

THE IDEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE OF THE ISLAMIST HUMOR
MAGAZINES IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF MISVAK

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on the ideological discourse of Misvak, one of the most popular Islamist humor magazines in Turkey in the 2000s. By analyzing the magazine's cartoons, the study first attempts to reveal the general characteristics and the function of humor in Misvak. Then it discusses how Islamism is presented as the primary ideological position in the magazine. In order to uncover absences and silences in the discourse, the purpose of the thesis is also to investigate whether there is discursive parallelism between the magazine and the AKP government or not. Finally, within the context of *kulturkampf* and hegemony debates, the study aims to show how enemy images are constructed in Misvak by analyzing visual texts.

Keywords: humor, Islamist humor magazines, hegemony, the AKP, enemy images

ÖZ

TÜRKİYE’DEKİ İSLAMCI MİZAH DERGİLERİNİN İDEOLOJİK SÖYLEMİ: MİSVAK ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu tez, 2000’ler Türkiye’sinin en popüler İslamcı mizah dergilerinden biri olan Misvak’ın ideolojik söylemine odaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışma öncelikle dergi karikatürlerini analiz ederek Misvak’ta sunulan mizahın genel özelliklerini ve işlevini ortaya çıkarmaya girişmektedir. Ardından, dergide ana ideolojik pozisyon olan İslamcılığın nasıl sunulduğu tartışılmaktadır. Söylemdeki eksiklikleri ve suskunlukları ortaya çıkarabilmek amacıyla bu tez ayrıca derginin ve AKP Hükümetinin söylemleri arasında paralellik bulunup bulunmadığını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Son olarak, hegemonya ve *kulturkampf* tartışmaları bağlamında düşman imajlarının dergide nasıl inşa edildiği görsel metinlerin analizi yoluyla gösterilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: mizah, İslamcı mizah dergileri, hegemonya,

AKP, düşman imajları

This thesis work is lovingly dedicated to my mother, Lale Erzenli, who raised me to be a strong woman. You have always believed in me, regardless of the circumstances.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party
ANAP	Motherland Party
AP	Justice Party
CHP	Republican People's Party
DP	Democrat Party
EU	European Union
FP	Virtue Party
HDP	People's Democratic Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LGBTQ+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer/Questioning +
METU	Middle East Technical University
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
MNP	National Order Party
MSP	National Salvation Party
MUSIAD	Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association
RP	Welfare Party
SP	Felicity Party
TRT	The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation
TUSIAD	Turkish Industry and Business Association
U.S.	United States

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Misvak is an online humor magazine that has followers almost half a million (490 thousand) on Facebook, 408 thousand on Instagram, and around 68 thousand on Twitter as of May 2020. The magazine also has supplementary social media accounts and pages such as "Misvak Caps" with about 200 thousand followers, "Misvak TV" with 108 thousand followers, "Erdoğan Volunteers" (Erdoğan Gönüllüleri Paylaşım Grubu) with 86 thousand followers, along with "Sumak" the sub-magazine of Misvak, publishing the works of younger illustrators, which has additional 108 thousand followers on Facebook as of May 2020.¹

Since it is a digitally published magazine, rather than having a traditionally printed humor magazine layout with pages divided into different sections, Misvak usually shares single-panel cartoons that are uploaded to the magazine's (mostly) Instagram page. There are approximately 4600 cartoons on its Instagram page as of May 2020, and the majority of the pictures depict the cartoonists' perceptions of daily news and events regarding the Turkish political agenda. The Misvak team chose humor as an instrument since it has always been a powerful tool to reflect the ideology.

There are no articles on the magazine's social media accounts, the platforms are mainly used to share caricatures, and the admins of those pages rarely share short pieces written by their acquaintances on their Facebook page.² According to Misvak's

¹ In addition, there is a back up account of Misvak since the magazine was warned by Instagram several times and has been close down for a few days for using inappropriate content such as those involving hate speech. In that sense, there is a possibility for Misvak's Instagram account to be shut down permanently.

² Although, the link provided was not working for a long time; once, there was a website address (misvakdergi.com) on those social media platforms, and it had been mentioned that the magazine was affiliated with the Haber Seyret media group. Now, these statements have been removed from the "about us" section of those mentioned social media accounts; thus, there is minimal information about the magazine.

social media platforms, it is an "instant political humor magazine" that came out on 30 June 2015 and that the magazine is "advocate and volunteer" (*taraf ve gönüllü*). After a quick examination of the cartoons, it becomes clear that the advocacy here is related to the magazine's support towards President Erdoğan as well as the AKP government. Besides their statements, another indicator supporting this argument is that the cover picture of Misvak's Facebook and Twitter page is a photograph showing Erdoğan during a breakfast with a Misvak poster in his hand and surrounded by some women affiliated with the magazine. It has been later acknowledged that one of them was Merve Dere, who draws cartoons for Misvak under the nickname of "Meruş".

Misvak is praised by those media outlets that are known with their affinity to the AKP circles such as Yeni Akit (newspaper), Akit TV, Beyaz TV or A Haber³ while it gets reactions from the anti-AKP segment of the media like newspapers Cumhuriyet, Sözcü, Birgün as well as social media platforms such as Ekşi Sözlük and Onedio.com. In that regard, either through applaud or negation, Misvak reaches a high traffic rate on the internet, which eventually causes the magazine to gain even more popularity.

Misvak's first cartoon portrays graduate students of METU. The cartoon depicts the students as donkeys in academic gowns during the traditional graduation ceremony with a banner in their hands quoting from Fuzuli, which is implying that a diploma would not change the fact that they are prone to remain ignorant.

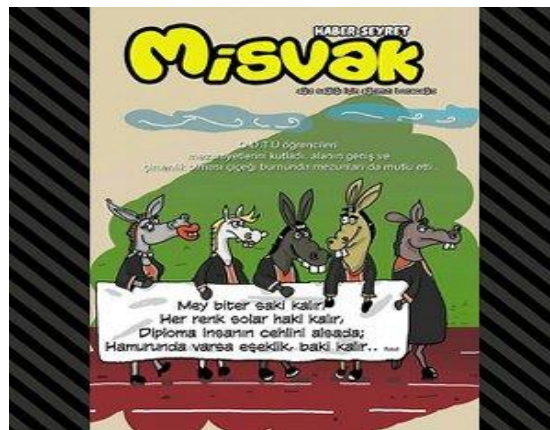


Figure 1.

