

BEYOND THE “PEOPLE”:
FORMATION OF “ULUSALCILIK” IN THE AKP’S POPULIST DISCOURSE

by

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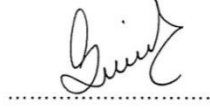
BEYOND THE "PEOPLE": FORMATION OF "ULUSALCILIK" IN THE
AKP'S POPULIST DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

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Over more than a decade, discussions on “ulusalcılık” became a major topic of debate in Turkish politics. A range of political actors, among them those who position themselves as liberals, nationalists (ülkücüler) as well as different incarnations of the political left, tried to capture the current stance of “ulusalcılık” in different ways with reference to different political, social and cultural events of the past decade. Despite its often noted ill-definedness, the term “ulusalcılık” has nonetheless found a place in the political space. The AKP government and its media supporters appropriate the term ‘ulusalcılık’ as a neo-Kemalist nationalist movement that reflects tutelary status quo reactions and cultural elitism of the laicist middle class groups. While those civil organizations that call themselves “ulusalcı” are quite few in actual numbers and vary ideologically, the populist discourse of the AKP gradually cast the ‘ulusalcılık’ phenomenon as antithetical of that of ‘the people’ (‘millet’); as the suppressive elite that attempts to exert tutelary power over the ‘real people of Turkey’. This study conceives attempts of different political discourses to fix the meaning of “ulusalcılık” as a hegemonic struggle. In accordance, the thesis illustrates the articulation of “ulusalcılık” in the AKP’s populist discourse as an empty signifier constituting and combining certain elements provided for the enemy figure. Focusing on particular political moments, namely the Republican Rallies in 2007, the constitutional referendum in 2010 and the Gezi Park protests in 2013, the thesis traces the formation and transformation of “ulusalcılık” in the AKP’s populist discourse in accordance with the AKP’s changing discursive field.

ÖZET

“HALK”IN ÖTESİNDE:

AKP’NİN POPÜLİST SÖYLEMİNDE “ULUSALCILIK”IN OLUŞUMU

ERDEM KAYSERİLİOĞLU

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On yıldan fazladır, “ulusalcılık” üzerindeki tartışmalar Türkiye siyasetinde önemli bir tartışma konusu oluşturdu. Geçtiğimiz on yıl içinde kendisini liberal, ülkücü ya da sol siyasetin içinde konumlandıran birçok siyasal aktör, “ulusalcılık”ın mevcut konumunu farklı yollardan ve farklı siyasal, sosyal, kültürel olaylara işaret ederek anlamaya çalıştılar. Birçokları tarafından eksik-tanımlanmış olduğu vurgulansa da “ulusalcılık” siyasal alan içinde yadsınamaz bir konum elde etti. AKP ve onu destekleyen medya araçları tarafından sahiplenildiği şekli düşünüldüğünde, ‘ulusalcılık’ vesayetçi statüko reaksiyonlarını ve laik orta sınıfların kültürel elitizmini yansıtan neo-Kemalist bir milliyetçi hareket olarak tanımlandı. Kendisini “ulusalci” olarak tanımlayan grupların sayıca oldukça az ve ideolojik olarak farklılaşmasına rağmen, zamanla AKP’nin popülist söylemi ‘ulusalcılık’ olgusunu ‘millet’in zıttı olarak tanımladı; ‘gerçek Türk milleti/halkı’ karşısında vesayetçi güç uygulayan baskıcı elitler. Bu çalışma, farklı siyasal söylemlerin “ulusalcılık”ın anlamını sabitleme çabalarını bir hegemonya mücadelesi olarak irdeler. Böylelikle, bu tez, düşman figürü için kullanılan belirli bileşenleri oluşturan ve birleştiren bir boş gösteren olarak ‘ulusalcılık’ın AKP’nin popülist söyleminde eklemelenmesini sergiliyor. 2007 Cumhuriyet Mitingleri, 2010 anayasa referandumu ve 2013 Gezi protestolarına odaklanırken, bu tez AKP’nin değişen söylem zemini ışığında ‘ulusalcılık’ın kurulması ve dönüşümünü takip ediyor.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. “Ulusalcılık” As An Ill-defined Conceptual Term

Despite its wide use in the Turkish political context, the term “ulusalçı” has a confusing effect with regard to its conceptual range. “Ulusalcılık” has been a disputed phenomenon since the late 1990’s and more significantly after the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*/AKP) came to rule in the 2002 general elections. Within this period a range of political actors, among them those who positioned themselves as liberals, nationalists (ülkücüler) as well as different incarnations of the political left, tried to capture “ulusalcılık” either as an ideology or movement, or contextually as both of them, in different terms in accordance with their political background. Despite varied appropriations of the term, debates on “ulusalcılık” gained currency after the rise of political Islam during the 90’s and in the early 2000’s with the AKP’s coming to power. Regarding this time period, analyses on the phenomenon as well as the dominant political discourse commonly accepted “ulusalcılık” as a reactionary neo-nationalist movement against the AKP’s reformist administration and neoliberal restructurings in the political, economic and cultural fields. However, since different ideological positions addressed the “ulusalçı” phenomenon with indefinite and varied references, histories and political groups, as a matter of fact the term remained ill-defined in conceptual terms (Özkırımlı, 2008, p. 46; Gürpınar, 2011, p. 22; Reyhan, 2012, p. 13). Since the early 2000’s, newspaper analysts and political actors gradually addressed the “ulusalçı” phenomenon varied to an extent to encompass far racist pan-Turkic movements, Kemalist left-wing movements, eurosceptics and anti-American movements, certain political parties, secular urban middle classes, bureaucratic cadres of the Kemalist state form etc. Therefore, beside the controversial scope of the debate, “ulusalcılık” and its constitutive elements have not been comprehensively conceptualized due to varied appropriations of the term across political discourses both in positive and negative terms.

Although mainstream debates addressing ‘ulusalcılık’ focus on the encounters between left and right wing nationalist movements or new forms of national anxieties that emerged after the 90’s, the term “ulusalçı” does not strictly refer to established “milliyetçi/ultra-nationalist” political movements and their party manifestation in the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi/MHP*) and Great Union Party (*Büyük Birlik Partisi/BBP*) (pan-Turkic nationalist movements, the *ülküçü*). The word “ulusalçı” is derived from “ulus” and, similar to the term “millet”, it means “nation”. Therefore, both “milliyetçi” and “ulusalçı” are synonymous and refer to “nationalism” as a conceptual term. Contrary this similarity, discursive appropriation of both terms differs across political movements and this difference distinguishes meanings of “ulusalçı” and “milliyetçi” with regard to their contextual references. On the discursive level, the term “ulus” is the modernized version of “millet” since it distracts itself from connotations of the Ottoman *millet* system and specific reference to the Islamic community, *ümme*t (Bora, 2011). In this line of reasoning, the neo-Kemalist nationalist discourses and certain branches of the leftist literature preferred the term “ulusal” in order to avoid conservative right-wing charge of the term “milli”. For example, in the 70’s, left-wing Kemalist intellectuals utilized the term “ulusal” (national) while addressing the national question from a universalist point of view. However, this terminological difference of “ulusalçı” did not constitute a peculiar political discourse till the 2000’s, and the term “ulusal” referred basically nationalist ideologies of Kemalist and anti-imperialist leftist movements (Reyhan, 2012).

In this study, contrary to conceptualization of the phenomenon as a movement or cultural identity resurging under specific dynamics, I question the discursive articulation of “ulusalcılık” in the AKP’s populist discourse as an empty signifier which rhetorically combined and condensed varied signifying elements. Regarding the attempts of different political discourses to fix the meaning of “ulusalcılık” as a hegemonic struggle, I attempt to analyze how the AKP’s populist discourse appropriated “ulusalçı” reference as a constitutive element in the configuration of the enemy figure. Therefore conceptualizing “ulusalcılık” as a discursive entity, which the AKP’s changing discursive terrains metonymically (re)configured along 2007, 2010 and 2013 periods, this approach can be considered as an attempt to reveal how the AKP’s discourse hegemonically contextualizes the antagonistic relations over the political field when the debates on ‘ulusalcılık’ are addressed. Based on this framework, in the introduction

party, I first cover dominant arguments in the academic literature on “ulusalcılık”. Secondly, I illustrate how the meaning of “ulusalcılık” shifts across discursive fields of different political movements. While comparing different quotes from different opinions about the condition of “ulusalcılık” in the political tensions, I argue that the indefiniteness of the meaning of ‘ulusalcılık’ is a result of the hegemonic struggle to locate the phenomenon onto a meaningful discursive terrain. Lastly, I discuss how the AKP’s discourse casted the phenomenon ‘ulusalcılık’ as the anti-people community disrupting the AKP’s developmentalist services as well as the inner well-being of Turkey.

According to the academic literature on the issue, “ulusalcılık” emerged as a neo-nationalist political ideology due to socio-economic turmoil during the 1990’s in Turkey (Bora, 1994; Erdoğan, 2001). In this line of analyses, two major dynamics have been addressed; acceleration of globalization and destabilization of established socio-political relations at the local level, and deepening of conflicts between the state and the civil society due to rising demands of ethnic and religious identities which eventually challenged the hegemony of the Kemalist state form. Thus, the academic research produced so far argued that while established Kemalist hegemony was dissolving, “ulusalcılık”, being a defensive neo-nationalist discourse, emerged as a synthesis of former left and right wing nationalist ideologies.

In the aftermath of the Cold War and with the expansion of neoliberal restructuring throughout the 80’s, transnational companies and global financial institutions within the commodity market organized new form of capitalism which bypassed the administrative logic of the nation state. New international division of labor and mass communication tended to deterritorialize local norms and established power relations while replacing them with moral and political ambivalences. Theories of globalization argued that restricting function of nation states would fade away under the rapid transformation of boundaries by constant spatial and temporal flows. According to this opinion, economic, political and cultural dynamics of globalization would weaken nation state establishments as well as nationalist sentiments. As a matter of fact, on the one hand new judicial and economic agencies at the global level, on the other hand emerging ethnic and cultural demands at the local level challenged and restricted local interests of national power elites. However, nationalism as an ideology, symbolism and movement remained as a potential dynamic (Smith, 1999). Although theoretical

approaches on post-nationalism assumed that nation-states lost their substantial importance on localizing “citizenship” and “identity” through globalization (Hansen, 2009), new forms of ethnic and religious nationalisms resurged along the process of globalization. In the face of those local and interregional confrontations, “reactionary movements endeavoring to reassert national sovereignty and seeking to impose ethnic and cultural uniformity” occurred (Richmond, 1994). Thus, rather than eliminating, globalization and neoliberalization grounded nationalist responses (Juergensmeyer, 2002; Worth, 2002). In everyday relations, nationalism kept operating along ordinary routines and commemorative instruments; and hence, reminded national identities through a routinely habituated language (Billig, 1995).

1.2. “Ulusalçılık” Between The 1990’s And The 2000’s

Globalization proliferated identity politics and new social formations at the national level which were based on cultural and ethnic demands (Kalb, 1999). Reflecting these dynamics, the rise of Kurdish and Islamic movement in the 90’s denied the hegemony of Kemalist state establishments. On the one hand, publicity of the Kurdish question increased as a result of the alienation between Kurdish citizens and the state throughout the 90’s, armed struggle of the PKK and rising human rights discourse at the international level (Yeğen, 2007). On the other hand, Islamic movement gained increasing electoral success at the municipal and parliamentary levels with the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) in the early 90’s. In a period when the left-wing movement and its intellectuals have been marginalized by the state violence, Islamic movement utilized dynamics of globalization while gaining support of liberal intellectuals as well as large exploited masses with their conservative populist rhetoric on the “just order” (Öniş, 2001). Therefore, the rise of Kurdish and Islamic movements pushed Kemalist principles on cultivating a modern, homogenized and secular people towards a crisis. In the face of these changes, while the tutelary interventions of the military and the judiciary cadres were increasing, citizens prone to Kemalist nationalism shared a feeling of insecurity and distrust considering the rise of Kurdish and Islamic movements as well as involvement of restrictive international agencies. As a result, while official nationalist discourse on the national unity and independence reoccurring and mobilizing masses, syntheses of a neo-nationalist discourse gradually popularized in this transitional period.

Under these dynamics, Kemalism, being the official ideology of the Turkish Republic, gradually lost its power on creating consent in the face of emerging counter-hegemonic demands. On the one hand, restrictions of global agencies such as the EU and the IMF injured fantasies of an independent and self-sufficient nation state. On the other hand academic and public debates criticized the Kemalist doctrine as a “patriarchal and antidemocratic imposition from above that has negated the historical and cultural experience of the people in Turkey” (Bozdoğan & Kasaba, 1997, p. 4). Revisionist historiography and social science studies criticized the truth regimes of Kemalist modernization project on national myths, the Kurdish and Armenian questions and assertive secularism of state apparatuses (Gürpınar, 2013). Although, the state-society relations have been heavily criticized in this period, Kemalist state ideology maintained itself along different layers of everyday life under different forms of reproduction and reification (Navaro-Yashin, 2002). As a result of these transformations, secularist, modernist and developmentalist principles of the Kemalist state ideology moved to the private sphere while Kemalist non-governmental organizations emerging at the civil society level.

As Islamic movement gradually occupied the public sphere, official Kemalist ideology and nostalgic sentiments attached to it found a new life at the public domain through consumption of symbolic commodities, personal items and popular icons commemorating the Kemalist state at the private and civil society levels (Özyürek, 2006). Under this neoliberal political culture, Kemalist non-governmental organizations established, such as the Atatürkist Thought Association (*Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği/ADD*) in 1989 and the Association for the Support of Contemporary Living (*Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği/ÇYDD*) in 1989. Through publishing magazines and organizing social assistance campaigns on education and family issues, these Kemalist non-governmental organizations aimed to reinstitute the Kemalist principles at the civil society level. Fear of losing privileges as a result of the confrontation of the Kemalist principles and transformation of the Kemalist state form reflected a shared feeling of victimhood in the political perception of such neo-Kemalist organizations (Erdoğan, 2000). In a political climate in which national self-confidence was in decline and concerns about the survival of the Kemalist principles were rising, official Kemalist nationalism transformed into different sub-branches of neo-Kemalist nationalisms at the discursive level.

One of the earliest studies trying to capture the relational configuration of neo-nationalist discourses during the 90's was Tanıl Bora's article published in 1994, titled, "Türkiye'de milliyetçilik söylemleri: melez bir dilin kalın ve düzensiz lügatı"¹. In his article, Bora stated that official Kemalist nationalism, which he identified as the root language of Turkish nationalist lexicon on national unity and independence, has been reconfigured by two major dynamics. On the one hand, a reactionary nationalist discourse dramatized the notion of survival of the state through combining radical nationalist ideologies, center-right parties and center-left ideologies in the light of isolationist anti-Western themes. On the other hand, a pro-Western neo-nationalist discourse merged national interests with globalization dynamics. This branch of neo-Kemalist discourse, which was appropriated by urban middle classes, big finance groups and media elites, stated that being prone to the Western ideals and liberal economy could actualize the Kemalist principles on reaching the "modern civilization"². Based on this distinguishing dynamic of being prone to or against Westernism and globalization, Bora schematized four sub-branches of neo-nationalist discourses. In this analysis, Bora referred to "ulusalcılık" as a synthesis of official Kemalist nationalism and the left-wing Kemalist discourse during the 60's and the 70's³ which he titled as "Kemalist ulusçuluk". However, what distinguished "ulusalcılık", to Bora, from the left-wing Kemalism was the fact that within the political tensions of the 90's the emphasis of "ulusalcı" neo-nationalist discourse on "secularism" replaced the "anti-imperialist" aspect of Kemalist ulusçuluk (Bora, 1994).

1 For the English version of the article see Bora, T. (2003) Nationalist Discourses in Turkey. The South Atlantic Quarterly 102: 2/3. 2003

2 For a detailed analysis portraying the relation between transformations during the 90's and their impact on the articulation of pro-Western neo-Kemalist nationalism with regard to the concept "white Turk" see Kozanoğlu (1995) and Günel (2001). Considering the formation of the AKP's political discourse, discussions on "white Turk" became a significant reference within the general debate on "ulusalcılık". Although it has been overused in media discussions as a pejorative label implying secular elitism, the term "white Turk" conceptually addresses the trauma of the Kemalist modernization project after the 80's and problematizes the Orientalist roots of the Kemalist imaginary on Turkishness and civilization. Criticizing the Turkish nation-building project from the perspective of postcolonial literature and class conflicts, the conceptualization of "white Turk" refers to the constitutive dichotomies of imagining the Turkish identity as a homogeneous, enlightened and civilized nation. For further reading on how Turkish modernization project reproduced Eurocentric reactions towards ethnic and religious identities and how this effected the trauma of the Kemalist elite after the 80's see Zeydanlıoğlu (2008).

3 Studies defining "ulusalcılık" as a reincarnation of the left-wing nationalism relates ideological roots of "ulusalcı" political movement to the Kadro journal in the 1930's, to intellectual circles of the Yön-Devrim movement in the 60's and to the Aydınlik movement. For further reading analyzing historical connections among those intellectual circles and left-wing movements in Turkey see Aydın (1998), Aydın (2002), Zileli (2004), Grigoriadis & Özer (2010) and Gürpınar (2011).

1.2.1. Debates on “Ulusalcılık” After The 2000’s and During The AKP Era

When we consider the socio-political crises of the 90’s Bora’s statements can be considered as valid. On the one hand increased involvement of the Islamic movement in the mainstream politics and conservative cultural codes in the public life, on the other hand the February 28 military intervention in 1997 which forced the Welfare Party government from power eventually strengthened the secular concerns within the neo-Kemalist discourse during the 90’s. However, by the end of the 90’s and with the AKP’s coming to power in the 2002 general elections, academic literature gradually addressed “ulusalci” neo-nationalism in accordance with a different conceptualization. In this line of explanation, several analyses identified “ulusalcılık” with the rising euroscepticism, anti-globalization reactions, and more significantly with the conspiracy logic.

The AKP, as an Islamic-oriented conservative government, applied a reformist political agenda which continued the IMF economic plan and neoliberal privatizations, while pragmatically prioritizing accession negotiations with the EU. Within this political climate, on the one hand, in line with the EU criteria Kurdish and Armenian questions and recognizing Cyprus became controversial issues which were heavily criticized by both public figures and bureaucratic state cadres. In this era, neo-nationalist discourses perceived these phenomenons and intellectual actors bringing them to the current state as traitors of national causes. On the other hand, global agencies like the IMF and the World Bank restricted the national economic model and the AKP government at the rule applied the neoliberal plan in collaboration with those institutions. Based on this conceiving, neo-nationalists voicing anti-Western reactions stated their concerns about “threats” against the national unity while addressing “betrayals to the nation” by the “imperial forces” and their local “collaborators”. During the time period, certain intellectual circles, covering left-wing nationalist, neo-Kemalists and ethnic-radical nationalists, and Kemalist state cadres from the military and the judiciary gathered under the shared perception of threats against the territorial unity. As a result, anti-globalization tendencies and euroscepticism shaped the defensive tone of neo-nationalist discourses in the socio-political turmoil of the early 2000’s under the AKP rule.

According to many, elementary manifestation of this neo-nationalist, isolationist and eurosceptic “ulusalcılık” was the so-called Sevres Syndrome. To the advocates of the theory of the Sevres Syndrome, ulusalcı groups formed a discourse based on nationalist anxieties of partitioning. Beyond the debate on ‘ulusalcılık’, discourse on the separation of the territorial integrity contains a deep-rooted conspiratorial rhetoric reaching back to Ottoman times. Commonly loaded with nationalist, religious and anti-Semitic constituents, paranoiac narrations of different political movements on the separation effect how the national unity as well as its enemies as secret threats are imagined⁴.

The basic assumption characterized the Syndrome was the mode of perception insisting that the Europeans were attempting to take over the country and their local collaborators were trying to separate and sell out the national territory. This line of conceptualization of the phenomenon argued that “ulusalcı” identity emerged as a result of the reactivation of traumatic memory of the Treaty of Sevres (Taraktaş, 2008; Grigoriadis & Özer, 2010; Yılmaz, 2011; Cevik & Tas, 2013; Gürpınar, 2013). This conceptualization argued that “ulusalcı” ideology conceived Kurds, Islamists and liberal intelligentsia as collaborators of imperial forces which were trying to divide Turkey in order to expel it from the Euro-Christian lands. Reflecting this neo-nationalist imaginary, certain popular fictions, like *Şu Çılgın Türkler* (Those Crazy Turks) (2005) and *Metal Fırtına* (Metal Storm) (2004), have been published and widely consumed in the market. On the one hand this popular nationalist genre mobilized nationalist sentiments of ethnic proud, patriotism and self-sacrifice, on the other hand certain authors, such as Ergün Poyraz and Soner Yalçın, wrote conspiracy books about the leading cadres of the AKP through which they argued that Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül were crypto-Jews and the AKP was a project of the Jewish lobby.

Bora in his article “Nationalist discourses in Turkey”, published in 2011 as the revised version of his former article, redefined “ulusalcılık” in accordance with transformation of the inner elements of the debate due to rising anti-globalism, euroscepticism and fear of disintegration. Bora argued that “ulusalcılık” became a distinguished ideological manifestation representing the nationalistic fanaticism,

⁴ For a detailed analysis on the inheritance of the constituents of the Sevres Syndrome from the Ottoman times, and an illustration of how conspiracy theories appropriated by different political ideologies reproduce anxieties regarding anti-Semitic tropes as paranoiac narrations, see Nefes, Türkay S. (2013) Political parties’ perceptions and uses of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories in Turkey. *The Sociological Review*. Vol. 61, pp. 247-264

perception of isolationist threats and conspiring mentality. Based on this framework, Bora defined “ulusalçı” language as a hybrid discursive system appropriated by varied social sector, including the military officers, Kemalist nationalists and national-socialists. In sum, to Bora, “ulusalçı” symbiosis has “popularized the ethnicist-racist mind-set and conspiracy theories” (Bora, 2011).

Following this line of reasoning, Özkırımlı, in his article “The Changing Nature of Nationalism in Turkey” (2011), stated that the neo-nationalist term “ulusalcılık” affiliated with former nationalistically charged terms like “patriotism”, “millet”, “ulusçu” etc. While highlighting the indeterminate relationality between these terms within the context of nationalism, Özkırımlı questioned in his article how Turkish nationalism was imagined under different competing narratives. He argued that each of the term resembled the continuous struggle for hegemony in defining the meaning of being a “Turk”. Therefore, Özkırımlı stated that each of the ideological terrains utilized contextually these different terms while appropriating Turkish nationalism in accordance with the rules of their discursive fields. Thus, he argued, different narratives on “Turkishness” determined the positionings in the political field through constituting relations of oppositions. Based on this framework, Özkırımlı situated those competing nationalist discourses in Turkey in the light of a topographic mapping which he settled according to two determining axes intersected vertically; secularism/anti-secularism line and Westernism/anti-Westernism line. In the light of this topographic approach, Özkırımlı defined “ulusalcılık” as a synthesis of official nationalism and its rivals (namely left-Kemalism and neo-liberal nationalism) and located “ulusalçı” actors onto the intersection between the anti-Western pole and secular pole (Özkırımlı, 2011). In line with this positioning logic, Özkırımlı’s diagram situated political parties like the Republican Peoples Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi/CHP*), the Labor Party (*İşçi Partisi/İP*) and civil-military bureaucracy together at the “ulusalçı” pole. In doing so, his diagram differentiated the MHP while locating the party onto the anti-Westernism/anti-secularism pole. Lastly, Özkırımlı’s mapping situated the AKP at the Westernism/anti-secularism pole.

1.3. Different Appropriations of “ulusalcılık” As a Discursive Entity

This topographic approach in mapping the competing nationalist discourses onto analytical settings can be considered as pragmatically true in descriptive terms for it

illustrates the major lines of demarcation across different appropriations of Turkish nationalism. However, what is misleading is that setting those political parties under the categorical definition of “ulusalçı” intrinsically assumes that each of those political parties at the anti-Western/secular pole utilize the same vocabulary of the “ulusalçı” discourse, while disregarding the heterogeneity of social actors within each of them. Moreover, Özkırımlı’s logic which sets the diagram and axes of it (namely the Western/anti-Western line and secular/anti-secular line), freezes different appropriations of the meanings of “West” and “secular” which in fact vary along different political conjunctures and across different political parties addressed. However, Özkırımlı’s mapping implies that within the hegemonic struggle of these actors, their discursive references to “West” and “secularism” conceive the same universal understanding of those determinants; thus, those political parties within the map are distinguishable (as well as identifiable) since they either accept or reject “West” and/or “secularism” as self-defined positions. Putting these critiques, what do we see if we analyze comparatively how those political parties mentioned above appropriate “ulusalcılık” according to the laws of their discursive fields? If “ulusalcılık” is a hybrid discursive system maintained by varied social identities, how can we decide which appropriation of the “ulusalçı” phenomenon can be considered as the systematic representation of “ulusalcılık”? Arguing that these narratives are struggling for hegemonic domination over each other and hence constituting the political space through relations of oppositions, how and in what way the struggle among discursive fields configure us and other relations while referring to the phenomenon “ulusalcılık”? In other words, how the meaning of “ulusalcılık” as a shorthand definition changes across political discourses and constitutes different conceptions of “ulusalçı” as a discursive entity which is either included or excluded along differing discursive fields? Through the examples below, I will exemplify how different discursive appropriations of “ulusalçı” as an empty signifier configure varied us and other dichotomies in the political field. In doing so, I will illustrate how different articulatory practices determine the hegemonic meaning of “ulusalçı” depending on the contingent formation of discursive fields.

The main opposition party in the parliament, the CHP, has long been criticized by different groups, like social democrats, liberals, leftists and the AKP cadres, for not eliminating the “ulusalçı” circles within the party. Addressing these critiques, leader of the party Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu stated that they were both “ulusalçı” and social democrat

since, to Kılıçdaroğlu, “ulusalcılık” meant nothing but developmentalist nationalism. Being one of the six Kemalist principles, Kılıçdaroğlu defined “ulusalcılık” as “milliyetçilik” in the context of left-wing Kemalism.

They are asking us this question: Are you an *ulusalcı* or a social democrat? One of our six arrows is *milliyetçiliği*, and its Turkish translation is *ulusalcılık*. Of course we are *milliyetçi*; of course we are *ulusalcı*. Being an *ulusalcı* does not mean being a racist; Mustafa Kemal Atatürk defined the term in the best way it could be. [...] Our understanding of *ulusalcılık* focuses on the independence of this country, on the interests of this country. We are not the descendants of the followers of a political approach that is deployed to market the Republic of Turkey. [...] Our *ulusalcılık* embraces the kind of mentality that believes in its people, trusts and loves its people and that fights to that effect; it does not subcontract the country for the benefit of others, yet *it wishes to raise free individuals and bring justice to the country*. We are *ulusalcı*, but at the same time we are social democrats.⁵ (Emphasis added)

In the context of Kemalist *ulusçuluk*, Kılıçdaroğlu positioned “ulusalcılık” with reference to universalist conceptualizations like the individual liberty, social justice, and national developmentalism. In this line of formulation, Kılıçdaroğlu equated “ulusalcılık” with Kemalist “milliyetçilik” while discursively identifying them with social democracy. In doing so, he appropriated “ulusalcılık” in positive terms and based on this framework stated that the CHP was an “ulusalcı” political party unlike those racist nationalists or those traitors selling off the country. As opposed to such enemy figures, Kılıçdaroğlu’s formulation of “ulusalcılık” defined “the people” through universalist and developmentalist references.

Doğu Perinçek, leader of the Labor Party (İşçi Partisi /İP), on the other hand, conceived “ulusalcılık” differently while defining the term within an anti-imperialist nationalist discourse. According to Perinçek, neoliberal leftists and imperialists were trying to conspire against the *Ulusalcı-Milliyetçi* front, organized within the CHP, the İP and the MHP, in order to hinder their struggle for anti-imperial national independence.

5 “Bize soruyorlar: siz ulusalcı mısınız sosyal demokrat mısınız? Yahu bizim altı okumuzdan biri milliyetçilik, türkçesi de ulusalcılık. Elbette ki milliyetçiyiz, elbette ki ulusalcıyız. Ulsalcılık kafatasçılık değildir; bunu en güzel Mustafa Kemal Atatürk tanımlamıştır. [...] Bizim ulusalcık anlayışımız bu ülkenin bağımsızlığı üzerine endekslenmiştir, bu ülkenin çıkarları üzerine endekslenmiştir. Biz Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’ni pazarlamakla görevli bir siyasal anlayıştan gelmiyoruz. [...] Halkına inanan, halkına güvenen, halkını seven, bunun için mücadele eden, başkalarının taşeronluğunu yapmayan, bu ülkede özgür bireyin olmasını isteyen, adaletin olmasını isteyen bir anlayıştır ulusalcılığımız. Biz ulusalcıyız ama aynı zamanda sosyal demokratız.” (Kılıçdaroğlu’ndan önemli açıklamalar. (Janary 22, 2013). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved May 4, 2015, from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22415635.asp>)

Look at those *Neoliberal Leftists* of ours, who say “let us distance ourselves from milliyetçilik.” None of them draws lines of demarcation between themselves and Kurdish Nationalism driven by US. Nor do they have any problem with *the so-called Turkish nationalists guided by US*. They always target Atatürk. I wish we drew the lines of border between imperialism and ourselves! Given the circumstances, why do they designate borders between Ulusalçılık and Milliyetçilik? Would it not be more righteous if we held ourselves at a distance from imperialism? Neither a distance nor a border, let us form a front against imperialism! Let us unite our nation and found an independent country! Well, those who insist on saying, “let us draw boundary lines against milliyetçilik,” object to the formation of such a *milli cephe* (*national front*). They want the *vatansever* (*patriot*) groups within CHP, İP, MHP to fight one another about drawing a line of demarcation between Ulusalçılık and Milliyetçilik and they want to keep the co-president of the Greater Middle East Initiative of US in power! ⁶ (Emphasis added)

Perinçek defined the actors in the “Ulusalçı-Milliyetçi” front as “patriotic masses”. On the one hand this discursive constitution of “ulusalcılık” designated the national front as “us” fighting for the anti-imperialist liberation of the country, on the other hand anti-US and eurosceptic reactions situated certain leftist intellectuals, “pseudo Turkish nationalists” and the Kurdish movement as enemies threatening “Ataturkist” republic. Similar to Kılıçdaroğlu, Perinçek identified “ulusalcılık” with “milliyetçilik”, however through discursively merging them with anti-imperialist patriotism and ethnic nationalism. Excluding “liberals” and “the US” as enemy figures, Perinçek’s formulation of “ulusalcılık” determined the meaning of “the people” as “millet” within the context of isolationist and anti-global emphases. Although the emphasis on “ulusalcılık” shifted from social democracy-Kemalist nationalism to patriotism-anti-imperialist nationalism, in a different discursive field Metin Çulhaoğlu rejected the relation between patriotism-anti-imperialism and “ulusalcılık”. Çulhaoğlu, a socialist intellectual involved in leftist political parties like the Turkish Communist Party (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi*/TKP) and the Freedom and Solidarity Party (*Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi*/ÖDP), argued that “ulusalçı” actors were composed of middle classes without having a leftist ideology; and hence they cannot be defined as “patriotic”:

⁶“Şu “milliyetçiliğe sınır çekelim” diyen Neoliberal Solcularımıza bakın, hiçbiri ABD güdümlü Kürt Milliyetçiliği ile aralarına sınır çekmiyor. ABD güdümlü sözde Türk milliyetçileri ile de sorunları yok. Hedefleri hep Atatürk! Sınırı emperyalizmle aramıza çeksek! Bu durumda Ulusalcılık ile Milliyetçilik arasına niçin sınır çekiliyor? Sınırı, emperyalizmle aramıza çeksek daha doğru olmaz mı? Hatta sınır da değil, emperyalizme karşı hep birlikte cephe tutsak! Milletimizi birleştirek ve bağımsız bir ülke kursak! İşte “sınır çekelim” diye tutturular, bu milli cephenin oluşmasına karşılar. İstiyorlar ki, CHP, İP, MHP içindeki vatansever kitle, birbiriyle Ulusalçı-Milliyetçi savaşı yapsın ve ABD’nin BOP Eşbaşkanı iktidarda kalsın!” (Perinçek, D. (March 16, 2014). “Ulusalcılık ile milliyetçilik arasına sınır çekmek” kimin görevi?. *Aydınlık*. Retrieved May 4, 2015, from <http://www.aydinlikgazete.com/ulusalcilik-ile-milliyetcilik-arasina-sinir-cekme-kimin-gorevi-makale,35797.html>)

Could not they call themselves “yurtsever” (patriot) without meddling with such terms as ulusalcılık? Aspiring to dissociate itself from milliyetçilik, which is pregnant with such fascistic tendencies as racism, however finding yurtseverlik inadequate and thinking that this concept has been adopted by communists, the *middle class rationale has eventually come up with the term “ulusalcılık”* and decided upon that⁷. (Emphasis added)

In similar lines, Merdan Yanardağ, another socialist intellectual involved in the ÖDP and the orthodox Marxist SoL newspaper, stated that anti-imperialist attitude of “ulusalçı” groups cannot be considered as “patriotism” since their nationalism reflected modernist enlightening nationalism of petty bourgeoisie. Therefore, both Çulhaoğlu and Yanardağ appropriated “ulusalcılık” in negative terms from a leftist nationalist conceptualization. However, more important than this comparison, Yanardağ argued that the “liberals” were purposively identifying “ulusalcılık” with “patriotism” in order to degrade leftist patriotism and reduce it into nationalism. Yanardağ stated:

Liberals today address such movements as yurtseverlik, ulusalcılık and milliyetçilik that have different meanings and dimensions both as a concept and political stance as if they were all same and identical; they deliberately mix these terms with one another. [...] Furthermore, yurtseverlik has been made equal to milliyetçilik and it is evaluated almost in the same category as xenophobia.⁸

Thus, according to Yanardağ, liberals were conspiring against leftist patriots through calling them “ulusalçı”. Therefore, Yanardağ distinguished “ulusalcılık”, “patriotism” and “nationalism” and positioned the “liberals” as an enemy figure against “patriots”. Conceiving “liberals” as an enemy figure was a common theme in the perception of the ultra-nationalists (*ülkücü*) circles, as well. Ümit Özdağ, then member of the MHP and became the party’s MP in the 2015 elections, argued as follows: “[C]onservative democrat and liberal circles accused and still accusing Ülkücü [Ultranationalist] Movement of being ulusalcı in order to defame Turkish nationalists”⁹. Özdağ in his column article stated that “milliyetçi” and “ulusalçı” could not be

7 “[U]lusalcılık gibi şeyleri karıştırmadan kendilerine “yurtsever” diyemezler miydi? [I]rkçı-faşizan yönelimlere gebe milliyetçilikten (ulusçuluktan) kendini ayırmak isteyen, ancak yurtseverliği de ‘yetersiz’ bulup ayrıca bu kavramın komünistler tarafından sahiplenildiğini düşünen orta sınıf akıllı, sonunda ‘ulusalcılık’ kavramını icat edip bunda karar kılmıştır” (Çulhaoğlu, M. (December 12, 2012). Şu ‘ulusalcılık’ meselesi. *SoL*. Retrieved May 4, 2015, from <http://haber.sol.org.tr/yazarlar/metin-culhaoğlu/su-ulusalcilik-meselesi-64768>)

8 “Bugün yurtseverlik, ulusalcılık ve milliyetçilik gibi birbirinden farklı anlamlara ve oyluma sahip akımlar liberaller tarafından hem bir kavram hem de bir politik tutum olarak bir ve aynı anlamda ele alınmakta, kasıtlı olarak karıştırılmaktadır. [...] Dahası, yurtseverlik, milliyetçilikle eşitlenerek neredeyse yabancı düşmanlığı ile aynı kategoride değerlendirilmektedir.” (Yanardağ, M. (March 6, 2009). Milliyetçilik, Yurtseverlik, Ulusalcılık. *SoL*. Retrieved May 4, 2015, from <http://haber.sol.org.tr/yazarlar/merdan-yanardag/milliyetcilik-yurtseverlik-ulusalcilik-1745>)

9 “[M]uhafazakâr demokrat ve liberal çevreler özellikle Türk milliyetçilerini ve Ülkücü Hareketi karalamak için Ülkücü Hareketi ulusalcı olmakla suçlamışlardır ve suçlamaktadır” (Özdağ, Ü. (February 2, 2011). Milliyetçilik ve ulusalcılık arasındaki farklar. *Yeniçağ*. Retrieved May 4, 2015, from <http://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/milliyetcilik-ve-ulusalcilik-arasindaki-farklar-17124yy.htm>)

considered as identical political groups since the latter was a leftist movement affiliated with Western life style and dictated their alienated ideologies to the people from above. Thus, “ulusalci” understanding of “nationalism”, to Özdağ, was different from “milliyetçi” understanding of nationalism. Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu, who was the leader of the racist-ultranationalist BBP, emphasized the same characteristics of “ulusalci” groups while defining them as “Jacobins”: “We are not at the same position with the ulusalci point of view which is Jacobin, commanding, conservative and suppressing millet in the name of the state”¹⁰. Although Yazıcıoğlu and Özdağ negated “ulusalcılık” while defining them as having elitist and dictating reactions, both of the ultranationalists stated that “ulusalcılık” and “milliyetçilik” shared the same fears about the territorial integrity and imperial threats against national unity. Thus, discursive appropriation of “ulusalcılık” within the ultranationalist circles positioned “ulusalcılık” conditionally, being both an elitist enemy and nationalist ally, while opposing “liberals” as traitors deceiving the public image of “milliyetçi” groups through calling them “ulusalci”.

As illustrated above, we can argue that depending on the positions within the political field the meaning of “ulusalci” differs across discursive fields. Therefore, we can state that those political actors which are defined as “ulusalci” in the dominant political discourse do not share the same “ulusalci” vocabulary. On the contrary, different political discourses articulate “ulusalcılık” as different discursive entities. If we take the AKP’s formulation on “ulusalcılık” into account, it can be observed that the situation does not change and the AKP’s discourse configures “ulusalcılık” within a different set of relationality. During its more than a decade long rule in the government, the AKP circles and the pro-government media time to time addressed “ulusalcılık” under different contexts depending on the dynamics of those peculiar periods. For the economic concerns of the introduction part, I will not exemplify debates within the pro-government media on the issue, but analyze how discourse of the pro-government media constituted “ulusalcılık” along different time periods in the coming chapters. However, quotes from Erdoğan’s speeches below can be regarded as the dominant mode of conceiving the phenomenon “ulusalcılık” in the discursive field of the AKP. Erdoğan’s formulation positioned “ulusalci” groups as the antithetical of “the people”

¹⁰“Jakoben, tepeden inmece, tutucu, devletin adına millet ezen ulusalci anlayışlarla aynı yerde değiliz” (Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu: Orduyu göreve çağırmak vatanperverlik değil (April 10, 2007). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved May 4, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/roportaj/muhsin-yazicioglu-orduyu-goreve-cagirmak-vatanperverlik-degildir-39446>

while designating the relation between the AKP and “the people” as an essential social bond for the actualization of economic and social justice in Turkey.

We are the guarantee for the unity and togetherness in this country. *Those calling themselves ulusalci tried to interrupt our path; they could not and will not manage it. Those being prone to be the extensions of ulusalci groups should not expect anything from us, they will not get it. We are the representatives of the people [millet]. You routed our path, and we will continue to walk on that path.*¹¹ (Emphasis added)

In his formulation, Erdoğan on the one hand identified the AKP as the true representative of the “people”, on the other hand positioned “ulusalci” groups as inhibiting forces trying to manipulate the tie between the people and the AKP. While stating that the AKP became the grant for the unity and peace in the country, Erdoğan defined “ulusalci” groups as the enemy figure trying to prevent the AKP’s services to the “people” and to “the nation”. Quotation below crystallized this mode of appropriating “ulusalcılık” in the AKP’s dominant discourse which defined “ulusalci” groups hegemonically as the anti-people community. Erdoğan, during a speech about education of female students, expanded his focus from the headscarf issue to “ulusalci” groups and to the national unity while dichotomizing “ulusalci” to “millet/the people”.

There is nothing like *ulusalci* in this country any longer, there is *the reality of millet*; you will concede it. This country belongs to all of us, you will concede it. This country belongs to women at the same extent it belongs to men. You will not achieve to separate the freedom and rights of my sisters having headscarves and those who have not from each other; they are going to walk hand in hand, together. *Seventy six million, including women, men, children, youngsters and elders, Turk, Kurd, Alevi, Sunni...* We all own this country. At this country we all belong to the first class, and we are all one, a union; and *we are Turkey all together.*¹² (Emphasis added)

In his statement, Erdoğan rhetorically combined different social elements as the real people of Turkey; all equal and all as together. On the one hand, Erdoğan’s formulation homogenized those social groups through rhetorical construction of

11 “Biz bu bu ülkede birliğin, beraberliğin dayanışmanın sigortasıyız. Bu ülkede ulusalci geçinenler önümüzü kesmeye çalıştılar, kesemediler, kesemeyecekler. Ulusalcıların uzantısı olmaya aday olanlar bizden bir şey beklemez, bulamayacaklar. Biz milletin temsilcisiyiz. Bizim rotamızı siz çizdiniz, bu yolda da yürümeye devam edeceğiz.” (Erdoğan: Ulusalcı geçinenler önümüzü kesemediler, kesemeyecekler. (January 20, 2013). *T24*. Retrieved May 4, 2015, from <http://t24.com.tr/haber/erdogan-ulusalci-gecinenler-onumuzu-kesemediler-kesemeyecekler,221946>)

12 “Artık bu ülkede ulusalci diye bişey yok, bu ülkede artık millet gerçeği var; bunu göreceksiniz. Bu ülke hepimizin ülkesi, bunu göreceksiniz. Bu ülke ne kadar erkelerin ülkesiyse o kadar da kadınların ülkesi[.] Bu ülkede başı açık kardeşlerim ile başı örtülü kardeşlerimin özgürlüklerini, haklarını birbirinden ayıramayacaksınız; el ele, beraber yürüyecekler. 76 milyon, kadın, erkek, çocuk, genç, yaşlı, Türk, Kürt, Alevi, Sünni... Hepimiz bu ülkenin sahibiyiz. Hepimizi bu ülkede birinci sınıfta ve hepimiz biriz, beraberiz, ve birlikte Türkiye’yiz.”(Artık bu ülkede “ulusalci” yok “millet” var. (October 11, 2013). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved May 4, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/video-galeri/artik-bu-ulkede-ulusalci-yok-millet-var/10457>)

equivalentiality under the Turkish national identity, on the other hand differentiated this popular identity from “ulusalçı” groups as an enemy violating the imagined harmony and unity of an inner totality. Thus, distinguished from above examples, the AKP’s discursive articulation positioned the “ulusalçı” phenomenon as an excluded social enemy through rhetorically constituting an antagonism between the “real people” of Turkey and “ulusalçı” groups.

