FIFTY SHADES OF "STATE": THE POLITICS OF CONSPIRACY AND TRANSPARENCY IN

CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

by

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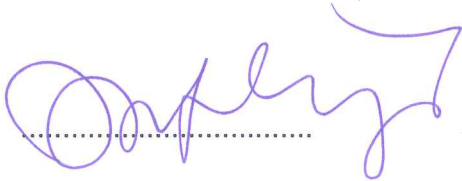
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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: Antisemitism, conspiracy theory, personalization, neo-liberalism, transparency

This study aims to trace the dynamics of conspiracy theories and its interplay with subjective interpretations of the dominant hegemonic order in contemporary Turkey. Firstly, based on a critical media discourse analysis, the study focuses on the extent to which anti-Semitic themes and motifs are utilized as explanatory texts to account for what happened in a political crisis situation. Secondly, based on a frame analysis of the headlines and front-page news coverage, the study aims to investigate the role of conspiracy theories as political communication tool in the process of news-production. Thirdly, based on the interviews with individuals with different political party affiliations, the study focuses on the ways in which conspiracy narratives shape and are shaped by the subjective interpretations of the dominant culture in Turkey. In considering the heterogeneity of these interpretations conveyed by various (and often competing) conspiracy narratives, this study aims to draw linkages between the popularity of a set of conspiracy narratives over others, by analyzing the role of history of the discursive repertoire of the state ("internal and external enemies"); the market for conspiracy theories; and the extent of media coverage that a particular conspiratorial account receives. In doing so, this study focuses on the individuals as active subjects in interpreting conspiracy narratives who contribute to their dissemination and elaboration within the popular culture in particular ways.

ÖZET

DEVLETİN ELLİ HALİ: GÜNÜMÜZ TÜRKİYE'SİNDE SİYASAL İLETİŞİM ARACI OLARAK KOMPLO TEORİLERİ VE ŞEFFAFLIK

SALİHA AKBAŞ

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Anahtar sözcükler: Antisemitism, komplo teorisi, neo-liberalizm, kişiselleştirme, şeffaflık

Bu çalışma günümüz Türkiye'sinde komplo anlatımlarının söylemsel ve öznel zeminde siyasi olayları tasfir edici rolünü açıklamayı hedefler. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, öncelikle komplo teorilerine kuramsal bir bakış açısı verilecek, ve medyanın komplo teorilerinin siyasal iletişim aracı olarak işlerlik kazanmasındaki rolü incelenecektir. İlk başlıkta, medya söylem analizi yöntemi kullanılarak anti-Semit temaların siyasal iletişim aracı olarak rolüne ve işlerliğine odaklanılacaktır. Bununla birlikte, yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlardan ve ikincil kaynaklardan edinilen veriler ile, komplo anlatılarının toplumdaki bireylerce siyasal iletişim aracı olarak kullanılması ile neoliberalizmin günlük hayatta tecrübesi ilişkilendirilmektedir. Bu eksende, ana akım medya ve resmi tarih söyleminde yer alan "iç ve dış düşmanlar" retoriğinin, komplo teorilerinin toplumdaki bireyler tarafından yorumlanması ve üretilmesi sürecine olan etkisi incelenecektir. Çalışmanın sonucunda, ana akım medyanın komplo teorilerinin siyasal iletişimde araçsallaştırılma sürecine önemli ölçüde katkıda bulunduğu savunulacaktır. Bununla birlikte, toplumdaki bireylerin, ana akım medya tarafından araçsallaştırılan komplo teorilerini günlük hayatları ve öznel değer yargıları ekseninde yorumlayıp, pasif bir "tüketici" olarak kalmadığı savunulacaktır.

To my family, and to the cat & the bird

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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Scope

Conspiracy theories seek to explain the capricious and ambiguous character of power relations by way of removing complexity from the patterns of cause and effect in narrating history. As explanatory texts, they help to replace what is "incomprehensible with the comprehensible" in human affairs (Groh 1987, p.9). In doing so, conspiracy theories relate significant political, social, and economic trajectories to the deliberative plans and covert operations of the intentional agents. These narratives tend to portray the alleged conspirators as coherent and consistent in the pursuit of their goals. Whilst pointing to the perceived imbalance of power, they purport to account for prevailing crises and social upheavals by means of personifying the sources of misery and injustice. Finally, conspiracy theories usually deconstruct their claim at the point of their construction, in that, "by personifying that source they paradoxically help people to reaffirm their own potential ability to control the course of future historical developments" (Bale 2007, p.51).

In this study, I focus on the conspiracy theories which have (re)gained momentum during the AKP government between the years of 2008 and 2016. I particularly dwell on those conspiracy narratives of the "deep state" and the "parallel state" which have reserved a considerable place in the media agenda during this period. After a critical media discourse analysis on the ways in which these conspiratorial narratives appear on the news-stories, I endeavor to understand their subjective interpretations from the point of view of the individuals with different backgrounds. I aim to investigate how conspiracy theories shape and are shaped by the subjective interpretations of the dominant-hegemonic culture in contemporary Turkey. I argue that conspiracy theories as everyday

communicative practice helps to reproduce the fantasy of state as an omnipotent and ever-present entity in this neoliberal moment, for which many scholars refer as the "demise of nation-states" (Aretxaga 2003).

1.2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

There are two major approaches accorded to conspiracy theories in the academic literature: "paranoid-style" and "cultural sociology" perspectives. The first, "paranoid-style" approach, takes on the conspiracy theories as reflective of a kind of political pathology, operating at the "margins" of the mainstream politics. Following Hofstadter's (1965) influential scholarly work, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics,* this line of research posits that the conspiracy theories emerge out of, and are confined to, those social groups excluded from engagement with mainstream politics (Pipes 1997, 1998; Sunstein & Vermeule 2009; Oliver & Wood 2012). While recognizing the "intensely rationalistic structure" of conspiracy theories (in their accounts of evidence), what make them "pathological" is the conception of power and history in their attribution of causality to the intentional agents (Hofstadter 1965, p. 36; Goertzel, 1994). Accordingly, conspiracy theories warrant a political pathology because they not only attempt to explain, but also "demonize" those intentional agents seen as the source of history (Gray 2010).

It can be argued that, implicit in the "paranoid style" approach, there is a certain trust accorded to the workings of institutions in the Western democracies, taken as strictly "rational" and "impersonal". In this vein, the popularity of conspiracy theories in the non-Western contexts (such as the Middle East) are linked to a failure of implementing such "rational" and "impersonal" institutions (Pipes 1997, 1998). Moreover, as conspiracy theories deflect attention from the "normal" course of politics, they end up contributing to the disempowerment of those already excluded (Hofstadter 1965, p.39). Accordingly, this "illusory" understanding of power is "disempowering" for those believers of conspiracy theories because it further blocks them from integrating into the mainstream politics (Jolley &Douglas 2013, p.6; Butler, Coopman, and Zimbardo 1995).

The second line of research, the cultural sociology perspective, holds that rather than an indication of a menacing pathology, conspiracy theories are cultural interpretative texts that are closely linked to the country's political institutions and political culture (Fenster 2008, p. 11-17). Seen as different than the "madness of paranoia" (Fenster 2007),

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conspiracy theories are viewed as explanatory texts both conveying waning trust in authorities and addressing the secrecy and hiddenness in decision-making processes (Hellinger 2003; West & Sanders 2003; Bale 2007; Goldberg 2001). Moreover, they point to governmental secrecy as the main reason for the proliferation of conspiracy theories—rather than attaching these narratives to a "false" conception power and history (Bale 2007; Raab et all. 2013).

This revisionist line maintains that conspiratorial discourse and practice are integral to the operation of modern power relations, rather than "outside" of it. As such they posit that conspiracy theories as a political rhetoric is a routine part of the mainstream politics (Stempel & Hargrove 2007). Thus, they point to the broad reception and popularity of conspiracy theories by the large segments of the society, seeing conspiracy theories as a mundane criticism of status-quo (Waters 1997). Overall, cultural sociology perspective puts a certain value on conspiracy theories—taking them as enlightening and (at times) subversive, rather than a symptom of a pathology (Dunst 2012, p. 4). In that vein, this body of research "dismisses" paranoia as a conceptual tool to get at the "cultural meaning" of conspiracy theories (Knight 2010).

In this thesis, I study conspiracy theories emerging in the context of Turkey by integrating two seemingly distinct paths in the academic literature: one that reintegrates paranoia as a conceptual tool to explore the structure and logic of conspiracy theories without pathologization through the close textual analysis gained from cultural sociology approach. Although Hofstadter used the concept of "paranoid-style" in the pejorative sense of the word; by "style" he was pointing towards the particular way in which "the beliefs and ideas are advocated" in conspiracy theories—rather than the "truth" value of their claim (p. 4-6). While Hofstadter takes on the conspiratorial rhetoric to get at political pathology (p.3), I would like to arrive at (state) "reason" and its "paranoid style" so to speak. Thus, I follow Hofstadter's conception of conspiracy theories as "paranoid constructions" so much so that in both conspiracy theories and paranoia "feeling of persecution is central, and it is indeed systematized" along with the attributions to (self) "grandiosity" (p. 3).

In this vein, I focus on conspiracy theories as paranoid narratives, a form of story-telling intertwined with the epistemological mechanism of paranoia and the cultural codes of domination, conveying a subjective interpretation of power relations in the experience of neoliberalism. To that end, I analyze the media discourse around the "deep state" and

the "parallel state" where the process of knowledge-making and political communication pertains to that of "paranoid-style". Thus, through the media discourse analysis, I aim to understand how the "paranoid-style" of state reason gets to be *systemized*. I situate paranoia within state reason, rather than outside it (Dunst 2012), because both the "deep state" (Ergenekon) and the "parallel state" denote a conspiracy *against* the state and conspiratorial practice *of* the state: The state looms in both narratives not only as an "object" of conspiracy, but also as the "subject" of conspiratorial practice. Following Dunst, I conceive both the "deep state" and the "parallel state" not as paranoia *about* the state, but as paranoia *of* the state.

Moreover, rather than approaching the proliferation and perverseness of conspiracy theories in the political language of societies in terms of the "distance between state and people" (Gray 2010) as the first line of research would have it, I focus on the "psychic glue" between the state (form) and people in which fear and desire get entangled in the imaginary of the state (Aretxaga 2003). By this "psychic glue" I refer to the paranoia of the state which come to be *embodied* by the subject. Thus, what renders state and people "strangely intimate" (Aretxaga 2003 p. 403) is the glue of paranoia, as I will argue particularly in the third chapter. In doing so, I address the question of the "subjectivity of state-being", as Taussig (1992, 1997) pointed out, through which state becomes the social subject of everyday life (Aretxaga 2003).

It is on that backdrop that I argue conspiracy theories are among those sites of everyday communicative practices in which "state processes and practices are recognized through their effects" (Aretxaga 2003, p. 398). In that sense, in exploring the narrative dynamics of conspiracy theories, I attempt to grasp the ways in which they come to be utilized as interpretative frameworks by individuals in making sense of the character of power that operates in ambiguous ways, rendered inaccessible to the subject's direct experience (Zizek 1997). The central question in the thesis is, then, how the subject comes to project hopes and anxieties onto the imaginary of the state (not only one's own state, but also other states as well that appear in the form of "dark forces") in this neoliberal moment where the ethos of transparency and democratic scrutiny go hand in hand with the practices and discourse of conspiracy.

1.2.1. Historical Plots

Political paranoia is not without its links to *reality*, it bases its reference points and evidences on the popular memory of historical plots. Although in the thesis, I use the words "conspiracy" and "plot" interchangeably, I situate conspiracy theories as part of the discursive strategies deployed in articulating the political position vis-à-vis these historical plots (or conspiratorial practices). In other words, in using the term "conspiracy theory" I do not attempt to invalidate the claim of a plot, but rather, through close textual analysis, I aim to show how conspiracy theories come to express the political or ideological urgencies in their accounts.

I agree with Bali (2013) on the point that "conspiracy is another means of politics" (p.43), but I do not necessarily endeavor on a historical analysis of political plots or the validity of particular conspiracy theories. Rather, I focus on how they are articulated in the form of conspiracy narratives as accounts of political reality, as a tool of political communication. The thematic focus of the thesis on the "deep state" and "parallel state" a involve a number references to the historical plots broadly covered by the Turkish media. In the following part, I give a brief historical account on those "plots" and conspiracy narratives to which I refer in the rest of the thesis.

1.2.1.1. Susurluk accident, 1996

In October 3, 1996, a traffic accident occurred in Susurluk, Balıkesir. The accident surfaced the close relations between the organized crime, the government, and the armed forces: The victims included the deputy chief Istanbul police department, a parliamentary deputy, together with a criminal wanted by Interpol (Abdullah Çatlı). Following the accident, an official case was launched investigating the unsolved murders of businessman with close ties to Kurdish movement, as well as other political figures during the 1990s. The suspects of the Susurluk case claimed that their actions were carried out in line with state interests. (Hürriyet Daily News 2009)[1]. The traffic crash and the subsequent official case sparked the public discussion about the existence of a conspiratorial network, called

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[1]Hürriyet Daily News. (2009, January 10).*Turkey's most shocking scandal back on agenda with Ergenekon*. Retrieved March 7, 2016, from http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/turkeys-most-shocking-scandal-back-on-agenda-with-ergenekon-10750341

the "deep state" operating outside (if not above) the established state hierarchies, and committing crimes.

1.2.1.2.February 28, 1997 Military Intervention

Following a meeting of the National Security Council (MGK) on February 28, 1997, the Turkish military presented a memorandum to the Islamist-dominated coalition government, warning against the "Islamist reactionary threat" posed to the secular state. In the aftermath of the intervention, (then) the prime minister Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the Islamist RP, had to resign from his position following a judicial indictment of the closure of the RP. February 28, 1997 was the fourth military intervention in the history of Turkey which previously experienced military coups in 1960, 1971, and 1980.

1.2.1.3.Ergenekon lawsuit

The Ergenekon lawsuit (officially launched in 2007) is based on an alleged clandestine ultranationalist (and secularist) group who aims to initiate a coup against the ruling government AKP by means of violence. The Ergenekon organization (or ETÖ) is said to consist of a number of nationalist-oriented organized crime bosses, paramilitary or terrorist groups, "along with intelligence officers, retired generals, military officers, journalists, university presidents, professors, politicians, businessmen, civil society association members, and artists." (Eligür 2012, p. 342). Similarly, there has been another lawsuit called the Sledgehammer (Balyoz), later combined with the Ergenekon lawsuit, which is based on a coup plan against the AKP, alleging the current and retired high-ranking military officials. The Commisssion of the European Union lend its support for the investigations, in their progress report in November 2010: "The Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials remain an opportunity for Turkey to strengthen confidence in the proper functioning of its democratic institutions and the rule of law" (as cited in Rodrik 2011, p. 99). Notwithstanding, the Ergenekon investigations drew criticism from the political opposition, on the basis of (then) suspected involvement of judiciary officials and bureaucrats which were close to the Gülen movement ("*Cemaat*") led by (then) AKP ally, Fethullah Gülen, an Islamic cleric in exile.

1.2.1.4. December 17-25, 2013 Investigations

On 17 December 2013, 47 people—including officials from the TOKİ[2], the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning, and the District Municipality of Fatih—were detained by the Istanbul Security Directory (Hürriyet 2013)[3]. Among them, three Turkish ministers— Zafer Çağlayan (Minister of Economy), Muammer Güler (Minister of the Interior), and Erdoğan Bayraktar (Minister of Environment and Urban Planning) were implicated, as well as their sons—Kaan Çağlayan, Barış Güler and Oğuz Bayraktar. Along with the ministers and their sons, Mustafa Demir (the mayor of the district municipality of Fatih), Ali Ağaoğlu (the real estate businessman), Süleyman Aslan (the general manager of Halk Bank) and the Iranian businessman Reza Zarrab were detained as the suspects of bribery. Some newspapers pointed to Egemen Bağış (the Minister of European Affairs) as a potential suspect of bribery, tying him with Reza Zarrab who has business affiliations with the Iranian businessman Babak Zanjani[4].

Following the detentions on December 17, several newspapers stated that a second wave of investigations was expected to be launched on 26 December, including Prime Minister Erdoğan's sons, Bilal and Burak Erdoğan along with some of the Al-Qaeda affiliates from Saudi Arabia such as Sheikh Yaseen Al Qadi and Osama Khoutub[5]. While the newly delegated police officers (who were appointed by the government a few days prior to 26 December) in İstanbul Security Directorate abstained from carrying out their orders, the Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions refused to approve this second-wave operation. Prosecutor Muammer Akkaş, who was carrying out the second operation was dismissed the very same day[6]. The list of the arrests was leaked to the press.

The AKP government denounced the corruption accusations and presented the investigations as part of a coup plan against the government orchestrated by the Gülenist cadres within the state establishment. The claim of the "parallel state" was put forward by

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[2]Mass Housing Devolepment Administration

[3]Aydın, Ç.(2013, December 17). İstanbulda yolsuzluk ve rüşvet operasyonu. *Hürriyet.* Retrieved May 4, 2015, from http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/istanbulda-yolsuzluk-ve-rusvet-operasyonu-25378685

[4]T24. (2013, December 19). *Yolsuzluk ve rüşvet soruşturmasında Egemen Bağış görüntüleri de çıktı!*. Retrieved May 4, 2015, from http://t24.com.tr/haber/yolsuzluk-ve-rusvet-sorusturmasinda-egemen-bagis-goruntuleri-de-cikti,246398

[5]BBC. (2014, January 7). *Turkish corruption probe row deepens.* Retrieved May 5, 2015, from http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25637710

[6]Vatan. (2013, December 26). *'Savcı operasyondan alındı'.* Retrieved March 30, 2015, from http://www.gazetevatan.com/-savci-operasyondan-alindi--595535-gundem/

the government in referring to this conspiratorial network led by Fethullah Gülen operating within the state structures, in the business and media circles. On December 24, 2013, Yalçın Akdoğan (a representative from AKP and the chief advisor of Erdoğan) announced that the Gülen movement had conspired against the military in carrying out the Ergenekon investigations. Following Akdoğan's statements, an official case launched investigating the "conspiracy against the military" claim which resulted in the subsequent release of the Ergenekon convicts and official denunciation of the Ergenekon case. The governmental measures were taken to eliminate the suspected Cemaat members from state institutions following an official "parallel state" probe where Fetullah Gülen was the major suspect.

During this period, on January 2, 2014, the report of an investigation regarding the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) trucks that had been stopped by the prosecutor in Hatay and Adana was brought into public attention[7]. It was indicated that the trucks were carrying ammo from Turkey to Syria. The government denied these allegations and defended the trucks by saying "Trucks were carrying aid to Turkmens". The prosecutors and gendarmeries who stopped the trucks were arrested and the investigation was subsequently presented as a "parallel state" conspiracy by the government and media outlets. In addition, the case was labelled as "state-secret" and a governmental decree was instituted that banned the media from further covering the issue.

1.3. Methodology

This research combines critical media discourse and qualitative interview analysis. I opted for a media discourse analysis in order to understand the systemic way in which particular conspiracy theories are (re)produced and disseminated and their role in the process of mass-mediated political communication. In other words, through the close textual analysis of the conspiracy theories publicized by the media, I aim to show the "paranoid-style" in which political events and issues are communicated. Following the cultural sociology perspective, through the interviews, I aim to show that the reception of conspiracy theories (or conspiracy theorizing) is not limited to particular segments of

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[7]Radikal. (2014, January 2). *Ala: TIR Türkmenlere yardım götürüyordu*. Retrieved April 15, 2015, from
http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/ala-tir-turkmenlere-yardim-goturuyordu-1169011/

society or political view but has a wider base of appeal. Following Hall (1980), I argue that individuals are not passive receivers of conspiracy theories disseminated by the media, but they actively deconstruct and reconstruct the meaning in line with their personal biographies and subjective values. In combining discourse analysis with the qualitative interviews, I focus on the conspiracy theories from various angles, attending "the tension between corporate media ideology and local experience, and between official history and personal biography" (Murphy 2009, p. 174). I formulated my research questions along the following lines: In what ways, conspiracy theories are instrumentalized as part of the process by which Turkish state structures its hegemonic discourse? What is the role of media in making conspiracy theories a tool of political communication? What is the interaction between media ideology and subjective sense of social positioning in the reception of conspiracy theories? And how conspiracy theorizing as an everyday communicative practice informs and is informed by the character of (state) power?