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jif4_dZ_37M

The story behind this cartoon conveniently sums up the main objective of the magazine. In an interview conducted with Misvak cartoonists in Akit TV; Şahin Güneş, one of the main cartoonists and founders of Misvak, explains that it was during Ramadan that he saw METU graduates holding a banner which "graduates of ten beers" (On bira yın mezunu) written on during the traditional march.⁴

He became agitated and lost his sleep because he thought it was an insult to religion (Islam) to make fun of with a mahya writing, which originally is "Sultan of eleven months" (Onbir ayın sultanı). The phrase is used to welcome Ramadan and indicates the sacredness and holiness of the month by emphasizing its superiority to the remaining eleven months of the year. In the interview, Güneş mentions that it was the hatred (kin) that kept him awake all night and this emotion was the main driving force that caused him to decide to draw a cartoon which he considers as a response to what he thinks an attack to his -and to Muslim community's- beliefs.

Şahin Güneş's remarks about what he felt that night are important because those feelings gave impetus to the idea of publishing an Islamist humor magazine; hence Misvak was born. In Misvak, strong emotions such as hate, anger, and rage are at play, and those emotions set the tone of the magazine while the cartoonists express themselves through their work on Misvak's social media accounts. In that sense, it would not be wrong to argue that Misvak has become quite popular and been widely acknowledged because of its provoking content; in fact, it is the most popular Islamist humor magazine of these days.

As an "instant political humor magazine,"⁵ there are mostly editorial, single-panel cartoons covering daily political events in a way that is revealing the magazine's

⁴ The banner grad students were holding was actually a reference to one of the drawings of the famous Uykusuz (and before Penguen) cartoonist Yiğit Özgür. In the original cartoon, an imam is slapping a man who separated the words of mahya writing incorrectly causing a shift in the meaning. The mahya writing in the cartoon becomes "Sultan of ten beers" (On bira yın sultanı) instead of "Sultan of eleven months" (Onbir ayın sultanı); hence the joke is basically based on a play on words.

⁵ According to its Facebook page

ideological position. Those cartoons which are embedded with Islamist ideology provoked reactions mostly based on the claim that the magazine is aiming to violate the foundation of Turkish laicism. Misvak's pictures about delicate and problematic issues such as Atatürk, Türkiye İş Bankası, the Republic, and laicism had widespread media coverage arguing the magazine's sympathy to Islamist reactionism (irtica). However, those arguments and reactions mostly took place on social media and some oppositional online newspapers rather than mainstream media.

A good portion of those cartoons get reactions from the secular or, more precisely, politically oppositional segment of the society. Ekşi sözlük is one of the leading platforms where that criticism towards Misvak takes place. After a quick search of the "misvak" and "misvak magazine" on the website, more than a dozen of headings including those words and referring to the magazine -excluding the miswak chew stick- have been found⁶. Those entries about the related headings are mostly full of anger and claiming the Misvak team for being ignorant, evil as well as ineligible artists. There are so many pages of heated discussions under each title that how Misvak is presented in Ekşi Sözlük could easily be a topic for a separate research study. Ekşi Sözlük is just one platform showing how Misvak could be perceived on social media, especially from the opposition side. Of course, there are contradicting opinions in Ekşi

⁶ <https://eksisozluk.com/misvakin-29-ekim-karikaturu--5829172>
<https://eksisozluk.com/misvak-dergisinin-esnaf-karikaturu--5781254>
<https://eksisozluk.com/misvak-dergisinin-laiklik-karikaturu--5097784>
<https://eksisozluk.com/misvak-dergisinin-yasar-nuri-ozturk-karikaturu--5135982>
<https://eksisozluk.com/misvak-dergisi-referandum-karikaturu--5293831>
<https://eksisozluk.com/misvak-dergisinin-eksi-sozluk-temali-karikaturu--5122408>
<https://eksisozluk.com/misvak-dergisinin-kilicdaroglu-karikaturu--5166295>
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<https://eksisozluk.com/misvakin-otel-karikaturu--6077262>
<https://eksisozluk.com/misvakin-yerli-uretim-logosu-karikaturu--5807037>
<https://eksisozluk.com/misvakin-ataturk-karikaturu--5564196>
<https://eksisozluk.com/12-ekim-2018-misvak-dergisi-karikaturu--5813905>

Sözlük as well. Still, most of the entries about the cartoons are emphasizing the irritating existence of dominant themes of anger, hate, and rage in Misvak.⁷

Due to claims of use of inappropriate content indicating hate speech, Misvak has been warned by Instagram several times, and the official account has been closed down for a few days in April 2020. Although Instagram later allowed the magazine to share cartoons again, cartoonists keep announcing the danger for the magazine to close down permanently, that's why there is a backup account named "Misvak Yedek" on Instagram as well.

1.1 The Aim and Significance of the Study

This thesis work aims to analyze the discourse of Misvak, the prominent Islamist humor magazine of the last five years in Turkey through cartoons. This study aims to examine the relationship between the AKP and the ideological discourse proposed by the magazine within the context of hegemony. To that end, this thesis aimed to reveal the efforts regarding the discursive construction of enemy images in the magazine, which indicates parallelism with the AKP discourse. Following this purpose, this study aims to show how enemy images are constructed via humor in the magazine by analyzing visual texts, hence cartoons. By doing that, this attempt will also shed light on the presented ideological position of the magazine, which manifests as the articulation of Islamism with Nationalism, and Neo-Ottomanism.