1.4. Aim of The Research And Methodology

As a result of the discussion above I argue that although varied actors in the political space utilized the same literal term “ulusalçı”, articulation of “ulusalcılık” constituted different discursive objects depending on different discursive fields and it effected the configuration of relations of oppositions over the political field. Therefore, both conceptual discussions and public debates in the political field regarding “ulusalcılık” remain imprecise and ill-defined. This hypothetical judgment does not deny that there emerged an isolationist defensive nationalism, which circulated in different branches of social segments covering the tutelary cadres of bureaucracy and public level actors, and hence popularized an agitated language of a chauvinist neo-nationalism. However, locating this emerging phenomenon onto a group identity and as a movement, i.e. the act of giving a name and inserting an objective quality to it in order to hegemonically fix contingent imprecisions, is not free from power relations over the political field and set of judgments that they configure. Regarding the main theoretical framework of this thesis, we can argue that hegemonic struggle to fix the meaning of “ulusalçı” and configuring the political field through relations of oppositions, accordingly, effected the way “the people” and its constitutive elements are articulated discursively. As exemplified above, the content that attempted to hegemonically capture the meaning of “ulusalcılık in relation to “the people” shifted across political discourses.

Based on this framework, this thesis aims to understand the formation of “ulusalcılık” in the populist discourse of the AKP. Tracing how the AKP discursively articulated the position of “ulusalcılık” in different time periods is crucial for understanding the configuration of enemy figures in the AKP’s discursive field. “Ulusalcılık” became a broader discussion during the AKP government till 2002, and varied social actors recurrently addressed “ulusalçı” phenomenon with regard to key political crises of the era; such as political assassinations by the deep state forces, the

Republican Rallies period, the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials and during the Gezi demonstration. Therefore, this approach, can shed light on how the hegemonic discourse of the AKP attempted to arrest the meaning of “ulusalcılık” while addressing these controversial events and accordingly the perennial problems of the mainstream Turkish politics; such as democracy, tutelary regimes, military coup d’états, status quo, bureaucratic elites etc. Secondly, through utilizing populist discourse theory, this study attempts to analyze the political logic behind the AKP’s appeals to the people. The AKP claims itself as the true representative of the people, their economic and political interests and cultural values. In doing so, the AKP’s rhetorical reference to “the people” on the one hand constitutes popular subjectivities, on the other hand interpellates “the people” in the light of certain social and moral codes and administrative technologies. Such codes function in bordering the social space and excluding certain elements over it. Therefore, discursive constitution of “the people” inevitably necessitates the configuration of “the other” through which a popular identity is assigned a sense of its own. Thus, the thesis, lastly, can be helpful in illustrating how the AKP’s populist discourse configures the political space in the light of changing social dynamics, dislocates identities and hegemonically fixes them over “the people” and “anti-people” poles through articulating social antagonisms.

1.4.1. Populist Discourse Theory, Hegemony And Rhetorical Constitution of The Social

Populism has long been defined by academics in the field as a slippery concept having varied and vague descriptions which eventually lacked a comprehensive and confidential understanding of social movements (Laclau, 1977; Canovan, 1982; Bjerre-Poulsen, 1986). Beside this elusive character, certain theoretical approaches on the issue addressed populism as a degrading pejorative label through which they classified populist movements as politically weak mass movements which lacked in reasonable and long term claims (Taggart, 2000). As opposed to those theories, Laclau conceptualizes populism as a royal road to understand the ontological constitution of the political (Laclau, 2005). Laclau’s theory of populism is based on three sets of categories which are discourse, hegemony and rhetoric. Grounded on this theoretical framework, Laclau’s populist discourse theory analyzes the political logic which constitutes “the people” discursively through hegemonic articulation of the political space.

Laclau defines discourse as the structuration of a certain meaningful field which pre-exists and determines the limits of perception, thought, objectivity and action (Laclau, 2007). Laclau does not restrict discourse to literary forms but states that any relationality over the social plays a role in constituting signifying elements and hence discursive fields. Therefore, rejecting the discursive/extra discursive dichotomy this conception of discourse considers words and actions, ideologies and movements (Laclau, 2005, pp. 13, 68) as signifying elements. Laclau's discourse theory differs from Saussurean linguistic and structuralism, since he conceptualizes language not as an enclosed totality but as a precarious totality effect. Defining the language as a signifying system of differences assumes that the language is a centered totality and that totality is present in each act of signification. In other words, this conceptualization of signification necessitates that the language as a totality sustains its systemic structure through the signifying chain which determines the meaning of objects. However, for the conceptual understanding of totality requires grasping the limits of the system, the idea of totality paradoxically necessitates something beyond the systemic limits; an excess, which disrupts the idea of totality. Although this differential other makes the idea of totality impossible, it is at the same time necessary in order to conceive the limits of a whole. Therefore, the totality is always incommensurable and cannot be grasped conceptually as an enclosed system. However, totality is produced as an effect of a temporary dislocation and demarcation of a negative difference, which means exclusion of a constitutive other. Thus, "if the systematicity of the system is a direct result of the exclusionary limit, it is only that exclusion that grounds the system as such" (Laclau, 2007). Based on this conceptualization of signification, Laclau states that through the excluded element the totality reaches a sense of its own cohesion, which means that "vis-à-vis the excluded element, all other differences are equivalent to each other-equivalent in their common rejection of the excluded identity" (Laclau, 2005, p.70). Thus, identity is a result of the tension between equivalential and differential logics. In sum, to Laclau, totality is always a failed totality since its representation as an identity is only possible through contingent effect of equivalential bonds as opposed to the excluded elements constituting the difference. The relation between the equivalential and differential logics takes us to the notion of articulation and configuration of the social field.

Articulatory practices constitute and organize the social space. Laclau and Mouffe define articulation as “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). In doing so, articulatory practice structures discursive fields in which elements occupy differential positions. Discursive formation is never sutured totally and the relationality among elements is always open to contingent dislocations and rearticulations. However, what articulation achieves is the temporary fixation of those heterogeneous social elements in the light of a simplifying and homogenizing logic. Based on Laclau’s theory of populism, we can summarize the effects of articulation at two operational levels. One is that homogenization necessitates subversion of differences into equivalences, and this is nothing but an operation of analogy as a metaphorical transposition (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 110). Therefore, Laclau argues that rhetorical elements like metaphor, metonymy, and catachresis play a constitutive role in organizing social elements and configuring the political space¹³. Secondly, rhetorical articulation of the social space¹⁴ and simplification of differential elements goes along with the configuration of an antagonistic frontier¹⁵. This frontier divides the social space into two incommensurable camps which are structured around two incompatible equivalential chains. This tropological process attempts to dislocate and analogically fix different social elements as monopolized discursive identities onto two antagonistic poles which eventually designate “us and other” positions. At this moment, one difference, without ceasing to be an isolated element, takes up the representation of those incommensurable elements along the equivalential chain. And hence, this privileged signifier temporarily arrests the content of the pole in which it has been overdetermined. Laclau defines “this operation of taking up, by a particularity, of an incommensurable universal signification” as hegemony (Laclau, 2005, p. 70). At the political level, this is nothing other than the rhetorical articulation of varied signifying elements under the force of a particular privileged signifier, i.e. an empty signifier like “people”, as opposed to the other side of the antagonistic frontier, i.e. the “enemy” (“There is nothing like ulusalcı in this country any longer, there is the reality of millet...

13 For further discussion on the relation between metonymy and metaphor, and their effect on the maintenance of hegemony see Laclau (2001)

14 For further discussion on the rhetorical constitution of the social space and the political identities accordingly see Laclau (2008), Kaplan (2010), Riha (2011) and Povinelli (2012).

15 For further discussion on the constitution of antagonistic frontiers and their effect on the production of the political field see Panizza (2005), Stavrakakis (2005) and Arditì (2010).

Seventy six million, including women, men, children, youngsters and elders, Turk, Kurd, Alevis, Sunni... We are Turkey all together”).

In sum, this theoretical approach on populism grounds a framework based on discursive totalization, hegemony and privileged signifiers which operate in knotting and representing varied elements as identical to each other and in opposition to a constituted enemy camp. According to Laclau, configuration of the discursive field and hegemonic fixation of social elements on it can be conceptualized as topological operations. Therefore, rhetorical operations, being more than mere literal formations, play a constitutive role in configuring and operating the social space. Rhetorical articulation of social elements constitutes equivalential chains among incompatible social groups which metonymically combine them as identical to each other over a contiguous setting. Then, a particularity, hegemonically encapsulating the whole from within, operates as a metaphoric figure through substituting the whole with its name. Therefore, what hegemonically fixes heterogeneous and contingent constituents is the performative force of naming which temporarily captures incommensurable entities as a totality effect; as Laclau puts it, the name is the ground of the thing (Laclau, 2006, p. 109). Based on this conceptual relationality, we can talk about rhetoricity of articulation, discursivity of the political field, and rhetorization of politics. “The people”, then, is a discursive constitution whose content is arrested hegemonically as a result of the rhetorical articulation of the political field. Regarding the configuration of enemy figures, the same operating logic is also valid. Based on this theoretical background, my thesis focuses on the “ulusalci” element being one of the constituents of the enemy figure in the populist discourse of the AKP. Different than those academic studies conceptualized “ulusalcılık” as a movement or ideology, this approach tries to locate “ulusalci” phenomenon from a relational perspective and traces the hegemonic attempts of the AKP’s discourse in capturing the meaning of the term.

1.5. Research Design

Based on this argumentative ground, in the thesis I illustrate how the AKP’s discourse configure the political space, us and other relations, and the hegemonic content which determine the constitutive elements of “ulusalci” being an enemy figure as opposed to the “people”. Chapters of the study analyzing the articulatory practices of the AKP based on textual analysis of political speeches of then Prime Minister Tayyip

Erdoğan and certain spokesmen of the AKP, and news paper columns from the pro-government media instruments. I utilized to a large extent column articles and news narrative structures from Yeni Şafak daily and Star Daily between the periods from 2007 to 2013. In some quotes, in order to cite the full speeches of political actors without editorial cuts, I utilized Hurriyet newspaper. Configuration of the AKP's discourse cannot be fully comprehended unless the pro-government media is taken into consideration. Yeni Şafak and Star newspapers are important resources in order to follow the mobilization of the pro-AKP columnists towards being a part of the AKP cadres. For example, Yalçın Akdoğan, one of the main ideologues of the AKP and involved in Yeni Şafak and Star dailies as a columnist in different time periods, became the head-advisor of the President Tayyip Erdoğan and currently serving as the AKP's MP. Yiğit Bulut, a Star columnist who gained a controversial reputation after his conspiratorial declarations during the Gezi Park protests, became the advisor of the President Erdoğan, as well. Similarly, Mehmet Metiner, who was a columnist in Yeni Şafak and Star, became the party's MP in the 2011 and 2015 general elections. Following this line of mobilization, Yasin Aktay, an academic and Yeni Şafak columnist, Markar Eseyan, a Yeni Şafak columnist, and Orhan Miroğlu, a Star columnist, became the AKP's MPs in the 2015 general election. Although these newspapers included critical voices previously, most of those columnists either left mentioned dailies or have been fired along the years and especially after the Gezi Park protests. Currently these newspapers mostly function as the propaganda instruments of the AKP government and they recurrently cover socio-political tensions with a conspiring logic¹⁶. I considered this parallelism in Erdoğan's rhetoric along his speeches and discourse of the pro-government media as a constitutive relationality which configure the AKP's dominant political discourse.

The thesis focuses on three time periods which are the Republican Rallies period in 2007, the constitutional referendum period in 2010, and the Gezi Park protests in 2013. Regarding the dynamics of the era, 2007 period was crucial for it included on the

16 In the past years, oppositional voices criticized intimidating language and un-skeptical stance of the pro-government media against alleged accusations and evidences provided for the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials, and the KCK investigations. After the Gezi protests and December 17-25 corruption case, discourse of the pro-government media highly utilized conspiracy theories. These newspapers argued that the Gezi Park protests were one step of a planned coup against the AKP government organized by the "interest lobby" which was a term manufactured with anti-Semitic connotations. In similar lines, regarding the 17/25 corruption scandal, the pro-government media argued that international forces were collaborating with the Gülen movement in order to overthrow the AKP government, which they defined as the "Big scenario" and the "global coalition". In order to strengthen this conspiring logic, Yeni Şafak published some documents through which they argued that Fethullah Gülen was a crypto-Jew.

one hand a chain of political assassinations targeted different groups like the Christian community, a judge in the State Council and Hrant Dink. At the time, “ulusalcılık” was a highly controversial topic debated as a neo-nationalist wave, and many social sectors including the pro-government media identified this chain of assassinations with “ulusalci” organizations. Beside, 2007 period covered the election period. Tayyip Erdoğan was the AKP’s possible candidate for the presidency and this situation led certain crises between state bureaucracy, parliament and the military to emerge with regard to concerns on secularism and Islamization. Based on this framework, in the first chapter I focused on the Republican Rallies, being a series of mass demonstrations concerned on secularism and Kemalist principles, for it became one of the major references in the AKP’s discursive field regarding the rise of “ulusalcılık”. Accordingly, I analyzed how the AKP articulated its discourse along rising social and bureaucratic reactions against decisions of the party. In the first chapter I argued that the AKP’s political appeal was based on a populist discourse and the notion of ‘ulusalci’ was a constitutive element in this discursive field. Discursive formulations of the AKP enabled the party and pro-government media to confront oppositional voices as extra-parliamentarian impeding forces against reformist attempts of the government. Erdoğan’s political rhetoric depended on two interrelated aspects; a developmentalist discourse facilitating an image of the elected government in the service of its people, and a rhetorical reference to the ballot box that constituted ‘the people’ as a popular subject in decision making. In the light of this discursive field of the AKP, components of the anti-people pole and ‘ulusalci’ as a constituent of it were configured accordingly, as well. During the 2007 period of the Republican Rallies, legislative crises and political assassinations discourse of the pro-government media defined ‘ulusalcılık’ hegemonically as ‘deep state’ organizations targeting the AKP government through manipulative terror acts.

In the second chapter, I focused on the constitutional referendum period in 2010. As a result of a series of crises between the judiciary and the parliament, the AKP attempted to prepare an amendment package which aimed to change the composition of the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (*Hakimler Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu/HSYK*), and appointment procedures of judges in the HSYK. Within this era, the AKP’s political discourse highly addressed such notions as “status quo”, “tutelage”, “bureaucratic elite” and “secular white middle classes”. Questioning the rhetorical combination of “deep

state” aspect with “status quo” through the “ulusalçı” reference, in the second chapter I analyzed whether political discourse of the AKP and elements in it transformed during the 2010 constitutional referendum era. While tracing conceptualization of “white Turk” and “status quo” attributed to the anti-people camp, I emphasized that in this period the rhetoric of the AKP articulated the antagonism between ‘democratic change’ and ‘tutelary mentality’ as the center of its discursive field. Therefore, in contrast to 2007, constant reference to ‘tutelage/status quo’ took the place of the privileged capacity of the ‘deep state’ in constituting the enemy pole. In light of this shift, tropes such as ‘mentality of the CHP’, ‘secular whites’ and ‘status quo elites’ configured the antagonistic frontier between the people and anti-people camps. Based on the field of discursive articulations, the rhetoric of the AKP defined the anti-people camp as the ‘elite No voters’ who were in favor of ‘exclusionist status quo’ while resisting ‘democratic changes’. According to this discursive field, in the period of 2010 constitutional referendum, the AKP and pro-government media defined ‘ulusalcılık’ as a constitutive component of the anti-people pole representing ‘educated, laic, white supporters of status quo/tutelary forces’.

In the third chapter, after following the AKP’s majoritarian and authoritarian turn in policy making and in the general political discourse, I focused on the Gezi Park protests in 2013. My aim in this chapter was, which can be regarded as the general concern of the thesis as well, how and why the AKP cadres and the pro-government media attempted to capture the meaning of the Gezi protests as an “ulusalçı” uprising more significantly during the first couple of weeks of the ongoing protests. I argued that during the protests there configured a contingent counter-hegemonic appropriation of the “people” in the discursive field of the demonstrators along the streets which eventually confronted the AKP’s hegemonic political discourse. In order to overwhelm this confrontation of their representational regime, the AKP attempted to hegemonically dominate the political space through configuring a counter-discourse which would arrest the meaning of the Gezi protests as an enemy organization. Although there were shifts and indefinite appropriations, dominant discourse of the AKP mobilized the constitutive elements of the enemy figures configured along 2007 and 2010 periods in order to mobilize the memory of “ulusalçı” components. In doing so, the AKP’s discourse articulated the Gezi protests as a coup attempt organized by “ulusalçı” forces of the “old Turkey” and international forces including the “interest lobby” and the

international media. In sum, I argued that based on this counter-discourse the pro-government media and the AKP cadres addressed “ulusalci” notion as a metaphoric substitute of former enemy figures; such as “white Turk”, “exclusionary laicists”, ‘mentality of the CHP’, “coup supporters”, “old Turkey” etc. This metonymic (re)articulation through the hegemonic fixation of “ulusalci” reference, discursively merged inner enemy figures with conspiracy elements like the “interest lobby” within the AKP’s counter-discourse.



2. 'ULUSALCILIK' AS 'DEEP STATE'

2.1. Rise of The AKP And Defensive Nationalism From 2002 To 2007

After a dramatic socio-economic crisis in the early 2000's, the AKP came to power in the 2002 general elections. Gaining 34 percent of overall votes, the AKP put an end to ongoing coalition governments that had been in rule throughout the 90's. Since then, the AKP has increased its vote rates in each election and remained as the majority government in the parliament. This became the era throughout which Turkey experienced major shifts and changes with regard to its state ideology, constitutional reforms, economic and international programs, and socio-cultural realms. Behind this success, a major legitimacy crisis in the late 2000's paved the way for the AKP in gaining such extensive legislative power. Not only local tensions but also changing global and regional politics contributed to this transformation in Turkey (Keyman & Öniş, 2004). On the local level, growing corruption cases within political parties and breakdown of bureaucratic accountability, rising inflation rates due to political instability, and hence, the collapse of economic system resulted with the 2001 economic crisis. Considering the social realm, human rights violations and the suppression of demands for eventually led certain demands for change to be raised by religious and ethnic groups. On the one hand, the after-effects of February 28 military intervention deepened the laic-anti-laic conflict; on the other hand state-supported extralegal violence against Kurds resulted with a political deadlock producing further social crises (Özkazanç, 2002). Under these conditions, shared feelings of despair and idea that legislative bodies were ineffective in solving these tensions have resulted in a major legitimacy crisis.

Apart from these local tensions, global dynamics of the era also pushed Turkey to reform its inner and international relations. The 9/11 attacks shocked the US and European Union, and resulted with the rise of a need to control radical Islam in the Middle East. In accordance there emerged the aim to make Islam moderate and to enable integration of the Middle East to global relations. That would eventually mean

transforming authoritarian and bureaucratic political systems towards a de-centralized and liberalized state forms (Uzgel, 2009). According to the US, Turkey was an exemplary case for reconciliation of Islam and democracy. In the local level these interventionist and restructuring attitudes, together with claims of the EU on the Cyprus issue, gradually evolved into a rising wave of anti-Westernism and isolationist nationalism. Instigating a climate of reactionist radicalization, rising tensions of the era eventually ended up with a shared distrust towards coalition parties in the government, and hence with a major legitimacy crisis.

Beside political turbulences, economic interests of big finance groups also played a crucial part considering the crises which carried the AKP to the legislative power as a reformist government. Top local business groups demanded a reformist government in the face of economic deadlocks and instabilities due to insufficient coalition parties. Therefore, those finance groups supported a restructuring process that would integrate the closed economy model into open neoliberal market. Besides, Anatolian finance groups composed of local conservative bourgeoisie, favored election of a liberal minded government for that situation would increase their economic possibilities in a globally integrated economy (Patton, 2007; Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009). Out of these dynamics and demands for change, the AKP managed to gain the governing power out of a legitimacy crisis and economic collapse in the early 2000's. In this period, the AKP justified their liberal minded reformism and anti-radical stance against the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*/MG) tradition through the pragmatic formulation of "conservative democracy".

According to the AKP's ideologues, the understanding of "conservative democracy" separated the AKP from the MG tradition while prioritizing social reconciliation, integration of global and local economies, and tolerance towards different identities (Akdoğan, 2006). Yalçın Akdoğan, who was one of the main ideologues of the AKP and currently the head advisor of President Tayyip Erdoğan, defined conservative democracy as an attempt to reformulate and discharge the political tensions that emerged as a result of the central state form, which isolated demands of the periphery. Akdoğan, in his article "The Meaning of Conservative Democratic Political Identity" published in 2006, highlighted certain causes for the constant emergence of conflicts within such a political system. He stated that the AKP's effort to reform established political structures had to be based on putting 'reconciliation' further

instead of the ‘conflict’ between the center and the periphery. Regarding this dichotomous relation, Akdoğan argued that the AKP had to translate demands of the periphery while concerning the common interests of the center in order to implement reforms for legislative and economic changes. While accusing former representatives of the MG tradition for their lack of such an integrationist perspective, Akdoğan argued that radical interest of Islamist parties justified interventions of the secular military and bureaucratic cadres (Akdoğan, 2006, p. 61). Akdoğan, while admitting that political Islam was not endurable under the *realpolitik* of Turkey, stated that

The JDP is not trying to regenerate and duplicate problematic past applications of conservatism; rather it seeks to reshape the concept of conservatism within the socio-cultural structure of Turkey through development of a more reasonable approach to politics, while at the same time absorbing lessons from past failures (Akdoğan, 2006, p. 55).

Conservative democrat identity enabled the AKP to have a positive image in the eyes of international and local actors regarding its breaking with the MG tradition. Therefore, through adapting a multicultural language and reformist perspective, the AKP’s conservative democrat discourse helped eliminating suspicions of the secularist liberal groups, as well as the military and bureaucratic cadres (Şimşek, 2013). Through their attempts to introduce the party, ideologues and founders of the AKP tried to formulate new set of oppositions on the political field. In times of a socio-economic turmoil, the AKP gained a remarkable popular support in the 2002 general elections while former coalition parties could not achieve to pass the ten percent election threshold. As a result of an economic crises and a shared distrust against inefficient political structures, the AKP’s gaining such a popular sympathy can be analyzed in the light of the literature on populist practices. In accordance with this line of conceptualization, Panizza argues that populist practices emerge due to “the failure of existing social and political institutions to confine and regulate political subjects into a relatively stable order” (Panizza, 2005). In such a period of socio-political unsettlements, the AKP tried to integrate different social segments through configuring a new political discourse. In doing so, the AKP reformulated alignments and political frontiers among social groups in order to “fix and unhinge the divides that constitute populist identities” (Panizza, 2005, p. 17).

The rupture from political Islamism of the MG movement enabled further support to the newly emerging AKP for two reasons. Firstly, this differentiation would

invalidate the tension between political Islam and laicism, and shield the party from interventions of military and judiciary officers of the Kemalist state establishment. Secondly, the promise of global integration would enable a support of liberals, democrats and secular finance groups. This reformist image of the AKP discursively merged premises on democratization and economic rationalization to each other. This integrationist approach addressed EU accessions as a way to legitimize new formulations of the AKP on political and economic globalism (Özkazanç, 2002). Considering the early years of the AKP, in accordance with this paradigm “the party leadership reaped the benefits of globalization and potential EU membership as a means of constructing and sustaining a broad-based electoral coalition” (Öniş, 2007, p. 252). In addition, the AKP continued the IMF plan of austerity which had been formulated by Kemal Derviş for the former coalition government. In this way, the AKP provided a discourse covering such notions as economic development, expansion of individual freedoms and consolidation of democracy (Gümüştü & Sert, 2010; Coşar & Özman, 2004) from a neoliberal and pragmatic perspective. Thus, on the one hand, through restructuring requirements of the EU negotiations the governing party displayed itself as accommodate to Kemalist principles on modernization and civilization; on the other hand, through implementing the IMF regulations the AKP strengthened its ties with secular business groups and liberals.

After the election and till 2005, however, the AKP program oscillated between conservative regulations and democratic reforms. The AKP prioritized the promotion of conservative figures from its electoral circles through clientelistic patronage networks. Moreover, considering the privatization of state property the AKP favored conservative bourgeoisie during auctions. Therefore, while the Anatolian bourgeoisie and conservative middle classes increased their involvement in the economic field, Islamic codes became more explicit in the cultural field (Öniş, 2007; Öktem, 2011). Beside these social and cultural transformations, statements of the AKP cadres on alcohol, headscarf, and adultery issues made the party controversial for the secular bureaucratic cadres at the military and judiciary levels.

Regarding the foreign politics of the AKP, this tension between the AKP and the bureaucratic cadres has grown in years due to the government’s support of the EU accession criteria which was requesting Turkey to open seaports and airports to Cyprus, and recognize cultural rights of Kurds and religious groups. However, after long

endured negotiations the EU offered a “privileged partnership” status for Turkey rather than an equal membership. This situation eventually diminished the credibility of EU membership at the public level while at the same time triggering feelings of humiliation and chauvinistic nationalism (Patton, 2007; Avcı, 2011). Beside this rising reactionist tendency against demands of the international actors, the EU’s pressure on Turkey to recognize the Armenian genocide eventually resulted with the emergence of a defensive nationalist block (Öniş, 2007). Merging left and right wing reactionary nationalist circles, this defensive nationalist wave manifested a fear towards the erosion of national sovereignty and partition of the territorial unity by foreign forces and their local collaborators. Culminating towards a general skepticism against EU and USA, defensive nationalist reactions perceived the current situation as the second Sèvres (Guida, 2008). In this political atmosphere between 2002 and 2007, the term “ulusalcı” started to be circulated along debates of columnists and analyses of journalists with reference to effects of this rising neo-nationalist wave. In a newspaper article, Fuat Keyman defined this neo-nationalist dynamic as an integration of leftist ideology and nationalist isolationist tendencies. He called this emerging ideology ‘milliyetçi-ulusalcı’:

[Today] we encounter a milliyetçi-ulusalcı leftist ideology that has turned its face to the state instead of turning it to the society; that is interested in the powers of security and sovereignty instead of the problems of social justice and that aims at protecting the existing state-centered system against the world instead of changing and transforming Turkey on the basis of democratization.¹⁷

Within this overall atmosphere, EU skepticism and chauvinist radicalism have merged reactionary sentiments of nationalist left and right politics to each other. This defensive block consisted of former anti-imperialist Kemalist leftists and radical nationalist parties. In 2002, news reports stated that İlhan Selçuk, a leftist intellectual and Cumhuriyet daily columnist, after a meeting with the MHP deputies declared that they agreed on common concerns about the EU threat against national unity. Within the same period, a group of active and retired bureaucratic personnel from the military and the judiciary started to establish paramilitary units whose ostensible appearance were civil society organization. Having different titles like “the Union of Patriotic Forces”

¹⁷ “[B]ugün, ‘yüzünü topluma değil devlete dönmüş, sosyal adalet sorunlarıyla değil güvenlik ve egemenlik süreçleriyle ilgilenen ve Türkiye’yi demokratikleşme temelinde değiştirmeyi ve dönüştürmeyi değil, var olan devlet-merkezci sistemi dünyaya karşı korumayı amaçlayan milliyetçi-ulusalcı bir sol ideoloji’ var karşımızda.” (Keyman, F. (April 10, 2005). Milliyetçi-ulusalcı sol. *Radikal*. Retrieved May 7, 2015, from http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=r2&haberno=4552)

(Vatan Sever Kuvvetler Birliđi) or “National Forces Society” (Kuvayı Milliye Derneđi), these paramilitary groups included certain figures who were detained in the Ergenekon trial in 2008, such as the lawyer Kemal Kerinçsiz and retired general Veli Küçük¹⁸. Consisting of far-right nationalist parties, certain leftist intellectuals, military and judiciary cadres, these organizations gathered in order to “revive the Kuva-i Milliye soul and counterbalance the imperialist powers” (Grigoriadis & Özer, 2010). Column discussions and newspaper articles called this emerging phenomenon as the Coalition of Red Apple (*Kızıl Elma Koalisyonu*). Journalists argued that the Coalition was combining ‘ulusal sol’ (nationalist left) and ultra nationalist parties like the MHP and the BBP. According to the news of the era, a number of those so-called civil society associations were detected in having extra-legal assassinations in different regions of Turkey¹⁹.

In this political climate, beside the rising defensive nationalist reactions, political assassinations started to emerged in different regions of the country. In November 2005, one week after the EU negotiations were started, a bookshop has been bombed in Şemdinli, a Kurdish province in the eastern Turkey. Inhabitants of the town captured a car after the bombing, and they found that two of the bombers were military officers and one was an ex-PKK informant. Along the turmoil, habitants attacked police and gendarmerie stations and local people gave deaths throughout protests (Öktem, 2011). A number of investigations under the article 301, a law code that criminalized insult to ‘Turkishness’, targeted Elif Şafak, Baskın Oran, Orhan Pamuk and Hrant Dink who declared their opinions on the Armenian question (Onar, 2007). While the rising nationalist atmosphere publically threatened and degraded such intellectuals, in Trabzon Father Andrea Santoro was shot dead by a sixteen year old killer in February 2006. During the same year in May, the Cumhuriyet newspaper has been bombed. One week after the bombing, a judge of the Council of State, Yücel Özbilgin, was killed by a radical Islamist while the headscarf issue was controversially debated. A couple of

18 Kemal Kerinçsiz is a Turkish nationalist lawyer and was the leader of Grand Lawyer’s Association who became a disputed figure after he has filed cases against a number of artists, intellectuals and journalists including Orhan Pamuk, Elif Şafak, Baskın Oran and Hrant Dink. Through the law code 301, a code that criminalized any “insult” to Turkishness, Kerinçsiz made official complaints against more than a hundred public intellectuals who expressed their thoughts at different platform on the Armenian and human rights questions. Both the retired general Veli Küçük, who played a pivotal role in the organization of paramilitary deep state units, and Kerinçsiz were charged with being involved in the Ergenekon terror organization and sentenced to life imprisonment as a part of the Ergenekon trials. In 2014, Kerinçsiz and Küçük, together with all convicts in the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases, have been released after the Constitutional Court’s decision for a retrial.

¹⁹See: Vatanseverlik’ yarışındaki örgütler emekli asker dolu-Al sana 'sivil' toplum! (February 17, 2007). *Radikal*. Retrieved May 9, 2015, from <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=213197>

months later, in January 2007 Hrant Dink²⁰ was shot from behind by a seventeen year old killer.

In the aftermath of these events, Ekrem Dumanlı, one of the leading columnists in Gülen Movement's newspaper Zaman, interpreted the situation as the manipulative activity of deep state forces in order to agitate and manipulate political climate in the country. Dumanlı defined these activities as that of a clique of undemocratic elites organizing manipulative acts, while he defined them as 'ulusalcı':

There are various labels tagging ulusalcılık. Leftism, rightism, Islamism... Scrape off these labels; there is only one truth beneath them: Comitadjism. A small clique that could not digest democracy conceals its leftism under the guise of milliyetçilik or cloaks its trade in a guise of sectarianism. The range of identities prepared through the mentality of a Russian nested doll consists of moves aiming at confusion. The fact that an elite clique who regards itself as the true owners of the regime undergoes into gang formation, comes through every activity shaking Turkey and then puts the blame on innocent people in a very shameless fashion is not vain. With the techniques of psychological war they have been familiar with all along, they try to drag the public into different adventures. But their endeavor is just futile...²¹

Dumanlı defined the constituents of 'ulusalcılık' majorly as an elite clique within the state having ties with deep state forces. Dumanlı stated that this exclusive clique was utilizing deep state forces in order to manipulate public peace and maintain their power through anti-democratic means. Here, in this frame of explanation the term 'ulusalcı' did not address the public realm, but defined as paramilitary activities controlled by the state elite.

Therefore on the one hand rising defensive nationalist and reactionist isolationism at the public level, on the other hand rising paramilitary organizations and

²⁰ Hrant Dink was a Turkish-Armenian journalist and public intellectual who was well-known for his struggle for Turkish-Armenian reconciliation and social rights. In several cases, he was prosecuted for denigrating Turkishness. In January 19, 2007, Dink was shot from behind by a member of the Alperen organization which is the youth association of the racist-Turkish nationalist Great Union Party (BBP). After his assassination investigations revealed how the killer was guided and protected by the intelligence service, gendarmerie and the Istanbul police. In line with this, although Dink's lawyers argued that the assassination was an organized criminal act including civil servants and police officers, the court overlooked the murder and elaborated the case on the base of a mere criminal act. In October 2014, The Supreme Court of Appeals decided that the investigation violated the principle of effective investigation and overturned the verdict of initial the trial process which paved the way for a retrial of the convicts.

²¹ "Ulusalcılığı ambalajlayan çok değişik etiketler var. Solculuk sağcılık. İslamcılık... Bu etiketleri kazıyın; altından tek bir gerçek çıkacaktır: Komitacılık. Demokrasiyi içine sindirememiş dar bir zümre kâh milliyetçilik postuna bürünüp solculuğunu gizliyor kâh tarikatçılık kisvesine sarılıp tüccarlığını. Matruşka mantığı ile hazırlanmış kimlikler silsilesi, kafa karıştırmaya yönelik hamlelerden oluşuyor. Kendini rejimin gerçek sahibi sayan elit bir zümrenin ulusalcılık oluşumuyla çete yapılanmalarına girmesi, Türkiye'yi sarsmaya yönelik her eylemin içinden bunların çıkması; sonra da büyük bir arsızlık içinde bu gruhun masum insanları suçlaması, boşuna değil. Öteden beri aşına oldukları psikolojik harp teknikleriyle kamuoyunu başka mecralara sürüklemeye çalışıyorlar. Ancak nafile..." (Dumanlı, E. (February 13, 2007). Milliyetçilik, Ulusalcılık, Komitacılık. *Zaman*. Retrieved May 9, 2015, from http://www.zaman.com.tr/ekrem-dumanli/milliyetcilik-ulusalcilik-komitacilik_499565.html)

political assassinations organized by deep state forces eventually mobilized concerns on the territorial unity, secularism and the AKP's relations with international actors. Within this era, Turkey witnessed the Republican Rallies in April 2007. While the period of office for the then President Ahmet Necdet Sezer was about to end in May and Tayyip Erdoğan was a strong possible candidate of the AKP government, these series of meetings were organized against Erdoğan's candidacy while voicing concerns on secularism and national unity.

2.2. Shifting Definitions of 'ulusalçı': Agitating Organizations, Laicist Elites, Masons?

In what follows, regarding the tensions of the era, I will first briefly describe the elementary features of the Republican Rallies, groups involved and claims they voiced. Secondly, I will analyze the AKP's political discourse in capturing the series of Rallies in the light of basic components Erdoğan's rhetorical formulations as well as analyses of the pro-government media. In doing so, I will illustrate how those discussed tensions of the era effected the hegemonic articulation of the meaning of the term 'ulusalçı' in the 2007 Republican Rallies period. From the perspective of articulation and discourse theory, I will question how the AKP's political discourse captured and fixed the meaning of "ulusalçı" through hegemonic articulation of the political field. Considering the relation between discourse and configuration of the meaning, Laclau states that "the very possibility of perception, thought and action depends on the structuration of a certain meaningful field which pre-exists any factual immediacy" (Laclau, 2007, p. 541). From this perspective, objective quality of phenomena are not pre given, but rather they are configured along "fixing and unfixing, sedimentation and reactivation, quilting and dissemination in the differential field of the particulars" (Gaonkar, 2012, p. 190). In accordance, while stating instable usages of the term "ulusalçı" in the AKP's discursive field- namely those shifts across references to 'Masons', 'laicist elites' within bureaucracy agitating crowds, and 'deep state'- the analysis will trace how contingent articulation of events overdetermined 'ulusalçı' term as a meaningful totality out of heterogeneous social elements.

The Republican Rallies were organized by a variety of groups and associations mostly sharing a common feeling of threat against national independence and laicism. Voicing their considerations on such issues, groups involved in the Republican Rallies

majorly aimed to prevent Erdoğan from being the president in the 2007 parliamentary elections. Under this motivation, beside supports of the Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu /YÖK*), the CHP and then President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the Atatürkist Thought Association (*Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği/ADD*) was leading the organizing committee. Şener Eruygur, who was a retired military officer, was heading the ADD in this period. At the beginning of April 2007, the *Nokta* journal published dairies of a retired navy commander, and Şener Eruygur was reported there as the organizer of two coup plots which had been prepared in 2003 and 2004. In addition to this military aspect within the organizing committee, one of those paramilitary associations, Association of National Forces Anew (*Yeniden Kuvayi Milliye Derneği*), published an invitation call in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper before the first meeting in Ankara. In the announcement letter, the association stated that:

Wake up Turkish nation! Are you aware of the danger? Do you want to throne a president in accord with Atatürk's Çankaya and Atatürk? Did you take an oath to keep alive and protect the laicism at the outset and Atatürk's present the Turkish Republic as your honor? For the sake of undividable integrity of the motherland, do you want to let the souls of our martyrs we lost during the Independence War to rest in peace?²²

Having references to skeptical tensions on partitioning and laicism mentioned above and trying to mobilize the memories of Atatürk and the War of Independence, such paramilitary associations aimed to identify the Rallies with another war of independence in order to secure laic Kemalist principles from the AKP cadres. Including retired and active state officers, the organizing committee gained further support from political parties like the İP, the CHP and the Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti/DSP*). Moreover, the oppositional media, several university rectors, military and legislative officers declared their support to the Rallies (Grigoriadis & Özer, 2010). At the beginning of April, the ADD was having visits to the parliament and making appointments with the then President Ahmet Necdet Sezer in order to announce the meeting to a larger public sphere and gain further support.

The pro-government media addressed the organizing committee while defining them as 'ulusalcı'. Discussing attempts of this organizing committee, pro-government media stated that 'ulusalcı' organizers were hardly getting any public support. Yeni

²²“Uyan Türk Ulusu! Tehlikenin farkında mısınız? Atatürk'ün Çankayasına, Atatürk'e yakışır Cumhurbaşkanı oturtmak istiyor musunuz? Başta laiklik olmak üzere Ata'nın bize emanet ettiği Türkiye Cumhuriyetini sonsuza kadar yaşatmaya ve namusunuz gibi korumaya ant içtiniz mi? Vatanımızın bölünmez bütünlüğü için Kurtuluş Savaşımızdaki şehitlerimizin aziz ruhlarını şad etmek istiyor musunuz?” (*Cumhuriyet*. April 7, 2007)

Şafak, while reporting the call of the former President Süleyman Demirel to rise up against the governing AKP, stated as follows: “Calling people to streets hand in hand with retired generals, Demirel could only find support from ulusalcı associations”²³. Defining the organizing committee as ‘ulusalcı’, Star newspaper reported appointments of the ADD and the ÇYDD with the president Ahmet N. Sezer as follows: “Sezer accepts ulusalcı groups”²⁴. Along these debates, a sub-committee of university rectors was making announcements for university students to attend the coming meeting. Yeni Şafak stated that the meeting organization was aiming to manipulate the presidency elections. This formulation implicitly differentiated the organizing committee, as ‘ulusalcı’ from the crowds as the public base of the upcoming meeting. On the other hand, putting this distinction, Yeni Şafak daily stated that the organizing committee was not able to gain public consent, but, manipulating the political atmosphere in order to provoke more people against the Prime Minister Erdoğan and the AKP. Therefore, rather than conceiving the meeting as public demands of several groups for secularism and Kemalism, pro-government media defined the meeting preparations as attempts for ‘manipulation’ while addressing the ‘ulusalcı’ organizing committee as the ‘agitating’ force behind the plot. According to this discursive definition of the Republican Rallies, the pro-government media implied that the meeting organization was an attempt to violate presidency elections through provoking crowds in the streets.

Yasin Aktay, who was a scholar and Yeni Şafak columnist who became the AKP’S MP after 2015 general elections, also defined the organizing committee as ‘ulusalcı’. Unlike the formulations quoted above, Aktay addressed ‘ulusalcılık’ while focusing on the rising neo-nationalist wave within the era. In his analysis, Aktay referred to the ‘state forces’ behind such ‘ulusalcı’ organizations:

Milliyetçilik does not rise out of blue from “people’s exploitation of the situation.” This rise of milliyetçilik requires a kind of state initiative, power and support. Everyone sees the fact that there is an untouchable state power behind all of the groups that have been emerging lately in the name of ulusalcılık. Many university rectors add fuel to the flames of milliyetçilik. They explicitly and blatantly drag students and university professors to ulusalcı rallies.²⁵

²³ “‘Darbe heveslisi’ emekli askerlerle kolkola halkı sokağa çağırın Demirel, ancak birkaç üyeli ulusalcı derneklerden destek bulabildi” (Perişan Süleyman. (April 2, 2007). *Yeni Şafak*. p.1)

²⁴ “Sezer’den ulusalcı Kabul” (Sezer’den ulusalcı kabul. (April 5, 2007) *Star*. p. 13)

²⁵ “Milliyetçilik de durduk yerde halkın “durumdan vazife çıkarmasıyla” yükselmiyor. Bu yükseliş de bir tür devlet inisiyatifi, iradesi, desteği ister. Türkiye’de son zamanlarda ulusalcılık adına ortaya çıkan grupların hepsinin arkasında dokunulamayan bir tür devlet gücü olduğunu herkes görüyor. Bir çok üniversitenin rektörü milliyetçilik ateşine

Although Aktay primarily questioned the rising nationalist atmosphere rather than addressing on the organizing committee, he utilized similar themes like ‘agitation’ and ‘deep state involvement’ within ‘ulusalçı’ groups. Another columnist of Yeni Şafak, Yusuf Kaplan, being an Islamist academician and former editor of Yeni Şafak, analyzed the rise of ‘ulusalçı’ phenomenon in his column article titled “Ulusalçı virus dynamites Turkey”²⁶. In his formulation, traces of previous themes likewise dominated the contextualization; such as manipulation, interference of the state, interrupting the well being of the nation etc. But more importantly, Kaplan grounded his formulation of ‘ulusalcılık’ on the tension between secularism and Islam in Turkey. Kaplan’s description of ongoing events attempted to capture rising ‘ulusalçı’ phenomenon onto the dichotomy between Turkey’s Islamic roots and suppressing ideology of the secular state elite. In doing so, Kaplan’s discursive formulation knotted different aspects like ‘agitation’ and ‘deep state manipulation’ together with the reference to ‘status quo’:

It is necessary to speak without indulging in any circumlocution. *A virus that is named ulusalcılık has been all around in recent years. It utters threats, hatches various plots and schemes actions that will threaten the future of the country, distort its stability and dynamite its presence. What are its grounds for all this? To save the country! [...] In effect, the true power in this country is this virus of ulusalcılık that constitutes the backbone of the power, turning “laicism” into a primitive religion and using it as the sword of Damocles at every opportunity. This virus of ulusalcılık wants to confine Islam into only private space. After converting to Islam, this society told the whole world principal things and undertook key roles in building the world history. Therefore, the history, the memory, the past, the present and the future of this society is Islam; they are bounded by Islam. However, secularism is the name and the address of the annihilation that dissolves this society, makes its children drug addicts, provokes national or local racists; legitimizes corruptions, thefts, and immodesty; turns men into men’s wolf; fetishizes human’s selfishness, pleasures, and interests; estranges humans from their humanity; freezes and destructs human consciousness against the wallet.[...] All of these are the viruses that laik and ulusalcı actors gave Turkey as presents and planted because they have monopoly over the governmental and non-governmental sources of power and they are the true controllers of the country. When the civil section of this country, namely the vast majority of the country, reached the position where they can direct the fate and future of the country, they either took coup d’états or*

körükle gidiyor. Öğrencileri ve öğretim üyelerini açıkça ulusalcı mitinglere pervasızca sürüklüyor.” (Aktay, Y. (April 9, 2007). Yükselen milliyetçilik ve belirsiz kimlikler. *Yeni Şafak*. p. 9)

²⁶See: Kaplan, Yusuf. (April 10, 2007). Ulusalcı virus Türkiye’yi dinamitliyor. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved May 11, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/yusufkaplan/ulusalcı-virus-türkiyeyi-dinamitliyor-4645?mobil=true>

were executed, or suspended from politics, or pushed and shoved.²⁷ (Emphasis added)

Here, Kaplan interconnected different facets of the ‘us and them’ formulations in an antagonistic form addressing secularism-Islam conflict in Turkey. Constitution of a discursive opposition between the ‘secular state elite’ and ‘the people of Islam’ identified ‘ulusalcılık’ as a component of the ‘elite status quo’. We can analyze Kaplan’s formulations of ‘ulusalcılık’ in three integrated layers of interpretation. First, Kaplan stated that ‘ulusalcı virus’ was a contemporary phenomenon. Resonating with the previously discussed identification of ‘ulusalcı’ with ‘agitation and manipulation’, Kaplan also stated that ‘ulusalcılık’ was a threat against the future well-being of the country, its stability and inner peace. However, in the second layer, Kaplan’s frame of explanation attached ‘ulusalcılık’ to a larger debate on the conflict between laicism and Islam in the modernization history of Turkey. Along his formulations, Kaplan stated that behind the ‘ulusalcı virus’ there was the omnipotent secular state elite repressing the Islamic spirit of the ‘real people’ of Turkey. While he identified Islam with the actualization and self-realization of “this society”, Kaplan situated ‘secularism’ as the evil/enemy that disrupted democratization progress of the nation by its “actual” people. Finally, this antagonistic line demarcated a split over the social space. Metonymically knotting ‘ulusalcılık’ with ‘laicism’, Kaplan discursively identified ‘ulusalcı virus’ with the secular state elite. Therefore, Kaplan positioned ‘ulusalcılık’ as one of the constituent of the anti-people camp while articulating ‘the people’ in the light of Islamic moral codes as the repressed underdog. In the light of this discursive framework, the antagonistic frontier that divided the social into two poles determined the constitutive features of ‘laicist ulusalcılar’ as the status quo elites and ‘the people’ as the Islamic essence of the people of Turkey.