1.3.1. Media Analysis

In the second chapter, *Anti-semitism as a Political Communication Tool*, I analyzed several editorial pieces in some of the newspapers which dwelled on the Ergenekon case such as *Sözcü, Yeni Şafak, Akit*. I selected these editorial-commentary pieces included in the analysis on the basis of the representativeness for the arguments I put forward in the chapter, such as those regarding anti-semitism and the rhetoric of "foreign forces". I also included some of the news-programs and interviews such as in the *32. Gün* (2008, 2012)[8], *SkyTurk* (2013)[9], and *Ulusal Kanal* (2013)[10] into my analysis where Tuncay Güney makes

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[8]32. Gün. (2008, October 30). *Tuncay Güney 32. Gün'de*. [YouTube]. Retrieved June 2, 2016, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quh0orgbtoo

32. Gün. (2012, August 16). *Konuk Tuncay Güney*. [YouTube]. Retrieved June 2, 2016, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2YTGqNeDB0

[9]SkyTürk. (2013, March 1).Tuncay Güney: Ergenekon davası bir projeydi bitti. [YouTube]. Retrieved June 2, 2016, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-o6LDyv7-LE

[10]Ulusal Kanal. (2013, December 4). *Ergenekon davası itirafları*. [YouTube]. Retrieved June 2, 2016, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKBjJFVzqKQ

an appearance (a suspicious figure whose statements formed the basis of the Ergenekon indictment). I also make use of Umberto Eco's (2011) novel *The Prague Cemetery*, as a literary material in my study.

For the third chapter, *Paranoia as a Systematic Mass-Media Propaganda*, where I focus on the media coverage of the December 17-25 investigations, I analyzed the broadsheet headlines and front-page news content of sixteen newspapers selected on the basis of media ownership and reception. Through a critical discourse analysis of the front-page news-content, I aimed to understand how the mainstream and alternative press covered the political events following the December 17, 2013 probe by means of the conspiratorial discourse. Thus, I am particularly interested in the mass-proliferation of conspiratorial narratives from the onset of investigations which have formed the official discourse around the "parallel state".

To that end, in the preliminary stage of my analysis, I compiled the front-page content of 16 newspapers between the December 18, 2013 and January 18, 2014 (excluding those published in the weekends) and looked for "framing devices" commonly used by the press in covering the issue. Although the kinds and descriptions of relevant events occurred in the period were more or less similar, the overall stance of the newspaper toward the corruption accusations was decisive in framing the investigations. Two framing devices was commonly used by the newspapers: *corruption* and *conspiracy*. I treat the corruption frame as reflective of the overall attitude of the newspaper toward the "nature" of investigations, in that, I coded the newspaper under the corruption frame when the newspaper reflects on the issue as a corruption case, pointing to the governmental corruption. The conspiracy frame also has to do with the general stance of the newspaper toward the investigation, in that, I coded the newspaper under the conspiracy frame when it posits the "conspiracy against the government" argument in covering the "nature" of investigations.

However, it is not necessarily the case that corruption and conspiracy are mutually exclusive categories. Most of the newspapers that emphasize the governmental corruption (as opposed to "the parallel state" conspiracy against the government) also utilized (counter) conspiratorial claims in covering what happened. In that sense, I treat the corruption frame as reflective of the political orientation of the newspaper (e.g. pro-government or anti-government), which in turn shaped its conspiratorial discourse (in terms of the subjects involved and events described). "Conspiracy" as a framing device

looms larger than that of "corruption", as what followed the investigations was more than about the corruption case such as "the plot against the military" claim which denounced the official Ergenekon probe; the investigations of the MİT trucks, the investigation of the activities wiretapping and phone-tapping of prominent figures. In order to attend the differences in the strategic uses of the conspiracy frame, I further divided it into two analytical sub-categories of "group of conspirers" and "non-transparency" (Raab. et. al, 2013). Thus, these two sub-categories allowed me to analyze the differences in the descriptions of the conspiratorial groups and their clandestine activities in both pro-government and anti-government newspapers.

I selected three days most representative of these framing devices of corruption and conspiracy (and sub-frames of "group of conspirers" and "non-transparency") to be included for close analysis in the third chapter. The events communicated in these particular days also informed some of my interview questions. These days are December 18, 2013; January 3, 2014; and February 25, 2014. I chose December 18 because it was the first day of the press-coverage of the corruption probe, and reflective of the overall stance or attitude of the newspapers toward the investigations. January 3, 2014 was the first day of MİT trucks investigations and reflective of how the newspapers communicated governmental secrecy. In this particular day, most of the newspapers also focused on "the plot against the government" claim of the government which was also decisive in the positions taken vis-à-vis the investigation. I chose February 25, 2014—even though it was not (temporally) included in my initial analysis of framing devices—because on this particular day the activities of wiretapping and phone-tapping of political figures made into the coverage with a focus on the so-called *Selam Tevhid* list (the list of figures claimed to be "blacklisted by "the parallel state" including (then) the prime minister Erdoğan and other bureaucratic and media figures). This was also the day, a new regulation with regard to the MİT law was covered by some newspapers. I analyzed whether the newspapers reflected on this recent legislative change regarding the MİT which made the state more of a "panopticon" over its citizens.

1.3.2. Interviews

I conducted interviews with twenty individuals who support different political parties (AKP, CHP, MHP, HDP) between October 2015 and February 2016. Three of the

interviews took place in İzmit, two in Burdur and the rest of the fifteen interviews in Antalya. The interviews lasted from 50 to 90 minutes. With sixteen individuals between the ages of 30 and 56, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured, one-to-one interviews. In addition, I also conducted an unstructured, open ended "focus-group discussion" with four young political activists (ages 13 to 21) who reside in the Güneş neighborhood in Antalya—a Kurdish-Alevi populated space from lower social classes. Because of the differences in the sample characteristics (age, electoral behavior, social-economic status) and the interviewing technique, I refer to the first sixteen "older" individuals as the "one-to-one group"; and the four young leftist activists as the "focus-group".

I told the participants that my research was about their electoral behavior and their ideas about the current political situation in Turkey. I started the interview discussions by asking their ideas about the outcome of recent national elections (of June 2015 and November 2015). I did not explain the particular focus of my research on the political conspiracy theories, because I wanted to see whether or not merely talking about current political issues and events would stimulate the respondents towards conspiratorial arguments.

For the "one-to-one group" I used a digital recorder to save the interview discussion having taken the permission of the interviewees. I did the transcriptions myself. For the focus group, although I recorded the group-discussion by the permission of the respondents, I was later asked to delete the record as it included sensitive political information given by the respondents. I relied on my notes I took during and after the interview for the focus-group.

1.3.2.1.One-to-One Group

The respondents in this group consist of middle-aged individuals from lower-middle classes consisting of (retired or not) teachers, state-officials, municipal workers, cleaning workers, and women who are not employed. In terms of their educational background, two of the interviewers are primary school graduates; five of them hold a university degree, while the remaining nine of the interviewers are high-school graduates. Six of the individuals are supporters of the AKP; four of the CHP; three of the MHP; and three of the HDP. Half of the individuals in this group are politically active in the sense that they are either active member of their political party or a member of a political organization

(e.g. the nationalist-secularist teacher's union, *Eğitim-İş*; the leftist teacher's union, *Eğitim-Sen*). The other half are not member of any political organization and basically vote as a political activity in the elections. Most of the interviewers in this group do not actively use the Internet platforms for "news"—and mainly follow the mainstream media outlets (except for two HDP supporters who follow alternative, leftist-oriented media platforms such as *imctv*, *Evrensel*, *BirGün*; and one AKP supporter who mostly use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to receive "news").

Because the conspiratorial narratives such as the "the parallel state" and "the plot against military" were put forward in the context of (municipal and presidential) elections and because the period I conducted the interviews saw two national elections (of June 7, and November 1, 2015), I opted for a variance in my sample in terms of electoral behavior. Since these conspiratorial arguments were engrained in the election strategies of these mainstream parties, I wanted to focus on the consumption and reception of these narratives by various political party supporters. Even though I set a "quota" for the number of individuals from each political party proportional to its parliamentary representation in the sample, I did not aim at arriving at a representative sample in terms of the patterns of conspiratorial rhetoric consumption. Rather, I aimed at anecdotal information with regard to how people from different political parties make sense of the general political atmosphere and how they make use of conspiratorial narratives put forward in the midst of elections.

I reached my interviewees through the snowball method; most of the interviewees introduced me with the others (either from the same political party affiliation or not) who were their relatives, friends, neighbors, or colleagues. Thus the respondents were also my "gate-keepers". In Izmit, I conducted an interview with Hatice (age 55), who is a mother of one of my friends. Hatice is a housewife of a state-official and she is a supporter of CHP. Hatice introduced me to one of her relatives, Ender (age 54) and one of her neighbors Ertan (57) who both reside in İzmit. Ender is a retired worker who is a supporter of MHP. Ertan is a small-business owner who voted for MHP in the recent elections but does not necessarily describe himself as a supporter of MHP. Previously, he was a supporter of AKP but after the December 17-25 corruption case he started voting for MHP. Ertan said he was imprisoned for several years because of his political activities and affiliations with leftist groups after the 1980 military coup.

In Burdur, I was introduced to Mehmet (43) and Rıza (53) through my relative who live in the district of Çeltikçi. They are both supporters of AKP. Mehmet as a veteran soldier actively work in the AKP organization of the district. Rıza is a retired commissioner of police and served as a president of the municipality of Çeltikçi before the last local elections in March 2013. I conducted the rest of the interviews in Antalya. Some of the interviews were active members of their political party organization in their districts in Antalya: Aylin (37) was previously an accountant in a company but quit working after she had a daughter four years ago. I was introduced to her through a friend of my relative who takes part in the activities of Kepez AKP organization with Aylin. Another respondent, Rakide (46) is a chemical engineer who actively participates in the HDP organization in Kepez. Among my respondents there were two teachers, Şakir (53) and Eda (35) who are the members of *Eğitim-İş* and *Eğitim-Sen* respectively. Ayşe (49), Enver (50), Seda (37), Cafer (42), and Neşe (48) and Meltem (41) are not members of any political organization. Ayşe and Enver are retired state-officials who support AKP. Seda and Cafer work for a tourism company as a cleaning worker and driver and they are supporters of CHP. Neşe and Meltem are housewifes who never worked before and they voted for MHP and HDP (respectively) in the last elections.

I had a list of questions with me, but the interview process itself mostly shaped the discussion content. Although I did not explicitly tell the respondents the focus of my research on conspiracy theories or political plots, almost from the beginning of the interviews, the respondents started sharing their ideas about the "parallel state", the "deep state", the Great Middle East project, etc. I wanted to account for their ideas about mainstream politics, how they explain the success or failure of their political parties in the elections in order to understand how they "feel" about the current state of affairs in relation to the memory of those plots. Almost all the respondents can be said to have formed tacit conspiratorial arguments—in the sense that they referred to "political plots" in accounting for the political life in Turkey. The idea of "plot", in other words, loomed as an underlying metaphor for understanding how (state) power operates in Turkey (Yashin 2002, p. 172). Moreover, the respondents also tacitly started relating current state of affairs with that of their personal affairs—their everyday social and economic interactions.

1.3.2.2.Focus Group

I got introduced with the four young respondents during my field visit to the HDP organization in the Güneş neighborhood in Antalya. I was aiming to conduct interviews with middle-aged individuals who were active politically under the umbrella of the HDP. I conducted an interview with a grown up there, Rakide (46) whom I included in the first group. I got introduced with those four young respondents when they brought me tea, and when I explained them the focus of my study—that is the electoral behavior—they wanted me to conduct interviews with them as well, as they call it "we, young people, just know better". I was more than happy as in my proposal I wanted to include leftist political activists from Okmeydanı—who voted for HDP—and then I opted for a more focused sample in terms of age interval. The questions I directed to this group were different than I prepared for the first group, as all four were in the same room and did not give me much chance to pursue my own questions. Nevertheless, as will be seen in the fourth chapter, *Paranoia, the "Cynic" and the "Kynic" Subject*, their accounts were more than helpful, and their conspiratorial narratives were more distinctive than those in the first group. These four young activists—who call themselves "revolutionaries"—accounted for their daily struggle with the police in their neighborhood, as Güneş Mahallesi is a highly contested place with occasional police violence and constant surveillance.

1.3.2.3.Reactions

Most of the time, I was suspected to be a journalist especially by those politically active respondents to whom I reached by going to their organization—that is for example, the HDP organization in Antalya (Kepez), the AKP organization in Burdur, and the nationalist-secularist teacher's union (*Eğitim-İş*). In the HDP organization, I was naïve enough to tape the conversations I made with the young activists (although I asked permission to do so both from them and from the adults there) which put me in trouble once the head of the organization came towards the end of the interview. In the end, I had to delete the record. Right after the interview, I typed what was left in my memory. I also put those young respondents in a sensitive position as they had a "earful" for being careless. This was a certain experience for me as a researcher with a focus on "political

paranoia". This is to say, it is not that "they are too paranoid" to get suspicious of me, but "being paranoid as precaution" in the loose sense of the word was a means for political survival in a place where the constant police surveillance and violence make up the day. I also had a chance to learn "manners" of interviewing, in that, asking those politically sensitive questions and getting even more sensitive answers in a place in such a vulnerable position, one should opt for taking notes, rather than being "lazy to record" as the president told me.

1.4. Historical Background on the Political Uses of Conspiracy Theories in Turkey

Conspiracy narratives articulating anti-Semitic sentiments can be traced back to the late Ottoman Empire. Baer (2013) notes that religious Ottoman Muslim proto-nationalist opponents of the Young Turks and supporters of Sultan Abdulhamid II explained the revolution in 1908 and the ways in which CUP acquired power in terms of a "Jewish conspiracy" backed by "foreign Jewish capital" and foreign colonial powers in order to promote immorality and irreligiousness in Ottoman society (p. 531).Scholars working in the field of conspiracy theories in Turkey point to the ways in which conspiratorial rhetoric is used by various political parties and elite positioning, from the right-wing, liberal-secularist and left-wing camps (Gürpınar 2013, p. 425; Nefes 2012; Bali 2013; Bora 1996).

According to Karaosmanoğlu (2008), in the single-party period (1923- 1945), the political elite from the Kemalist-secularist camps deployed the conspiracy narratives of "internal and external enemies" which echoed their suspicion towards the ethnic and religious minorities concomitant with the attempt to homogenize the society into a single "national" identity as part of the larger modernization-westernization project. As such, the minorities are viewed as possible collaborators with a foreign power ("external enemy") against the state. For example, Britain was seen as orchestrating the Kurdish upheavals against the authority of the Turkish state. According to Bali, while the anti-Semitic themes were found mostly within the Kemalist-secularist camp, with the transition to the multi-party period, the Islamist and ultra-nationalist camps utilized anti-Semitic conspiracy narratives in articulating their perspectives. Thus, these narratives largely echoed those

anti-Semitic themes found in the West and in the rest of the Islamic world (Bali 2013, p. 66).

By the 1960s to the 1970s, these narratives particularly focused on the Israel state and how the "Zionists" materialized their "true intentions". Amongst these claims were that the communism and capitalism were Zionist projects; and the Dönme community controlled the Turkish state. After 1980s, there were more variations in these anti-Semitic narratives, in that these conspiracy theories included the claims that the U.S government was under the control of a "Jewish lobby"; the Holocaust was a Jewish project; the PKK was supported by Israel. Overall, the conspiracy narratives historically proliferated within the political language in Turkey included the Kurds (through PKK), Armenians (through ASALA), the "green money" and political Islam, Jews, Masons as the main agents of plots against the Turkish state (Karaosmanoğlu 2008).

Many scholars demonstrate that 9/11 attacks mark the increase in the proliferation of conspiracy theories both in the U.S (Bale 2007; Fenster 2008; Raab et al. 2013), in the Arab world (Gray 2010) and also in Turkey (Bali 2013). Thus, the market of conspiracy literature (in which conspiracy theories are produced and claimed) shows a considerable expansion in 2000s when compared to 1990s. As Bali (2013) demonstrates, whereas in 1999 and 2000 there were only one or two publications that take conspiracy theories as their central theme, in 2002 and 2003 the number increased tenfold (p. 49). These publications not only contributed to the normalization process of anti-Semitic discourses, but they also contributed to the expansion of anti-Semitism as these publications received broad reception. In addition, as Gürpınar (2013) posits, concomitant with the introduction of revisionist historiography that breaks with the truth regime of official line of history in 2000s, there has been an increase in the circulation of conspiracy theories which have not only reproduced the core values of official historiography (e.g. Kemalist, nation-statist), but they have also established a new regime of truth in terms of historical reality, yielding neo-nationalist sentiment. Thus, within the discourse of neo-nationalism the rhetoric of "external forces", in collaboration with the minorities (especially the members of Jewish community in Turkey), controlling the internal affairs of Turkish state dominates the understanding of history.

1.4.1. "Sevres syndrome"

The late Ottoman period is particular for laying down the reservoir of historical events that the official historiography bases its narrative. In the political climate of independence movements of non-Muslim minorities, the political discourse shaped by the nationalist sentiment started to code the minorities as posing threat against the unity of empire and society. The treaty of Sevres in 1920 served as a source of justification for the anti-minority and anti-semitic attitudes prevailing among the state officials and the elites. The treaty was signed by the officials of the Ottoman Empire subsequent to their defeat in the World War 1 which planned for a partition of the Ottoman land. It included an independent Armenian republic in the east of Anatolia and autonomous Kurdish region in the Southeast. The rest of the country would be partitioned and ruled by France, Italy, and Greece. It also included demilitarization of Straits of Bosporus and Istanbul, placing them under international control.

The Sevres Treaty was never put action with the success of Turkish War of Independence in 1922 and the foundation of an independent Turkish republic in 1923. However, the Sevres, more than the Luissance treaty in 1923 which debunked it, has been continually reinvoked and rearticulated in the political discourse and in the official historiography. It has come to serve as a source of justification for the "threat" posed by the external powers and the perception of the minorities as the possible collaborators of foreign intermingling. What is referred as the "Sevres Syndrome" by many scholars working in the field of Turkish nationalist discourse refers to this continual returns to the scene of Sevres Treaty in the discourse of state officials and political elites in articulating their perspectives (Guida 2008; Hakan 2011; Hovsepyan 2012; Nefes 2015). The term Sevres Syndrome expresses wider terrain of "fear of territorial dismemberment, mistrust toward the outside world, worldview based on conspiracy theories" (Hovsepyan 2012, p.4). Nefes (2013) shows that anti-semitic conspiracy theories are strategically utilized by the mainstream political parties in articulating their ontological insecurities emerging from the Sevres Syndrome. The issue of minority rights and Kurdish issue is disputed, for example, in line with the urgencies and insecurities laid down by the Sevres Syndrome expressing the suspicion against the minorities coupled with fears of persecution by the external forces (namely the EU and the US) in various hegemonic positions. Thus, the Sevres Syndrome has come to serve as a model for the construction of future conspiratorial narratives.

Discursive association of the minorities into a grand conspiracy is not only the result of "remembering" the history of separatist movements of the minorities and the subsequent Treaty of Sevres. It also boils down to the denialist discourse of the official historiography on the collective violence committed against the minorities. As Gocek (2014) shows in her book, *Denial of Violance*, Abdulhamid II *successfully* presented the the Ottoman Bank raid by the Armenian revolutionaries in 1896 to draw a linkage between the Armenian unrest and the Great Powers. This narrative not only "legitimated" the Armenian massacres of 1894-1896 by portraying the Armenian issue as prompted by the Great Powers, but also initiated the official process of "othering" the Armenian subjects and other non-Muslim minorities by raising suspicion about their intentions and external alliance (p. 42-43).

It can be argued that in the narratives around the "deep state" and the "parallel state", the Sevres syndrome along with the denialist discourse which makes the non-Muslim minorities suspect by association to an external force have been continued by the competing political actors. Thus, the way I use the concept of paranoia is thematically related to the Sevres syndrome, particularly for those conspiracy theories voiced by the mainstream media. However, as I show that conspiracy theories are not necessarily put forward in a "nationalized manner" by different individuals, but at times involve counter-hegemonic expressions. In that sense, I use the concept of political paranoia as a more general analytical template to encapsulate those conspiratorial claims which both reproduce and challenge the status-quo.

1.5. Thesis Outline

In the second chapter, *Anti-semitism as a Political Communication Tool*, after tracing the emergence of the term Ergenekon with reference to "deep state" in the Turkish media in the late 1990s, I focus on the media trajectory of the Ergenekon investigations during 2008-2013. I analyze the discursive strategies around the Ergenekon in competing media platforms, namely in the Islamic and neo-nationalist Kemalist media. I argue that in formulating their alternative conspiratorial claims, both the Islamic and Kemalist media mobilized a shared vocabulary of a cultural reservoir imprinted by Turkish nationalism. Although these competing conspiratorial narratives were put forward in order to

undermine the rival position, this resort to a common "cultural tool-kit" reinforced each other's claims at an ideological level (Swidler 1986).