First of all, this work suggests that the use of humor in the magazine has a distinctive character in the way that it promotes and empowers the hegemonic narrative instead of challenging it. Unlike the narratives that position humor as a powerful tool for the resistance, this study suggests that humor in Misvak aims to strengthen the authority and nurture the AKP's hegemony project. In that sense, Misvak presents itself as an alternative product in the field of culture, which is allegedly dominated

⁷ What may be considered as surprising is that the magazine sometimes gets reactions even from the AKP circles, which Misvak illustrators repeatedly declare their support for. However, it should be noted that such incidents are rare, and considering the magazine's continuous support to the government, the discursive parallelism between the party and Misvak keeps emerging.

mainly by secular humor magazines such as *Leman*, *Penguen*, and *Uykusuz*. Such claims, in fact, showcase the changing outlook of Turkey during the last 18 years under the AKP rule, especially after the Gezi uprising.

Secondly, it is also important to analyze the othering discourse of *Misvak* to be able to pinpoint the efforts regarding the construction of enemy images in the magazine. Othering, framing, and stigmatizing certain parties come out as frequently used methods in *Misvak*, which lead to the reproduction of the hateful discourse that has been used by the hegemonic bloc in Turkey under the AKP rule. In that sense, it is possible to have a grasp of the current disposition of politics in Turkey and especially the tendencies to pursue a discriminative discourse after 2015 by examining the cartoons in *Misvak*.

Considering popular culture is significant within a Gramscian analysis of hegemony, emerging of Islamist humor magazines during the 2000s also needs to be carefully addressed. That is to say that if one attempts to cover the main Islamic magazines of the 2000s chronologically as *Cafcaf*, then *Hacamat* and finally *Misvak* s/he can bear witness to ‘the transition of the hegemony from an expanded to a limited one’. In that sense, analyzing *Misvak* as the current one will also present the recent features of the AKP’s hegemony project, which turned into a limited one while keeping and even polishing its authoritarian character.

Finally, tracing the proposed ideologies in *Misvak* will shed light on the matter of how ideology works through humor and visual texts. Considering that an art form could both affirm and negate the reality that it emerges from, those illustrations will provide us to comprehend the function of the ideology, including its capacity for hailing the subject, which in this context refers to the audience. At the same time, those representations of the self-image will help us to understand the perspective of *Misvak* cartoonists with their relation to ideology.

All in all, it is meaningful to attempt to analyze *Misvak* as a case of an Islamist humor magazine, both for academic reasons as well as in terms of the current social and political trends. Without further examining the existing products of popular

culture, the current disposition of the hegemony cannot be thoroughly evaluated. In addition, attempting to do that through a humor magazine will also display the intertwined dynamics of the humor and power, considering that it entails keeping an open mind to the paradoxical and ambiguous nature of the subject.

1.2 Literature Review

The existing literature on Islamist humor magazines and especially on Misvak, is highly limited, which, in fact, poses a challenge for this thesis. In that sense, Alparslan Nas's work can be mentioned among the almost non-existent literature on Misvak. Nas's book, "*Media Representations of the Cultural Other in Turkey*" (2018), engages in a critical analysis of the representations of the self and other in media during the 2010s. Nas, attempting to cover a handful of mediums including films, TV series, and advertisements, also examines the Misvak cartoons digitally published in 2017 in the "*New Cultural Others? Unveiling the Limitations and Paradoxes*" chapter of the book. The chapter seeks to engage in a critical elaboration of the Misvak cartoons with an intent to show how those pictures make use of discursive strategies to imagine and establish new cultural others (Nas, 2018). In his analysis, Nas, building on Bourdieu, argues that cartoons must be comprehended as "a field" that consists of power relations and which in different social classes compete in terms of their habitus and cultural capitals (Nas, 2018).

According to Bourdieu;

A field is a field of forces within which the agents occupy positions that statistically determine the positions they take with respect to the field, these position-takings being aimed either at conserving or transforming the structure of relations of forces that is constitutive of the field (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 39).

In that sense, it is not clear how a cartoon should be comprehended as a field in Bourdieuen terms, considering Bourdieu's analysis was mainly to identify the power relations between different classes within the field theory. In fact, Nas's position to the subject comes from the approach of center-periphery dichotomy. He argues that considering those vulgar representations of the individuals who migrated to the cities

and did not adapt to modern urban life, satirical humor magazines historically have reflected the perspectives of “*the central subject as opposed to the periphery*” in Turkey (Nas, 2018). He claims that those magazines led to the establishment of a certain hegemony in terms of popular culture, and even though the AKP came into power in 2002, the cultural identity of the party and its voters remained as the “*underrepresented cultural others*” in Turkey (Nas, 2018). Accordingly, Misvak was born as a response to those deep-rooted center-periphery dichotomy considering those notions are also not stable and consistent, and there are dynamic boundaries between them. Nas argues that there are three different layers of meaning in the narrative of Misvak as the promotion of xenophobia, counter-secularism, and discourse of nationalism (Nas, 2018). He adds;

Misvak cartoons show that the social class of caricaturists who associate themselves with the ruling party tend to define themselves and their goals based on establishing enemy figures rather than offering coherent, sophisticated and original narratives that would illustrate their worldviews. (Nas, 2018, p. 89)

He further concludes and explains this social class as those once “*peripheralized, otherized, dismissed as undesirable citizens of Republican elitism*” now found a space at the center of power relations, and they use the same discursive mechanisms against certain social classes and notions including the West, secularists and Kurdish opposition (Nas, 2018, p. 89). He mentions that Misvak promotes *misogyny, racism, homophobia, militarism, and speciesism* as narrative strategies, and the self-representation is based on the cultural other, which is paradoxical (Nas, 2018).

