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Covid19 and the Outbreak Narrative: How the Turkish State Produces and Obscures Gendered and Sexual Vulnerabilities

Diploma Thesis

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Abstract

How do the state institutions in Turkey (dis)articulate gender politics? How does the institutional discourse disintegrate gender politics? Where, when, and how do the institutions locate discourse of gender and sexuality into politics of pandemic? Where do institutions become silent? This thesis offers a feminist reading of the pandemic politics and discourse in Turkey; specifically, it analyzes the gendered tensions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Investigating the impacts of the pandemic discourse of the state on gender politics, I aim to unpack the state rhetoric where the official outbreak narrative generates a particular gender narrative. Observing that the state discourse obscures the gendered impacts of the pandemic, I work on locating the pandemic responses and discourses in Turkey. Approaching to politics of discourse as an issue of power and knowledge where power appears through the continuity of knowledge production, I elaborate on how an institutional discourse interprets, incorporates, articulate and disarticulate gender and sexuality overtly and covertly. As unpacking the discursive struggle of the state for mastery in gender and sexuality discourse, I demonstrate how the state reshapes and redirects the narratives on gender and sexuality within the politics of outbreak.

Keywords: Covid-19, Turkey, pandemic, gender and sexuality, vulnerability, intersectionality, discourse analysis, content analysis

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List of Abbreviations

IHD   Insan Hakları Derneği
        'Human Rights Association'

MoH   Ministry of Health

MoI   Ministry of Interior

SoE   State of Emergency

1.Introduction

1.1. Aim of the Research and Research Questions

How do the state institutions in Turkey (dis)articulate and represent gender politics in the time of the pandemic? How does the institutional discourse incorporate and disintegrate gender politics? Where, when, and how do the institutions locate discourses of gender and sexuality within the pandemic management? Integrating these questions to the research, this thesis offers a feminist reading of the pandemic politics and discourse in Turkey. Specifically, it analyzes the gendered tensions of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Investigating the impacts of the pandemic discourse of the state on gender politics, I aim to unpack the state rhetorics where the official outbreak narrative generates a particular gender narrative. Approaching to politics of discourse as an issue of power and knowledge where power appears through the continuity of knowledge production, I elaborate on how an institutional discourse interprets, incorporates, articulates and disarticulates gender and sexuality overtly and covertly. As unpacking the discursive struggle of the state for mastery in gender and sexuality discourse, I demonstrate how the state reshapes and redirects the narratives on gender and sexuality within the politics of outbreak.

Applying to the responses and narratives constituted by the Health Ministry and the Ministry of Interior during the Covid-19 pandemic, I mainly aim to locate gender politics within the contemporary power dynamics in Turkey. The official statements those two ministries present serve as my primary sources. As these state institutions have a particular authority in the outbreak response, I find it critical to identify the echoes of power dynamics reflected in these official narratives. I embrace intersectional positionality, which proposes a "matrix thinking" that considers how inequalities "span and transform structures and activities at all levels and in all institutional contexts," which "makes it harder to imagine any social process as a singular 'main effect' for anyone" (Choo & Ferree, 2010, p. 135). I approach gender as a mobile category in a "multiple jeopardies" (King, 1988) where "power and privilege operate on several levels at

once (experiential, epistemological, political, and structural) and across (and within) categories of experience and personhood including race, gender, sexuality, disability, social class, and citizenship" (May, 2015, p. 23). As the power appears through mobile and multifaceted relations between socio-political hierarchies and asymmetries, my theoretical interest lies in unpacking these interactions. Considering the Covid-19 pandemic is instead a wide-ranging and compound issue that is more than a medical emergency, I analyze the interaction between the official pandemic responses and the current power dynamics in Turkey from an intersectional perspective. I particularly look at how the pandemic response and narrative communicate with the politically, economically, and socially hegemonic dynamics. As a researcher of Gender Studies and occupant of Turkey for 25 years, my theoretical standpoint, political position, and personal experience drive me to approach those tendencies critically. To my understanding, politics of authoritarianism, and conservatism, and nationalism distinctively take place among those dominant power relations and dynamics in the Turkish context. My research aims to present the echoes of these politics and ideologies within the pandemic response of the state. Thus, I track how the official outbreak narrative articulates the dominant political tendencies, namely authoritarianism, conservatism, and nationalism. Understanding those tendencies as intertwined ideologies, I analyze how they intersect with each other and what this intersection tells about the gender politics of the Turkish state. I find authoritarian, conservative, and nationalist ideologies using resemblant cultural-political terminologies, driving in parallel paths, and referring to politically familiar frameworks. Hence, my study focuses on the parallel narratives, rhetoric, and discourses of those right-wing ideologies and the ways their alignment affects gender politics. Constructing a feminist critique of these dynamics, I explore the location of gender and sexuality in the contemporary political context of Turkey. Locating the institutional pandemic discourse within a broader and macro politics of signification, I analyze the relationship between institutional gender/sexuality politics and right-wing politics.

Parallel with the hegemonically revivifying right ideologies in Turkey, I observe a particularly outstanding discourse and anxiety on national security. Noticing a critical link between the issue of security and the tendency of authoritarianism, I

elaborate on the path that this tie has been constructed in the Turkish context in the last ten years, since the early 2010s. My aim lies in locating the concept of national security within the re-emerging right-wing ideologies and finding the correlation between the issue of security and the politics of pandemic. Demonstrating the state's pandemic response, I present a critical reading of the state's approach to public security. Since the concepts of national security and public security address diverse subjects, actors and concerns, I identify how they differ and deviate. In addition, also because security of nation and security of public do not always correspond to identical politics and projects, I examine how the concepts of nation, public, and security are defined in the dominant power relations. My primary question in this frame is whether gender-based and sexual (in)securities correspond to the state's security plan. How the gendered and sexual (in)securities are defined and discussed by the state institutions and how the position of state, law, and armed forces are addressed over the issues follow as my sub-questions. I elaborate on how re-militarization as security anxiety appears as an essential social and political issue in the contemporary context of Turkey. Thus I demonstrate on usage and function of a militarist understanding of security in the rhetoric of right-wing politics. As to my understanding, militarization projects and processes appear as a more archaic form of hegemonic masculinities, I aim mainly to address the gendered and sexual effects of the militarist path Turkey is going through. In this framework, I intend to present the gendered and sexual meanings of the concept of national security and its echoes on the concept of public security in response to the pandemic.

1.2 The Covid-19 Pandemic in Turkey

In January 2020, the Health Ministry introduced the thermal cameras implemented at the airports for the people coming from China. After advising the public not to fly to China, the Ministry decided to sustain the flights to China in the following days. As the thermal camera practice was extended to all incomers by plane in a few days, the 'quarantine hospitals' were introduced. Turning some public dormitories for students into quarantine hospitals, the Ministry mandated that incomers with symptoms be guaranteed for two weeks in these state-ran places. In

addition, the wearing of face masks in crowded aresa was recommended to the public, which became obligatory later.

Meanwhile, the Ministry stated that they were in the progress of developing diagnosis sets for Covid-19. In the following weeks, in February, with the announcement of the first official case in Iran—the southeastern neighbor of Turkey,—thermal cameras were extended from airports only and introduced on highway borders. As at the end of the month, the Health Minister optimistically asserted that with the arrival of summer, the pandemic would ramp down; in the first week of March, many international airway and highway borders were closed. It was advised to the elderly to not go out, and the mandatory total-lockdown followed shortly after. On March 11, the same day when the World Health Organization defined the coronavirus outbreak as the pandemic, the Health Ministry of Turkey announced the first official case. The Ministry introduced the long-standing institutional slogan of "The problem is global, our struggle is national" (Sorun Küresel, Mücalemiz Ulusal). However, the Ministry also stated that it is not possible to break the foreign connections entirely, mainly due to economic and touristic concerns. Despite the government's announcement on an economic measures package for low-income households in the spring of 2020, the lack of a detailed action plan was regularly addressed by individuals and organizations. Moreover, President Erdogan and the ruling party AKP initiated a donation campaign called "We are Enough for Each Other Turkey" (Biz Bize Yeteriz Türkiyem) that expects citizens to contribute to the pandemic fund of the state. Following the governmental decision to take money from the income of some institutions in order to donate to this campaign, it has been observed that salary cuts of the staff were executed from many institutions to raise the fund of the campaign.

Since March 2020, all kinds of alcohol-consuming places such as bars, nightclubs, discotheques, and pavilions were closed. In the following days, the closure had been extended to all leisure spaces (e.g., theatre houses, movie theaters, video game arcades, gyms, saunas), social gatherings (wedding venues and 'condolence houses), and political organizations (meetings, training, and conferences organized by NGOs). As the Ministry of Health launched a pandemic hotline

(ALO 184 Korona Danışma Hattı) in the early pandemic stage and this was followed by the introduction of an application called HES (Hayat Eve Sığar, 'Life fits in Home'), which required citizens to provide a HES code to enter all indoor public spaces by showing a negative coronavirus result. Followingly, the Ministry of Interior announced that people over 65 years olds (which makes for approximately 10 million people within the population) were obliged to stay at home. The Ministry asserted that if these 10 million did not abide by the 'government's polite warning' about the elderly lockdown, they might be sued for risking public health. Moreover, for people under 65 years old, the 'weekend curfews' were declared, starting in March of 2020 and continuing till today, June 2021. Weekend curfews apply to all citizens who cannot provide an official statement declaring they are extempt from the rule. This rule is held off only during summer.

As of today, there are over 5,000,000 confirmed Covid-19 cases, and over 48,000 people lost their life.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, I will introduce the issue, purpose, and research questions. In the second chapter, I will elaborate on the theoretical framework for the analysis. In the third chapter, I will demonstrate the methodology and researcher's positionality. Subsequently, in the fourth chapter, I will present the analysis. Finally, the conclusion will be presented in the fifth and the last chapter.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will provide a theoretical framework for analysis. I will firstly elaborate on why and how outbreaks are politicized events and crises. Then, in the second subchapter, I will demonstrate the gendered and sexual implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, locating these implications as political issues. This second subchapter will first provide an overview of Turkey's political context addressing the resurrection of right-wing politics. Followingly, authoritarianism and gender

politics will be discussed. Furthermore, finally, addressing the issue of power and privilege, I will present a theoretical framework on how the pandemic responses are highly capable of reproducing gendered/sexual vulnerabilities in the authoritarian states/regimes.

2.1 Outbreak as a Political Crisis

Pandemics/epidemics, namely outbreaks, have never been only a medical issue. Although emerging as a medical issue, outbreaks inevitably lead to a socio-political response and a narrative. Outbreaks both as a phenomenon and a narrative "influence how both scientists and public understand the nature and consequences of infection, how they imagine the threat, and why they react so fearfully to some disease outbreaks and not others at least as dangerous and pressing" (Wald, 2008, p. 3). They inaugurate broader questions and extensive consequences than that science as a particular mode of knowledge production can respond to.

The popular narratives sometimes signify medical solutions and treatments to diseases as the primary way out from the outbreaks. However, the effects and experiences of outbreaks catalyze more comprehensive and complex questions and issues. They might "evoke (and can be harnessed to incite) broader, and historically-embedded, aims and anxieties whether linked to political-economic relations, conflict or social control" (Leach, 2020). As Priscilla Wald discusses, throughout the twentieth century, the concepts of contagion and infectious diseases go well beyond being epidemiological facts. These concepts in fact materialize "the interactions that make us sick also constitute us as a community" (Wald, 2008, p. 2). According to Wald, outbreaks dramatize "the necessity and danger of human contact" and draw out "the changing social formations of a shrinking world" (Wald, 2008, p. 2). In this sense, I approach the concept of outbreak as a re-evaluation of human contact. Moreover, I conceive it critical to locate each outbreak narrative within which particular historical, socioeconomic, and geographical conditions, conflicts, practices, and anxieties are reshaped and reproduced.

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Drawing attention to colonial history, many scholars, for instance, elaborate on social and political anxieties that have been echoed in the Ebola epidemic (Abramowitz, 2017; Fairhead, 2016; Leach, 2020; Wilkinson et al., 2017). Stemming from the understanding that outbreaks are social, political, and historical experiences that address more than a medical phenomenon, many scholars point out the geographical conflicts that the Ebola experiences reproduce. Memories of repressive state practices invoked through the state-driven quarantines in African settings (Leach, 2020); local insecurities on foreign intervention and dispossession (Fairhead, 2016), structural violence (Wilkinson et al., 2017); practices of social resistance and silence (Abramowitz, 2017) are, for example, considered to be some of the geographical understandings and reactions that intersect the narratives of disease with the narratives of political history.

As much as the experience of an outbreak is a more-than-a-disease phenomenon, what Paula Treichler (1987) calls "epidemic of signification" also is more than a medical conceptualization. Treicher discusses that AIDS is a representation system that overlaps the discourse of sexuality and discourse of biomedicine. Furthermore, Mary Douglas (2003) unpacks the popular AIDS narratives as a discourse of 'sexual danger.' This discourse symbolizes "the relation between parts of society" that mirrors "the designs of hierarchy or symmetry" in the larger social system "which are felt to be in danger of slippage, dissolution or overthrow" (Douglas, 2003, p. 4). The meanings of AIDS are not apart from the practices that conceptualize it, represent it, and respond to it (Crimp, 1988). Moreover, the signification of disease within the discourse of sexual purity against the queer community shows that meaning of diseases and sexualities can intersect in which 'purity ideals privilege certain subjects over others' (Berthold, 2010, p. 2). As strikingly apparent in the anxieties of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich, 1980) through the mainstream tension between hyper-representation of and absolute-silence on AIDS, the outbreaks do tell more than a disease.

Covid-19, as the former outbreaks, addresses an abundance of social, political, and economic conflicts, moving beyond the emergency to discover medical solutions. Susan Craddock and Steve Hinchliffe (2015) point out to the unequal capabilities and resources in response to outbreaks. They argue that "not everyone

(or, indeed, every species) is equally at risk, not every country is equally able to recognize and respond to disease outbreaks, and not all actors in disease interventions possess equal financial or political leverage to effect change" (Craddock & Hinchliffe, 2015, pp. 1-4). Medical resources, healthcare infrastructures and public health systems asymmetrically vary in different geographies. Hence, access to primary healthcare brings the questions about economic, social, and political barriers more than on capabilities of medicine itself. Asymmetric power relations and resources generate unjust experiences of the outbreak. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize the most vulnerable populations to COVID-19, living without accessible medical systems and health structures (Giles-Vernick, 2020) due to social, economic, and political barriers. Yet, the issues, problems, and conflicts, which have become more apparent and intensified with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, are indeed not limited to access to primary healthcare. As the responses to the outbreaks affect every social, political, and economic dimension of the societies, the marginalized communities and minorities inevitably come to endure more cruel and unequal consequences.

Given the complexity of the outbreaks, historical meanings and ubiquitousness of their intersecting and multidimensional effects, I approach the Covid-19 pandemic as a political emergency as much as it evolves out of a public health crisis. Looking at the institutional outbreak discourse and response, I bring attention to the historical implications and socio-political denouncements in the Turkish context. As the outbreak response goes beyond medical actions that cuts across multiple power relations, I discuss the historical and political connotations that the institutional pandemic discourse relies on in Turkey. Demonstrating the reflections of this political and historical context within the outbreak discourse, I elaborate on the current power dynamics and struggles evoked through the outbreak response. I raise questions on whether the state ensures "rights to health, housing, water and sanitation, food, work, social security, education, healthy environment an adequate standard of living, and to equality and non-discrimination"; and pay special attention to "traditionally marginalized or vulnerable groups and ensure access to appropriate support, resources and

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protection mechanisms including regarding any issues of stigmatization, exclusion, violence, hatred, labeling and the targeting of victims of COVID-19."[1]

2.2 Politics, Pandemic and Gender/Sexuality

2.2.1 Contemporary Power Dynamics in Turkey: Resurrection of Right-Wing Politics

A year after the Gezi Protests[2], that often are regarded as a local form of Global Occupy Movements, Erdogan was elected as the new president of Turkey in August 2014 following his Prime Minister role between 2003 and 2014. The protests spreading through the whole country are sometimes regarded as one of the "major indicators of a hegemonic crisis in AKP rule" (Yalvaç & Jonathan, 2019, p. 14). The protests were also followed by a credible accusation of rising police violence and corruption (Seufert, 2014, p.1). However, it is often discussed that the presidential victory empowered Erdogan and his party AKP (Justice and Development Party) in political decision-making processes and to reconstitute the political hegemony (Özbudun, 2014; Baser & Öztürk, 2017). In July 2016, the government faced a coup attempt, which was claimed to be organized by the 'Gülen Movement'[3] within the national security institutions. Although the attempt was defeated in two days by the government, this political event has triggered conflictingly numerous cultural responses. For example, the collective traumas deriving from the plenty of military coups in the short history of the republic or

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[1] IHD. (2020, April 20). *Joint NGO statement on civil and political rights*.
https://ihd.org.tr/en/joint-ngo-statement-on-civil-and-political-rights/

[2] Gezi Protests are a wave of demonstrations that began in May of 2013 and lasted that summer. While the protests were ideologically heterogeneous, addressing different political positions, the increasing hegemony of the AKP government is often discussed to be an intersecting motive.
See Gambetti (2014); Göle (2013); Iğsız (2014).

[3] 'Gülen Movement' is a religious-political community/organization active in Turkey since the 1980 military coup. Their strong alliance with the AKP government started to dismantle following the Gezi Protests and the governmental corruption cases. However, the government still addresses this movement as a 'terrorist organization.'
See Şık (2019); Yavuz & Koç (2016).

the history of political and religious purges that occurred in secularized state institutions are some of them. Besides the societal reflections and civil insecurities invoked by militarist actions, the 2016 coup attempt[4] also paved the path to a transition on an anti-democratic restructuring of each state body and institution.