In the third chapter, *Paranoia as a Systematic Mass-Media Propaganda*, I analyze the press coverage of the December 17-25 corruption investigations and investigate the emergence of the narrative of the "parallel state" between December 18, 2013 and Febuary 25, 2014. I argue that both the pro-government and the anti-government mainstream press presented their conspiratorial arguments sensationalistically which lead to the explanation of the political meaning of corruption and the governmental secrecy in a personalistic rather than systemic manner. I also argue that those themes and motifs earlier utilized in the discourse around the Ergenekon were remobilized in configuring the narrative around the parallel state in an "over-coherent" manner.

In the fourth chapter, *Paranoia, the "Cynic" and the "Kynic" Subject*, I focus on the interview discussions and the conspiracy theories formulated by the respondents. I argue that those conspiracy theories circulating in the mainstream media are not necessarily representative of those put forward by the respondents. The respondents critically assessed the mass-mediated conspiracy theories and re-formulated them according to their subjective values and experiences. I pose that the appeal of conspiracy theorizing might culminate in the ways in which individuals seek to relate their sense of positioning in social space to a grand narrative, through which the subjective values are emphasized.

CHAPTER 2

2. ANTI-SEMITISM AS A POLITICAL COMMUNICATION TOOL

2.1. New Political Economy of State Censorship and Control over Media

The history of press journalism and commercial broadcasting in Turkey is characterized by practices of state-censorship, political repression, and self-censorship (Alpay 1993). While the Islamic cultural market has expanded considerably within the last three decades in appeal and reception (by "Muslim audiences), they operated under the limits and control of the secularist grip of the state (Öncü 2012, p. 129). As such, in accordance with the secularist fear of "reaction", especially in the field of mainstream media, measures were taken by state institutions to limit the infiltration of Islamic cultural and political currents to the scene of dominant media. RTÜK reports show that, during the years of 1994- 2002, "these reactionary (so called "radical Islamists") and "separatist" broadcasters constituted 94 percent of all channels being fined" (Özdiker 2002, as noted in Bek 2004). In addition to the governmental pressure on the media, the military (especially in the 1990s) was a powerful actor intervening in the process of news-production: The "reactionary" fear and anti-Kurdish stance being the two ontological reference points for the mass media (Özonur 2015, p. 111).

In breaking with the National View ideology of Erbakan, the AKP declared itself as conservative rather than Islamist. The party's pro-Western, pro-globalization outlook was reinforced through downplaying its "Islamic" image both in the "secular" media and newly emerging conservative media (Aydın 2015, Akser & Baybars-Hawks 2012). This "conservative democratic" image was also fostered by secular-liberal media outlets, as media owners tend to challenge government (usually) only if their economic interests are

threatened (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, p. 305). This liberal stance towards mainstream media has started to transform to that of "autocracy" with AKP's electoral victory in the 2007 elections (Akser & Baybars-Hawks 2012). As the AKP started encouraging its close business circles towards media ownership from 2005 onwards (Aydın 2015, p. 14), the lines between secular and conservative-religious media started to be drawn—both by Erdoğan himself who used the rhetoric of "biased-sided" media for the first time during 2007 national election campaigns (Akser & Baybars-Hawks 2012, p. 310); and by powerful media groups such as Doğan Media which "lent their support for the opposition" criticizing the government "for leading towards an Islamic path" (Öncü 2012, p. 126). Thus, the premises of the battle between Erdoğan and Aydın Doğan date back to the 2007 national elections where the rivalry between earlier and emerging hegemonic positions started to be materialized. (p.4)

The post-2007 period exemplifies a host of "different systemic kinds of neoliberal government pressures on news-production" where the restrictive practices on media freedom has increased in volume: The ban on YouTube, the dismissal and arrests of journalists during Ergenekon trials, "phone tapping/taping of political figures and the exclusion of unfriendly reporters from political circles" (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, p. 302). The period after December 17-25, 2013 saw the escalation of these pressures: Occasional Twitter bans along with the more "protective" measures as to Internet regulation; the restructuring of MİT (that it became harder to make news about the activities of MİT), continued arrests and exclusion of journalists, confiscations of the media outlets owned by those having close ties with the Gülen movement, to name but a few. The increased governmental pressures at political, economic, judicial, and discursive levels shaped the mass-communication context towards a "media autocracy", restricting the practices of news-reporting (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, 2012).

These pressures coincide with the "democratization" motto of AKP, who, by waging a war against all those "deep state" elements, promised "transparency" in the political and economic affairs of state. Expanding the "deep state" activities to involve staging military coups against (mostly Islamic) governments, the AKP shaped its discourse around the Ergenekon lawsuit as a blow against the long established Turkish deep state (Kaya 2009; Taş 2014), thus as a gain for "*advanced* democracy". Thus, the discursive antagonism is drawn in terms of the "deep state" versus the "democratic state". Notwithstanding, the Ergenekon investigations (launched in 2008) stimulated suspicions with regard to the

AKP government for utilizing the case in order to mobilize public opinion to suppress its (secular-oriented) critics—by arresting and detaining them together with organized crime bosses (e.g. Veli Küçük). Thus, the arrests and detainments took place without an indictment and the Ergenekon suspects were mainly interrogated "based on their private phone conversations, which the police wiretapped." (Eligür 2012, p. 342). Against these suspicions, (then) the prime minister Erdoğan declared that even his phone had been tapped[11].

At this point, rather than puzzling with the details of the lawsuit, I would like to turn my attention to the discursive trajectory of Ergenekon in the mainstream media. Ergenekon and its conceptual relation to the deep state practices is defined, interpreted, and redefined by the media—which brought the case into public attention (Balci 2010). Although the history of the deep state (both in terms of conspiratorial narratives and practices) dates back to earlier periods (Balci 2010), in this chapter (within the temporal focus of the thesis), I mainly focus on the discourse around the "deep state" in relation to the media coverage of Ergenekon between 2007 and 2014.

2.2. "Deep State" or "Media as State"

A prominent scholar, Daniel Pipe's (1998) discussion on "hidden hand" (with reference to the narratives of conspiratorial coalitions) is taken up as a rather necessary component in analyzing the political discourse in the Middle Eastern context within the canon of conspiracy theories. There are also a host of studies about the role of CIA and NATO in the proliferation of radical Islamic groups, as a residue of the Cold War period in the contexts such as Pakistan and Afghanistan (Mamdani 2002). The term "deep state" is also taken up by the scholars in analyzing the European context (Tunander 2009). Jeffrey M. Bale (2007) proposes that history writing should also include an investigation of the effects of real conspiracies, thus focusing only on the institutional processes and neglecting the actual conspiracies (or rather, plots) will lead to a significant gap in understanding history and the current political undertakings. For Bale, the historical analysis of the actual conspiratorial practices is a part of "political realism" (p. 45).

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[11]Hürriyet Daily News. (2011, December 1).*Erdoğan's bedroom talks illegally taped: Minister*. Retrieved June 13, 2016, from http://www.turkishnews.com/en/content/2011/12/03/turkey-minister-says-erdogans-bedroom-was-bugged/

Rather than analyzing the historical practices of the "deep state", or endeavoring on its historical impacts, I focus on the ways in which it was brought to the public attention by the mainstream media. In that sense, rather than the truth value—or validity of their claim, I am interested in the "certainty" put forward as to the intentional agents and their motifs, dubbed the "deep state" in media platforms. Drawing on the political economic intimacy between media and state, I analyze the configuration of the (media) discourse on Ergenekon on the basis of Hall's analogy of *media as state* (Hall 1973, p. 284). Hall argues that "since broadcasting must not become a 'state within state', it must take its 'definition of political reality from the state" (p. 285) As state, media communicates the events taking "national interest" into account in the process of news-production (p. 284). This "natural attitude" of media towards assuming the position of "national interest" impels the (media) propaganda to be based on "the preexisting discursive possibilities provided by this "natural attitude" into which the codes are set" (Smith 1991, p.128). Thus, although different political actors (in the media, or those represented in the media) utilize these preexisting discursive possibilities as a "cultural tool-kit" (Swidler 1986), they share similar nation-statist codes and filters in lending their justifications (Gürpınar 2013). The "Sevres Syndrome" can be said to underlie the ideological basis of this shared "cultural tool-kit" in both neo-nationalist and Islamist stances, in articulating their position in relation to Ergenekon. As such, both stances converged into a view of minority groups as collaborators of a foreign plot against the state, and as a threat against the unity of society emerging from the Sevres Syndrome.

The minority groups appear to be the most widely used actors in conspiracy theories because conspiracy theories are part of the hegemonic discourse of the modern nation-state and the image of society that goes along with it (homogenous, disciplined, submissive). In this sense, the xenophobic and anti-semitic sentiments are not necessarily the direct result of conspiracy theories (or conspiracy theorizing), but rather the historical and ideological pretext in which they are used (Raab et al. 2013). The answer to the primary and fixed question of conspiracy theories— "in whose interest" is put forward in relation to the dominant ideology and its reservoir of "others" for which the "other states", minorities, and the Jewish figure loom as common denominators. Thus, the convergence into dominant ideology occurs when the media deploy conspiratorial narratives in a "nationalized" manner, rather than through the mere tendency to resort to conspiratorial arguments. In other words, it is not the conspiracy theories per se, but the way they are

used is the arbiter for convergence into the dominant ideology, as conspiratorial practice is an integral part of mainstream politics in this neoliberal moment where the ethos of transparency coexists with the obscurity in power relations (West & Sanders 2003).

These conspiratorial arguments around the "deep state" put forward by competing actors—that of neo-nationalists and conservative Islamists—both originate in and appeal to this preexisting discursive repertoire, largely drawn by the official historiography. However, the analogy between the media and state in configuring its propaganda to reach hegemonic mainstream consensus is not far-fetched as to be identical to the official historiography. They also bear "innovative characteristics and unique constructions" derived from this preexisting reservoir of discursive possibilities (Gürpınar 2013, p. 414) which are brought by the ethos of neoliberalism and particular interpretation of them in the political Islamic and secularist circles.

All this academic literature on "deep state" point to the non-transparency in the manner of decision-making processes are handled where the political accountability is kept away from democratic scrutiny (Hellinger 2003). At this point, it is important to note that both academic and media attention on the "deep state" occur in tandem with the neoliberal ethos of "transparency" which gained precedence after 1990s both in Turkey and elsewhere. The Ergenekon probe for example, was referred as the "clean hands operation" of 1990s' Italy, where the prosecutor DiPietro called for the "international community" to combat against deep-state structures which found refugee under the Berlusconi government (Hürriyet 2009)[12]. As the extra-legal, clandestine deep-state structures are seen as a "residue" from the past (Cold War relations of power) and as a "progressive" political party at this point, AKP and Erdoğan was quick to describe Ergenekon as a "clean hands operation" of Turkey. As such, in combatting against those non-transparent agents of the deep state network, Erdoğan stated in the parliament that "Everyone should be open and transparent. There can be no description of national interest for which the nation has not given its consent" (Milliyet 2008)[13]. The description of transparency is based however, in relation to the "national interest"; not necessarily to

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[12]Hürriyet. (2009, July 12). *Temiz Eller Savcısı'nın ibretlik gazete ilanı*. Retrieved June 20, 2016, from http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/temiz-eller-savcisi-nin-ibretlik-gazete-ilani-12057470

[13]Milliyet (2008, September).*Erdoğan'dan Ergenekon'a temiz eller benzetmesi*. Retrieved June 20, 2016, from http://www.milliyet.com.tr/erdogan-dan-ergenekon-a-temiz-eller-benzetmesi/siyaset/siyasetdetay/08.07.2008/891193/default.htm

"democratic scrutiny". Therefore, when the events are posed against the society, transparency may no longer be the priority.

I contextualize conspiracy theories of the "deep state" which gained precedence after 2000s in this context of neoliberal ethos of transparency. Their specific configuration, in terms of the incorporation of the transparency rhetoric in line with the ideological and economic urgencies of competing groups is the gist for me to dwell on Ergenekon's media trajectory. The media discourse on the question of *who* as to the identity of conspiring agents, and the question of *how* these clandestine practices are "made transparent" is fashioned through the interaction between the preexisting modern ethos of "national interest" and the particular interpretation of "transparency". In formulating their competing conspiratorial claims in relation to the "deep state", both Kemalist and Islamic media shared similar urgencies and discursive strategies emerging from the Sevres Syndrome, although the emphasis as to the identities and motives of the agents, and the mode of historical evidencing (Susurluk crash in 1996 or military intervention of February 28, 1997). What I argue that in their sharing of a similar ideological pool to derive their conclusions and motives regarding conspiratorial practices, both Islamic and Kemalist media reinforced each other's (ideological) frame of reference, reproducing the nationalist-statist sentiment.

2.3. Emergence of the Term Ergenekon in Media-scape

Ergenekon is both a (judicial) case about the conspiratorial activities of the "deep state" and is reminiscent of a conspiracy theory itself. Ergenekon is hardly the first and only clandestine organization popularly held to operate behind the façade of governments in Turkey. These clandestine networks are said to have been formed under the military aegis of NATO in collaboration with CIA and European intelligence services to combat the "Soviet threat" shortly after World War 2 in many European countries as well as Turkey (Tunander 2005; Nuti & Riste 2007). These so-called "stay-behind units" of NATO, first exposed in Italy by the Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti in 1990 who discovered a secret Italian army called "GLADIO" brought other "Gladio-like" organizations in Europe under media scrutiny as well: "France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Austria, Greece and Turkey" (Ganser 2004). Ergenekon is framed as the

successor of these clandestine networks, referred to as "*derin devlet*" in Turkish media. Although launched in 2008, the Ergenekon investigation involved allegations to the political plots and criminal activities carried out in the context of 1990s—such as the activities of Gendarmerie Intelligence Organization (JİTEM), enforced disappearances and political assassinations.

Before its becoming an official investigation in July 2008, Ergenekon, as a name for the "deep state", found genesis within the secularist-Kemalist media in the 1990s (Kaya 2009; Balcı 2010; Efe & Yeşiltaş 2012). The writer and journalist, Erol Mütercimler, was first to use the term in 1997 during an interview with the nationalist daily Aydınlık where he defined Ergenekon as a "'Gladio-type' gang hidden within the state", and argued that "it is above the General Stuff, the MİT, and the prime minister" (as cited in Balcı 2010, p. 78). Ergenekon was said to consist of a network including the heads of police departments and businessmen. This interview was conducted on the backdrop of Susurluk incident (1996) where the close relations between criminal gangs, the government, and the armed forces was surfaced through a traffic accident: The victims included the deputy chief Istanbul police department, a parliamentary deputy, an ultranationalist gangster. The Susurluk crash exposed the clandestine links between state agencies and organized crime and became a major political scandal.

The term Ergenekon to imply clandestine organized crime groups operating within the state was first used and developed by the secularist-Kemalist circle (Balcı 2010, p. 77). Ergenekon was, at first alleged to consist of the right-wing ultra-nationalist groups operating under the wing of the nationalist MHP, as part of a CIA-backed effort to curb the leftists-communist movements since 1970s. The main historical reference for the existence of such clandestine, para-military and extra-legal organization was the Susurluk accident. The secularist-Kemalists dwelled on Susurluk case as part of the propaganda against the Islamic RP—which was held responsible for the shady relations between state and mafia (Yashin 2002; Aydın 2015). The term Ergenekon found credence in the Islamist circles with the 2000s, although this time focusing more on the "civic" and "business" (along with the elements of military and police) groups and activities involved in the Ergenekon structure (Balcı 2010, p. 79). The main historical thematic to read into the Ergenekon was the February 28, 1997 military coup which resulted in the removal of the political Islamist RP from the government. This was seen as the activity of secularist-leftist figures operating to undermine Islamic groups (Balcı 2010, p. 81).

Thus, before the Ergenekon issue was rebrought to public attention with the lawsuit after 2008, there were actually two Ergenekons: one depicted in the Kemalist secularist press as the ultra-nationalist, rightist formations within the state dating its genesis to the 1970s NATO-backed paramilitary organizations; the Islamist press focused more on how Ergenekon restructured itself to prevent Islamists gaining power and expanded its operations to include secular civil society institutions. Thus, while the Susurluk case was the main historical reference point for the secular press, for the Islamic press it was February 28 military intervention, emphasizing the secular grip on the military and erasing the connections to the 1970s rightist movements. Thus, the media compiled and interpreted the "facts" after Ergenekon becoming major lawsuit in 2008 within this pretext of its differing ideological (and historical) connotations of the term (Balcı 2010, p. 82-84).

2.4. Coverage of Ergenekon in the Secular and Islamic Press (2008-2013)

Although the descriptions of the case showed some resemblance, the secularist and Islamist media outlets carried on the difference in emphasis in terms of historical evidencing after the official lawsuit in 2008 as well. Thus, the emphasis on figures related to the Susurluk accident was the main argument put forward by the secular press. While not opposing to these arguments, the Islamist media through the thematic of February 28 highlighted "the coup supporting nature of Ergenekon "and its (secularist- Kemalist) civil extensions (Balcı 2010, p. 85-6). The Doğan Media Group, although remaining critical of the allegations regarding secularist political and military figures in its mainstream media outlets, its more leftist oriented outlets (e.g. *Radikal*) held a position against the coup tradition (Balci, p. 88). *Taraf*, as a liberal-leftist newspaper, was founded in this period and pioneered the investigations in bringing important documents into public agenda which later was included in the Ergenekon indictment. These liberal-leftist oriented newspapers reinforced the arguments of the Islamist press (Balcı 2010, p. 91).

2.5. Common Themes

While the name of Ergenekon became almost synonymous with the "deep state"—the motives and figures of this hidden power network have been emphasized differently

by the secular and Islamist press in terms of historical evidencing and perception of threat. More than the divergences though, I am mainly interested in the convergences in the discourse of competing positions, of those neo-nationalists (*Ulusalcı*) and Islamists (as they are the most "heated" partners of the case). Thus, Ergenekon, beyond merely a lawsuit about the deep state, has taken the form of discursive strategy to undermine the rival hegemonic position as staged in the media. As I scrutinize in this section, the rhetoric of "foreign intermingling" (or "*dış mihraklar*") and anti-semitic themes form the backbone of the discursive strategies in justifying or criticizing the Ergenekon investigations. Thus, both the Islamic and neo-nationalist Kemalist media deployed a shared set of ideological reference points and "cultural tool-kit" in setting their discursive strategies to rival the competing position. The view on minorities as possible collaborators of "external forces" to undermine the unity of society and state was the main argument put forward by both Islamic and neo-nationalist media. In addition, "the investigative journalists" of both stances utilized the anti-semitic themes and motifs within the conspiratorial literature in expressing their claims. The overall media dwell on Ergenekon pertains to an amalgam of "facts and fiction" (Kardaş 2012) due to the close interaction between media and conspiratorial literature.

2.5.1. Foreign Intermingling

The "external forces" ("*dış mihraklar*") with reference to their use of Islam (and Islamic movements) to further their world-domination is a common theme found in both the secular and the Islamic press and also in the interview discussions regarding state and/or "deep state". While the secular press links the foreign forces to the Islamic movement in such a way to pose a threat to the secular-independent Turkish state (in posing the Islamic Cemaat as in collaboration with the foreign forces); for their Islamic counterparts, the link between foreign enemies and Islamic groups (namely, the Gülen movement) is established through the "deep state"—or this secular Ergenekon establishment to undermine again the independence of Turkish state. This foreign element is emphasized in both stances because the "deep state" is (discursively) juxtaposed as opposed to the "actual state", its activities are understood in relation to the practices of "other states" which are in the "winning" position within the structure of global system of

domination. Thus, both stances justify their claim in relation to the dominated position of "Muslims" (for the conservative nationalists) or "Turks" (for secular nationalists) either by the "Judo-Christian" alliance or by the system of "imperialism".

The Gülen movement is posed either as a community fighting against this (international) "grand order" or its "pawn" given the central role of the Cemaat in Ergenekon investigations. In justifying their conspiratorial claims, both the Kemalist and Islamic media also referred to the statements of the prominent figures of the rival position. For example, On January 30, 2012 *Sözcü*[14] gave a reference to Oğuzhan Aslıtürk, framed as the "big brother of the Nationalist View" in its criticism of the Cemaat involvement in carrying out the Ergenekon case and the main "motive" behind the investigations. With the broadsheet headline of "Ergenekon is an American job", Sözcü posed the statement of AslıTürk, a prominent National View figure, as a means to justify their argument of foreign intermingling in the Ergenekon lawsuit. The news-content reads: "According to Asiltürk, the US conspired against those military cadres in the army who opposed to the US intervention in İran". Here not only does Cemaat loom as a collaborator with the US (or its "pawn", rather), it also poses those military figures implicated in the investigations as "anti-American" rather than "anti-Islamist". Thus, it is portrayed in Sözcü, with reference to Asiltürk, those implicated as "conspirers" are real "patriots" and "nationalists": "The US plans to occupy İran in near future. However, those patriotic military officers have been opposing to this. These officers have been detained with the Ergenekon investigations. Ergenekon is discharge of the opponents of the US in the Turkish military". Thus, Sözcü utilized a prominent figure from its (rival) political Islamic position in order to have a more explanatory completeness in their accounts as to Ergenekon, a decisive tool in the appeal of conspiratorial arguments (R. X. Dentith 2014, p. 76). In this way the claim of "US intermingling" is reinforced, a notion which is in the shared vocabulary of the secularist-Kemalist and political Islamic circles.