²⁷“Sözü evirip çevirmeden söylemek gerekiyor. Son yıllarda adına ulusalcılık denen bir virüs kol geziyor her tarafta: Tehditler savuruyor, türlü tezgâhlar tertip ediyor, ülkenin geleceğini tehdit edecek, istikrarını bozacak, huzurunu dinamitleyecek eylemler planlıyor: Gerekçesi ne? Vatani kurtarmak! [...] Bu ülkenin gerçek iktidarı, iktidarının omurgasını oluşturan, “laikliği” ilkel bir din hâline getirerek her fırsatta demoklesin kılıcı gibi kullanan bu ulusalcı virüsdür. Ulusalcı virüs, İslâm’ın sadece kişisel alana hapsedilmesini istiyor. Bu toplum, müslüman olduktan sonra, dünyaya esaslı şeyler söylemiş; dünya tarihinin yapılmasında kilit roller oynayabilmiştir. O yüzden bu toplumun tarihi, hafızası, dünü, bugünü ve geleceği İslâm’dır, İslâm’la mukayyettir. Oysa sekülerlik, bu toplumu çözen; çocuklarını uyuşturucu müptelası yapan; ulusal ya da lokal ırkçılıkları kışkırtan; yolsuzlukları, hırsızlıkları, arsızlıkları meşrûlaştıran; insanı insanın kurdu yapan; insanın bencilliğini, hazlarını, çıkarlarını fetişleştiren; insanı insanlığından uzaklaştıran, insanın vicdanını cüzdan karşısında donduran, yok eden bir yokoluş mevsiminin adı ve adresidir. [...] Bütün bunlar, Türkiye’ye laik, ulusalcı aktörlerin hediye ettiği ve köksaldırdığı virüslerdir. Çünkü sivil ve sivil olmayan iktidar kaynakları onların tekelindedir. Ve ülkeyi asıl onlar kontrol etmektedir. Bu ülkenin sivilleri, yani kahir ekseriyeti, bu ülkenin kaderine, geleceğine yön verecek bir konuma geldiğinde, ya darbeler yemiştir; ya asılmıştır; ya siyasetten uzaklaştırılmıştır; ya da itilip kakılmıştır.” (Ibid: footnote 26)

Discursive configuration of an antagonistic frontier reduces simultaneously the heterogeneity of the social space into two incompatible poles. This becomes the precondition of the constitution of identities over the political field. Laclau's discourse theory of populism understands the constitution of the political field in relation to contingent articulation of this internal frontier over the social. Laclau states that "populism involves the division of the social scene into two camps. This division presupposes the presence of some privileged signifiers which condense in themselves the signification of a whole antagonistic camp" (Laclau, 2005, p. 87). Along with this division, differential signifying sequences are negotiated within the discursive field. Therefore, as an effect of hegemonic articulation and fixing of instabilities one difference assumes the representation of the totality. However, since the social space is fundamentally heterogeneous and unevenly open to dislocations, conceptual definition of society as a totality is incommensurable. Thus, 'totality' is represented only as a totality effect through the force of an empty signifier. This privileged signifier, such as 'the people' or 'us', constitutes a privileged center structuring an internal logic of equivalence. At the opposite end of the pole, performative force of another privileged signifier has to constitute the enemy figure as a homogeneous camp, as well; such as 'status quo' or 'ulusalçı'. According to Laclau, the signification process conceived in this manner is a tropological investment which rhetorically combining social elements through metaphoric and analogical operations. In sum, within the given conjuncture the precarious order of the social space is partially fixed through a hegemonic discourse which rhetorically dislocates and fixes particularities through the force of an antagonistic frontier. In light of this discursive configuration, atomized social elements gain their meaning with reference to a structured center that is constituted due to this totalizing power of the discourse (Torring, 1999, pp. 85-93). Considering Yusuf Kaplan's above quote, together with previous definitions like 'agitation' and 'deep state', the term 'ulusalçı' gains its meaning as the secular guardian state power having ties with guardian state forces that repress civil demands of 'the people/us' in order to impose laicism.

In the following days 'ulusalçı' debate tied to another subtopic in newspapers: Mason lobbies. Yeni Şafak continued its reference to 'agitation' and reported that the organizing committee was forcing certain civil society associations to attend the Rallies in larger numbers. According to the news report, one of those associations forced to join

the meetin by ulusalıcı organizers complained that among the organizers there included Masons and Lions associations together with foreign foundations²⁸. Besides, Yeni Şafak's narration stated that the organizing committee has also invited "an association who embraced Abdullah Öcalan's thoughts" while implying the terror aspect of meeting organizations. On the other hand, Star daily related rising "ulusalcı wave" to an inner conflict between two Mason lobbies in Turkey due to a political disagreement.

According to many who watch closely the Masonic community, there is a conflict between 'Ulusalcı' and 'Evrenselci' [Globalists] groups. While Ulusalcı groups highly interested with politics, Evrenselci groups argues that the Masons should stay outside the politics. In this respect, the rise of Ulusalcı wave puts the Masons in panic.²⁹

The themes of Masons and missionary are recurrent conspiracy figures in the right wing political discourses constituting relations of oppositions as a dichotomy between good and evil (Özman & Dede, 2012). Based on this line of reasoning, Star daily tied 'ulusalcı' debate to 'Mason lobbies' in a way to refer an outside force waiting in disguise to interrupt and agitate the political dynamics under the current condition. Moreover, those integrated aspects of "foreign foundations" and "Öcalan supporters" further invested to the constitution of an enemy figure while discursively relating the debate on 'ulusalcılık' to terror organizations and foreign threats. Although there were such instabilities and shifts which disrupted the hegemonic representation of 'ulusalcılık' in the pro-government media discourse, through the constitution of an internal frontier 'ulusalcı' became a constitutive element in configuring the anti-people pole. In pages below, I will investigate the constitution of the antagonism which dichotomized the people and anti-people camps through analyzing then Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan's statements. Analyzing his meeting speeches and interviews, I will question whether Erdoğan's interpretations of current tensions differed from the discursive definitions of the pro-government media regarding the conception of 'ulusalcı' organizations.

28 See. 'Mitinge katıl' baskısı. (April 5, 2007). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved May 11, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/gundem/mitinge-katil-baskisi-38934>

29 "Masonların dünyasını yakından bilen pek çok kişiye göre, kendi aralarında 'Ulusalcılar' ve 'Evrenselciler' çatışması yaşanıyor. Ulusalcılar siyasetle yakından ilgilenirken, evrenselciler masonluğun siyasetin dışında tutulması gerektiğini savunuyor. Bu çevrelerdeki 'Ulusalcı' dalgalanım yükselişi, masonları paniğe sürüklüyor" (Hür ve Kabul edilmiş ulusalcılar. (April 3, 2007). *Star*. p. 10)

2.3. Erdoğan's Appeal to The 'People': Rhetorical Reference to The Ballot Box And The Discourse on Developmentalism

In continuation with the discourse of the pro-government media, Erdoğan, along his speeches, constantly referred to the same themes of 'agitation' and 'manipulation'. However, unlike the way the pro-government media addressed the organizing committee, Erdoğan neither labeled this enemy pole as 'ulusalcı', nor he referred to a rising neo-nationalist atmosphere. Throughout his statements while rhetorically excluding activities of the organizing committee for the Rallies, Erdoğan rather called the anti-people camp 'gangs' with a criminalizing and blaming emphasis. He basically framed his dichotomizing rhetoric onto two levels: the 'ballot box' and a developmentalist discourse. While constant reference to the 'ballot box' grounded the AKP's discourse on the parliamentary legitimacy of their power in the government, developmentalist discourse invested to the populist identification of the party with 'the people' through excluding 'others' as violators and agitators against the well-being of the country. In below quotation, Erdoğan addressed the organizing committee as 'gangs' while he opposed their attempts with reference to popular will of the 'nation' and democratic parliament:

Look, you remember certain *gangs* from the past; now those gangs cannot find any clients for themselves. Why? Because no one gives credit to those who want to cast a shadow over this period when the country has been all over green and spring flowers has blossomed. You must remember they [rally organizations] go from one door to another. But they cannot find many buyers. Why? Now, common sense is meeting at one place. If it is democracy, democracy does not mean uniting at the wrong place. *Democracy* is to unite at the majority of the people. And now, Turkey walks towards that direction. ...*The nation will make them pay for this at the ballot box.* [...] Why? Because others cannot cue us in any possible way. *Only the nation* can cue us. You say, "Sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the nation," then you attempt to discharge the nation's right to sovereignty, as you wish.³⁰ (Emphases added)

Following the same pattern of reasoning, during an interview with Ahmet Hakan, a journalist in Hürriyet newspaper, Erdoğan stated as follows:

30"‘Bakın belirli çeteler vardı hani, geçmişte; artık o çeteler bile kendilerine müşteri bulamıyor. Niye; ülkenin bu her tarafı yemyeşil olmuş, bahar çiçekleri açmış bir dönemine gölge yapmak isteyenlere, artık kimse pirim vermiyor. Hatırlıyorsunuz, dolaşıyorlar [miting örgütlerini kastediyor] kapı kapı. Ama pek müşteri bulamıyorlar. Niye? Artık aklıselim bir yerde buluşuyor. Eğer demokrasiyse, demokrasi yanlışta birleşmek değildir. Demokrasi, halkın çoğunluğunda birleşmektir. Ve şu anda bu güzergahta yürüyen bir Türkiye var. ... Bunun faturasını, millet var ya, sandıkta kesecek[.] Niye, çünkü, bize bir yerler sufle edemez, herhangi sufle. Bize ancak millet sufle eder. Parlamentoda 'Egemenlik kayıtsız şartsız milletindir' diyeceksin, ondan sonra milletin egemenlik hakkını kalkıp kendine göre buradan böyle göndermeye çalışacaksın" (Kapı kapı dolaşan çeteler var. (April 2, 2007). *Zaman*. Retrieved May 12, 2015 from http://mobil.zaman.com.tr/politika_kapi-kapi-dolasan-ceteler-var_521935.html)

There may gather a huge crowd [at the meeting], too. However, I want to say that such huge crowd will not bring any solution. *The ballot box brings the result* and this result is the parliament. The parliament will perform its constitutional right. The sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the nation and this is secured by the constitution. *Thos who cannot bear this are the ones involved in such endeavors.*³¹ (Emphasis added)

There are different but interconnected patterns in Erdoğan's formulations. In three parts I am going to analyze them; configuration of the antagonistic frontier, interpellation of 'the people' through rhetorical reference to the ballot box, and the AKP's developmentalist discourse legitimizing discursive identification of 'balloting' with the party's legislative legacy.

Erdoğan, in his speeches, distinguished two groups, the people as *millet* and gangs. While pro-government media addressed the organizing committee as 'ulusalci', Erdoğan defined these groups as attempts of 'gangs'. Connotating Star's and Yeni Şafak's definitions on 'agitation' and 'manipulating forces', the term 'gangs' also referred to an excluded group trying to penetrate into the inner totality through means of violence and disruption in order to abuse the well-being of 'us' for their own interests. In accordance, Erdoğan defined activation of these groups of 'gangs' as attempts to cast shadow onto the flourishing well-being of the country. In similar lines, this exclusionary rhetoric of Erdoğan dichotomized 'the people' as millet/nation and 'foreign powers' while referring to the theme of 'cuing'. This emphasis, in Erdoğan's rhetoric, implied that behind the meeting organization there remained external forces agitating and manipulating crowds. Based on such aspects of 'external forces' and 'manipulation', Erdoğan's formulation configured the upcoming Republican Rallies as an enemy organization gathering agitated crowds that were directed by "gangs". In fact, however, the organizers were consisted of a multitude of social groups; ranging from ex-military members, rectors, lawyers, unionists, academicians to several civil society organizations. In the discourse of the AKP, however, Erdoğan's rhetorical formulation casted this heterogeneous complex of social elements, who were mainly concerned with secularism and the AKP's political agenda, as an organization of 'gangs' while excluding variety of constituents as an anti-people community. Under a dichotomizing

³¹"Büyük bir kalabalık da toplanabilir [mitingi kastediyor]. Ama ben bütün bu kalabalıkların bir sonuç getirmediğini söylemek istiyorum. Sandık bir netice ortaya koyar ve bu netice parlamentodur. Bu parlamento anayasal hakkını kullanacak. Egemenlik kayıtsız şartsız milletin ve bu anayasamızın teminatı. Bunu hazmedemeyenler işte bu tür çırpınışlar içinde." (Hakan, Ahmet. (April 4, 2007). Çankaraya sıkıştırması ile futbol muhabbeti. *Hürriyet*. Retrieved May 14, 2015 from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/6265207.asp>)

logic and eliminating the inner verities, Erdoğan defined organizers of the meeting as ‘anti-democratic gangs’ who were against decisions and well-being of ‘the people/millet’.

Throughout his statements, Erdoğan tried to inscribe a frame of explanation while defining the organization for the Rallies as manipulations against the interests of ‘the people’. Laclau states that “there is no emergence of a popular subjectivity without the creation of an internal frontier” (Laclau, 2005, p. 38). According to Laclau, contingent formation of such splits in the social realm is a necessary condition for a society to reach a sense of its own as a result of the demonization of a certain section. Similar to the dichotomy between ‘gangs’ and ‘the people’, Laclau argues “vis-à-vis this excluded element, all differences are articulated as equivalent to each other” (Laclau, 2005, p. 70). This exclusion through a differential logic (i.e. ‘gangs’ or ‘ulusalcı organizations’), in return, positions those variations over the inner field along an equivalential articulation and configures ‘the people’ as a homogenized popular subjectivity. Having the common feature of being opposed to the ‘other/enemy’, there constituted is the ‘us’ (i.e. ‘the people/millet’).

A second point I want to make with regard to Erdoğan’s above logic of demarcation is that this simplification of heterogeneity into a single ‘other’ is constituted through a grounding reference to ‘democratic legislation’. While Erdoğan defined the democratic realm in a deterministic relation with the ballot box, this conceiving of popular voting defined ‘balloting’ as the true representation of the total will of ‘the people/millet’. Therefore, through defining voting as the actualization of the national will, the AKP’s discourse legitimized the rhetorical identification of the will of ‘the people’ with that of the party. The political discourse of the AKP interpellated ‘the people/millet’ as identical to the legislative power of the party. Thus, configuring the conflict between ‘the people’ and ‘gangs’, the antagonistic frontier in the political discourse of the AKP constituted the political field along the tension between ‘anti-democratic gangs’ and ‘popular will of the people’.

Erdoğan’s formulations rhetorically configured the political field through a significant act of the appeal to the people. Stavrakakis argues that in populist discourse, appeal to ‘the people’ occupies a central place (Stavrakakis, 2005). Populism as a discourse operationalizes ‘the people’ as a signifier and constitutes the political space

that is based on an oppositional difference. Therefore, in order to make this reference to ‘the people’ make meaningful as a signifier of an inner totality, an antagonistic demarcation has to be invested. Out of the above discussions, it is clear that Erdoğan configures an exclusionary frontier that works according to the logic of difference. Erdoğan excludes a group of organizers out of the heterogeneous complex of the social space as ‘gangs’ and with an antagonistic relation to ‘the people’. Thus, ‘the people’ as a totality, in the political rhetoric of Erdoğan, has been maintained through the master reference to ‘democratic legislations’.

Besides this grounding reference to ballot box and ‘democratic legislation’, Erdoğan also utilized a developmentalist discourse. Along his speeches, Erdoğan recurrently reminded that what distinguished the AKP government from former governments in office were their development projects, successful economic plans serving to the interests of the people, and achieving increase in the national wealth. Based on this developmentalist discourse, Erdoğan addressed the enemy figure as those inhibiting forces disrupting the projects and investments of the AKP government. While separating ‘the people/millet’ from “those who cannot bear the well-being of Turkey”, Erdoğan appealed to the people to make their judgment at the ballot box.

The nation shows them another door to go. The nation will make them pay for what they have done. Those who have been no avail to Turkey, those who have not been fit the bill... Can they understand the progress Turkey has made?³²

Erdoğan’s political rhetoric integrates this developmentalist discourse to an elusive but encapsulating formulation of the enemy figure through his populist addressings (Türk, 2014, p. 211). Within this developmentalist discourse, in above quotation Erdoğan also differentiated organizers of the Republican Rallies from the crowds in the streets. Also highlighted by the AKP spokesman Bülent Arınç, this distinction defined the gathering of crowds as a democratic right rather than an ‘agitation’ against the upcoming presidency elections. This identification of the meeting as a democratic gathering was important, since after the Ergenekon trial began in 2008 the AKP’s discourse tended to identify the Republican Rallies as one of the steps of a designed coup attempt against the AKP government. As a result of this shift, the rhetorical distinction between the organizing committee and crowds would be erased

³² “Millet onlara başka kapıya diyor. Bunun faturasını millet kesecek. Türkiye’de taş üstüne taş koymamış, bir çivi çakmamış olanlar... Bunlar Türkiye’nin nereden nereye geldiğini anlayabilirler mi?” (Millet çetelere pirim vermiyor. (April 3, 2007). *Yeni Şafak*. p. 13)

and the organizations for the Rallies would be defined as an anti-government agitation by ‘coup supporters’. However, although in the given period both Erdoğan and the pro-government media remarked the distinction between the organizing committee and the crowds, the AKP’s discourse excluded the Rallies as an anti-people organization while integrating developmentalist aspects into his discursive reference to ‘ballot box’:

We are never disturbed by these protests as long as such meetings are held within the framework of law and within the lines democracy designated. We always respect such meetings. They include different movements, these and those. I suppose we probably have earned immunity against them by now; we have grown accustomed to them, they made us. They will have no impact from now on. *But the nation despises them; mark my words. This is the work of love; this is the work of ambition. We love our nation; we love our country and nation. Without that love, none of these works [investment and service] could have taken place.* We will show the world what this nation is capable of; we will show it again. We are not going to decelerate and slow our pace until reaching the enlightened tomorrows that are on the horizon today. But our nation, god willing, will put up the best demonstration *on the ballot boxes* on November 4. I believe that our nations trust in and the love for AK Party is growing day by day and it will do so. As Turkey advances, our bonds, our bonds of love will strengthen more and more.³³ (Emphasis added)

In above quotation, we can trace the constituents of a populist discourse. Considering the dynamics of the time and the upcoming parliamentary voting for presidency elections in April 2007, Erdoğan discursively combined certain societal aspects in order to demarcate an anti-people camp. According to this formation, constant reference to ‘the people’ invested to the division of the social space as two antagonistic camps. First, through formulating a rhetoric on economic investments and progress, Erdoğan’s rhetorical appeal crafted an image of the government in the service of its people in order to exclude a group of agitators that “cannot bear” this relation between the party and the people. Secondly, reminding the tireless effort of the party for ‘the love of the people’, Erdoğan addressed the ‘hatred of the nation’ against those meeting organizations. While voicing the feelings *of* the people against the Rallies, Erdoğan, lastly, advised ‘the nation’ to reflect their decision at the ballot box, which he

³³ “Bunlardan [eylemler] hiçbir zaman rahatsız olmayız. Yeter ki bu tür toplantılar yasalar çerçevesinde, demokrasinin belirlediği çizgiler içerisinde olsun. Her zaman bu tür toplantılara saygılıyız. Bunların içinde hareketler var, şunlar var, bunlar var. Artık bunlara karşı da herhalde muafiyet kesbetmeye başladık, alıştık, alıştırdılar, sağolsun. Artık bunların bir tesiri olmaz. Ama millet bunlara nefretle bakıyor, bunu bilin. Bu aşk işidir aşk, sevda işidir sevda. Bizim milletimize sevdamız var, vatanımıza, milletimize sevdamız var. O sevda olmazsa bu işler [yatırım ve hizmet] olmaz. Bu milletin nelere muktedir olduğunu göstereceğiz dünyaya, yeniden göstereceğiz. Bugün ufukta beliren aydınlık yarınlara ulaşmaya kadar hızımızı kesmeyeceğiz, tempomuzu düşürmeyeceğiz. Ama en güzel gösteriyi inşallah 4 Kasım’da sandıklarda milletimiz yapacak. İnanıyorum ki milletimizin AK Parti’ye olan inancı ve muhabbeti her geçen gün artıyor, artacak. Türkiye yol aldıkça bağlarımız, gönül bağlarımız daha da güçlenecektir.” (Cumhuriyet. April 11, 2007)

identified as the manifestation of democratic legitimacy and popular will. In Erdoğan's statements, "the people as a rhetorical source, figure and effect is voiced" (Povinelli, 2012) in the form of a hatred against the meeting organizations. According to Erdoğan's formulation, 'the people' would make their judgment against those organizations at the ballot box while favoring the dedicated AKP government and its developmentalist ambitions. Therefore, Erdoğan's formulation on the one hand interpellated 'the people/nation' as a popular subject through the rhetoric on developmentalism. On the other hand, calling 'the people' to reflect their 'hatred' against 'those who cannot bear' at the ballot box integrated developmentalist rhetoric to the discourse on parliamentary legitimacy of the party. Although rhetoric of the AKP constituted 'the people/millet' as a popular subject, the other side of the frontier, namely the anti camp, was not statically defined, yet; rather it shifted from 'ulusalcı', 'gangs', 'Masons' to 'those who cannot bear the economic growth'.

Certain pro-government media actors shared Erdoğan's emphasis on the 'ballot box' in similar lines of thought. For example, a columnist in Yeni Şafak, Hakan Albayrak analyzed the relation between political parties and needs and decisions of the people in one of his articles. Albayrak accused CHP for the party did not take the voice and reactions of the people into enough consideration.

CHP does nothing to win the nation. It does have not a bit of interest in the true problems of the nation. CHP does not direct itself to the nation nor does it address the nation. *It does not compete with AK Party that is honored by the elector's courtesy, but with the ulusalcı groups for which the people have a low regard and that have a low regard for people.* CHP does not aim an election victory; this party that requires a thousand of witnesses to certify its quality as a political party tries to gain favor in the "ulusalcı market" that is worth two-a-penny. [...] They should quit politics before they see the farthest bottom of the ballot box and lose their credit. They should either found a new "ulusalcı"/kuva-yı milliye (national forces) association or join in Ataturkist Thought Association. *Without troubling themselves with accountability vis-à-vis the nation, they can harangue on bigoted laicism there as much as they want.*³⁴(Emphasis added)

Albayrak's formulation reproduced the populist formation of the AKP's discourse. In the quotation, Albayrak addressed "decisions and needs of the people"

³⁴"Milleti kazanmak için hiçbir şey yapmıyor CHP. Milletin gerçek sorunlarıyla zerre kadar ilgilenmiyor. Millete yönelmiyor, millete hitap etmiyor. Seçmenin teveccühüne mazhar olan Ak Parti'yle değil, halka metelik vermeyen ve halkın da metelik vermediği 'ulusalcı' gruplarla yarışıyor. Seçim zaferlerinde gözü yok; üç kuruluşluk 'ulusalcı piyasası'nda prim yapmaya çalışıyor parti demeye bin şahit isteyen bu parti. [...] Sandığın dibini boylayıp karizmayı iyice çizdirmeden siyaseti bıraksınlar. Yeni bir 'ulusalcı' / 'kuva-yı milliyeci' dernek kursunlar veya Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği'ne iltihak etsinler. Orada, millete hesap verme derdi filan olmadan, istedikleri kadar fanatik laiklik söylevi çekebilirler." (Albayrak, H. (April 9, 2007). CHP neden ADD'ye iltihak etmiyor?. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved May 14, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/hakanalbayrak/chp-niye-addye-iltihak-etmiyor-4626>)

ideologically as pre-determined demands and interpreted the AKP's success as a result of serving to those interests of the people. In doing so, to Albayrak, the AKP gained the favor of the people as opposed to the CHP. According to the columnist, what differentiated both parties was the ability to appeal and gain the trust of the people; in other words hearing their voice. Referring to the ballot box as the representation of the true voice of the people, Albayrak discursively identified 'the people' with the AKP, while opposing the CHP for its affiliations with 'ulusalci' groups. Thus, this frame of articulation dichotomized the AKP and 'ulusalci' groups with constitutive reference to 'decisions of the people' and popular voting. While reproducing the AKP's political discourse, in the quote above 'ulusalci' groups identified with the organizing committee; namely the ADD and paramilitary associations. Moreover, Albayrak's formulation put a significant emphasis on 'fanatic laicism'; therefore, 'laicism', similar to Kaplan's quote above, became the differentiating denominator in discursively separating the 'voice of the people' and the disinterested secularist concerns of 'ulusalci' groups.

2.4. 'Ulusalcılık' Gains Its Temporary Fixation Along The Deep State Acts

Until now, I have analyzed varying forms of contextualization provided for 'ulusalci' while illustrating how those differential references constituted political identities in the light of an antagonistic frontier. I compared Erdoğan's speeches and discourse of the pro-government media, and argued that populist formation of the AKP's discourse functioned in representing 'us' and 'other' camps through indefinite formulations. This discursive articulation recollected elements of 'Öcalan' and terror, 'Masons' and foreign forces, 'gangs' and agitation, and 'laicist elite status quo'. Such analogical combinations attempted to fix heterogeneous elements rhetorically as contiguous to each other as the anti-people pole. In constituting this enemy figure the AKP's discourse dichotomized the political field as 'millet and others'. However, in the AKP's discursive field, the term 'ulusalci' was not the privileged signifier for the configuration of the anti-people pole. Yet, the antagonistic frontier made these metonymic combinations representable as a rhetorically constituted unity over the syntagm of an anti community. In below pages, I will analyze the period encapsulating the Republican Rallies and its aftermath from the perspective of the AKP's discursive field. While tracing how the term 'ulusalci' gained its contingent fixation in the light of extra-legal assassinations by deep state organizations of the era, I will analyze how the

AKP's discourse hegemonically arrested the meaning of the 'ulusalci' term in 2007 period along the rising deep state acts.

Within those controversies of the period illustrated above, state bureaucracy and military officers increased their involvement in the ongoing debates about the presidency elections. In this time period, Erdoğan kept silent on declaring his possible candidacy which eventually increased ongoing suspensions and polarization. Considering the parliamentary elections for the presidency, the head of the YÖK Erdoğan Teziç stated that two-third of the MP's in the parliament (367 seats) has to be present during parliamentary votes according to constitutional laws. The head of the CHP, Deniz Baykal, was stating that his party would boycott the parliament if Erdoğan would insist on his candidacy and not negotiate. If that would become the case, parliamentary voting would be cancelled due to lack of presence of the required seats and hence the presidency elections would be blocked. Beside this possible constitutional crisis, commonly defined during the era as the "367crisis", the Head of the General Staff Yaşar Büyükanıt expressed his concerns on the headscarf issue and threats against laicism. While implying Erdoğan as the candidate of the AKP for the presidency, Büyükanıt declared that any possible candidate has to be "secular not just in word but in essence" (Baran, 2008). In sum, a political crisis circulating around bureaucratic, parliamentary, military and civil society levels was at the door.

One day before the first meeting to be held in Ankara in April 14, then President Ahmet Necdet Sezer gave a speech at the War Academy. There he strongly criticized the government and said: "Political regime in Turkey, since the founding of the Republic, has never faced such a threat but in current situation. For the first time in its history, fundamental values of the laic Republic are made controversial"³⁵. In a response at the same day, Erdoğan opposed Sezer's statements while continuing his former references to rising economic development and democratic legislations:

Sezer's statements are quite wrong, the people disagrees with him. What exactly left the regime in danger? Is it possible for an economic system to develop in a country where there is political instability and threats against democracy? Do

³⁵ See. Rejim büyük tehlike altında. (April 14, 2007). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved May 14, 2015, from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/6330947.asp>

foreign investors will to come to a country under threats against its regime? I do not believe that the majority of our people share such concerns.³⁶

Along these tensions and the polarized atmosphere, the first meeting of the Republican Rallies gathered hundreds and thousands people in Ankara. According to different sources, number of participants was announced variably from three hundred thousand to one million. The square and highways were decorated with national flags. Different segments of the society participated in the meeting who were concerned about the AKP's supposedly Islamic agenda and weakening of the Kemalist principles. Sharing these anxieties, more than ten university rectors and thousands of university students, political parties like the CHP, the DSP and the IP, retired and active military officers like Şener Eruygur and Hurşit Tolon, several public intellectuals and artists, and a number of civil society organizations involved in the meeting in Ankara. During the meeting, the crowd highlighted certain slogans, such as "Turkey is laic and will remain as laic", "Sheikhs and mullah cannot stay at Çankaya", "Imam of the USA, for how much did you betray your country?", "We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal". Nur Serter, being the assistant manager of the ADD during the era and later the CHP's MP from Izmir, encouraged lawyers, universities and Kemalist military in her speech for speaking out if the unity of Turkey would intended to be shattered:

Can those who cannot say 'How happy is the one who says I am a Turk' stay at Çankaya? Can they protect the honor of Turkey? We want a president who rules Turkey from Turkey; a president who would not give in to imperialism and EU politics. We want a president who will not compromise the ultimate freedom of the country and protect the nation state.³⁷

Bekir Coşkun, in his column in *Hürriyet*, defined the meeting with a prideful celebration as "this was the first attempt to take back laic republic from the hands of counter revolutionaries"³⁸.

Aftermath of the meeting did not reflect the agitating and provoking atmosphere that which the pro-government media supposed to happen previously. The

³⁶ "Sezer'inki çok yanlış tespit, halk katılmıyor. Ne oluyor da rejim tehlikede... Siyasi noktada bir istikrarsızlığın olduğu ülkede, demokrasinin tehdit altında olduğu ülkede ekonominin gelişme kaydetmesi mümkün olur mu? Rejimin tehdit altında olduğu bir ülkede gelir de yabancı yatırımda bulur mu? Ben bunu halkımızın kahır ekseriyetinin paylaştığına inanmıyorum." (*Hürriyet*. April 14, 2007. p. 23)

³⁷ "Ne mutlu Türküm' diyemeyenler Çankaya'ya çıkabilir mi? Türkiye'nin onurunu koruyabilir mi? Türkiye'yi Türkiye'den yöneten bir cumhurbaşkanı istiyoruz. Emperyalizme boyun eğmeyen, AB politikalarına ülkeyi kurban etmeyen bir cumhurbaşkanı. Biz, tam bağımsızlıktan ödün vermeyen, ulus devlete sahip çıkan bir cumhurbaşkanı istiyoruz." (*Hürriyet*. April 15, 2007. p. 20-21)

³⁸ "Dün o meydanda, laik cumhuriyeti karşı devrimcilerin elinden geri almanın ilk adımı atıldı." (Coşkun, B. (April 15, 2007). Güzel günler göreceğiz çocuklar. *Hürriyet*. Retrieved May 14, 2015, from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/6334939.asp>)

gathering ended with a non-violent march and this situation temporarily falsified those attributions of the AKP circles. While oppositional media celebrated and supported demands appeared during the meeting, the pro-government media remained silent about the event during broadcastings and in the aftermath, as well. Erdoğan, on the other hand, addressed the crowd in the meeting while suggesting them to reflect their critiques at the ballot box: “Do we believe in democracy, laic Republic, social state, rule of law? If we do, the ballot box is the way to them”³⁹. Erdoğan stated that he respected democratic rights of demonstrators in the meeting; however, he defined crowds at the meeting as ‘dispatched squadrons’: “Too many rumors have been done [about the number of demonstrators], but the nation cannot be fooled. Because, dispatched squadrons are different. If they had pictured [the crowd in] our opening at the Blacksea coastal road, they would see the situation clearly”⁴⁰. Reproducing the discursive tie between developmentalist investments and the image of a government servicing for its people, Erdoğan separated two crowds; the crowds in the AKP’s opening ceremony as ‘the people’ and the other crowd in the Rallies as ‘dispatched squadrons’. This identification on the one hand discursively designated the AKP’s popular supporters as the actual nation, on the other hand differentiated the protesters at the Rallies as manipulated crowds without having genuine claims.

Contrary to Erdoğan’s judgments, two important columnists of *Yeni Şafak*, Kürşat Bumin and Fehmi Kuru, emphasized the democratic insight of the meeting. Ended up with gathering hundreds of thousands of people, Bumin complained about Erdoğan’s attitude for he did not take the voice of these oppositions into enough consideration⁴¹. Similar to Bumin, Fehmi Kuru, writing under his pseudonym Taha Kıvanç, stated that he also supported the meeting for it could contribute to democratic atmosphere: “It is a fundamental democratic right for the people to gather in order to declare their opinion on any topic they believe and express their reactions”⁴². In fact, the

³⁹ “Demokrasiye inanıyor muyuz, laik Cumhuriyete inanıyor muyuz, sosyal devlete inanıyor muyuz, hukuk devletine inanıyor muyuz? O zaman, bunun yeri sandıktır” (AKP locasından Erdoğan’a: Ordu burada. (April 17, 2007). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved May 10, 2015, from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/6347331.asp>)

⁴⁰ “Gazetelerde farklı farklı rakamlar. [...] Çok farklı şeyler söylendi, ancak millet bunu yutmuyor. Çünkü bindirilmiş kitalar farklıdır. [...] Karadeniz Sahil Yolu açılışına gelip bunu fotoğraflayıp koymuş olsaydılar, neyin ne olduğunu gayet iyi görürlerdi.” (Tandoğan’dakiler bindirilmiş kıta. (April 18, 2007). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved May 16, 2015, from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/6350588.asp>)

⁴¹ Bumin stated in his column article as follows: “Yüzbinlerce vatandaşın yer aldığı bir gösterinin değerlendirilmesi ‘2 dakika’ya sığar mı? [Is two minutes enough to evaluate a demonstration in which hundreds of thousands of citizens participated?]” (Bumin, K. (April 17, 2007). Tandoğan’ın Analizi. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved May 16, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/KursatBumin/tandoganin-analizi-4749>)

⁴² “İnsanların inandıkları bir konuda görüş açıklamak üzere bir araya gelmeleri, tepkilerini ifade etmeleri en doğal demokratik haklarıdır” (Kıvanç, T. (April 18, 2007) Mitingden sonra. *Yeni Şafak*. p. 8)

tone of the meeting was highly nationalist, chauvinistic, majorly indifferent to rising deep state activities and exclusive against democratic demands of different sectors. However, unlike former attributions of certain pro-government columnists on agitation and terror, the extent of high participation in a peaceful march ended up with arguing the democratic possibilities of the meeting. Thus, semiotic shifts regarding the definition of inner qualities of both the crowds in the meeting and organizers remained without stability and changed according to political positions of narrators in the given conjuncture.

Due to the indefiniteness of signifying elements across competing discursive fields, the AKP's discourse could not hegemonically fixed the meaning of the term 'ulusalci', although it was salient during the controversies of the era. According to Laclau, the concept of hegemony requires three essential modes of operation. First, heterogeneity of the social field has to prevent articulation of elements from being closed as a representable totality. Second, hegemonic suture has to force heterogeneity and indefiniteness towards an effect of totalization. Third, since universal totality is both incommensurable due to openness of the social and necessary as an effect, heterogeneity has to remain and hegemonic articulations have to be re-maintained (Laclau, 2001). Thus, for totality in conceptual terms is impossible, signification of totality maintains this unachievable fullness. Empty signifiers emerge out of this need to name an instable stability which is impossible but necessary. According to Laclau, this act of representing something irrepresentable is a catachrestical operation, and becomes the zero-point of any signifying process (Laclau, 2005, p. 72). Conceptualizing signification in the light of tropological operations leads Laclau to relate his theoretical discussion to a general debate on rhetoric. Within this framework rhetoric refers to "the contingent, discursive, and fundamentally tropological process that brings objective reality into existence by imposing on an array of heterogeneous elements the semblance of a structure within which they acquire identity/meaning" (Kaplan, 2010).

Regarding the concerns of this study, I argue that the AKP's attempt to capture 'ulusalci' debates fulfilled these criterions. Although there were shifts in terms of defining the constituents of the 'ulusalci' organization, i.e. those references to 'Masons', 'Öcalan', 'secular elites', 'gangs' etc., the discourse of the pro-government media attempted to hegemonically capture the 'ulusalci' phenomenon as a component of the enemy figure. In similar lines, Erdoğan's rhetoric on developmentalism and ballot box

constituted, on the one hand, ‘the people’ as a political subject, on the other hand excluded hindering activities of enemy organizations. However, ‘ulusalcı’ remained as an indefinite reference along these developments. Although this was the case, along these attempts to fix the content of ‘ulusalcılık’ hegemonically, the reference to ‘ulusalcı’ gained its totality effect in the aftermath of deep state assassinations which followed the first Republican meeting.

A couple of days after the meeting, on April 18, three Christians were massacred in the Zirve publishing house in Malatya where they publish Bible and other pieces of Christian literature. Similar to the killing in Trabzon and murder of Hrant Dink, this deep state assassination also targeted religious minority groups. This event, within the period of April 2007, became determinant in indentifying the term ‘ulusalcı’ with the ‘deep state’ in the discourse of the pro-government media. On its cover page, Yeni Şafak daily repeated its previous definition ‘agitation’ while addressing the assassination event as “Dark hands, dark day: The same agitators appeared on the stage while again using youngsters in Malatya”⁴³. Yalçın Akdoğan defined the massacre as a result of “ulusalcı fascism”. Through a retrospective articulation of previous killings discussed in pages above, Yalçın Akdoğan, under his pseudonym Yasin Doğan, stated that the actual aim behind these deep state activities was to force Turkey into further crises:

Killing of Father Santoro. Murder of the writer Hrant Dink. Assassination of the personnel at the Zirve publish house. The Attack against the State Council. This ferocity and violence always takes us to the same address: Ulusalcı fascism which utilizes occasionally religion or nationalism. Abusing notions like motherland, national flag, religiosity for their bloody projects, the ulusalcı mind aims to leave Turkey under great depressions.⁴⁴

While setting interrelations among previous assassinations through retroactive articulation of mentioned events, Akdoğan defined ‘ulusalcı fascism’ as an ideology which manipulating nationalist and religious sentiments, and he discursively identified it with deep state killings. Akdoğan’s formulation, in the end, positioned ‘ulusalcılık’ as a larger threat before the country. At the same day, Yeni Şafak columnist Ibrahim

⁴³ “Karanlık el kara gün: Aynı tahrikçi yine gençleri kullanarak Malatya’da sahneye çıktı.” (*Yeni Şafak*. April 19, 2007. p. 1)

⁴⁴ “Rahip Santoro'nun öldürülmesi. Yazar Hrant Dink'in katledilmesi. Zirve Yayınevi çalışanlarının öldürülmesi. Danıştay saldırısı. Bu gözü dönmüşlüğün, bu vahşetin dönüp dolaşıp çıktığı adres hep aynı: Kimi zaman dini, kimi zaman milliyetçiliği yedeğine alan ulusalcı faşizm. Vatan, bayrak, din kavramlarını kanlı hesapları için istismar eden ulusalcı anlayışın geldiği nokta Türkiye'yi büyük sıkıntılarla karşı karşıya bırakmaktır.” (Doğan, Yasin. (April 20, 2007). Türkiye'ye yazık ediyorlar. *Yeni Şafak*. p. 7)

Karagül also addressed the same rising “deep wave”. While he majorly described a moment of fear and anger against foreign forces, Karagül referred ‘ulusalcı’ not as the cause but as one actor within the general atmosphere:

Which fears feed such people? We witnessed similar incidents. The man who killed Hrant Dink was at the same age [with the murderers in the Zirve massacre]. There is a wave in Turkey growing rapidly at the deep. It is not enough to call it “Ulusalcı”. It is not enough to identify it with certain political groups. Currently, it belongs to nowhere. It does not take side with the inner polarizations of Turkey. It is an anger channeled against “foreign threats”.⁴⁵

Unlike Akdoğan, Karagül stated that this deep wave of anger against foreign threats extended the boundaries of political groups like ‘ulusalcılar’. In similar lines, Mehmet Altan, in Star newspaper, referred to current deep state activities. While describing in his article how and under which dynamics the missionary activities came to be recognized as a threat against the nation, Altan defined deep state activities as ‘agitation’ that manipulated not just ‘ulusalcı’ groups but a variety of political groups:

“Missionary threat” spread to large masses after the National Security Council included it into its agenda under Bülent Ecevit’s term in office in 2001. Almost everyone, from Ulusalcı circles to Islamists, started to argue that missionaries converted Muslims to Christianity day by day and organized separatist acts. In the end, agitation showed its effects. Coming towards the presidency elections, messages of such murders are always the same. The one targeting inner actors addresses the AKP. The other which target outer actors addresses the EU. Summary of the message is as follows: We will stay as what we are or we will destroy this place.⁴⁶

The following day, Yeni Şafak newspaper separated a large portion to the analysis of political killings. The headline was written as “The Name of it, ‘Ulusalcı’ terror”, and description was provided as follows:

Traces of the murders, which violate the inner peace of Turkey and leave the country in a hard situation in front of the world, lead us to the paranoia of

⁴⁵“Bu insanları hangi korkular besliyor? Trabzon’da aynı şeyler yaşandı. Hrant Dink’i öldüren aynı yaşlardaydı. Türkiye’de derinden bir dalga hızla büyüyor. “Ulusalcı” demek yetmiyor. Belli siyasi gruplarla tanımlamak yetmiyor. Şimdilik hiçbir yere ait değil. Türkiye içi kamplaşmaların tarafı değil. “Dış tehdit”e yönelmiş bir öfke.” (Karagül, İbrahim. (April 20, 2007). Türkiye sürprize hazır olmalı. *Yeni Şafak*. p. 9)

⁴⁶[2001] Nisan’ında Bülent Ecevit döneminde Milli Güvenlik Kurulu gündemine girince, ‘misyonerlik tehlikesi’ bir anda geniş kitlelere yayıldı. ‘Ulusalcılar’dan İslamcı çevrelere, herkes misyonerlerin ülkede gün be gün çok sayıda Müslüman’ı Hristiyan yapıp bölücü faaliyetler yürüttüğünü iddia etmeye başladı. ... Ve sounda tahrik, etkisini gösterdi. ... Cumhurbaşkanlığı öncesi bu cinayetlerin mesajı ise hep aynı. İçeriye olanın adresi AK Parti. Dışarıya olanın adresi ise AB. Mesajın özeti ise şu: Eskisi gibi kalalım yoksa buraları dağıtırız.” (Altan, Mehmet. (April 20, 2007). Azmettirenlerin listesi mi?. *Star*. p. 13)

‘dismantling the nation’. Those hands manufacturing such tensions terrorize the atmosphere through ‘young killers’.⁴⁷

Again, there the signified ‘ulusalçı’ shifted between deep state activities as ‘dark hands’ and ‘paranoid crowds’ as the nationalist atmosphere at the public level. On the one hand, discussions of the columnists addressed ‘ulusalçı’ as a deep state organization triggering nationalist fears and anxieties of crowds; on the other hand, indefinite relationality between those ‘dark forces’ and social groups supplemented the limit of the ‘ulusalçı’ term in defining larger socio-political positions. Considering these indefinite and instable references, Laclau stated that “that vagueness and indeterminacy are not shortcomings of a discourse about social reality, but, in some circumstances, inscribed in social reality as such” (Laclau, 2005, p. 67). Illustrating this conceptualization of the formation of the social, below quotation from Yeni Şafak daily narrated the current situation from a larger spectrum. Extending the limits of ‘dark hands’ or ‘agitators’, narration of the newspaper stabilized previously referred features of the anti-people pole within a meaningful interpretation. Below, ‘ulusalçı’ name hegemonically encapsulated different social branches while integrating them through rhetorically constituted equivalential ties.