Parallel to the political restructuring, the government introduced the concept of "New Turkey." The concept and narrative of re-construction are ironically served as a democratization attempt by the government. This attempt is expected to overcome the political domination exercised by the secular elites and the political infiltration exerted by other religious blocs conflicting with the government's socio-economical agenda. As "New Turkey" asserts a reconstitution in each political space/practice, it has been followed by introducing a new regime, Presidential System in the Government. With the official legitimation of the new regime in 2018, concerns and critiques on institutionalized authoritarianism have been intensified in various political spheres.

By many scholars (Çalışkan, 2018; Hoşgör, 2015), the path of institutionalized authoritarianism in Turkey is deconstructed by bringing attention to the hegemonic struggles and crises to which the AKP government responded. Stuart Hall (1985), by the term hegemony, refers to power dynamics in which an alliance of certain social groups can exert authority over other subordinate groups. However, such authority does not take place through a direct force or a manifest constraint, but by constructing a popular consent in which dominant ideologies appear legitimate and natural. As Hall (1985) argues, popular consent can be constructed by a historical bloc seeking hegemony that neutralizes the opposing forces, disaggregates the opposition and incorporates strategic elements of popular opinion. In this sense, work of consent and the creation of hegemony inevitably function or malfunction together. As such, a consent-based dominance can be claimed to have ruled the first period of the AKP governance (2002-2007). Moreover, the religionist and nationalist populations are integrated into the scope of a political alliance the government attempts to construct. As a result, it is often asserted that the fanatic voices have remarkably gained visibility, credibility, and

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[4] See Gökarıksel(2017); Korkman (2017); Ozbay & Soybakis (2020) for the gendered impact of the coup.

legitimacy in micro and macro political spaces. The political alliance of AKP with the nationalist and conservative right-wing party, MHP ('Nationalist Movement Party)[5]; termination of 'Peace Process' by the government with Kurdish population which leads to increasing military attacks in Kurdish geographies[6]; hyper-visibility of mafia leaders on mainstream media are often observed as some of the reflections of resurrecting right ideologies.[7]

Despite the aggressive melioration of the nationalist and religionist ideologies, the counter-hegemonic discourses and struggles have responded to the dominance of conservative & anti-democratic axioms and also the implementation of neoliberal politics into right-wing politics. As reflected in the social movements and deepened by the militarist interventions, the sovereignty that the AKP government attempted to create has received social and institutional opposition. In this regard, it is frequently observed that hegemony does not run as "a static state of domination" but embodies only a "relative stability" instead of a "fixity in power relations and struggles" (Yarar, 2020, p. 118). In the Turkish context, the political challenges against the current state of domination repeatedly have taken place. Feminist struggles, occupy movements, civil protests, unionization of labor, oppositions of journalists, academics, and non-governmental organizations have been strongly repercussive political contestations to the hegemonic projects.

Given the variety of civil movements in Turkey, it is important to address that neoliberal crises have deepened the insecurities of the dominant power struggle and led to the crystallization of hegemonic fractures. Pointing out to the political outcomes of global economic crisis of 2007–08, Yalvaç and Joseph (2019) observe a tendency in liberal democracies. According to the authors, this tendency

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[5] See Kalaycıoğlu (2016); Yılmaz et al. (2021) for a detailed analysis of the AKP government's turn to a political ally with the nationalist parties.

[6] See Baser (2017) for an overview of the peace process and empirical analysis of conflict resolution and justice.
  See Özpek (2017) for a detailed analysis of the failing peace process.

[7] In 2016, 'Academics of Peace' signed a petition to stop the conflict between the Turkish state and Kurdish Guerilla and addressed the state as the responsible actor of this conflict. The Mafia Leader Sedat Peker then threatened the academicians, "We will let your blood in streams, and we will take a shower in your blood."
See Baser et al. (2017) for a detailed overview of Academics of Peace and analysis of the relationship with nationalization and mafiatization.

functions to strengthen authoritarian elements through "restructuring of the coercive and judicial state apparatuses, concentration of power in the executive, use of repressive surveillance mechanisms, and insulation of decision-making processes from public scrutiny" (Yalvaç & Joseph, 2019, p. 8). As anti-democratic tendency of the AKP government has been a concern to various different (even conflicting) populations (e.g. ethnic minorities, underprivileged subjects, state elites), the crisis deepened the concerns on authoritarianism among these different communities. The global economic crisis of 2007-08, according to Yarar (2020), "led to the post-2008 shifts in the socio-economic, legal, and political landscapes at the global scale had an important impact on the AKP's tendency to proceed toward authoritarianism" (Yarar, 2020, p. 127). To a great extent, the crisis has consolidated social, economic and political pracarities that the neoliberalism generated. As an authoritarian reflex, the AKP government subsequently has attempted to restore the hegemonic fractionation by accentuating the rhetoric and politics of righ-wing ideologies, blending itself more and more into anti-democratic position. As Yarar observes, 'due to the changes in the balance of power at both the national and global level, the AKP had to retreat from its liberal and reformist position and tended to rely more and more on the use of state forces and of a political alliance including radical nationalist and conservative groups' (Yarar, 2020, p. 127). The AKP government adopted its struggle for dominancy into a strategy that corroborates and collaborates with radical right ideologies, responding aggressively to the economic, social, political insecurities and vulnerabilities that the neolibreal crisis created.

Nicos Poulantzas (2020) elaborates on the mutually beneficial relationship between neoliberalism and authoritarianism. He argues about "authoritarian statism" as a tendency in contemporary capitalism for "intensified state control over every sphere of socio-economic life combined with the radical decline of the institutions of political democracy and with draconian and multi-form curtailment" (Poulantzas, 2020, pp. 203-4). In this frame, the intensification of state control by the AKP government has taken place in various ways, though two of them seem particularly important. The first is the constitutive changes for the illicit intrusion of the party domination of the AKP government into state institutions. The second is the political reconfigurations to obscure the legal

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separation between the government and the state. Given the multilayered aspects of the state-control, it is important to address that the dominance is not just about the constitution of ideological alliances, but also about "how the ruling group is able to relate to deeper structural processes and use these to maintain its rule" (Yalvaç & Joseph, 2019, p. 1). The caderisation within the state institutions, rising as an anti-democratic reflex for control, has turned to be a key strategy of the AKP government. The monopolization of authority has, to a certain degree, functioned to expand the party authority. Also, the intensifying anti-democratism and monopolism have led to the mobilization of oppressed voices consisting of various social groups such as women, queers, ethnic and religious minorities, labor forces, students, etc. According to many (Abbas & Yiğit, 2015; Göle, 2013; Yörük, 2014), the Gezi Movement, for instance, took place both as literal and figurative resistance against such statification of the party supremacy and the consolidation of state authority into monolithic politics. Moreover, social mobility resurrected by the movement has uncurtained the societal discomforts and conflicts. Yet, the authoritarian governance responded to this massive discomfort by instructing the police forces for a disproportionate resort of the state's armed power and resources.

As the government has empowered police forces by recruiting new staff and extending the armed power disproportionately, the military coup in 2016 paved the way for a tremendous change in the political and social landscapes. This change is often observed in the implementation of a permanent state of emergency in the country (Kaygusuz, 2018; Özden et al., 2017). The extensive execution of the authoritarian regime in social, political, and legal landscapes has occurred following the coup attempt against Erdogan and his party. A few days after the army intervention, president Erdogan and the ministry cabinet declared the state of emergency, which has legally lasted until 2018. Constitutional amendments were sustained in 2017 under the state of emergency conditions. These amendments further transitioned the country to a "Presidential Government System or Turkish-Type Presidential Model," which allowed for a political party leader to act as the president.[8] The country has been governed by a state of

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[8]IHD (2020, May 5). *IHD 2019 Report on Human Rights Violations in Turkey.* https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-2019-report-on-human-rights-violations-in-turkey/

emergency (SoE) regime directly since 2016 and indirectly since 19 July 2018. SoE often was claimed to have been lifted but actually it has been rendered permanent and ordinary through the introduction of numerous legal amendments.[9] While many address this political transformation as a 'permanent state of exception' (Berksoy, 2017; Bilgiç, 2018; Kaygusuz, 2018; Yalvaç & Joseph, 2019; Yarar, 2020; Türk 2018), such a transformation also has loosened up the legitimization of the discourse of 'New Turkey.' The discourse of new regime often is criticized due to "the abandonment of the principle of constitutionalism," and "the dominance of arbitrariness and uncertainty over the public space by making both law and institutions "apparatuses" of the oppressive regime".[10]

While permanent state of exception intensified the anxieties on 'national security, the government's discourse of 'one-man' enhanced the narrative of 'internal and external enemies,' cementing the hegemonic power of the party ideologies. Moreover, following the entrance of the Presidential System into force in 2018, the president has been entitled to unlimited power such as dissolving the parliament, calling for new elections, making appointments to all positions within the state institutions, and running the country by issuing presidential decrees (Yalvaç & Joseph, 2019, p. 3). As such, accumulation of state power in a central authority has inevitably led to a massive erasure of democratic institutions; the president's power has literally and figuratively enlarged not only as a head of state but also as the guarantor of the will of people (Seufert, 2018).

The intersection of politics of security-state and the regime of authoritarian statism has particular implications on politics of gender and sexuality. As the parallel rhetorics of security and power foster their ideological weights within the right-wing politics, the radicalization of anti-democratic ideologies and aggressive usage of right-wing terminologies accompany this transforming political landscape. As the New Turkey discourse establishes a new hierarchy of political identities (Seufert, 2014, p. 3), it has been observed by many scholars (Dönmez,

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[9] IHD (2020, December 9). *IHD-HRFT Statement on 10 December Human Rights Day.* *https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-hrft-statement-on-10-december-human-rights-day/*

[10] IHD (2020, December 9). *IHD-HRFT Statement on 10 December Human Rights Day.* *https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-hrft-statement-on-10-december-human-rights-day/*

2015; Kaygusuz, 2018) that securitization of monopoly empowered by a domineering exertion of central political concepts such as nation, national interest, justice, progress, religion. These nationalist and conservative terminologies are integrated into the institutional discourse of New Turkey that is used to justify the authoritarian state. In this regard, "politics of gender in Turkey is intrinsic rather than incidental to a characterization of its ruling ideology (Kandiyoti, 2016, p. 103). The execution of an authoritarian governance with resurrecting nationalist and conservatives rhetorics runs in parallel with the execution of certain gender and sexuality politics. The next chapter will eloborate deeply on the gendered and sexual meanings of authoritarian governance.

2.2.2 Authoritarianism and Gender Politics

Addressing the rise of 'anti-gender movements' in several European countries in the 2010s, many scholars examine socio-economic conditions that drive the rise of backlash against theories and politics of gender and sexuality (Kováts, 2018; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017; Petö, 2016). The anti-gender mobilizations are often discussed in parallel with the rise of conservative social movements against the perceived threat of so-called 'gender ideology, 'gender theory,' or 'genderism' (Kováts, 2018, p.1). In this regard, enhancing conservative power struggles against feminists/queer movement are often understood as a populist strategy of right-wing ideologies governance. Nevertheless, since the conservative politics varies along with national contexts (Petö, 2015, p. 127), the triggering factors for the surge of these movements differ based on the geographical and political landscape (Kováts, 2018, p. 2). Debates on reproductive technologies, abortion, same-sex marriage, gender studies, or feminist policies, for example, have been regarded as some of the discussions varying across different countries, which are concurrent with particular economic and political crises (Kováts & Põim, 2015; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017).

In the current context of Turkey, it has been often observed that the rise of anti-gender and anti-feminist agendas are very intrinsic to the dramatic shift toward authoritarianism (Unal, 2021). As a strategy of arising 'big man politics' (White, 2015) that set the net of hierarchies around a father figure, anti-gender and anti-

feminist state narratives and initiatives servet o restore hegemonic masculinities (Ozbay & Soybakis, 2020). The term anti-gender connotates the vilification of "theoretical work, empirical research and activist voices that draw on the concept of gender, gender equality and its policy tools" (Ozbay & Soybakis, 2020, p. 68). On the other hand, the term anti-feminist highlights the construction of "a homogenous enemy out of feminists and feminisms" (Ozbay & Soybakis, 2020, p. 68). Although both terms, anti-gender, and anti-feminist, signify the same political frames and policies in politics of gender, their target can vary strategically. Yarar (2020), for instance, addresses the similarities between authoritarian regimes around the world that partake in a hegemonic struggle to appropriate the politics of gender. She further discusses that anti-feminist mobilization and strategies in Turkey have occurred in parallel with drift to the authoritarian position of the ruling party, AKP. The government's rhetoric of neoliberal-neoconservative female subjectivities that consolidates strategical elements of capitalist agenda with conservative-Islamic views often occured as an anti-feminist strategy to appropriate women's agencies (Acar & Altınok, 2013; Yarar, 2020).

The neoliberal ideology often locates women's labor force very strategically while emphasizing economic empowerment and reproduction of domestic work. As an outcome, the neo-conservative domination often functions to depoliticize the structural aspects of gendered hierarchies. Appealing to radical conservative and nationalist authoritarian forces, a biased usage of "justice" is often observed in the ruling party's neoliberal-neoconservative rhetoric. Against the concept of gender equality, which is blamed for being a tool of Western-minded secular feminists misreading and refusing Islam (Yarar, 2020, p. 132), the governing party promotes the concept of "gender justice." This concept emphasizes the impossibility of equality "between men and women" because of "women's fragile and vulnerable natures." In this regard, the notion of "justice" functions to consolidate binary understanding of genders and restore hegemonic masculinities that supposedly protect the "essentially" weaker gender. As a result of hegemonic re-appropriation of politics of gender, some point out the domination of familial and pro-natalist visions in policy-making progress as a hegemonic strategy of the ruling party and ideology (Güneş-Ayata & Doğangün, 2017). Some others discuss the de-humanizing backlash of religious-conservative rhetoric against feminist

challenges (Cindoglu & Unal, 2017). Addressing neoliberal precarities, Coşar and Özcan for instance, discuss that "the emphasis on family as the basic social security mechanism gained increasing prevalence" (Coşar & Özcan, 2021, pp. 42-3). This emphasis historically coincides with replacement of welfare with workfare, domination of security of business circles against the job security, and individualization of social security and health insurance systems (Coşar & Özcan, 2021). Moreover, Coşar and Özcan assert that "the new legal a familistic alley on a religious-familialistic discourse envisages the Turkish family as offering an ideal locus for social solidarity" (Coşar & Özcan, 2021, p. 43); which depoliticizes the social rights by representing them as a matter of domestic space. As every family becomes subject to government intervention in the pursuit of ideal citizen-subjects, according to Yarar, it also functions "regulating and coping with the unnamed crisis of neoliberalism" (Yarar, 2020, p. 132). As the survival of capitalism in Turkey greatly depends on the invisible labor of women at home (Elçik, 2021), institutional rhetoric of family operates to restore economic and social crises. This rhetoric recognizes women's agency only through their location in a family. The neoliberal objective obscuring state-responsibility against social protection comes with a discursive shift to "strengthening the family." The de-emphasized state responsibility serves to undercut further already vulnerable families and women's claims on welfare (Kandiyoti, 2016, p. 106).

The right ideologies often present the institution of family as a guarantee of protection from gendered violence and the home as protection from gendered precarity of capitalism (Dworkin, 1983). The conventional and conservative understandings of motherhood often signify the deserving subjects of 'patriarchal bargains' (Kandiyoti, 1988). However, "the particular mix of neoliberal, neoconservative and bio-political agendas evident in AKP policies signal a new departure in the gender regime" (Kandiyoti, 2016, p. 107). This departure not only serves the family as a locus of the nation-state but also creates the "politics of intimate." According to Acar and Altınok, the politics of intimate regulates women's bodies by disciplining sexual relations, sexual orientations, and reproductive rights (Acar & Altınok, 2013). As an outcome of institutional politics of sexual discipline, the elevation of pro-natalist and pro-life stances on abortion and obligement of women to give birth to young, productive, and

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conservative next generation are often observed (Yarar, 2020). Strengthening conservative regulation against women's bodies inevitably consolidates the new power block while criminalizing other feminist or queer discourses (Yarar, 2020, p. 129).

Enhancing authoritarian-conservative objectives deploys the metaphor and rhetoric of 'dangerous bodies' against alternative feminist/queer subjectivities (Basaran, 2014, p. 574). In an economic and social crisis where restoration of hegemonic masculinities are operated as a solution to save neoliberal-authoritarian governance, the rhetoric of security takes a unique place. Security of nation and security of family operates strategically in the institutional discourse to preserve an 'authentic cultural self' dominated by nationalist-conservative objectives. As a result of authoritarian control over gender identities, the metaphor and rhetoric of 'dangerous bodies' function to marginalize and criminalize alternative feminist and queer discourses (Basaran, 2014, p. 574). Concomitant with the rhetoric of national/familial security, 'dangerous bodies' come to represent a potentiality for criminality. Feminist and queer discourses, as counter-strategies to anti-gender and anti-feminist mobility, turn to be potential subjects of criminality against conventional and essentialist foundations of the family institution.

As an alarming outcome of empowering rhetoric of national security and 'anti-national' criminality, Turkey recently has announced to withdraw from Istanbul Convention.[11] Based on a supposed risk of "harming traditional family values" and "supporting LGBTI+ ideology" [12], the Convention has become a significant ground to operate anti-gender mobility. "Propagating gender ideology and dismantling the family unity" are often served as a credible objection by conservative/nationalist actors (Unal, 2021, p. 74). Lying on an anti-Western rhetoric that emphasizes 'national' and 'authentic' self against global actors, annulment of the Convention is represented as reinforcement of cultural

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[11] Cumhurbaşkanlığı İdari İşler Başkanlığı Hukuk ve Mevzuat Genel Müdürlüğü. (2021, March 20). *20 Mart 2021 Tarihli ve 31429 Sayılı Resmî Gazete*. T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Resmi Gazete. https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/20.03.2021

[12] IHD. (2021, May 6). OBS-İHD Report- Turkey's Civil Society on the Line: A Shrinking Space for Freedom of Association. https://ihd.org.tr/en/obs-ihd-report-turkeys-civil-society-on-the-line-a-shrinking-space-for-freedom-of-association/

authenticity (Unal, 2021, p. 77). Considering the return to the national self justifies the authoritarian state and protects it from trans-national accountability, anti-gender mobilization revolving around the Istanbul Convention serves to oppress, marginalize, and criminalize alternative discourses of gender and sexuality.