The very next day, one of the columnists in *Yeni Şafak* (2012)[15], Salih Tuna, writes in response to this news-piece in *Sözcü*. While agreeing on the existence of a US-intermingling in the military, Tuna portrays those military officers implicated in the investigations as under the command of the US: "These so-called "patriotic" officers have

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[14]Sözcü. (2012, January 30). *Milli Görüş'ün abisi Asiltürk'ten çarpıcı açıklama: Ergenekon Amerikan İşi*. p. A1.

[15]Tuna, S. (2012, January 31).Vay canına Ergenekon Amerikan işiymiş!. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 15, 2016, from http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/salihtuna/vay-canina-ergenekon-amerikan-isiymis-30857

always expressed their position against those "mullahs" in Iran. They were even motivated to use the armed forces against those National View figures including Oğuzhan Asıltürk…They even conspired with the US for their military intervention plan against the government which was prevented with the Ergenekon case". The notion of US intermingling has not only articulated in relation to the alleged Ergenekon figures in the military, but also in expressing the "suspicion" against the investigations in the Islamic media. For example, another columnist, Yusuf Kaplan, in *Yeni Şafak* (2008)[16] questions whether the Ergenekon investigations (rather than the Ergenekon network itself) are an undertaking of an utterly domestic establishment. Kaplan agrees with the accusations against the Ergenekon suspects and portrays Ergenekon as a secularist "deep mafia" established by NATO to combat against Islamists' gaining (state) power. But he also questions the role of Cemaat (with reference to those prosecutors having close ties with the Gümel movement) in terms of performing the "changed motives" of the US. Accordingly, Kaplan argues that rather than with those Kemalist cadres, the US wants to work with the "so-called" Islamist cadres (with reference to the Cemaat) to better control the Islamists: "They want to work with seemingly Islamic-friendly actors in order to domesticate, secularize, and take over the Islam which represents the spirit of Turkish state and society". Kaplan relates all these suspicions against the Cemaat-US collaboration to the role of Turkey as the "Trojan horse" in the new world order. It seems that both editorials from *Sözcü* and *YeniŞafak* are commonly "conservative" enough to deploy "foreign vs domestic" rhetoric in line with their shared ontological insecurities emerging from the "Sevres Syndrome"—although the actors and their desires are described differently. In both stances the notion of "Islam" looms as a means to further the system of domination designed by the "grand order".

2.5.2. Minorities as the "pawn" of "foreign forces"

Minority groups loom as a readily accessible tool for foreign powers to intervene in the domestic process, both in the narrative of official historiography and in the market for conspiracy literature. In the Islamic press, while Ergenekon is associated with the "old

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[16]Kaplan, Y. (2008, July 18).Ergenekon'un getirdikleri ve götürdükleri. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 15, 2016, from http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/yusufkaplan/ergenekonun-getirdikleri-ve-goturdukleri-11946

state-mentality" with reference to the earlier Kemalist-secularist hegemonic grip of state, this Ergenekon clandestine network is also described as to include the agents of Kurdish movement such as the Kurdish fighter organization, PKK. For instance, in a news-piece in *Yeni Şafak* published in 2008, the PKK is argued to be founded and supplied by the Ergenekon group[17]. Although the period of Ergenekon investigations saw the discussions of "peace process" and negotiations between state agents and the PKK on the "table" (which was later put into the "freezer"), the political agency and mobilization on the part of the minorities were still feared in the process of AKP's consolidation within the state.

In a way, it was rather *necessary* to include PKK and the KCK lawsuit in Ergenekon to emphasize its *illegality* as opposed to the "actual" state. It can be argued that there was a discursive continuation of the "old state mentality" which made the Kurdish issue a taboo within the frame of mainstream politics. Thus, those who founded the JİTEM (e.g. Veli Küçük) also argued to have founded the Kurdish fighter group, as contradictory as this sounds, it coheres with the historical discursive repertoire of state which sees its rivals as one unified entity, posing a threat to its own unity. After all, the genesis of Ergenekon—a.k.a. the deep state—dates back to NATO's Gladio "stay-behind units" and it is much expected to include all the "anarchy" into its practical purpose. These allegations, of course, mostly and primarily offended those secularist republicans. Against these allegations, Muharrem İnce, a representative from the secularist CHP, stated: "The patriotic intellectuals, journalists, and parliemantary representatives are being put into trial on the basis of those secret witnesses from the PKK. This is not acceptable" (Hürriyet 2012)[18].

This allegation of Kurds as operating under the command of higher order clandestine structures to undermine the Turkish state is also present in the secularist perspectives. One of my interlocutors, Şakir (age 53), a high-school history teacher from the nationalist-secularist teachers' union (Eğitim-İş) posited (then) Kurdish political party, the BDP and AKP to be an American—imperialist project. This "puppet" position of both AKP and HDP accounted for the "peace process" then, "war process" now. According to Şakir, the imperialism—which is the system of domination shaped by the US and Israel—is not

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[17]Arslan, Ş. (2008, July 17). PKK'nın hamisi de Ergenekon örgütü. *Yeni Şafak.* Retrieved May 22, 2016, from http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/pkknin-hamisi-de-ergenekon-orgutu-129230

[18]Hürriyet. (2012, November 6). *'Ülkenin aydınlarını PKK'lıların verdikleri ifadelerle yargılıyorlar'.* Retrieved February 22, 2016, from http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ulkenin-aydinlarini-pkklilarin-verdikleri-ifadelerle-yargiliyorlar-21861186

expected to be consistent in its methods—it can make its "puppets" both collaborate and fight with each other, whatever is suitable to its interests:

> "There is this aspect in imperialism: It does not care about the agents or instruments it uses. It sometimes supports them both (AKP and HDP), and sometimes it lets them clash with each other. It just leaves them to destroy each other"

Conspiratorial explanations remove the inconsistencies in the affairs of "conspiring groups" in favor of over-coherence in such a way that the periods of collaboration and dispute between these groups serve the global system of domination whose strings are taken to be held by the conspiratorial coalitions. Or, this "domestic dispute" might as well be grafted over "us" even if AKP is not believed to be a "pawn" but rather the backbone of the state. As Aylin (age 37) who actively participate in and contributes to the AKP organization in Antalya:

> "They also dictated the Kurdish uprisings before the establishment of Turkish republic in order to end our existence in Anatolia. Perhaps, the "peace process" did not serve their interests. I do not think that we have any internal problems with our Kurdish brothers and sisters. The source of dispute is external"

Although the agency granted to the AKP, seen either as a "puppet" or as an active agent in narrativizing what happened differ in line with Şakir's and Aylin's political positioning, what is shared in these two statements is the view that Kurds are ripped of their subjectivity in terms of political agency. Thus, Kurds, or other minority groups for that matter, are to be viewed as passive agents who are susceptible to foreign manipulation. The dispute between Kurds and Turks are portrayed as historically imposed on the society by external forces which benefit from this dispute, concealing the internal— historical and cultural roots of that dispute. Thus, conspiracy theories built around this minority image derive their legibility from the official denialist discourse of the state, which conceals its own agency in accounting for Kurdish issue. Thus, the end of "peace process" is understood in both instances as in the interest of other states, curtailing the agency of "own state" in creating the domestic dispute among its citizens. Both Aylin and Şakir point to the political vocabulary of the Kurdish movement, particularly that of "destroy the TC" ("*Kahrolsun TC*") to account for the threat they pose for the Turkish

state of whose devastation is in the interest of other states. What's more, the slang that criticizes the Turkish state practices yields the evidence for the "puppet essence" of AKP and HDP in that they do not target the government but the state. As Şakir puts it:

> "They say 'destroy the TC' for example. What does this mean? They attack directly to the Turkish Republic, rather than the AKP or Erdoğan."

The dichotic textual structure of conspiracy theories, in its positioning of society into "innocent us" and "persecutory other(s)", fits well into the official imaginary of society as a coherent and homogenized nation united against a common enemy. Thus, mass-mediated conspiracy theories are utilized both as a reminder of national identity, and also as a reminder of "their national place in a World of nations" (Billig 1995, p. 8). In other words, conspiracy theories are used as explanatory texts about the operation of power through the construction of "us" vis-à-vis the (power) position of "others". For example, the rhetoric of foreign intermingling perpetually used in mass-mediated conspiracy theories, not only (re)constructs the society into one coherent unit as opposed to the external threat, but it also reinforces the sense of positioning in the larger system of world domination imprinted in the official historiography. The hegemonic image of the minorities as a "pawn" of these foreign forces, however, paradoxically reaffirms the position of control and agency on the part of the majority "us", as the minorities are ripped of their political agency and reduced to that of "object" of political action, open to manipulations.

2.6. Personification and Personalization

As conspiracy theories yield an unveiling of the "true" identities of those controlling the history, they usually point to this persecutory other by means of personification (Bale 2007). The personification of threat also brings about the "demonization" of the conspiring group, laying down an image of "villain", the hideous conspiratorial other, to account for "why do bad things happen to good people or vice versa" (Groh 1987). This personification, or defining the threat in blood and flesh, relies on the pool of *others* in the reservoir of the popular culture and official discourse. This hunt for a "non-Turkish and/or non-Muslim" essence flows across both Kemalist and Islamic press to justify their position

in the Ergenekon case. The "Jew image" looms in the vocabulary of both Kemalist-secularists and political Islam as the hidden conspiring agent, as the common "villain" (Landau 1988). The anti-semitic conspiratorial narratives, in this sense, provides the bridge for competing positions towards convergence into the dominant nation-statist ideology, even though they are put forward strategically to undermine each other's position.

Although successive Turkish governments celebrated the absence of potent anti-semitism in Turkey in line with the imprint of the denialist discourse of the official historiography, many scholars point to the integrality of anti-semitic rhetoric to both the political and media discourse (Bali 2013; Nefes 2012, 2013, 2014). Many studies show that anti-semitic themes and motifs are widespread at the societal level as well. According to the report of PEW Research Center in 2008, in Pakistan and Turkey, 76% had unfavorable opinions about Jews, while less than 10% expressed positive opinions (Pew 2008). Another PEW report from 2014 found Israel to be the most hated country by Turkish citizens, in that, while 86% had an unfavorable opinion of Israel, only 2% of the responders expressed positive impression[19]. This suggests that the conspiratorial accounts revolving around the image of "hidden Jewish hand" as controlling the course of historical events resonate with the widespread anti-semit attitudes in society. Thus, anti-semitic conspiratorial narratives, or the "villain" image of Jew, offer readily accessible cultural material for the reproduction of national identity, and the sense of positioning vis-à-vis other nations.

The media narrative of the Ergenekon relied mostly on the personas of political figures because of the extent and identities of those implicated and also because of the tendency in which media communicate politics in a "personalized manner" (Bennett 2012). Both the secularist-Kemalist and the conservative Islamic media drew on the cultural imaginary of Jew as a tool for attaching villain essence to the personas of the rival political figures in justifying their conspiratorial claims. The "investigative journalists" of both camps (neo-nationalist and political Islamist) utilized their energy and resources in uncovering the "true", that is non-Turkish, non-Muslim and mostly Jewish, identity of those who hold the strings of the state and society behind the closed doors.

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[19]Poushter, J. (2014, October 31). The Turkish people don't look favorably upon the U.S., or any other country, really. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved May 30, 2016, from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/10/31/the-turkish-people-dont-look-favorably-upon-the-u-s-or-any-other-country-really/

For example, *Vaki*t (2008) covered a picture of General İlker Başbuğ—implicated as the head of the Ergenekon terrorist group—in the Western Wall in Jerusalem with its broadsheet headline "*A bureaucrat in the Western Wall*", hinting at the possibility of his secret Jewish descent. This "Jew picture" is made explanatory for his "turning out to be a villain" through the Ergenekon probe. It is important to note that the question of his descent was the fist question to be asked in his trial in 2012, based on his picture in the Western Wall (Hürriyet 2012)[20]. He defended himself as "being proud of his being a Turk and Muslim". This shows both the role of media discourse in fashioning the judicial process, and the integrality of anti-semitism in the state discourse. The attributions to a secret Jewish identity can also be found in the neo-nationalist discourse. As such neo-nationalist author, Soner Yalçın's books, "The Great Secret of White Turks" (2004) and "Mr. Pipe" (2008) become bestsellers; where he claimed, building on the global narrative of Jewish plot to the world domination, that the Dönme, or Cyripto Jews, control the Turkish state. In a similar vein, Ergün Poyraz (2009) portrays Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Emine Erdoğan as "secret Jews" in addition to building on the claim that the AKP as the "project" of U.S and Israel (*Musa'nın Çocukları* 2009).

As a young, "National View" student, following in the footsteps of Necmettin Erbakan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan "wrote, directed, and played the leading role in a theatrical play entitled Maskomya", staged throughout Turkey during the 1970s.The title of his "piece", Mas-Kom-Ya reads "Masons-Communists-Yahudi (Jews)" (Rosenfeld 2015, p. 59). The "glue" of this "trinity" was the Jew image. A similar "theatrical piece" was also staged by mainstream media around the Ergenekon issue, although utilizing the "villain image" as a discursive strategy to downplay the rival position, they ended up reproducing the nation-statist sentiment, for which the Jew image served as the continual and familiar reminder of nationhood. In other words, the personalized discourse of mainstream media "flagged" the Ergenekon issue on the basis of the personification of threat with the thematic of Jew as "villain".

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[20]Hürriyet. (2012, April 30). Ağlama duvarı sorusuna insanlık suçu tepkisi. Retrieved April 21, 2016, from
http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/aglama-duvari-sorusuna-insanlik-sucu-tepkisi-20450090

2.6.1. Ergenekon as a media fiction: The case of Tuncay Güney

Building on the analysis of how the personas of political figures are integrated within the conspiratorial discourse of media in covering the Ergenekon, I would like to turn my attention to the most mysterious figure of the case, Tuncay Güney, the Julian Assange of the Turkish media. It was (mostly) on the basis of Güney's testimonial allegations (we are told) the Ergenekon investigations were carried out. Güney is a Turkish citizen of Jewish descent who claims to have infiltrated the JİTEM, the Worker's Party, the Ergenekon, and the Gülen movement. Even though he was presented as a "spy" in the media, he always put forward his current occupation as a rabbi, working in a Jewish organization in Canada. Given his central role in both the lawsuit and the media narrative of the Ergenekon, Tuncay Güney gained reputation as "the black box/ key figure/ rabbi of Ergenekon". Güney looms as the outspoken defender of the "democratic state" as opposed to the residues of the "old state"—that is Ergenekon. Different than those implicated who had to prove their innocence by way of "being proud of" their "Turkishness and Muslimness" though, Güney emphasized his "hybridity" in relation to his identity, through his "controversial" statements such as "Alhamdulilah (praise to God) I am not a Muslim" and "I feel more sense of belonging to Canada than Turkey" (32. Gün 2008).

Even though Güney was portrayed as a figure who unveiled the secrets of the deep-state practices through his testimonies in the official lawsuit and his allegations with regard to those implicated, his statements were scrutinized in relation to his personal biography: Before his "self-exile" in Canada in 2001 (he never made in-person appearance on TV during the investigations), he started his journalism career in *Sabah* and later transferred to *Milliyet*. Güney is also among the founding member of the conservative Islamist *STV*, a television channel with organic ties to Gülen movement where he also hosted a discussion program called *Gündemdekiler*. Güney later worked in the newspapers *Tercüman*, and the channel *HBB*. More than his journalist career though, Güney was mainly on the media agenda with his career as a "spy", although the question of "for whom he really works" was the most speculated discussion topic. He was speculated to be a spy of the Turkish Intelligence Organization (MİT), the CIA, and the MOSSAD due to his "contribution" to the investigation based on his intelligence endeavor.

The most interesting part in relation to his persona, although he was subjected to all sorts conspiracy narratives, he was also the one circulating similar conspiratorial allegations (which got "official" over time) with regards to other prominent political or

media figures by implicating himself as the "investigative journalist", "a networked person who knows a guy", "an innocent bystander in all of this", "as a person for whom the money and contact is never the issue" (Ulusal Kanal 2013). In all those interviews he attended, the truth value of his conspiratorial claims were disputed and questioned on the basis of his personal position in the events—whether he was an secret agent, really a Rabbi, from the Cemaat. In response to the conspiratorial allegations made by the journalists with regards to his personal involvement in the case, Güney would charge them as "the journalists whose *kıble* is in the direction of Washington"asking them to "uncover those journalists who work for MOSSAD and Tel Aviv in the first place" (32. Gün 2012). The scandal-hungry Turkish media, of course, swallowed all these disputes around the figure of Tuncay Güney (and what were disputed by him) in relation to Ergenekon, which they configured in line with their political positioning. As "sensationalistic" the investigations were (e.g. the extent of the targets, the allegations to deep state activities), Tuncay Güney was the one who brought the "fun" in all these political events—a perfect example for the "villain" image of the Jew which have a resonance across political perspectives, ranging from the Islamists, secularists, and leftists (Bali 2013). Although he seemed to occupy a central position in the investigations with references to him as the "black box", he was also in "nowhere land" with regards to all these ideological stances because of his "Jew" image, the common other in relation to which they all draw their political and cultural identity. The way Güney was portrayed in the competing claims of the conservative Islamist and Kemalist neo-nationalist positions, not only reproduced the potent anti-semitism as a discursive tool, but also configured a readily accessible basis for these competing claims to "come to terms with" at an ideological level.

While the liberal secular press draw suspicion towards the overall Ergenekon probe (mainly) through this uncanny figure of Tuncay Güney, the Islamist and liberal-leftist press drew their conclusions for their conspiratorial accounts on the basis of his statements about the "existence" of ETÖ. As curious as it is, having done his war against ETÖ for over 4 years in the media scene, in February 2013, he made another appearance in some media platforms (in *SkyTurk*, and after that *Ulusal Kanal*) this time claiming that Ergenekon investigation was itself a "plot" and that "his role in the game *has been* ended" (Ulusal Kanal 2013). In his interview in *Ulusal Kanal*, he claimed that a cadre in Cemaat had been formed who took over the "tutelage" from the secularist-military cadres after the investigations. This time, Güney posed himself as the outspoken chevalier against an

international conspiracy group he called the "global parallel oligarchic network". As part of this network, he claimed, the Gülen movement operated "in order to undermine democratic aspirations of Turkey". In tying this new "parallel tutelage" behind the façade of Islamic (Gülenist) movement, he pointed to the Cemaat and Israel collaboration. And it was his "Jew image" which rendered his claims all the more persuasive. As once depicted "*Gülen's black box*", he was the perfect "proof" of such linkage between the Cemaat and the international Jewish presence.

In one his interviews in *32. Gün* (in October, 2008) Birand hosted him together with the investigative journalists from Islamist and neo-nationalist circles (e.g. Şamil Tayyar, Saygı Öztürk) who wrote books about him or about the Ergenekon probe where his role in the case is scrutinized. Birand posed each and every guest the question of "who is Tuncay Güney". The answers range from a "democratic fellow"; a CIA, MİT or MOSSAD agent. Birand posed the same question to Güney, he replied that "I am a ghost!". Güney negated all those conspiratorial claims deriving its basis from his Jewish identity by posing himself as a "ghost" of anti-semitism resurrected through neo-nationalist discourse. The books of those investigative journalists from competing positions commonly relied on potent anti-semitism in the market for conspiracy theories, in making Güney the culprit of the case and the prime subject of (the Ergenekon) conspiracy. In a way, this paradoxically rendered the conspiratorial allegations that Güney put forward as a "Jewish black box", making them "marketable" for a wide range of political perspectives.