The discourse of some politicians and non-governmental organizations claiming, “EU will divide Turkey,” and “The country will be lost,” enhanced the elbow room of the “ulusalçı terrorism.” *The attack on Council of State* that took place on 17 May 2006 agitated Turkey. It turned out that the hitman Alparslan Arslan had been in contact with the *ulusalçı* Association for the Union of Patriotic Forces (Vatansever Kuvvetler Güç Birliği Hareketi Derneği - VKGB) and with some of the retired officers. It appeared that *all the well-known ulusalcı people of Turkey, particularly some of the retired officers, scholars, politicians and journalists* were the denizens of the meetings, programs and all kinds of events in the city. How the groups deploying the discourse on “saving the country,” which is particularly influential on milliyetçi students are organized became evident with the oath that the retired colonel Fikri Karadağ, the chairperson of the National Forces Society, swore on gun. ... *As all the other ulusalcı people do, Rağsan Ecevit, the vice chairperson of DSP,* made statements such as “Missionary activities increased when foreigners started to bought lands. Another way of dividing Turkey is to encourage people to convert from their religion,” stating that the religion is lost with the EU process. ... *Ulusalcı websites,* the number of which is increasing day by day, provoke the youth against both missionary activities and minorities. *The ulusalcı newspapers* where people who once occupied important positions wrote articles blamed those

⁴⁷“Türkiye’de huzuru bozan ve ülkeyi dünyaya karşı güç durumda bırakan cinayetlerin izleri ‘vatan elden gidiyor, ülke bölünüyor’ paranoyasına çıkıyor. Gerginliği üreten karanlık eller ‘genç katiller’ eliyle terör estiriyor.” (Bunun adı ‘Ulusalçı’ terör. (April 21, 2007). *Yeni Şafak*. p.1)

protested the victims and murders instead of investigating the murders. *The Article 301 under which Dink was prosecuted became one of the important propaganda materials of the ulusalçı policy.*⁴⁸ (Emphasis added)

While retroactively renegotiating former events and social groups, this overdetermined definition of the term ‘ulusalçı’ hegemonically fixed varied signifying elements as components of a unified enemy organization. Therefore, while setting relations of equivalence between particulars, rhetorical appropriation of them discursively constituted ‘ulusalçı’ as an anti-people community contextualized through the reference to ‘deep state’. While the ‘deep state’ emphasis gained a privilege as a result of political killings, along the articulation of elements ‘ulusalçı’ signifier knotted civil society and paramilitary forces together in the light of those attributions of ‘agitation’ and ‘disrupting the inner peace’.

This contingent fixation of the term ‘ulusalçı’ enabled the pro-government media discourse to hegemonically connect previous events, groups and controversies over a contiguous setting. Based on this discursive constellation, Koray Düzgören, a columnist in *Yeni Şafak*, related the Malatya killings to the Republican Rallies in Ankara through. There, relating the meeting in Ankara to the February 28 military intervention, Düzgören stated that the tutelary state forces targeted the AKP through organizing the meeting in order to weaken the party:

The meeting at Tandoğan is an organization similar to the February 28. It is an effort of those who want to maintain the February 28 through this or that way. [...] They voice similar issues. Scenario is the same. This time the target is the AKP. That is why, what seems reasonable is that in such a condition the Malatya massacre is an incident servicing to the aims of such an effort. [...] *Those groups, who planned the murders of Father Santoro, Hrant Dink and protestant missionaries in Malatya, are probably the same with the organizers hiding behind*

⁴⁸“Bazı siyasetçilerin ve sivil toplum örgütlerinin ‘AB Türkiye’yi bölecek’, ‘vatan elden gidiyor’ söylemleri ‘ulusalçı terör’ün hareket alanını genişletti. Türkiye, 17 Mayıs 2006’da Danıştay’a yönelik saldırıyla sarsıldı. Tetikçi Alparslan Arslan’ın [...] ulusalçı Vatandaş Kuvvetler Güç Birliği Hareketi Derneği (VKGB) ve bazı emekli askerlerle irtibatlı olduğu anlaşıldı. Başta bazı emekli askerler, akademisyenler, siyasetçiler ve gazeteciler olmak üzere Türkiye’nin tanınmış tüm ulusalçılarının şehirdeki toplantılarını, programlarını ve her türlü etkinliğinin vazgeçilmez konukları olduğu ortaya çıktı. Özellikle milliyetçi gençler üzerinde etkili olan ‘vatanı kurtarma’ söylemini kullanan grupların nasıl örgütlendiği ise Kuvayı Milliye Derneği’nin Başkanı emekli albay Fikri Karadağ’ın silah üzerine ettirdiği yemin ile ortaya çıktı. ... DSP Genel Başkan Yardımcısı Raşan Ecevit diğer tüm ulusalçılar gibi AB’yle birlikte dinin elden gittiğini belirterek, ‘Yabancıların toprak alımıyla birlikte misyonerlik faaliyetleri arttı. Türkiye’yi bölmenin bir yolu da vatandaşların dinlerini değiştirmelerini teşvik etmekten geçer’ şeklinde açıklamalar yaptı. ... Sayıları gün geçtikçe artan ulusalçı siteler de gençleri hem misyonerlik, hem de azınlıklar aleyhine kışkırtıyorlar. Bir dönem önemli makamları işgal eden kişilerin yazı yazdığı ulusalçı gazeteler cinayetleri sorgulamak yerine kurbanları ve cinayetleri protesto edenleri suçladı. Dink’in yargılandığı 301. madde de ulusalçı politikanın önemli propaganda malzemelerinden biri oldu.” (Bunun adı ulusalçı terör. (April 21, 2007). *Yeni Şafak*. p. 17)

the curtain of the Tandoğan meeting. Although they might not be the same, the purpose they service is not different.⁴⁹ (Emphasis added)

Düzgören's formulation reproduced the hegemonic definition of 'ulusalçı' as the deep state while integrating the tension between the political Islam and interventions of the secular military. On the one hand relating the Republican Rallies to the February 28 coup attempt located the 'ulusalçı' as a component of tutelary state forces, on the other hand this identification of the meeting with the current deep state assassinations reinvested the discursive antagonism between deep state activities and the well-being of the people.

Under these shifts and re-localizations along the contextualization of 'ulusalçı' phenomenon, in April 24 the AKP declared Abdullah Gül as the candidate for the presidency elections. The pro-government media and liberal circles supported the AKP's decision. However, reactionary groups with secular concerns continued to perceive Gül as a threat against Kemalist republic and secular laic Turkey. Those groups opposed the candidacy of Gül for he criticized the headscarf ban at universities and supported his wife's becoming the first first lady with a headscarf. In the face of rising oppositions, the CHP insisted on its plan for boycotting the parliamentary voting, so that the constitutional law on the required 367 seats would annul voting process. Against such controversies, then Prime Minister Erdoğan and Gül tried to obtain required number of seats for parliamentary voting through negotiating with members of the parliament in order to convince a few of them. However, the first voting session at the parliament was unsuccessful in gathering 367 seats due to boycott decision of the CHP. Although Gül gained 357 votes out of 361, in the aftermath, the CHP took the voting to Constitutional Court and the first session of voting annulled.

At the evening of the first voting tours, in April 27, the Head of the General Staff Yaşar Büyükanıt declared worries of the Turkish military and reminded the responsibilities of the army on protecting the nation and laicism against any threats. Often titled as 'e-memorandum', this declaration in the late evening was perceived as a possible military intervention to decisions of civil parliament. Two days later, Erdoğan

⁴⁹“Tandoğan mitingi aslında bir 28 Şubat'vari örgütlenme. 28 Şubat'ı başka bir biçimde devam ettirmek isteyenlerin işi. [...] Şimdi de aynı şeyler söyleniyor. Senaryo aynı. Bu sefer hedef AKP. İşte böyle bir ortamda ortaya çıkan Malatya katliamı da görünen o ki aynı gidişe hizmet eden bir olay. [...] Rahip Santoro'nun, Hrant Dink'in ve Malatya'da Perotestan misyonerlerin katledilmesini planlayan odaklarla Tandoğan mitinginin perde arkasındaki planlayıcıları muhtemelen aynı. Aynı olmasa bile hizmet ettikleri amaç farklı değil” (Düzgören, Koray. (April 23, 2007). Tandoğan'dan Malatya'ya. *Yeni Şafak*. p. 10)

Teziç, head of the YÖK, was targeted in an assassination attempt and according to the assailant the act was due to Teziç's declarations on the banning of headscarf at universities. The assailant was arrested; a membership card for Kuvayı Milliye Derneği, being one of the paramilitary associations mentioned, and a note on which Orhan Pamuk's name was written was found on him.

Along these tensions the second Republican meeting was held in Istanbul on 29th of April. Gathering hundreds of thousands citizens, the meeting in Istanbul highlighted similar concerns with akin slogans. However, one was rather distinct from others: "Neither Sharia Nor Coup". Although the crowd voiced out their concerns on secularism, foreign interventions of the EU and the IMF and national independence, the meeting in Istanbul integrated this anti-coup aspect, as well. Türkan Saylan, one of the founders and the then head of the ÇYDD, emphasized anti-coup stance of the meeting. In her speech, Saylan criticized the AKP for favoring Islamic cadres at the bureaucratic levels, having alliances with foreign actors and anti-secular policies. Although Saylan defined the military as an actor in the service and protection of laic republic, she additionally stated that coups will not be a solution for political conflicts.

This distinguished tone, together with political crises occurred between Ankara and Istanbul meetings, effected interpretations of the pro-government media about the Republican Rallies. Unlike previous references to agitation and terror organizations, this time Yeni Şafak daily highlighted the democratic aspect of crowds and the meeting. Yeni Şafak reported the meeting with a heading which stated: "Democracy is a beautiful thing". While emphasizing the large number of public participation, the newspaper stated: "The meeting in which certain political party leaders involved, concluded along with democratic maturity"⁵⁰. From a similar perspective, Star newspaper defined the meeting as a "wave of flags", which was the same heading of the oppositional Hürriyet daily. Fehmi Kuru also paid attention to this democratic aspect of the meeting in his column article in Yeni Şafak. He defined the meeting as a step in the democratic progress of the country: "No matter what the claim of demonstrators was, no matter

⁵⁰"Bazı siyasi parti liderlerinin de yer aldığı miting demokratik olgunluk içerisinde tamamlandı." (Demokrasi güzel şey. (April 29, 2007). *Yeni Şafak*. p. 1)

how the addressees of those claims perceive the meeting, with the last street demonstrations Turkey took a new step forward in its path towards democracy”⁵¹.

During these debates on ‘ulusalcılık’, Republican Rallies, presidency elections and annulment of the parliamentary votes due to the 367 decision, three more meetings were organized during May 2007. In these meetings, participants highlighted similar complaints and oppositions against policies of the AKP. Mobilizing large crowds within one month period, Republican Rallies led hundreds of thousands of people to gather on streets in five different cities under the concerns for secularism, foreign threats, national freedom and laic republic. Within this period the Constitutional Court defined the first voting tour as invalid due to the law necessitating participation of 367 members of the parliament. Criticizing the decision of the Constitutional Court, Erdoğan stated: “Election of the president in the parliament is now being blocked; this is a bullet shot against the democracy”⁵². Then, the AKP decided on having an early general election. In the aftermath of the 2007 general elections, the AKP gained more than 46 percent of votes. The crowd gathered during the Republican Rallies could not reflect the same dynamic at the ballot box, and the atmosphere of ‘threat and agitation’ turned into democratic achievement and maturity of the AKP government. As a result of gaining enough seats at the parliament for reforming the constitution, the AKP prepared an amendment package which changed presidency elections in order to prevent another 367 crisis. Therefore, through the constitutional amendment voted and accepted at the parliament number of required seats was decreased. Beside, the law on presidency elections was changed from parliamentary voting to popular voting. As a result of these changes, the AKP managed to elect Abdullah Gül in the parliament as the new president of Turkey. Thus, the period covering Republican Rallies gradually closed along debates, tensions and transformations analyzed above.

In this chapter I first illustrated the dynamics that led the AKP to gain a public trust and high vote rates at the 2002 general elections in the aftermath of major economic and legislative crises. Through the pragmatic conceptualization of the party doctrine “conservative democracy”, the AKP introduced the party as reformist, liberal

⁵¹ “Katılanların muradı ne olursa olsun, mesaja muhatap olanlar eylemi nasıl algılasa algılasın, son sokak gösterileriyle, Türkiye, demokrasi yolunda yeni bir adım daha atmış oldu” (Koru, Fehmi. (April 30, 2007). Sokaklardan korkmak mı, o niye? *Yeni Şafak*. p. 12)

⁵² “Cumhurbaşkanının Meclis’te seçilmesinin önü bloke edilmiştir; bu, demokrasiye sıkılmış bir kurşundur.” (Erdoğan: Demokrasiye kurşun sıkıldı. (May 5, 2007). *Radikal*. Retrieved May 17, 2015, from <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=220196>)

minded and inclusive. On the other hand, I stated that the AKP's reformist foreign relations and neoliberal administration led a defensive nationalism emerge which merged left wing anti-imperialist ideologies and right wing ultranationalists. Coming towards the Republican Rallies and the presidency elections, political assassinations organized by deep state actors became more explicit. In this period of the Rallies, I argued that the AKP generated a populist discourse which configured the social space in light of a dichotomizing logic. Discourse of the pro-government media and PM Erdoğan's statements constituted an antagonistic frontier through such referents as 'agitators', 'Masons', 'terror groups', 'gangs', 'secular elite' and 'ulusalci'. In his statements, Erdoğan's excluded the organizing committee through a developmentalist discourse and rhetorical reference to the ballot box. Although there were shifts in the contextualization of the term, I argued that what overdetermined the meaning of the 'ulusalci' reference was the political assassinations by deep state organizations. Thus, the AKP's populist discourse hegemonically captured the contingent meaning of 'ulusalcılık' in 2007 period with the privileged signifier 'deep state'. According to this discursive formation, 'ulusalcılık' indicated the paramilitary state cadres manipulating crowds and agitating political climate against the well-being of the people. In the next chapter, I will analyze how the AKP's rhetorical articulation of the political space contextualized the 2010 constitutional referendum period and 'ulusalcılık' as a constitutive element of the enemy figure.

3. 'ULUSALCILIK' AS 'TUTELARY ELITES'

3.1. From 'Deep State' To 'Status Quo': The AKP's Changing Discursive Field

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the period covering the Republican Rallies while problematizing the AKP's populist discourse and formation of "ulusalcılık" as a constitutive element in it. Although during the period the meaning of 'ulusalcılık' shifted across different signifying elements, 'deep state' aspect hegemonically fixed the term 'ulusalçı' as a privileged constituent of the anti-people camp in the AKP's discursive field. In this chapter I analyze rearticulation of 'ulusalcılık' as 'status quo' in the 2010 constitutional referendum period. In below pages I will first trace the effects of the attempted party closure case against the AKP, and Ergenekon and Balyoz investigations on the configuration of the AKP's political discourse. Secondly, I will argue that in the 2010 constitutional referendum period the AKP's populist discourse constituted the antagonism between 'democracy' and 'status quo' which eventually took the place of the privileged signifier, i.e. 'deep state', in configuration of the enemy figure. In light of this inquiry, through analyzing pro-government media discussions and Erdoğan's statements I will illustrate how hegemonic definition of 'ulusalcılık' shifted its discursive terrain from 'deep state' and contingently fixed 'ulusalcılık' as 'tutelary white elite' supporting the 'Kemalist status quo'.

After the 2007 general elections, the AKP gained 46,5 percent of overall votes. Despite the oppositions of the CHP, mass gatherings during the Republican Rallies, and interventions of the military and judiciary branches of state bureaucracy, the AKP increased its power in the parliament as well as its public legitimacy. The election showed that neither the oppositional efforts nor these wide-ranging interventions could keep Abdullah Gül from becoming president. After the electoral success of the AKP, increasing pessimism and frustration grew on the side of oppositional voters (Keyman F. , 2010). On the one hand increased interventions of the bureaucratic cadres to parliamentary legislation considering the threats against secularism, on the other hand

resentments of secular critiques against voters of the ruling party enabled the AKP to use a discourse of victimhood during its second term in office.

In the aftermath of the Republican Rallies, two columnist of *Hürriyet* newspaper, Bekir Coşkun and Yılmaz Özdil, wrote two articles which reflected this displeasure and indignation. Notably, the AKP rhetorically turned content of both columns into evidence of their being victimized by the laicist and bureaucratic circles. Bekir Coşkun portrayed a potential AKP voter which he called “a man scratching his belly” (*göbeğini kaşıyan adam*), who was lazy, pragmatic, indifferent and ignorant to politics. Coşkun contrasted this insulting figure with sons and daughters of Atatürk who were struggling for the future of this country⁵³. Using similar stereotypes, Yılmaz Özdil presented AKP voters through the figure of a man, that he named “barrel head” (*bidon kafa*), who was deceived by the governing AKP because of his being weak in reasoning and indifferent⁵⁴. Onur Öymen, spokesman of the CHP, while trying to make sense of the elections results noted that although people suffered because of the AKP and criticize the party, they still voted for the party in an irrational manner. According to Öymen, this was partly due to religious affiliations that the governing party abused and mostly because of assistance campaigns provided by the AKP in kind of wheat and coal⁵⁵. These interpretations of certain oppositional circles about voting results provided the AKP key references in constituting a populist appeal that rejected ‘elitist’ reactions of privileged exclusionists.

After winning their second term in office, the AKP proposed a constitutional amendment and took it to a referendum. Amendments included certain codes which decreased required number of seats at the parliament for decision taking, and changed presidential elections from parliament to popular voting. Oppositional circles interpreted this reform package as the AKP’s legal counter attack against the Constitutional Court due to its decision on the two-third rule for parliamentarian voting, so-called “367-decision”. In October 2007, the AKP took the amendment to a referendum and people voted for constitutional reforms with 70 percent of support. In sum, despite the pessimism and frustrated views of oppositional groups, the AKP

53 See: Coşkun, B. (May 3, 2007). Göbeğini kaşıyan adam. *Hürriyet*. Retrieved May 28, 2015, from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/6449176.asp>

54 See: Özdil, Y. (August 13, 2007). Bidon kafa. *Hürriyet*. Retrieved May 28, 2015, from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/7074842.asp>

55 See: Öymen: CHP gücünü korumuştur. (July 23, 2007). *Zaman*. Retrieved May 28, 2015, from http://mobil.zaman.com.tr/politika_oymen-chp-gucunu-korumustur_567542.html

gained self-confidence as a result of fortifying its ballot base. Free from previous pressures of the military and the judiciary, the governing AKP (re)instated certain legal reforms that the party had to withdraw during its first term in office.

Among these was an amendment to lift the headscarf ban at universities which the party had tried to implement previously together with reforms on university admission process of religious high schools (*İmam-hatip okulları*). In the face of strong oppositions from the military, the AKP had to drop these reform plans. However, after the 2007 general election the AKP prepared a constitutional reform and with the help of the MHP the law lifting headscarf ban was approved with 411 votes in the parliament. In response, the CHP took the article to the Constitutional Court for the amendments to be annulled (Kalaycıoğlu, 2012; Shambayati & Sütçü, 2012). *Hürriyet*, one of the most sold dailies in Turkey and owned by the oppositional Doğan Media Group, highlighted the collaboration of the AKP and the MHP on the headscarf issue in their cover page as “411 hands raised for chaos”⁵⁶. While the newspaper interpreted this decision of the parliament as an attempt toward disunion and polarization of the country, this headline became another important reference point through which the AKP restored their claim of being oppressed by secularist state reactions, that did not only aim against the party but also ‘the people’. As I stated in the previous chapter populist politics configure the political space by purportedly siding with the people as opposed to elites and their state establishments. In the AKP’s rhetoric, this chain of crises became evidences for the obstruction of the national will by the secular elite and exclusionary bureaucratic cadres (Dinçşahin, 2012).

In March 2008, a chief public prosecutor applied to the Constitutional Court demanding to close down the AKP arguing that the party violated the constitutional law on secularism. In addition, the prosecutor requested to bar leading party cadres, including Erdoğan and Gül, from public office for a period of five years (Öktem, 2011). Intervention of the judiciary as a tutelary establishment was a recurrent phenomenon in the Turkish parliamentary history. Through party closure cases banned political parties of the left-wing, Kurdish and Islamist movements, the judiciary as a status quo establishment tended to protect official ideology of the Kemalist state form (Saygılı, 2010). Pro-government media circles and liberals defined the involvement of the Constitutional Court and the military in parliamentary decisions as attempts of the

⁵⁶ “411 el kaosa kalktı” (*Hürriyet*. February 10, 2008. p. 1)

tutelary forces in order to guard the secular state form. From this perspective, pro-AKP circles expressed their concerns on the closure request in 2008. Although, the chairman of the Court Haşim Kılıç accused the AKP of being the center for anti-secular activities, the Court decided not to ban the party but decreased the portion of financial aids paid to the AKP by the state. According to Kılıç, this would be a “serious warning” for the AKP (Shambayati & Sütçü, 2012).

In this one year period, the Ergenekon trial being one of the most important political trials of Turkey was about to. According to many, Ergenekon investigations were hard to follow due to allegedly varied, detailed and intertwined connections among defendants (Ünver, 2009). Prosecutors of the case alleged that the so-called Ergenekon networks within the military and judiciary branches of the state have organized as a clandestine organization. Throughout the investigation suspects, including retired and active military officers and civilians from different backgrounds, have been charged with aiming to overthrow the AKP government through political assassinations, terror acts and ultimately a coup plot.

The Ergenekon investigations began when more than twenty hand grenades were found in a shanty house in Istanbul, in June 2007. After a while, the police determined that serial numbers of grenades were identical with the bombs used in the attack against the offices of the Cumhuriyet newspaper in May 2006. Through the assailant, Alparslan Arslan who was a member of the paramilitary organization Association for the Union of Patriotic Forces (*Vatansever Kuvvetler Güç Birliği*) and also the killer of a State Council judge, investigations reached to retired army major Muzaffer Tekin. The investigation proposed that Tekin had incited Arslan to carry out these violent acts. Meanwhile, the investigation spread to other provinces and towns with the police finding secretly buried military equipments, bombs and arms. As the investigation expanded, in January 2008 retired four-star general and founder of intelligence service of Gendarmerie (*Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele-JİTEM*) Veli Küçük, the lawyer behind the article 301 indictments Kemal Kerinçsiz, ultranationalist (*ülkücü*) mafia leader Sedat Peker were arrested. In March 2008, investigations started to include people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Head of the Labor Party Doğu Perinçek, Cumhuriyet columnist İlhan Selçuk, and the rector of Istanbul University Kemal Alemdaroğlu were also taken into custody.

The pro-government media and liberal circles perceived this chain of arrestments as the gradual uncovering of the perennial deep state networks. On the contrary, critical groups and secular media were doubtful on the investigation and alleged connections between paramilitary mafia circles, journalists and academicians under the accusation of terror. In this speculative climate, police and prosecutors constantly serviced evidences and accusations to media groups which have close connections with the government. In doing so, pro-government media narrated the story behind Ergenekon networks before official indictments were prepared. As a result, actors and events were connected to each other not by the court but by media debates. Without further skeptical exploration, pro-government media groups interpreted those serviced connections with a speculative and criminalizing reasoning. This narration of the case, on the one hand, situated the AKP as the sole democratic force trying to eliminate tutelary cadres; on the other hand, pro-government media actors gradually started to stigmatize critical voices in an offensive manner while conjecturally labeling them as supporters of Ergenekon and coups d'états. Oppositional media, on the other hand, relatively remained silent about ongoing accusations and majorly emphasized the instrumentalization of the case against oppositional voices in the hands of the governing AKP (Danzikyan, 2008).

In July 2008, another set of investigations expanded towards an even larger and varied segment of public figures; and hence, gradually, the case became more controversial. In the sixth wave of indictments retired general and head of the Atatürkist Thought Association (*ADD*) Şener Eruygur, another retired high ranked general Hurşit Tolon, Ankara Chamber of Commerce Chairman Sinan Aygün, Cumhuriyet columnist Mustafa Balbay and former deputy of the AKP Turhan Çömez were questioned; except Çömez, all were taken into custody due to their alleged relations with the Ergenekon networks. These extraordinary chains of custodies eventually resulted with the rise of skepticism and disputes about the nature of investigations. After several waves of arrestments, the inquiry apparently aimed to combine a group of sectors having different origins and heterogeneous aims. According to the main argument of the trial, the Ergenekon network was an extra-legal terror organization that aimed to create a suitable environment for a military takeover to topple the AKP government. The Ergenekon indictment further proposed that the organization consisted of four sub-branches; which were military personnel, ideologues and journalists crafting a nationalist and isolationist

public opinion, mafia-like figures circulating a climate of terror and fear, and juridical cadres that enabled the Ergenekon network to operate clandestinely (Aydınlı, 2011). According to the pro-government media, the ultimate goal of Ergenekon and deep state terror organization was to overthrow the AKP from governing power through a military coup plot.

Since the Ergenekon investigations and the attempt to close down the AKP occurred in the same time periods, the two cases appeared as a political battle between state bureaucracy and the AKP government. It was along these lines that Erdoğan accused the Supreme Court and the State Council of being agents of the anti-AKP, anti-democratic, pro-military forces (Kalaycıoğlu, 2012). As a response, head of the CHP Deniz Baykal argued that Erdoğan was acting like the prosecutor of ongoing investigations. Erdoğan replied that he indeed could be seen as the prosecutor of the case, since a prosecutor is concerned with the public interests; i.e. the people, just like the AKP.

Prosecutor works in the name of the people. Allegation operates in the name of the people and we are struggling for demanding and defending the justice in the name of the people. If it is conceived in this manner, yes I am the prosecutor of the case.⁵⁷

Along the controversies, increasing number of arrestments targeting oppositional groups led larger public segments to perceive the Ergenekon trial as the AKP's legal counter-attack against secular cadres at the state bureaucracy (Ünver, 2009). As a result of these political allegations, together with constant enlarging scope of the case towards rectors, academicians, journalist, several civil society segments including unionists, skeptical tendencies culminated towards a deeper polarization that questioned trustworthiness and impartiality of the trial.

Members of the opposition were highlighting different injustices. First of all, forced connections between arrestments and leakages of sensitive evidence directly to the pro-government media channels attracted a shared feeling of distrust about both the AKP's the court's neutrality on the trial. Besides, larger public sectors gradually perceived the case as initially inflated due to immensely detailed and more than three

⁵⁷“Savcı millet adına vardır. İddia makamı millet adına oradadır ve biz de millet adına hakkı aramanın, hakkı savunmanın gayreti içerisindeyiz. Eğer bu anlamda savcılıksa, evet savcıyım” (Evet milletin savcısıyım. (July 16, 2008). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 1, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/politika/evet-milletin-savcisiyim-129065>)

thousand page long indictment (Ünver, 2009). Despite the seriousness of charges, the indictment did not include convincing evidence that the accused were members of a single terror organization (Jenkins, 2009). Moreover, the way in which evidence was collected, such as use of wiretaps and electronic surveillance without legal warrant, became controversial due it was illegal. In addition to these legal allegations, the individuals in question were detained and kept in custody for years without formal charges (Gürsoy, 2012). Thus, rising number of journalists and oppositions from varied backgrounds started to highlight the politicized nature of the investigations and accusations. In the end of ongoing doubts and speculations over the case, insight of the trial turned into unjustifiable conspiracies that further polarized the public discussions (Polat, 2011).

In analytical terms, this polarization and split of judgments about the trial was about the conception of the deep state which was perceived differently along media oppositions. The name Ergenekon was firstly heard in the context of Susurluk incident. In 1997, a car accident in the town Susurluk eventually revealed extra-legal connections between political assassinations, state bureaucracy and parliamentarian circles. In the accident head of the Istanbul police department Hüseyin Kocadağ and an ultranationalist contract killer Abdullah Çatlı were dead, while Sedat Bucak who was a Kurdish tribe leader and a deputy in the parliament survived. Although police investigation and the parliamentarian commissions of inquiry tried to clarify networks between these figures, investigations could not uncover deep state alliances of the 90's. Comparing the oppositional and pro-government media with regard to their conceptualization of the Ergenekon trial and 'deep state', the Susurluk incident became a distinguishing reference point. While secular oppositional media discussed Ergenekon and deep state as a part of the alliances appeared in the Susurluk incident, pro-government media discursively isolated Ergenekon from Susurluk and argued that the deep state reorganized itself after the 90's and ranged to civil society associations (Balci, 2010). Pro-government media situated 'deep state' mainly as a product of 90's coup-supporting tutelary state cadres while identifying Ergenekon with the secular bureaucracy. This definition was disconnecting the history of counter guerilla organizations which have been active till 70's and onwards, and hence enabling the AKP's discourse to limit 'deep state' as coup plots against the current government. In contrast, oppositional media conceived deep state as a continuation of the political

assassinations and terror plots by the counter-guerilla forces till the 70's; however, it mainly remained silent on the actual Ergenekon investigations.

Thus, two different accounts emerged on Ergenekon, deep state and tutelary forces of state cadres (Balçı, 2010). On the one hand, the pro-government media addressed 'ulusalçı' deep state actors in the tutelary establishments of the secular state. Based on this line of reasoning, pro-government media actors stated that 'Ergenekoncu' status quo was targeting the AKP in order to violate the party's success in consolidating democracy and granting the will of the people. On the other hand, oppositional media was insisting that the AKP was not aiming to expose actual deep state networks, but instead trying to reinstitute and utilize state establishments for their own benefit. On the eve of the actual trial, Zaman newspaper defined the case as "the case of the century": "Bloody chaos plans of the 'ulusalçı gangs', who involved in many provocative acts in the recent history of the country, have been deciphered"⁵⁸.

Chain of detainments during the Ergenekon investigations included civilians as well as jurisdictional and military cadres in the name of elimination of the tutelary cadres. Therefore it helped the AKP to portray the party as an actor in reforming anti-democratic status quo establishments of the Kemalist state form and normalize state-civil society relations (Cizre & Walker, 2010). In this era of demilitarization, the ruling party started democratic openings that aimed to negotiate and improve cultural rights of discriminated communities; namely Kurds, Alevis and Roma people. However, the so-called Khabur incident in October 2009 became a cut off point for oppositional public opinion and for the AKP, as well. As a step for the Kurdish opening negotiations, a representative group of unarmed Kurdish guerilla members entered into borders of Turkey from Khabur border gate with a massive demonstration over a bus while saluting townspeople with Kurdish national flags, marches and slogans. In the uproar of critical explosions from state officers and civil realms, the AKP had to step back and condemned the incident. According to Kalaycıoğlu, in the turmoil of rising reactions, the governing party decided to prepare a constitutional amendment in order to fight off another closure case that might be imposed by tutelary cadres at the military and judiciary (Kalaycıoğlu, 2012).

58"Ülkenin yakın tarihindeki birçok provokatif eylemde imzası olan 'ulusalçı çete'nin, kanlı kaos planları deşifre edildi" (Yüzyılın davası başlıyor. (October 20, 2008). *Zaman*. Retrieved June 2, 2015, from http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_yuzyilin-davasi-basliyor_751306.html)

During preparations for the amendment package, the newspaper Taraf published military documents in January 2010 which allegedly uncovered plans for a military intervention in 2003, the Sledgehammer (*Balyoz*) coup plan. Under the Balyoz investigations, detained military personnel accused of planning to shoot down a Turkish fighter jet and blow up two mosques during a Friday prayer. Although the military officers stated that these were parts of a military workshop, the Taraf daily and the indictment alleged that documents were part of a designed coup attempt. Critiques claimed that those documents have been manufactured in order to degrade and weaken the military. On the contrary, pro-government media took side with the alleged accusations. In sum, on the one hand, rising sceptical atmosphere due to political and legal allegations made the accusations in Balyoz and Ergenekon trials more controversial, on the other hand pro-government media circles intimidated critical voices for “supporting” military coups and accused with a criminalizing tone (Doğan & Rodrik, 2010). As a result, Balyoz investigations accused more than a hundred active military members for organizing terror acts in order to weaken the AKP government and enabling a coup plot. Being the second largest trial which included majorly active military personnel from high ranked offices, Balyoz investigations let oppositional voices to increase their critiques against their being silenced under the AKP’s “empire of fear”.

The Balyoz indictment proposed that retired General Çetin Doğan was heading the plot. Some other active generals, who were allegedly involved, were about to have their annual promotions in August 2010 from the Supreme Military Council (*Yüksek Askeri Şûra/YAŞ*) depending on the confirmation by the Prime Minister Erdoğan. Chief of the General Staff İlker Başbuğ, who was identified Ergenekon investigation as intentionally targeting Turkish Armed Forces, insisted on the appointment of the military members in question. In contrast, Erdoğan’s decision was to prevent the promotions, and instead direct them into forced retirements. After a number of YAŞ sessions, negotiations between Erdoğan and Başbuğ turned into a major crisis between the military and the elected government in rule. Erdoğan and Başbuğ could not agree on promotions of certain generals. In the end, Erdoğan solved this dispute by forcing Başbuğ to retirement, and hence finalizing YAŞ sessions with a new Chief of Staff and his own list of appointments. Similar to the Ergenekon and party closure cases, pro-government media portrayed Erdoğan’s decisions on the so-called “YAŞ crisis” as a

move to delegitimize and weaken the long endured tutelary cadres within the bureaucratic structures.

Just in the aftermath of the YAŞ crisis, Turkey went through the constitutional referendum on 12th of September 2010. The amendment package contained varied and seemingly unrelated constitutional reforms; ranging from law codes regarding personal privacy, children's right, right to travel, introduction of the Ombudsman, right to file a petition for the Constitutional Court individually etc. However, contrary to these administrative changes, four amendments made the referendum a realm of hegemonic struggle for both oppositional and pro-AKP sectors. Under the political tensions illustrated above, the amendment package gained the 58 percent of overall votes and formally accepted. The fact that the date for the referendum intentionally overlapped with the thirtieth anniversary of 12 September 1980 coup let the AKP to strengthen its hegemonic investment in crafting the referendum discursively as a break point towards democratization of Turkey. According to the AKP's discourse, the referendum would be a threshold in order to leave tutelary and coup-prone establishments of the "old Turkey" behind, and move towards what the government called "advanced democracy". Two requested amendments in the package were considering the legal status of the military personnel. One was demanding to limit the jurisdictional bureaucracy and reach of military courts while empowering civil courts. The other was requesting to repeal the article 15 that had barred the prosecution of coup generals, including Kenan Evren, since the 1982 constitution drafted under the military junta. Two further amendments pertained to bureaucratic organization of the judiciary. These articles aimed to change the composition of the Constitutional Court and the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (*Hakimler Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu/HSKY*) by increasing the total number of judges and changing their election procedure. Although the 1982 constitution have been amended 17 times before 2010, the AKP rhetorically framed referendum as an initial stage for confronting the coup interventions in the political history of the country.

Pro-government media columnists defended these reforms for they regard amendments as a step to challenge tutelary cadres of the Kemalist state and downgrade status quo establishments. According to pro-AKP circles, amendments would transform unaccountable and nonresponsive jurisdictional bureaucracy, which they called as the 'tutelary elites', into a more democratic and heterogeneous composition. The AKP spokesmen and the pro-government media argued that amendments would weaken the

strength of status quo supporters in the judiciary and would prevent and eliminate future interventions of the tutelary cadres to the elected government. Therefore, to the AKP's discourse, the referendum was more than voting for amendments but it would be a breaking point from a repressive state form and impacts of former coup regimes towards consolidation of democracy and normalization of state-society relations in Turkey. Based on this line of reasoning, the AKP discursively positioned "Yes" votes as the "decision of the people" for democratic changes, while defining "No" votes as manifestation of defenders of the tutelage resisting for status quo. Based on the AKP's discursive field, below caricature from Taraf newspaper perfectly portrayed this configuration of the antagonism between change and resistance.



(Evet-Hayır [Yes-No]. (September 7, 2010) *Taraf*, p. 19)

3.2. Articulation of 'ulusalcılık' Within The Context of 'Status Quo' And 'White Elites'

Up until now elements I have portrayed the social dynamics and tensions- namely the attempted closure of the AKP, the democratic openings, the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials and the YAŞ crisis- which shaped the political atmosphere coming towards the constitutional referendum on September 12, 2010. In the following pages, I will illustrate the configuration of the AKP's discursive articulation of the referendum while analyzing rhetorical formulations of Erdoğan and certain AKP's spokesmen, as well as excerpts from pro-government media columnists. In doing so, I will analyze how the AKP's discursive field hegemonically fixed constitutive elements of the enemy figure and 'ulusalcı' being a component in it through the antagonism between 'democratic change' and 'status quo'.

3.2.1. *CHP Zihniyeti* (Mentality of The CHP) And The ‘Coup Supporters’

From late 2007 onwards, the AKP discursively positioned itself on the political space as an anti-institutionalist and anti-status quo party. Pro-government media and public intellectuals from different backgrounds applauded attempts of the government as courageous steps to challenge political manifestations of Kemalist status quo and their exclusionist tutelary cadres. Since public figures from different backgrounds conceived the Kemalist ideology as the perennial problem before the anti-democratic nature of state-civil society relations in Turkey, a large scope of political groups, ranging from leftists, conservatives to liberals, supported the AKP’s reformist attempts for weakening the common enemy, ‘tutelary mentality’. In the previous chapter, I stressed that populist logic necessitates the division of the social space into two antagonistic camps; e.g. elites as the oligarchs vs. the people as the underdog. Articulation of claims of heterogeneous sectors towards a broader anti-institutionalist demand of a popular identity, to Laclau, is a characteristic feature of the politics logic of populism (Laclau, 2005). The AKP’s discourse operationalized this political logic in the referendum period through its appeal to ‘the people’ while this rhetorical addressing simultaneously demarcated the anti-people block.

Along this dichotomic ‘us and other’ relation, Erdoğan mainly referred to two constituents of the anti-democratic pole. The first was related to the continuing debates on ‘coup plots’ and the AKP discursively knotted current trials together with the May 27 1960 coup d’état and hanging of then PM Adnan Menderes. The other was the ‘mentality of the CHP’ that which the AKP rhetorically articulated as a metaphoric figure referring to the CHP as the political manifestation of the ‘status quo’. Based on this discursive field, in the quotation below Erdoğan referred to the 1960 coup and identified the forces behind it as those that would vote for “No” in the referendum. While Erdoğan implied the continuity of tutelary interventions, he situated the “No” votes as votes against ‘democracy’ and ‘decisions of the people’.

The mentality, which applauded May 27, offered May 27 some possibilities, which said “I am at your disposal”; it is the same mentality supporting “No” votes today. Are we saying “Yes” to the advanced democracy? “Yes” to liberties? “Yes” to the empowerment of the national will [milli irade]? “Yes” to

confront May 27? “Yes” for the power to the nation [millet], the decision to the nation [millet]?⁵⁹

This quote from Erdoğan’s speech designated that the ‘mentality’ behind “No” votes reached back to the 1960 coup. In another speech, Erdoğan stated that “We are yelling like Adnan Menderes, saying ‘enough’, enough; we are stating that both the word and decision belongs to the people [millet]”⁶⁰. Erdoğan recurrently commemorated Adnan Menderes, who was hanged by military junta of the 1960 coup, along different public meetings during the referendum period. Right-wing political movements in Turkey as well as the AKP government discursively articulated Adnan Menderes and the Democratic Party period in the 1950’s as a progressive administration which challenged the single-party domination of the CHP and discontinued the alienation of relations between the state and the people. After he has been expelled from the CHP in 1945, Menderes won the general elections in 1950 with the Democrat Party and put an end to single party period. Menderes became the prime minister while gaining one of the highest vote rates in the parliamentary history of Turkey. Considering his economic and political programs, Menders, similar to Erdoğan, utilized a populist rhetoric which based on the antagonism between the despotic single-party state under the CHP rule and the oppressed people. Based on this dichotomy, Menderes accused the CHP for suppressing the interest of the people and establishing a rule of elites. He criticized former CHP rule, which he defined as a small privileged minority enjoying the resources of the central state, and rhetorically positioned the Democrat Party as the true representative of the people (Türk, 2014).