2.2.3 Power, Privilege, Pandemic: Un-naming Gendered Vulnerabilities

The Covid-19 pandemic has been catalyzing an abundance of historically, politically, and economically embedded questions/problems in various political landscapes and set-ups. The right and access to health care, housing, water, work, and education are just a few of these structural problems that surfaced with the outbreak. Moreover, the right to life becomes disproportionately jeopardized for minoritarian populations who already are underprivileged within the 'matrix of domination (Collins, 1990). The intersection of the structural inequalities with the harms caused by the state of (health) emergency often takes place. The complex and multifaceted crisis generates disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations (Benini, 2021). The marginalized groups already cast into the margins of society, based on 'multiple jeopardies' (of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability…), and have unique vulnerabilities that are not consistently assessed or addressed in global frameworks and policies. In this regard, intersecting insecurities and precarities often are left behind by the institutional pandemic responses (Dhanani, 2020).

As the marginalized populations are hit hard by social and economic outcomes of the pandemic responses (e.g., deterioration and impoverishment), the gendered, ethnicized, economized precarities are condemned to the portrayals that their lives are disposable. In a political climate where 'turning back to normal' is melancholically idealized, the existing 'normals' that surfaced in COVID-19 expose the already-entrenched inequalities, the persistent masculinities, and the unrelenting patriarchal & militarist systems (Hans, 2020). Enhancing the existing power asymmetries, the 'normal' evolves to be a "continuing dependence on a discordant and inhumane security system, which has unwarranted power and control over its citizens' (Hans, 2020)

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Despite the governments' failure to meet the vulnerable populations' primary social, economic, and political needs, the state control has had a dramatic authoritarian turn with increased digital surveillance, curfews, lockdown, and sweeping measures by military and police forces (Mai, 2020). Where the medicalized outbreak discourse of the states obscures intersecting inequalities and insecurities, the escalation of different forms of social and governmental fascism becomes an excuse (WSFTE, 2020). As a result of increasing state power to enforce radical changes, the imposed military lockdown has been observed in various geographic set-ups (Gazia, 2020; Giroux & Filippakou, 2020; Ray, 2020; Metheven, 2020). In parallel to the empowerment of militarist forces over public spaces, arbitrary arrests & police harassments are alarmingly spread (Gazia, 2020). Moreover, the outbreak narratives and vocabularies of the states to a great extent enhanced the militarist approach to the crisis. The 'new normal' of states often reboots militarist/masculinist terminology where the outbreak narratives are overwhelmingly hostile as the pandemic has brought in new words (e.g. 'war' and 'enemy') that are being increasingly linked to violence and rising fascism (Hans, 2020).

According to Chinkin and Rees (2020), militarism is 'dependent on the elevation of a particular construction of masculinity which necessitates a binary notion of gender' that 'deepens gendered divisions and sets in place a framework which establishes what the post-pandemic priorities will be.' Moreover, militarist language and discourse evoke other binaries and tensions (e.g. 'us vs. them') that are inherently problematic to comprehend the complexity of the crisis. The privileged gazes at crisis dominate the institutional narratives. Where binary oppositions (us & them, friend & enemy, soldier & civil, men & women, white & black) work for the privileged party of the duality (Hall, 1997a), the dyadic, hierarchical thought system establishes the latter as inherently inferior to the former (Pritchard & Morgan, 2020). Moreover, such dualistic categories obscure the spectrums and alternative meanings. Entrenching the underprivileged position of women and LGTBI+ populations within hierarchical gender systems, the dualistic rhetoric and militarist discourses amplify and justify gendered/sexualized violence, discrimination, and segregation.

Condensing the social and economic jeopardies, Covid-19 has accentuated other gendered disparities. The women overrepresented in health services on the frontline and in an unjust division of domestic work become exposed more to economic downturn and feminization of poverty (Mai, 2020). Right to life (Nigam, 2020), right to housing (Vozikis et al., 2021), right to sexual and reproductive health (Hamzehgardeshi et al., 2020), right to work (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2021), right to public contestation (Eichler & Sonkar, 2021) are only some of the areas where gender and sexual minorities come to endure the crisis more disproportionately. Moreover, gendered vulnerabilities and precarities have been entrenched further by the outbreak responses that aggravate preexisting gender inequities and power hierarchies, further isolating gendered and sexual minorities from the resources that can help them (Dhanani, 2020). As isolating gendered & sexual minorities from larger social communities has historically been a surefire way to disempower them, the current outbreak, "Covid-19 has imposed one of the longest periods in the modern history of prolonged, social isolation" (Brooks, 2020).

Given that domestic violence and gendercide are on an alarming rise in many countries with the stay at home obligations (Alfaro, 2020; Boserup et al., 2020; Chandan et al., 2020; Ünal & Gülseren, 2020), for many women and gender non-conforming people across the globe, the home has not evolved to be a safe space where restrictions on movement have offered abusers additional power and control (Carcelén, 2020). Moreover, it is crucial to address that women are not a homogenous category and LGBTI+ women, refugee women, older women, or women with disabilities face more varied forms of violence (Hans, 2020). As intersecting vulnerabilities intensify the impacts of the crisis, gendered, sexualized, ethnicized precarities are being consciously left behind by the states and governments.

3. Methodology

3.1 Primary and Auxiliary Sources

The Covid-19 is a complex crisis that unveils and regenerates various social, political, and economic problems and in turn also causes a massive knowledge production. Thus particularly for this research, I thought it crucial to assemble quantitatively large data to understand how the outbreak narrative evolves and is incorporated into various discourses. In order to study the pandemic discourses employed by the Turkish state, I turn to the official websites of *The Ministry of Health*[13] and *the Ministry of the Interior*[14] as my primary sources. Concretely, I examined texts publicized on the two websites between December 2019 and May 2021.

This choice is based on three main reasons. Firstly, it is motivated by my observation that the visibility and authority of these two state institutions have increased remarkably during the pandemic. Regularly introducing Covid-19 related statements and announcements via different media outlets, these ministries often present the state's epidemiological measures.

Secondly, the ministries' structural connection often brings about monolothic state discourses. The connection derives from the current state regime. With the introduction of the 'Presidential System of Government' in the Turkish Constitution in 2018, all ministries became directly responsible to the president. In this new political structure, the president is by Constitution defined as the 'head of state' while also entitled to be a sole authority to appoint and dismiss all ministers. Considering the ministries' absolute dependence on the president and central power, I found it theoretically advantageous and practically applicable to limit the primary sources to these two ministries. Such focus has given me an opportunity to engage deeply with the texts.

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[13] https://www.saglik.gov.tr/

[14] https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/

Finally, third choice is based on theoretical reasoning. Meaning is mediated at different levels: by text/content, by the production process of text/content, and by processes that prevent texts from being produced (Reinharz & Davidman, 1992, p. 145). My decision to analyse the official websites of the two ministries is based on the observation that these sources are subject to multiple articulations. Based on the articulation theory, Stuart Hall states that "the so-called unity of a discourse is the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be articulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness'" (cit in Grossberg, 1986, p. 53). In this regard, articulation theory offers a understanding of meaning production that the discourses come to make sense as they become produced in various different time-space and with various mediumd. Moreover, the medium as the message (McLuhan, 1994) reconciles the various forces of history, culture, economics into the apparatus. Not only the content but also the medium itself produce meanings. Hence each articulation in the Ministries' website leads into the question of the medium as an "ideological state apparatus" (Althusser, 2006) through which the state denounces subject, discourse, and power. In a state-owned and state-controlled medium, the official narratives not only convey textual meanings but also the process of production and prevention of particular meanings. Hence, the medium itself connotes the very existence of the state in the discourse produced.

I approach the statements of these institutions with a focus on gender and sexuality. Researching the ways the institutional discourses articulate, disarticulate, include, and exclude gender/sexuality from the politics of the pandemic, I look for ways in which gender is overtly or covertly spoken of and what it tells in those contexts. I aim to elaborate on the political space and modalities in which gender, authoritarianism, conservatism, nationalism, and militarism are articulated together. As part of the state apparatuses, the official websites of ministries produce or prevent from circulation specific bits of knowledge about minoritarian subjectivities. Hence the question of what is missing from the state representations of the pandemic and how "certain topics came to be missing and the implications of these gaps" (Reinharz & Davidman, 1992, p. 162) became one of my research interest. Deeming that the state discourse is not only formed of what it emphasizes but also what it obscures, my

research method also intends to identify the 'gaps' in the outbreak narrative employed by the state.

I lean against online statements of a human rights association called IHD (İnsan Hakları Derneği, 'Human Rights Association').[15] However, instead of repeating their observations, I use this source critically and cautiously. My choice is based on the theoretical position that in the authoritarian state, it is important to acknowledge the sources and the knowledge produced by the collectives on the ground. The reports and statements published by IHD are a crucial help in analyzing the gaps of the state's outbreak narrative. While the state discourse excludes the gendered and ethnicized minorities from the pandemic narrative, the materials produced by IHD enable me to re-emphasize the excluded knowledge. Identifying such exclusionary practices raises questions about how the state narrative contributes directly to excluding specific knowledge. Hence, the inclusion of another source/voice enabled me to highlight and then deconstruct the exclusionary practices of the state discourse.

Human Rights Association (İnsan Hakları Derneği "IHD") was founded in 1986 by 98 human rights defenders. Nowadays, the association is enlarged by over 10,000 members (IHD, 2008). The foundation history of IHD is closely linked to the political landscape brought about by the military coup d'état of September 12, 1980. The association's establishment followed the military coup that paved the way to an alarming increase of violations of fundamental human rights, acts of violence under police custody, and prohibition of political parties, trade unions, and associations. Having been founded in a political environment where state violence becomes frighteningly prevalent, the association Human Rights Association claims to be devoted to "struggle to protect the right to life, abolish capital punishment, find forcibly disappeared persons, and prevent executions" (IHD, 2008). IHD organizes activities and campaigns to draw attention to problems in prisons, on the Kurdish question, on economic and social rights, on education, and to social marginalization of disabled people. IHD defines its principles as "standing up for oppressed individuals, peoples, nations, genders and classes" (IHD, 2008). Promoting and defending personal, political, economic,

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[15] https://ihd.org.tr/en/

social, cultural rights and the right to solidarity for everyone without geographical location and circumstances, IHD became a member of various international human rights organizations such as FIDH (International Human Rights Federation) and EMHRN (Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network).[16]

IHD serves me as a crucial auxiliary source. Applying to the auxiliary source in this research reflects that "the very act of obtaining knowledge creates the potential for change because the paucity of research about certain groups accentuates and perpetuates their powerlessness" (Reinharz & Davidman, 1992, p. 191). Moreover, IHD reports helped me extend my perspective on how state practices contribute to marginalization and criminalization against various subject positions. As the association mainly watches over actions and declarations of justice communities/ministry of the state, presenting reports and organizing campaigns on human rights violations, my source includes different state institutions. Expanding observations of the association over the official statements of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Interior, I demonstrate further whether/where these observations challenge with the state discourse represented by these two state institutions. Furthermore, as the association often addresses pre-existing issues and topics, I bring attention to the effects of these on the pandemic management. Similar to the collection of the primary data, I approached every statement and report produced by the association between December 2019 and May 2021, with a possibility that they might address a different aspect of state discourse. 'Press Releases' and 'Reports' section of the website, including 75 reports/statements during the timeframe, was used as the material of this source.

3.2. Research Methods and Data Analysis

Although quantitively extensive data has been assembled, the materials were analyzed using a qualitative method through content analysis and discourse analysis. As content analysis enables a systematic approach to compress a large amount of text into different themes by organizing data in specific ways, data segmentation enables the creation/drawing of 'maps of meaning' (Hall, 2003).

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[16] See AEDH & Euro Med Rights & FIDH (2016); FIDH (2017); IHD & FIDH for some of their joint statements/reports.

The maps of meaning allow the analysis to deal with different levels of signification. Finding the denotative and connotative meanings encoded in a text provides an analytical tool to distinguish the different levels of signification at which ideologies and discourses intersect (Hall, 2003). Unpacking connotative levels of signifiers, therefore, carries a great potential to address the fragments of ideology (Barthes, 1977) and construct an analysis of discourse. As discourse produces knowledge and power networks through language, a state of knowledge (episteme) appears across a range of texts (Hall, 1997b). A particular way of thinking and signifying a subject/concept produce a specific state of knowledge about it. Analysis of a discourse, hence, illustrates the maps of meaning produced through a given episteme.

3.2.1 Content Analysis

According to Reinharz & Davidman, content analysis is a study of "a set of objects or events systematically by counting them or interpreting the themes contained in them" (Reinharz & Davidman, 1992, p. 146). Content analysis can be applied to any cultural artifact without an ontological limit. As Reinharz & Davidman mentions, "the only limit to what can be considered a cultural artifact —and thus used as a 'text' for research—is the researcher's imagination" (Reinharz & Davidman, 1992, 146). In this research, where I try to understand the pandemic discourse of the state, I used the official statements as the text of the study. As I interact with large quantities of primary data/materials, content analysis provided me with a systematic approach to interpret the recurring themes, concepts, and metaphors.

Coffey and Atkinson point out that segmenting and coding data is a crucial aspect of content analysis. It is because these methods can enable the researcher to organize, manage, and retrieve the most meaningful bits of data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 26). Yet, the ways of coding and organizing data can vary depending on the research material and the researcher's approach. In this study, I applied several steps of coding. First, I followed the strategy of open-coding. As open-coding starts from scratch without a predefined set of codes, it enabled me to

create codes based on the data itself. This coding approach gave me crucial flexibility, which promotes the data to shape and lead the frame of the study.

As the first level of the data collection, I read through all statements chronologically and then broke the data into smaller samples. In this open-coding step, I was especially interested in meanings, metaphors or concepts that were attached to notions of state, power, and agency. I documented the statement with its date, title, and weblink in a digital file. I collected the citations (be it sentences, words or full paragraphs) in this file with a chronological order marking each statement separately. At this very first level of collection of open coded data, the sample addressed various ideologies and power relations. I observed authoritarian statism, nationalism, conservatism, and militarism as recurring ideological themes. However, it is important to note that data cannot be recorded neutrally because observation always involves choices (Sears & Cairns, 2015, p. 25). All the collected samples and their decoding surely reflect my own interpretation, and another researcher would observe different sets of themes and issues in the same data.

This first level of coding enabled me to reduce the data. It also led me to think of the new ways of identifying and reordering data, which "contains a more subtle process of having ideas and using concepts about the data" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, 29). Subsequent to this first step of open coding, I have again read through the whole sample of data and added other codes interpreting the concepts, metaphors, and sentences collected in the selection. I repeated this process of reading and coding multiple times, which reshaped, redirected, and enhanced how I interpret the data and how I draw an analytical map of the data.

3.2.2 Discoure Analysis

Analyzing the cultural imaginations and employment of "the outbreak narrative," Priscilla Wald addresses the consequences of these narratives. As they produce a certain kind of knowledge of an outbreak, "they promote or mitigate the stigmatizing of individuals, groups, populations, locales (regional and global), behaviors, and lifestyles" (Wald, 2008, p. 3). As the outbreak narratives are

construed through certain power relations that produce the knowledge and subject of the emergency, I examined the gendered dimensions of the pandemic discourse of the state. I addressed how the institutional discourse articulates, disarticulates, includes, and excludes the politics of gender/sexuality within the politics of pandemic. Considering that the content analysis and discourse analysis are linked research methods, I approach discourse analysis as an analytical strategy by which I can expand the contextual meanings of the data and support the yield of the content analysis.

For the purpose of the present work, discourse is understood as "a system of representation" (Hall, 1997b). According to Stuart Hall, a Foucauldian understanding of discourse addresses "a way of representing the knowledge about a particular topic or particular historical moment"; as such, it appears "across a range of texts and as forms of conduct" (Hall, 1997b, p. 44). As a system of representation, discourse entails a practice of repetition and reproduction. For my research, discourse analysis as a theoretical approach brings observations on how the pandemic discourse of the state is complex, mobile, and multi-faceted.

As the discourse is an effect of knowledge and power, the feminist discourse analysis in this study addresses the gendered effects of knowledge and power reproduced in the pandemic discourse. According to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002, p.13), "feminist methodology always entails some theory of power, since the power to produce authoritative knowledge is not equally open to all." While theories of power expand in this research as a very fundamental method to challenge the state power-producing specific knowledge, the deconstruction of this power requires the involvement of critical voices in this research. Given that "the suppression and concealment of oppositional elements prevent those aspects that challenge hegemony from being articulated in discourse" (Ebert, 1988, p. 29), uncovering oppositions involves acknowledging multiple jeopardies and positions.

As a feminist theory and practice, acknowledgment of intersectionality and multiple positions takes two forms in this research. Firstly, it occurs by working with IHD, as an auxiliary source, critical to the state's discursive and judiciary

practices. Drawing on IDH allows me to foreground intersectional perspective as well as the multiplicity of voices. Engaging with IHD data enabled this analysis to challenge and go beyond my own observations and assumptions. Secondly, IHD reports and materials, to a significant extent, lead me to recognize various other vulnerabilities that I did not notice or named. While my privileges kept me from imagining numerous forms of marginalisation and vulnerabilities, the association's analyses enabled me to acknowledge the obscured precarities. As discourse analysis requires a challenge to authoritative power that regulates and reproduces certain discourses, IHD as another critical voice helped me to think and write more consciously, reflexively, and intersectionally as a researcher.