The media portrayal of Tuncay Güney is reminiscent of the protagonist, Simon Simonini in Umberto Eco's *The Prague Cemetery*. In *The Prague Cemetery*, Eco traces the origins of the Protocols of Elderly Zion, a make-believe Tsarist Russian document that purported to reveal a Jewish plot to take over the world. In the novel, the Protocols is presented as one of the forgeries, that it was plagiarized from the preexisting anti-semitic conspiratorial literature, but which nevertheless served as a source of justification during the Nazi Holocaust. In the novel, the Protocols is shown as the work of a single man, Simonini, a fictional character who manages to have a hand in most of the great events in the second half of the 19th century (e.g. Italian unification, Franco-Prussian war, Paris Commune, Dreyfus Affair) as a master forger, murderer, and conspirator. Eco's Simonini "is too cynical to believe any of the conspiracy theories, but it strikes him they are infinitely marketable" as he realizes that "there was an anti-Jewish market… among the revolutionaries, republicans, and socialists" of the 19th century (p. 194). Thus, it was

convenient for various groups to promote anti-Jewish sentiments in their political agenda. What comes to be a product of forgery is posed, in effect, as a shared and collective affair. The way the mainstream media presented the Ergenekon issue around the persona of Güney relied on the pretext of anti-semitic sentiment historically widespread among variety of political circles in Turkey, and based its motifs and themes on the anti-semitic conspiratorial market. In that sense, the media-story of Ergenekon was also "plagiarized" from anti-semitic conspiratorial market surrounding deep state practices.

Another insight from *The Prague Cemetery* has to do with the nature of conspiracy theories. Eco takes on the Jew figure as the *object* of conspiracy in portraying the Protocols as a "plot" *against* the Jew, rather than the usual *subject* of conspiratorial narratives. In doing so, Eco draws on a web of historical plots (e.g. Dreyfus Affair) and presents conspiracy theorizing as a highly uncoordinated and not necessarily masterfully directed practice. Instead, conspiracy theories do not have a consistent governing body and they have no other direction other than their own dispersion. Likewise, conspiracy theories do not have a particular target or enemy, but can be propagated against any person, group, or ideology; even at times against their own proclaimers. And yet, the Jew figure comes to be the frequent node enabling this "flexibility" in terms of the target and the uses of conspiracy theories as a political strategy. This is because conspiracy theories tend toward social reproduction, as Simonini says, "People believe only what they already know, and this is the beauty of the Universal Form of Conspiracy" (p. 104).

The frequent use of historical plots such as Susurluk crash and February 28 military intervention have been put into a grand narrative of what happened, which portrayed loosely connected clandestine activities since 1970s (e.g. the activities of JİTEM, PKK, the Worker's Party) as a coordinated effort of a coherent group, the Ergenekon. What has been left unaccounted by the Islamists came to be accounted for by the Kemalist neo-nationalists (or vice versa) rather than contradicted, which made the narrative around Ergenekon explanatorily complete (R.X. Dentith 2012). As anti-semitic conspiracy theories can be utilized by various political actors at various times against their rivals as Eco posits, the Jew figure as a "villain" is perpetuated in competing discursive strategies around the Ergenekon case. Both sides of the argument drew on a shared anti-semitic "cultural tool-kit" in rivaling each other, which made the overall narrative (of Ergenekon) conclusive (that it was an "international Jewish plot") but all the more bounded on a hegemonic interpretative basis. During the period of Ergenekon investigations, anti-

semitic sentiment is reproduced through a loosely coordinated collective propagation as staged in the mainstream media.

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on the ways in which the Ergenekon investigations were brought to the public attention by the mainstream media. Beyond merely a lawsuit based on the activities of the "deep state", the media narrative around the Ergenekon has been configured as a discursive strategy to undermine the competing hegemonic position. Thus, both the Islamic and neo-nationalist Kemalist media mobilized the case as a means to articulate their political urgencies and ideological positions.

In lending their justifications for their conspiratorial arguments around the "deep state", both the Islamic and Kemalist media drew on a shared "cultural tool-kit" of the nationalist ideology. Thus, these competing claims both originated and appealed to this preexisting discursive repertoire shaped by the "Sevres Syndrome", continually articulated in the official historiography. As such, the rhetoric of "external and internal enemies" have been reproduced in both explanations in that both positions presented the Ergenekon case as a way of "foreign intermingling" through minority groups.

Especially the anti-semitic themes and motifs formed the backbone of the discursive strategies of the Islamic and Kemalist media around the Ergenekon. Both positions utilized the anti-semitic conspiracy market in portraying the actors and the practices of the "deep state". In both competing media outlets, the Ergenekon issue has been covered in a personalized manner, focusing mostly on the personas of the political figures implicated in the case. Thus, the "villain" image of the Jew was remobilized to undermine competing political actors.

These competing conspiratorial arguments put forward by the Islamic and Kemalist media, in a way contributed to each other's plausibility, in the sense that they complemented, rather than contradicted with the rival position on ideological grounds. Thus, it can be argued that although purported to challenge each other, these alternative conspiracy theories had the same political implication of reinforcing Turkish nationalism.

CHAPTER 3

3. PARANOIA AS A SYSTEMATIC MASS-PROPAGANDA

3.1. Political trajectory of the term "Parallel-state"

In his column in *Cumhuriyet* (on February 25, 2014)[21] Can Dündar traces the genesis of the term parallel through the İmralı reports—one of which was published in Milliyet on 23February, 2013—one year prior to the aforementioned article. According to Dündar, the notion of "parallel state" with reference to Cemaat establishment was first used by Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of Kurdish movement. In the aforementioned (İmralı) report, Öcalan argues:

> "There is a three-fold 'parallel-state' operation in Turkey. The Jewish, Armenian and Greek lobbies in the US are intervening with the domestic matters… These parallel-state agents infiltrated in the AKP, media and business circles. There is only the MİT left to be penetrated. They want to overthrow the head of the intelligence service. They have a major power network in their support"

Two weeks before his current article (25.02.2014), Erdoğan described the parallel state as "the interest, cleric, media, and business lobby" *("faiz, vaiz, medya, sermaye lobisi").* Although the description of the parallel state came later from Erdoğan, *Milli Gazete* was first to deploy the term parallel, in referring to the Cemaat establishment mainly in judiciary, as orchestrating the December 17, 2013 investigation. *Milli Gazete*

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[21]Dündar, C. (2014, February 25). Öcalan ne dediyse o oldu. *Cumhuriyet*. Retrieved February 21, 2015, from http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/44733/Ocalan_Ne_Dediyse_O_Oldu.html

was also quick to raise suspicion in tying the events to the so-called "MİT crises" of February, 2012. What is referred as the MİT crises is that on February 7, 2012, some MİT officials including the head of the organization, Hakan Fidan, was called forward for testimony by the prosecution in relation to their dealings with PKK within the framework of "peace negotiations". This situation was communicated as a "domestic security crises" by the government and media showing the affair as an "attempted coup". According to Dündar, Öcalan referred to the Gülen movement as orchestrated the coup against the intelligence service:

> "This (parallel) power planned a coup against the MİT. I immediately interfered and called it a 'coup'… If they had taken over the MİT, they would be in the position to control the state. If they had arrested Fidan, the next would be the prime minister in jail. I noticed that I could help prevent the coup and started the process immediately"

It is interesting to note that although *Milli Gazete* seems to be the first one to use "parallel state" with reference to Cemaat and thus first to draw parallels between MİT crises (that Öcalan speaks about) and the December 17 probe, the notion of "parallel" seems to be firstly circulated by media on the backdrop of what labelled as the intelligence crises of February 2012. Here I do not aim to trace who came up with the term parallel in relation to Cemaat, but it seems significant enough to note that it was first put forward and circulated by the media in relation to the "crises" situation in the Turkish intelligence before its becoming official in the following years through the December 17-25 corruption probe. Thus, as the intelligence service is a significant apparatus of control and agency on the part of the state, the term "parallel" is constructed to deploy an alternative locus of control within the established state institutions. The civic base of Cemaat in relation to its grass-roots mobilization will later to be included in the descriptions of its operation after the December 17-25 context.

3.2. On paranoia as a systematic propaganda

In understanding how the press dwelled on December 17-25 investigations, I make use of Chomsky's Propaganda Model (1988)—which is the most applicable considering the ways in which mainstream media reproduces the system of domination and statist

discourse in capturing the political events. As I focus on conspiracy theories as "paranoid" narratives, I approach to mass-mediated conspiratorial accounts as reflective of a paranoia not only *about* the state, but also *of* state-reason due to the close intimacy between media and state. As the propaganda model suggests that mass media serves for elite interests through their choice of what to cover and what to omit in the process of news-production which is "oriented towards social reproduction" of the hegemonic relations (Pedro 2011, p. 1866) As such, I address paranoia spoken through these conspiracy theories as part of the systematic propaganda that the mass-media engages. Thus, I take on conspiracy theories as a "practical social knowledge" which shape the news-content towards social reproduction and in the favor of status-quo (Hall 1981, p.270).

3.3. Media Rivalry and Conspiracy

Media is not only the medium for conspiracy theories to be disseminated, but also comes to be the "subject" of conspiracy theories. In the context of the corruption accusations, media outlets not only positioned themselves in relation to the official line of the government, but also with respect to other (competing) media outlets in their description of conspiratorial practices. As the crisis situation paved the way for rivalry among media outlets, this rivalry was spoken through implicating one another into the conspiracy or distancing itself from conspiratorial practice as a political activity. For example, *Akit* communicated the MİT trucks investigations in terms of "*Zaman* based *Radikal* conspiracy" ("*Zaman Merkezli Radikal Komplo*") alleging the newspapers, *Zaman* and *Radikal*, which covered the investigations to the "parallel conspiracy" claim put forward by the government. The term "conspiracy" is not used to suggest any state-level conspiratorial practice, but rather the very exposure of it by the government-critical media outlets. *Zaman* is put at the center of this conspiracy because of its organic ties with the Gülen movement, though it was the work of a journalist from Radikal, which brought the issue to public attention for the first time. While describing *Zaman* as the "master mind" of the investigation reinforced the parallel conspiracy claim, it also posed the oppositional press as tools of this conspiratorial foci. While mainstream media engaged in a strategy of alleging its rivals into a grand-conspiracy, the alternative press chose to strategically distance itself from the conspiratorial practice. For example, in its commentary column entitled as "Resisting and Snitching" ("*Direnenler ve Fitneşenler*"),

Birgün posed that "snitching" and "conspiring" are the strategies of the power groups, distancing leftist ideology and political practice from conspiracy in favor of resistance.

3.4. Corruption and Conspiracy Frames

3.4.1. The Newspapers and Their Attitudes Toward the Investigations

In terms of the *corruption* frame, I refer to those newspapers' overall attitudes towards the accusations which emphasized governmental corruption rather than conspiracy against the government. However, it is not necessarily the case that those newspapers who highlighted the existence of governmental corruption (therefore, the legitimacy of the corruption probe) never deployed the *conspiracy* frame in their coverage of events. As it will be exemplified, they posed other conspiratorial arguments or pointed to a state-level conspiratorial practice in narrativizing the investigations.

Thus, although it can be said that mainstream *Taraf, Sözcü, Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, Milli Gazete, Hürriyet, Zaman* and alternative-leftist *Evrensel* and *BirGün* shaped their overall attitude towards the case in terms of governmental corruption; *Milli Gazete, Yeni Akit, Haber Turk, Vatan, Akşam, Sabah, Star, Yeni Şafak*'s overall attitude was "conspiracy against the government" by the "parallel state". Thus, what I refer to as the pro-government and the anti-government in categorizing these newspapers pertains to this distinction of their overall tone towards the investigations. Except for *Milli Gazete*, the rest of the pro-governmental press stance held there was *no corruption*. On the one hand, *Milli Gazete* highlighted the governmental corruption, it also put forward "parallel conspiracy" account—pointing to the clandestine activities of Cemaat, particularly with the thematic of "international Zionism". *BirGün* and *Evrensel* are different than the rest of the anti-governmental newspapers due to their alternative-leftist stance as opposed to the liberal mainstream newspapers (such as *Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Sözcü*).

3.4.2. Corruption Frame

All the newspapers covered the investigations in their broadsheet headlines on December 18 which was the first day of print-press coverage of events. While both anti-government and pro-government newspapers used the word "operation" to denote the judicial process in their broadsheet headlines, they used a tacit distinction in their deployment of the word which either legitimated or illegitimated the nature of investigations. the anti-government newspapers used the word "operation" in terms of an investigation against governmental corruption. The pro-government newspapers, used the word operation connotatively, implying a conspiratorial activity behind the investigations which are described as "deep operation"; "operation within operation"; "backstage of the operation"; "election-timed operation".

Both *Radikal* and *Yeni Şafak* referred to "three components of the operation". *Yeni Şafak* categorised the ones implicated as from "the political, bureaucratic, and business circles" ("*siyaset, bürokrasi, iş dünyası*"). *Radikal* was more explicit in aligning the AKP government to the corruption probe and it emphasized the specific figures and institutions implicated in the accusations: "Rıza Zarrab and 3 deputies; Municipality of Fatih; and TOKİ[22]". *Yeni Şafak* used more general terms than *Radikal* to describe the extent and target of the investigations. This might be due to how they overall framed the investigation: While *Radikal* covered it as a corruption probe targeting the AKP government specifically, *Yeni Şafak* portrayed it as part of a broader conspiracy by those who have penetrated the state.

3.4.2.1. Corruption and Personalization

Iyengar (1991) categorizes the media coverage of political issues into two distinct genres: *episodic* and *thematic* framing. The former concentrates on issues in terms of individual instances and specific events that draw people's attention to individual responsibility or agency rather than social responsibility. The latter places an issue in more general context and takes structural (and historical) issues into consideration. The press coverage of the corruption scandal almost exclusively relied on episodic framing where

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[22]Mass Housing Administration

the issue was presented as a "battle" between the AKP government and the Gülen movement. In the first day of the coverage of the case, *Cumhuriyet* described the issue in terms of a "chess game" between the AKP and Cemaat, posing the investigation as a "finishing" move of the Cemaat to take on the government ("Cemaat said checkmate") in its broadsheet headline. Similarly, the alternative press, *Birgün* and *Evrensel*, also posed the event as a strategically move on the part of the Cemaat in utilizing the case to take on the AKP government.

This episodic dwell on the governmental corruption also brought about the personalization of responsibility with a focus on the persona of Erdoğan. On December 18, *Sözcü* offered an example of this "personalized slang" in its broadsheet headline: "Tayyip, either clean this mess or resign!". Thus, on the one hand Erdoğan is portrated as the single responsible agent of the corruption, on the other hand he is posed as the only one actor who could "clean the mess". A thematic frame could link the governmental corruption with the social, economic, and political trajectories in the socio-historical context of neoliberalization and its ethos such as "economic transparency". Moreover, a thematic report on the political corruption could relate the issue to the concrete and daily experiences of the members of the society, not to the power struggles among the hegemonic positions. Thus, the relevance of the political corruption to the society is communicated in terms of a crises at the governmental level limited in time and space, rather than its systematization as a state-level practice.

Hürriyet dwelled on the corruption by way of "exposing" close ties among those implicated, namely Reza Zarrab, Ebru Gündeş, and Zafer Çağlayan with the headline of "the TC-RZA Passengers". News-content refers to a plane trip in March 2013 of Reza Zarrab (and his wife Ebru Gündeş) together with the son of Zafer Çağlayan to Saudi Arabia. Although the picture of a plane along with the picture of these three figures might be suggestive of an implicit association to the car and its controversial the passengers in the Susurluk incident, the strategic appropriation of the word "TC" (abbreviation of *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, Turkish republic) along with "RZA" (Reza Zarrab) is suggestive of something else: It hints at the non-Turkish identity of Zarrab—as an Iranian businessman having close, personal ties with the government officials and their families.

In February 25, 2014 both *Cumhuriyet* and *Milliyet* referred to the famous "hide the money at home" ("*evdeki paraları sıfırla*") tape leaked to the Internet in their headline which is about a private conversation between Erdoğan and his son Bilal Erdoğan. This

particular leaking deserves a place in the headline due to its scandalous quality, but I am interested in how these newspapers tell about the events through personalizing the political meaning of corruption. The investigations implicated the families of the government representatives and it is only natural to include such kinds of emphasis on the personal figures who got involved. However, it also relates to the general attitude of the mass media in Turkey in terms of "the personalization of politics" in communicating political events (Bennett 2012).

As such, within the personalized frame of mass-communication, "politics-as-usual has been transformed into a succession of 'shock events'—with public speculation centering on the persona of Erdoğan" (Öncü 2012, p. 130). Arguably, this personalized dwell on corruption has to do with the counter-argumentative strategy of the opposition against the AKP which has built its party image around the persona of Erdoğan as a man of "family values" and "moral integrity". Thus, the anti-government newspapers in this sense, in dwelling mainly on the "misdeeds" of Erdoğan attempted to downplay this image, rather than the system of corruption.

3.4.3. Conspiracy Frame

For the conspiracy frame, I deployed the conditions listed by R. X. Dentith (2014) and the analytical categories put forward by Raab et al. (2013) for the textual analyses conspiracy narratives. R. X. Dentith (2014) poses that in order for a claim to be considered as a conspiracy theory (or as a conspiratorial explanation), the statement should consist of a set of intentional agents who plan; and a description of secrecy as to their (conspiratorial) activities (p. 91). I divided the conspiracy frame into two categories of "group of conspirers"; and "non-transparency" with reference to the aforementioned conditions which are also found as the components of conspiracy narratives in a study published by Raab et al. (2013). Thus, in my analysis of the conspiratorial explanations put forward by the press for the events and issues related to the December 17-25 investigations, I focused on the way they describe the set of actors and their desires under the sub-category of "group of conspirers"; and their definitions of secrecy under the "non-transparency". The descriptions of plot (or conspiracy) vary depending on how the newspaper defines these "group of conspirers" in terms of the actors involved and to which activities the "non-transparency" claim is attributed.

3.4.3.1. Group of Conspirers

The group of conspirers and their intentions are emphasized differently depending on the position of the newspapers vis-à-vis the government. As I mentioned earlier, those anti-governmental newspapers which highlighted the governmental corruption also made use of conspiratorial arguments in their coverage of the December 17-25. In the pro-government newspapers, these actors of conspiracy are mainly posed as consisting of the Cemaat and the external forces (such as the US and Israel). In the anti-government newspapers, the recent history of collaboration between the Cemaat and AKP (such as during the Ergenekon investigtions) are emphasized, describing the group of conspirers as the Cemaat and AKP. Overall, the Gülen movement was presented as a common conspiring agent in both pro-government and anti-government newspapers. But the responsibility attached to the AKP government regarding the role of Cemaat in state-affairs is described differently depending on the overall attitude of the newspapers toward the accusations of governmental corruption.

3.4.3.1.1. Cemaat and External Forces

The pro-government press framed the corruption investigation as illegitimate by means of ascribing a motive for those orchestrated the probe which was defined as a "coup" against the AKP government. The group of conspirers are covered in vague and politically loaded terms such as "dark powers/gangs", "dirty coalitions" which are used by Erdoğan in referring to the "parallel state" structure as behind the investigations. The "dirty coalitions" involved the Gülenist cadres within the state institutions and the other states such as the US and Israel and intelligence services of these countries (CIA and MOSSAD).

The evidence for such a collaboration between the Cemaat and international power groups is put forward by pointing to the role of the Halk Bank in the economic affairs with Iran. The Halk Bank was implicated in the corruption investigations because of Reza Zarrab's (the prime suspect of bribery in the case) investments in the bank regarding the "gold trade" between Iran and Turkey. The pro-government media showed the issue as an evidence for an "international interest-lobbying group" behind the investigations such that what referred as "gold-oil transfer" between Iran and Turkey had upset the interests of this

group in the region. This interest group was said to be backed by the US and Israel who had a claim in the oil reserves in the Middle East. Thus, this gold-oil trade between Iran and Turkey through Halk Bank damaged the "plans" of the US and Israel in the region so that they mobilized the Gülenist cadres within the state to make a coup against the government through the December 17-25 corruption probe. Thus, *Akşam, Sabah* and *Habertürk* showed the investigations as part of a "dirty campaign" against the government for not being under the control of the U.S and Israel. The evidence for such an international manipulation was put forward also with reference to Fetullah Gülen's residency in the US who was presented as backed by the CIA.

The pro-government media wove a societal relevance regarding the December 17-25 investigations, in that, they included the society as the target of the investigations in addition to the "nationally elected" AKP government. *Sabah* and *Akit* referred to the statements of the AKP officials such as Ali Babacan who said "They targeted the nation and the banks" through the events. Thus the categories of the domestic, "benevolent us" as opposed to the external, "persecutory other" were constructed through covering Erdoğan's statements such as "We won't surrender" and "We only need Allah". Thus the "us" was constructed as a unified, homogenous entity with an Islamic and nationalist color in its identity, as opposed to the conspiratorial others who were defined as "dark" and "dirty".