Mobilizing the memory of the Democrat Party, Erdoğan time to time appropriated the symbolic image of Menderes in order to legitimize their political discourse. In his speeches, Erdoğan frequently referred to the hanging of Menderes and the overthrow of the Democrat Party by the 1960 coup d’état while rhetorically addressing the CHP cadres as coup supporters. In doing so, Erdoğan’s rhetoric merged tutelary state and coups d’états with the CHP as a single domineering force which suppressed the will of the people. In line with this reasoning, during the 2007 general

⁵⁹ “O gün 27 Mayıs'a alkış tutan, o gün 27 Mayıs'a çanak tutan, o gün 27 Mayısçılara 'emrinizdeyim' diyen zihniyet, işte bugünkü hayırcı zihniyettir. İleri demokrasiye evet mi? Özgürlüklere evet mi? Milli iradenin güçlenmesine evet mi? 27 Mayıs'la yüzleşmeye evet mi? Gücümüz millet, kararımız millet evet mi?” (CHP’nin diktiği tek bir ağaç yok. (August 7, 2010). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 6, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/politika/chpnin-diktigi-tek-bir-agac-yok-272294>)

⁶⁰ “Tıpkı Adnan Menderes gibi haykırıyoruz, ‘yeter’ diyoruz, yeter, ‘söz de karar da milletindir’ diyoruz” (12 Eylül’den sonra kimse fişlenmeyecek). (August 6, 2010). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 6, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/politika/12-eylulden-sonra-kimse-fislenmeyecek-272102>

election in July, one of the support campaigns for the AKP utilized the memory of Menderes. Entitled “Men of the Nation” (*Milletin Adamları*), this campaign poster set pictures of Adnan Menderes, Turgut Özal and Tayyip Erdoğan together. At the bottom the poster read:

They are the iconic figures of the love for the nation clinched with Atatürk. They are the voice of this land, its conscience, its spirit for springing. There is the nation in their hearts, and they in the heart of the nation. They are the Men of the Nation⁶¹.

Similar to this political campaign, during the referendum period Erdoğan rhetorically addressed Menderes while discursively merging the 1960 coup, Ergenekon and Balyoz trials and the CHP as continuous threats against democracy and the popular will. Through this rhetorical inscription of equivalence and continuity, the AKP’s discourse configured the political space as a battle between two camps; one represented the popular will and the well-being of the nation, while the other manifested coup supporters and exclusionary circles suppressing the national will (Koyuncu, 2014). In this way, Erdoğan strengthened the depiction of referendum as a threshold for eliminating ‘status quo’ and establishing the ‘advanced democracy’.

Beside the reference to ‘coup d’états’ as an anti-democratic aspect, Erdoğan integrated different signifying elements that he opposed to the popular will of the nation; such as the ‘dark provocations’, ‘agitating political parties’ and ‘legislative organs’.

They wanted to prevent us through *mafia* and *dark provocations*. Through *manipulating laws they deterred us*. Do you know what do they say us, now? You know what happened to Adnan Menderes in the end, don’t you? They say “You’re going to have the same end”. [...] Henceforth, the people [millet] shape the destiny of this country, which is what they could not bear. We know how they cooperate with dirty forces, *dirty gangs within the terror organization*. And, you know what is written in those indictments about frightening dirty partnerships. Unfortunately, some of the political parties became figurants in this game of gang and terror organizations intentionally or unintentionally. With the will of God and common sense of our people Turkey will not be deceived by such games.⁶² (Emphasis added)

⁶¹ “Onlar Atatürk ile perçinleşen millet sevgisinin simge isimleri. Onlar bu toprağın sesi, vicdanı, atılım ruhu. Onların yüreğinde millet, milletin yüreğinde onlar. Onlar Milletin Adamları” (as cited in Koyuncu, 2014, p. 148)

⁶² “Bizi mafyayla, karanlık provokasyonlarla durdurmak istediler. Hukuku zorlayarak üzerimize geldiler. Şimdi bize ne diyorlar biliyor musunuz? Merhum Adnan Menderes’in akıbetini biliyorsun değil mi? ‘Senin de akıbetin öyle olur ha’ [...] Bu ülkenin kaderini artık millet kendisi çiziyor, bunu hazmedemediler. Terör örgütünün içerideki kirli odaklarla, kirli çetelerle, nasıl işbirliği içinde olduğunu biliyorsunuz. O yazılan iddianamelerdeki tüyler ürpertici kirli ortaklıkları biliyorsunuz. Bu terör, bu çeteler, işte bunlarla beraber maalesef birtakım siyasi partiler de bilerek ya da

Erdoğan's statement above knotted different elements together contiguously; such as 'gangs', 'mafia', 'legislative bodies', 'terror organizations' and 'political parties'. Addressing the people as the democratic subject in decision, Erdoğan rhetorically configured these elements as a unified force which worked against Turkey's well-being. Erdoğan referred to the 1960 coup and Menderes in order to justify his statements on 'dark provocations' and 'dirty collaborations', although his formulation of an enemy organization extended the limits of military aspect towards political parties and the jurisdiction. Therefore, contrary to this equivocality of varied elements, a certain discursive structure arrested these aspects within a meaningful totality as an anti-people pole.

This structure, constituting and organizing social relations, is configured through articulatory practices which discursively determine the meaningful positions of signifying elements (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, pp. 115-21). Theory of discursive articulation rejects foundationalist and deterministic explanations on objective identity of particulars; to the contrary, it prioritizes the contingency and openness of the social. This theoretical framework does not conceive social elements as having particular identities and meanings by themselves, but argues that identity and meaning is a result of hegemonic articulation which dislocates and fix signifying elements under a temporary force of discursive fields (DeLuca, 1999). Regarding the analyses on above quotes, Erdoğan's formulations developed such an articulation while addressing the anti-people camp. Configuring the heterogeneity of social elements as a unified actor, an enemy, Erdoğan rhetorically integrated different actors in a relational setting. In below quote from his speech, we can trace the dislocation and metonymic fixation of elements in contiguity to each other.

CHP, MHP, BDP, YARSAV [the Union of Judges and Prosecutors] and the terrorist organization all came together against who, against those who say "Yes" to the constitution of the people [millet]. I am asking you, can Turkey benefit from such an alliance? They cannot work together on any issue mattering to the country. They run away from democracy, from liberty, from anything that may benefit the well-being of the people. But today, together they oppose the

bilmeyerek bu oyunun figüranı oluyorlar. Allah'ın izniyle milletimizin sağduyusuyla Türkiye'ye bu oyunlara gelmeyecek" (Abdest şüphesi olanın namazından şüphesi olur. (August 10, 2010). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 9, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/politika/abdest-suphesi-olanin-namazindan-suphesi-olur-272809>)

amendments which will expand the people's horizon and strengthen the vision of the country; they make evil alignments.⁶³ (Emphasis added)

In this quote, articulation of the political field simultaneously subverted different elements while equalizing them as constitutive elements of an enemy organization that which Erdoğan defined as opposed to the democratic and developmentalist interests of the people/millet. While rhetorically merging political parties, terror groups and legislative bodies together, Erdoğan's discursive formulation dislocated the position of those elements in the political field and hegemonically captured them as 'evil alignments' who were against the 'constitution of the people'. Constituting equivalential chains and configuring a hegemonic contiguity, Erdoğan rhetorically addressed the constitutional referendum as an antagonistic frontier demarcating the political field. Based on this differential logic and configuration of the relations of oppositions, we can argue that elements like the CHP or legislative bodies do not preexist as threats against the social well-being, but configuration of the discursive realm and articulation of the political antagonisms determines the quality of particulars. Laclau and Mouffe define articulation as "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 105). In consequence, articulatory practice dislocates and temporarily fixes those elements onto a meaningful discursive field. Above references on "decision of the nation" and "constitution of the people" configured the center of this field through which "us and others" were determined discursively. While recurrent reference to "democracy" enabled Erdoğan to rhetorically interpellate 'the people' as a popular subject in decision making, appealing to the people at the same time constituted 'restrainers' of democracy and popular will. Through this discursive field in which the referendum gained its discursive meaning, the "Yes" pole designated 'us/democracy/freedom', while the "No" pole implied the 'evil alignments' as an enemy organization having ties to terror groups, judiciary and the parties at the parliament.

⁶³ "CHP, MHP, BDP, YARSAV, terör örgütü hepsi bir araya toplanmışlar, kime karşı, milletin anayasasına evet diyenlere karşı. Soruyorum size, bu ittifaktan Türkiye menfaat sağlayabilir mi? Bunlar, memleketin hiçbir meselesinde bir araya gelmezler. Bunlar demokrasiden kaçır, özgürlükten kaçır, milletin yararına olacak ne varsa ondan kaçırır. Ama bugün, milletin ufkunu açacak, ülkenin vizyonunu güçlendirecek bu değişikliğe karşı çıkıyor, şerde ittifak ediyorlar." (Dört Yol mesajları. (August 1, 2010). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/politika/dortyol-mesajlari-271279>)

3.2.2. *CHP Zihniyeti* And The ‘White Turks’

Articulatory practice governs and contextualizes a discursive narration of events and actors. In light of historical and political dynamics, articulation hegemonically fixes and saturates varied references as meaningful constituents of a whole (DeLuca, 1999). This is valid for the AKP’s discourse, as well. The discourse of the party in 2007 mostly addressed ‘agitating gangs’ implying ongoing deep state activities which eventually became the privileged signifier overdetermined the context of ‘ulusalçı’ reference. However, tensions of the period from 2007 to 2010 led the AKP to constitute an anti-tutelary and anti-status quo discourse. Therefore, during 2010 constitutional referendum period rhetoric of the party knotted the deep state aspect and oppositional groups together as two related branches of the ‘status quo’ as the anti-democratic enemy pole. In another speech, while stating achievements and progressive successes of his party, Erdoğan defined those anti-democratic forces hindering the services of the AKP:

While carrying out such activities, we saw that *some dark forces that do not like milli irade (national will) and that despise civil politics took action*. We saw that there are some dirty organizations in this country. ... There is no government asking for *anti-democratic forces* anymore. There is no government yielding its power and leaves the administration; there is a government that considers the nation’s trust more sacred than its own existence on nation’s behalf. This *CHP mentality* (CHP zihniyeti) calls my citizens “belly scratchers” and “barrel headed.” You will see who is belly scratcher and who is barrel headed on September 12.⁶⁴

Again, Erdoğan grounded his formulation onto the opposition between “will of the people” and “extra-democratic forces”. This dichotomization prioritized notions such as “democracy”, “civil politics” and “decisions of the nation” over “locus of dark organizations” and ‘mentality of the CHP’. In his formulation, firstly, Erdoğan talked about “locus of dark organizations” while implying ongoing coup trials. In the previous chapter, I have argued that Erdoğan constantly referred to “gangs” as ‘deep state’ in the context of a developmentalist discourse. In the 2010 period, however, the AKP’s discourse prioritized their struggle against coup attempts, which Erdoğan referred as ‘anti-democratic dirty organizations’, and degradation of the people by the state elite. In

⁶⁴“Tüm bunları yaparken, demokrasiden, millet iradesinden hoşlanmayan, sivil siyasetten hazzetmeyen bir kısım karanlık odakların harekete geçtiklerini gördük. Gördük ki bu ülkede kirli bir takım örgütlenmeler var. ... Şimdi artık demokrasi dışı güçlere çanak tutan bir yönetim yok. Şimdi artık şapkasını alıp giden bir iktidar yok, milletin adına milletin emanetini canından kutsal bilen bir iktidar var. Bu CHP zihniyeti benim vatandaşşıma ‘göbeğini kaşıyanlar’ diyor, ‘bidon kafalı’ diyor. 12 Eylül’de kim bidon kafalı, kim göbeğini kaşıyan göreceksin” (Bu anayasa değişikliği bir millet projesidir. (August 17, 2010). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 12, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/politika/bu-anayasa-degisikligi-bir-millet-projesidir-273896>)

accordance, metaphoric formulation of ‘mentality of the CHP’ discursively combined both the coup aspect and denigration of the people. In previous quotes, Erdoğan’s reference to the ‘mentality of the CHP’ situated an ill-defined relationality between the military interventions and the CHP while mobilizing the memory of Menderes. However, in this formulation, Erdoğan excluded the CHP rhetorically as an anti-democratic and anti-people through indicating the hierarchy between secular elites and the people. While addressing those pejorative labels, i.e. “the man scratching his belly and “the barrel headed”, Erdoğan merged ‘coup’ aspect with ‘secular elites’ under the shorthand formulation of the ‘mentality of the CHP’. Through subversion of the ‘secular elites’ and ‘coup plots’ and rhetoric combination of both, Erdoğan’s articulation arrested both aspects within a single narration based on an antagonistic relationality against the people. Privileged reference to “anti-democratic forces” tied on the one hand coup trials and ‘locus of dark organizations’, on the other hand denigrating reactions of ‘the CHP elites’ against the people. Thus, through the constituting antagonism between ‘democracy’ and ‘status quo’, ‘mentality of the CHP’ and ‘dirty/terror/coup organizations’ became substitutable as ‘tutelary forces’. Through this discursive substitution, Erdoğan designated ‘the CHP’ both as an actor supporting coup d’états and, through mobilizing the memory of such pejorative labels, as the suppressive elite alienated from the people. According to this line of formulation, ‘mentality of the CHP’ hegemonically meant exclusionary secular elite reactions that patronized, ignored and oppressed the ‘real people’ of Turkey. Based on this discursive field, in a speech Erdoğan referred to the lifting of headscarf ban and rising secular concerns. While reminding and criticizing the headline “411 hands raised for chaos” by oppositional Hürriyet newspaper, Erdoğan retroactively related this event into the ‘mentality’ behind “No” votes:

What happened to your liberal thoughts; what happened to your support for freedom of religions; what happened to your support for freedom of education? Yet, these were the people subjecting the country to such discrimination as *white Turks-black Turks*, unfortunately. These people are wretched enough to call my nation “belly scratchers.” Those who give them columns in their newspapers have the mentality to go too far to call my citizens “barrel heads.” Now *they all gather on the “No” front. Now they are defending a coup d’état constitution. However, we will walk towards an enlightened future with the constitution of the people [millet].*⁶⁵ (Emphasis added)

⁶⁵“Hani ya, siz özgürlükçüydünüz, hani siz inanç özgürlüğünden yanaydınız, hani siz eğitim özgürlüğünden yanaydınız? Ama bunlar bu ülkeyi maalesef ayrıma tabi tutanlardı, beyaz Türkler-zenci Türkler diye. Bunlar var ya,

In this quotation, the same two-layered logic was at work. On the one hand, Erdoğan referred to ‘mentality of the CHP’ and discursive indications of it while commemorating those same labels. In his formulation, Erdoğan designated the antagonism between ‘secular elites’ and the ‘people’ through “white Turk-black Turk” dichotomy. Through this analogy, Erdoğan remarked the underestimation of religious identity of the people by exclusionist ‘white Turks’. On the other hand, Erdoğan rhetorically configured a dichotomy between the ‘constitution of the people’ and ‘constitution of coup’. While he identified actors at the “No front” as supporters of the constitution of coup d’états, Erdoğan rhetorically merged ‘white Turks’ reference with the ‘coup’ aspect.

As stated above, in the AKP’s discourse ‘mentality of the CHP’ was one of the two pillar constituents of the anti-people camp together with ‘coup plots’ as ‘anti-democratic forces’ in the period of the constitutional referendum. In previous quotations, Erdoğan’s rhetoric metonymically combined different political parties, terrorist organizations and legal cadres to each other on a contiguous setting (i.e. “CHP, MHP, BDP, YARSAV, terror organizations”). Under the hegemonic force of an equivalential chain, this contiguous setting constituted the anti-democratic syntagm in the AKP’s discursive field. Along speeches, Erdoğan reduced the unidentified relationality between those elements into the ‘mentality of the CHP’. This short hand formulation, as argued above, represented the metaphoric substitute of ‘anti-democratic forces’. Thus, in the discourse of the AKP the ‘mentality of the CHP’ functioned in condensing two phases of ‘anti-democratic forces’ which were ‘secular elite reactions’ and supporting ‘coup d’états’. Thus, the AKP’s discursive field condensed these two axes in the metaphoric formulation of ‘mentality of the CHP’ which was located in opposition to ‘those who say ‘Yes’ to the constitution of the people’.

This rhetorical reduction of the heterogeneity of the social necessitated the simplification and homogenization of the political field under a dichotomizing logic. According to Laclau’s political theory, as a result of the tension between the equivalential and differential logics an antagonistic front line demarcates the social into

benim milletime göbeğini kaşıyanlar diyecek kadar sefil. Bunları köşelerinde yazdırırlar, benim vatandaşımın bidon kafalı diyecek kadar ileri giden zihniyettir bunlar. Şimdi hepsi hayır cephesinde toplandı. Şimdi darbe anayasasını savunuyorlar. Ama biz milletin anayasasıyla aydınlık yarınlara yürüyeceğiz.” (Biz her yerde aynı dili konuşuruz. (August 29, 2010). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 13, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/politika/biz-her-yerde-ayni-dili-konusuruz-275920>)

two incommensurable camps while subverting the heterogeneity of particulars. Laclau states that since objects are not pre-determined by necessary laws but discursively configured through articulatory practices, constitution of the society as a closed totality is only possible through contingent dislocation and hegemonic fixation of elements. Therefore, what constitutes and maintains the effect of society is the result of discursive performances and rhetorical operations such as metonymic combinations and metaphoric substitutions (Laclau, 2005, p. 12). Thus, regarding the configuration of equivalentiality among different signifying elements Laclau states: “[T]his equivalence supposes the operation of the principle of analogy among literally diverse contents- and what is this but a metaphorical transposition” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 110). Through metonymic articulations and analogical identifications, heterogeneity is subverted into homogeneity through equivalential relations. Below quote from Egemen Bağış, then deputy of the AKP and minister of EU affairs, illustrates operation of this political logic and how rhetorical articulations configure the signification within the discursive systems. Egemen Bağış, during an interview with the *Yeni Şafak* daily, identified the actors behind “No” votes and their ‘mentality’ as below:

Look at who is saying “no” to the change. *The separatist terrorist organization* says “no.” Those who call their own base “piteous” say “no.” *Those who feed upon coup d’état* say “no.” Those who call *the nation barrel-heads* say “no.” Those who desire a democracy without the people say “no.” The social engineers say “no.” *The well-to-do* say “no.” Those who see the nation as a threat say “no.” Those who grudge the nation the democracy say “no.” *EU opponents* say “no.” *Dark forces* say “no.” [...] Voting for no brings wide range of problems, poverty, oppressive regimes, long queues and weariness, as every CHP government would bring. *CHP mentality* was put on trial by the nation’s conscience and sentenced to lifelong opposition. The fact that *status quo supporters and those stymieing this country’s will for change and transformation* are revealed and they are going be defeated by our nation’s will for change once more will be the greatest beneficence of voting for no.⁶⁶ (Emphasis added)

Bağış’s formulation exemplifies rhetorical constitution of equivalential bonds across different elements in a discursive field. The AKP’s dominant discourse on

⁶⁶“Bakın değişikliğe kimler “hayır” diyor bakalım. Bölücü terör örgütü “hayır” diyor. Kendi tabanına “zavallı” diyenler “hayır” diyor. Darbelere beslenenler “hayır” diyor. Millete bidon kafalı diyenler “hayır” diyor. Halksız bir demokrasi isteyenler “hayır” diyor. Toplum mühendisleri “hayır” diyor. Tuzukurular “hayır” diyor. Milleti tehdit olarak görenler “hayır” diyor. Millete demokrasiyi çok görenler “hayır” diyor. AB karşıtları “hayır” diyor. Karanlık odaklar “hayır” diyor. [...] Hayır oyu bu ülkeye sadece ve sadece her CHP yönetimi gibi envai cesit sorun, fakirlik, baskıcı rejim, kuyruk ve bezginlik verir. CHP zihniyeti millet vicdanında yargılanmış ve muhabbet muhalefete mahkum olmuştur. Statükocuların ve bu ülkenin değişim ve dönüşüm iradesine taş koyanların artık iyice ayyuka çıkmaları ve bir kez daha milletimizin değişim iradesi karşısında yine yenilecek olmaları “hayır”ın en büyük hayrı olacak.” (Yüksek Mahkeme bile referanduma ‘evet’ dedi. (August 26, 2010). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 17, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/roportaj/yukse-mahkeme-bile-referanduma-evet-dedi-275323?mobil=true>)

'democracy' configured the political space in the light of the antagonism between demand of the 'people' for 'democratic change' and 'tutelary state elite' resisting for the maintenance of 'status quo'. Discursive articulation configured the differential setting of heterogeneous social elements while contiguously fixing them onto two incompatible poles. Through analogically articulating varied elements under the 'status quo' reference, Bağış's formulation metonymically combined different signifying elements as 'No voters'; such as 'separatist terrorists', 'coup supporters', 'dark units', 'EU-skeptics', 'elites' and 'mentality of the CHP'. Therefore, in the AKP's discourse, hegemonic definition of 'status quo' metaphorically substituted varied elements and articulated them as equivalent to each other as constituents of the anti-people camp. Quote from Erdoğan's speech below crystallized configuration of 'No voters' as supporters of 'tutelage' while hegemonically fixed different sectors as the features of the same enemy group in contrast to the values and constitution of 'the people':

Do you know who will win if you vote for "No"? The tutelary mentality will win. Gangs will win if you say "No". If you say "No" those who want to conceal the actor unknown murders will win. Those who ignore national values, those who mock the religion of the people will win.⁶⁷

3.3. The Pro-government Media Addresses 'ulusalcılık': Rhetorical Identification of 'Elite', 'Laic' and 'Tutelage' Under The Label "No Voters"

Until now, I have analyzed how discourse of the AKP articulated the political space in light of the antagonism between 'democratic change' and 'status quo'. Along this dichotomization, one camp defined proponents of amendments as supporters of democratization through confronting tutelary regimes. The other camp referred to coup supporters and secular exclusionists as the tutelary elite. Similarly, Erdoğan's formulations above addressed 'tutelary mentality' while implying on the one hand 'dirty organizations' and 'coups d'états' as extra-legal attempts of anti-democratic forces; on the other hand, he addressed alienated 'elites' degrading the people. On this discursive field, while 'democracy' reference indicated 'constitution of the people' and "Yes" votes, 'status quo/tutelage' determined the hegemonic meaning of "No" votes indicating the 'mentality of the CHP' and support for 'coup constitutions'. In the coming pages, I will analyze how the pro-government media reproduced the AKP's hegemonic

⁶⁷"Hayır dersiniz kim kazanacak biliyor musunuz? Vesayetçi anlayış kazanacak. 'Hayır' dersiniz çeteler kazanacak. 'Hayır' dersiniz faili meçhullerin üzerini örtmek isteyenler kazanacak. Milletın değerlerini hiçe sayanlar, milletin inancıyla dalga geçenler kazanacak." (Hayır çıkarsa çeteler kazanır. (September 7, 2010). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 18, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/politika/hayir-cikarsa-ceteler-kazanir-277330>)

antagonism and how it effected the discursive articulation of ‘ulusalcı’ reference in the context of ‘status quo’ and ‘tutelage’.

Based on this dichotomized political space, pro-government media appropriated the same hegemonic articulation of “No” voters as ‘coup supporters’. Nizamettin Barış, a columnist in Taraf newspaper, stated:

Even in paradigmatic terms, saying “No” to the amendments, which are in favor of all citizens except the bureaucratic elite, is equal to asking the continuation of the tutelary regime, taking side with coups, and at the same time opposing EU criterions.⁶⁸

In this quote, rhetorically voicing the ‘interests of the people’ hegemonically positioned elements like “bureaucratic elite”, “coup supporters” and “eurosceptics” as the actors behind “No” votes. Therefore, regarding the discursive dichotomy between the status quo and democratic change, we can argue that there was a similarity between the AKP’s hegemonic articulation and that of the pro-government media. Based on this constitutive dichotomy, pro-government media discursively defined “Yes” votes in the referendum as a decision for the common good of the people. Therefore, this formulation stated that the referendum would be a threshold for the people to voice their claims against the long endured oppression by the status quo establishments. In line with this reasoning, Ahmet Altan, then editor of Taraf newspaper and a liberal columnist, stated that reformist achievements of the AKP on eliminating the tutelary cadres of the status quo establishments would be accomplished with the constitutional amendments. Therefore, Altan perceived the September 12 referendum as a chance to challenge the status quo with the popular will of the people which would accordingly strengthen democratic power of the people over the suppressing state form: “In a country in which the state decided on ‘what shape’ the people should be, now we are going into an era in which the people will decide on what shape ‘the state’ should be”⁶⁹.

Along similar lines, Ali Bayramoğlu, a liberal democrat columnist at Yeni Şafak, stated that Turkey was passing through an important period of transformation. Bayramoğlu, defined the promise of amendments as “a vital turning point for the

⁶⁸“Paradigmatik açıdan bakıldığında bile, bürokrat elitlerin dışında her vatandaşın lehine olan bu kısmî değişikliklere karşı ‘Hayır’ demek, vesayetçi rejimin sürmesini istemek, darbeden yana olmak ve aynı zamanda değişime ve AB kriterlerine de karşı olmak demektir.” (Barış, N. (August 1, 2010). Evet! Cellatlarımızı desteklemiyoruz. *Taraf*. Retrieved June 18, 2015, from <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/haber-yazdir-54845.html>)

⁶⁹“Halkın ‘nasıl’ olması gerektiğine devletin karar verdiği bir ülkede, şimdi ‘devletin’ nasıl olmasına gerektiğine halkın karar vereceği bir döneme giriyoruz.” (Altan, A. (August 10, 2010) Ayaklarının üstüne koyarken. *Taraf*. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/ahmet-altan/ayaklarinin-ustune-koyarken/12414/>)

maturity of Turkish democracy and its institutionalization with civil qualities”⁷⁰. Differentiating supporters and skeptics of this wave of transformation, Bayramoğlu addressed two conflicting camps with cross interests. To Bayramoğlu, on the one side there were supporters of democratic reforms, on the other side there were defeated skeptics including ‘ulusalcılar’ who were resisting against those reforms in order to maintain their position in the state and society segments.

Yes, one section of the society thinks that Turkey is passing through a process of deep rooted transformation; they support related reformist steps, take side with civil institutions and values. [...] The other section at the opposite pole is composed of ulusalcılar, losers, militarists, Kemalists and some nationalists who perceive the transformation as separation. To them, what is at stake is a “struggle for fields”, to them, “The AKP and Gülen community are seizing the state step by step”.⁷¹

Here, the emphasis on ‘democratic demands for change’ remains as the basic determinant in demarcating and configuring political identities. In his article, Bayramoğlu depicted different sectors implying anti-reformist groups, which he defined as ‘ulusalcılar’, ‘Kemalists’ and ‘nationalists’. To Bayramoğlu, what bonded these social sectors was their common fear in losing their privileged status in state branches. In another column article titled “Whites of the exclusionist regime and ‘No’ voters”, Bayramoğlu argued that what the referendum would transform was the “mentality of laicists whites” which, to the author, resembled the struggle of tutelary elite to maintain their exclusionary state cadres.

Especially No voters agitate laic fears and laicist diseases through campaigns including aspects like “the empire of fear” and “the seizure of the state”, and they form a psychology of civil war. The “No” vote manifests the will to maintain political and cultural criteria regulating the exclusive relations over the fields which are monopolized by whites and laicists. In fact, Turkey is trying to break this mentality.⁷²

70“Anayasa değişikliklerine ilişkin referandum, Türk demokrasinin olgunlaşması, sivilleşerek kurumsallaşması yolunda hayati bir rol oynayacak.” (Bayramoğlu, A. (August 28, 2010). Hayır’daki vasatlık. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/alibayramoglu/hayirdaki-vasatlik8230-23742>)

71“Evet, bir kesim Türkiye'nin köklü değişim sürecinden geçtiğini düşünüyor, bu çerçevede atılan reform adımlarını destekliyor, sivil kurum ve değerlerden yana tavır alıyor. [...] Bunun karşısında yer alan diğer kesim, ulusalcılar, kaybedenler, militaristler, Kemalistler, değişimi bölünme olarak algılayan kimi milliyetçilerden meydana geliyor. Onlar için yaşanan bir ‘alan kavgası’dır; ‘AK Parti, Gülen cemaati birlikte adım adım sistemi ve devleti ele geçirmektedir’.” (Bayramoğlu, A. (August 25, 2010). Süngü savaşları ve anlamı. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 21, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/alibayramoglu/sungu-savaslari-ve-anlami-23693?mobil=true>)

72“Özellikle ‘hayırcı’lar ‘korku imparatorluğu’, ‘devletin ele geçirilmesi’ gibi unsurlardan oluşan kampanyalarla laik korkuları, laikçi hastalıkları tahrik ediyor ve bir iç savaş psikolojisi oluşturuyorlar. ‘Hayır oyu’ beyazların, laiklerin tekelindeki alanlara giriş çıkışları düzenleyen siyasal ve kültürel kriterlerin korunmasını, korunması isteğini ifade ediyor. Türkiye aslında bu zihniyeti kırmaya uğraşılıyor.” (Bayramoğlu, A. (September 10, 2010). Ayrılkçı rejimin beyazları ve hayırcılar. *Yeni Şafak*. p. 3)

This quotation shown that the antagonism between ‘democratic demands of the people’ and guardian ‘status quo’ forces continued to determine the configuration of positions within the political field in the AKP’s hegemonic discourse. Although the 1982 coup constitution have been reformed for 17 times prior to 2010 referendum and 68 out of 177 articles have been amended (Kalaycıoğlu, 2012), the social and political tensions occurred during the AKP’s second term in office portrayed the constitutional referendum as a threshold for democratization of Turkey politics. The AKP’s discourse formulated this threshold as a step for leaving tutelary regimes and the ‘exclusionary mentality’ supporting it behind, and proliferate civil demands of the people.

In similar lines, Etyen Mahçupyan, long considered a liberal intellectual and advisor of the Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu since October 2014, perceived the referendum as a reflection of the battle between ‘educated laic classes’ in the center and ‘the people’ in peripheries. In his article titled “Masters and countrymen” (“*Efendiler ve taşralılar*”), Mahçupyan stated:

Last fifteen years of Turkey mean *an existential defeat and trauma for the educated, urbanite, well-off laic sections of the society*. [T]his defeat is achieved through democracy. Besides, ‘the *countrymen*’ defeating them are about to checkmate their ‘*masters*’ in terms of the economic and intellectual aspects. [...] *The referendum will decide on either democracy or tutelage, and both of the poles of the society perceive it in this regard*. [E]ach step taken towards the release from the ‘master’s domination will lead this country to recover its health thanks to its ‘countrymen’.⁷³ (Emphasis added)

Two important issues stand out in this quote. First, like the statements discussed throughout this chapter, it illustrates the contrast between 2007 and 2010 periods considering the constituents of the AKP’s populist discourse. In the 2007 period of deep state killings and the Republican Rallies, the AKP’s political discourse mostly referred to ‘deep state’ killings which temporarily overdetermined the meaning of ‘ulusalcı’. However, in the lead-up to the 2010 constitutional referendum, the enemy figure tended to shift towards the notions of ‘tutelage’ and ‘laicists elites’ as the supporters of the ‘status quo’ establishments. As a result of this discursive articulation, the AKP rhetorically prioritized the oppression of democratic demands of the people by the

⁷³“Türkiye’nin son on beş yılı eğitilmiş, kentli, hali vakti yerinde laik kesim için varoluşsal bir yenilgi, bir travmadır. [S]öz konusu yenilgi demokrasi üzerinden geliyor. Üstelik onları yenen ‘taşralılar’ iktisadi ve entelektüel açıdan da bu ‘efendileri’ mat etmek üzereler. ... Referandum demokrasi ile vesayet arasında yapılıyor ve toplumun her iki kanadı da bunu böyle anlıyor. ‘[E]fendilerin’ tahakkümünden kurtulmaya yönelik her adım, bu ülkenin ‘taşralılar’ sayesinde sağlığına kavuşmasına vesile olacak.” (Mahçupyan, E. (August 15, 2010). ‘Efendiler’ ve ‘taşralılar’. *Taraf*. Retrieved June 24, 2015, from <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/etyen-mahcupyan/efendiler-ve-tasralilar/12502/>)

tutelary cadres of the exclusionary establishments. This oppositional logic discursively defined ‘the people’ as an uncorrupted Islamic community while designating the anti-people camp in light with such tropes as ‘secular whites’ and ‘tutelary elites’. Therefore, I argue that in the 2010 constitutional referendum period, the AKP’s discursive articulation of the enemy figure shifted its terrain from ‘deep state’ to ‘status quo/tutelage’ as the privileged signifier.

Mahçupyan’s differentiation of ‘masters’ and ‘countrymen’ also reflected this antagonistic demarcation. Mahçupyan’s formulation, in the first hand divided political space in the light of the conflict between democracy and tutelage. Discursive effect of this hegemonic split simplified and fixed varied elements through rhetorical operations as two antagonistic poles; the people as the underdog “countrymen” and the anti-people pole as “educated, urbanite, well-off laicist communities”. Combination of tropes along the chain of equivalence rhetorically constituted the anti-people camp through fixing different social elements over a contiguous setting. Subversion of heterogeneity into particularity (i.e. ‘tutelage’ vs. ‘the people’) is fundamentally a discursive articulation which is configured by rhetorical operations. Therefore, we can state that “the tropological characterization of the articulatory practices progressively yields to an analysis of their performative emergence by way of ‘naming’” (Gaonkar, 2012). This discursive force of the name, according to Laclau, is identical with the hegemonic capacity of privileged signifiers. Privileged signifiers condense metonymic slippages and determine the signification of the whole antagonistic camp as a metaphorical closure (Laclau, 2005, p. 87). Turning back to Mahçupyan’s formulation, this organizing logic defined the anti-people camp as “tutelage” while metonymically articulating well-known motifs in the Turkish political context; “masters”, “periphery”, “elites”, “educated middle classes”, “laicists” etc. The second important point in Mahçupyan’s formulation was that the name “tutelage” functioned as the metaphor for the anti-people pole which as a privileged signifier signified those constitutive elements. According to Laclau, performative force of a privilege signifier in assuming the representation of a totality is a hegemonic representation.

[T]here is the possibility that one difference, without ceasing to be a *particular* difference, assumes the representation of an incommensurable totality. In that way, its body is split between the particularity which it still is and the more universal signification of which it is the bearer. This operation of taking up, by a particularity, of an incommensurable universal signification is what I have called

hegemony. And, given that this embodied totality or universality is, as we have seen, an impossible object, the hegemonic identity becomes something of the order of an *empty* signifier, its own particularity embodying an unachievable fullness. (Laclau, 2005, p. 70).

In sum, according to this theoretical framework, populist discourse of the AKP constituted its hegemony over the political field through dividing the social space into two camps in the light of two privileged signifiers; ‘democracy’ and ‘tutelage/status quo’. On this discursive realm, the AKP and pro-government media hegemonically configured this antagonistic opposition as the essential contradiction in the history of socio-political crises in Turkey. Based on this line of conceiving, the AKP circles and the pro-government media discursively portrayed the constitutional referendum as the confrontation of military regimes, coup d’états, tutelary reactions of secular elite and exclusion of ‘the people’ from parliamentary politics. In another article, titled “Yes and No voters”, Mağcupyan underlined this contradiction while stating that the referendum had a “key” role in breaking the tutelary character of the Turkish Republic towards further democratization.

The change that will emerge with the opening of this lock will inevitably lead *the only essential quality of the republic, namely the tutelary approach to government*, to transform. Such a transform will put an end to the ideological domination generated over the phenomenon of “nation” while making the balance between the state and society more egalitarian. Thus, we can argue that *a parenthesis of one hundred years* will close and the people of these lands will build their own road to emancipation again even though they have been black and blue. Considering from this perspective, *the approval of referendum package* will, for the first time, form the conditions of a true speech and politics while *demonstrating this people’s desire to have a say over their own fate in real terms...* Those who insist on “no” can no longer dream about coming to power through democratic means and bringing someone they wish to Presidency. ... In brief, *those who insist on “no” are slanted towards the continuity of the regime of tutelage in Turkey* because they foresee that the democratic initiatives will keep them outside politics and they are right in this foresight to a great extent.⁷⁴ (Emphasis added)

⁷⁴ “Bu kilidin açılmasıyla yaşanacak değişim ise kaçınılmaz olarak bu Cumhuriyet’in tek temel niteliğinin, yani vesayetçi yönetim anlayışının dönüşmesine yol açacak. Bu ise, devletle toplum arasındaki dengeleri en azından daha eşitlikçi hale getirirken, ‘millet’ kavramı üzerinden üretilmiş olan ideolojik tahakkümün sonunu getirecek. Böylece yaklaşık yüz yıllık bir parantezin kapanacağını ve bu toprakların halkının, yara bere içinde kalmış olsa da, yeniden kendi özgürleşme yolunu oluşturacağını öne sürebiliriz. Bu açıdan bakıldığında referandum paketinin onaylanması, bu halkın ilk kez gerçek anlamda kendi kaderi üzerinde söz sahibi olma isteğini ortaya koyarken, yine ilk kez gerçek bir konuşmanın ve siyasetin de koşullarını oluşturacak. ... ‘Hayır’cılar demokratik yollardan iktidara gelmeyi, kendi istedikleri birini Cumhurbaşkanlığı’na getirmeyi artık hayal bile edemiyorlar. ... Kısacası ‘hayır’cılar Türkiye’de vesayet rejiminin devamından yanalar, çünkü demokratik açılımların kendilerini siyaset dışı kılacağını öngörüyorlar ve bu öngöründe büyük çapta da haklılar.” (Mağcupyan, E. (August 13, 2010). ‘Evet’çiler ve ‘Hayır’cılar. *Taraf*. Retrieved June 26, 2015, from <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/etyen-mahcupyan/evet-ciler-ve-hayir-cilar/12459/>)

Mahçupyan rearticulated the hegemonic discourse of the AKP which was structured by the grounding reference to ‘democracy’ and ‘the people’. Mahçupyan stated not the popular will of the people but tutelary regimes shaped the history of the Republic and regulated state-society relations while favoring ideologically and institutionally despotic secular elites. According to Mahçupyan, the referendum would be a chance for ‘the people’ to voice their democratic demands for the first time and to challenge the despotic state if they would vote for “Yes”. In the face of these democratic demands, to Mahçupyan, “No” voters had no choice but to hold on to the tutelary regimes in order to protect their privileges. In accordance with the previous excerpt from Mahçupyan’s article, ‘tutelage’ remained the privileged signifier that identified “tutelary mentality” and “No voters” as the anti-democratic elitist reactionaries.

In the August 2010, a group of intellectuals, including academics, lawyers and public figures from different backgrounds, gathered under the campaign “Yes, but not enough” (*Yetmez, ama Evet*). This group of intellectuals, together with the liberal minded youth organization Young Civilians (*Genç Siviller*), organized support campaigns for constitutional amendments. One of the leading figures in this campaign, Ferhat Kentel, an academician and Taraf columnist, argued that “Yes” votes in the referendum would challenge the supporters of tutelary establishments. According to Kentel, those willing to maintain their hierarchical status were at risk to lose their privileged position in the face of democratic transformations led by the AKP.

They even accept the military tutelage with a great risk in order not to lose their status in the social and cultural hierarchy. As a matter of fact, these conservative and essentialist “new fundamentalists” compiled from milliyetçi MHP, ulusalçı CHP, racists, elitist, and orthodox leftists having become a closed community are right because the fear is something humane and pushes one towards defense; therefore, it only generates negative politics, “it cannot do anything,” only tries to prevent others from doing.⁷⁵ (Emphasis added)

During the referendum period of 2010, the ‘ulusalçı’ feature was notably not a common reference in addressing the enemy camp. However, what crucial for our

⁷⁵“Toplumsal ve kültürel hiyerarşide sahip oldukları statülerini kaybetmemek için, risk karşısında, askeri vesayete bile eyvallah diyorlar. Milliyetçi MHP’den, ulusalçı CHP’den, ırkçılardan, seçkincilerden, kapalı bir cemaat haline gelen ortodoks solculardan derlenen bu muhafazakâr ve özcü “yeni fundamentalistler” de haklı aslına bakarsanız. Çünkü, korku da insanidir ve insanı savunmaya iter; bu nedenle de ancak negatif siyaset üretir; “yapamaz”, yapılmasını engellemeye çalışır.” (Kentel, F. (August 14, 2010). “Yetmez ama evet”: tevazu ve özgüven. *Taraf*. Retrieved June 26, 2015, from <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/ferhat-kentel/yetmez-ama-evet-tevazu-ve-ozguven/12490/>)

discussion in Kentel's formulation was that 'ulusalci' did not refer to deep state forces as it was in 2007 period, but mainly indicated privileged supporters of the exclusionary state form. While Kentel defined this group of interest as "new foundationlists", he identified features of it as "ulusalci", "elitist", "supporters of coups/tutelage" etc. Kentel's formulation therefore knotted 'ulusalci' feature together with 'mentality of the CHP' and captured it as a component of cultural and political despotism of 'high ranked conservatives'. Therefore, it would not be wrong to argue that in the 2010 constitutional referendum period and in the light of basic determinants of the era, the AKP's discourse hegemonically defined the 'ulusalci' term within the context of 'status quo' and 'tutelary mentality' while contingently breaking apart from 'deep state' aspect of 2007 period. Thus, although 'ulusalci' element was not a common reference for the anti-people camp, discursive field of the AKP in 2010 metonymically rearticulated the meaning of the term under the hegemonic force of the 'status quo/tutelage' privileged signifier.

Another article by Kentel crystallized the hegemonic form of the rhetorical articulation and organization of the political field in the AKP's discursive field. In his article in Taraf daily, Kentel argued that with the constitutional amendments and referendum period, the fundamental contradiction of the political history of Turkey eventually revealed. According to Kentel, this contradiction was the hegemonic struggle between "AKP, becoming one of the most significant political actors in Turkey's story of democratization and emancipation" and "the elitist hegemony that has been lasting for 90 years".

The positions re-gained vis-à-vis the class-based and cultural transformation in Turkey as well as the fears brought about by this transformation in the existing status quo and within the sovereignty relations occupy an important place. To put it in another way, the continuity of modern-nationalist docility constructed by *the elitist hegemony that has been lasting for 90 years*, but at the same time, the upheavals created by the "counter-hegemony" that rises outside the elitist hegemony assign new forms to this identification. *AKP, becoming one of the most significant political actors in Turkey's story of democratization and emancipation*, creates radical influences on the other political and social sections through this quality. The said transformation primarily produces a deep fear and resistance in the *status quo's* institutions of domination. The *white, upper social and cultural classes* that do not want to lose their class-based power and *secular middle classes* that are a lower version of the said class and that have minds and bodies tamed by the hegemony and do not want to lose their mental comfort [...] exist by

means of their anti-AKP-ism. These sections of the society reproducing the discourse of the “state power” as a tool of domination become more and more conservative at full speed. This fear of marginalization causes the discourse, which can be roughly called laic conservatism, to break and this fear provides the said discourses with a new ground for embarking on new quests. On the one hand, *this discourse most generally represented at CHP* places the AKP at the “center” from its marginal position; on the other hand, it has to seek after that central position [...].⁷⁶ (Emphasis added)

In line with this antagonism between democracy and status quo, discursive field of the AKP and the pro-government media attempted to position varied political identities and hegemonically fix heterogeneous elements as ‘democratic demands of the people’ and ‘exclusionary tutelage/status quo’. Although Erdoğan addressed the ‘coup aspect’ with more emphasis, the pro-government media discursively defined ‘status quo’ and ‘tutelage’ in accordance with such tropes as ‘laicists’, ‘mentality of the CHP’, ‘white elites’ etc. Hegemonic force of the privileged signifier ‘tutelage/status quo’ metaphorically condensed a contiguous set of signifying elements including ‘ulusalcı’ as constituents of the anti-people camp.