I have applied discourse analysis as a complementary method to renrich the content analysis by its focus on knowledge, and power that name as well as obscure. After several layers of coding of the primary data sample, I created different analytical maps for state discourse. To better understand the complexities of the state discourse, I organized and interpreted the data differently several times. The initial readings of the data led me to think about authoritarianism, nationalism, neoliberalism, and militarism as the recurring themes in the state discourse, creating different maps then provided a more complex understanding of these ideologies. One of the analytical maps I created focused on the descriptive and metaphoric dimensions of the state discourse. I analyzed how the concepts of pandemic and the nation-state are signified and how the concept of the border as a physical and symbolic category shapes these significations. Encountering an emphasis on the discourse of security that links the descriptions of pandemic and nation-state, I studied the ethnicized and gendered implications of this discourse.

Through another map of analysis, I looked at the genealogical meanings of these descriptions. I examined how these descriptions are historically situated and interact with the political context. Finding a discursive repetition of the ideological framing of neoliberal authoritarianism, I analyzed how the desriptions are linked to the state politics and policies. Moreover, by providing a genealogical understanding of the state discourse of pandemic, this map helped me to understand how neoliberal authoritarianism is also situated as a counter-hegemony to feminist struggles. These findings are offered in the second chapter of the

analysis. Additionally, applying textual and contextual analysis simultaneously enabled me to address the right-wing state strategies more concretely through the pandemic response. This methodological choice helped me to identify the state rhetoric of the pandemic that promotes surveillance, militarization, and criminalization as state practices. The theoretical link between the concepts and the context of authoritarianism helped me to enlarge the implications of state control on gendered and sexual vulnerabilities. The last chapter of the analysis provides a detailed discussion on these resurrecting state practices.

3.3 Researcher's Positionality

As a researcher of gender studies, I find it vital to address my positionality and cultivate self-reflexivity. Since the knowledge produced in this study is not independent of my personal, political, and theoretical positions, it is crucial to address their potential effect on the primary material, methodology, and analytical approach. Where power, privilege, and vulnerabilities are discussed, it is a crucial aspect of feminist research ethics to locate the 'author' within the matrix of power relations and unveil the personal privileges and vulnerabilities that can impact the study.

Until I moved to the Czech Republic to start graduate school, I have spent most of my time in Turkey, where I was born and raised. My immigration from Turkey was deeply related to the authoritarian, conservative power dynamics and the ongoing neoliberal economic crisis in the country. As the country's oppressive turn and neoliberal transition enhanced my gendered insecurities/precarity/vulnerability, I deeply desired to have a new 'home' where I can feel more secure. Entrenching authoritarian and capitalist structures in the country massively untie the geographical belonging for many subjects in Turkey and signify these subjects as 'undeserving citizens.' The political re-structuring reproduces gendered, ethnicized, class-driven vulnerabilities against various subject positions.

While the concept of 'home' encapsulates our subjective and collective identities and belongings very symbolically, it also always involves space and spatial

relationships. As our identities and belongings are not apart from the power relations we are involved in, 'home' also signifies a space where power is reproduced. Based on the denotative meaning of home, I would also address the domestic space where I started to question gendered power relations. Coming from a traditional nuclear family that operates with conservative and repressive gender norms, I primarily become a subject to power hierarchies within gendered dynamics. Although the 'home' was where I learned to be ashamed of my body and sexuality, gendered disciplinary dynamics in the domestic space always reminded me how complex and nonlinear power relations are. Moreover, my personal experience with the domestic space and my analytical approach to the concept of home inevitably resonate in this research. I discuss the Covid-19 pandemic and the possibly oppressive impacts of domestic confinement.

Both my parents are part of a religious minority in Turkey, which has been exposed to several collective massacres initiated sometimes by the state itself. Moreover, the violent oppression of this cultural-religious identity is almost always addressed only among the family members. Being a minority is mostly narrated as a deviation from the norm that we need to bury and hide in the home. As much as my home was a symbol of a deflection from the 'regime of truth' (Hall, 1997b, p. 49) to family members, it was also territory for reproducing other norms and reproducing the power. In my experience, gendered/sexual conservatism and control were a means of resurrecting the authority in the domestic space.

In sum, my personal experiences and theoretical positions have led me to conceive of power as a multi-formed and multi-layered matrix of relations instead of an 'out-of-there' entity. Power operates in multiple spaces and spheres. Hence, it goes beyond the traditional understanding of power-as-pyramid and "arises in all kinds of relationships, and can be built up from the bottom of a pyramid (or any structure)" (Lynch, 2010). In this Foucauldian understanding of power that highly resonates with my theoretical position, power also not only represses but also produces. It, for instance, generates regulations, institutions, discourses, identities, vulnerabilities, and privileges. In this sense, I approach the concept of power with its both productive and repressive aspects. Accordingly, in this research, I present

an analysis of double-ended power that emphasizes and de-emphasizes vulnerabilities and privileges simultaneously.

4. Analysis

4.1 Re-bordering of Nation and Globe:

This first subchapter of the analysis first will present how war rhetoric has emerged in the pandemic discourse of state. Followingly, resurrecting conceptual and ideological ambiguities of state discourse will be discussed. As the concepts of border, identity and crisis will be elaborated within the rhetorical ambiguities and dualities, the term national security will be unpacked as a gendered and ethnicized issue.

4.1.1 Emergence of War Rhetoric

Analysing the outbreak narratives, Priscilla Wald discusses that epidemological diseases have quite been animated as "great enemy of mankind" (Wald, 2008, p. 83). Likening disease to enemy, the outbreak narratives, according to Wald, have deployed the metaphor of war in various epidemological diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Sars, and so on. Although the meaning of war and enemy is not stable in the outbreak narratives, the metaphoric work holds a great importance. The specific usage of militarist terminolgy gives a particular understanding to outbreaks through implicatios of securitisation. While the binary concepts of enemy/army, defense/offense, invasion/occupation, inland/outland play a critical role in metaphor of war, they serve a particular comprehension of outbreaks that stimulates a variety of political, economical and social issues at local, national and global levels.

In the state discourse, I have observed a synchrony between the emergence of the rhetoric of war and the 'entrance' of the coronavirus into the country, Turkey. Leading into a master narrative that offers a familiarity, the metaphor of war and the mysteries of the disease arise simultaneously. The depiction of viruses as

enemies and invaders that damage or destroy the host (Wald, 2008, p. 158) can be distinguished as one of the conventionally repeating components of the outbreak narratives. The official usage of the Covid-19 metaphors reproduces a similar, militarist discourse and terminology. Before the announcement of the first official case, the Health Minister Fahrettin Koca, locating the enemy (virus) through a host (human body), underlines that "coronavirus patients are not found in the country," and "the state would mobilize all means to prevent the virus from entering from abroad, especially across borders."[17] With the announcement of the first case, namely with invasion of the enemy, the Ministry highlights the binary opposition between the virus and 'us.' However, the signifier of 'us' floats constantly (as 'human,' 'nation,' 'health workers,' 'society,' 'family' and so on). Koca states that "there are two sides in this struggle; if one of the parties is the virus with a high spreading capacity at every opportunity, we are the other party."[18] Against the enemy, the Ministry re-introduces the concept of "Health Army" [19] and expresses that "we are strengthening our health army these days when we are struggling with the coronavirus outbreak." [20] This Health Army signifies the healthcare labor force over a million, ranging from doctors to nurses and support personnel who are "at the service of the nation." [21] Concurrent with the usage of the concepts of Army and Nation, the institution slightly integrates the concept of State in the outbreak narrative. Koca claims that "to achieve the goal of a great and powerful Turkey, we must support this process together with the spirit of mobilization. We trust our nation."[22] Parallel to these meta-concepts of War, Nation, and State, the militarist terminology continues to be expanded by

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[17] MoH. (2020, February 28). *Bakan Koca, Sınırda Kurulan Sahra Hastanelerini Ziyaret Etti.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64221/bakan-koca-sinirda-kurulan-sahra-hastanelerini-ziyaret-etti.html

[18] MoH. (2020, April 7). *"Mücadelemizdeki Ortak Payda İnsan Sağlığıdır".* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64935/mucadelemizdeki-ortak-payda-insan-sagligidir.html

[19] Health Army is a concept often used in official statements, which depicts Health-care Workers. Although the term was introduced a couple of years before the Covid-19 pandemic, it appears more repetitively during the pandemic.

[20] MoH. (2020, March 25). *32 Bin Personel Alımına İlişkin Yapılan Açıklama.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64688/32-bin-personel-alimina-iliskin-yapilan-aciklama-25032020.html

[21] MoH. (2020, May 31). *Yeşilköy Acil Durum Hastanesi Hizmete Açıldı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65789/yesilkoy-acil-durum-hastanesi-hizmete-acildi.html

[22] MoH. (2020, May 31). *Yeşilköy Acil Durum Hastanesi Hizmete Açıldı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65789/yesilkoy-acil-durum-hastanesi-hizmete-acildi.html

the state institution. 'Protection of borders' [23] ; 'prevention of invasion' [24] ; 'extraordinariness of condition' [25]; 'isolation' [26]; 'precaution' [27], 'vaccination as a weapon' [28] ; 'causalities of war' [29] ; 'heroes of war' [30] ; 'spirit of war effort' [31]; 'self-abnegation of nation' [32] appear as some other concepts introduced in the narrative of the war.

4.1.2 Ambiguities: Border, Identity, Crisis

The narrative of war provides a familiarity with the concept of the virus by obscuring medical, political, and economic implications of the outbreak. Yet, the narrative falls short in addressing the location of the virus and the pandemic. Both physically (as home, city, country) and figuratively (as a matrix of power relations), the location of the outbreak sparks an equivocacy. Since it is not possible to envisage a single place to address as the sole battlefield of the pandemic, every space without physical and symbolic borders represents the emergency.

[23] MoH. (2020, March 19). *Bakan Koca, TBMM'de Koronavirüs ile Mücadeleye İlişkin Sunum Yaptı* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64544/bakan-koca-tbmmde-koronavirus-ile-mucadeleye-iliskin-sunum-yapti.html

[24] MoH. (2020, March 27). *Sağlık Bakanı Fahrettin Koca, 81 İl Sağlık Müdürüyle Telekonferansla Görüştü* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64721/saglik-bakani-fahrettin-koca-81-il-saglik-muduruyle-telekonferansla-gorustu.html

[25] MoH. (2020, March 27). *Sağlık Bakanı Fahrettin Koca, 81 İl Sağlık Müdürüyle Telekonferansla Görüştü* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64721/saglik-bakani-fahrettin-koca-81-il-saglik-muduruyle-telekonferansla-gorustu.html

[26] MoH. (2020, April 1*). Bakan Koca: "Dışarı Çıkmayalım, Virüse Fırsat Tanımayalım".* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64846/bakan-koca-disari-cikmayalim-viruse-firsat-tanimayalim.html

[27] MoH. (2020, October 23). *Bakan Fahrettin Koca, 5 İlin Sağlık Yöneticileriyle Bursa'da Bir Araya Geldi.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,76543/bakan-fahrettin-koca-5-ilin-saglik-yoneticileriyle-bursada-bir-araya-geldi.html

[28] MoH. (2021, February 16). *Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısına İlişkin Açıklama.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,78598/koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisina-iliskinaciklama- 16022021.html

[29] MoH. (2020, April 1*). Bakan Koca: "Dışarı Çıkmayalım, Virüse Fırsat Tanımayalım".* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64846/bakan-koca-disari-cikmayalim-viruse-firsat-tanimayalim.html

[30] Ibid.

[31] MoH. (2020, May 5). *"Koronavirüse Karşı Mücadelemiz, Yakın Dönemlerdeki En Büyük Seferberliğimizdir".* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65622/koronaviruse-karsi-mucadelemiz-yakin-donemlerdeki-en-buyuk-seferberligimizdir.html

[32] MoH (2021, February 16). *Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısına İlişkin Açıklama.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,78598/koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisina-iliskin-aciklama-16022021.html

In the state discourse, I have observed such ambiguity in locating the pandemic that obliges the outbreak narrative to reproduce the country's borders unceasingly. Firstly, the suspension of international mobility[33], and closing of national borders[34] become subject to attempts for locating the pandemic. Especially until the announcement of the first official case on March 11, 2020, a metaphoric meaning of border accompanies a literal usage of the term border. Keeping 'strangers' outside of the national borders seems to function to barring the invasion of the disease. "The virus has entered within our borders" [35], says Koca when announcing the first official Covid-19 case. As Koca defines the first patient only with two words, "a male and a citizen," such a signification drives in parallel the narrative of invasion and subject to invasion, which alarms a threat on gendered and nationalized security. The Minister states that they (state) expect him to "giving strength to this struggle by obeying the rules" and followingly that they will "wage a national struggle against this global problem."[36]

While such sequencing depicts a gendered and nationalized narrative against the pandemic, which I will expand on later, the conceptualization of the problem and struggle carries another ambiguity in locating the outbreak. In the same time frame with the announcement of the first case, the Ministry of Health raises the slogan of "Problem is global, solution is national" and claims that "we can overcome this struggle together with our national, domestic citizens"[37]. This

[33] MoH. (2020, February 3). *Sağlık Bakanı Koca, Koronavirüs Hakkında Son Gelişmeleri Aktardı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,63638/saglik-bakani-koca-koronavirus-hakkinda-son-gelismeleri-aktardi.html
MoH. (2020, February 29). *Üç Ülke ile Daha Uçuşların Durdurulmasına İlişkin Açıklama.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64265/uc-ulke-ile-daha-ucuslarin-durdurulmasina-iliskin-aciklama-29022020.html
MoH. (2020, March 16). *Sağlık Bakanı Koca, Koronavirüse İlişkin Son Durumu Değerlendirdi.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64493/saglik-bakani-koca-koronaviruse-iliskin-son-durumu-degerlendirdi.html

[34] MoH. (2020, February 22). *Sağlık Bakanı Koca, Koronavirüse İlişkin Son Durumu Değerlendirdi.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64066/saglik-bakani-koca-koronaviruse-iliskin-son-durumu-degerlendirdi.html
MoH. (2020, February 24). *Türkiye, İran ile Sınır Kapılarını Geçici Olarak Kapattı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64067/turkiye-iran-ile-sinir-kapilarini-gecici-olarak-kapatti.html
MoH. (2020, March 19). *Bakan Koca, TBMM'de Koronavirüs ile Mücadeleye İlişkin Sunum Yaptı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64544/bakan-koca-tbmmde-koronavirus-ile-mucadeleye-iliskin-sunum-yapti.html

[35] MoH. (2020, March 11). *"Koronavirüs, Alacağımız Tedbirlerden Güçlü Değildir"* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64383/koronavirus-alacagimiz-tedbirlerden-guclu-degildir.html

[36] Ibid.

[37] MoH. (2020, March 9). *"Sorun Küresel, Mücadelemiz Ulusal".* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64342/sorun-kuresel-mucadelemiz-ulusal.html

slogan envisages the outbreak response in a national frame despite its global impacts. Moreover, it lies on populist rhetoric that "arises when there is a crisis of confidence about a political system's ability to solve social problems" (Yalçın & Joseph, 2019, p. 3). As the pandemic is a multifaceted issue and a complex crisis, the populist discourse serves to ease public anxieties to a certain degree. However, even the "populism as a marker of difference that pits an authentically national 'us' against an anti-national 'them'" (Kandiyoti, 2016, p. 103), it still "emerges out of the contradictions of globalized capitalist development" (Yalçın & Joseph 2019, p. 1). Although this slogan, "Problem is global, solution is national," repeats in a couple of other contents [38] , it comes to be subject to a transformation, deriving from contradictions of globalized neoliberalism. Pointing out that it is impossible to cut relations with the rest of the world and Europe altogether [39], the Ministry addresses the state's economic concerns that gradually overshadow nationalist discourse. Highlighting the importance of global tourism and trade for the national economy [40], the Ministry incorporates the concepts of "cooperation with global stakeholders" [41], "global outbreak of the global world" [42], "global consultation and solidarity" [43] , "global health" [44] , "global supply chain" [45] into the official outbreak narrative. Yet, the contractions of globalized neoliberalism

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[38] MoH. (2020, March 10). *Bakan Koca, TBMM Sağlık Komisyonu'nda Koronavirüs Sunumu Yaptı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64378/bakan-koca-tbmm-saglik-komisyonunda-koronavirus-sunumu-yapti.html
MoH. (2020, March 11). *Üç Bakan, Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısı'nın Ardından Açıklama Yaptı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64397/uc-bakan-koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisinin-ardindan-aciklama-yapti.html
MoH. (2020, March 13*). Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi'nde Koronavirüs Zirvesi Düzenlendi.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64414/cumhurbaskanligi-kulliyesinde-koronavirus-zirvesi-duzenlendi.html

[39] MoH. (2020, March 11). *Üç Bakan, Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısı'nın Ardından Açıklama Yaptı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64397/uc-bakan-koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisinin-ardindan-aciklama-yapti.html

[40] Ibid.