3.4.3.1.2. Cemaat and AKP

Milli Gazete pointed to the recent history of "partnership" between AKP and the Gülen movement since the February 28, 1997 military intervention which the newspaper claimed Fetullah Gülen supported. With reference to the role of the prosecutor Zekeriya Öz (claimed to be the member Gülen movement) in carriying out both the Ergenekon and December 17-25 investigations, *Milli Gazete* criticized the AKP for not being "competent" enough to "control its own officers" and being "under the tutelage of the Cemaat" since its coming to power. Likewise, the liberal anti-government media also criticized the government for supporting the Cemaat cadres during the Ergenekon trials. *Cumhuriyet, Hürriyet*, and *Sözcü* mainly emphasized "the conspiracy against the military" claim of the government as a justification for their earlier stance against the Ergenekon case, posing the AKP and Erdoğan responsible for the practices of phone-tapping and

wire-tapping in gathering the evidence for judicial investigations.

3.4.3.1.3. Cemaat as the Common Conspiratorial Agent

The claim of the international conspiracy against the government was reinforced through the utilization of similar vocabulary of historical plots which had been used in covering the Ergenekon investigations. The Gülenist cadres operating within state structures were described as the "residues of the old Turkey" with reference to the Cold War period extra-legal, para-military establishments. Thus, the narrative of the "parallel-state" was historicized in a similar way with that of the Ergenekon which presented the corruption probe as part of a web of "coordinated" historical plots orchestrated by the foreign forces who penetrated the state with Cemaat members since the 1970s. For example, *Milli Gazete* portrayed the February 28 military intervention in terms of a conspiracy masterminded by Fetullah Gülen. Thus, February 28, earlier used as a historical thematic in describing the activities of the Ergenekon, this time was used to present a historical background for the activities of the "parallel state".

This historical "grand narrative" of plots regarding the activities of the Gülen movement was also reinforced by the anti-government newspapers. For example, in *Sözcü* it was argued that "Cemaat wants to seize the Turkish state… The Ergenekon, Balyoz, OdaTV and KCK investigations were just means towards an end" along with a criticism against the government for being too "naïve" for not seeing the threat earlier. Thus, in a way, the December 17-25 was made explanatory for the historical events that were earlier explained by the Ergenekon. With the "parallel state conspiracy" argument the Ergenekon case was presented as a "plot", tying it into a historical coherent narrative with the themes and motifs earlier mobilized in the Ergenekon period itself.

In the alternative-leftist press, *Evrensel* and *BirGün*, the Cemaat establishment within the state was also portrayed as "superior" than the Ergenekon. However, these newspapers also problematized the conspiratorial practice as a structural one, rather than a governmental or personal one. As such, rather than a "residue of the old Turkey", they describe these clandestine activities as reflective of the "unchanging state-mentality". *Evrensel* pointed to the ongoing judicial cases with regard to the enforced disappearances, and unsolved murders such as Hrant Dink's—to question "why and how these cases are not still resolved despite the vast of witnesses and documents in relation to the

Ergenekon". Thus rather than blaming specifically the government or Erdoğan, *Evrensel* and *BirGün* problematized the systematic manner in which the practices of secrecy have been carried out in relation to the affairs of state.

3.4.3.2.Non-transparency

I use "non-transparency" in referring to the narratives of secrecy regarding state practices. The emphasis differed in terms of attributions to the governmental secrecy or to the clandestine practices of "the parallel state" depending on the position of the newspaper vis-à-vis the government. In other words, even though the pro-government and anti-government press used "non-transparency" as an argument in their conspiratorial arguments, what they covered as "secret" varied.

Regarding the corruption investigations, the pro-government newspapers (such as *Yeni Şafak, Sabah* and *Milli Gazete*) drew suspicion toward the intentions of the prosecutors in undertaking the case by pointing to the "non-transparent" manner in which they had carried out the process. On December 18, *Yeni Şafak* and *Sabah* highlighted that the prosecutors did not enter the corruption investigation to the National Judiciary Informatics System (*UYAP*), a platform through which the judicial processes were made transparent for the public. Thus, because the investigation was held secret from the authorities and the public, the evidences of corruption put forward by the prosecutors were presented as fabricated and defamatory. *Milli Gazete* as well read into the situation with an emphasis on secrecy where it commented that "*even* Erdoğan learned about the investigations from media". The pro-government press also ascribed non-transparency in describing the conspiratorial cadres, referred as the parallel state. For example, in *Akit*, the president of the Dissemination of Knowledge Society ("*İlim Yayma Cemiyeti*") commented with reference to those agents of the parallel state that "secrecy is their life-style. If their identities get exposed, they feel themselves as naked".

The "non-transperancy" argument regarding governmental practice is mostly emphasized on January 3, 2014 where most newspapers (especially the anti-government press) carried the MİT trucks investigations into their broadsheet headline and dwelled on the issue in their front-page coverage. Fatih Yağmur, a journalist from *Radikal*, was first to bring MİT trucks investigations to the public attention on January 2 in the online page of the newspaper. Yağmur reported that MİT, by using the vehicles of a Turkish-Islamic

NGO, Humanitarian Relief Foundation (*İHH İnsani Yardım Vakfı*) had been secretly carrying weaponry for the non-state actors operating in Syria which came to surface through an investigation of these trucks in near Hatay. Yağmur stated that the MİT official responsible for the trucks refused to carry out the prosecutor's orders. The affair was immediately labeled as a "state-secret", and the media banned from further scrutiny in their news-coverage.

The issue was on the press-coverage on January 3. Among the 16 newspapers analyzed, 11 newspapers covered the MİT trucks investigations into their headline (*Star, Radikal, Evrensel, Millet, Sözcü, HaberTurk, Taraf, Milli Gazete, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Şafak*) and 5 of the newspapers focused on Cemaat or corruption case in their headlines (*Yeni Akit, Vatan, Akşam, Sabah, Hürriyet*). The anti-government press highlighted the governmental secrecy claim by delivering the events as "state-secret" in their headlines, and pointed to the clandestine activities of state agencies with terrorist groups in Syria. The anti-government press posed counter-arguments as to these allegations, rendering the prosecutor orchestrated the investigation as a "parallel state" agent who took orders from CIA and Mossad. In addition, the "non-transparency" argument of the anti-government press was replaced with "transparency" argument, such that what the trucks carried was described as "aid for Turkmen groups" in Syria referring to the AKP representative, Efkan Ala's statements. Thus, while the anti-government press framed the event as a "state-secret", the anti-government press framed the event as part of an international conspiracy against the government and removed secrecy through the explanation of "aid for Turkmens".

BirGün evoked the Susurluk incident in covering the MİT trucks investigations suggesting that similar state-mafia relations were still in the practice of state agents. *BirGün* referred to Erdoğan as an actor occupying a place beyond the law and held him and the AKP government as responsible for the affairs with the terrorist groups in Syria. The alternative press, gave a criticism of the Syria policy of the government regarding the secrecy associated with the decision-making processes. *Evrensel* also referred to the government as a conspiratorial group in that they argued that "the government supported the El Kaide and El Nusra" deriving from the MİT trucks investigations. Although in the mainstream liberal newspapers, the governmental decision to label the investigation as state-secret was not usually questioned, *BirGün* and *Evrensel* put the issue as a historical and systemic activity of state agents with reference to shady relations between state and

mafia groups.

While the December 17-25 stimulated the public discussion towards the existence of an alternative focus of control within the state establishment, called "parallel state", it also included the process of consolidation of the AKP in terms of its claim of statehood. In a way, it is paradoxical that state agencies acquired more control over the media and the private lives of its citizens (through the adjustments in the MİT and the Internet regulation) during the same period the state is shown to be seized by "alien" groups. But this is a paradox intrinsic to those conspiracy theories claimed by the position of power, by exposing the clandestine undertakings of a conspiratorial body, they deny the conspirators the very of means of control—that is secrecy. Thus, by exposing the conspiracy, those in the hegemonic position paradoxically reaffirm their own "potential ability to control the course of future developments" (Bale 2007, p. 5). In the following section, I focus on how the mainstream media, in a similar manner, reconstructed its panopticon stance through their particular dwell on the issue of wiretapping and phone-tapping by a clandestine group—the "big brother".

3.5. On State-Practice and Conspiratorial Practice

As the Ergenekon lawsuit was primarily made up of the evidences based on the personal information such as private video and audio recordings, circulating "in the hands of the police, prosecutors", and also government-friendly journalists, Akser and Baybars-Hawks (2012) point to the increase in the surveillance practices as a political strategy to undermine rivals (p. 313-14):

> "Access to private information at this level suggests the existence of a *big brother like surveillance group* within the police that serves the interests of the government by spying on potential critics of the government… *Suspected but unproven*, this group seems to be able to provide defamatory surveillance videos of prominent figures, military and civilian bureaucrats, and members of the parliament, especially those in opposition, to use them for leverage and to create a sense of guilt by association" (p. 314- 319).

This statement resonates with the widespread belief among the public in Turkey that every citizen's phone has been tapped and their private conversations have been recorded by a clandestine surveillance structure. According to a 2013 poll conducted by Konda on

the belief in conspiracy theories, 64% of the individuals stated that a conspiratorial group has tapped the private phones of each citizen in the society. The existence of such a clandestine surveillance group, although highly disputed, was also normalized by the prominent political figures. As such, during the Ergenekon period, this hidden surveillance group was posed as targeting only those engaging with criminal activity, as (then) the Minister of Transport and Communication Binali Yıldırım put it, "If you are not engaged in an illegal activity, there is no need to be scared of being tapped" ("*Yasadışı işiniz yoksa dinlenmekten korkmayın*") (Hürriyet 2009)[23]. After the December 17-25, however, rather than the *content* of these private information obtained through wiretapping and phone-tapping, the *identity* of this "big brother" was in the main agenda of the government and pro-government media.

Even though this surveillance group, referred as the "big brother" by the researchers might not be the the state itself, it was nevertheless within the state institutions and the practices of the state officials this big-brother-like surveillance group emerged. In a way, this brings the state at the center of conspiratorial practice and point to the paranoid and panopticon-like manner in which it exerts control over its citizens. The period after the December 17-25 investigations is exemplified by the discursive strategy of the AKP and the conservative media, to take on this "big brother", now identified as the "parallel state". The threat posed by this clandestine group was taken as a matter of the "sake" of state and society in general, which were treated as the same categories. Thus, if it was "transparency" which formed the general motto of the government during Ergenekon investigation, after December 17-25, it was the sacredness of state (secret) at stake.

3.5.1. In Search of the "Big Brother"

During the ongoing process of leaking of private conversations on the Internet following the December 17-25 investigations, *Star* and *Yeni Şafak* announced that they reached a list of names wiretapped by a secret conspiratorial group which had been planning a coup against the government. Newspapers claimed there were 7000 people included in the list ranging from business, bureaucracy, media, and academia including

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[23]Hürriyet. (2009, January 29). *'Yanlış işiniz yoksa dinlenmekten korkmayın'*. Retrieved June 2, 2016, from http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yanlis-isiniz-yoksa-dinlenmekten-korkmayin-10876924

Erdoğan and the MİT officials. Accordinly, these figures in the list were wiretapped on the basis of an allegation to the so-called *Selam Tevhid* organization. The secret wiretapping was linked to the Gülen movement and to the corruption investigations with the claim that "if the December 17-25 coup had been successful, they would have used these tapes as an evidence against those in trial". Overall, the newspapers posed this "conspiracy under the name of Selam Tevhid investigation" as primarily "against the Islamic groups and societies who opposed to Gülen and his followers". The list also included the names of the journalists, intellectuals, and politicians from other political circles which were highly disputed by the oppositional press.

The anti-government press put the "authenticity" of the list in question with reference to the prosecutors of the case. *Hürriyet, Cumhuriyet, Radikal*, and *Zaman* remained critical of the number of people wiretapped and argued most of the names put forward by the media as being wiretapped were not included in the original report of the prosecution. For example, *Zaman* claimed there were actually 35 people under surveillance while *Cumhuriyet* claimed the number was 40. Both referred to the prosecutors' statements. *Hürriyet, Radikal*, and *Zaman* focused on the particular figures included in the list of 7000 names who were popular singers, and actors. The newspapers argued that these popular figures (such as Metin Şentürk and Defne Samyeli) were not political actors and explicit their political stance. Therefore, these newspapers argued, the number of people included in the list put forward by *Yeni Şafak* and *Star* was doubtful and exaggerated. *Hürriyet* and *Zaman* also argued that the names of the people actually tapped were not in the list put forward by these pro-government newspapers.

However, except for *Radikal*, these (mainstream) liberal newspapers did not lay a criticism of the practice of wiretapping and phone-tapping as part of a structural issue. Rather, they tended to reinforce the perception of threat that the conservative media built about this big-brother-like surveillance group. *Hürriyet*, for example, with the headline of "(Illegal) Organizations are everywhere, everywhere is wiretapped" ("*Her Yer Örgüt Her Yer Telekulak*"), gave a picture of a map of Turkey with large headphones on it. Thus, the oppositional liberal newspapers too posed the threat as coming from an alien, external source and did not lay a critique of a (state-level) practice of wiretapping in the process of collecting evidence. In a way, they ended up concealing the persecutory surveillance practices that state officials historically engaged.

Evrensel, BirGün, and *Taraf* reflected on the issue with reference to the recent

adjustments regarding MİT regulation that passed on February 24, 2014—one day prior to the *Selam Tevhid* list becoming a major debate in the press. The recent legislative changes regarding MİT increased its surveillance powers and included more restrictive measures on the journalists who exposed its abuses. Thus, *BirGün* and *Evrensel*juxtaposed the debate around the *Selam Tevhid* list with the increased measures of surveillance and control of state agents, pointing at the domestic structural issues rather than external manipulations. They also included the statements of the leftist, pro-Kurdish figures whose names were included in the *Selam Tevhid* list put forward by the conservative press. Hüseyin Aygün, a columnist in BirGün, commented that "We were tapped and profiled by the AKP-Cemaat coalition", placing the issue in recent historical perspective.

3.6. Mass-Media as the "Big Brother"

In paranoia, the locus of control and agency is attributed to an external source rather than internal dynamics. In the description of the wiretapping scandal, similar mode of external attribution was present particularly in the pro-government press. *Akit* and *Akşam* claimed there was an international support for this clandestine surveillance group, showing the devices (used for wiretapping) which were "proved to be Israel and Russian made" as an evidence. They put forward their arguments within the thematic of "international Zionism" claiming that "most of the people wiretapped were against Zionism and Israel". Anti-semitic tendencies were continued and reproduced in configuring the discourse around the parallel state. Thus, the explanatory completeness of the parallel state argument was reinforced by the anti-semitic expressions which were rarely challenged (if not fully taken up) by the rest of the press.

The mainstream press, through presenting itself and the rest of the society as the victim of the "big brother", concealed its own panopticon-like stance and "big brotherly" function as recently exemplified during the Ergenekon investigations. Rather than engaging in a systemic criticism of wiretapping and phone-tapping as a (state) practice of obtaining criminal evidence, the mainstream press fashioned the common ground regarding the identity of this surveillance group, called as the "parallel state". In *Akit*, for example, the issue was covered as "*Akit*, which had been so far wiretapped by the Kemalists, February 28 supporters, and Ergenekon, now became the target of the parallel state". Although the oppositional press opposed the proposition that Kemalists and the

Ergenekon as being the earlier "big-brother", they all agreed on the current identity of this surveillance group. The "parallel state" argument made it possible for tying all the "little brothers" under one over-coherent "big-brother" which was made discursively accessible through the textual dynamics of conspiracy theories.

3.7. Conclusion

The mainstream press configured its discourse around the December 17-25 investigations remobilizing the themes and motifs deployed in the media portrayal of the Ergenekon investigations. Thus, the conspiracy theories around the "deep state" were utilized as "practical social knowledge" in covering the events and issues related to the corruption case. Thus, the notion of "parallel state" was taken up by the pro-government and anti-government newspapers within the codes and axioms of the nationalist repertoire recently evoked during the Ergenekon investigations.

In both the pro-government and anti-government press, the Gülen movement was portrayed as the common conspiring actor. While, in the pro-government the alleged conspiring group was presented in the form of an external source, in anti-government newspapers the recent history of political collaboration between the AKP government and the Gülen movement was emphasized. Especially in the mainstream secularist press, this emphasis on the recent history of cooperation was made through the Ergenekon case, in line with the official explanation of the "conspiracy against the military". The alternative press on the other hand stressed the political issues overlooked by the mainstream press such as those related to the minority status, enforced disappearances, unsolved murders. The sensationalistic way in which the mainstream press presented the activities of the "parallel state" led to the explanation of governmental corruption and secrecy in a personalistic manner, mainly around the persona of Erdoğan, rather than a systemic manner. Although the alternative press put forward alternative conspiratorial claims voicing the dissent, they were likely to be over-matched by the mainstream media which have a wider base of reception.

Overall, the mainstream press presented a historically and ideologically coherent narrative around the "parallel state", encapsulating the explanations recently put forward for the Ergenekon. Thus, the discourse around the "parallel state" was fashioned in an over-coherent manner by the pro-government and anti-government media which not only

distracted from systemic criticism of governmental corruption but also the activities of wire-tapping and the secrecy associated with the decision-making processes.

The mode in which competing newspapers offered a grand narrative around the notion of the "parallel state" through tying the source of (state) control to the external forces while mobilizing the popular knowledge in describing the source, along with the constructions of "benevolent us" vs "the persecutory other" point to the paranoid-style embedded in the "structure of communication" about the crises situation (Hall 1973). This manner in which the mainstream press operated helped the paranoia of state to be mass-distributed.

CHAPTER 4

4. PARANOIA, THE "CYNIC" AND THE "KYNIC" SUBJECT

The Ergenekon and "parallel state" are not only official lawsuits regarding a conspiracy against state, but they were also about a crises felt in its powerful institutions—the government, bureaucracy, the military, police, judiciary, intelligence service—that *make up* the state. After all those attempts by the clandestine conspiratorial coalitions which came out of itself, state (form) seems to be alive and well, if not it has come out of the crises stronger. To account for this survival story, I so far focused on the discursive strategies that media outlets have taken in the name of state, which helped the "the greatest myth of the modern times" to be reproduced, that "there is a such thing as the state, real, neutral and stable above the governments, the army, political parties, bureucrats, schools, or the police" (Abrams 1988, p. 68, as cited in Yashin 2002 p.155).

As both the Ergenekon and the parallel state are about the conspiratorial practices of those operating within the established state structures, state becomes both the "subject" and the "object" of conspiracy. All those conspiratorial narratives centering around the Ergenekon and parallel state demystified *the neutral, overarching, consistent, and protective* state in rendering it *sided, fragmented, inconsistent, and persecutory.* Notwithstanding, the myth is reinvented by the very tools of this demystification: For example, anti-Semitic and nation-statist conspiratorial narratives from the reservoir of the official historiography are re-utilized in the "strategies of action" (Swidler 1986) of the competing political actors, for which the media have offered the medium of convergence into nationalist ideology. In that regard, I conceptualize the mass-mediated conspiracy narratives as not only reflective of paranoia about the state, but also paranoia of the state (re-)articulated systematically in times of "ontological crises".

4.1. State as the Social Subject of the Everyday

Up to this point, I focused on the discursive activity of reifying state power in its (seemingly) utmost critique. However, as Yashin (2012) elsewhere suggests, there is a "phantasmic" reproduction of state at work at the level of subjectivity, in addition to its discursive re-articulation through "nationalized" conspiracy narratives. Following Zizek's reading of Lacan, Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002) takes on the concept of fantasy of state as a "psychic symptom that survives analysis, critique, or deconstruction" (p.4). According to Yashin, more than the discourse and its institutions, "fantasy does the everyday maintenance work for the state" (p.4), exploring the concept of fantasy to account for the endurance of state. Following Yashin, in this chapter I turn my attention to "the complicity of those in the margins of stately power in the activity of reifying the state" (p.157). In other words, I endeavor on laying down how the paranoia of state is embodied by the ordinary people and how state comes to be the social subject of everyday communication.

Is this paranoia spoken through conspiracy theories in the everyday discussions of individuals about state-matters reminiscent of irrationality? Or can it be that conspiracy theorizing is as part of a rational effort to get at state (reason)? According to a poll in 2013 conducted by Konda, belief in conspiracy theories is widespread in Turkey and this trend increases with education level (p. 24-25). Accordingly, 70% agreed that some foreign countries decide on who governs Turkey. 64% stated that everyone has been wiretapped and recorded by a clandestine surveillance group in Turkey. And 53% believed there is a fraud in the process of counting the votes after the elections (p.18). I also encountered similar arguments in the interview discussions where some of the respondents critical of the AKP government stated that the election results have been fabricated in favor of the AKP. Most of the individuals from different political views also put forward the argument that other countries historically manipulate the political leadership in Turkey. In support of their claims, they counted number of evidences from history, media, and their personal lives. They all seemed to be based on "reasonable" grounds.