In this chapter, I illustrated first major social and political dynamics that paved the way to the 2010 constitutional referendum and how they effected the articulation of the AKP’s populist discourse. Underlining the impacts of the attempted closure case, Ergenekon and Balyoz trials and YAŞ crises, I have stated that the discourse of the AKP shifted its main reference from ‘deep state’ to ‘status quo’. Transformation of the AKP’s discursive terrain reconfigured the constitutive elements in the constitution of the enemy figure. In accordance, I have analyzed that ‘coup plots’ and ‘mentality of the CHP’ was knotted together

⁷⁶ “[T]ürkiye’deki sınıfsal ve kültürel değişim karşısında yeniden alınan pozisyonlar, bu değişimin var olan statükoda, egemenlik ilişkileri içinde yarattığı korkular önemli bir yer tutuyor. Başka bir ifadeyle, 90 yıldır süren seçkin hegemonyanın inşa ettiği modern-milliyetçi uysallığın devamlılığı, fakat aynı zamanda bu hegemonyanın dışında yükselen “karşı-hegemonyanın” yarattığı altüst oluşlar bu kimikleşmeye yeni biçimler veriyor. [T]ürkiye’nin demokratikleşme ve özgürleşme hikâyesinde en önemli siyasal aktörlerden biri haline gelen AKP, bu özelliğiyle, diğer siyasal ve toplumsal kesimler üzerinde de radikal etkiler yaratıyor. Öncelikle, bu değişim, statükonun tahakküm kurumlarında derin bir korku ve direnç üretiyor. Sınıf iktidarlarını kaybetmek istemeyen, “beyaz”, üst toplumsal ve kültürel sınıflar; bunların bir alt versiyonu olan, zihinsel konforlarını kaybetmek istemeyen, hegemonyanın uysallaştırdığı zihin ve bedenlere sahip laik orta sınıflar [...] “anti-AKP’cilik” vasıtasıyla kendilerini var ediyorlar. Bir tahakküm aracı olarak “devlet iktidarının” söylemini yeniden üreten bu kesimler alabildiğine muhafazakârlaşıyorlar. [...] İşte bu marjinalleşme korkusu, kabaca laik muhafazakârlık olarak adlandırılabilir söylemin kırılmasına, yeni arayışlar içine girmesine zemin oluşturuyor. En genel olarak CHP’de temsil olunan bu söylem, bir yandan – bulunduğu marjinal konumdan- AKP’yi “merkeze” oturturken, diğer yandan onun peşinden koşmak zorunda kalıyor [...]” (Kentel, F. (September 4, 2010). Gerçeklerin beklenmedik sonuçları. *Taraf*. Retrieved June 27, 2015, from <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/ferhat-kentel/gerekcelerin-beklenmedik-sonuclari-2/12813/>)

contiguously in order to address the anti-people camp. While coup reference indicated ‘dark/dirty terror organizations’ and ongoing coup trials, ‘mentality of the CHP’ metaphorically subverted varied elements ranging from oppositional parties, legislative bodies, secular elites, disdainful middle class ‘whites’ etc as ‘status quo’. In the end of analysis, I have pointed out that through privileged signifiers of ‘tutelage/status quo’ the AKP discursively articulated those varied and incommensurable elements as a particular anti-people identity. In the discourse of the AKP during the 2010 constitutional referendum period, enemy identity, including ‘ulusalcı’ as a constituent in it, hegemonically referred to supporters of ‘status quo/tutelage’ who demanded the protection of their exclusionary fields. In the coming chapter, I will analyze the Gezi Park protests and try to illustrate how the mobilization of the memory of Republican Rallies and the constitutional referendum period effected the rearticulation of ‘ulusalcılık’ in the contexts of ‘old Turkey’.



4. ‘ULUSALCILIK’ AS THE ‘OLD TURKEY’

4.1. Reinstitution of The State Power In The Hands of The AKP From 2010 To 2013

During the previous two chapters, I questioned how the AKP government configured and attempted to hegemonically dominate the political space through a populist logic. According to the analyses, in the first chapter I argued that along the Kemalist state and civil society reactions against the parliamentary decisions of the AKP and rising political assassinations, the AKP’s discourse hegemonically identified the ‘ulusalçı’ discussions to ‘deep state’ organizations. Although discourse of the pro-government media remained instable in positioning “ulusalçı” debates, political assassinations in the time period overdetermined the hegemonic meaning of the term as ‘deep state’ organizations aiming to agitate and manipulate socio-political relations. Following this line of conceptualization, Erdoğan recurrently addressed the organizing committee of the Rallies while calling them ‘gangs’. In the second chapter, I focused on the 2010 constitutional referendum period and tried to analyze transformation of the component features of “ulusalçı” attribution in the AKP’s discourse. In contrast to 2007 period, the AKP’s grounding emphasis on ‘deep state’ shifted to ‘status quo’; and hence, configuration of the enemy and the ‘ulusalçı’ reference, as a constitutive element in it, shifted their hegemonic terrains. During the 2010 constitution referendum era, Erdoğan’s rhetoric and the pro-government media discourse constituted the anti-people camp while combining different elements through tropological operations. As a result, in this time period, the AKP’s discourse hegemonically defined the anti-people camp as the ‘status quo’. In accordance, ‘ulusalçı’ reference dominantly addressed ‘white laicist elites’ favoring ‘exclusionary tutelary cadres’.

In this third chapter, I will focus on the period covering the social and political tensions between the period 2010 and 2013, and more specifically impacts of the Gezi protests in June 2013 on the political logic of the AKP in rhetorically configuring the

political field. In the first half of this chapter, changing political atmosphere led the AKP to prioritized majoritarian and authoritarian governmental policies from 2010 to 2013. This period became an era during which the rule under the AKP government came under scrutiny by supporters and the oppositions alike. On the one hand, larger public sectors shared the perception that the AKP was influencing jurisdictional mechanisms due to intimidating and targeting statements of the AKP circles regarding the Ergenekon and the KCK⁷⁷ trials. This critical perception made the ‘anti-status quo’ rhetoric of the AKP more controversial. On the other hand, increasingly aggressive tone of Erdoğan stigmatized different social groups, habits and life styles due to use of alcohol or birth control methods. In this increased atmosphere of conservatism leaning on criminalization, the AKP favored a majoritarian rule which was based on a plebiscitarian understanding of democracy. Besides, bombings and tens of deaths in the Roboski (Uludere) and Reyhanlı towns⁷⁸ led the AKP to prioritize more authoritarian and security based regulations against those criticizing the government. Against this historical background, I will trace those controversies surrounding the Gezi protests and analyze what discursive articulations they produced on part of the AKP. I will question why the AKP and pro-government media tried to define the Gezi Park protests while mobilizing the memory of the Republican Rallies and through the reference ‘ulusalcı’. In this analysis, I will focus on how previous constituents of the populist discourse of the AKP culminated in configuring the enemy figure during the Gezi protest.

From 2002 to 2010, the AKP increased its electoral popularity and hence consolidated its power over state institutions. Considering this electoral hegemony of the AKP (Keyman F. , 2010), the 2010 constitutional referendum presented an increasing threat to the former bureaucratic and military power blocs within the tutelary state cadres. Accordingly, the constitutional amendments that followed the referendum eventually curtailed military privileges in the court system and enabled active and

77 Koma Civakên Kurdistan (KCK) (Group of Communities in Kurdistan) is a Kurdish administrative organization that aims to practice the idea of Democratic Confederalism of Abdullah Öcalan. The KCK investigation began in 2009 and along the investigation activists, academics, politicians and mayors have been inquired and detained in the name of war against terror. In the end, this anti-KCK investigation aimed to prevent organization of the Kurdish movement at the civil level.

78 Roboski (Uludere) is a town in Şırnak on the southeastern border of Turkey. On December 28, 2011, 34 Kurdish civilians were killed by an airstrike of the Turkish military. The AKP government tried to defend the killing by criminalizing civilians as “smugglers” carrying arms to terrorists beyond the borders. The Reyhanlı bombings took place in May 11, 2013, in the town Reyhanlı in Hatay. While supposedly 52 civilians lost their lives, the AKP government and the pro-government media alleged that Syrian-intelligence service plotted the terror act. In order to emphasize the anti-Assad policy of the Turkish government, Erdoğan stated at a party conference “Reyhanlı bombings martyred 53 Sunni citizens of ours”; thus he rhetorically contrasted Sunni identity with the Alawite background of the Syrian leader Bashar Al-Assad.

retired military personnel to be prosecuted under civilian courts. Moreover, since the amendments changed the composition of Higher Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK), different social groups including liberals, conservatives, certain left-wing democrats supporting the AKP supposed that the new structure of the judiciary would be far from a tutelary juristocratic force, to the contrary it would evolve into a democratic, heterogeneous composition attuned with decisions of the elected government. In sum, through the amendments the AKP aimed to weaken the possibility of challenges to the ruling government from military and judiciary branches (Özbudun, 2014).

Just as during the referendum campaign, the AKP presented constitutional amendments as a step to confront the legacy of coup d'état rules and their tutelary establishment, which the AKP circles perceived as part of the progress towards a full-fledged democracy. Based on this discursive configuration of the referendum, Erdoğan and the pro-government media hegemonically defined oppositions of “No” voters as reactions of ‘tutelary elites’ trying to maintain their exclusionary fields while hindering the AKP’s democratic reforms. In line with this antagonism, the AKP discursively identified the party’s effort in the elimination of tutelary cadres as the sole meaning of ‘democratization’ (Çınar, 2011). In the doing so, the AKP downplayed varied democratic demands through discursively identifying maintenance of democracy with the survival of the AKP against tutelary interventions and coup attempts. Beside silencing and undermining, the AKP reduced the field of politics to the struggle against ‘status quo’ in light of the constitutive antagonism between ‘democracy’ and ‘status quo/tutelage’. According to this discursive field, policies of the AKP and the polemics of the pro-government media constantly situated critical voices as threats against the AKP’s reforms for an “advanced democracy”.

Given these dynamics, contrary to the AKP’s premises on the elimination of the status quo forces, the referendum results showed that the tutelary establishments were not eliminated, but only changed hands. In the aftermath of amendments, Ministry of Justice of the AKP government favored the appointment of cadres known to be close to the Islamist Gülen movement to HSYK, the Supreme Court, and the Council of State (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014, p. 487). Therefore, the AKP eliminated former tutelary cadres within the military and judiciary, but the party did not aimed to overcome the governmental logic leading new actors to adapt tutelary institutions for their own sake.

Thus, the current situation “took the form of the AKP’s prevailing over the militarist secular establishment and rested on the AKP’s power position” (Çınar & Sayın, 2014). After this period of transformations, the AKP on the one hand increased its domination over key state institutions, on the other hand introduced more Islamic and conservative themes through legislative and bureaucratic regulations. In doing so, the AKP justified the condensation of state power at the hands of the elected government through the constitutional referendum as termination of the alienation of state from the people and hence as actualization of the national will.

Although the AKP prioritized democratic values in its statements in order to degrade former tutelary establishments, it ensured that certain authoritative institutions of state apparatuses kept functioning, for instance the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*). YÖK was established by the 1982 coup d’état constitution in order to regulate, standardize and control universities and academic activities. YÖK reflected the official ideology of the 1980 coup d’état through decisions on appointments of rectors and academic degrees, discrimination against university student activities and upholding the headscarf ban. Through its interventions, YÖK functioned as a tutelary institution restricting the freedom of academic research and academic autonomy. Although the AKP criticized YÖK and the former President Sezer’s decisions over it previously⁷⁹, the party did not give priority to academic freedom but rather reinstated YÖK under its own control. Considering promotions and appointments for academic positions and rectorate, President Abdullah Gül utilized the tutelary domination of YÖK over universities while making decisions in favor of certain academic personnel who had affinities with the AKP’s ideology and party circles. In similar lines, the AKP continued to maintain the disciplinary function of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). In Turkey, Diyanet is in charge of organizing preaches and financing imams. Controlling the reproduction of religious codes, Diyanet serves as a state apparatus in regulation of one particular religious interpretation which is Sunni Islam. Alevis and non-Muslim communities have long suffered due to the state supported orthodoxy of the Diyanet.

79 According to YÖK’s regulations on the appointment procedure of university rectors, academic personnel of each university votes for possible candidates and YÖK suggests candidates with high ranks to the president. However, the president has right to approve a different candidate for the rectorate who even could not obtain required votes and achieve to get into the list of appointments. Therefore, beside the tutelary regulations of YÖK, the president can manipulate academic autonomy of universities through authoritative interventions in line with political interests. Former president Sezer also utilized this function of YÖK along appointment of certain rectors.

The AKP did not liberalize this authoritarian religious understanding of Diyanet, but used it to continue to suppress heterodoxy (Tombuş, 2013, pp. 320-23).

4.2. The Cost of ‘Democratization’ While Majoritarianism Rises

In light of the promises and hopes attached to the AKP’s fight against the ‘status quo’, pro-government circles either tolerated or disregarded certain injustices and abuses of parliamentary power which gradually tended to criminalize politically excluded groups. In this period, journalists Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener were arrested during the so-called Oda TV investigation which was allegedly targeted the media arm of the Ergenekon terror organization. At the time, Ahmet Şık was writing a book about the Gülen Movement and their take-over of state institutions, and Nedim Şener published a book on the assassination of Hrant Dink exposing how the assassination was planned by the collaboration between state officers and the intelligence service. On the other hand, Prof. Büşra Ersanlı, an academic worked on constitution of the Turkish official history and involved in civil society organizations of the Kurdish movement, and Ragıp Zarakolu, a publisher and public intellectual working on the Armenian question, were accused of colluding with terror organizations and both were arrested under the KCK investigation. This string of arrests in late 2011 became a breaking point in the public opinion. Larger number of critics argued that influence of the AKP and Gülen movement at the judiciary led the Ergenekon and KCK trials to become politicized and turned to be criminalizing oppositional groups by accusing them of terrorist activity. According to growing critiques against the AKP’s prevailing over state institutions, the government tried to silence any critical voice against the AKP circles and cadres of the Gülen movement. Contrary to the believes of pro-government circles on the AKP’s premises for democratization, the AKP’s domination over state institutions resulted with concentration of the state power at the hands of the elected party. Accordingly, the AKP justified the current condition through majoritarian understanding of democracy which increased the government’s security policies towards ‘threats’ against the nation.

Under this rising authoritative atmosphere, then Minister of Interior, İdris Naim Şahin, in his speech at the meeting of the Directorate of Counter-Terror stated:

The activities the terrorist organizations carry out are not limited to attacks it organizes by treacherously laying ambushes in mountains, hills, cities, streets

and in back alleys. There are also psychological terror and scientific terror. [...] Some support terrorism by seriously distorting the facts as well as fabricating and rationalizing their own facts. By drawing pictures, they reflect their fabricated truth on the canvas; writing poems, they reflect their fictitious facts on the poems; by writing daily articles... Such people try to demoralize the soldiers and the police who served in the fight against terrorism by turning them into the subjects of their art and study. The backyards of the terror are Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, Vienna, London, Washington, university chairs, associations, and non-governmental organizations.⁸⁰

These declarations favoring security policies and authoritarian accusations delimited the space of politics. While mobilizing nationalist codes on territorial unity and harmony, the AKP delegitimized critical demands through intimidating and criminalizing statements against oppositional groups. As a result, the AKP tended to introduce more majoritarian regulations. In a symbiotic relation with the party's discourse on 'democracy', this majoritarian turn effected the conservative policies of the AKP government; such as abortion discussions, education reform, restrictions on alcohol consumption, and targeting unmarried boys and girls who shared the same flat.

4.2.1. The AKP's Neoliberal Populism: Family And Education Policies

After the 2011 general elections, the AKP gained almost 50 percent of the popular votes. Being the highest result the party obtained, the AKP sustained its power in the parliament while shaping a dominant party system in Turkey considering both its electoral power and the seat share in the Grand National Assembly (Çarkoğlu, 2011). Through this solidified political environment and more predictable economic relations, the AKP on the one hand portrayed itself as a vital actor for the continuation of economic growth. On the other hand, the AKP increased chances for new middle classes to have larger bank credits and involve in further investments, while foreign finance groups deepened their hold over the neoliberal economic field. In this time period, the government utilized urban reconstruction projects as an economic model for national growth. While urban reconstruction projects and flexible capital accumulation depriving lower income groups, this process increased precarious and informal forms of

⁸⁰ "Terör örgütünün yürüttüğü çalışma sadece dağda, bayırda, şehirde, sokakta, arka sokaklarda haince pusu kurarak yaptığı saldırılardan ibaret değil. Psikolojik terör, bilimsel terör var. [...] Birileri de ciddi halde saptırma yaparak, kendine göre gerekçeler uydurarak makulleştirerek, teröre destek veriyor. Resim yaparak, tuvale yansıtarak, şiir yazarak, şiire yansıtıyor, günlük makale yazarak. Terörle mücadelede görev almış askeri ve polisi, sanatına çalışmasına konu yaparak demoralize etmeye çalışıyorlar. [Terörün] arka bahçe İstanbul'dur, İzmir'dir, Bursa'dır, Viyana'dır, Londra'dır, Washington'dur, üniversitede kürsüdür, dernektir, sivil toplum kuruluşudur." (İçişleri Bakanı Şahin'den ilginç sözler. (December 26, 2011). *Milliyet*. Retrieved July 2, 2015, from <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/icisleri-bakani-sahin-den-iliginc-sozler/siyaset/siyasetdetay/26.12.2011/1480627/default.htm>)

labor. In this era, the AKP applied social assistance programs and systematically encouraged religious oriented charity organizations to alleviate injustices of their neoliberal economic model. Therefore, while welfare policies were declining and subcontract labor skyrocketing, Islamic charities substituted social assistance programs. Through the coordination between municipalities and faith-based voluntary organizations, the state subcontracted its welfare provision duties to the Islamic charities which eventually increased the involvement of Islamic codes at the civil society level (Kaya, 2015). As a result of this neoliberal populist administration (Yıldırım, 2010) (Bozkurt, 2013), the AKP government put significant emphasis on conservative family values and necessity of the cultivation 'pious generations' through religious education. Accordingly, the AKP put increasing emphases on conservative codes while utilizing family and school education as ideological state apparatuses.

In 2012, statistics showed that Turkey's birth rates had fallen to an all time low of 0.12% projecting a future population decrease and problems related to aging (Bila, 2013). The AKP insisted that only a larger and youthful population can keep Turkey in the global economic competition and sustain its geopolitical vision. Erdoğan called attention to abortion and birth control methods on several platforms. In his speeches, Erdoğan stated that he did not support birth control since it would eventually help the "insidious plans" of foreign forces to decrease in number and weaken the Turkish nation. In the Congress for the Woman Branch of the AKP, Erdoğan linked abortion discussions to Roboski massacre while stating that he accepted neither abortion nor caesarean births:

You talk about nothing but 'Uludere' day and night. Every abortion is an Uludere. What is the difference between killing a baby in her mother's womb and killing her after birth, I am asking to you? We are obliged to struggle for this together. We need to know that abortion is an insidious plan for erasing this nation from the world scene; we should never rely on such games.⁸¹

On many occasions, such as press conferences and wedding ceremonies in which he was invited, Erdoğan emphasized the importance of the three-generational family and called women to have at least three children. This growing emphasis on the woman body and childbirth reflected the AKP's perception of the family as a resolution

81 "Yatıyorsunuz kalkıyorsunuz 'Uludere' diyorsunuz. Her kürtaj bir Uludere'dir. Anne karnında bir yavruyu öldürmenin doğumdan sonra öldürmeden ne farkı var soruyorum sizlere. Bunun mücadelesini hep birlikte vermeye mecburuz. Bu milleti dünya sahnesinden silmek için sinsice bir plan olduğunı bilmek durumundayız, asla bu oyunlara prim vermemeliyiz." (Erdoğan: herkürtaj bir Uludere'dir diyorum. (May 26, 2012). T24. Retrieved July 3, 2015, from <http://t24.com.tr/haber/erdogan-her-kurtaj-bir-uluderedir-diyorum,204853>)

for the social care while legitimizing this attempt through conservative and nationalist references. Beside the expansion of conservative policies, the government forced an education reform in parliament regarding the elementary school, changing eight years of compulsory education to twelve years with three interconnected sections; commonly titled as “4+4+4”. The new system legalized the establishment of secondary religious schools (*İmam Hatip*), which were banned after the February 28 military intervention. Education reform after the February 28 intervention the period of elementary schooling increased into eight years in order to prevent children from starting religious schools at earlier ages. With regard to the “4+4+4” system, many critics have argued that the AKP was taking revenge of the February 28 military intervention and policies on religious schools designed under the secularist military tutelage. In line with the AKP’s reforms, a number of elementary schools transformed into secondary religious schools without consulting local stakeholders, which eventually erupted neighborhood-based protests at different cities. Reforms covering school curriculums and university entrance exams added optional religious courses and related questions about the Quran and the life of the Prophet Mohammed. The oppositional parties in the parliament and public critiques stated that the AKP was imposing Islam through state power. In the face of rising critical voices Erdoğan supported the education reform arguing that democratic conservative identity of the AKP government necessitated the cultivation of ‘pious generations’. Erdoğan stated in a party meeting at the National Assembly as follows:

We have drawn attention to the Jacobin and exclusionist, elitist mentality that still exists today. Does this mentality exist today? Yes, it does. [...]They say that I divide Turkey between the pious and the non-believers. There is no such thing as the pious and the non-believers in my statement. It includes the point about bringing up a religious youth. Do you expect a party with a conservative-democrat identity to raise an atheist youth?⁸²

While reducing critiques to being prone to ‘atheism’, Erdoğan legitimized the party’s authoritarian use of state institutions with reference to the dichotomy between the ‘exclusionist elite mentality’ and conservative values of ‘the people’. Erdoğan used this polarizing logic in his speeches during public openings⁸³ while addressing ongoing

82 “[B]ugün de varlığını sürdüren jakoben, seçkin, elitist bir zihniyete dikkatleri çektik. Bugün bu zihniyet var mı, evet yine var. [...] Türkiye’yi dindarlar-dinsizler diye ayırdığımı söylüyorlar. Benim ifademde dindarlar-dinsizler diye bir ifade yok. Dindar bir gençlik yetiştirme var. Muhafazakar demokrat partisi kimliğine sahip bir partiden ateist bir gençlik yetiştirmemizi mi bekliyorsunuz?” (Dindar gençlik yetiştireceğiz. (February 2, 2012). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved July 4, 2015, from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/19825231.asp>)

83 Erdoğan and the AKP cadres, during their rule in the government pragmatically utilized public openings, sports organizations or any invitation from NGO’s as a chance to express their ideological stance regarding the current situation. In similar lines, Erdoğan mostly utilized public openings as propaganda platforms.

critiques. There, he criticized oppositional voices while emphasizing the necessity of religious education in terms of ‘national values’:

Whatever this country has suffered, it has suffered from the mentality that wants to shape students with certain ideologies and torture them in persuasion rooms. Books were banned in this country at one time. The mountains of books were set to fire in town squares. The youth in this country was prevented from learning their national values. Those who teach national values were treated as if they had been convicted of murder. [...] Do you want this youth to be thinner addicts? Do you want them to be a rebellious generation? Do you wish a generation with no issue or cause?⁸⁴

Similar to abortion, pregnancy control, and the issue of creating ‘pious generation’, Erdoğan’s rhetoric, and the discourse of the AKP circles legitimized the disciplinary techniques of state power they obtained with reference to “national values” (Koyuncu, 2015). In line with this legitimation, for the government represented the unmediated interests of the people, the AKP circles assumed the party as the political manifestation of the actual demands of the nation. This ideological crafting of a party image disregarded power relations over the heterogeneity of the social and constituted ‘the nation’ as a homogenous entity. According to this ideological configuration of the ‘people’, the AKP defined ‘values of the nation’ in line with Islamic and nationalist references. This synthesis of conservative, nationalist and Islamist codes determined the AKP’s political agenda attempting to discipline the population through state apparatuses (Şen, 2010).

Erdoğan’s controversial statements about alcohol consumption and unmarried couples likewise reflected the AKP’s authoritarian turn which utilized majoritarian policies favoring Turkish-Islamic codes. The AKP prepared amendments in order to restrict alcohol consumption in public areas, opening ceremonies in festivals, art events or any public opening, and use of alcoholic beverage brands for sponsorships. In one of his speeches, Erdoğan supported those amendments while legitimizing restrictions in line with orders of religion and national values.

No matter what the religions is, a religion does not prescribe the wrong, but the right. If it commands the right, are you going to take a stand against it merely

84 “Bu ülke ne çektiyse öğrencileri belli ideolojilerle şekillendirmek isteyen, ikna odalarında⁸⁴, öğrencilere zulmeden zihniyetten çekmiştir. Bu ülkede bir dönem kitaplar yasaklandı. Kasaba meydanlarında kitap dağları yakıldı. Bu ülkenin gençlerinin milli değerleri öğrenmeleri engellendi. Milli değerleri öğretmenler cinayet işlemiş gibi muamele gördü. [...] Bu gençliğin tinerci olmasını mı istiyorsunuz? İsyankar bir nesil mi olmasını istiyorsunuz? Hiçbir meselesi olmayan bir nesil mi istiyorsunuz?” (Bu gençliğin tinerci olmasını mı istiyorsunuz?. (February 6, 2012). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved July 4, 2015, from <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=19857737&tarih=2012-02-06>)

because the religion prescribes so? Why does a fact, a case ordered by faith become a phenomenon you should defy while you consider the law issued by two drunkards legal? [...] We drew up this regulation so that our people can look towards the future in peace and safety with its national and spiritual values.⁸⁵

4.2.2. The AKP's Neoliberal Populism: Neo-Ottomanism And Social Engineering

Erdoğan's statements and the AKP's policies on abortion, religious education and alcohol consumption have to be considered together with Turkey's changing global and regional perspective after 2010. In the face of the rising skepticism in the EU countries against Turkey's accession and transformative wave of the Arab Spring, Turkey shifted towards a more proactive foreign policy that sought to be a role model for the Islamic countries in the Middle East. Although state policies on presenting Turkey as a model for the Middle East predated 2010, under the given political tensions this geopolitical vision of the AKP government redefined state-society relations while merging neoliberal administrations with the Muslim identity as a solution to both domestic and regional politics (Yalvaç, 2012). In order to cooperate with the Muslim countries in economic and political relations, Erdoğan and then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmet Davutoğlu, employed a neo-Ottomanist discourse in their attempt to guide the revitalization of Islam (İnsel, 2012).

Appropriation of the Ottomanist discourse in the Turkish right wing political parties has been a recurrent phenomenon in different time periods. During the late 80's and onwards Turgut Özal, then prime minister between 1983 and 1989 and president between 1989 and 1993, merged Turkish nationalist discourse with Ottomanist references in order to resolve socio-cultural crises at the local level and the political turmoil at the Balkans. At this time period, politicians rhetorically addressed the Ottoman legacy and nostalgic narration of a shared cultural past in order to mobilize a collective memory and reconstitute social bonds discursively. Throughout the mid-90's and onwards, rising political Islam gradually intensified Islamic elements in the rearticulation of the Ottomanist discourse (Çolak, 2006). The AKP government highly utilized the references to the Ottoman heritage as social critique of Kemalist republic. Based on this interpretation, Erdoğan recurrently accused the Kemalist elite for

85 “[H]angi din olursa olsun, bir din yanlışı değil doğruyu emrediyor. Doğruyu emrediyorsa bunu din emrediyor diye karşısında mı duracaksın? İki tane ayyaşın yaptığı yasa, sizin için muteber oluyor da inancın emrettiği bir gerçek, bir vaka, niçin sizler için reddedilmesi gereken bir olay haline geliyor. [...]Biz bu düzenlemeyi milli ve manevi değerleriyle huzur ve güvenlik içinde insanımız geleceğe baksın diye yaptık.” (Erdoğan'dan flaş açıklamalar. (May 28, 2013). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved July 6, 2015, from <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/erdogan-dan-flas-aciklamalar/siyaset/detay/1715196/default.htm>)

denoting the Ottoman heritage and in many cases cited different works of Ottoman-Islamist thought. Moreover party's attempt to reintroduce the Ottoman architecture, introduction of Ottoman language courses into school curriculums, reinstatement of the May 29 celebrations (the day Istanbul was conquered by Sultan Mehmed in 1453) became public manifestations of the AKP's articulation of the so-called neo-Ottomanist discourse (Ongur, 2015). Glorification of the Ottoman past ideologically reconfigured the conception of "Turkishness", its past in the history and composition of national values accordingly. Therefore, the AKP's promoting neo-Ottomanist codes increased the circulation of conservative-nationalist interpretations of the past (Bakiner, 2013).

Thus, in contrast with the EU driven reform policies and the party's pragmatic rhetoric on democracy during the previous terms in office, after 2010 period the AKP shifted towards a majoritarian understanding legislation and attempted to regulate homogenizing policies through their domination of the state institutions. Accordingly, the AKP recurrently referred to Islamic and nationalist codes in the way they legitimized policies of the government against rising tensions and critical voices. While the party enforcing neoliberal policies through encouraging privatizations and exploitation of precarious labor, security policies loaded with a nationalist conservative language targeted large sectors and increased authoritarian and non-responsive regulations of the state power under the AKP rule. At the discursive level, the AKP legitimized this authoritarian shift and the party's insertion of Islamic codes through taking over state institutions as the democratization and normalization of the 'old Turkey' in favor of the 'values of the nation' (Açikel, 2012). In contrast, the AKP discursively addressed 'new Turkey' as revitalization and self-actualization of demands of the people at the state level. Based on this line of conceiving, spokesmen of the AKP and Erdoğan himself put significant emphases along several platforms on the dates 2023, the hundredth anniversary of founding of the Turkish Republic, and 2071, millennial anniversary of Turks' reaching to Anatolia.

Considering the government's reforms on education and social assistance as well as urban reconstruction projects and flexible labor policies, the AKP's synthesis of neoliberal populism with Islamic authoritarianism resulted with rising uprisings at local levels. Although premises of the neoliberal thought and results of authoritarianism apparently seem contradictory, as a matter of fact neoliberal political rationality promulgates conservative norms through market mechanisms. Mobilization of religious

and moral references in neoconservative political discourses is an important fertilizer for neoliberal authoritarian movements (Brown, 2006). This political logic reduces political problems to market solutions. In doing so, administrative technology of neoliberalism eradicates political antagonisms while limiting political demands into mere administration. Beside, the neoliberal ideology claiming the ‘end of politics’ paves the way for the inscription of moral codes in the constitution of political identities and social belonging. Therefore, neoliberal logic articulates religious, nationalist and racist fears and resentments which cause right-wing populist politics (Mouffe, 2005).

In Turkey, neoliberal authoritarianism of the AKP government explicitly manifested in urban reconstruction projects. The AKP utilized urban gentrification and reconstruction as an economic model, since investment to public housing trigger different forms of consumption. Therefore, the AKP significantly encouraged construction companies for further economic growth and enlargement of the consumption sector. Throughout the AKP’s urban policies, urban regeneration projects devastated poor income communities and expelled them from central commercial zones. on the other hand the AKP’s right-wing populist discourse recurrently defined local resistances through a criminalizing language. The TOKİ (Housing Development Administration), under the command of Prime Minister’s Office, became the central actor in this period with more than 450.000 constructions and gentrification projects which targeted mostly lower income neighborhoods (Balaban, 2011). Through the cooperation between private construction sector and the TOKİ, the spatial profile of big cities have rapidly changed with mushrooming tower blocks, gated luxury residences and shopping malls. Alongside immense construction plans, such as the third airport project for Istanbul, Canal Istanbul project⁸⁶, and Marmaray railway construction, the wave of “crazy projects” distorted cultural memory of cities and increased commodification of city space through privatizations and demolition of low income neighborhoods. Under the motto “reinvigoration and construction” (“*ihyâ ve inşâ*”), the idea of “New Turkey”, in the end, resembled a mixture of imitated Ottoman heritage, pragmatic use of Turkish-Islamic codes, and imperial nostalgia for lost Ottoman lands in the Middle East. In sum, the discourse of “New Turkey” and the AKP policies more

⁸⁶ Erdoğan’s Canal Istanbul was a waterway project between the Blacksea and the Sea of Marmara which would become Istanbul’s new Bosphorus. Although Erdoğan stated that Canal Istanbul would solve sea traffic this project was a step in a larger social infrastructure that would open the region for settlement and consumption projects.

and more represented authoritarian attempts of a conservative social engineering (Açikel, 2012; İnel, 2012; Özbudun, 2014)

4.2.3. The Gezi Protests In The Context of The AKP's Neoliberal Authoritarianism

Up until now, I illustrated key events during the period from 2010 to 2013. I stated that while the AKP took over key institutions, premises of the government on eliminating tutelary forces turned out to be their being appropriated by the AKP cadres. I argued that the AKP government in their third term in office became utilized majoritarian authoritarian regulations considering the Erdoğan's declarations and the party's policies on the abortion issue, alcohol consumption and 4+4+4 reform. Besides, under the economic and political conditions of the given period the AKP changed its foreign policies regarding the Middle East. In this way, while gaining the state power, the AKP adopted the view of "New Turkey" which merged neo-Ottomanist discourse with neoliberal policies along increasing authoritarian regulations. In coming pages, I will question how this chain of events and political tensions configured the AKP's discursive field in the course of the Gezi Park protests. While describing Erdoğan's political rhetoric and discourse of the pro-government media, I will analyze the counter-discourse of the AKP in arresting the meaning of the Gezi protest as a collaboration of inner and outer enemy organizations. Scrutinizing the patterns of continuity regarding the constitutive elements in 2007 and 2010 analyses, I will ask how and why the AKP remobilized 'ulusalcı', 'Republican Rallies' and 'status quo' references together with conspiracy elements in the context of the Gezi Park protests.

Considering this background of events illustrated above, the Gezi Park resistance should not be regarded as an unexpected event. The Taksim Square in particular and Beyoğlu region in general can be defined as a prototype of this general transformation. In the name of urban renewal for reconstruction of risky zones, Istanbul municipality destructed historical Sulukule region, a former Roma neighborhood, through reconstruction projects designed with "Ottoman-style" architecture. Similarly, a low-income neighborhood Tarlabası was also demolished. In this way, reconstruction projects removed poor and lower income communities from city centers and secured the place for further consumption fields. This process resulted with transformation of the cultural memory of big cities under a neoliberal logic. Beyoğlu region and İstiklal Street, one of the cultural capitals of Istanbul, rapidly lost historic bookstores, shops and

art centers while rising number of malls and luxury stores occupied the region. As a result of this transformation, the Emek cinema was demolished for the construction plans of a mall project. During the demonstrations held to prevent the demolition of Emek, the police attacked activists and used water cannon to rout people out. This attack reflected the unresponsive and intolerant attitudes of authorities towards critique and negotiation.

The Taksim project of the government did not only include commercialization through privatization of city space, but also intended to reconfigure the collective memory through Islamic and Ottomanist references. In the light of this aim, one of the iconic structures of the modernization history of Turkey, the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) was closed for renewal in 2008. However, the reconstruction was postponed for several times, and hence the AKM was inactivated and left to perish. Besides, while being the mayor of Istanbul and during his former terms in office for prime minister, Erdoğan stated many times that he wanted to erect a grand mosque at the Taksim square. In what follows, together with the Istanbul municipality, Erdoğan announced that the Gezi Park would be demolished to “reinvigorate” in its place a replica of the Topçu Kışlası (Taksim Military Barracks). Being a former Ottoman garrison demolished in 1940, according to Erdoğan reconstructed Topçu Kışlası would, on the one hand, commemorate actual Ottoman heritage of the square, and on the other hand it would be used as a complex constituting of a shopping mall, city museums and luxury accommodation. In order to suppress the fact that the Taksim square has been the address of political demonstrations and traumatic memories of state violence⁸⁷, such immense recreation plans would purify the region from public demonstrations and low-income groups. Although the then Minister of Culture, Ertuğrul Günay, and

87 Although Taksim square have witnessed a series of political incidents, both for the revolutionary leftist movement and the Kurdish movement the square and Beyoğlu region have symbolic importance. In 1 May, 1977, hundreds and thousands of people composed of different sections of the Turkish left-wing politics and unionists gathered at the square for the International Labor Day demonstrations. At the middle of the meeting shots were heard and police forces intervened in the square through means which purposively triggered an atmosphere of panic and chaos. Although some speculated that the shots were a result of the disputes between demonstrators, involvement of counter-guerrilla units determined the result of the incident as well as the rising state violence against the leftist movement in Turkey. In the end of the May 1 1997 tens of demonstrators killed. Beyoğlu region is also a memorial site for the Kurdish movement. Throughout the 90's, restoration ideology of the 1980 coup d'état and security forces subjected Kurdish civilians to systematic torture, murder and forced disappearances. Throughout the mid 90's, Kurdish mothers who lost their sons and daughters along forced disappearances tried to gather in front of the Galatasaray High School over the İstiklal Street on each Saturday. Facing with harsh police attacks, gathering of the Saturday Mothers were tried to be suppressed by security forces for years which eventually made the region a traumatic manifestation of the state violence against civil politics and demands for justice. Along years this demand did not extinguish. On the one hand, attempts of demonstrators to demand justice for the Taksim massacre and forced disappearances made the Taksim region a site commemorated the injuries of the state violence. On the other hand, the authorities kept attempting to suppress such political movements through criminalizing demonstrations and security forces.

Commission of Renewal of the Ministry rejected reconstruction plans for the Topçu Kışlası, Erdoğan stated in February 2013: “We are going to build Taksim Barracks. The higher council rejected the project. We are going to reject this rejection”⁸⁸. As opposed to authoritative tone of Erdoğan and non-transparent bureaucratic organs under the AKP rule, dissidents have organized under the Taksim Solidarity in order to prevent the Taksim Plan of the government. This shows that the Taksim square have become a battle ground of antagonistic desires projected on both the collective memory and representations attached to the space prior to the Gezi resistance (Eken, 2014).

However, what made Gezi Park protests a mass movement of nationwide uprisings were the culmination of certain transformations and the polarization of the social field towards a shared distrust against policies of the AKP. Rising authoritative tone of Erdoğan, monopolization of the media in the hands of a few business groups that had close relations with the government, lack of freedom of press, legal injuries regarding crucial cases, and mounting pressure over oppositional voices ended up with the AKP’s negation and silencing of claims of varied actors through coercive instruments. After a couple of days from the Reyhanlı bombings, what started as a protest of a small group resisting against the demolition of the Gezi Park in 27th of May exploded into a series of nationwide anti-government uprisings in the following days. In order to prevent demolition of the park, “the protests started out as a response to the governing neoliberal party’s project of urban transformation [...]; yet, urban question quickly took a backseat as the protests became massive” (Tuğal, 2013). In the face of excessive police violence through paper gas, water cannon and plastic bullets, on the 31st of May hundreds of thousands of people from various backgrounds gathered in the streets and involved in the resistance. In the afternoon of the 1st of June, police forces stepped back and thousands of demonstrators entered into the Taksim square while the protests spontaneously spread to different cities all around the country. Thus, the Gezi Park protest exceeded the limits of an environmental activism, and the movement took the form of the solidarity of a multitude of voices against the authoritative state power under the AKP rule. The title “spirit of the Gezi” and the tree image became the symbol of solidarity of different sectors that resisted against the repressive police violence and the non-responsive authoritarian government.

88 “Topçu Kışlası’nı yapacağız. Üst Kurul reddetmiş. Biz de reddi reddedeceğiz” (Avukatlar örgütte aktif. (February 4, 2013). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved July 6, 2015, from <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/kent/144084-basbakan-in-topcu-kislasi-israri>

As street clashes and police violence were continuing, the Gezi Park remained occupied by demonstrators until the 15th of June when police forces demolished the commune in the park and evicted protesters through water cannons and tear gas. The experience derived from nearly twenty days of resistance and the aftermath of the events helped constitution of a new political rhetoric which was configured through encounters among different social backgrounds and intersubjective actions (Karakayali & Yaka, 2014). A vast variety of different sections, ranging from LGBT activists and feminists to football club fans, nationalist, Kemalists to Kurdish groups, from religious communities, secular identity groups, academicians to artists, and middle and upper middle classes from different incomes labor unions, university students to homeless people gathered in the square. Through humorous and creative interventions, this spontaneous and unorganized community developed a counter-hegemonic language and a set of practices which eventually reconstructed the spatial and symbolic surface of the place. On the one hand, ‘people’ across squares and along uprisings in different cities pointed out privatization of common areas and authoritarianism of the government through slogans such as “Capitalism will cut down the tree if it can’t sell the shadow” and “Shoulder to shoulder, against fascism”. On the other hand, such spontaneous encounters along different political affinities reflected a rhetorical affirmation of current tensions. Considering the restrictions against alcohol consumption people voiced the slogan “You shouldn’t have banned the last beer” or “You banned the alcohol, the people sobered up”. Against statements of Erdoğan on the abortion and three children issues, the slogan “Tayyip, do you want three children like us?” highly circulated among the crowd (Deren van het Hof, 2015). Similarly, while Erdoğan was defining the people in the streets as “looters” (in Turkish “çapulcu”), crowds in the squares quickly appropriated the term and subverted the meaning of the “çapulcu” as the motto of their resistance for further liberation; i.e. “chapulling”.

Moreover, new slogans emerging in the light of current encounters between heterogeneous groups challenged the ordinary limits of political identities through contingent articulation of a satirical language. As opposed to one of the widely circulated slogan “We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal” shouted by Kemalist and nationalist groups, demonstrators created anti-militarist slogans such as “We are the soldiers of Mustafa Keser” who is a folk singer. Beside the subversive power of the Gezi protests’ counter-hegemonic language, certain encounters among conflicting social

groups enabled contingent dislocation and rearticulation of political oppositions. In line with this, a photograph of two men standing in juxtaposition with the posters of Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, and Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, was shared in large numbers by protesters. Accordingly, one of the striking examples reflecting this encounter was the graffiti “Biji Serok Atatürk” which was appropriated from the Kurdish slogan “Biji Serok Apo”, meaning “Long live the Leader Apo”. Another important aspect during the Gezi Park resistance was the active involvement of Islamic conservative communities calling themselves “Anti-capitalist Muslims”. Hand in hand with those heterogeneous sectors referred above, those Islamists and pious groups prayed at the Gezi Park on the holy night, Mirac Kandili, and offered dessert to the inhabitants of the park in order to commemorate injuries and losses during the Gezi protests. Thus, different sections from various social backgrounds, which were mostly excluded and stigmatized in the discourse of the AKP as the anti-people groups, temporarily involved in a collective action within a shared anti-institutionalist demand. Through the contingent configuration of an antagonism under the given condition, claims of different sectors articulated into a popular demand negating the authoritarian policies of the AKP government. As hundreds of thousands of people were demanding the Prime Minister Erdoğan to resign, the AKP’s hegemony over ‘the people’ shattered. Thus, one can argue that under such a field of contingent encounters, counter-hegemonic articulation of a discursive field during the Gezi Park protest forced the AKP’s dominant rhetoric over the political field towards dislocation and brought about its reconfiguration. One of the slogans shouted by protesters reflected how the rhetorical subversion of the signifier ‘the people’ reshaped the boundaries of the social: “We claim religion without the AKP, Atatürk without the CHP, motherland without the MHP, Kurds without the BDP, we are the people”⁸⁹.