[41] MoH. (2020, April 30). *Bakan Koca, DSÖ'ye Türkiye'nin Covid-19 Mücadelesini Anlattı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65370/bakan-koca-dsoye-turkiyenin-covid-19-mucadelesini-anlatti.html

[42] MoH. (2020, May 13). *"Sosyal Hayatımızı Kontrol Altına Alırsak Güzel Günler Göreceğiz".* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65592/sosyal-hayatimizi-kontrol-altina-alirsak-guzel-gunler-gorecegiz.html

[43] MoH.(2020, July 9). *Bakan Koca, DSÖ Avrupa Bölge Direktörü Kluge ile Bir Araya Geldi.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,66652/bakan-koca-dso-avrupa-bolge-direktoru-kluge-ile-bir-araya-geldi.html

[44] MoH. (2020, August 24). *Türk Konseyi Aşı Çalıştayı İzmir'de Başladı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,68136/turk-konseyi-asi-calistayi-izmirde-basladi.html

[45] MoH. (2021, March 10). Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısına İlişkin Açıklama. https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,80465/koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisina-iliskin-aciklama-10032021.html

do not reveal only on a rhetorical level but also through pandemic regulations. In line with the Presidential Cabinet's decisions convened under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in April 2021, a two-week closure decision is taken for the whole country, except for foreigners who are in the country temporarily with the purpose of tourism.[46] As the government rules out the prohibition of movement for non-citizen tourists, this very economical approach unveils one of the contradictions of globalized capitalism that strategically includes or excludes nationalist and populist narratives. The official discourse clings to the meta-concepts (such as war and warriors) in outbreak narrative both in national and global frames. However, locating the response within physical borders and international power relations still causes a constant disruption in and reconfiguration of geographical binaries such as national vs. global and citizen vs. foreigner which does not always work on behalf of one pole.

4.1.3 Individualization of Response and Responsibility

Concurrent with increasing market concerns in the outbreak response, the state discourse on the pandemic puts empahsis on the individualization of responsibility. As neoliberalism normalizes the individuals to be autonomous (Adams, 2018, p. 3) for the sake of private entrepreneurialism, this market logic inevitably leads to intersecting economic, social, and political implications. Emphasizing in his speech that no health institution, or no physician can prevent the transmission of the virus, Koca calls out to the citizens, "You can prevent this. You can prevent it by staying at your home. You can prevent it by wearing a mask when necessary. By avoiding contact, you can prevent this." [47] The Ministry of Health continues to use the narrative of individual responsibility in a couple of different press statements:

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[46] MoI. (2021, April 14). *81 İl Valiliğine Kısmi Kapanma Genelgesi Gönderildi.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/81-il-valiligine-kismi-kapanma-genelgesi-gonderildi

[47] MoH. (2020, March 25). *İki Bakan, Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısı'nın Ardından Açıklama Yaptı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64693/iki-bakan-koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisinin-ardindan-aciklama-yapti.html

"Every member of the society should show the same sensitivity in combating the epidemic" [48];

"The pandemic starts from one person, and the price of even one person not following the rules can be high. It was emphasized that individuals' self-control would also control the cases; otherwise, the controlled social life obtained with great difficulties may be lost." [49];

Expansion of individual responsibility against the outbreak creates an illusion of individual power against a ubiquitous crisis and shadows the obligations of the states in the time of such a crisis. While expecting the 'same sensitivity' and 'individual self-control,' the state discourse neglects the socio-political realities and the myriads of inequalities and vulnerabilities. Given that the pandemic responses can encompass a massive proportion of structural power asymmetries, individualization of the response leaves the state's responsibility with an empty signifier. The Human Rights Association (IHD, "Insan Hakları Dernegi") points out the systematic inequalities and intersecting vulnerabilities, stating that "in times of crisis, governments have an obligation to protect those who are most vulnerable."[50] The association calls on states and international institutions to mobilize funds and resources for people's livelihoods. It raises questions about the rights to health, housing, water and sanitation, food, work, social security, education, healthy environment, an adequate standard of living, equality, and non-discrimination. It also addresses the protection of vulnerable groups, such as older people, people with pre-existing medical conditions, people living in poverty, persons with disabilities, children, Indigenous people, people discriminated on work and descent, migrants and asylum seekers, people living in refugee or IDP

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[48] MoH. (2020, September 9). *Bakan Koca, Koronavirüse İlişkin Son Durumu Değerlendirdi.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,68676/bakan-koca-koronaviruse-iliskin-son-durumu-degerlendirdi.html

[49] MoH. (2020, September 29). *Koronavirüsle Mücadelede Yeni Kamu Spotları Yayında.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,73279/koronavirusle-mucadelede-yeni-kamu-spotlari-yayinda.html

[50] IHD. (2020, April 8). COVID-19: *Jailed Human Rights Defenders Must Be Released Immediately.* https://ihd.org.tr/en/covid-19-jailed-human-rights-defenders-must-be-released-immediately/

camps, and people deprived of liberty.[51] Addressing to intersecting vulnerabilities,[52] the association approaches the pandemic with an extensive and heterogeneous understanding of power relations, taking the focus from the narrative of individual responsibility to institutional accountability. Certain groups, such as persons with disabilities, children, older persons, minority communities, low-wage workers, homeless people, migrants and refugees, LGBT+ and gender diverse persons, are more vulnerable, more at risk, and are more acutely experiencing the impact of both COVID-19 and emergency measures taken by governments.[53] Hence, individualization of responsibility not only eases the social, political, and economic conflicts but also neglects and dislocates vulnerable populations and communities.

4.1.4 National Security: Intersection of Ethnicity and Gender

Individualization of the responsibility serves to obscure the states' economic and political obligations. Yet, the Turkish state still redefines and reconfigures itself in the power relations triggering different national dynamics and conflicts. This reconfiguration comes out where physical and symbolic borders are being re-drawn during the outbreak response in the country. Moreover, this reordering is sometimes made hyper-visible by the government that alarms the panic on national security. Expanding the narrative of terror targeting the internal enemies, the government not only positions itself as an ally of the nationalist populations but also symbolically restores the state's position within the outbreak narrative. The overemphasizing of the internal enemies functions to deploy the war rhetoric simultaneously in the narrative of war and the narrative of the national security. Reproducing the narrative of national security restores the state's position as the authority for ethnicized conflicts while it justifies the marginalization of some ethnicized struggles.

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[51] IHD. (2020, April 20). *Joint NGO statement on the United Nations' COVID-19 response.* https://ihd.org.tr/en/joint-ngo-statement-on-the-united-nations-covid-19-response/

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

Addressing the concept of 'national security,' the Ministry of Interior publishes over 200 statements on its official website, including the terms "terror" and "terrorist" on the titles of the contents published between 2019 December and May 2021. Except for a few exceptions, all statements point out the Kurdish guerilla movement, PKK (Partîya Karkerên Kurdistanê), and Kurdish-populated cities (such as Şırnak, Ağrı, Muş, Bitlis and so on). The Ministry equates the concept of terror with the Kurdish movements and populations. This equation enables to de-emphasize public security crises of the outbreak by highlighting the state's conflict with the political recognition of the Kurdish identities and movements. "Defusing of terrorists" [54] , "surrendering of terrorists" [55], "the disintegration of the terrorist organization" [56], "collapse of the terrorist organization" [57], "high-level blow to a terrorist organization" [58] are the most repetitive state actions represented on the Ministry's statements. As the state discourse simultaneously signifies the coronavirus and the Kurdish guerrilla as 'enemies' within the war narratives, the win against the ethnicized enemy functions to compensate for the losses against the epidemiological enemy.

Moreover, official statements, which explicitly embrace violent and aggressive language to describe 'terror,' bring about a social polarization. The Kurdish guerilla movement and eventually all Kurdish populations and political allies for Kurdish resolution become signified of 'terrorist' and 'threats to national insecurity.' As the rhetoric of national security targeting the Kurdish movement has a long and complicated history in Turkey, the institutional pandemic narrative appears distinctively, which serves rhetoric of national security not only as an ethnicized but also a gendered issue. Judicial harassment against the 'Saturday

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[54] MoI. (2020, May 7). *Tunceli Ovacık Kırsalında 1'i Gri Listede Yer Alan 3 Terörist Etkisiz Hale Getirildi*. https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/tunceli-ovacik-kirsalinda-1i-gri-listede-yer-alan-3-terorist-etkisiz-hale-getirildi

[55] MoI. (2020, September 16). *Ferman Kod Adlı Ercan Yacan Adlı Terörist, Van'da Saklandığı İkamette Yakalandı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/ferman-kod-adli-ercan-yacan-adli-terorist-vanda-saklandigi-ikamette-yakalandi

[56]MoI. (2021, January 17). *Terör Örgütü PKK'da Çözülme Hızlandı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/teror-orgutu-pkkda-cozulme-hizlandi

[57] MoI. (2020, May 28). *Bir Terör Örgütünün Çöküşü: Ölüm Oruçları Ve DHKP/C'nin Kanlı Geçmişi.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/icguvenlik/bir-teror-orgutunun-cokusu-olum-oruclari-ve-dhkpcnin-kanli-gecmisi

[58] MoI. (2020, July 28). *Terör Örgütüne Üst Düzey Darbe.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/teror-orgutune-ust-duzey-darbe

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Mothers'[59] can be addressed as an outstanding example of this ethnicized and gendered rhetoric of national security .

'Saturday Mothers' is a collective of mothers (later expanded to "families") of the individuals who have been subjected to enforced disappearance in custodial places. Following the 12 September 1980 coup d'état, enforced disappearance cases became prevalent prominently in Eastern and Southeastern Turkey. According to the IHD data, 1,352 individuals were subjected to enforced disappearance in Turkey.[60] In the early 1990s, the campaigns for the disappeared evolved into the peaceful vigils of Saturday Mothers, and since 1995 families of the disappeared have been holding weekly peaceful vigils every Saturday at noon in İstanbul's Galatasaray Square. Saturday Mothers demands the authorities to disclose the fates and whereabouts of their loved ones and perpetrators to be held accountable.[61] While the collective is often symbolized as an ally of Kurdish mothers whose children have been detained and disappeared forcefully by the state institutions (Budak, 2015; Davidovic, 2018), their voice gives a tremendous amount of attention to the ethical and gendered counter-hegemonic resistance.

Saturday Mothers has been targeted by the state institutions for a long time with the claim that they are "a terrorist organization abuse motherhood." [62] On August 25, 2018, marking the 700th week of the vigils since 1995, the law enforcement arrested 47 participants, who were released a day later, due to "exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, guaranteed under both domestic and international human rights law."[63] The authorities did not initiate an investigation back then. However, the institutional outbreak narrative outstandingly enabled further criminalization of these mothers and families,

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[59] IHD. (2021, February 23). *İHD Urgent Appeal: Judicial Harassment against the Saturday Mothers.* https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-urgent-appeal-judicial-harassment-against-the-saturday-mothers/

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] MoI. (2018, August 27). *Bakan Soylu "104. Dönem Kaymakamlık Kursu Açılış Programı"na Katıldı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakan-soylu-104-donem-kaymakamlik-kursu-acilis-programina-katildi

[63] IHD. (2021, February 23). *İHD Urgent Appeal: Judicial Harassment against the Saturday Mothers.* https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-urgent-appeal-judicial-harassment-against-the-saturday-mothers/

deploying the rhetoric of national security. According to the report of IHD, On 18 November 2020, an İstanbul court of the first instance charged 46 participants of Saturday Mothers' vigils with violating Article 32 of Law No. 2911 on Assemblies and Demonstrations.[64] The association highlights that no prior permission or approval is required for the right to the assembly under Article 34 of the Turkish Constitution. Nevertheless, "the law's restrictive nature and its arbitrary application have been used to hinder the exercise of the right to assembly." [65] The charges were against "the unarmed participation in an unauthorized assembly and refusal to disperse despite warnings."[66] However, the ban on vigil is furthermore served as to guarantee of "national security, public order, general morality, general health and to prevent the commission of crimes." [67] The participants now disproportionately face up to three years imprisonment and arbitrarily are deprived of their right to assembly.

Pursuing to delegitimize 'Saturday Mothers,' the state institutions attempts to re-appropriate some concepts such as motherhood, terror, and protest carried by the collective. This discursive re-appropriation mainly takes place during the pandemic. The institutions re-fill the meaning of these concepts in a different women's struggle. Another group of mothers, later called as 'Diyarbakır Mothers,' started their sit-in protest first in September 2019 in Diyarbakır, a Kurdish populated city the southeastern Turkey. They claim that their children were manipulated by the Kurdish guerilla and forced to join the guerilla movement. 'Diyarbakır Mothers,' echoing the state discourse, addresses the guerilla as the reason of the terror, which immediately evolved an opportunity by the state to abuse. After their protest, the Ministry of Interior aligned with these mothers and integrated their protest into the state's 'anti-terrorism discourse.' In December 2019, Minister Süleyman Soylu made the first statements on Diyarbakır Mothers:

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

> "This year, we brought 268 people through persuasion methods we applied together their families. We send letters to their [guerilla] camps. We tell them how the holidays passed in the country where they grew up. We describe the meals their mothers made for them. The state is trying to explain that longing and that life."[68]

The ministry first integrates these women into populist/nationalist discourse, utilizing traditional and patriarchal denotations of motherhood, which oblige women to be a primary caregiver. The ministry states "they [Diyarbakır Mothers] are trying to protect their children with their mother heart against the terrorism, against the international system, against the destabilization of the region." [69] It further depicts the Diyarbakır Mothers as the ones who will end "the terror and the terrorist organization."[70] The Ministry plainly abuses the mothers' protest to legitimize the broader state projects and policies. The state rhetoric of motherhood implicitly unveils how gendered and ethnicized movements are differently and asymmetrically integrated into state rhetoric of terror and national security. The Ministry re-appropriates the narratives of Kurdish mothers whose children were abducted by state institutions. It further re-signifies the image of Kurdish mothers against "terror" and "terrorists." The institutional narrative creates binary oppositions between these two different mothers' organizations by setting their demands against each other. This opposition unjustifies and marginalizes some Kurdish women's gendered and ethnicized struggles.

Remarkably during the outbreak, the rhetorical opposition between Saturday Mothers and Diyarbakır Mothers resonates in the unjust state treatment to different gendered and ethnicized struggles. As the state is entitled to restrict the

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[68] MoI. (2019, *December 30). "Bu Yıl Toplam, 43 Milyon Kök Kenevir Yakaladık".* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bu-yil-toplam-43-milyon-kok-kenevir-yakaladik

[69] MoI. (2020, September 24). *Bakanımız Sn. Süleyman Soylu: DEAŞ'ın 2020'de 152 Terör Eylemi Engellendi.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-suleyman-soylu-deasin-2020de-152-teror-eylemi-engellendi

[70] MoI. (2020, November 23). *Bu Topraklarda Bir Tek Terörist Kalmayacak.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bu-topraklarda-bir-tek-terorist-kalmayacak
MoI. (2021, January 7). *Bakanımız Sn. Soylu Diyarbakır'da, Diyarbakır Anneleriyle Bir Araya Geldi.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-soylu-diyarbakirda-diyarbakir-anneleriyle-bir-araya-geldi
MoI (2021, February 16). *Bakanımız Sn. Soylu: Kimlerin Bu Ailelerimizi Nasıl İstismar Etmeye Çalıştıklarını Söyleyeceğim.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-soylu-kimlerin-bu-ailelerimizi-nasil-istismar-etmeye-calistiklarini-soyleyecegim

movement of people and collective gatherings in public spaces as a pandemic response, arbitrary use of this power noticably takes place. According to IHD, "certain civil society organizations and HRDs have been hit particularly hard by restrictions on freedom of assembly and have suffered disproportionately from the crackdown." [71] Moreover, "demonstrations on issues considered to be politically sensitive by the authorities are more likely to be banned and/or criminalised." [72] As Saturday Mothers extensively signify the ethnicized terror in the state discourse, their right to assembly inevitably comes across the state obstacles during the pandemic restrictions. "Stigmatisation, criminalization, judicial and administrative harassment, police violence, and even detention for the legitimate exercise of the right to protest" become common state practices during the pandemic against the minoritarian ethnicized/gendered communities, and particularly against the Saturday Mother. [73] However, as Saturday Mother collective cannot gather based on the outbreak restrictions, Diyarbarkır Mothers rally over twenty-five times [74] and meet with the Ministry of Interior multiple times during the pandemic. [75] The disproportionate treatment to the minoritarian collectives, which do not ally with the state institutions, reveals the arbitrary usage of the state power justified with the outbreak restrictions. As the ministry restricts the right of assembly for an organization using the pandemic, it also entitles another one with the right to meet and the power of visibility. This unjust treatment leads to the state of exceptions and arbitrariness, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[71] IHD. (2020, July 29). *OBS-İHD Report: Attack on Freedom of Assembly Undermines Work of Human Rights Defenders.* https://ihd.org.tr/en/obs-ihd-report-attack-on-freedom-of-assembly-undermines-work-of-human-rights-defenders/

[72] Ibid.

[73] IHD. (2020, November 25). *İHD-Observatory Report: Freedom of assembly under attack as women demonstrate for their rights.* https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-observatory-report-freedom-of-assembly-under-attack-as-women-demonstrate-for-their-rights/

[74] MoI. (2021, April 28). *Bakanımız Sn. Süleyman Soylu NTV'de Gündeme İlişkin Soruları Yanıtladı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-suleyman-soylu-ntvde-gundeme-iliskin-sorulari-yanitladi-28-04-2021

[75] There are ten statements of the Interior Ministry, which mention the minister's gathering with the Diyarbakır Mothers during the pandemic

4.2 Justification and Reinforcement of Neoliberal Authoritarianism

This chapter will discuss how neoliberal authoritarian ideologies are reinforced and justified by the state discourse of the pandemic. The objective of the chapter is to unpack the gendered implication of these ideologies. Firstly, I will analyze the state narratives on politics, policies, and power to elaborate on the institutional dimensions of authoritarianism. The analysis will present the ideological work of the state that is reinforced by the institutional pandemic response. Followingly, I will discuss how the outbreak discourse of the state paves the way for a state of emergency to become a permanent state of exception. Finally, I will unveil how the justified neoliberal authoritarianism takes place as a counter-strategy against feminist achievements.

