored to adhere to a carefully framed regime narrative. Third, whether these securitization narratives have influenced or shaped public opinion and social perceptions so far. Finally, what the potential effects and repercussions of such narratives on Turkey's regional and international relations could be. In addition to answering each of the identified questions in their respective chapters, it has argued that Turkey's regime insecurity, worsening capacity to deal with political competition, and being in the epicentre of the Syrian conflict has led to the government's securitization of the internal Kurdish question followed by a reinforced widespread securitization narrative of siege mentality and a consequential enactment of emergency law as well as regression in the status of democracy in Turkey. It has also argued that Turkish society's heavy consumption rates have been capitalized on by the regime; as the multi-layered qualitative data analysis of a sample from popular culture entertainment productions in Turkey indicates that the regime pushes securitization narratives portraying Kurds and Western foreign powers as enemies of the state and justifying national and foreign policies of violence and war. Finally, this thesis project has also argued that despite the significant potential

of utilizing popular culture entertainment productions to bridge societal and cultural gaps, resolve conflicts through the exportation of such productions being a powerful tool of soft diplomacy that can highlight cultural similarities instead of differences and act as an influential public opinion swaying force, Turkey's current regime has not been able to utilize such potential. Instead, Erdogan's regime has chosen to strategically alienate regional and international former allies and isolate the country due to its hegemonic-seeking goals and the widespread narrative reinforcing siege mentality.

Finally, the main contribution of this research has been to fill a current literature gap in relevance to the analysis of the effect of popular culture entertainment production narratives as highly influential tools of politicization and securitization, specifically in relevance to the identified research questions and the Turkish case, which is a prominent case due to the high levels of societal consumption, absorption, and penetration of the narratives within locally produced television series and movies. However, future research in relevance to this topic and case study can capitalize on a current literature gap questioning and thoroughly analysing the potential effects and outcomes of using such heavily consumed popular culture television productions to specifically bridge cultural and historical intractable conflicts such as the Turkish-Armenian conflict and the Cyprus conflict in order to prepare the respective societies for conflict resolution and whether the short term exposure could alter identity formulation in addition to the perception alteration.

VIII

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