The central inquiry of this thesis revolves around the construction of the enemy images in Misvak; hence it will also be argued that the use of misogyny, racism, homophobia, etc. comes up as frequently used methods in Misvak with this intent. However, this work aims to discuss Misvak within the Gramscian framework of hegemony rather than the center-periphery dichotomy. First, it should be noted that there are inherent problems in the center-dichotomy approach. Yalman mentions that those approaches to the center-periphery dichotomy arise from the “*dissident but hegemonic discourse,*” which are based on the tendency to address the Turkish state

as a “*deviant case*”(Yalman, 2002). Accordingly, this relativist approach, which could lead to an “*Orientalist understanding,*” entails both a confirmation of the “*sui generis* reality of the Turkish state” and a “*neoliberal eulogy*” (Yalman, 2002, p. 23). It is because herewith, the Ottoman-Turkish social formation is explained with the absence of a Western-type civil-society (Güngen & Erten, 2005). In that sense, Mardin’s analysis assumes the state “as an objective, real phenomenon, but in fact, it provides a misconception of the social reality” (Yalman, 2002, p. 25). In sum, this approach “*leads to an assumption in which the tribulations of Turkish democracy are attributed to a strong state tradition or to the weakness of civil society*” (Güngen & Erten 2005, p. 9); hence it has much more to do with the neoliberal ideology. In a similar vein, Erdoğan also mentions that this framework has been used as a paradigm at the risk of ignoring class struggles and instead worked as an agency to explain the binaries in the society from only a cultural perspective in Turkey (Erdoğan, 2015).

Lastly, Nas argues:

It is not possible to understand what their ideology offers as a worldview since the cartoons are deprived of the necessary narrative strategies to construct substantial and sophisticated arguments on the kind of values that this social class maintains (Nas, 2018, p. 89).

However, it will be argued in this study that there are certain ideological positions that are affirmed as well as negated in the Misvak discourse. Such as Islamism, nationalism, and neo-Ottomanism are forwarded *vis-à-vis* Kemalism and the left, which are negated and constructed as enemy categories via representations. In addition, there is a remarkable ambiguity within the discussion of Nas regarding the “*social class of caricaturists*”. He defines them as “*once peripheralized others who identify themselves with the ruling party,*” and that those cartoons reproduce “*an Islamist, nationalist superior self as opposed to enemies*”(Nas, 2018, p. 82) however, those remarks do not give us a clear picture about the social class of cartoonists. The narrative shows that those classes are categorized as secular vs. conservative social

classes in his analysis, yet that is to reckon without the main principles of the class relations that are rooted in economics, hence such an analysis is out of place.

In his article “*What does the discourse on cultural power serve for?*” Emre Keten examines the issue within cultural hegemony debates (Keten, 2019). He argues that for those who attempt to analyze the history of Turkey from a cultural perspective and ignore class struggles, the discussions on cultural power always had a central place. However, Gezi Revolt played a crucial role in those debates; it created a form of cultural resistance which blindsided the AKP and forced the party to respond the unexpected development; hence the subject brought to the table this time by the AKP, and the efforts to establish a cultural hegemony became prevalent (Keten, 2019).

To that end, Keten evaluates Misvak’s position similar to those TV shows that broadcasting on state channel TRT with a pro-government narrative and argues that not only Misvak but also other Islamist and pro-government humor magazines including Cafcaf and Hacamat were created as Islamic substitutions of *Leman* and *Penguen* (Keten, 2019). As such, the Islamic popular culture magazines such as *Cins*, *Lacivert*, and *İzdaham* seek to replace those secular ones like *Ot* and *Kafa* (Keten, 2019).

In sum, it could be mentioned that Keten’s position on the issue is more aligned with the central arguments of this thesis. In that sense, this study aims to discuss the Islamist humor magazines and especially Misvak within the context of hegemony debates and does not resort to the center-periphery dichotomy.

1.3 Research Method and Theoretical Framework

This thesis work examines the Misvak’s cartoons digitally published on the magazine’s Instagram page between 2015 and 2020. With the aim of analyzing the magazine’s discourse, qualitative research methods will be employed, and discourse analysis will be used in the study.

It is clear that cartoons are not regular texts such as news or speeches, however as Fairclough also argues “*in cultural analysis, by contrast, texts do not need to be*

linguistic at all; any cultural artefact - a picture, a building, a piece of music - can be seen as a text." (Fairclough, 1995, p. 4). For this reason, discourse analysis will be conducted to reveal the hidden meanings, explore absences and silences in Misvak's discourse and its relation to the dominant ideology, which is proposed as Islamism by the AKP as a part of its hegemonic project. To that end, this analysis will help us to detect and show the parallelism between the discourses of the party and the magazine.

The data is derived from Misvak's social media accounts and mainly from its Instagram page for the period of June 2015-May 2020. In addition, 19 issues of Cafcaf published during 2013-2015 (from the 53rd to the last issue 72nd) and all 56 issues of Hacamat published during 2015-2016 have been briefly reviewed for supplementary data and in order to gain a general outlook regarding the Islamist humor magazines of the 2000s. As of May 2020, there are approximately 4600 cartoons on Misvak's Instagram page, and covering all of these pictures is beyond the scope of this study. Misvak cartoons cover a handful of issues, including politics, popular culture, consumption habits as well as daily religious practices such as fasting during Ramadan; having said that, the political cartoons unmistakably predominate over the remaining images. In addition, advocacy of the ruling party, along with the construction of enemy images, stand out as two main themes in the magazine. To that end, after conducting a thematic analysis, all images have been roughly divided into categories, and the sample has been determined according to the identified themes. Accordingly, humor and ideology proposed by the magazine, the representation of the self-image, and enemy images have been defined as the main thematic categories. Besides, several enemy images have been analyzed within additional sub-categories as follows; the representations of left, intellectuals, the Gezi Park protesters, the political parties in opposition, women and LGBTQ+, the foreign powers, and Kemalist modernization. Hence, remaining images (such as the depictions of popular culture, etc.) have been excluded from the analysis, and those images that are relevant and rather fit in an ideological context became the focal point. Having said that, some specific examples that may fit into both categories might also be used in the study.

In that sense, this thesis will cover 141 Misvak cartoons in total⁸, the images that are typical and critical for the related theme are selected for the study. The unit of analysis will be single frames. To that end, a list of figures showing all Misvak images used in the text is also presented below. As can be seen below, one image may fit in more than one category. Having said that it can be observed that some themes or categories are more prevalent in the magazine.