4.3. “The People” As The Ground of Hegemonic Struggle

Under such encounters and confrontations, the Gezi Park protest gave rise to an idea of communitarian fullness which was shared across different social groups involved in the resistance. However, as I discussed in previous chapters, openness of the social and unevenness of dislocations prevents the conceptual grasping of community as

⁸⁹ “Biz AKP’siz dine, CHP’siz Ata’ya, MHP’siz vatana, BDP’siz Kürt’e sahip çıkarız, biz halkız”. See: Çelik, B. (June 6, 2013). The diverse revolt of Turkish youth and the production of the political. *Open Democracy*. Retrieved July 1, 2015 from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/burce-celik/diverse-revolt-of-turkish-youth-and-production-of-political>

a closed totality. Laclau states that “the community as such is not a purely differential space of an objective identity but an absent fullness, it cannot have any form of representation of its own” (Laclau, 2007, p. 42). The community emerges, however, in the field of politics through the equivalential expansion of previously repressed claims into a particular demand in the face of the repressive power, which resembles the anti-community. According to Laclau, oppositional difference from the same oppressive establishment constitutes a community through combination of individual claims. Therefore, articulation of various demands along an equivalential chain constitutes ‘the people’ (Laclau, 2005, p. 74). This tension between equivalence and difference is maintained through the discursive configuration of an antagonistic frontier through which the heterogeneous elements in both poles are reduced to the conflict between two homogeneous forces. As a result of this constitutive antagonism, one signifier achieves representing the fullness of the community, i.e. ‘people’, ‘class’ or ‘nation’, which is actually a signifier standing for an impossible universality. Thus, through the production of such empty signifiers, the name becomes the ground of a thing which keeps an assemblage of heterogeneous elements equivalentially together (Laclau, 2005, p. 100). The name, indicating political movements, ideologies or institutions, condenses contingent articulation as a fixed belonging and crystallizes the content of the privileged signifier, that which Laclau characterizes as the operation of hegemony (Laclau, 2008). In sum, configuration of the antagonistic frontier constitutes equivalential chains across particular demands, and one particularity contingently determines the context of the contradiction through hegemonic articulation of the political field. To Laclau, this discursive articulation of the political moment is a rhetorical investment: “[p]olitics is the articulation of heterogeneous elements, and such an articulation is essentially tropological, for it presupposes the duality between institution and subversion of differential positions that we found as defining a rhetorical intervention” (Laclau, 2008, p. 73).

From this perspective it can be argued that the event of Gezi Park protests and massive demonstrations in its aftermath became a political moment which challenged the AKP’s hegemonic definition of ‘the people/millet’. Although both protesters and government agreed that the Gezi Park resistance was not about a few trees, demonstrators defined the Gezi protests as a resistance against authoritarian tendencies of the government and its excessive interference into the private lives. This discursive

field dislocated various elements rhetorically (as discussed above Kurds, Turkish nationalist, LGBT people, certain Islamists, university students, left wing parties, environmental activists etc.) and articulated them within a counter-hegemonic context. Therefore, ‘the people’ in the rhetoric of the multitude in streets came to mean anti-institutionalism, anti-authoritarianism and inclusiveness.

On the other hand, the AKP’s discourse, as discussed in previous chapters, based on the political rhetoric which privileged the antagonism between status quo and democracy while hegemonically defining popular decisions of ‘the people’ through ethno-religious codes and majoritarian formulations. Within the AKP’s discursive field, plebiscitarian understanding of democracy and ‘balloting’ legitimized the AKP’s identification of ‘the people’ with the party as the representation of the popular will. In doing so, while the AKP became the norm of democracy (Çınar, 2013), any critical voice against the AKP’s policies was either defined as attempts of tutelary forces to the detriment of the AKP and thus the decision of the people. Therefore, the Gezi resistance became a political moment of struggle between two hegemonic articulations of ‘the people’. On the one hand, the AKP’s differential logic, which was based on the antagonism between democracy and impeding forces of extra-legal and bureaucratic cadres, shattered. On the other hand, contingent articulation of a counter-hegemonic articulation reconfigured the political space through rhetorically dislocating and fixing elements under a different representational regime which was based on a new contextualization of ‘the people’. Thus, this clash between competing discursive fields, shifting of political frontiers due to the emergence of a counter-hegemonic contextualization of the ‘people’, necessitated “the reconstitution of the space of representation through the construction of a new frontier” (Laclau, 2005, p. 153). In line with this conceptualization, the AKP reconfigured the antagonistic frontier through rhetorical investment.

The AKP circles tried to construct this new antagonistic frontier by combining two levels of interpretation. On the one hand the AKP attempted to narrow the scope of demands made by protesters and lumped these protesters from various backgrounds into a homogeneous crowd which was agitated by the CHP through anti-democratic means. In the light of this interpretation, the AKP cadres argued that the Gezi was a plot staged by tutelary forces of the ‘old Turkey’ aiming to interrupt the process of democratization and de-militarization. In this regard, the counter-discourse of the AKP, therefore,

portrayed the Gezi protests as an organization of ‘ulusalci’ forces. On the other hand, Erdoğan and pro-government media highly circulated the term “interest rate lobby” (*faiz lobisi*) to imply the operations of finance groups in the backstage manipulating the socio-economic dynamics in several countries for their own interests. Not only the AKP but also Necmettin Erbakan’s party, the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*), in the 90’s addressed the domination of interest rate groups while referring to the US, Jews and their local collaborators. Loaded with anti-Semitic, nationalist and religious constituents discourse on the interest rate groups implied that a collaboration of global and local actors manipulated the economic sphere in order to obtain benefit from the socio-economic turmoil. Erdoğan in a way reproduced the Welfare Party’s discourse within the context of the Gezi protests through re-appropriating the “interest rate lobby”. In this second level of explanation, Erdoğan and the pro-government media argued that the interest lobby was manipulating crowds into a riot through social media and international media with the help of local business groups, academicians and journalists. Combining former constituents of ‘ulusalcılık’ with current conspiracy theories, Erdoğan and pro-government media thus tried to capture the Gezi Park protests as a coup plot devised by international and local forces that seek to remove the government from power. In the light of this analysis, I will firstly illustrate how the AKP’s counter-discourse narrated the Gezi Park protests while in a way that reduced it to the revival of tutelary forces of the old Turkey. In the second level, I will analyze the significance of the “interest lobby” as a term which rhetorically combined local enemy figures with broader conspiracy elements.

4.3.1. ‘The Gezi Protest’ As The Plot of ‘ulusalci’ Status Quo Forces

The AKP’s interpretations of the Gezi Park protests in its first few days could not configure a solid definition of the ongoing chain of events. While some of the AKP cadres defined the demonstration as an environmental protests agitated by police violence, Erdoğan and pro-government media tended to define the ongoing chain of events as a failed coup attempt. Within this hegemonic articulation “ulusalci” notion gained increased emphasis in the discourse of the AKP. While the Gezi resistance was spreading around different cities, Erdoğan expressed his ideas about the reason behind the uprisings for the first time at the 1st of June during a meeting with business groups and exporters. In his speech, while contrasting other countries in crises with the economic growth of Turkey, Erdoğan stated that incapacities of oppositional parties in

the parliament let clashes along the street to emerge. According to Erdoğan, because of oppositional parties' insufficient involvement in the parliament, a minority group was trying to dominate the democratic will of the people through extra-parliamentary means.

Look, if the opposition cannot reach the level of the governmental power, at least it cannot come close to it, then other powers will seize the duty of opposition in a significantly unhealthy, unlawful and anti-democratic manner; the extremist will take possession of that duty. Unfortunately in Turkey we have a serious gap in the opposition. Just as the majority cannot put pressure on the minority, the minority can neither exercise power over the majority nor make impositions, nor impose choices on the majority in this country anymore because democracies do not embrace the type of governments where the minority holds the power through the votes of the nation, but the majority accede to the government. But who is entitled to do so? The entitlement belongs to the nation. [...] *Those who seek results apart from those coming out of the ballot box do not pursue democracy in this country; they chase anti-democratic practices. They are all non-democratic and unlawful...* We have experienced and unfortunately seen what kinds of *games, scenarios and provocations those who fail at the ballot box, who cannot perform an effective opposition and cannot be honored by the courtesy of the majority resort to.*⁹⁰ (Emphasis added)

In the end of his speech, Erdoğan defined the actions of demonstrators as “ideological”. Moreover, he stated that they should demolish the AKM and build in its place a gigantic opera house and a rebuilt version of the Taksim Barracks. In doing so, the regenerated Taksim square, for Erdoğan, would turn into an attractive city center for tourists. While implying that there was a backstage scenario manipulating the crowds in the streets, Erdoğan argued that the ongoing protests were reenacting the process leading to the 1960 and 1980 coups d'états. Considering this manipulating scenario, Erdoğan addressed particularly the CHP and implied that the main oppositional party was agitating “extreme and marginal groups” in order to provoke larger amount of people against the elected government. There, in the end Erdoğan addressed the head of the CHP Kılıçdaroğlu and stated as follows: “I can gather 200 thousands where he

⁹⁰ “Bakın muhalefet, iktidarın seviyesine ulaşamazsa en azından yaklaşamazsa o zaman muhalefet görevi son derece sağlıklıdır, hukuksuz, antidemokratik biçimde başka odakların eline geçer, aşırı uçların eline geçer. [B]iz ne yazık ki, Türkiye’de böyle çok ciddi muhalefet boşluğu yaşıyoruz. ... Çoğunluk nasıl ki azınlık üzerinde baskı kuramazsa azınlık da bu ülkede artık çoğunluk üzerinde baskı kuramaz, dayatmalar yapamaz, tercihler dayatamaz. Zira demokrasiler milletin oylarıyla azınlığın iş başına geldiği iktidarlar değildir, çoğunluğun iş başına geldiği iktidarlardır. Ama bunun yetkisi kime aittir? Millete aittir. ... Sandığın dışında netice arayanlar bu ülkede demokrasinin peşinde olanlar değildir, antidemokratik uygulamaların peşindedir. Bunların hepsi demokrasi dışıdır, hukuk dışıdır. ... Sandıkta başarılı olamayanların, etkili bir muhalefet yürütemeyenlerin, çoğunluğun teveccühüne mazhar olamayanların hangi oyunlara, hangi senaryolara, hangi tahriklere başvurduğunu yaşadık ve ne yazık ki gördük.” (Başbakan’dan Gezi Parkı açıklaması. (June 1, 2013). *Sabah*. Retrieved July 11, 2015, from <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/06/01/basbakan-erdogan-konusuyor>)

gathered 20, my party can gather one million where he gathered 100 thousands. We do not have such a hardship. But they better not to force the situation to this level”⁹¹.

According to this frame of explanation, Erdoğan’s rhetoric addressed the CHP, as the cause of the current situation and the culprit behind provocative scenarios. He defined the demonstrators as groups that seek the domination of a minority over the decisions of the majority of the people. This definition which claimed a connection between the CHP and the crowds in the streets discursively negated, silenced and reduced a variety of different social groups in the streets to an enemy figure “dominating minority”. On the other hand, rhetorical reference to ‘balloting’ and “decision of the people” delegitimized the different demands made by demonstrators and discursively limited the realm of democratic claims to the ballot box. Therefore, this logic of justification based on ‘balloting’ that we have also witnessed in 2007 and 2010 periods intended to capture the Gezi Park protests as “anti-democratic” and “extra-legal” attempts. Framing this interpretation onto the discourse of development which highlighted the economic success of the government in the service of its people enabled Erdoğan to deframe critical voices as those who envy the well-being of the country. Thus, according to this narrative, an enemy alliance led by the CHP and provoked minorities was losing its grip on the public and losing its ground in the ballot as opposed to the AKP who gained the favor of the majority of the people. Therefore, this enemy organization was trying to agitate the streets through plots and invoking chaos, simply to push the AKP government into a corner for their own selfish interests.

Just after Erdoğan’s statements, in the next day of June, pro-government media associated ongoing demonstrations heavily with the Republican Rallies of 2007. Certain columnists argued that the same organizers behind the Rallies were trying this time to reactivate the forces of ‘status quo’ to enable a coup plot. While stating that “certain groups” were trying to turn Taksim to Tahrir square and oust Erdoğan from power as a continuation of the Arab Spring, key columnists in pro-government media addressed the CHP as the master manipulator. İbrahim Karagül, from Yeni Şafak daily, stated in his article that the protests held by demonstrators to prevent the cutting down of trees in the Gezi Park was only a cover for ‘the scenario’:

⁹¹“Ben kalkarım onun 20 topladığı yerde 200 bin toplarım, onun 100 bin topladığı yerde partim olarak 1 milyon insan toplarım. Bizim böyle bir sıkıntımız yok. Ama işi buraya getirmesinler” (Ibid: footnote 88).

But whoever pushed the button, the second stage of the scenario revealed the truth in crystal clear. The CHP tried to push the party to the front when they saw a matured massive anger. Trying to get the incident as its own, the CHP increased its agitation. The event turned into a Republican Rallies-like CHP meeting.⁹²

In similar lines, another Yeni Şafak columnist Yusuf Kaplan, in his article titled “Do you still think that children of this country are the wire-pullers?” stated as follows: “Through these demonstrations, which started at Taksim and spread quickly Ankara, Izmir and other large cities of the country, they will not hesitate to commit what they could not achieve during the Republican Rallies”⁹³. Following this stream of interpretation, Mehmet Ocaktan, a columnist in Star daily, argued that the Gezi was the enactment of a plot devised by the status quo forces of the ‘old Turkey’. He stated in his article as follows: “Similar to the attitude during the State Council killing and the Republican Rallies, we come up against a minority yearning for the ‘old Turkey’”⁹⁴.

Analyzing the process, Yeni Şafak daily was narrating the Gezi event through mobilizing the memory of May 27 and February 28 military interventions. While stating that the CHP and the Labor Party (*İşçi Partisi/İP*) were organizing a “provocation”, Yeni Şafak daily argued that ‘ulusalcı’ organizations were terrorizing squares in order to manipulate crowds against the government:

Leftist organizations were at the bottom of the Taksim events; the CHP and the Labor Party were at the surface thereof. [...] The innocent demonstration initiated to protect trees in Gezi Park was drifted apart from its cause due to the trick of the many organizations that were involved in “Ergenekon” case. The protestors’ demonstration with pots and pans provoked by some forces reminded of February 28 period. With the cooperation among ulusalcı, racist, and marginal organizations, Taksim and Beşiktaş turned into a battlefield.⁹⁵

⁹² “Ama düğmeye kim bastıysa senaryonun ikinci aşaması gerçeği çınlıçılak ortaya koydu. CHP ise, hazır kitlesel öfkeyi görünce durumdan vazife çıkarma pozisyonuna geçti. Olayı sahiplendi, alabildiğine kıskırtmaya başladı. Olay CHP mitingine, bir tür Cumhuriyet Mitingi’ne dönüştü.” (Karagül, İ. (June 2, 2013). Taksim’den Tahrir çıkmaz. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved July 11, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/ibrahimkaragul/taksimden-tahrir-cikmaz-37970?mobil=true>)

⁹³ “Cumhuriyet mitingleriyle yapamadıklarını, Taksim’de başlayan, Ankara’ya, İzmir’e ve ülkenin belli başlı büyük şehirlerine hızla yayılan bu gösterilerle yapmaya kalkışmaktan çekinmeyecekler.” (Kaplan, Y. (June 2, 2013). İplerin bu ülkenin çocuklarının elinde olduğunu mu sanıyorsunuz siz hala?. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved July 12, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/yusufkaplan/iplerin-bu-ulkenin-cocuklarinin-elinde-oldugunu-mu-sanıyorsunuz-siz-hala-37967>)

⁹⁴ “[T]ıpkı Daniştay cinayeti dönemindeki ve Cumhuriyet Mitinglerindeki görüntülerden aşına olduğumuz bir uslupla ‘eski Türkiye’ özlemiyle yanıp tutuşan bir azınlıkla karşı karşıyayız.” (Ocaktan, M. (June 4, 2013). Provokatorlerden ayırışın. *Star*. Retrieved July 15, 2015, from <http://haber.star.com.tr/yazar/provokatorlerden-ayrisin/yazi-759657>)

⁹⁵ “Taksim olaylarının altından sol örgütler, üstünden ise CHP ve İşçi Partisi çıktı. [...] Gezi Parkı’nda ağaçları korumak için başlatılan masum eylem, adı ‘Ergenekon’ davasına karışmış çok sayıda örgüt marifetiyle amacından kopartıldı. Bazı odaklarca provoke edilen halkın tencere-tavağı gösterisi 28 Şubat sürecini hatırlattı. ... Ulusalcı, ırkçı, marjinal örgütlerin ortaklığında Taksim ve Beşiktaş savaş alanına çevrildi.” (Altı örgüt üstü CHP. (June 3, 2013). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved July 16, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/politika/alti-orgut-ustu-chp-528994>)

In this framework, the AKP's discourse tried to capture the meaning of the Gezi event by configuring the movement as the organization of coup supporters against the AKP government. While separating "innocent demonstrators" from "ulusalci marginal organizers", the AKP's discourse argued that the same actors involved in the Ergenekon and February 28 military interventions were agitating this time apparently naïve protests. Following this interpretation, Orhan Miroğlu, current Star columnist and the AKP's MP, stated in an interview for Yeni Şafak that the Gezi demonstrations were similar to the Republican Rallies. While arguing that 'ulusalci' groups were leading the hidden plot behind the process on the surface, Miroğlu stated that the Gezi protests were reflecting the latest efforts of 'ulusalci' groups to regain the state power they have lost⁹⁶. From a similar point of view, the Deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay argued that certain groups dominated the innocent claims of the Gezi Park protesters for purposes of protecting their status quo. While defining those groups as 'ulusalci', Atalay stated that their aim was to prevent democratic openings: "There is an ulusalci section. They both opposed Kurdish opening [and] wise people commission, and protested the commission where they held meetings. Uluşalcılar was the most active group during the protests. In Turkey, those who want to protect the status quo opposes us, this has always been the case"⁹⁷. These formulations which are akin to the AKP's discourse on 'ulusalci' in 2010 enabled the AKP's spokesmen and pro-government media to define the Gezi as the continuation of the tutelary cadres of the 'ulusalci' status quo. Contrary to the fact that former tutelary forces in the military and the judiciary have been eliminated and the AKP consolidated the state power in its own hands following the 2010 amendments, the AKP narrated the Gezi event by remobilizing the discursive antagonism between the AKP's struggle for democracy against the reactions of status quo forces. Below is a quotation from Mehmet Metiner, then a columnist of Yeni Şafak and the AKP's MP for two terms which illustrates this level of explanations that tries to capture the motivation behind the Gezi as a coup attempt:

The set-up is the same. The powers staging the play are the same. ... Forces within the *Ergenekon-status quo-ulusalci circles* call the army to duty, saying that laicity and the republic are in danger. Those who terrorized streets by using

⁹⁶ See: Eylemlerin nedeni yenilgi psikolojisi. (June 8, 2013). *Yeni Şafak*. p. 12

⁹⁷ "Burada bir ulusalci kesim var. Bunlar bizim çözüm sürecine de, [...] akil insanlar mekanizmasına da karşı koymuş, akil insanları gittikleri yerlerde protesto [etmişlerdir]. Onlar burada en aktiftir. Türkiyede statükoyu korumak isteyenlerin bize muhalefeti var, başından beri böyledir" (Atalay: Gezi Parkı'nın en aktifi 'ulusalcılar'. (June 15, 2013). *Zaman*. Retrieved July 15, 2015, from http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_atalay-gezi-parkinin-en-aktifi-ulusalcilar_2100836.html)

environmental sensitivity *target the democratization and peace process of Turkey* in the personage of the Prime Minister.⁹⁸ (Emphasis added)

By rearticulating the discourse on ‘democracy’ and ‘coup attempt of deep state’ in a manner that resembles the context in 2007 and 2010 periods I analyzed previously, the AKP circles intended to capture the Gezi event as the plot of the tutelary forces of the ‘old Turkey’. According to this framework, Mustafa Karaaliođlu from Star daily argued that ‘ulusalacı’ motivations were agitating the environmental concerns of protesters at the Taksim square, trying to (mis)lead the demonstrators towards the ‘old Turkey’:

An alliance, which could not get what they wanted from the Republican Rallies, attempts to go out to the streets again. It is beneficial to remind hereby that *there will be no return to the Old Turkey*. We will never live in a country governed by the *military tutelage, elite, media as well as by the deep alignments*. There will be no return from the resolution of the Kurdish question. [...] Shortly, *the ulusalacı dream will not take place*.⁹⁹ (Emphasis added)

Several other columnists in pro-government media also defended the argument that status quo forces were manipulating the Gezi protests in order to gain the support of larger crowds so as to prevent the AKP’s democratization process and Kurdish opening. From this perspective, Yalçın Akdođan, then a columnist in Star daily, argued that the CHP and several “marginal parties” were steering the sincere concerns of protesters about the Gezi Park away from democratic and legal grounds. According to Akdođan, this reflected the interests of status quo forces that try to abuse the current situation in order to violate the peace process and preparations for the new constitution:

[...] CHP and some marginal parties turn the struggle with the government into an uprising and [try] to pull the ground of political fight into a non-democratic and illegal point. ... Particularly the positive developments regarding peace process and the new constitution cause the block of status quo supporters to desperately cling onto other methods. [...] We will adopt a wise and determined

⁹⁸“Tezgah aynı. Oyunu sahneleyen güçler aynı. [...] ‘Cumhuriyet mitingleri’ni düzenleyen ve bizzat yer alan Ergenekoncu-ulusalacı-statükocu güçler laiklik ve cumhuriyetin tehlikede olduğunu söyleyerek orduyu göreve çağırıyorlardı. Gezi parkındaki çevreci duyarlılığı kullanarak sokakları terörize edenlerin Başbakanın şansında hedefledikleri şey, Türkiye’nin demokratikleşme ve barış sürecidir” (Metiner, M. (June 6, 2013). Başbakanı Yedirmeyiz. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved July 16, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/mehmetmetiner/basbakani-yedirmeyiz-38020>)

⁹⁹“Cumhuriyet mitinglerinden hevesini alamamış bir ittifakın kendisini yeniden sokağa atma çabası var. Bu vesileyle hatırlamakta fayda var, bir daha Eski Türkiye’ye dönüş olmayacak. Bir daha askeri vesayetin, seçkinlerin, medyanın, derin ittifakların idare ettiği bir ülke de yaşamayacağız. Kürt meselesinin çözümünden geri dönüş de olmayacak. ... Hasılı, ulusalacı rüya da gerçeklemeyecek.” (Karaaliođlu, M. (June 2,2013). Taksim’den ‘Eski Türkiye’ye çıkılır mı?’. *Star*. Retrieved July 16, 2015, from <http://haber.star.com.tr/yazar/taksimden-eski-turkiyeye--cikilir-mi/yazi-759168>)

stance vis-à-vis the coalition of status quo powers trying to re-build the Old Turkey and their schemes instigating violence and conflict.¹⁰⁰

Although the emphasis on local dynamics of ‘status quo’ and ‘coup intervention’ were more emphasized, pro-government media also introduced international media and the US in their interpretations as conspiracy figures. According to Oliver and Wood, conspiracy theories are “narratives about hidden, malevolent groups secretly perpetuating political plots and social calamities to further their own nefarious goals” (Oliver & Wood, 2014). Through predispositions and content framing, conspiracies assert a type of political discourse for public events through compelling explanations. Although conspiracies are often perceived as paranoid style of politics, they constitute a “popular imagination, they comment and provoke thought about real contradictions” (Hellinger, 2003, p. 205). Through simplifying a socio-political turmoil and offering an explanation in comprehensible and popularized forms, political elite use conspiracy theories as narrations provided for opaque and non-transparent political actions. In this way, through condemning and delegitimizing opponents, “both conspiracy and conspiracy theory frequently serve as political strategies” (Fenster, 2008, p. 10).

From this point of view, by constituting a narrative replete with conspiracy elements, the AKP’s discourse blanked the heterogeneous actors and reduced demands of the demonstrations to interferences of an enemy collaboration. Through this conspiratorial rhetoric, the AKP circles on the one hand tried to overcome the legitimacy crisis that the party faced, on the other hand they aimed to mobilize a popular reaction through demonizing the protesters as ‘traitors’ against the national interests. Based on this political strategy, pro-government media addressed both local and international actors as manipulators behind apparently reasonable environmental demonstrations. According to the analyses published in *Yeni Şafak*, a mysterious IP address from Houston was giving directives to the CHP and the Labor Party to control a crowd of 200 thousands. While stating that the crowds were mobilized through zello¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰“[...] CHP ve bir kısım marjinal partilerin hükümetle mücadeleyi bir başkaldırıya dönüştür[mekte] ve siyasi mücadelenin zeminini demokratik ve hukuki olmayan bir noktaya çekmeye [çalışmaktadır]. ... Özellikle çözüm süreci ve yeni anayasayla ilgili olumlu gelişmeler statüko bloğunun can havliyle başka yöntemlere sarılmasına sebep olmaktadır. [...] Eski Türkiye’yi geri inşa etmek isteyen statükocu güçlerin koalisyonuna, şiddet ve çatışmayı körükleyen tertiplerine karşı ise ferasetli ve kararlı bir duruş içinde olacağız.” (Akdoğan, Yalçın. (June 4, 2013). Ağaç hassasiyetinden siyasi tertip ve vandalizme. *Star*. Retrieved July 18, 2015, from <http://haber.star.com.tr/yazar/agac-hassasiyetinden-siyasi-tertip-ve-vandalizme/yazi-759658>)

¹⁰¹ Zello is a smart phone application enabling to use the phone as a walkie talkie device through online communication.

communication, Yeni Şafak argued that the ultimate aim was a “civil coup” supported by the international media and the US¹⁰².

Besides these explanations which prioritized the manufactured coup aspect, there were critical voices within the pro-government media as well. For example, at the early days of the Gezi Park resistance, Kürşat Bumin, then a columnist in Yeni Şafak who was fired from the newspaper after the Gezi protests, defined the Gezi protest as a democratic urban movement. While criticizing authorities for their intolerance and imprudence, Bumin stated that “It is impossible to apprehend the Gezi Park protests through attributions such as ‘ideological, plot, game’ which eventually works to disguise the real cause of the protests”¹⁰³. In a similar vein, Ali Bayramoğlu from Yeni Şafak warned the government about political morass of shortsightedness, given the divergent elements involved in the movement and its actual content: “The political authority’s highlighting only one of the dissident actors and movements, for example ulusalcı or violent groups, and shutting their eyes to different segments and actors is heavily wrong”¹⁰⁴. Along these lines, Fehmi Kuru, then a columnist in Star who was transferred to Haber Türk daily after the Gezi protests, stated that the government would be mistaken if they perceive any political movement as an act of agitation. Criticizing authorities for their top-down dictations, Kuru stated that “One cannot govern the ‘new Turkey’ with the methods of the ‘old Turkey’”¹⁰⁵. Following this critical stream within the pro-government media, Star columnist Mustafa Akyol admitted that many supporters of the government were conceiving the Gezi event as a ‘coup intervention’ in the line of February 28 and the Republican Rallies. However, he warned his readers and the AKP circles by stating that “[N]o, this is something different. Identifying current

102 See: Houston’dan ölüm emir. (June 6, 2013). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved July 18, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/houston-dan-olum-emri-529835>

103 “Gezi Parkı protestolarının ‘ideolojik, tertip, oynanan oyun’ gibi olayların gerçek nedenini gizlemeye çalışan niteliklemlerle anlaşılması imkansızdır.” (Bumin, K. (June 2, 2013). “Tertip” değil, sahici bir “şehir hareketi”. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved June 18, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/kursatbumin/tertip-degil-sahici-bir-sehir-hareketi-37963>)

104 “Siyasi iktidarın muhalif aktör ve hareketlerden sadece birine, örneğin ulusalcılara, şiddet eylemine soyunan gruplara vurgu yapması, diğer katman ve aktörleri, işin özünü görmezden gelmesi son derece yanlıştır.” (Bayramoğlu, A. (June 5, 2013). Yangını kim, nasıl söndürecek?. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved July 19, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/alibayramoglu/yangini-kim-nasil-sondurecek-38002?mobil=true>)

105 “Eski Türkiye’nin ölçüleriyle ‘yeni Türkiye’ yönetilemez.” (Kuru, F. (June 4, 2013). Ok yaydan çıktı, ama kim çıkardı oku yaydan. *Star*. Retrieved July 19, 2015, from <http://haber.star.com.tr/yazar/ok-yaydan-cikti-ama-kim-cikardi-okuyaydan-yazi-759652>)

protests with former anti-democratic attempts [...] would be a desperate mistake. Besides, it both damages the government and Turkey”¹⁰⁶.

Although critiques were emerging from different sections of society including the AKP cadres, Erdoğan and the pro-Erdoğan media circles insisted on defining the Gezi movement as an attempt targeting the Prime Minister Erdoğan and the AKP’s economic and geopolitical success in the region. This stance had an impact on the rhetoric of the AKP and brought about a stigmatizing language in the light of an intensified conspiratorial logic. In a press interview, Yalçın Akdoğan stated that “We won’t let you eat up Erdoğan” (“*Erdoğan’ı yedirmeyiz*”). This saying became the motto for narrating the current situation as the latest attempt of tutelary forces to overthrow Erdoğan for the continuation of the ‘status quo’ which overthrew Adnan Menderes and Turgut Özal before. Under the twitter hashtag #yedirmeyecemiz, the AKP’s social media campaigns and Erdoğan’s supporters circulated an image which shows the pictures of Menderes, Özal and Erdoğan side by side. Under that was written: “You hanged, you poisoned, we won’t let you eat up Erdoğan”. Thus, the AKP tried to narrate the current situation as the continuation of anti-democratic tutelary interventions in the political history of Turkey.

According to this level of interpretation, the term ‘ulusalçı’ functioned as a metaphor which resembled in the discourse of the AKP the ‘old Turkey’ and the ‘anti-democratic aims of the tutelary forces of status quo’. While rhetorically enabling the elimination of a variety of claims and heterogeneity of actors of the Gezi protests, the AKP circles introduced the ‘ulusalçı’ term in order to rearticulate the field of politics in the light of a comprehensible narrative. This narrative recollected certain elements from the populist formulations of the AKP government which I analyzed with regard to the Republican Rallies and constitutional referendum periods; such as the balloting, developmentalist discourse, status quo and being impeded as the underdog. Thus, at the first level, the terms ‘ulusalçı’ and the ‘status quo’ framed the narration of the Gezi uprisings throughout the AKP’s campaigns as the reactivation of ‘tutelary’ forces. According to this narrative, the ultimate aim of the Gezi movement was to overthrow Erdoğan and the AKP was the true representatives of ‘the people’. Invested in this rhetorical articulation, Erdoğan and pro-government media fabricated stories to

¹⁰⁶ “[H]ayır, bu başka türlü bir şey. Bunu, daha önceki anti-demokratik girişimlerle bir tutmak [...] vahim bir yanılgı olur. İktidara da büyük zarar verir, Türkiye’ye de.” (Akyol, M. (June 10, 2013). Hayır, bu filmi henüz görmemiştik. *Star*. Retrieved July 19, 2015, from <http://haber.star.com.tr/yazar/hayir-bu-filmi-henuz-gormemistik/yazi-761191>)

mobilize the religious and conservative motivations of the AKP's popular base. On the one hand, Erdoğan argued that protesters were entering the mosques with their shoes on and drinking beer inside. On the other hand, Elif Çakır from Star daily narrated the story of a woman who claimed that she was beaten in broad daylight by tens of half naked men wearing leather accessories, just because she wore a headscarf.

4.3.2. 'The Gezi Protest' As The Manipulation of The "Interest Rate Lobby"

At the second level, Erdoğan and pro-government circles introduced the term "interest rate lobby" in order to address a collaboration conspiring against the AKP. This narration of the Gezi protests implied that local business groups supporting the 'old Turkey' and 'status quo' collaborated with international finance groups in order to speculate the economic and political structure of Turkey and overthrow the AKP government for their own interests. Introduction of the term "interest rate lobby" invested further conspiracy formulations about the manipulating campaigns of the international media. In the light of this second line of explanation, the AKP's interpretations framed the Gezi protest as the scenario of counter-interest groups which sought to destabilize economy and overthrow Erdoğan. , I will illustrate how this larger conspiracy theory articulated the elements of the AKP's counter-discourse, including the CHP's malicious aims, terrorist groups in the streets, the international media, and the interest lobby.

At the peak of the turmoil, Erdoğan flew to Morocco and Tunisia for a diplomatic visit. During one of the interviews he gave to Turkish reporters in his visit, Erdoğan stated that they have received intelligence information about the preparations for such a movement three months ago. He responded to a question asking him whether there were any "deep organizations" behind the events: "Currently, we are investigating on the issue. It can be everything"¹⁰⁷. After his return to Turkey, Erdoğan started to call for public meetings in order to fabricate consent. In these public meetings and declarations Erdoğan introduced the term "interest rate lobby" as the culprit behind the large scale scenario. In a speech he gave at the airport, Erdoğan compared the protesters in the street whom he called "vandals" with the progressive achievements of the

¹⁰⁷"Şu anda onlar üzerinde çalışmalar yapılıyor. Her şey olabilir." (Demokratik taleplere canımız feda. (June 7, 2013). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved July 20, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/politika/demokratik-taleplere-canimiz-feda-530031>)

government. From this developmentalist context, Erdoğan situated the interest lobby as stock market speculators stealing the wealth of the nation:

We have no truck with fight and conflict; we have nothing do with vandalism, with knocking out, ravaging or smashing down. My brothers, we know how to build; we have come to these days by building, producing, constructing and growing Turkey. At this point, I would like to highlight a fact: we have to come these days despite the interest rate lobby. This lobby thinks that it can threaten us by way of producing speculations in the stock market. They had better know this: we will not sacrifice the great efforts of this nation to them.¹⁰⁸

This conspiratorial term “interest lobby” was invested with meaning through speculative interpretations maintained by pro-government columnists. Drawing on Erdoğan’s comments, economic analysts of the Star newspaper, Süleyman Yaşar and Cemil Ertem defined the “interest lobby” as the former Kemalist bourgeoisie trying to prevent a liberal economic model led by the Anatolian bourgeoisie. Cemil Ertem stated that the “interest rate oligarchy” was demanding a return to the ‘old Turkey’ by eliminating Erdoğan through the May 31 uprisings in a manner that is similar to their support for the February 28 military intervention: “The social classes encouraging May 31 uprising are the same classes and capital owners who managed and supported February 28. In this respect, May 31 is the continuation of February 28 which was intended to last for a thousand years”¹⁰⁹. In similar lines, Süleyman Yaşar stated that the interest lobby intended to protect the status quo by maintaining a closed national economic model. Yaşar argued that the demands of the Anatolian bourgeoisie for an open economic model disturbed the interest lobby:

Then, why the interest rate lobby does not want the AKP? Because the AKP is the representative of the Anatolian bourgeoisie competing at the global level. The party does not support a closed economic model. They are on the side of an open economy. In doing so, the AKP prevents the accumulation of state revenue in the hands of the status quo bourgeoisie.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸“Bizim kavga ile çatışma ili işimiz, olmaz, bizim vandallıklarla, vurup kırmayla, yakıp yıkmakla, kırıp dökmekle işimiz olmaz. Kardeşlerim, biz yapmayı biliriz ve bugüne kadar da yaparak, üreterek, inşa ederek, Türkiye’yi büyüterek bugünlere geldik. Şimdi altını çiziyorum; faiz lobisine rağmen buralara geldik. Bu faiz lobisi şu anda borsada spekülasyonlara girmek suretiyle bizi tehdit edeceğini zannediyor. Şunu bir defa çok iyi bilmeleri lazım; bu milletin alın terini onlara yedirtmeyeceğiz.” (Başbakan Erdoğan yurda döndü. (June 7, 2013). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved July 21, 2015, from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/23451417.asp>

¹⁰⁹ “31 Mayıs kalkışmasını destekleyen toplumsal sınıflarla, 28 Şubat’ı yapan ve destekleyen toplumsal sınıflar ve sermaye çevreleri [aynıdır]. Bu anlamda 31 Mayıs, bin yıl sürecek denilen 28 Şubat’ın bir başka biçimde devamıdır” (Ertem, Cemil. (June 5, 2013). 28 Şubat’ın devamı olarak 31 Mayıs. *Star*. Retrieved July 21, 2015, from <http://haber.star.com.tr/yazar/28-subatin-devami-olarak-31-mayis/yazi-759953>)

¹¹⁰ “Peki faiz lobisi niye AK Parti’yi istemiyor? Çünkü AK Parti küresel düzeyde rekabet eden Anadolu sermayesinin temsilcisi. İçeride kapalı bir ekonomiyi savunmuyor. Dışarıya açık bir ekonomiden yana. Böylece statükocu sermayenin lehine çalışan devlet rantlarının oluşmasını engelliyor.” (Yaşar, S. (June 1, 2013). Faiz lobisi, AK Parti’ye karşı milliyetçi cephe kurdu. *Sabah*. Retrieved July 21, 2015, from <http://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/yasar/2011/06/01/faiz-lobisi-ak-partiye-karsi-milliyetci-cephe-kurdu>)

This contextualization of the “interest lobby” implied the local interests of the former state bourgeoisie who speculated against the liberal economic model. However, the pro-government media debates provided another formulation of the “interest lobby” which addressed the manipulations of global finance actors. According to this level of explanation, George Soros, big capital owners and international NGO’s were manipulating the existing tensions in countries in crisis through international media and global-scale declarations. Following this line of interpretation, *Yeni Şafak* reported that the Gezi demonstrations were a part of the project supported by George Soros. According to this plan the Gezi was the continuation of a speculative wave that intentionally triggered the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the Arab Spring in 2010:

The powers that initiated the Orange Revolution in 2004 and tried to gather power from the Arab Spring that shook up the Islamic world took action in Gezi. The trio consisting of *Jadaliyya* Magazine, Georgetown University and speculator George Soros led these powers that transformed the social demand of environmentalist circles into a smear campaign against Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.¹¹¹

According to this narrative, this three-headed coalition organized a deceitful smear campaign against the successful image of the AKP government in terms of democratization and economic growth. Similarly, *Yeni Şafak* argued that four unidentified people, an academician, a journalist and two foreigners, were controlling Twitter mobilization to escalate protests. While arguing that this organization triggered 15 million of tweets during the Gezi demonstrations, *Yeni Şafak* narrated the network conspired against Turkey as follows: “It has been detected that the mentioned twitter users actively involved in the ‘green revolution’ in Iran in 2009 and the Arab Spring including Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain”¹¹². Based on these conspiracies, pro-government media therefore argued that the aim of the protesters was to harm the public reliability of Erdoğan and prevent the projects of the AKP by getting the help of the international media, academicians and global speculators.

The AKP’s spokesmen and pro-government circles saw particular events that took place during the Gezi events the justification of their conspiratorial explanations.

111 “2004’teki Turuncu Devrimleri başlatan ve İslam dünyasını sarsan Arap Baharı’ndan güç devşirmeye çalışan odaklar Gezi’de de harekete geçti. Çevreci kesimlerin toplumsal talebini Başbakan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’a yönelik bir karalama kampanyasına dönüştüren bu odakların başında ise *Jadaliyya* (Mücadele) dergisi, Georgetown Üniversitesi ve spekülâtör George Soros’ üçlüsü geliyor.” (Şeytan üçgeni. (June 10, 2013). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved July 21, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/dunya/seytan-ucgeni-530641>)

112 “Söz konusu kullanıcıların 2009 İran ‘yeşil devrimi’ ile sonrasında gelişen Tunus, Libya, Mısır, Yemen ve Bahreyn’deki Arap Baharı gösterilerinde de aktif olarak yer aldıkları tespit edildi.” (Dört hesaplı kaos planı. (June 13, 2013). *Yeni Şafak*. p. 13)

For example, according to *Yeni Şafak*, a play titled “Mi Minör” was a rehearsal of the Gezi uprising: “The play Mi minor, staged by Mehmet Ali Alabora in the last December with the support of England, became almost a rehearsal for the Gezi protests”¹¹³. Beside, the Taksim Solidarity, during negotiations with the AKP’s deputies, stated their environmental concerns and declared that the demolition of the AKM, the construction of the Kanal Istanbul and the third airport projects should to be cancelled. According to the AKP circles, these demands reflected the interests of an international coalition. Certain pro-government columnists argued that since profit of international finance groups would be hindered by these projects of the AKP, England and Germany were dictating their demands with using the Taksim Solidarity. In the news channel 24 TV, Yiğit Bulut stated that England was against the Kanal Istanbul project and pressuring the government for months to prevent the construction project of the second channel to be opened in Bosphorus. Moreover, Germany was against the construction of the third airport to Istanbul, for it would displace the central position of the largest airline in Europe, Lufthansa. Thus, according to Bulut and counter-discourse of the pro-government media, the uprising was nothing but a western plot to undermine the successful projects of the AKP (Yörük, 2013). The AKP circles argued that global actors utilized the international media to manipulate the public opinion and represent Erdoğan as such an authoritarian government that even suppressing environmental concerns with intolerance and violence. Thus, pro-government media recurrently argued that a collaboration of local actors, i.e. the CHP driven coup supporters terrorizing streets, with international forces, i.e. international media and finance speculators degrading the AKP and exaggerating the scope of events, was targeting successes of the democratically elected government and Erdoğan himself.

Based on this framework, the AKP prepared a half an hour long propaganda movie in order to manufacture public consent in the light of the counter-hegemonic perspective of the government. In this propaganda film certain images, snapshots and several video cuts captured during the Gezi protests have been used, and a male voice over was used which narrated the story during the whole clip. The propaganda movie titled “The Big Scenario” defined May 2013 before the Gezi Park demonstrations as “the brightest May in the history of Turkey” while referring to successes of the AKP government in the economic and political fields. Through highlighting the AKP’s mega

¹¹³ “Mehmet Ali Alabora’nın İngiliz desteğiyle geçtiğimiz aralık ayında sahnelediği ‘Mi Minör’ adlı oyunda Gezi eylemlerinin adeta provası yapılmış.” (Taksim tiyatrosu. (July 10, 2013). *Yeni Şafak*. p. 15)

projects on the third airport and Kanal İstanbul together with democratization and peace processes, the video stated that “It is obvious that such positive improvements upset some groups. It is obvious that some groups tried to extinguish Turkey’s rising at the global level as a rising star. It is obvious that some groups aimed to restage the same old game replicated along years”¹¹⁴. The movie, having a highly conspiratorial language, implied that particular “dark forces” wrote “the scenario” for demonstrations in order to mobilize their agitating local collaborators and interrupt the successful path of Turkey under the AKP rule. The voice over in the video defined a coalition of forces in four groups; the starring CHP as the actor manipulating the anti-democratic movement, “marginal organizations” terrorizing streets through violence, “the interest lobby” speculating economic systems of countries to constrain them according to their own behalf, and finally the international and local media disrupting Erdoğan’s and the AKP’s successful image in governance to shape global pressure on Turkish parliament. Therefore, the AKP’s counter-hegemonic narration of the Gezi protests as the collaboration of local and global actors rhetorically converged old motifs, such as the Welfare Party’s emphasis on the interest rate groups, with new combinations in the given context.