To turn back to the Konda study, the belief in conspiracy theories are shown to be positively correlated with the belief in science. The researchers dwell on this seemingly puzzling relation between the belief in conspiracy theories which is taken as *irrational* and the belief in science which is seen as *rational*. They argue that because people in Turkey tend to differentiate their personal matters from that of state-matters (p.26), they

are "reasonable" when it comes to the issues related to their everyday life, but at the same time, they are highly suspicious when it comes to state-affairs and tend to believe in conspiracy theories which cannot be validated on "scientific" grounds (p.18). They conclude that individuals who "seem to be rational" in their personal lives resort to "irrational tendencies" when it comes to belief in the conspiracies regarding state (p.25). Another way to put it, people who are reasonable when it comes to the issues and concerns related to their daily affairs (such as belief in scientific medicine as opposed to mystic regiments) seem to act like "dummies" when it comes to understand how power operates within state institutions and resort to conspiratorial thinking.

The research seems to agree with main argument put forward by the "paranoid-style" thesis that belief in conspiracy theories in explaining political phenomena is outside of rationality. Although some of the findings of the study argue against other propositions of the "paranoid-style" line such as those which hold that the belief in conspiracy theories and science is negatively associated (Sunstein & Vermeule 2008) and the appeal of conspiracy theories increases with low education level (Goertzel 1994). This contradictory finding is explained in the report in manner that does not upset the discursive line between rationality and irrationality, without decreasing the "irrational quality" of conspiracy theories. This line is drawn on the assumption that people think differently in their personal lives than in their public life, that they do not transfer the mode of reasoning they utilize for their personal affairs to that of understanding state-affairs (Konda 2013, p. 24).

During my interviews, the respondents did not necessarily treat their personal matters as irrelevant when discussing state-affairs, but rather, they usually derived their conclusions about state and mainstream politics in relation to their personal life. For example, the respondents who put emphasis on sacredness of state-secret justified their arguments on the basis of sacredness of family-privacy. The value of personal privacy was symbolically associated with the value of secrecy in state politics, especially vis-à-vis those foreign states. Notwithstanding, the same respondents also approached to state-secrecy as a "strategic" matter in terms of international affairs. Thus, the practice of secrecy was seen as necessary for state to have a leverage in its dealings with other states. In other words, when discussing state-secrecy, the respondents drew on their personal lives, at the same time, they put the issue in a larger context of international affairs.

The cultural sociology perspective suggest that conspiracy theories proliferate as a result of secrecy associated with decision-making processes at state-level (Hellinger 2003,

West & Sanders 2003). As such, they suggest that conspiracy theories are "rational" attempts at interpreting power relations as they put their claims based on an evidence (Nefes 2014b). This line also points to the frequent uses of conspiracy theories as a political rhetoric by various political actors in their definitions of political reality (Fenster 1999). In the previous chapters, I argued that conspiracy theories are historical and discursive tools of political communication which are systematically deployed by the power groups represented in the mainstream media. Thus, the ontological intimacy between state and mainstream media limit the range of explanatory possibilities of those conspiracy theories voiced in the media platforms. In that sense, mass media reinforces the applicability of conspiracy theories as a form of explanation and interpretation of state-affairs which they configure in a way not to challenge the status-quo. Thus, the tendency to resort to conspiratorial arguments as a political analysis by the ordinary people can be argued to be "rational" given the systemic conspiratorial manner in which mass media defines the state-affairs.

The conspiratorial arguments put forward by the power groups helps to construct a societal relevance as to what happened in explaining political events. The interpretative appeal of conspiracy theories can be argued to be stemming from their ability to relate to the personal lives of the ordinary people. During the interview discussions, most of the respondents resorted to conspiracy theories in their explanations of state-affairs. The conspiracy theories they put forward were unique and not necessarily the same as those "nationalized" conspiracy theories voiced in the media. They selectively adopted those conspiracy theories put forward by different political actors according to their subjective values and personal experiences. Conspiracy theories, or the narratives around a political "plot", offered the form for the respondents to symbolically link their subject-position to a grand narrative which, in turn, is made explanatory for their subjective sense of positioning. Thus, these individualized versions of conspiracy theories conveyed a selective interpretation of the dominant cultural and political regime, as proof of one's interpretation of his or her subject-position in the social space.

4.2. On Paranoia and Cynicism

The interpretative appeal of conspiracy theories come from their ability to offer a coherent account which link seemingly uncoordinated and inconsistent political events

into a historical narrative of cause and effect. This grand narrative not only helps to explain what happened in line with the sense of social positioning, but also serves as a template through which the subjective values and beliefs are emphasized. Many of the respondents put forward the "Great Middle East Project" as a general framework in accounting for the power struggles as experienced in the Middle East context. In their formulation of this "grand project", some of the respondents referred to the governing body in terms of a "Judo-Christian alliance" to undermine the position of Muslims, whereas others called it "imperialism" with a critique of global capitalism. Thus, in whatever form, the grand narrative offered the grounds for the subjective affective engagement with history and the character of power. As the high-school history teacher Şakir stated:

> "So if someone is not able to see the big project, it becomes impossible to analyze and cope with history. If only you see the big picture, the small details come to make sense. Otherwise you just stay confused facing an enigma"

Thus, to account for a grand narrative is a method of political analysis onto which the subjective values are grafted. As Şakir and Mehmet told me, the insight into this general template is learned through political engagement as both respondents actively participate in a political organization. In other words, it is not simplistic to read the details according to a grand narrative, but it is an insight gained through experience. As Mehmet put it:

> "The people who are more experienced read into other people for what they are better. Like you, there were journalists visiting here before the elections on November 1. They were from various places—France, China, the Netherlands…We were sitting there and they wanted to interview us. We were bursting with pride because of their interest for our Çeltikçi. But those experienced people know better…The first question they asked was the same as yours: Why did the terrorist attacks start again? Everybody started bursting with anger this time. And I asked myself who really were these people. Our president (the mayor of the municipality of Çeltikçi) said: "You ask such a question that as if you do not live in this country…Haven't you actually seen what happened?"… I mean such a question makes one suspicious of the other's intentions…As it turned out, these people were Fethullah Gülen supporters. We were so proud that there were journalists interested with us. But the reality was different. The politically experienced people are aware of these kinds of shenanigans. To be a politican is a different matter…One learns new things day by day, gains experience… Just watching news in front of the television is not enough to be knowledgeable about state-matters. The state starts from one person and extends on whole society. From the furthest in the East to the

furthest in the Thrace, everyone belongs in the Turkish republic. The citizen of Turkey himself is the responder to the activities of the Freemasonry, terrorists, and the external forces. Until now, those G20 countries have not even called Turkey for their meetings, now they are held in Tukey. The leaders are not easily being raised in Turkey, and they cannot be. It started with Turgut Özal, I have told you already that they poisioned him. The leadership is more important than the party itself".

Mehmet is a 43 year-old, veteran soldier who lives in Çeltikçi—a small district of Burdur. As a primary school graduate, Mehmet works for the municipality with a minimum wage. He is also an active member of the AKP organization in Çeltikçi. His above statement pertains to "the personalization of politics" as Bennett (2012) puts it, that the personas of political figures, more than the ideological bases of the party, loom larger in the electoral behavior (or in political movements). Bennett draws his conclusions through giving examples from right-wing constituency (of its electoral behavior) and the party agenda which successfully amalgamate the "conservative" with the neoliberal (p. 21). Nonetheless, Bennett cautiones that the personalization of politics does not necessarily yield the decay of ideologies, in the sense how Mehmet put it: "The Turkish state starts from one person and extends on whole society. From the furthest in the East to the furthest in the Thrace, everyone belongs in the Turkish republic".

Thus, this "personalization" does not necessarily eradicate more abstract senses of belonging, in its, for example, nation-statist form. Which, as I argue in this chapter, brings me towards the "personalization of state"—that of interpreting state-affairs by way of codes and norms associated to everyday human interaction, treating state as a subject of everyday life closer to the "direct", yet subjective, realm of experience. In that regard that the subject becomes "the responder to the activities of the Freemasonry, terrorists, and the external forces", in close contact as to what happens to the state, or what is the state—the responsible and active agent. If his or her agency does not involve defining who is a "parallel state agent" (or any other "threat" for that matter) as the mayor did or Erdoğan did, it is still an agency of "being aware" of what and how the state "thinks". Thus, Mehmet's agency involves an awareness of the paranoia of the state-reason and embodying it in his everyday encounters, particularly with the "suspicious" subjects who create a "reasonable doubt" through their questions, such as myself and those *turned out to be* "parallel state" journalists.

If this paranoia—a vein of suspicion and doubt about others' "true" intentions—is embedded in the state-reason, it is nonetheless embodied by the subject (Taussig 1992, 1997; Abrams 1988; Aretxaga 2003). As Mehmet contends the subject is bound to "learn different things and new experiences everyday", the paranoia becomes a tool of "know-how". Thus, this paranoia is learned rather than intrinsic. In other words, the paranoia embodied by the subject is a learned way of attaining knowledge, of making sense the novelty in light of subjective experience. In this regard, I see paranoia embodied by every respondent irrespective of their political views, but as long as (and the ways in which) state exert *effects* in their daily life (Aretxaga 2003). That said however, the paranoia of state is not necessarily in the same form when different subjects embody it: at times, it *bounds* to be liberating (from the state-reason).

The most important questions at this point is: does this paranoia—or the embodiment of state paranoia—delude or *fool* the subject into the nationalist ideology? Is the notion of the "personalization of politics" enough to account for how the state gets away with the mundane criticism? According to Yashin, the fantasy of state is not the lack of consciousness about the ideology or the discourse. Rather than being *falsely conscious* of its unity and coherence, the so-called public is already conscious of the role of (state) ideology in masking "what lay behind as obscure, rather than clear" (West & Sanders 2003, p. 21). In that vein, the state has already been deconstructed and critiqued by the public (Yashin 2002, p.4). In simultaneity with the practice of deconstruction though, there are the practices of "reproduction, regeneration, re-reification keep re-dressing the state in a variety of garbs" (p. 6).For instance, although it was *meant to be* as such, most of the respondents who support AKP do not necessarily "buy into" the discourse around the "parallel state". They find it as a strategic "exaggeration" of the situation. Enver (age 50), for example, contends that he does not belive the "parallel conspiracy" claim of the AKP government in that he does not find it reasonable that Gülen's followers (or Fetullah Gülen himself) are "that powerful" within the state establishment. He is *aware* that the "parallel state" rhetoric is a discursive strategy to downplay the corruption accusations. In line with the "personalized" vocabulary of media on corruption, he firmly believes that the corruption exists "at an individual level", a common belief shared by each and every respondent. Enver said:

> "I know it from my own youth period. These bribery scandals have been around since 30-40 years. We hoped that new generations would change this system of corruption but we first teach the kids how to deceive others"

Not only that the corruption is individualized, it is also systematized. So at what point then, Enver becomes *more statist than the state* in his critical re-assessment? According to Enver, the moment we give *consent* to the government for running the state, we also give them "the key" to the state treasury to be managed. Therefore, it in a way becomes "naïve" to argue that these governments are "stealing" from the state, as they are put in a position to use that "money" by the society in the first place. In other words, for Enver, it is meaningless to downplay the government for carrying on the practices of corruption, as any elected government would turn out to be corrupt. In that regard, it would be misleading to see the AKP followers as blinded by the discourse on "parallel state", but rather as *happily* "cynical" about it.

If Enver does not see a "parallel plot" in the media exposure of the corruption, still there is an element of conspiracy behind the December 17-25 probe. In other words, the exposure of these corrupt practices is still reminiscent of a plot against the state—by those "other" states such as the US and Israel to undermine the "progress" of the Turkish state. Thus, if it was not a conspiracy of the "parallel state", it was certainly a way of foreign intermingling to undermine the power of "our" state. So "our" state gets away with the corruption because it is not a matter of the exposure of which already known, but a matter of "who does the revealing?" or "who benefits from it"—the primary question of conspiratorial reasoning that incites the subject to think through the lenses of state.

In a similar vein, another AKP voter, Ayşe (age 46) does not believe in the "conspiracy against military" claim which poses the "parallel state" conspiring against those military cadres implicated in the Ergenekon probe:

> "There was not such a conspiracy against the military. Our military hanged even the prime minister back then. It can stage a coup anytime it wants to. And before the Ergenekon trials as well, there were some military officials with a plan of take-over in mind. I mean whenever our country gets stuck in the matters of politics and economy, we immediately call for the military. But as I said, the military has the gun power and it counts on that. Now, it was needed for such military officials to learn that they could not stage a coup as they wanted. The role of army is not to intervine with the domestic affairs. It is only responsible for protecting us from other states. They said there was a "plot against the military" during Ergenekon. No matter it was, it ended up for all of us' sake. Because a person who came into power with my vote cannot be removed from that position by armed forces"

Thus, even though Ayşe thinks that Ergenekon was not orchestrated by the "parallel state" and it was rather engineered by the AKP government to curb the threat of coup historically posed by the military. In a way, if the government has *failed* to convince its supporters about the *existence* of a "parallel conspiracy" against the military under the façade of the Ergenekon investigation, the Ergenekon case successfully brought about the harmony and coherence among the state institutions, another common belief shared by other respondents as well. Arguably, the same question of "in whose benefit" is still at work in accounting for *the governmental plot against the military plot*, this time though, it is in the benefit of the "democracy" and the larger public.

If the "conspiracy against military" claim has not found much grounds of persuasion by Enver and Ayşe, it certainly has found reception by some of the respondents who support oppositional parties. At the expense of being in agreement with the AKP, the notion of the "conspiracy against military" is taken as a confession on the part of the government that it (the AKP) was (once) *tool* of such conspiratorial coalitions serving the interests of other states (US and Israel) rather than its "own". As put forward by Hatice, Cafer, Neşe and Ender who support either CHP or MHP, the December 17-25 has got Erdoğan's head screwed on right about the danger posed by its up-to-then ally Gülen, who is "clearly" a CIA and/ or MOSSAD agent. Thus, the Ergenekon investigation which "turned out to be a plot" points to the *existence* of a "common enemy" trying to take over the state from "us".

To repeat, Yashin argues that fantasy of state is not a deficit or falsehood of consciousness (or awareness) about the ideology, but rather, it is its reification in spite of such awareness (p. 171). In a way, state has already been de-constructed and re-constructed on a mundane basis by the ordinary people (p. 162). To make her point, she uses the concept of "cynicism" to refer to the psychological *state* of the public (or *the people* as she uses interchangeably) about the state of affairs in Turkey. Cynicism is, in a way, a central "structure of feeling" (Williams 1961) of "political existence in the public life" (Yashin 2002, p.5) by means of everyday ridicule of state power (p. 163). It is with this cynicism, she argues, that the Turkish state endures deconstruction. In contrast to Zizek who uses the notion of cynicism to designate *the state of mind* of the "leftist intellectuals", Yashin generalizes the concept as to encapsulate its pervasiveness among the ordinary people from lower social classes. Thus, for Yashin, cynicism is a more of a "common and ordinary way of managing existence in a realm of state-power" (p. 5).

But is it necessarily the case that each and every subject in Turkey is cynical in the same manner? Although I follow Yashin that cynicism along with a certain amount of ridicule is to be found in my respondents' accounts of "politics", to put the argument further, there seems to be a difference between those who are "happily" cynical and "unhappily" cynical about *the state* of affairs in Turkey. In other words, I do not mean that I found a heterogeneity among the cynical subjects that Yashin "failed" to come up with, but *feeling* content or discontent about the "constitutive stupidity of the symbolic order" (Zizek 1997, p. 17) shapes the *techniques* to go along with it.

Seda (age 37) is an Alevi woman who works a cleaning worker in a private school in Antalya. She describes herself as a follower of Atatürk and a supporter of laicism. During our interview discussion, she stressed the unprivileged position of Alevis in Turkey and criticized the discriminatory practices both at governmental and societal levels. To make her point, she gave the example of what is known as the "Maraş Massacre" in 1978, a violant incident directed against left-wing activists, which resulted in a pogrom targeting mainly Alevis by the ulta-nationalist group called Grey Wolves. The Maraş incident left more than 100 deaths, most of whom were Alevis. Seda argued that the massacre was engineered by the state agents itself, who benefited from this sectarian conflict in appealing to the mainstream society. Seda contends that these kinds of oppressive practices orchestrated by the successive governments are the main reason for Alevis' political disempowerment. I asked her opinions about CHP's stance vis-à-vis Alevis as its general chairman, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu is an Alevi politician. Seda gave a rather interesting criticism:

> "I am not comfortable with Kılıçdaroğlu being an Alevi. Because people are extremely discriminatory. They do not vote for CHP because he is Alevi. This is why, I would like the president of CHP to be changed. It is not because Kılıçdaroğlu is a bad person, it is because people discriminate on the basis of religion and ethnicity. Because they think differently about Alevis when they do not know them personally. For example, I tell a person that I am Alevi after that person gets to know me. If I tell that the moment we meet, that person looks at me differently. That's why I wait until I become friends with that person. If she leaves me then, when I tell her I am Alevi, that is just okey. The people I meet usually really like me anyway. I say these things deriving from my friends and neighbors. If Kılıçdaroğlu is replaced, the votes of CHP will increase to even 40%"

In a way, Seda's main criticism of the CHP is that of *not being cynical enough* to assume (state) power. As Zizek (1995) contends: "The cynical subject is quite aware of

the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, *but nonetheless still insists upon the mask*" (emphasis added, as cited in Yashin, p. 160). The ideology of secularism or Kemalist-republicanism certainly has not tricked her (Seda) into the belief that she would not encounter discrimination even when the secular CHP comes into power, for its coming to power depends on its pretention *as though* there are no grounds for such discrimination (by way of *masking* the "Alevi-friendly stance" of the CHP). Thus, Kılıçdaroğlu, as an Alevi politician, stands as a reminder for the mainstream as to *why not to vote for CHP*, as it is the "other" of "the Sunni-conservative majority" (as Seda elsewhere put it).

As for Seda's *technique* of political existence in the public life, she is cynical about how she goes about being in the "habitus" as she chooses to be *silent* about her Alevi identity in her newly encounters. Thus, Seda is also well aware that those later learn that Seda is Alevi *do* keep in contact with her *as though* they *do not know* she is Alevi. Deriving from her daily experiences, Seda offers a similar pragmatic way of *getting by in the system by means* of "defensive cultural adaptation" (Swidler 1986). To haphazardly put it, Seda seems to be "less happy" in her techniques of being cynical than, for example, Enver or Ayşe, in that, her tachniques involve an activity of adaptation to the codes of the symbolic order which (seemingly) keeps her pushing outside. The difference, arguably, lays in how the ideology (of state) exerts *effects* in their daily social encounters: where Enver and Ayşe do not find the need to make the effort as to "hide" their subjectivity, Seda embodies a (pragmatic) "illusion" just to fit *in*.

In either way ("happily" or "unhappily") cynicism does not yield emancipation from the confines of statism, on the contrary, it puts the subject "remain forever locked into it" (p. 159). Ertan (age 57) said he started voting for MHP after the December 17-25 investigations, and up until that point he had voted for AKP. Ertan, as a small business owner, has close business ties with the Gülen movement, but he does not identify himself as a supporter of Fethullah Gülen. When I asked him what he thought about the claim of the Cemaat colloboration with the foreign countries, namely the US and Israel, he replied "I do not believe that they are traitors. They were part of a movement which changed the global perspective about Turks. They changed Turkey's vision".

That said, however, he laid down a criticism about the "political involvement" of the Cemaat in the matters of state, which concealed their social function. Unlike other respondents who support MHP, Ertan is the most cynical in his electoral choice. It is not

because he changed his political party from AKP to that of MHP after the Gülen-AKP dispute, but because he spent three and a half years in jail after 1980 military coup for being actively involved with leftist groups. Deriving from his personal biography, Ertan articulates the violence posed by state's own insitutions:

"They said after the May 1, 1977 bloodshed that the events occurred because of a fight between the leftists and the ultra-nationalists. They blamed the death of 37 people on this fight. But of course, the MİT and Special Warfare Department had a hand in the events. And these institutions are the backbone of state. As a result, it was in a way the state itself"

Even though he finds the state violently complicit in collaborating the May 1, 1977 incident, he still *insists* upon the necessity of such practices ("in general") for the state to survive its competitors. When I asked about the MİT trucks investigation, where the potention state involvement with the terrorist groups in Syria was brought to media "attention", he responded:

"It is normal…There can be many illegal practices of state. As in the case of Abdullah Çatlı who fighted against the Armenian ASALA organization…There are many intelligence service agents operating under cover in other countries such as those from CIA and MOSSAD. If other states engage with these kinds of intelligence operations, we also have their own intelligence agents doing their jobs. These are the basic responsibilities of the MİT…These kinds of activities should be done by state"

This might be where voluntary imprisonment into the chains of statism begins as Yashin talks about: the fantasy of the "strong" state to which the subject feels belonging downplays the force of criticism. There is also a rationalistic justification at work, in that, it becomes only "reasonable" for our state to deploy such illegal conduct since that is the part of the activity of the "other" states competing with "ours".