Table 1- List of Figures used in the text

Figure Nr.	Description	Themes/Categories
1	Depiction of METU Graduation ceremony	Islamism
5	Two cartoons of Uykusuz and Misvak depicting a similar marketplace scene	AKP advocacy
6	An image of Misvak Bakkal's coffee mug with an illustration of Minister Soylu	Ideology, AKP advocacy
7	Depiction of "World of Kemals" (Kemaller Alemi)	Advocacy, copying, enemy images
8	Illustration of President Erdoğan	AKP advocacy
9	Depiction of Selahattin Demirtaş with a PKK terrorist and a T.C soldier	Sexism, hegemonic masculinity, vulgar language, sexual implications Enemy images- LGBTQ+,
10	Depiction of two pigs drinking Rakı	Grotesque imagery
11	Depiction of a Dutch politician	Grotesque imagery
12	Illustration of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu in the form of a toilet seat	Grotesque imagery
15	An image from Misvak Capps comparing two schoolbags	Ideology, Narcissism, Enemy Images (negation of the West)
16	A depiction of Santa Clause	Ideology, Narcissism, Enemy Images (negation of the West)
17	Depiction of two men drinking tea and discussing laicism	Islamism
18	Depiction of two men discussing laicism	Islamism
19	Depiction of two men discussing salutation forms	Islamism
20	Depiction of PKK terrorists discussing burning down mosques	Islamism

⁸ 139 images will be directly used in the main body of the text and additional 2 more will be shown in the Appendix A section of the thesis.

Table 1- List of Figures used in the text (continued)

21	A warning sign, parents are reminded to choose religious courses for their primary-school-age children's curriculum	Islamism
22	Depiction of a hodja talking about the ummah	Islamism
23	Illustration of President Erdoğan	Representation of the self-image
24	Illustration of President Erdoğan	Representation of the self-image
25	Depiction of two men discussing "the cause."	Representation of the self-image, Islamism
26	Illustration of President Erdoğan	Representation of the self-image
27	Illustration of President Erdoğan	Representation of the self-image
28	Illustration of President Erdoğan with a shepherd	Representation of the self-image
29	Depiction of the "Beyaz Atletli"	Representation of the self-image
30	Depiction of the "Beyaz Atletli"	Representation of the self-image
31	Depiction of the "Beyaz Atletli"	Representation of the self-image
32	Depiction of the "Beyaz Atletli"	Representation of the self-image
33	Depiction of the "Beyaz Atletli"	Representation of the self-image
35	Illustration of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek	Representation of the self-image, Islamism
36	Depiction of Corporal Seyit	Representation of the self-image, Islamism, suffering subject, narcissism
37	Illustration of Minister Çavuşoğlu in fez	Representation of the self-image, neo-Ottomanism
38	Depiction of President Erdoğan and Sultan Abdulhamid II.	Representation of the self-image, neo-Ottomanism
39	Illustration of Alpaslan Türkeş	Representation of the self-image, nationalism
40	Illustration of Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu	Representation of the self-image, nationalism

Table 1- List of Figures used in the text (continued)

41	Depiction of President Erdoğan and Devlet Bahçeli in “white Toros” cars	Representation of the self-image, nationalism
42	Depiction of the weakness of the S-400 missile system	Political contradictions
43	Depiction of the superiority of S-400 missile system	Political contradictions
44	Illustration of Maduro is using Rabia gesture	Political contradictions
45	Depiction of President Erdoğan and Ahmet Davutoğlu as friends	Political contradictions
46	Depiction of President Erdoğan and Ahmet Davutoğlu as friends	Political contradictions
47	Depiction of Ahmet Davutoğlu as the enemy	Political contradictions, enemy images
48	Depiction of Ahmet Davutoğlu and Ali Babacan as the enemy	Political contradictions, enemy images
49	Depiction of Ahmet Davutoğlu and Abdullah Gül as the enemy	Political contradictions, enemy images
50	Depiction of Devlet Bahçeli as the devil	Political contradictions, enemy images
51	Depiction of Devlet Bahçeli during an interview	Political contradictions, enemy images
52	Depiction of President Erdoğan and Devlet Bahçeli in a boxing ring	Political contradictions, enemy images
53	Depiction of an old man writing on a wall, “Prayer is the only way.”	Enemy images- Left in Turkey
54	Depiction of two leftist men sitting face to face on the U.S. flag patterned chairs	Enemy images- Left in Turkey
55	Depiction of the logos of Uykusuz, Leman, and Penguen magazines	Enemy images- Left in Turkey
56	Depiction of two young men firing a gun on Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu	Enemy images- Left in Turkey
57	Depiction of two young people who are about to die after an armed conflict	Enemy images- Left in Turkey
58	Illustration of Turgut Özal	Enemy images- Left in Turkey
59	Depiction of laborers as street beggars	Enemy images- Left in Turkey
60	Depiction of a streetcleaner on May 2	Enemy images- Left in Turkey

Table 1- List of Figures used in the text (continued)

61	Depiction of laborer carrying an anti-1 May sign	Enemy images- Left in Turkey
62	Depiction of International Workers' Day gathering	Enemy images- Left in Turkey
63	Depiction of a toolbox with a quotation of Prophet Muhammad	Enemy images- Left in Turkey, Islamism
64	Depiction of a policeman arresting a teacher	Enemy images- Intellectuals
65	Depiction of "1128 traitors."	Enemy images- Intellectuals
66	Depiction of a PKK terrorist on the shoulders of an academic	Enemy images- Intellectuals
67	Depiction of Former Head of First Army Hasan İğsız	Enemy images- Intellectuals
68	Depiction of METU student as a donkey	Enemy images- Intellectuals
69	Depiction of METU as a barn	Enemy images- Intellectuals
70	Depiction of METU students as donkeys riding a terrorist form ballerina in an amusement park	Enemy images- Intellectuals
71	Depiction of Gezi Protesters as terrorists	Enemy images-Gezi Protesters
72	Depiction of Berkin Elvan as a monster	Enemy images-Gezi Protesters
73	Depiction of <i>Kartal Municipality Berkin Elvan Football Tournament Award Ceremony</i>	Enemy images-Gezi Protesters
74	Depiction of Berkin Elvan Park	Enemy images-Gezi Protesters
75	Depiction of a policeman interrogating a FETO member	Enemy images-Gezi Protesters
76	Depiction comparing Gezi Revolt and 15 th July coup attempt	Enemy images-Gezi Protesters
77	Depiction of a tank crushed by the "nation."	15 July coup attempt
78	Depiction of a soldier of the ummah	15 July coup attempt
79	Depiction of two men discussing a coup attempt	15 July coup attempt
80	Depiction of the "elite-squad."	15 July coup attempt, Enemy images- white Turks
81	Depiction of a man sunbathing during the coup attempt	15 July coup attempt, Enemy images- white Turks
82	Depiction of a reporter making news about Leyla Zana	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition

Table 1- List of Figures used in the text (continued)

83	Depiction of Meral Akşener as affiliated with many political parties	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
84	Depiction of “ <i>Les Misérables</i> ” film poster	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
85	Depiction of Ekrem İmamoğlu and Canan Kaftancıoğlu sitting on the same chair with PKK terrorist and Fethullah Gülen	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
86	Depiction of the devil talking with Fethullah Gülen, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Selahattin Demirtaş and Aydın Doğan	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
87	Depiction of a PKK terrorist, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Selahattin Demirtaş, Fethullah Gülen, Vladimir Putin and Bashar al-Assad all chanting for Moscow	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
88	Depiction of a man telling Kılıçdaroğlu that he is not the opposition leader that Trump appointed	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
89	Depiction of a voting ticket	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
90	Depiction of Kılıçdaroğlu watching news	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
91	Depiction of Demirtaş licking Russia’s boots	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
92	Depiction of Imamoğlu before and after the elections	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
93	Depiction of two men reading “Közcü” on the subway	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
94	Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and another CHP MP drinking beer and talking	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
95	Depiction of an older woman telling President Erdoğan that he should tolerate Kılıçdaroğlu because he is stupid	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
96	Depiction of a CHP supporter declaring that he is stupid	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition

Table 1- List of Figures used in the text (continued)

97	Depiction of the jealousy of those “ <i>did not do anything but to erect statues for 100 years.</i> ”	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
98	Depiction of Kılıçdaroğlu and Bahçeli watching the news	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
99	Depiction of Kılıçdaroğlu admitting he bankrupted the SSK	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
100	Depiction of a man listening to the news about women employment	Enemy images- Women
101	Depiction of a woman writing graffiti	Enemy images- Women
102	Depiction of a cavewoman	Enemy images- Women
103	Depiction of men beating up a woman in a chador	Enemy images- Women
104	Depiction of two women in front of a 28 th February sign	Enemy images- Women
105	Depiction of a man who is asked to answer a question about women’s clothing on a TV show	Enemy images- Women
106	Depiction of a pimp giving his card to a woman during the feminist march	Enemy images- Women
107	Depiction of Selahattin Demirtaş in front of a banner about child marriage	Enemy images- Women
108	Depiction of a man serving prison time due to marrying a child	Enemy images- Women
109	Depiction of an anti-riot vehicle spraying water to an LGBTQ+ activist	Enemy images- LGBTQ+
110	Depiction of two men walking during the gay pride	Enemy images- LGBTQ+
111	Depiction of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and Fethullah Gülen as lovers in bed	Enemy images- LGBTQ+, hegemonic masculinity
112	Depiction of Kılıçdaroğlu in front of an LGBTQ+ flag	Enemy images- LGBTQ+, hegemonic masculinity
113	Depiction of Selahattin Demirtaş as Rapunzel	Enemy images- LGBTQ+, hegemonic masculinity
114	Depiction of Kılıçdaroğlu dancing with a PKK terrorist, both in skirts	Enemy images- LGBTQ+, hegemonic masculinity

Table 1- List of Figures used in the text (continued)

115	Depiction of a PKK terrorist in a skirt, suffocated by strong arms	Enemy images-LGBTQ+, hegemonic masculinity
116	Depiction of a PKK terrorist in a skirt	Enemy images-LGBTQ+, hegemonic masculinity
117	Depiction of an Ottoman man slapping a PKK terrorist	Enemy images-LGBTQ+, hegemonic masculinity
118	Depiction of “foreign powers.”	Enemy images-Foreign powers
119	Depiction of the U.S. and Chinese statesmen	Enemy images-Foreign powers
120	Depiction of a Crusade soldier	Enemy images-Foreign powers
121	Depiction of Putin as a bear	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Russia)
122	Depiction of Turkey’s downing Russian jet plane	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Russia)
123	Depiction of a Turkish soldier named “Mehmet Baltacı”	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Russia)
124	Depiction of two men talking about the foundation of the Republic	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Anti-Semitism & Kemalist modernization)
125	Depiction of an Israeli soldier killing a Palestinian man	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Anti-Semitism)
126	Depiction of Netanyahu on the shoulders of Trump	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Anti-Semitism)
127	Depiction of Necmettin Erbakan drawing a Cyprus flag	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Anti-Semitism)
128	Depiction of Kılıçdaroğlu, Trump, Netanyahu and Fethullah Gülen as football players in the same team	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Anti-Semitism)
129	Depiction of “Kara Murat”	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Anti-Semitism)
130	Depiction of Trump talking about a trip to Turkey	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Western foreign powers)

Table 1- List of Figures used in the text (continued)

131	Depiction of an American and a Turkish soldier patrolling together	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Western foreign powers)
132	Depiction of Trump bowing at the feet of President Erdoğan portrayed as an Ottoman janizary	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Western foreign powers)
133	Depiction of President Erdoğan responding to claims about dictatorship	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Western foreign powers)
134	Depiction of Angela Merkel as a Nazi official	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Western foreign powers)
135	Depiction of foreign powers saying no to Mehmed the Conquerer	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Western foreign powers)
136	Depiction of a man in fez voting yes for Erdoğan	Enemy images-Foreign powers (Western foreign powers)
137	Two men talking about the liberation of Istanbul in 1923	Enemy images-Kemalist modernization
138	Depiction of donkeys in suits worshipping to donkey statues	Enemy images-Kemalist modernization
139	Depiction of a man asking for directions	Enemy images-Kemalist modernization
140	Depiction of Yılmaz Özdil interviewing on TV about President Erdoğan	Enemy images-Kemalist modernization
141	Depiction of two Kemalists drinking rakı and singing	Enemy images-Kemalist modernization
142	Depiction of a TV interview about Atatürk	Enemy images-Kemalist modernization
143	Depiction of a “Mankurt”	Enemy images-Kemalist modernization
144	A warning sign about the modern education system	Enemy images-Kemalist modernization