4.4. Achieving Contiguity Through Metaphoric Subversion: ‘The Gezi Protest’ In The AKP’s Counter-hegemonic Discourse

This simplified narration of the Gezi Park protests eventually crafted the counter-hegemonic field of the AKP in arresting the meaning of the Gezi Park protests as an anti-democratic attempt of a global coalition using manipulative and provocative means. On the one hand, the AKP’s counter narration of the Gezi protests enabled a ground to connect local ‘ulusalcı status quo’ forces with international ‘hidden’ enemies. Counter-discourse of the AKP rhetorically knotted these two levels of interpretation together through rearticulating ‘ulusalcı’ and ‘old Turkey’ metaphors in contiguity with the fabricated conspiracy element the ‘interest lobby’. This tropological investment eventually shaped the social space while excluding discursive constituents the Gezi demonstrations as an anti-people enemy organization. On the other hand, through circulation of mentioned conspiracy figures the AKP aimed to mobilize a popular

¹¹⁴ “Belli ki bu kadar olumlu gelişme birilerini mutsuz etti. Belli ki birileri dünyanın yükselen yıldızı olan türkiyeyi söndürmeye çalıştı. Belli ki birileri yıllar boyu tekrarlanan o bildik oyunu tekrar sahneye koymak istedi” (The Big Scenario (Büyük Oyun) [Video file]. Retrieved July 22, 2015, from http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x11a6b1_akp-nin-28-dakikalik-gezi-parki-filmi-buyuk-oyun_news)

reaction through manufacturing consent about the nature of the Gezi. Conspiracies, as a counter-discourse seek to convince through rhetoric and repetition while challenging conventional or accepted explanations (Gray, 2008). Thus, while manufacturing consent, conspiracy theories constitute social imaginaries through plausible narratives which open up the space for collective action (Iqtidar, 2014). Aiming to arrest the meaning of the Gezi protests over a counter-hegemonic frame, the AKP reconstituted a representational regime in order to dominate other discursive fields through restating an antagonistic frontier. In sum, discourse of the AKP located the heterogeneity of the Gezi protests onto an explanation of a coup plot through retroactive articulation of previous local crises and introduction of global scale conspiracy elements.

Based on this frame of explanation, President Erdoğan organized a series of nationwide meetings titled as “Respect for the National Will” (“*Milli İradeye Saygı Mitingi*”) with the motto “Let us destroy the grand big scenario, Let us write history” (“*Büyük oyunu bozmaya, haydi tarih yazmaya*”). According to the AKP’s counter discourse, Erdoğan along those public meetings tried to convince its public base while negating peaceful language of protests and eliminating multitude of voices from divergent backgrounds. In the light of a conspiring narration of events, throughout meetings Erdoğan tried to speak in the name of ‘the people’ about an enemy organization. According to the counter-discourse of the AKP, Erdoğan had to be stand still in the face of this collaboration of enemy organization threatening the economy, national will, the AKP and Turkey in general. Reflecting this call for mobilization, one of the widely circulated slogans of the AKP supporters was “Stand strong, do not bow, the nation is with you” (“*Dik dur eğilme, bu millet seninle*”).

In 15th of June, Erdoğan organized a public meeting in Ankara with hundreds and thousands of audience and he warned demonstrators in Istanbul to leave the Gezi Park as soon as possible. A few hours later from the AKP’s meeting, police forces routed people out form the Park with excessive use of tear gas and water cannon. In the next day, Erdoğan organized the last step of this meeting series in Istanbul which gathered according to official records more than one million people, while calculations by oppositional sources stated the number as not more than three hundred thousand. During his almost two hours long speech, Erdoğan combined different layers of the Gezi protests in light of the AKP’s counter discourse which I have analyzed above. Erdoğan’s formulations addressed the audience as the ‘real people’ of Turkey while in

opposition to the Gezi protesters. Through disregarding the heterogeneity of demonstrators and narrowing the scope of claims shouted by protesters, Erdoğan defined the Gezi Park protests a coup attempt designed by the coalition of local and global force.

Erdoğan opened his speech with saluting not only the audience in Istanbul but also several Muslim countries in different parts of Asia and Africa including former Ottoman territories in the Balkans. While greeting cities like Kuala Lumpur, Sarajevo, Jerusalem, Mosul, Gaza, Erdoğan stated as follows: “Istanbul means the Middle East. Istanbul means the Balkans; it means the North Africa, Europe, Asia. I am saluting all of our sisters and brothers from the ageless capital of the Ottoman Empire”¹¹⁵. Referring to this imagined geography, Erdoğan attempted to mobilize a popular subjectivity in the light of the neo-Ottomanist ideology. In doing so, Erdoğan criticized international media channels, such as the CNN and the BBC, for purposively misrepresenting the real image of Turkey by broadcasting nothing but demonstrators in Taksim and Ankara. Erdoğan stated that “[I]f there is anyone who wants to see the image of Turkey, the picture is here. International media, will you hide this, too? You produced fabricated news for days. You broadcasted Turkey to the world differently”¹¹⁶. While harshly criticizing international media channels and the Gezi protesters in the streets, Erdoğan defended the AKP and public support to the party as the true image of Turkey: “If there is anyone who really wants to learn Turkey, who really wants to apprehend, they should better try to understand the AK Party and then realize the truth”¹¹⁷.

In order to legitimize his rhetorical formulation, Erdoğan referred to the ballot box and a developmentalist discourse as two grounding features of the AKP’s political discourse which I have analyzed in previous chapters. While mobilizing the memory of military interventions and tutelary reactions, Erdoğan constantly referred to the ballot box in order to imply the democratic will of the people. Through repetition and shorthand connections between events- ranging from hanging of Menderes, February 28

115“İstanbul demek Orta Doğu demektir. İstanbul demek Balkanlar demektir, Kuzey Afrika, Avrupa, Asya demektir. İşte bu kadim Osmanlı başkentinden, yer yüzündeki tüm kardeşlerimizi selamlıyorum” (AK Parti’nin Kazlıçeşme mitingi. (June 16, 2013). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved July 22, 2015, from <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/printnews.aspx?DocID=23520443>

116“[E]ğer Türkiye fotoğrafı görmek isteyen varsa, fotoğraf burada. Uluslararası medya, bunu da gizleyin olur mu? Günlerdir yalan haberler ürettiniz, Türkiye’yi dünyaya farklı gösterdiniz.” (Ibid, footnote 109)

117 “[E]ğer Türkiye’yi gerçekten tanımak, gerçekten anlamak isteyenler varsa, AK Parti’yi tanımaya çalışınlar ve o zaman gerçeği görsünler.” (Ibid, footnote 109)

military intervention, interest lobby to the Gezi- Erdoğan's rhetoric configured 'balloting' as the undisputable representation of the popular will ("milletin kararı") for democracy, and hence justification of the AKP's power at the parliament. Erdoğan stated as follows:

You know them; the Republican Rallies, the closure case against our party, the State Council killing, scenarios of interventions against the AK Party, against democracy, the laws and against the national will [milli irade]. This nation showed patience on July 22 and June 12¹¹⁸, and called such plots to account.¹¹⁹

Through retrospective articulation of previous events, Erdoğan rhetorically implied the continuing tutelary power of the same forces which endured itself from the Republican Rallies period to the Gezi protests. Considering the developmentalist discourse, Erdoğan utilized developmentalist themes in the context of the Gezi protests in order to imply the interests of demonstrators in contradiction with that of the 'people'. To Erdoğan, both "scenario writers" at the backstage and actors involved in the Gezi protests aimed to destabilize the well-being of Turkey: "I always stated that I am your servant, not the master. Our service for Istanbul are obvious[.] Turkey makes some groups jealous, it drives them. Turkey had a series of improvements, they cannot bear this any longer"¹²⁰. According to this logic of formulation, firstly, the Gezi protests violated the popular will of the real people of Turkey, and Erdoğan defined the protests as anti-democratic for they aimed to prevent decisions of the elected government. Secondly, to Erdoğan, the series of anti-government uprisings were against the economic and political progress of Turkey under the AKP rule, and they were instrumentalized by the 'status quo forces' provoking at the backstage. Therefore, Erdoğan's rhetorical articulation insisted that the initial aim of the Gezi protests to overthrow Erdoğan's party through the same means practiced in the May 27 military intervention:

Adnan Menderes put an end to the great tyranny [.] He ended up the constraints, dictations and social engineering of the CHP's single party rule. Those who cannot bear and admit, those who have no respect to the national will

118 July 22 is the date for the general elections in 2007, and June 12 is for the 2011 general elections. Thus, Erdoğan refers to those dates for balloting which enabled the AKP to remain in the governing power.

¹¹⁹"Bunlar, biliyorsunuz, Cumhuriyet mitinglerini, partimizi kapatma davalarını, Danıştay saldırılarını, müdahale senaryolarını AK Partiye karşı, demokrasiye karşı, hukuka, milli iradeye karşı tertip ettiler. Bu millet sabretti, sükut etti 22 Temmuz'da, 12 Haziran'dabunun hesabını sordu." (Ibid, footnote 109)

¹²⁰"Ben sizin hizmetkarınız olduğumu hep söyledim. Efendi değil hizmetkarım. İstanbul'umuzdaki hizmetler ortada[.] Türkiye birilerini kışkandırıyor, birilerini tahrik ediyor. Türkiye nereden nereye geldi, artık buna tahammül edemiyorlar." (Ibid, footnote 109)

overthrown Menderes in May 27[.] You the remorseless, you hanged him, executed him. Now, you are using the same threat against Erdoğan.¹²¹

According to Erdoğan, the Gezi protests were an attempt of ‘tutelary forces’ against the “national will”. Through mobilizing the memory of the Republican Rallies, the killing of a judge in the State Council and coup d’états, Erdoğan and the AKP’s counter-discourse implied that the Gezi was the last resurgence of the tutelary reactions of the status quo elite in conflict with the “national will”: “Under the pretext of Taksim Gezi Park, overall attitude of demonstrations is nothing but the attempt of a minority to dominate the majority through discarding national will. In this country, no minority can dominate the majority”¹²².

The Gezi demonstrations have started with the resistance at the Gezi Park and gained its anti-authoritarian language and spontaneous form of organization along nationwide uprisings and the Gezi commune inside the park. However, the AKP’s counter-discourse defined the Gezi protests as an enemy collaboration for a designed coup plot organized on the one hand by tutelary forces and the CHP, and on the other hand by the interest lobby and international media. Thus, in the representational regime of the AKP’s discourse the Gezi protest represented as an anti-people organization targeted the AKP government and the interests of the people. Based on this frame of explanation, in his speech at the Istanbul meeting Erdoğan stated: “The Gezi Park and Taksim has been evacuated; both have been delivered to the nation”¹²³.

In this chapter, I first illustrated the transformations between 2010 and 2013 while stating that dynamics of the era lead the AKP to adapt majoritarian and authoritarian regulations together with their neoliberal economic policies. On the one hand, the AKP’s premises on eliminating the tutelary cadres of the former status quo establishments turned out to be their consolidation in the hands of the AKP cadres. In consequence, after the 2010 constitutional reforms, the AKP adopted state institutions, which the party accused for serving to tutelary cadres, and utilized them as ideological apparatuses. I argued that during this period the AKP intensified the introduction of

¹²¹ “[A]dnan Menderes büyük zulme son verdi [.] Tek parti CHP döneminin baskıları, dayatmaları, toplum mühendisliği tek tek sona erdi. Bunu hazmedemeyenler, bunu kabullenemeyenler millet idaresine saygısı olmayanlar 27 Mayıs’ta o Başbakanı devirdiler[.] Astınız be vicdansızlar, idam ettiniz. Şimdi Erdoğan için de bunu kullanıyorsunuz.” (Ibid, footnote 109)

¹²² “Taksim Gezi Parkı bahanesiyle, Türkiye genelinde ortaya konan tavır [...] milli iradeyi bir tarafa koymak suretiyle azınlığın çoğunluğa tahakküm etme gayretinden başka bir şey değildir. Bu ülkede azınlık, çoğunluğa tahakküm edemez.” (Ibid, footnote 109)

¹²³ “Gezi Parkı, Taksim boşaltıldı; bu millete teslim edildi.” (Ibid, footnote 109)

conservative regulations considering family, education and social security policies which favored ethno-religious codes. On the other hand, this majoritarian nature of the government reduced politics into a plebiscitarian understanding of democracy based on balloting. The AKP discursively justified its non-responsive and non-negotiating way of administration through addressing the ballot results and the popular support that the government gained. During this period, while appropriating a neo-Ottomanist discourse in light of the changing geopolitical vision of the party, the AKP constantly referred to Turko-Islamic codes as discussing abortion, alcohol consumption and the education reform. Thus, regulations of the AKP and the criminalizing tone of Erdoğan gradually included more authoritarian reactions. As a result, towards 2013 various social sections from different backgrounds shared a feeling of distrust against the AKP's premises on democratization and elimination of tutelary regimes on the judiciary. In this period, the Gezi Park protests made this tension and polarization of the social into two camps explicit. While the Gezi protest produced an anti-authoritarian language and inclusive social organization, the AKP's populist hegemony over the political space has shattered. I argued that political antagonism configured during the Gezi demonstrations made the reference to 'the people' a hegemonic battleground resembling two representational regimes. The AKP, in order to dominate the field of politics, necessitated to reconstitute an antagonistic frontier in accordance with a counter-discursive arrestment of the meaning of the Gezi protest.

The AKP articulated this counter-discourse through intertwining two frames of explanations. On the one hand, the AKP rearticulated previous constitutive elements which I analyzed in the context of the Republican Rallies in 2007 and the constitutional referendum period in 2010. Through discursive remobilization of such signifying elements, Erdoğan's rhetoric and discourse of the pro-government media recurrently attempted to locate the Gezi protest as a continuation of the Republican Rallies. In doing so the AKP circles argued that the CHP manipulated ongoing demonstrations to reactivate former 'ulusalcı' tutelary forces for reestablishing the status quo. From this point of view, the AKP's counter-discourse reduced and simplified the heterogeneity of demands shouted by protesters while defining the Gezi event as the resurgence of 'ulusalcı/status quo' forces. According to this first frame of explanation, the initial aim of the Gezi protests was to prevent democratization process and development of Turkey under the rule of the AKP government.

In the second level of interpretation, the AKP circles and the pro-government media tended to define the Gezi Park demonstrations as a cover scenario which aimed to hide the aims of the “interest lobby”. The AKP circles argued that the interest lobby was targeting Erdoğan to prevent his development project of his party through speculating economic and political atmosphere with local and international campaigns. From this point of view, the AKP’s counter discourse stated that international forces were organizing a manipulation campaign together with ‘ulusalçı’ status quo supporters. This conspiring logic tried to configure a political frontier which aimed, on the one hand, to portray demands of the demonstrators as provocations of status tutelary forces. On the other hand, the AKP’s rhetoric utilized conspiracy elements, such as the “interest lobby”, in order to mobilize a political resentment against the Gezi protesters and to blanket the AKP’s legitimacy crises at the political level.

Considering the main question of this thesis, i.e. the rhetorical effect of ‘ulusalçı’ reference in the AKP’s populist discourse, it can be argued that during the 2013 Gezi Park protests, in the counter-discourse of the AKP the term ‘ulusalçı’ meant the ‘old Turkey’ and functioned as a metaphor that rhetorically condensed different references which the AKP’s populist discourse articulated in 2007 and 2010 periods. Based on this fixation of the term, the AKP circles argued that ‘ulusalçı’ supporters of the ‘old Turkey’ conspired together with the ‘interest lobby’ against Turkey. This hegemonic fixation of the term ‘ulusalçı’ invested to the antagonistic frontier in constituting the anti-people pole; i.e. a coup plot of an enemy collaboration by ‘ulusalçı’ status quo supporters and international forces.

5. CONCLUSION

In this study, I analyzed the formation of “ulusalcılık” as an empty signifier in the AKP’s populist discourse and its transformation across the AKP’s changing discursive fields from 2007 to 2013. Contrary to the conceptualization of the phenomenon as a movement or cultural identity, in the thesis I questioned the discursive articulation of “ulusalcılık” as a constitutive element in the AKP’s rhetorical configuration of the enemy figure. Based on this theoretical approach, I tried to illustrate how ‘ulusalcılık’ as a signifying element in the AKP’s populist discourse rhetorically combined and condensed heterogeneous elements. In line with this reasoning, I traced the contextual overdetermination of the hegemonic meaning of ‘ulusalcılık’ along three different time periods through analyzing textual material covering the pro-government media discussions and political declarations of Erdoğan and the AKP circles.

I mainly focused on three political events which were the Republican Rallies period in 2007, the Constitutional Referendum period in 2010 and the Gezi Park Protests in 2013. The pro-government media and the AKP cadres considered these events either as the strengthened or downgraded manifestations of the “ulusalçı” circles. In accordance with the dynamics of the given periods, contingent configuration of the enemy figure overdetermined the content of “ulusalçı” attribution differently; as I have noted in the thesis in 2007 period it was the ‘deep state’, then shifted to ‘status quo’ in 2010, and ‘ulusalçı’ reference resembled the ‘old Turkey’ in 2013.

In the first chapter, I illustrated rising tensions between 2002 and 2007. Accordingly, I portrayed the emergence of a defensive nationalism in line with the AKP’s reformist administrations, the rise of political assassinations by deep state forces, and lastly the political crisis between the bureaucratic state cadres and the AKP government due to concerns on secularism and upcoming presidential elections. Against the AKP’s attempt to elect Erdoğan as the president, different oppositional sectors, including the military, judiciary, political parties like the CHP and Kemalist civil

society organizations, such as the ADD and the ÇYDD, voiced their concerns on secularism and protection of Kemalist principles against an Islamist candidate. Under the heading of the ADD, an organizing committee programmed a series of meetings titled Republican Rallies in order to publicize a critical stance against the AKP's possible candidate. Pro-government media instruments defined the organizing committee as 'ulusalci' groups trying to agitate the presidential elections. Pro-government media argued that 'ulusalci' organizing committee included the Masons, Abdullah Öcalan supporters, terror groups, secular state elite and they aimed to manipulate the meeting in order to agitate the crowds against Erdoğan and successes of the AKP government. Then Prime Minister Erdoğan, on the other hand, addressed the organizing committee while calling them "gangs". According to Erdoğan, illegal "gangs" were about to manipulate the Rallies in order to violate the public trust for the AKP government, that which Erdoğan discursively legitimized through a developmentalist discourse and rhetorical reference to the ballot box. In 2007 period, although the appropriation of "ulusalci" reference in the AKP's discursive field shifted from 'Masons', 'Öcalan supporters', 'gangs' and 'secular state elites', what overdetermined the hegemonic articulation of the term was the deep state killings. After the Zirve publishing house massacre the pro-government media retrospectively knotted the Republican Rallies with the ongoing political assassinations while rhetorically identifying 'ulusalci' phenomenon with the deep state activities.

Between the 2007 and 2010 periods the AKP prioritized the discourse on 'democratization' and struggle against the 'status quo' which they formulated as the elimination of 'tutelary cadres' of the 'secular state elite'. Along the attempted party closure case and together with the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials, the pro-government media and the AKP's discourse formulated the 'deep state' as the Kemalist tutelary state cadres in the military and the judiciary aiming to overthrow the AKP government through terror organizations and coup plots. The AKP, on the one hand, discursively limited the problem of 'deep state' to the 'secular tutelary cadres' and 'coup attempts against the AKP'; on the other hand, portrayed the government as the sole actor for democratization and normalization of state-society relations. Thus, the antagonism between 'democracy' and 'status quo' took the place of the 'deep state' in constituting the enemy-figure in the 2010 constitutional referendum period. Based on this antagonism, in the AKP's discursive field "Yes" votes for the amendments resembled

supporters of democratic changes and demands for the constitution of the people, in contrast, the “No” votes addressed supporters of the coup d’état constitutions and interests of the secular elite. Through rhetorical identification of shorthand labels, such as the ‘mentality of the CHP’ and ‘secular white elites’, the AKP’s discourse merged ‘deep state’ with ‘status quo’ while designating an anti-people community. While the privileged signifier shifted from ‘deep state’ to ‘status quo’, the AKP’s discursive terrain that captured the ‘ulusalçı’ attribution reconfigured accordingly. In the 2010 constitutional referendum period the AKP’s discourse hegemonically captured ‘ulusalçı’ reference as one of the tutelary groups supporting the ‘status quo’ in order to protect their exclusionary fields in the state and civil society realms.

In the last chapter, I analyzed the rhetorical effect of ‘ulusalçı’ reference in the AKP’s counter-discourse on the Gezi Park protests. I analyzed the Gezi event and counter-hegemonic discourse emerged along the nation-wide protests as a challenge against the AKP’s neoliberal, majoritarian and authoritarian policies. I argued that the Gezi protests confronted the AKP’s hegemony on the political field and its discursive configuration of ‘the people’, which eventually forced the AKP to reconstitute the space of representation through the construction of a new antagonistic frontier. At this point, the AKP attempted to arrest the meaning of the Gezi protests as a ‘coup plot’ organized by former status quo forces of the ‘old Turkey’ and the ‘interest lobby’ at the international level. According to the first level of interpretation, the AKP circles argued that the Gezi Park protests were an attempt to reinstitute tutelary regime of secular elites who were against democratization and the Kurdish opening led by the AKP government. Based on this frame of explanation, ‘ulusalçı’ reference metaphorically condensed different references provided in configuration of the enemy pole during 2007 and 2010 periods. On the other hand, through conspiracy figures like ‘the interest lobby’, pro-government media and Erdoğan argued that the AKP’s mega projects were disturbing interests of international finance actors. Because of that, according the AKP’s counter-discourse, the ‘interest lobby’ tried to manipulate crowds during the Gezi protests with the help of international media in order to overthrow Erdoğan from the rule and prevent those investments. Therefore, through this counter-discourse the AKP reinstated the antagonistic frontier and attempted to define the Gezi Park protests as a coup plot not only against the AKP but also against the interests of the ‘real people’ of Turkey on ‘democratization’ and ‘development’.

By the 2013 Gezi Park protests till the time I wrote this thesis, debates on “ulusalcılık” almost moved out from the AKP’s discursive field as well as mainstream public discussions. Considering the grounding inquiry of the thesis, i.e. operation of ‘ulusalcılık’ as a rhetorical figure in the AKP’s populist discourse in configuring the anti-people camp, vanishing of ‘ulusalci’ reference is crucial in order to follow how the changing political landscape dislocated former signifying elements like ‘tutelage’ and ‘status quo’ while recapturing them through a different representational regime. In the aftermath of the Gezi protests, when the anti-government atmosphere was still dominant in shaping the political field, the corruption scandal unfolded in December 17 which eventually turned the rift between the AKP and Gülen movement into an all-out war.

On December 17 police arrested three cabinet ministers’ sons, several businessmen from the construction sector known to be close to the government, and the manager of state-controlled Halkbank. Prosecutors alleged that suspects engaged in corruption, bribery and illegal transfer of gold to Iran. The corruption investigation was orchestrated by three prosecutors including Zekeriya Öz, who was also the prosecutor of the Ergenekon trial and known to be one of the followers of Gülen movement in the jurisdiction. Although it was publically known that the alliance between the Gülen movement and the AKP government has weakened in years, especially after the government’s decision to close down *dershanes*, a sector of special weekend schools in which the Gülen community was highly dominant and educated its cadres for university entrance exams, the fight approached to a point of no return¹²⁴. Just three months before the municipal elections in March 2014, cadres of the Gülen movement in police and judiciary departments serviced wiretaps via internet which uncovered the supposed networks of bribery and illegal transfers among business and parliamentarian circles. As a reaction, Erdoğan announced a cabinet reshuffle while branding the probe as a “dirty organization” of “traitors” involved in a “parallel state” trying to overthrow the government. According to Erdoğan and the pro-government media, ongoing detainments were a part of a designed ‘coup attempt’ against the AKP government. Influencing the judicial investigations, Erdoğan blamed the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) for protecting prosecutors of the corruption investigation who were, to Erdoğan, abusing their power in order to weaken the government through

124 See: Tuğal, C. (December 22, 2013). Towards the End of a Dream? Erdogan-Gülen Fallout and Islamic Liberalism’s Descent. *Jadaliyya*. Retrieved July 25, 2015, from <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/15693/towardstheendofadreamtheerdogangulenfallo>

blackmails and manufactured evidences. As a result of the period commonly called “17-25 December”, prosecutors of the corruption investigation have been suspended from duty while thousands of state personnel in police and judiciary departments, who were supposed to be close to the Gülen community, were transferred and reassigned.

What is important for our discussion is that the battle between Gülen and Erdoğan resulted with the AKP’s renegotiating the party’s position against certain historic events such as the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials and the 2010 constitutional referendum. Previously, the AKP discursively portrayed these events as the manifestations of the party’s democratic struggle against tutelary establishments of the ‘old Turkey’. Based on this contextualization, the AKP’s discourse defined those trials and constitutional amendments as the downgrading of Kemalist status quo and elimination of tutelary mentality of secular elites. Within this hegemonic struggle, the AKP’s discourse recurrently addressed ‘ulusalcı’ phenomenon in a way to designate the suppressive elites supporting status quo. In sum, the AKP discursively located the attempts of the party and transformations in the aftermath as the pillars of democratization and normalization in the ‘new Turkey’. However, after the 17-25 December corruption scandal and deepening of the rift between the Gülen movement and the AKP, the pro-government media rearticulated the narration of mentioned events while demonizing the Gülen community as one of the ‘tutelary’ force within the ‘status quo’ establishments against the AKP government. Then PM Erdoğan’s advisor Yalçın Akdoğan accused Gülen’s cadres in the judiciary for plotting against Turkish army while indicating Ergenekon and Balyoz trials, and stated that through blackmails and intimidation they betrayed Erdoğan and interests of the nation¹²⁵¹²⁶.

In line with this shift, after arriving country from abroad visits during the 17-25 December period, Erdoğan declared in a meeting organized in the airport that ongoing prosecutions were far from being corruption investigations, to the contrary it was a plot against the ‘new Turkey’. While rhetorically combining the Gezi Park protests with the corruption operations Erdoğan merged both events in the context of a ‘plot’ designed by the same traitors against the well-being of Turkey.

125 <http://haber.star.com.tr/yazar/ellerinde-nur-mu-var-topuz-mu/yazi-820061> ellerinde nur mu var topuz mu akdoğan

126 After a couple of months, the Constitutional Court decided that rights of the suspects in the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases have been violated during the trials. In doing so, the Court paved the way for a retrial, which eventually resulted with the release of all convicts in the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases.

This country suffered a lot because of Gezi. Now they force Turkey to pay a price with corruption operations. Don't you see the instabilities at interest rates, exchange rates and the stock market? What is their account for this loss? How they are going to give an account for setting-up this game?¹²⁷

According to Erdoğan, a global coalition was trying to degrade the public image of the AKP government to be able to decrease the vote rates of the party in the coming municipal elections. Erdoğan stated in a party meeting in February 2014: "This election is not solely about municipal elections. [...] All these incidents reveal that certain groups are in an effort to decrease the AKP's votes. It is all about this"¹²⁸.

Based on this counter-discourse, after the 2014 municipal elections and the AKP's relative success at the ballot box, Erdoğan directly targeted Gülen in his "balcony speech" at the party building. While addressing "Pennsylvania" where Gülen stays in his resident, Erdoğan rhetorically merged 'Gülen' and 'status quo' together as the enemy defeated at the 'ballot box' by the popular will of the 'people/millet:

Today, status quo suffered a heavy blow. Today, dirty associations, unnamed alignments failed to win. The people hit any kind of tutelary mentality with an Ottoman slap. [...] You Pennsylvania, your media supporters, your capital circles; what happened to your cries about being suppressed by anti-democratic forces? In the end, democracy and national will won at the ballot box today. [...] Today, the people destroyed such insidious set-ups¹²⁹.

Within this period rhetorical reference to 'Gülen' and 'parallel state' gradually took the place of 'secular elite' and 'ulusalcı' in the discursive configuration of 'status quo' and 'tutelage' as enemy figures. Based on this transformation of the AKP's discursive field, Star daily rearticulated the history of the 2010 constitutional referendum. While addressing 'insidious plans' of the Gülen movement which 'deceived' the AKP government in the name of eliminating anti-democratic judiciary

127 "Gezi'de ülkeye çok şey kaybettirdiler. Şimdi de bununla [implying the corruption operation] ülkeye çok şey kaybettiriyorlar. Faizin oynaması ortada, döviz kurları ortada, borsa ortada. Bunun hesabını nasıl verecekler bunlar. Bu oyunu, bu tezgahı kuranlar, bunun hesabını nasıl verecekler". (Olaylar dersane sürecinin devamıdır. (December 27, 2013). *Akparti.org.tr*. Retrieved July 25, 2015, from <https://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/olaylar-dershane-surecinin-devamidir/57205#1>)

128 "Bu seçim, herhangi bir şahsın belediye başkanı seçilme seçimi değildir. [...] Bütün gelişmeler şunu gösteriyor; bu seçimde AK Parti'nin oyunu nasıl aşağı çekebiliriz. Bütün gayretler buna yönelik." (Bu seçimin ayrı bir özelliği var. (February 11, 2014). *Akparti.org.tr*. Retrieved July 25, 2015, from <http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/bosnadaki-olaylari-kaygi-ile-izliyoruz/59397#1>)

129 Statüko bugün çok büyük bir darbe almıştır. Kirli ilişkiler adı konulmamış ittifaklar bugün kaybetmiştir. Vesayetçi odakların her türlü bugün milletten tam bir Osmanlı şamarı yemiştir. [...] Ey Pensilvanya, buradaki yandaşları medya, yandaşları sermaye hani siz demokrasinin karşısına konumlandırılmıştınız. Ne oldu sandıkta bugün demokrasi kazandı sandıkta bugün irade kazandı. [...] Millet sinsi planları, ahlaksız tuzakları bugün bozmuştur. (30 Mart balkon konuşması. (March 31, 2014). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved July 25, 2015, from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/26119975.asp>)

cadres, *Star* daily argued that the Gülen community took over the cadres in HSYK and the intelligence service for a future coup plot against the government¹³⁰. In line with to this discursive shift and rearticulation of ‘status quo’ and ‘Gülen movement’, *Yeni Şafak* daily published two series of pseudo documents in April 2015. Through those “documents” *Yeni Şafak* alleged that the founder of the Turkish Republic Kemal Atatürk was poisoned by İsmet İnönü who served as the second president after Atatürk’s death. In the second series, *Yeni Şafak* argued that Gülen was a crypto Jew who was protected by the US and several ‘dark hands’, and involved in the hanging of Menderes. According to the daily’s reports, Gülen was a member of “Hür ve Kabul Edilmiş Masonlar” (Free and Accepted Masons) which we have witnessed in the 2007 Republican Rallies period as one of the alleged features of the debates on ‘ulusalcılık’¹³¹. *Yeni Şafak* combined both of the narrations in order to configure a frame for rearticulating the conceptualizations of ‘tutelage’ and ‘status quo’ as a ‘global coalition’ aiming against Turkey’s power at local and interregional relations. Thus, on the one hand through utilizing conspiracy figures implying foreign and disguised threats, on the other hand excluding local actors such as Gülen and the CHP as traitors, the AKP’s discourse portrayed the ongoing corruption operations as a ‘big scenario’ designed by a ‘global coalition’ against the AKP government and Turkey’s proactive policies at the region. Erdoğan and the pro-government media rhetorically identified this situation as the second War of Independence. In his speech at the opening ceremony of the Marmara University, Erdoğan stated as follows:

A hundred years ago, there were blind traitors who betrayed Ottomans in return of gold coins. Today, those traitors still exist. [...] Sometimes having an outlook of a cleric, sometimes of a service volunteer [implying the Service movement of Gülen], of a journalist and author, or even a terrorist, there are new Lawrences¹³² trying to throw this region into fire.¹³³

130 See: Paralel yapı 17-25 Aralık darbesinin temellerini 2010 referandumunu ile attı. (March 15, 2015). *Star*. Retrieved July 26, 2015, from <http://haber.star.com.tr/politika/darbenin-temeli-2010da-atildi/haber-1009878>

131 See: Fethullah Gülen’in sırlarla dolu karanlık dünyası. (March 30, 2015). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved July 26, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/fethullah-gulenin-sirlarla-dolu-karanlik-dunyasi-2110893>

¹³² T.E. Lawrence was a British archeologist and diplomat who played a role in the Arab revolt against the Ottoman rule in the early twentieth century. In the Turkish nationalist imaginary, Lawrence became a figure representing the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire by the Great powers and their ‘agitations’ triggered nationalist uprisings in the region. In this quote, Erdoğan addresses Lawrence as a figure in order to emphasize the resemblances between the World War I and the current ‘threats’ against territorial integrity and betrayals against national unity.

¹³³ “100 yıl önce, egemen güçlerden çil çil altın alarak şursuzca Osmanlı’ya isyan edenler ve bu coğrafyaya en büyük ihaneti yapanlar vardı. Bunlar bugün de var. [...] Bakıyorsunuz din adamı görünümünde, hizmet eri görünümünde, gazeteci yazar görünümünde, hatta terörist görünümünde yeni Lawrence’lerin bölgeyi ateşe atmak için çabaladığını görüyoruz.” (Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan’dan önemli açıklamalar. (October 13, 2014). *Hürriyet*. Retrieved July 26, 2015, from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/27376911.asp>)

Due to ongoing rise of social conflicts and the legitimacy crisis which the government tries to overwhelm, both the AKP cadres and a majority of actors in the pro-government media circles highly utilize conspiracy theories at the current moment of a political turmoil. To have a deeper understanding of the AKP's current state of perception and the pro-government media's changing discourse on 'status quo/tutelage', column articles of Yeni Şafak writer İbrahim Karagül provide a good case. Along his articles we realize that the AKP's discourse broadened the rhetorical scope of 'tutelage' towards the War of Independence in 1923. To Karagül, till the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the War of Independence the same 'global actors' were and are trying to manipulate Turkey. In accordance, Karagül argued that the Gezi Park protests and recent 17-25 December operations were revealing attempts of the 'global coalition' to turn Turkey into Ukraine or Egypt.

The Gezi uprising and 17-25 December intervention were coup plots. It was an attempt to turn Turkey, which they could not manage to make it like Ukraine, into Egypt. In fact, there was a multinational project at the hand. For us, the First World War did not end. At the moment when the tutelage is over the War will come to an end with its leftovers and effects. Therefore, Turkey is having a struggle as important as it did during the First World War. Actually, this struggle is a new war for independence.¹³⁴

Through Karagül's formulation, we can trace the transformation of 'tutelage', as a signifying element representing the enemy figure in the AKP's discursive field, from 'secular white elite' to 'global forces'. Shared by Karagül and many other pro-government media actors, conceptualization of 'tutelage' gradually addressed the domination of global forces on Turkey and their abuse of local forces for their own favor. In line with this reasoning, which came to a level lately that captured any oppositional voice as a threat of 'manipulation' and 'coup preparation', Karagül argued in above quote that aftermath of the Gezi protests and the 17-25 December eventually uncovered the 'tutelary aims' of a 'multinational project'. Investing to this counter-discourse, in his current articles Karagül mostly utilizes such conspiratorial analyses while addressing emerging oppositional tensions against the AKP's security politics on local administrations and foreign policies on the Middle East and the ISIS question.

134“Gezi isyanı ile 17-25 Aralık müdahalesi birer darbe planıydı. Ukrayna'ya döndüremedikleri Türkiye'yi Mısır'a döndürme müdahalesiydi. Gerçekten de ortada çokuluslu bir proje vardı. [...] Bizim için Birinci Dünya Savaşı bitmedi. Vesayet bittiği anda dünya savaşının izleri de, kalıntıları da, etkisi de bitecek. Bu yüzden Türkiye aslında en az Birinci Dünya Savaşı kadar büyük bir mücadele veriyor. Aslında bu yeni istiklal mücadelesidir.” (Karagül, İ. (March 20, 2015). *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved July 26, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/ibrahimkaragul/kozmetikodasirlariturkiyeilkikibuyuksavasikazandi2009580>)

After the ISIS' suicide bomber attack in July 20 2015 at Suruç, which killed 32 socialist activists gathered to assist reconstruction of Kobani, Turkish armed forces began air strikes which targeted ISIS camps as well as Kurdish militants in northern Iraq. Turkey's bombing PKK camps after ISIS' attack burst controversies on the AKP's perception of 'terror' and their way of identifying ISIS with the PKK. Till then, police arrested hundreds of socialists, Kurds as well as some members of ISIS in Turkey in the name of terror operations. By the time I finish the thesis, Turkey is passing through a period of airstrikes and shootouts between the PKK and security forces of Turkey almost each day resulting with political killings including civilians. To Karagül, behind the rising 'terror' activities there is the 'global coalition' trying to maintain their 'tutelage' over Turkey. After the Suruç massacre Karagül states:

What remained was their ugliest and dirties scenario. In a time when Turkey, for the first time till the First World War, was striving for releasing from the tutelage, gaining an ultimate freedom, accumulating power by itself and through its relations and rising like a star while leaving many European countries behind, they are making plans on how to invade Turkey from inside in order to surround the country like a hostage. Up to this day, all of their dirty organizations smashed to the national reflexes of this country and blew into air. There was no coup d'états, no economic crises, no laicist obsessions, no disputes on Iranian or any other country models. But there was Ukraine and Egypt. They tried to turn Turkey into those countries, but it did not work. They started to cooperate with terror organizations.¹³⁵

Before concluding the overall discussion and leaving the floor to further analyses on the AKP's changing political discourse, highlighting certain symptoms might be fruitful in having a broader conception of the constraints of the AKP's populist logic. One significant aspect is that beside new discursive maneuvers we witness at the moment it is also possible to trace how they actually draw on enduring motifs in the dominant political discourse in Turkey, such as territorial integrity, foreign threats, local collaborators and agitating disguised organizations. The other aspect is that although Erdoğan and the AKP circles refer to 'the people' as 'millet' (nation) certain intellectuals in support of the AKP, for example Etyen Mahçupyan, perceive the 'people' as 'halk'. As I remarked in the introduction part, 'millet' is a term addressing

135“Geriye en çirkin, en kirli senaryo kalmıştı. Türkiye, Birinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan bu yana ilk kez vesayetten kurtulma, gerçekten özgür olma, gücünü kendinden ve çevresinden alma mücadelesi verirken, birçok Batılı ülkeyi geride bırakan bir hızla yıldızlaşırken onlar iç işgal üzerinden iç iktidar hesapları yapıyor, ülkeyi yeniden rehin almaya dönük projeler uyguluyordu. Bugüne kadar yaptıkları bütün bu kirli organizasyonlar ülkenin milli refleksine çarpıp un ufak olmuştu. Artık darbe yoktu, ekonomik kriz yoktu, laiklik saplantısı yoktu, İran veya şu ülke modeli tartışmaları yoktu. Ukrayna vardı, Mısır vardı. Onları da denediler yine olmadı. Terör örgütleriyle iş tutar oldular.” (Karagül, İ. (July 31, 2015). Geriye en çirkin, en kirli senaryo kaldı. *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved August 16, 2015, from <http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/ibrahimkaragul/geriyeencirkinenkirlisenaryoyokaldi2018411>)

the Islamic community ‘ummet’ and it is akin to mobilize the memory of the Ottoman heritage as the roots of Turkish national identity. To the contrary, ‘halk’ is a neutralized term which abstracts various backgrounds within the society and rhetorically negates the ethnicist-religious determinants of the term ‘millet’. Therefore, preferring ‘millet’ instead of ‘halk’ represents more than a difference between daily language routines. In fact, this difference reveals two distinct discursive fields in imagining the Turkish nation as well as its enemies. Therefore, hegemonic domination of ‘millet’ in the AKP’s discourse as opposed to ‘halk’ effected the contextualization of anti-people constituents such as ‘white Turk’ and ‘status quo’.

Although the ‘white Turk-black Turk’ formulation depends on a relation of oppression, the AKP’s discursive appropriation of ‘millet’ precludes the problematization of the class background of the socio-cultural hierarchies. To the contrary, the AKP’s discourse privileges the antagonism between the uncorrupted cultural codes of ‘millet’ and alienated and disdainful ‘elites’ as ‘white laicists’. Consequently, although the reference to being ‘white’ tends to address privileged groups in the capital accumulation, the AKP discursively eliminates class antagonisms and configures the political field through moral codes which assume ‘millet’ as a homogeneous ethno-religious community.

Being the second aspect the AKP’s populism captures ‘status quo’ references with a similar line of reasoning. Although it appears to be transforming in the current context towards addressing a ‘global coalition’, the AKP circles and the pro-government media addressed the ‘status quo’ while implying laicist bureaucratic cadres and elite supporters of tutelary institutions during the 2010 constitutional referendum period. According to the AKP’s discourse, status quo worked against the AKP government in order to prevent conservative movements and oppress the religious character of the political demands of the people/millet. Although it was unquestionably true that the tutelary reactions of the military and the judiciary previously aimed to prevent the AKP’s parliamentary power, shaping ‘status quo’ as ‘coup plots against the government’ enabled the AKP to legitimize their domination over the state institutions through the discourse on ‘democracy’. Constituting the antagonism between ‘democracy’ and ‘status quo’, the AKP rhetorically configured the ‘tutelary state establishment’ as the oppression of a culturally privileged community against the essential claims of ‘millet’. Therefore, the AKP’s populist discourse privileging

‘democracy’ assumed the ‘people’ as ‘millet’ while inscribing the population as a homogeneous entity regarding its moral and cultural features. In doing so, the AKP defended their utilization of tutelary institutions as ideological apparatuses through their political rhetoric on servicing to the claims and values of ‘millet’. Based on this discursive field, just like ‘millet’ disguised class conflicts, the relation between ‘democracy’ and ‘national values’ eventually resulted with the rise of majoritarianism. Accordingly, this discursive constitution of ‘the people’ as ‘millet’ constituted the enemy figure as ‘traitors betraying the ‘nation’.

Lastly, elimination of class antagonisms, rising majoritarianism, and hence configuring the enemy as ‘traitors of moral and national unity’ resulted with the rise of conspiratorial thinking in the face of emerging political tensions and critiques of various circles. The AKP at the current state highly utilizes conspiracy theories in their political discourse. The party cadres and the pro-government media circles interpret the Gezi protests and the corruption operations as malicious plans of the ‘global coalition’ against Turkey. Through simplified narrations and replacing incomprehensible phenomena with comprehensible figures, the AKP condemns opponents as part of a conspiracy while demonizing certain groups. Therefore, political elites and ideologues of the AKP utilize conspiratorial thinking in order to mobilize a popular reaction against ‘traitors’ while simultaneously attempting to disguise the legitimacy crises that the party faces. Aiming to downplay and silence dissatisfaction of oppositional groups, the AKP utilizes conspiracies as a political strategy in order to delegitimize critiques by calling those groups ‘dirty organizations’, ‘coup attempts’ or ‘collaborators of a global coalition’ who work against the well-being of ‘millet’.

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