4.2.1 State Narratives: Politics, Policy and Power

The discourse of national security obscures the long-standing discrimination against ethnic minorities. It also depoliticizes structural neglection, oppression, and criminalization against marginalized populations and communities. The national security narratives firstly overshadow the intersecting effects of the outbreak on the minorities. Protection of nation and national borders inevitably generates an imagined unity/homogeneity that often marginalizes and excludes minorities. Moreover, where the discourse of national security is reinforced, the dominance of scientific narratives appears as a justification of the seemingly depoliticized response to the pandemic. Depoliticization as an ideological strategy obscures the political character of the outbreak. As this strategy un-names politics and curtains the power relations/hierarchies, it outstandingly hits marginalized groups. Unrecognition of the political aspect of the pandemic response results in denial of the political features of marginalization. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Ministry of Health claims that the state approached the pandemic as a scientific issue instead of a political matter.[76] The rhetoric of science endows the official response with the concepts of 'objectivity,' 'impartiality,' and 'absolute

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[76] MoH. (2020, March 11). *Üç Bakan, Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısı'nın Ardından Açıklama Yaptı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64397/uc-bakan-koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisinin-ardindan-aciklama-yapti.html

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truth.' As a consequence, it narrows down the politics of health to the numbers & figures and the politics of the outbreak to the medicine. Concepts such as 'science team'[77], 'scientific research'[78], 'scientific method'[79], 'scientific data'[80], 'scientific assumption'[81], 'scientific evidence'[82], 'scientific approach'[83], 'scientific truth'[84], 'scientific development'[85] are repeated regularly. While the government relies on the very political distinction of "false ideology and true science" (Latour, 1993, p. 36), "distinguishing between ideology and science prevents seeing continuities where in fact there are only elements of ideology" (Latour, 1993, pp. 92-3).

As such concepts give credits to the 'objectivity' and 'impartiality' of the government's pandemic response, they also cement the distinction between policy and politics, which the state discourse creates. While the state discourse of policy lies on the rhetoric of 'future' and 'development,' the discourse of politics implies a history and ideology. Answering the critiques against the government's response to the pandemic, the Health Minister Koca states, "Let's not do politics over everything, let's see the truth." [86] The leader of the main opposition party

[77] MoH. (2020, February 14). *Bakan Koca, Karantina Süresi Sona Eren Vatandaşları Ziyaret Etti.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,63929/bakan-koca-karantina-suresi-sona-eren-vatandaslari-ziyaret-etti.html

[78] MoH. (2020, March 4). *Mükemmeliyet Merkezlerinde Görev Yapan Personelin Ek Ödemelerinin Artırılmasına İlişkin Açıklama.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64270/mukemmeliyet-merkezlerinde-gorev-yapan-personelin-ek-odemelerinin-artirilmasina-iliskin-aciklama-04032020.html

[79] MoH. (2020, March 11). *Üç Bakan, Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısı'nın Ardından Açıklama Yaptı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64397/uc-bakan-koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisinin-ardindan-aciklama-yapti.html

[80] MoH. (2020, October 5). *DSÖ Türkiye Covid-19 Raporunu Yayımladı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,73655/dso-turkiye-covid-19-raporunu-yayimladi-05102020.html

[81] MoH. (2020, June 24). *"Maske Kullanmamak Kişisel Hukukun İhlalidir"* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,66086/maske-kullanmamak-kisisel-hukukun-ihlalidir.html
[82] Ibid.

[83] MoH. (2020, October 5). *DSÖ Türkiye Covid-19 Raporunu Yayımladı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,73655/dso-turkiye-covid-19-raporunu-yayimladi-05102020.html

[84] MoH. (2020, December 12). Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısına İlişkin Basın Açıklaması. https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,77431/koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisina-iliskin-basin-aciklamasi-02122020.html

[85] MoH. (2020, December 25). *Yurtdışından Gelen Tüm Yolculara Son 72 Saatte Yapılmış PCR Testi Zorunluluğu Getirilmesine İlişkin Açıklama.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,77799/yurtdisindan-gelen-tum-yolculara-son-72-saatte-yapilmis-pcr-testi-zorunlulugu-getirilmesine-iliskin-aciklama-25122020.html

[86] MoH (2020, February 19). *Bakan Koca, Koronavirüse İlişkin Son Durumu Değerlendirdi.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,63853/bakan-koca-koronaviruse-iliskin-son-durumu-degerlendirdi.html

(CHP-"Cumhuriyet ve Halk Partisi"), Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, asks about the financial details of international vaccination agreements. As a response, the Health Ministry claims that such question can risk the international relations and supply chain, which would be "against the nation but in favor of their (opponent party) politics." [87] Minister Koca says, "We have made great efforts to keep politics out of our struggle since the first day of the pandemic," and asserts that the government responses are tried to be abused as a material for politics." [88] Thus, the concept of 'politics' appears as a false ideology and only connotates the critiques against the government, which allegedly derive from malicious intention and self-interest against the raison d'etat. The institutional rhetoric knowingly and explicitly narrows down the concept of politics to the parliamentary oppositions and the opponent parties' own agenda. As a result, the scope of politics is deprived of recognition of vulnerable groups and marginalized communities. While the demands and challenges of vulnerable and marginalized people are predominantly removed from state discourse as if those are not political, their recognition and dignity get nothing but silent treatment.

The concept of policy shadows the idea of politics in the state discourse. As much as the 'politics' implies the malicious intentions and actions against the national greater good, the concept of 'policy' takes place in the exact opposite of these allegedly destructive political motives. The Health Ministry incorporates the term of the policy to define the government actions that are supposedly intended to enhance the wealth and expand the development. "Health policy"[89] and "domestication and nationalization policy"[90] are some of them that are used repeatedly to define technological, social, and economic improvements that the government assertedly built up. While the Ministry narrates governmental policies as if they aim at the greater good for the nation-state, the univocal and monolithic

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[87] MoH (2021, March 6). *83 Milyonun Hakkı Adına Bir Açıklama.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,79480/83-milyonun-hakki-adina--bir-aciklama-06032021.html

[88] Ibid.

[89] MoH. (2021, April 2). *Bakan Koca, Dünya Sağlık Örgütü Medya Brifingi'ne Katıldı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,82159/bakan-koca-dunya-saglik-orgutu-medya-brifingine-katildi.html

[90] MoH. (2020, November 25). *Uluslararası Standartlarda İlk Yerli Aşımız Olan Tetanos-Difteri Aşısı Kullanıma Hazır.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,77180/uluslararasi-standartlarda-ilk-yerli-asimiz-olan-tetanos-difteri-asisi-kullanima-hazir-25112020.html

meaning of nation obscure the diversity and plurality of the politics of democracy. The government policies dominate the possibility of variety that the politicization can carry, as the government supremely represents the 'national will' as if that is a homogenous and analogous entity.

As describing the government's response against the pandemic, Minister of Health Koca gives a narrative of success through "first, political leadership; second, deciding and implementing the right policies; and the third is speed"[91]. The Minister argues that "it is important to make and implement decisions quickly."[92] The Ministry defines government policies as a way to achieve the national good. It also incorporates the concept of the leadership, namely a central authority, into the outbreak narrative as if the political power is the predecessor of the policy. As mostly the political leader directly refers to the President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the institutional outbreak narrative emphasizes his leadership particularly. Highlighting the importance of making quick decisions in pandemic response, Fahrettin Koca asserts, "the determination and sensitivity of our President were effective in this. I believe that this is the result and success of the presidential government system, especially in taking decisions quickly in this process."[93]

During the pandemic, the Ministry claims that Turkey passed the test successfully with its robust health infrastructure and healthcare professionals who are devoted to their profession under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.[94] Koca claims that "the country entered a new era in health, in line with the goals set by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan."[95] This "new era" often describes a

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[91] MoH. (2020, July 9). *Bakan Koca, DSÖ Avrupa Bölge Direktörü Kluge ile Bir Araya Geldi.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,66652/bakan-koca-dso-avrupa-bolge-direktoru-kluge-ile-bir-araya-geldi.html

[92] Ibid.

[93] MoH. (2020, March 11). *Üç Bakan, Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısı'nın Ardından Açıklama Yaptı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64397/uc-bakan-koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisinin-ardindan-aciklama-yapti.html

[94] MoH. (2020, October 30). *Türk Dünyası Sağlık Bilim Kurulu Toplantısı Gerçekleştirildi.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,76667/turk-dunyasi-saglik-bilim-kurulu-toplantisi-gerceklestirildi.html

[95] MoH. (2020, September 5). *Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Göztepe Şehir Hastanesi'nin Açılışını Yaptı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,68774/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-goztepe-sehir-hastanesinin-acilisini-yapti.html

neoliberal transition where "collaboration with the private sectors"[96] and "partnership of public and private institutions"[97] become a dominant tendency in economic power relations. The rhetoric of the new era primarily defines an economic transition in which privatization supposedly brings about a social and capital growth. Furthermore, Koca says, "with the country's achievements in the field of health in the last 20 years under the leadership of our President, our role in both regional and global health is increasing."[98] In this statement, firstly, the concept of global health appears as a neoliberal objective defining the aforementioned new era. The Ministry links the concept of "Global Health" to the capitalized health care structures in which "collaboration with global stakeholders,"[99] "global supply-chain,"[100] and "global strategies"[101] dominate the concept of public health. According to Keshavjee (2014), the notion of global health implies the infiltration of neoliberalism into health care. This infiltration reflects and encourages the post-Soviet economic transition where patients become clients and healthcare turns to be a commodity. Hence, the term of global health serves as an objective of capitalist power relations, which obscures the right to free and accessible health care. Moreover, in the Turkish context, neoliberalist healthcare discourse is often accompanied by authoritarian ideology. In the rhetoric of neoliberal development and growth, Erdogan takes place in the state discourse as an irreplaceable actor of the wealth in the country. He is often addressed as the architect of economic and political transition and as a 'founding father' of the new regime and new era.

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[96] MoH. (2020, April 19). *G20'ye Üye Ülkeler Kovid-19 ile Mücadelede Tecrübelerini Paylaştı*. https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65087/g20ye-uye-ulkeler-kovid-19-ile-mucadelede-tecrubelerini-paylasti.html

[97] MoH. (2020, May 5). *Başakşehir Çam ve Sakura Şehir Hastanesi Hizmete Açıldı*. https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65638/basaksehir-cam-ve-sakura-sehir-hastanesi-hizmete-acildi.html

[98] MoH. (2020, September 9). *DSÖ İstanbul Acil Durum Ofisi'nin Açılışı Yapıldı*. https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,68981/dso-istanbul-acil-durum-ofisinin-acilisi-yapildi.html

[99] MoI. (2020, April 30). *Bakan Koca, DSÖ'ye Türkiye'nin Covid-19 Mücadelesini Anlattı*. https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65370/bakan-koca-dsoye-turkiyenin-covid-19-mucadelesini-anlatti.html

[100] MoI. (2020, July 9). *Bakan Koca, DSÖ Avrupa Bölge Direktörü Kluge ile Bir Araya Geldi*. https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,66652/bakan-koca-dso-avrupa-bolge-direktoru-kluge-ile-bir-araya-geldi.html

[101] MoI. (2020, April 28). *Sağlık Bakanı Koca, Türk Konseyi Sağlık Bakanları Toplantısına Katıldı*. https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65328/saglik-bakani-koca-turk-konseyi-saglik-bakanlari-toplantisina-katildi.html

Erdogan's leadership is also integrated into the outbreak narrative by the Ministry of the Interior, besides the Ministry of Health. Süleyman Soylu, the Minister of the Interior, asserts that in line with the instructions of the President Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, "many prudent decisions were taken and implemented to manage the risk of the pandemic/transmission in terms of public health and public order."[102]The presidential decisions were "to ensure social isolation, to protect social distance and to keep the rate of spread under control, since the emergence of coronavirus pandemic."[103] However, as aforementioned, the leadership of Erdogan is not only defined within the pandemic response but in more extensive development and welfare discourse. Within the neoliberal understanding of wealth, his administration is claimed to actualize opportunities the nation deserves. As in the rhetoric of 'global health' and 'new era,' his authority is addressed as a facilitator of social, national, and economic development. Soylu states:

> "our beloved nation will continue to be the hope of all oppressed nations both in the region and in the world and will rewrite the history of the future, as it was yesterday, with this spirit and belief, the strength it will gain from its brotherhood, belief and civilization values, and with the determination and faith under the leadership of our President."[104]

The Ministry of Interior claims, "as long as President Erdogan is in charge of the country, Turkey will continue to grow, prosper, turn its interests into spheres of influence, and transfer its strong future and civilization to all countries of the world."[105] Erdogan is pictured not as the head of national will but also a global leader that allegedly will shape the world's future.

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[102] MoI. (2020, April 21). *30 Büyükşehir ve Zonguldak İlinde 23-24-25-26 Nisan Tarihlerinde Uygulanacak Sokağa Çıkma Kısıtlaması.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/30-buyuksehir-ve-zonguldak-ilinde-23-24-25-26-nisan-tarihlerinde-uygulanacak-sokaga-cikma-kisitlamasi

[103] Ibid.

[104] MoI. (2020, March 18). *Bakanımız Sn. Süleyman Soylu'nun 18 Mart Çanakkale Zaferi Mesajı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-suleyman-soylunun-18-mart-canakkale-zaferi-mesaji-2021

[105] MoI. (2021, January 27). *Bakanımız Sn. Soylu: Benim Valime, Kaymakamıma, Yargıcıma Militan Diyenler, Bu Kadar Mı Koptunuz Türkiye'den?* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-soylu-benim-valime-kaymakamima-yargicima-militan-diyenler-bu-kadar-mi-koptunuz-turkiyeden

4.2.2 Permanent State of Exception

The state institutions present the changing political regime (presidential government system) within a development narrative in which state institutions, policies, and resources are signified with the discourse of progress. Yet, despite the institutional/neoliberal rhetoric, various opponent critiques challenge the neoliberal welfare narrative that the state presents.   These critiques also sometimes point out to the authoritarian structure that the "one-man government" serves.[106] According to IHD, , "the last five years of Turkey has been a period during which the regime has become more and more authoritarian while the official ideology has been exceptionally implemented." [107] Addressing the State of Emergency (SoE) declared after the coup attempt in 2016, the Association observes that the declaration has functioned to turn the situation into an enormous opportunity to construct an authoritarian regime. Even though the SoE that was launched on July 2016 was lifted in July 2018, it's been observed that the defacto emergency rules still persist in the country. Especially with the emergence of the pandemic, the state discourse often justifies the state of emergency as a reasonable response to the outbreak. As if an extraordinary crisis can be overcome by exceptional measures, the state of emergency serves to enhance the central authority as the sole actor of crisis and measures. According to the IHD, "the state of emergency enacted in 2016 paved the way for governors' authority to declare blanket bans on assemblies – a power that has been arbitrarily implemented, often without legitimate grounds."[108] Incorporating the emergency decrees into ordinary law is often addressed as the justification of exceptional circumstances. Pointing to the judiciary that does not promptly and effectively intervene to prevent or redress legal violations, IHD observes that the civil society is left behind with little remedy against arbitrary practices.[109]

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[106] IHD. (2020, February 24). *İHD Report on the "New Human Rights Action Plan"*. https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-report-on-the-new-human-rights-action-plan/.

[107] IHD. (2020, May 5). *İHD 2019 Report on Human Rights Violations in Turkey*. https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-2019-report-on-human-rights-violations-in-turkey/

[108] IHD. (2020, July 29). *OBS-İHD Report: Attack on Freedom of Assembly Undermines Work of Human Rights Defenders.*   https://ihd.org.tr/en/obs-ihd-report-attack-on-freedom-of-assembly-undermines-work-of-human-rights-defenders/

[109] HD. (2020, July 29). *A Perpetual Emergency: Attacks on Freedom of Assembly in Turkey and Repercussions for Civil Society.*   https://ihd.org.tr/en/a-perpetual-emergency-attacks-on-freedom-of-assembly-in-turkey-and-

The association addresses the consolidation of power in "one-man," and the 'dominance of arbitrariness and uncertainty over the public space by making both law and institutions "apparatuses" of the oppressive regime.'[110] As the political power works through the dominance of exception, the immobilizing outbreak conditions have provided an opportunity to resort to control. The oppressive regime has further centralized its power "by associating the extraordinary nature of the pandemic with the SoE to exacerbate its repression and control over the society."[111] Although the exercise of freedom of expression in Turkey has been problematic regarding almost all forms of expression, the pandemic as a political crisis enabled state authorities to suppress all kinds of criticism or demands for checks about the activities of the political power. As IHD points out, "investigations and lawsuits have been brought against numerous individuals and organizations that found the measures taken within the scope of the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic as meager and insufficient."[112]

4.2.3 State of Arbitrariness: Undoing Feminist Achievements

The institutional discourse of political leadership and regime hold on to the concepts of 'impartiality' and 'neutrality' following the scientific vocabulary. However, it is important to note that in various geographical set-ups, asserted objectivity of the political power often emerges 'contaminated with domination' and 'compulsive control' (Keller, 1985). The objectivity of approach and neutrality of response, rather than repairing the inequalities, serve to intensify the politics of repudiation, which "negates identities by forcing people into a homogeneous mold that is untrue to them" (Taylor, 1994, p. 43). The claim of embracing 'the truth,' which is supposedly free of political power struggles, hides the political hegemony constructing that truth. The marginalized and vulnerable populations need special attention during the outbreak since the social and

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repercussions-for-civil-society/

[110] IHD. (2020, December 9). *İHD-HRFT Statement on 10 December Human Rights Day*. https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-hrft-statement-on-10-december-human-rights-day/

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

economic crisis more deeply intensifies the oppression and discrimination that underprivileged communities are already witnessed (Crenshaw, 2020). However, the rhetoric of objective truth bars the involvement of 'politics of difference' into the outbreak response where vulnerabilities come to meltdown under a homogeneous understanding of public and nation.