Table 1- List of Figures used in the text (continued)

145	Depiction of two men in a car talking about Atatürk	Enemy images- Kemalist modernization
A.6	Depiction of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu as a clueless person	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
A.7	Depiction of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu as a clueless person	Enemy images- Political Parties in opposition
Total:141 figures		

Humor is one of the key concepts of this study, and there is an extensive literature on humor. From Aristotle to Hobbes, Bergson, and Freud, many scholars and philosophers have worked through and came up with different analyses regarding the reasons behind laughter or the function of humor, etc. There are laughter theories, including superiority, relief, and incongruity, attempting to explain the reasons and motives behind laughter. In addition, humor's relationship with religion is another inquiry that will be discussed within this thesis, and whether humor and religion are compatible will be also be argued. For example, while Islamic humor praises good kind of "clean" humor, it condemns and strictly forbids that involves mockery, insult, or ridicule since those could lead to hostility among people. Within the context of the Islamic approach to humor, Misvak's position as an Islamist humor magazine will also be analyzed in this study.

As such, the function of humor has been in the center of debates on humor; for example, it is mentioned that it can be rebellious or disciplinary, as Billig argues. While laughter was not welcomed in the Platonic state sense, today, having a good sense of humor is considered to be an appealing quality for human beings. Bakhtin argues that the Carnival laughter is such a powerful tool that it could upend hierarchy and makes the king fools and fools the kings. However, as a critical question, it needs to be further addressed whether humor is always oppositional by nature. This study, in that sense, finds the notion of humor as paradoxical and argues that while it could lead

to rebellion, humor can also be instrumental and even propagandist, which serves for the hegemon. Hence, the humor proposed by Misvak will be discussed within the understanding that the magazine is a product of AKP's limited hegemony project.

Interrelated with the hegemony debates, Gezi is also relevant as it plays a crucial role in terms of social and political trends in Turkey and represents a break for the AKP. What Gezi represents is also crucial for this thesis because one of the essential features of the uprising was embedded in its humorous nature. During the protests, the use of humor came to the forefront as a prominent characteristic of the Revolt; young protesters embraced humor in those slogans, graffiti, cartoons, and drawings that were mainly anti-government. There were mockery and ridicule targeting the government and the police force; as such, laughter became a tool for resistance during the anti-government demonstrations in the city squares. In that sense, it has been argued by many scholars that the Gezi Revolt was aiming to upend the hierarchy with the power of laughter and humor, which was reminiscent of the features of a Bakhtinian carnival (e.g., Gökem, 2015; Karakayalı & Yaka, 2014). On the other hand, as Dağtaş argues, since the Revolt had a secular character, the political humor embedded in the Gezi spirit also revealed the deep-rooted binaries in the cultural sphere of Turkey. For example, many middle-class protesters adopted a Kemalist/secularist stance; with those slogans of "*Mustafa Kemal'in askerleriyiz*" (We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal) as they almost intended to defend the nation from reactionism (Dağtaş, 2016). It could be argued that the use of humor during the uprising is highly critical since, as the product of the hegemonic form, the political work of humor entails power struggles along the secular/religious binary in Turkey (Dağtaş, 2016). During the Gezi Revolt, it was clear that the field of culture was somewhat dominated by secular groups, and as an essential part of the culture, the use of humor was also secular in nature. Besides, mainstream and secular humor magazines such as *Leman*, *Penguen*, and *Uykusuz* strongly supported the uprising and contributed to the process of cultural production. However, those counter-protests and demonstrations held by the pro-government groups in the city squares indicated an unusual phenomenon.

As a response to the use of disproportionate police force during the protests, “Disproportionate intelligence” (orantısız zeka) was the term to define the humorous acts of young people who also embraced and reclaimed the concept of “looters” (çapulcular). In return, made-up terms combined such as “Gezi Zekalı” (implying geri zekalı, which basically means retarded) to describe the activists by the pro-government groups to react and with the intend to dominate the discourse. In addition, counter-performances were demonstrated such as “Man Standing Against the Standing Man” (Duran Adama Karşı Duran Adam) which was a response to the “Standing Man” performance demonstrated by the artist Erdem Gündüz who did nothing but to stand still for hours in the Taksim square.

In that sense, Misvak’s approach to humor will also be analyzed in a similar vein to those counter-protesters’, which shows that new dynamics are at play in Turkey today that needs further inquiry. Those developments point to the debates that mainly revolve around the *kulturkampf*, and cultural power has been rekindled after the Gezi Revolt. As such, many Islamic and pro-government TV shows, films, soaps, and magazines have been produced -and still are being produced- during this period. Those attempts have been perceived as a “new” cultural hegemony project by the conservative and mainly pro-government circles. In that sense, this thesis will attempt to explore the function of Misvak within those debates.

In order to provide a bigger picture of the issue of what Misvak proposes, it would be appropriate to mention a pro-government analysis regarding the humor magazines in Turkey. In 2016, SETA (The Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research), a pro-government think tank, published a report on humor magazines in Turkey and cultural hegemony. The report aims to analyze four humor magazines, namely Gırgır, Leman, Penguen, and Uykusuz, for the period starting on 3rd November 2002, when the AKP first came into power (Demir, 2016). In sum, the report accuses those magazines of adopting a humor sense shaped by Islamophobia as well as a fear of Erdoğan and concludes as below:

After analyzing those four humor magazines, it has been found that the humourists in Turkey enjoy revealing people's flaws and that they are constantly angry. For this reason, there is neither philosophical melancholy nor hope proposed in the current humor understanding in Turkey. There are no principled and constructive contributions and suggestions for a better country and a better world in those slang words that are filled with curse/ridicule as well as in those insulting caricatures that are trapped in an anti-Tayyip perspective. Erdoğan's increasing public support in every election causes the magazines' hate speeches that are pushing the boundaries of the freedom of expression, to be intensified. Thus, far beyond an opposition that is based on intelligence and subtle criticism, the magazines' language is trapped between curse and ridicule. (Demir, 2016, p. 57) (my translation).