4.3. The "kynical" subject

If cynicism in relating to state necessarily (and in most cases, paradoxically) rebuilds the status-quo; are there other ways of relating to state, which does not transform into an active submission to the system of domination, but actively subverts it? (Yashin, p.163) The particular deconstruction the cynical subject engages is an active effort to be bounded

by the pre-existing relations of power, rather than upsetting those relations. Thus, it is a utilization of techniques to make one's way in the system. Deriving from Sloterdijk (1988), Yashin talks about a "kynic" subject in referring to the "groups from lower social classes who do not have the means to adopt to the capitalist system….among whom the kernels of resistance may be located" (p. 163). Thus, in addition to the mainstream cynic; there is also the subaltern kynic who turn the system of domination "topsy-tuvy" through resistance and humor (p.164).

In her research in 2002, Yashin has not yet come across with such a subaltern group or practice to offer the grounds for analysis (p.165). My interview discussions with four young HDP members (ages between 13 and 21) with whom I conducted a group-discussion (rather than one-to-one interview), I saw a certain ridicule of (state) power that went hand in hand with the practices of resistance. These young political activities reside in the Güneş neighborhood in Antalya—a Kurdish-Alevi populated space where the police and the locals in periodically clash with each other. In their narratives of their everyday experiences with the police, which included occasional clashes and constant "police gaze" over their lives, I encountered a certain amount of humor about the police as to their techniques for curbing down the resistance. As Baran (17) tells me:

> "Perhaps the most functioning police unit is in Antalya. Because here is a touristic place, they immediately take action for any level of trouble. There are many of our friends in the jail, or under custody. We are police surveillance. Those people that you see on the street, most of them are undercover officers. Well, you are also being watched from now on."

I am not sure if Baran was also *ridiculing* me, as a person who listened to what they tell with such a "dramatic" face, but he certainly did not sound subverted by the constant surveillance and police control. And Baran also ridiculed the "myth" about his "habitus"—that Antalya is a touristic city, it is only the sun and the beach that make up your day there. Baran turns the city "other" way around, rendering it more panopticon-like and persecutory. But how does this much of a stately effect in their daily encounters relate to the kynical subject (or vice versa)? As Ali (19) told me:

> "In the past, it used to be impossible for the police to walk around here and in Zeytinköy like this. They are afraid of us anyway. When there is a protest in our neighborhood they cannot even intervine, but when there is a protest in the city center they come at us with the TOMAs, scorpions, and batons"

Ali did not seem to be consumed by the techniques and procedures of control that state exert on a daily basis in the Güneş neighborhood. Rather, Ali interpreted it as a sign of weakness of the police, clinching the practices of resistance. In other words, state looms as an inconsistent rival, instead of an object of fear. But there are also other, more neoliberal means of control at the disposal of state, as Bekir (20) told me:

> "You see these TOKİ buildings, right? They constructed all these in order to break the resistance in the neighborhood. For example, they cut the trees over that park, just because they can surveil better. They put cameras in some neighborhoods. There are undercover polices walking around everywhere"

The process of "gentrification" entails the (enforced) displacement of the "locals" of the neighborhood with those "outsiders" from higher social classes as part of the neoliberal city restructuring. Thus, it pertains to the systematic reconfiguration of space and class relations (Harvey 2003). Its "ends", as experienced by the "locals" is obvious, to better gaze over and purge the resistance. In addition to the systematic efforts, there are also more "conspiratorial" means pursued to that end. As Bekir continued:

> "The police were behind the drug-trade here. But it is the Kurds who sell the drugs. I mean there are many young people here, it is really a small number of them who do not use drugs. The other day, a couple of my friends were rolling cigarettes at park. The undercover police came and asked what they were doing. When he saw the cigarette, he just left"

As Lacan puts it, "the Other enjoys (him) in his passivized being" (as cited in Dunst, 2012 p. 15). This is similar to the "War on Drugs" as a government-sponsored "War on Blacks" conspiratorial claim in the U.S, which posits "the drug war is a race war" (Hellinger, 2003, p. 214). Although largely dismissed in the eyes of the larger public through the mainstream media and academic circles which are suspicious about these kinds of "conspiracy theories", it nevertheless triggered the judicial investigations as to the criminal undertakings of some FBI and CIA officials (Hellinger, p. 217). Hellinger concludes, the conspiracy theories coming from the "already oppressed" are different than those claimed by the power position, in that, it fuels the resistance rather than curbing it (p. 212).

4.4. "The Other of the Other"

The difference between the paranoia of the "cynic" for example, and the paranoia of the "kynic" lies in the "identity" of "persecutory other": Whereas, for the cynical subjects it is "the Other of the Other" ("parallel state", Freemasonry, "the Jew") that holds the strings of the symbolic order (Zizek 1997), for the youth from the Güneş neighborhood it is "the Other"—that the symbolic (dis)order itself is persecutory. Thus, "the Other of the Other" enables the cynical subject to escape the fact that "the Other does not exist" that it lacks the coherence and the consistency the subject seeks in it (Zizek 1997, p. 19), much like "state does not exist" and yet *carries on* its privileged position. Exposing "the Other" as persecutory and inconsistent have a different political implication, it unmasks the state rather than keep re-dressing it.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on state as a social subject of everyday communication. Through the concept of fantasy, I endeavored on the conspiracy theories formulated by ordinary individuals in order to understand how the paranoia of state comes to be embodied by the subjects. I argued that the appeal of conspiracy theories stems from their ability to relate the subjective experiences and values to a consistent grand narrative. Overall analysis of the interview discussions show that ordinary people are not just passive consumers of those mass-mediated conspiracy theories but they selectively adopt and reconstruct those conspiracy theories in line with their sense of social positioning. The concepts of the "cynic" and "kynic" pertains to the mode of affective engagement that the subject employs in formulating conspiracy theories. Thus, paranoia of state is not in the same form when different subjects embody it. Depending on how the state exerts effect in the everyday life of the people, this paranoia, at times, bounds to be liberating from state-reason.

CHAPTER 5

5. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I focused on the conspiracy theories integrating two distinctive approaches accorded to their study in the academic literature: "paranoid style" and "cultural sociology" perspectives. Following the "paranoid-style" approach, I utilized the concept of paranoia in order to attend the structure and logic of conspiracy theories. Through the close textual analysis offered by cultural sociology perspective, I conceptualized conspiracy theories in terms of "paranoid narratives" which reflect the state-reason, rather than a political pathology in understanding state-affairs. In that sense, I made use of the "paranoid-style" thesis not to analyze the function of conspiracy theories but to understand their method of explanation. Deriving from cultural sociology approach, I focused on the integrality of conspiracy to the experience of modern power relations both in terms of their rhetorical usage and political practice.

Through critical media discourse analysis, I focused on the "paranoid-style" in the process of news-production during the Ergenekon and December 17-25 investigations (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). I argued that the conspiratorial manner in which mainstream media advocated ideas and beliefs in covering these investigations helped the paranoia of state to be mass-distributed. Thus, due to the ontological intimacy between state and media, the explanatory possibilities offered by those mass-mediated conspiracy theories are bounded by the dominant ideology of nationalism. The qualitative analysis of the interview discussions showed that ordinary individuals are not passive consumers of conspiracy theories put forward by the political actors, but they critically reassess and reformulate them according to their subjective values and personal experiences (Chapter 3). Thus, the political effect of conspiracy theories in terms of reproducing or subverting

the status-quo boils down to the ways in which state ideology is materialized in the everyday encounters of the subjects.

In the first chapter, I argued that the discourse around the Ergenekon investigations took the form of a discursive strategy to undermine competing hegemonic position as voiced in the Islamic and neo-nationalist Kemalist media platforms. In articulating their competing conspiratorial claims, both the Islamic and Kemalist media mobilized the themes and motifs of a shared "cultural tool-kit" which in turn molded by nationalist discourse. The rhetoric of "external and internal enemies" in the vocabulary of the official historiography was remobilized in formulating competing conspiratorial claims by the Islamic and Kemalist media. Both positions relied on the anti-semitic conspiratorial market in assigning a "villain" image for those political actors who were either implicated in the Ergenekon case or undertook the investigations. These competing conspiracy theories paradoxically reinforced the explanatory appeal of each other's claim, as both stances agreed upon the ideological ground of nationalism.

In the second chapter, I focused on the media discourse around the "parallel state" analyzing the press coverage of the December 17-25 corruption investigations. Both the anti-government and pro-government mainstream press drew on the nationalist and anti-semitic discursive reservoir recently mobilized during Ergenekon investigations. The sensationalistic way in which the mainstream press formulated their conspiratorial claims led to the explanation of the political meaning of corruption, secrecy, and wiretapping in a personalistic manner, rather than a structural one. Although the leftist press offered dissenting conspiratorial claims, these were overlooked by the mainstream press.

In the third chapter, following the cultural sociology line, I argued that recipients of the conspiracy theories are not passive consumers, but they actively (re)construct their own idiosyncratic "kernel of truth" that are not necessarily representative of those conspiracy theories publicized by the media. Following Dunst (2012) I situated paranoia within the process of knowledge acquisition, and argued that conspiracy theorizing is a practice at the disposal of ordinary individuals in linking their position in social space to a grand narrative. Thus, through conspiracy theories, individuals not only make sense and explain the character of power, but also emphasize their subjective values in line with their personal experiences.

Majority of studies in the field of conspiracy theories in Turkey has been devoted to the ways in which conspiracy narratives are deployed by "the power bloc"—by the

mainstream political parties, and by the political and economic elite (Bora 1996; Karaosmanoğlu 2008, Nefes 2012, 2013, 2014; Gürpınar 2013; Bali 2013). These studies focus on the role of conspiracy theories in consolidating the status-quo by emphasizing the ways in which conspiracy theories elicit (or legitimize) a collective action in the form of mass-mobilization. As such, most research is concerned with the function of conspiracy theories in *manufacturing consent* by pointing to the broad circulation and elaboration of these narratives within popular culture. Thus, the broad elaboration of conspiracy theories within popular culture is conceived in terms of fashioning a "conspiracy mentality", a particular way of understanding the world and history by means of categorization of society into "us" vs. "them" (see for example, Bora 1996).

While I do not necessarily dismiss such a function of conspiracy narratives when they are claimed by the hegemonic position, I believe in order to fully comprehend the reproduction of dominant-hegemonic system through conspiracy narratives, it should also be considered that conspiracy theories at times serve as a subaltern critiques depending on the interpretation of them by different subject-positions. As Fenster (2008) emphasizes, in studying conspiracy theories' potential for collective action, one needs to take into account the individuals' affective engagement with conspiracy narratives (p. 19). Thus, to focus on the subjective interpretations of conspiracy theories through an analysis of the ways in which current political climate relate to the everyday experiences of people is necessary in understanding the wider dynamics in which conspiracy theories operate. In other words, it is one thing to explore the influence (and function) of conspiracy theories' rhetorical usage in mass-mobilization; it is another thing to explore the ways in which they come to be utilized as interpretative frameworks by ordinary individuals.

In that sense, I focused on the process of dissemination of conspiracy narratives as a circular, rather than a linear process, one that includes the variety in their subjective interpretations, which in turn inform the character of hegemonic power. Thus, following Stuart Hall and Yashin, I argued that reproduction of the dominant hegemonic power not only includes the process in which dominant interpretive frameworks come to be accepted as they are, but also the process in which they come to be critically evaluated. Conspiracy theories, thus, especially in understanding the reproduction of state power, are useful themes to explore the subjective dynamics of mystification and normalization of state power within the practice of everyday communication.

There are certain limitations of my research on conspiracy theories both in terms of the textual material I analyzed and the range of population represented in the sample. Because I particularly focused on those conspiracy narratives voiced in the mainstream media outlets, this study does not take into account the conspiracy theories circulating in Internet platforms which show more explanatory variance than those in the mainstream media. Likewise, except for the focus-group, most of the respondents with whom I conducted interviews mainly rely on the mainstream media outlets for the "news", rather than the Internet platforms which pose more dissenting opinions on the political issues. For a more through analysis of the political contingencies of conspiracy theories, the Internet platforms and their users should also be considered in terms of scholarly analysis.

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1. *Kısaca kendinizi tanıtır mısınız?*/ Could you present yourself briefly?

2. *Haberleri hangi sıklıkla ve hangi araçlardan takip edersiniz?* /How often and through which channels do you follow news?

3. *7 Haziran 2015 genel seçim sonuçları hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz*?/ What do you think about the results of the national election on June 7, 2015?

4. *Seçimlerin 1 Kasım 2015'te tekrarlanacak olmasının sebepleri sizce nelerdir?*/ Why do you think about repeating the elections on November 1, 2015?

5. *Bugün Türkiye siyaseti üzerinde hangi güçleri etkin görüyorsunuz?*/ Which dynamics do you think effective in the context of mainstream politics in Turkey?

6. *Türkiye'nin uluslararası ilişkileri hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?*/ What do you think about the international policy of Turkey?

7. *Türkiye'nin Suriye politikası hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?*/ What do you think about the Syria policy of Turkey?

8. *"Çözüm süreci" hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz? Çözüm sürecinin askıya alınmasında sizce hangi unsurlar etkili olmuştur?*/ What do you think about the "peace process"? What are the reasons for the frozen state of the process?

9. *Sizce devlet kurumları nasıl işliyor?*/ How do you think the state in Turkey functions?

10. *Türkiye tarihindeki askeri darbelerle ilgili görüşleriniz nelerdir?*/ What do you think about the military coups in the history of Turkey?

11. *Polis, ordu, ve MİT teşkilatlanmalarının bugünkü işleyişi hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?*/ What do you think about the functioning of the police, military, and the intelligence service today?

12. *17-25 Aralık süreci ile ilgili olarak değerlendirmeleriniz nelerdir?*/ What is your opinion about the December 17-25 investigations?

13. *Derin devlet sizce nedir, nasıl ve ne amaçla faaliyet gösterir?*/ What is "deep state", and how does it function?

APPENDIX B:PROFILE OF THE INTERVIEWEES

Name	Length of the Interview	Date of the Interview	The Place of the Interview	Age of the Interviewer	Occupation	Organization
Mehmet	95 minutes	17.11.2015	Burdur	43	Municipality Worker	*AKP Belediye Teşkilatlanması*
Aylin	52 minutes	09.01.2016	Antalya	37	Unemployed	*Antalya AKP Kepez İlçe Teşkilatlanması*
Rıza	48 minutes	17.11.2015	Burdur	53	Retired Police Officer	None
Ayşe	67 minutes	19.11.2015	Antalya	49	Retired State Official	None
Enver	47 minutes	18.11.2015	Antalya	50	Retired State Official	None
Neslihan	58 minutes	18.11.2015	Antalya	32	Unemployed	None
Şakir	74 minutes	08.01.2016	Antalya	53	Teacher	*Eğitim-İş*
Seda	50 minutes	07.01.2016	Antalya	37	Cleaning Worker	None
Cafer	63 minutes	07.01.2016	Antalya	42	Driver	None
Hatice	64 minutes	29.10.2015	İzmit	55	Unemployed	None
Neşe	45 minutes	13.12.2015	Antalya	48	Unemployed	None
Ender	85 minutes	30.10.2015	İzmit	54	Retired Worker	None
Ertan	80 minutes	30.10.2015	İzmit	57	Merchant	None
Eda	60 minutes	13.12.2015	Antalya	35	Teacher	*Eğitim-Sen*
Rakide	40 minutes	22.02.2016	Antalya	53	Chemical Engineer	*HDP Kepez İlçe Teşkilatlanması*
Meltem	47 minutes	20.02.2016	Antalya	52	Unemployed	None
Focus Group	67 minutes	22.02.2016	Antalya	14-21	—	*HDP Kepez İlçe Teşkilatlanması*

APPENDIX C: HEADLINES OF THE NEWSPAPERS FOR THE THIRD CHAPTER

Newspapers	December 18, 2013	January 3, 2014	February 25, 2014
Yeni Akit Gazetesi	Tuhaf Operasyon Başbakan Erdoğan: "Hiç bir tehdide boyun eğmeyeceğiz" BİZE ALLAH YETER	Bediüzzaman'ın Talebeleri, Cemaati Bir Manifesto ile Uyarmıştı Genç Abi'ler de Rahatsız	Bu İT'in ipi kimde Paralel Yapılanma'nın dinlediği isimlerin, özellikle İsrail'in rahatsızlık duyduğu kişi ve kurumlardan oluşması, "Bu İstihbarat Teşkilatı'nın (İT) ipi kimin elinde sorularına yol açtı
Taraf Gazetesi	Büyük Operasyon 'Büyük Rüşvet Operasyonu'	Tır'ın yükü devlet sırrı AKP'nin planı kademeli af	Sıkıyönetimin son tuğlası (*MİT tasarısı*) Böcek Zanlısı El Kadı'nın koruması çıktı
Haber Türk	3'lü Operasyon Yemekhanede Başladı 'Yolsuzluk ve rüşvet iddiası'	İçişleri Bakanı Ala, Hatay'daki Tır için Konuştu: TIR Türkmenlere Yardım Götürüyordu TSK'DAN 'KUMPAS' İÇİN SUÇ DUYURUSU	Gülen için Obama'ya Sitem
Sözcü	Yolsuzluk, rüşvet, kara para aklama, altın kaçakçılığı, rant vurgunu… Her şey var… Tayyip bu pisliği temizle ya da istifa et, git	Devlet TIR'lattı! MİLLET TIRLATTI!	Dosyadaki Usame Kutub, Tayyip'i böyle aramış ALO BAŞBAKAN! KAZA GEÇİRDİK, AMBULANS YOLLA KASET BOMBASI
Cumhuriyet	Yolsuzluk iddiasıyla büyük operasyon PİMİ ÇEKTİLER Cemaat 'şah' dedi	O TIR MİT'İN	Başbakan ile oğlu Bilal'e ait olduğu iddia edilen konuşmalar gündemi sarstı EN BOMBA KASET
Milliyet	Rüşvet ve Yolsuzluk Soruşturması ŞOK OPERASYON	Silivri Günlüğü TIR'IN YÜKÜ DEVLET SIRRI	İnternetteki ses kasedine Başbakanlık'tan gece açıklaması ŞOK İDDİA, JET YANIT
Milli Gazete	Yolsuzluk ve Rüşvet OPERASYON Operasyon içinde Operasyon	İHH'ya Silah Komplosu	ERBAKAN HOCA TAM BİR DERVİŞTİ
Akşam	DERİN OPERASYON	HEDEF NEDEN HALK BANKASI Yargıtay İmamına Jet Soruşturma	ŞANTAJ TERÖRÜ
Sabah	İşte Operasyonun Perde Arkası KASET OLMADI DOSYA VERELİM OPERASYONUN AMACI: SİYASETİ İTİBARSIZLAŞTIRMAK	HSYK'YA TEPEDEN TIRNAĞA NEŞTER Babacan Ve Yıldız'dan Ortak Tespit: HEDEF TÜRKİYE	Cumhuriyet tarihinin en vahim telekulak rezaleti DARBE TAPELERİ
Star	Kirli ittifaklar diz çöktüremez SEÇİM AYARLI OPERASYON	'PARALEL YAPILANMA' BU KEZ SURİYE'YE YARDIM TIRLARINI HEDEF ALDI Başarısız dalga tır çalışması	Tarihin en büyük telekulak skandalı X=ŞANTAJ

Hürriyet	BAKAN OĞLU 3 RÜŞVET B0MBASI	TC-RZA YOLCULARI	HER YER ÖRGÜT HER YER KULAK
Yeni Şafak	Hiçbir güce BOYUN EĞMEYECEĞİZ (*RTE Resim*) Nöbetçi Savcı İş Başında	İHH Başkanı Yıldırım İlk Kez Yeni Şafak'a Açıkladı SAVCI DOSYAYLA TEHDİT ETTİ	Örgüt Şemasını Mossad mı Yaptı BU İHANET HEPİMİZE
Zaman	TÜRKİYE'Yİ SARSAN RÜŞVET VE YOLSUZLUK OPERASYONU	Faili meçhul kazısında battaniyeye sarılmış insan kemikleri çıktı	Bu andıcın hesabı sorulsun
Radikal	Türkiye'yi sarsan 3 ayaklı operasyon Rıza Zarrab ve 3 Bakan Fatih Belediyesi TOKİ	TIR tutanağı	KİM BU TELEKULAK
BirGün	TAKKE DÜŞTÜ!	Susurluk'ta Kamyon Kırıkhan'da TIR!	Kardeş Kardeş Dinlediniz İşte
Evrensel	AKP'NİN AŞİL TOPUĞUNA KURŞUN	TIR Başbakanlığınmış!	CAMBAZA BAK