Denying to acknowledge/recognize different vulnerabilities often has enormous consequences especially on gender and sexuality politics. Furthermore, the pandemic response of Turkish state paved the way further to undo the achievements of feminist struggles. Withdrawing from 'Istanbul Convention'[113] (or the 'Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence) has been one of them. Based on a presidential decree, the withdrawal of Turkey from the convention was announced in the Official Gazette dated 20 March 2021.[114] As many feminist organizations and activists have shown disagreement, they also emphasized that withdrawing from international conventions by presidential decrees is against the Constitution.[115] While there is still a judiciary process going on if an international convention can be withdrawn based on presidential decisions, various organizations and activists point out to the 'arbitrariness' of political authority. Having only one statement mentioning the withdrawal from the convention, The Minister of Interior launched a press release titled "Guarantee of Rights is Law, Not a Convention", Süleymen Soylu opens a statement:

> "If the question is life, even one is a high number. I am sure there will not
> be a single person who could disagree with this statement. Could someone
> in society or in the relevant units of the state who objected to, or thought
> that any kind of struggle against violence, judicial, administrative, social,

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[113] Council of Europe, *The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*, November 2014, ISBN 978-92-871-7990-6.

[114] Cumhurbaşkanlığı İdari İşler Başkanlığı Hukuk ve Mevzuat Genel Müdürlüğü. (2021, March 20). *20 Mart 2021 Tarihli ve 31429 Sayılı Resmî Gazete*. T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Resmi Gazete. https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/20.03.2021

[115] Since the change of regime into Presidential system in 2018, the limits of the president's authority have been quite often discussed in both in political and judiciary frames.

legal, and any kind of violence against every human and animal, male, female, or child?"[116]

As neglecting gendered and sexualized dimensions of violence have been one of the government strategies for a while, the Ministry applies a similar rhetoric of ungendered/unsexualized violence when giving statements about the Istanbul Convention. Although the women and gender non-conforming persons face specific forms of violence that invokes a particular power relation, the Ministry strategically invalidates the difference of gendered/sexualized violence. Nullification of gendered/sexualized dynamics is followed by the annulment of international pacts. Soylu states, "The Istanbul Convention, which was signed in 2011, entered into force in 2014, but meanwhile, the Law No. 6284 on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence Against Women was passed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 2012."[117] After referring to the domestic law integrating domestic violence into the category of crime since 2014, the Ministry highlights the superiority of national laws to international conventions. Relying on the political weight of the concept of the Constitution, Soylu takes the focus away from the critiques on the arbitrariness of the domestic law due to the corrupted judiciary independence from the political authority. Many feminist organizations address that Law No. 6284 is not a gift of the government to the women out of goodwill, but an achievement of feminist struggle that has been taking place for decades, which was empowered by the international pressure enabled by the Istanbul Convention.[118] As IHD observes, "what rendered all international "rights" possible were the great prices paid and efforts put into making them real"; and "a great struggle for the liberation of women, too, rendered the Council of Europe İstanbul Convention possible."[119] Moreover, it is important to highlight that in the authoritarian regime which does

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[116] MoI. (2021, March 25). *Hakların Teminatı Sözleşme Değil Kanundur*. https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/haklarin-teminati-sozlesme-degil-kanundur
[117] Ibid.

[118] See We Will End Femicide Platform. (2021, April 7). *2021 March Report of We Will End Femicide Platform*. http://kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/veriler/2960/2021-march-report-of-we-will-end-femicide-platform

[119] IHD. (2021, March 20). İHD Statement on Turkey's Withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention. https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-statement-on-turkeys-withdrawal-from-the-istanbul-convention/

not guarantee the de facto separation of powers (legislation, execution, and jurisdiction), the problem is not the existence of law but implementation and practice of it. The Ministry claims, "Turkey, before and rather than international conventions, has made the necessary arrangements with its own domestic laws as every state should do."[120] He takes the attention from the critiques against the arbitrariness of judiciary implementation and from the political weight of the transnational accountability that the states become obliged under international conventions. "The guarantee of our rights are laws, not conventions! So, you will do what you will do first and of course, apply it in your own home", the Ministry continues. De-emphasizing the significance of accountability in international power relations, the Ministry of Interior focuses on national borders. As 'the Convention burdens the parties with the duty to change gender-based perspectives'[121], the Ministry undo the gendered meaning of the violence and asserts, "We have laws ahead of many European countries to fight against all forms of violence."[122]. Moreover, applying the metaphor of home to depict the nation-state, the Ministry strategically aligns with the nationalist discourse that links the citizens through a kinship that is supposedly free of power relations and struggles. However, integrating the nationalist discourse into gendered/sexualized violence occurs a strategy to accumulate populist support for the withdrawal. It further enhances misogynist and queerphobic ideologies, practices, and policies. Unpacking the institutional withdrawal narrative on 'harming traditional family values' and 'supporting LGBTI+ ideology,' I will demonstrate in the following chapter how the gendered and sexual struggles are criminalized through the government's rhetoric of national security.

4.3 Surveillance, Militarization, and Criminalization:

The permanent state of emergency in Turkey is often discussed with its impacts on the systemization of mass detention and arrests of thousands of people

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[120] MoI. (2021, March 25). *Hakların Teminatı Sözleşme Değil Kanundur*. https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/haklarin-teminati-sozlesme-degil-kanundur

[121] IHD. (2021, March 20). İHD Statement on Turkey's Withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention. https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-statement-on-turkeys-withdrawal-from-the-istanbul-convention/

[122] MoI. (2021, March 25). *Hakların Teminatı Sözleşme Değil Kanundur*. https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/haklarin-teminati-sozlesme-degil-kanundur

arbitrarily. The Human Rights Association (IHD) points out the fabricated charges of the SoE, such as "propagandizing for a terrorist organization," "being a member of a terrorist organization," "insulting the President," "denigration of Turkishness," "incitement to enmity and hatred" and "revealing state secrets."[123] The organization addresses the severe consequences of empowering authoritarianism that normalize marginalization and criminalization of democratic challenges. The perpetual state of exceptions unduly restricts people's right to express their dissent peacefully. As it paves the way to declare blanket bans on assemblies, according to the research conducted by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV), between January 1, 2019, and January 31, 2020, authorities issued at least 147 decisions in 25 cities to ban all assemblies and events for a period ranging from 2 days to 395 days.[124]

Coupled with a negative public narrative, which aims at stigmatizing and delegitimizing critiques, conflating them with terrorism, the practices of the emergency and exception to a great degree leads to the justification of criminalization.[125] During the pandemic, the enactment of targeting occurs mainly through two enhancing state practices; excessive implementation of surveillance mechanism and militarization of public space. Since these practices, directly and indirectly, affects women and queer individuals and communities, the next sub-chapters will elaborate on the implementation of surveillance technologies and militarist practices and demonstrate how such authoritarian exercises pave the way to victimize women and criminalize queer communities.

4.3.1 Digital Surveillance & Military Visibility: Corruption of Public Space, Banality of Violence

On 25 March 2020, Fahrettin Koca announced that the ministry of Health would regularly share with the public the total number of patients, tests, deaths, patients

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[123] IHD. (2020, January 27). *İHD and EuroMed Rights Joint Statement on the Gezi Trial*. https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-and-euromed-rights-joint-statement-on-the-gezi-trial/

[124] IHD. (2020, July 29). *A Perpetual Emergency: Attacks on Freedom of Assembly in Turkey and Repercussions for Civil Society*. https://ihd.org.tr/en/a-perpetual-emergency-attacks-on-freedom-of-assembly-in-turkey-and-repercussions-for-civil-society/

[125] Ibid.

in intensive care, patients connected to the intubated ventilator, and the number of patients recovered."[126] Besides these medical categories, the intersectional information & status (gender, age, disability and health) also is important to understand how diverse groups of people are affected disproportionately (Carcelén, 2020). However, the Ministry has limited to the shared data to the numbers, which later evolved in the execution of a massive digital data collection. Launching a telephone line "ALO 184 Korona Danışma Hattı" (Coronavirus Hotline),[127] a website "koronaonlem.saglik.gov.tr"[128], and a mobile application HES (Hayat Eve Sığar, 'Life Fits Into Home')[129] in the first months of pandemic, the Ministry of Health quickly adapted current information technologies into the surveillance of the outbreak. Koca states that the application HES has been developed to see "whether the cases are isolated or mobile, whether they are at home or go out."[130] He adds, "We will monitor our patients who need to be isolated at home with a digital method; if necessary, we have completed the preparations for a system that we will warn itself immediately."[131] Although there is no explicit sanction for those who do not use the HES application, it is practically impossible to participate in social life without obtaining a HES code (Özgür, 2021). In order to use public transportation or go in a (semi) public space, one needs to acquire a code that shows one's coronavirus status as 'riskless.' The application stores the users' national identity number, mobile phone number, location, occupation, and health information. It also requires access to Bluetooth, the camera, and the phone book. These aspects of the application bring about vital

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[126] MoH. (2020, March 25). *İki Bakan, Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısı'nın Ardından Açıklama Yaptı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64693/iki-bakan-koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisinin-ardindan-aciklama-yapti.html

[127] MoH. (2020, March 16). *Sağlık Bakanı Koca, Koronavirüse İlişkin Son Durumu Değerlendirdi.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64493/saglik-bakani-koca-koronaviruse-iliskin-son-durumu-degerlendirdi.html.

[128] MoH. (2020, April 19). *G20'ye Üye Ülkeler Kovid-19 ile Mücadelede Tecrübelerini Paylaştı.* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65087/g20ye-uye-ulkeler-kovid-19-ile-mucadelede-tecrubelerini-paylasti.html

[129] MoH. (2020, May 5). *"Koronavirüse Karşı Mücadelemiz, Yakın Dönemlerdeki En Büyük Seferberliğimizdir".* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65622/koronaviruse-karsi-mucadelemiz-yakin-donemlerdeki-en-buyuk-seferberligimizdir.html

[130] MoH. (2020, April 7). *"Mücadelemizdeki Ortak Payda İnsan Sağlığıdır".* https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64935/mucadelemizdeki-ortak-payda-insan-sagligidir.html

[131] Ibid.

concerns about the transgression of the user consent and abuse of the collected information (Çayır, 2020).

Some can assert that such surveillance technologies can enable decreasing the 'cases.' However, it holds great importance to take into account that such technologies carry a high potential for criminalization that can be abused by the authoritarian state/regime (Hans, 2020; Joseph & Nangeli, 2020; Mai, 2020). Moreover, considering that implementation of digital solutions in such short timeframe requires an enhanced infrastructure in digital technologies (Peckham, 2020), those solutions to a great extent unveil how massive the surveillance reflexes of the state have grown. The surveillance reflexes are often associated with the "anti-terror" agenda of the state that mainly targets Kurdish people and activists (Doğan, 2021; Kocer & Bozdağ, 2020). Although we still need to observe more about the particular targets of the state in the digital platforms, the nationalist dimension of state surveillance has often been addressed (Çelik, 2013).

Addressing the military coup attempt in 2016, the Minister of Interior states:

> "Especially after July 15, with the direct instructions and support of our President, our organization has made serious investments in many areas from unmanned aerial vehicle technology to cyber technologies, from criminal laboratory capacity to all digital infrastructures, from camera systems to traffic control systems."[132]

Süleyman Soylu calls these investments as a part of "Digital Transformation Projects"[133] that make Turkey "one of the leading countries in digitalization."[134] He further pictures the changing technological infrastructure through the narrative of 'national security and 'welfare.' These narratives encompass a high potential

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[132] MoI. (2020, April 10). *Bakanımız Sn. Soylu'nun Türk Polis Teşkilatı'nın 175. Kuruluş Yıldönümü Mesajı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-soylunun-turk-polis-teskilatinin-175-kurulus-yildonumu-mesaji

[133] MoI. (2021, April 2). *Bakanımız Sn. Süleyman Soylu Dijital Dönüşüm Projelerini Tanıttı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-suleyman-soylu-dijital-donusum-projelerini-tanitti

[134] MoI. (2021, April 6). *Bakanımız Sn. Süleyman Soylu Ankara'da Biyometrik Veri Yönetimi Sistemi Tanıtım Toplantısına Katıldı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-suleyman-soylu-ankarada-biyometrik-veri-yonetimi-sistemi-tanitim-toplantisina-katildi.

and practice of criminalization against whom are supposedly risking the national security and welfare. Hence, the digital surveillance technologies need to be addressed thorough their potential of criminalization that lies behind their presentation with the concept of protection.

Criminalizing people on the basis of their online posts, for example, strikingly occurs as an outcome of the state's digital surveillance technologies and practices. Survealing and targeting people on the basis of their online expression also increasingly become subject to the government's outbreak response. Soylu defines the ministry's work as "Combating Cyber Crime,"; and he announces "in the last 21 days, 3 thousand 576 social media accounts have been examined, and 229 persons have been caught" following the announcement of the first official coronavirus case.[135] As these people are charged with "sharing provocative posts on coronavirus," they are also associated by the ministry to "terror organization" and "marginal groups." The ministry states that those users claim that "the relevant institutions and officials did not take necessary/sufficient measures, and the issue [the pandemic] was kept from the public." Allegedly, the users publish "provocative posts on social media to encourage the society to fear, panic and anxiety, and to target authorized / responsible institutions and individuals."[136] Delegitimizing the freedom of expression through national security discourse makes the digital abuse of the state obscure, invisible, and intangible.

Concurrent with the enhancement of surveillance technologies, the ministry points out the restructuring of armed forces. The ministry states that a crypto protocol was signed with the Ministry of National Defense for the national encrypted devices such as the friend-foe recognition system and encrypted radios used in aircraft to be used and operated by the police. "Turkey owes its ability to carry out its operations by security forces due to the progress it has achieved in this period with all its stakeholders in the defense industry"[137] Soylu claims. "With the contributions, support and instructions of our President, we made an important

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[135] MoI. (2020, April 6). *3.576 Adet Sosyal Medya Hesabı İncelendi 229 Şahıs Yakalandı.* https://icisleri.gov.tr/3576-adet-sosyal-medya-hesabi-incelendi-229-sahis-yakalandi

[136] Ibid.

[137] MoI. (2021, February 26). *'ATAK' Emniyet'in Gücüne Güç Katacak.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/atak-emniyetin-gucune-guc-katacak

renewal both to repair the damage caused by July 15 and to increase our capacity in the field"[138] Soylu states. He points out that currently, 77 percent of police chiefs, 37 percent of police officers and 95 percent of guards are newly appointed. The ministry highlights the militarist restructuring, especially in last five years.

During the pandemic, the Ministry of Interior has launched several police operations called "Turkey, Security, Serenity" (Türkiye Güven Huzur)[139]. The Ministry claims that these operations intend to control whether the public abides by pandemic rules implemented by the government. The ministry states that over 50000 armed forces (police, gendarmery, coast guard command) join in each operation. Moreover, Judicial/administrative action is taken against 3000-10000 people during theses operations. As those numbers are evidence of how the public spaces are occupied by armed forces and how the criminalization becomes an escalated practice during the pandemic, they also require an understanding beyond figures. "In order to be visible in the field and make the citizens feel the presence of security forces anytime and anywhere,"[140] the Interior Minister states, "effectiveness and visibility of audit activities will be kept at the highest level."[141] The visibility of military forces supposedly proves the existence of state power during the pandemic. As the public spaces are occupied by these forces, this occupation seems to function to resurrect the state authority in and despite the crisis.

4.3.2 Obscurities of Gendered Violence: Victimization of Women

Militarized public space and state narrative inevitably lead to the "normalization of violence in everyday political discourse and practice" (Kandiyoti, 2016, p.

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[138] MoI. (2021, April 9). *Bakanımız Sn. Süleyman Soylu Türk Polis Teşkilatının İlk Müzesinin Açılışını Yaptı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-suleyman-soylu-turk-polis-teskilatinin-ilk-muzesinin-acilisini-yapti

[139] There are eleven operations called "Türkiye Güven Huzur" published on the website of ministry during the pandemic.

[140] MoI. (2020, July 7). *Kurban Bayramı Öncesi Ülke Genelinde Türkiye Güven Huzur Uygulaması Gerçekleştirildi.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/kurban-bayrami-oncesi-ulke-genelinde-turkiye-guven-huzur-uygulamasi-gerceklestirildi.

[141] MoI. (2020, September 30). *Türkiye Genelinde Kapsamlı Koronavirüs Denetimi Gerçekleştirilecek.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/turkiye-genelinde-kapsamli-koronavirus-denetimi-gerceklestirilecek

103). As "the values of militarism drive the rhetoric in the response, which in turn supports militarised responses and ultimately enables violence and oppression" (Metheven 2020), the militarist dominance appears strikingly through gendered and sexualized social/power relations. Moreover, as the militarist rhetoric invades not only public spaces but also domestic spaces, the expansion of violence and oppression becomes an alarming concern for women and queer people.

Following the announcement of the first official case, the Ministry of Health, Fahrettin Koca, introduces the institutional pandemic slogan:. "Life Fits into Home."[142] He expands the definition of the motto:

> "While the epidemic brought some restrictions to us, we enlarged some of our freedom areas. We now know that our homes are places where we win this war without any risk. Our homes promise us health safety as well as family happiness, uniqueness of life and personal freedom."[143]

The statement addressing the 'home' as the most secure place carries a several privileged positions against the vulnerabilities related to gender, class and refugee status. The state rhetoric of home brings into question the issue of power since a large number of people are not granted the right to housing, and many people are not endowed with the same privileges and resources in domestic spaces. For example, refugees who live in the refugee camps, the prisoners who are confined in the state institutions, elderly and/or disabled persons who stay in social-care facilities do not obtain the privileges of domestic self-isolation. Hence, the official motto excludes and obscures these vulnerabilities, which is a form of symbolic violence.

Moreover, given that the primary area where women/children are subjected to violence is the domestic place (WHO, 2021), the home does not provide security

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[142] The original slogan in Turkish is "Hayat Eve Sığar". 'Life Fits into Home' is the translation used by the Ministry, although 'Life is Home' can be more accurate to understand the slogan that implies that home is an enough space for the life.

[143] MoH. (2020, May 5). *"Koronavirüse Karşı Mücadelemiz, Yakın Dönemlerdeki En Büyük Seferberliğimizdir"*. https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65622/koronaviruse-karsi-mucadelemiz-yakin-donemlerdeki-en-buyuk-seferberligimizdir.html

for many people. Especially with the lockdown conditions obliging people to stay at home, it's been observed in many countries that domestic violence has massively increased. According to the data presented by the chair of the Federation of Turkish Women's Associations (Ağgül, 2020), in Turkey, psychological violence against women increased by 93%, physical violence by 80%, and the demand for shelter by 78% in March 2020 compared to the previous year, March 2019. According to the reports of the Turkish organisation 'We Will End Femicide' Platform (2020a; 2020b); with the outbreak measures, the number of people calling the platform's support lines increased by 55% in April 2020 and by 78% in May 2020 compared to previous months. It is reported that it was mostly due to sexual violence in April 2020, and mostly because of psychological violence in May in which women who were subjected to violence mostly from the man they were married to.

Despite the fact that the domestic violence and femicide reports gathered by various feminist organizations show a massive increase in violence against women, the Ministry of Interior claims the opposite. For example, Süleyman Soylu states, "as a result of the activities carried out within the scope of combating violence against women and domestic violence, and as a result of the measures taken, there was a 34% decrease in femicide in the six months of 2020 compared to the same period of the previous year."[144] Besides limiting the violence only to its physical form, on many occasions, the Ministry continues to cling to this claim of decreasing violence against women.[145] However, some feminist organizations observe that the Ministry of Interior makes manipulative statements almost every month instead of revealing the facts about femicide and suspicious female deaths (We Will End Femicide Platform, 2021). IHD also addresses the Ministry's statements on decreasing amount of violence against women and highlights that "if the fact that women, who have to stay in their houses, do not file domestic

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[144] MoI. (2020, July 7). *Tedbirlerle Birlikte Kadın Cinayetlerinde Ciddi Düşüş Yaşandı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/tedbirlerle-birlikte-kadin-cinayetlerinde-ciddi-dusus-yasandi

[145] MoI. (2020, November 11). *Aile İçi ve Kadına Yönelik Şiddetle Mücadele Kararlılıkla Devam Ediyor.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/aile-ici-ve-kadina-yonelik-siddetle-mucadele-kararlilikla-devam-ediyor
MoI. (2021, March 8). *Bakanımız Sn. Süleyman Soylu'nun 8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar Günü Mesajı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-suleyman-soylunun-8-mart-dunya-kadinlar-gunu-mesaji-2021
MoI. (2021, April 15). *Kasten Öldürme Olaylarında Son 15 Yılda %31,5'lik Düşüş Sağlandı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/kasten-oldurme-olaylarinda-son-15-yilda-315lik-dusus-saglandi

violence complaints is interpreted as a decrease in numbers, it should be known that we are face to face with quite an alarming mentality problem."[146] What we actually have is a distorted official data that arbitrarily categorize violence and murders from a gendered perspective and do not include information for all de-facto femicides. Hence, the feminist and human-rights organizations point out the dreadful increase in gendered violence/murders and the manipulative presentation of official data.

The militarist discourse and practices pave the way to the normalization of violence, which affects the vulnerable populations most disproportionately. Moreover, the militarist institutions, directly and indirectly, become authority figures against gendered violence. The intervention of the armed forces in the domestic violence cases firstly was introduced in 2018, through a mobile application called 'KADES' (Kadın Acil Destek, 'Women's Emergency Support) although the promotion of the application has been escalated only after 2020. In case of an emergency against sexual assault and violence, the app KADES is told to help women by calling in the police to her location.[147] The Ministry promotes 'KADES' in various occasitions[148], asserting that the application increased the preventive measures taken by the armed forces.[149] However, besides the government's class-exclusive approach, which takes granted for everyone to access the information technologies, the Ministry also promotes the authority and intervention of militarized institutions in gendered violence.

The military as a state institution prompts, constructs, and organizes hegemonic masculinities (Hinojosa, 2010; Kronsel, 2015) with the narratives and practices of aggression and violence. Hence, the authority of militarist institutions and forces

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[146] IHD. (2020, November 25). *İHD Statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women*. https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-statement-on-international-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women/

[147] MoI. (2020, June 2). *Aile İçi ve Kadına Yönelik Şiddet Olaylarına İlişkin Alınan Tedbirler Sonuç Verdi*. https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/aile-ici-ve-kadina-yonelik-siddet-olaylarina-iliskin-alinan-tedbirler-sonuc-verdi

[148] There are fifty-two statements on KADES published on the ministry website during the pandemic, particularly after the withdrawal from the Istanbul convention.

[149] There is not yet any scholarly report that shows how effective this application is. We need further studies, particularly analyzing the KADES initiatives.

in the domestic violence, more than contradictory, materializes the crisis of masculine domination. According yo Kandiyoti, "the politics of gender in Turkey is intrinsic rather than incidental to a characterization of its ruling ideology" (Kandiyoti, 2016, p. 103). In this regard, hyper-visibility of armed forces in the institutional discourse of gender-based violence reflects on masculinization practices and projects both in gender politics and in institutional organizations. 93% of police are men in Turkey[150], who dominantly perform a cis-gendered heterosexuality who favorably are entitled to masculine privileges. Hence, the enhancement of military power against gendered violence remarkably evokes anxieties on undoing the women's agency and entrenching state violence. On the narrative of the clash between perpetrators of the violence and armed forces of the state, women are portrayed as 'appreciative subjects of their benevolent protectors' (Babül, 2015, p. 117). The portrayal of women "rescued by police"[151] that repeatedly occurs in the institutional discourse establishes a certain kind of gendered victimhood which deprives women of their human rights and make them invisible against the masculine spectacle of armed forces. However, more alarmingly, the intervention of the police against domestic violence promotes more masculine visibility than enabling women to pursue and claim their rights. According to the report of Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation titled 'Coronavirus Outbreak and Violence Against Women' (2021), public officials, particularly the police, who neglect their duties by resisting to enforce laws and regulations, appear as the biggest obstacle to the effectiveness of mechanisms for combating violence against women.

Rejection of shelter application of women on the grounds of coronavirus who applied to the police station to move into a shelter; restraining women from the information on their rights who call police lines due to sexual assault and threat; keeping waiting for hours the women who go to the police station to make a complaint against a violent spouse or partner; preventing the women from

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[150] MoI. (2021, April 8). *Türk Polis Teşkilatı 176 Yaşında*. https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/turk-polis-teskilati-176-yasinda

[151] MoI. (2021, April 1). *KADES'i Test Ettiler, Polisler 4 Dakikada Olay Yerine Ulaştı*. https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/kadesi-test-ettiler-polisler-4-dakikada-olay-yerine-ulasti
MoI. (2021, April 26). *İstanbul'da 'KADES' Uygulaması Bir Kadını Daha Kurtardı*. https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/istanbulda-kades-uygulamasi-bir-kadini-daha-kurtardi
MoI. (2021, April 26). *İyi Ki Polisler Ve KADES Uygulaması Var*.
 https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/iyi-ki-polisler-ve-kades-uygulamasi-var

requesting protection from a neighbor, partner, or friend with the police misdirection that suspension order can be issued only against relatives; preventing the women who demand secrecy from the prosecutor's office with the misdirection that decision is only given to terrorist criminals; are only a few of the examples from the report of Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation. Hence the women often face legal and operational obstacles as demanding state protection against the domestic violence. However, the Ministry's manipulative conceptualization of violence solely as a physical incident and intervention of armed forces in domestic violence often only function to promote hyper-visibility of hegemonic masculinities. This conceptualization further justifies institutional militarisation, rather than protecting vulnerable populations. Hence, while the state is obliged to protect women, women manage to survive despite the state, as Mor Çatı (2021) express.

4.3.3 Home, Family, and the Nation: Dangerous Queer Bodies

The concept of 'domestic violence' has two common translations in the Turkish language. One is 'Ev içi Şiddet' which refers to violence that takes place in a home, and the other is "Aile içi Şiddet" which refers to violence that happens among family members. While the former addresses a domestic space and gendered power dynamics of the space without imposing a kinship or marital relation between the inhabitants, the latter delimits the scope of violence based on the consanguineal and conjugal link of the subjects. Hence the two different usages of "domestic violence" in the Turkish language imply a significant ideological difference that defines the violence within two different paradigms, namely spatial relation or familial relation.

The Ministry of Interior, without exception, applies to the concept of domestic violence with the second usage, 'Aile içi Şiddet'.[152] The emphasis on the "family" while discussing domestic violence preconditions particular consanguineal and conjugal status to recognize the violence. Considering that Turkish law does not grant marital statuses to queer intimacies, the institutional discourse officially

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[152] Ministry has over 20 statements titling 'Aile içi Şiddet,' as there is not any content containing 'Ev içi Şiddet.'

recognizes only the marriage relationship between heterosexual, cis-gendered subjects. Hence the concept of domestic violence in the state discourse precondition a conservative understanding of family where only heterosexual and cis-gendered people are recognized as the subject to violence and hence subject of state protection. As the state discourse accredits some subject positions as a precondition of being a deserving subject of state protection, it inevitably excludes "certain groups who do not comply with the dominant image of the helpless victim" (Kandiyoti, 2016, p. 108). The political power's conception of a desirable gender, a desirable family, a desirable nation oppresses sexual diversities. The work of homogenization often leads to dominant practices that marginalize and hence criminalize non-normative genders and sexual identities.

Queer individuals & communities face disproportionate amount of challenges and discriminations under the instutional discourse of ideal gender & sexuality, family, and nation. As the state discourse of the pandemic detaches LGBTI+ populations from the concepts of family and nation, it explicitly paves the way to the normalization and reproduction of queer-phobic hatred and violence. In the state discourse, queer communities are pictured as dangerous bodies whose existence stands in conflict with 'values' and 'moralities' of (a normative understanding of) family and nation. As a result, the marginalization and discrimination of queer bodies and communities strikingly take place. Addressing the arbitrary implementation of laws against gendered& sexual discrimination, IHD points out that there are many instances in which perpetrators of hate crimes and discrimination against the LGBTI+ have been granted impunity.[153] It is important to note that hate crimes and speeches are already constitutionally problematic areas due to legal loopholes and arbitrary implementation of human rights legislations. Hence, the enhancement of conservative outbreak discourses inevitably legitimizes the hate against non-normative identities.

The legitimization of hate against queer populations takes place in two distinctive ways. Firstly the Ministry of Interiror reproduces the hate by ignoring the

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[153] IHD. (2020, November 25). *İHD Statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.* https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-statement-on-international-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women/

existence of queer individuals&communities. Thus, for instance, counting domestic violence as an offense only if it occurs in a family of cis-gendered heterosexual subjects is only one of the examples. Another one is that the Ministry of Interior does not name, address and recognize queer people in any statement. In the official website of Ministry that has been active for ten years, queer people exist only in one statement.[154] Ignoring to talk about queer people is one of the state approach legitimizing marginalization of non-normative identities. Secondly, the way the Ministry integrates queer people into the state narrative carries an explicit hatred. In the only official statement where the Ministry of Interior addresses the queer community, the Minister gives a statement on Turkey's withdrawal from Istanbul Convention on March 2021. The Minister states:

> "We are a sovereign state. We sign under the international convention we want, and we terminate the ones we want. As a matter of fact, there are many countries in Europe that do not sign this convention. Poland, for instance, withdrew from it recently because the government objects to lesbian, gay, trans, and this kind of things, and believes that these [queer people] can mislead the Polish society." [155]

The Ministry gives a reference to Poland that has been going through similar right-wing and conservative oppression, especially against diversity of genders and sexualities (Kováts, 2018). Soylu firstly claims that the withdrawal from the feminist convention is not related to Turkey's own authoritarian politics. He secondly positions LGBTI individuals as if their rights are jeopardizing instead of intersecting with women's right. Addressing queer communities as they are the reason for the withdrawal, the Ministry multilayeredly reproduces hate and discrimination against the non-normative identities. However, justification of the withdrawal by targeting LGBTI+ identities is not unique to the Ministry of

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[154] I have searched various common words separately at the website, which are used to define some queer identities, such as LGBT, lesbian, gay, queer, trans, homosexual, etc. However, only one content includes any of these terms. Moreover, the Ministry of Health does not contain any content at all addressing or mentioning queer communities.

[155] MoI. (2021, March 23). *Bakanımız Sn. Soylu Seyahat Belgesi Sahteciliği Tespiti ve Risk Analizi Kapasitesinin Güçlendirilmesi Projesi Açılış Konferansı'na Katıldı.* https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/bakanimiz-sn-soylu-seyahat-belgesi-sahteciligi-tespiti-ve-risk-analizi-kapasitesinin-guclendirilmesi-projesi-acilis-konferansina-katildi

Interior but appears in various state representatives' statements. Addressing as an institutional approach, IHD observes a hostile and stigmatizing narrative againt the ones representing a threat to 'national security. According to the association, "the hateful narrative extends to members of the LGBTI+ community, who have been targeted through state-led smear campaigns"; and "the same narrative is also behind Turkey's recent withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, a Council of Europe treaty seeking to protect women from gender-based violence, on account of the supposed risk of "harming traditional family values" and "supporting LGBTI+ ideology." [156] Considering that the state's outbreak narrative aims and functions to resurrect traditional notions of right-wing terminology, the concept of family and the concept of the nation explicitly and implicitly promotes the exclusion of queer populations. Although the narrative of familial and national unity eases the anxieties of the outbreak, the state rhetoric of family and nation establishes these imagined communities by creating deserving subjects of the state. Thus, the 'dangerous bodies,' which do not correspond with the state's ideals, come to represent a dualistic threat against the security of family and nation. As queer populations are already encountering a massive amount of hate against themselves for being against the norms and traditions, enhancement of the hatred by the state institutions paves the way to criminalize queer identities exactly where they are vulnerable and left behind.

5. Conclusion

In this thesis, the theoretical approach to the pandemic is based on the understanding that outbreaks are more than a medical issue. Although pandemics trigger particular health emergencies, they inevitably lead to a socio-political response and a narrative, which re-evokes spatial and geographical dynamics and conflicts. Hence, I conceived it critical to locate the outbreak narrative of the Turkish state within particular historical, socioeconomic, and geographical conditions, practices, and anxieties in Turkey.

This thesis offered a feminist reading of the pandemic politics and discourse in Turkey; specifically, it analyzed the gendered tensions of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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[156] IHD. (2021, May 6). *OBS-İHD Report- Turkey's Civil Society on the Line: A Shrinking Space for Freedom of Association.* https://ihd.org.tr/en/obs-ihd-report-turkeys-civil-society-on-the-line-a-shrinking-space-for-freedom-of-association/

Investigating the impacts of the pandemic discourse of the state on gender politics, I elaborated the state rhetorics where the official outbreak narrative generates a particular gender narrative. As unpacking the discursive struggle of the state for mastery in gender and sexuality discourse, I demonstrated how the state institutions reshape, reproduces, and redirects the narratives on gender and sexuality within the politics of outbreak.

Applying to the responses and narratives constituted by the Health Ministry and the Ministry of Interior during the Covid-19 pandemic, I tried to understand gender politics within the contemporary power dynamics in Turkey. I mainly tracked how the official outbreak narrative articulates the dominant political tendencies, namely authoritarianism, conservatism, and nationalism. As these state institutions have a particular authority in the outbreak response, I found it critical to identify the echoes of power dynamics reflected in these official narratives.

Moreover, I discussed that asymmetric power relations and resources generate unjust experiences of the outbreak. As the responses to the outbreaks affect every social, political, and economic dimension of the society, I claimed that the marginalized communities and minorities inevitably endure more cruel and unequal consequences. Gendered and sexualized minorities took a focus on this thesis, and the representation of women and queers in the state discourse is extensively discussed.

As the state apparatuses, the official websites of ministries, produce or prevent specific knowledge about minoritarian positions/subjectivities, the study of what is missing also became my research interest. Deeming that the state discourse is not only formed of what it emphasizes but also what it de-emphasizes, I integrated a secondary source (material of IHD) as analyzing the state discourse.

My analysis first presented how war rhetoric has emerged in the pandemic discourse of the state. Then, resurrecting conceptual and ideological ambiguities of state discourse are discussed, while the rhetorical dualities of the state over the concepts of border, identity, crisis are pointed out. The term national security,

which has been remarkably evoked in the outbreak discourse of the state, is unpacked as a gendered and ethnicized issue. Finally, the very discursive work of the state, which reproduces the populist terminologies (e.g., 'nation,' 'state,' etc.) and also reflects neoliberal anxieties (global power relations), is addressed.

Subsequent to the terminological deconstruction, I discussed how neoliberal authoritarian ideologies are resurrected and justified by the state discourse of the pandemic. I analyzed the state narratives on politics, policies, and power and discussed how the outbreak discourse of the state paved the way from a state of emergency to a permanent state of exception. As a result, I addressed how the justified neoliberal authoritarianism takes place as a counter-strategy against feminist achievements.

In the final section of the analysis, I presented how the enactment of criminalization occurs in the state discourse of the outbreak. First, I addressed two enhancing state practices; excessive implementation of surveillance mechanism and militarization of public space. Second, since these practices, directly and indirectly, affects women and queer individuals and communities, I elaborated on how such authoritarian exercises pave the way to victimize women and criminalize queer communities.

For further research, I would like to suggest that this research could be taken as a part of a more comprehensive analysis of the state discourse of the pandemic. As this thesis has a particular focus on the narratives produced by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Interior of Turkey, further research could include other state institutions and apply other mediums. While this research mainly focuses on gendered, sexual, and ethnicized representation, further study could bring attention to other intersectional positions and vulnerabilities. The analysis of how disability and age are constructed in the state discourse of the pandemic could be a critical part of deconstructing state discourse as analyzing the socio-political context in a critical theoretical framework.

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