Considering Misvak came out as an alternative to those above-mentioned mainstream magazines analyzed in the SETA report, then what can be said for Misvak? What does Misvak propose? Does it offer hope, a world view, a contribution to the current status of political and social trends? What does Misvak bring to the table regarding cultural production? This thesis mainly aims to bring clarity to those issues. For this reason, by analyzing the discourse proposed through visual texts, this study also seeks to answer the following questions: To what extent does Misvak's discourse show parallelism with the AKP discourse? To what extent does the use of humor in Misvak contribute to the construction of enemy images? How are enemy images constructed through visual texts in Misvak? Are those representations of the enemy image categories such as the left in Turkey, intellectuals, Gezi protesters, political parties, women, and LGBTQ+, foreign powers, and Kemalist modernization in line with the AKP discourse?

1.4 Organization of the Thesis

Besides the introductory and concluding chapters, this thesis work will consist of four main chapters. This chapter firstly aimed to present the objective and the significance of the study. In addition, the chapter has detailed the research methodology and the related theoretical framework covering key concepts in the previous sections. Also, the existing literature on Misvak, as well as the notion of humor, have been shortly reviewed.

The second chapter aims to examine the notion of humor from several angles. In this chapter, humor theories will be briefly reviewed to analyze the laughter and humor types in addition to humor's function and its relationship with the hegemony as well as religion. Besides, humor magazine publishing in Turkey will be briefly discussed from a historical perspective.

The third chapter seeks to investigate the sources of the AKP's hegemony project as well as the ideological party discourse. To that end, this chapter attempts to position the AKP as a neoliberal authoritarian government and argues that those characteristics of the party remained the same while the expanded hegemony project transformed into a limited one. Arguing that *Misvak* is a product of the limited hegemony period, the third chapter first will review the underlying causes for the AKP to come out as a hegemony project, then will discuss the reasons for its transition. After, the prominent features of the party discourse will be briefly presented to evaluate whether there are similarities with the discourse of the AKP and the one proposed in *Misvak*.

The fourth chapter aims to discuss the humor and the ideology proposed in *Misvak* via visual texts. Along with the examination of the function of humor in *Misvak*, this chapter will also mention the production process of the magazine. Besides, a concise comparison between *Misvak* and the other Islamist humor magazines of the 2000s, namely *Cafcaf* and *Hacamat*, will be made. In addition, the representation of the self-image will be shown through ideologies that are affirmed by the magazine after indicating those positions.

The fifth chapter aims to present the construction of enemy images in *Misvak* through cartoons. It will be argued that there are number of main enemy categories, which are the left in Turkey, intellectuals, Gezi protesters, political parties in opposition, women, and LGBTQ+, foreign powers, and Kemalist modernization. The chapter will argue that those representations of the enemy images in *Misvak* serve as discursive strategies to nurture the AKP's hegemony project, considering that the magazine follows the same discourse with the party. It will also be discussed that with

the use of othering, stigmatizing, and scapegoating certain parties in those depictions, the use of humor in Misvak functions as a form of propaganda, and the magazine acts as an Ideological State Apparatus.

Finally, the sixth and concluding chapter will discuss the findings of the study as a whole, and those findings will be briefly summarized in the last chapter.

CHAPTER 2

APPROACHING HUMOR, ISLAMIC HUMOR AND ISLAMIST HUMOR MAGAZINES IN TURKEY

As the backbone of this study, humor as a notion needs to be analyzed to establish a framework that covers multiple areas. To that end, this chapter aims to bring clarity on the issue of humor in several aspects, including its types and forms, its function, its relation with hegemony as well as religion. In addition, this chapter will also focus on the humor magazine publishing in Turkey from a historical perspective. Briefly reviewing the processes of both mainstream and Islamist humor magazine publishing in Turkey will help to provide a thorough understanding and further reasoning the current conjuncture of humor magazine publishing in Turkey today.

2.1 On Laughter and Humor

It is still a wonder why some people laugh in certain situations, whereas others may find those irritating, disturbing, or even painfully tragic. That is to say that there is no precise formula when it comes to producing as well as perceiving humor since these processes are highly interrelated to the cultural norms along with personal experiences. Nevertheless, even though it has been lately mentioned that apes are also capable of laughing, this ability is a unique way for humans to reflect a chemical process of the brain as a social indicator. In his work *“Laughter: An Essay of the Meaning of the Comic,”* Henri Bergson also focuses on the social function of laughter, where he argues whether it can shed light on the way that social, collective, and popular imagination works and focuses on the social significance of the laughter (Bergson, 1911).

Theories on laughter date back to Ancient Greece, however those discussions on laughter intended to develop debates on universal codes of humanity rather than to come up with a definition for laughter (Şahinalp, 2010). Thus, discussions on laughter

in the works of Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato were, in fact, arose from the debates on fundamental issues such as politics, rhetoric, and ethics (Şahinalp, 2010). Various theories on laughter have been produced until this time and, while each handles laughing in different ways, it seems possible to say that none of them are sufficient to explain the underlying causes of laughter alone. Nonetheless, there are three main theories on humor in the research literature; superiority theory, relief theory and incongruity theory.

Superiority theory involves a comparison with the other party; people might laugh at others' weaknesses and thus confirm their state of superiority. This approach traces back to Aristotle and Plato but rather is built on the ideas of Thomas Hobbes later in modern times. According to Hobbes, laughter manifests itself as a bodily passion, which he uses the term "glory" for it because it connotes the emotions of self-pride, superiority, and self-assertion since glory also involves one's power and advantageous position before the others (Heyd, 1982).

In the 18th Century, the Superiority Theory was challenged by two new laughter theories; the Incongruity Theory and Relief Theory (Morreall, 2016). According to the Relief theory, which was later developed by Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud, laughter relieves the nervous energy (Morreall, 2016). In his book *"Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious"* Freud intended to show humor's relationship to the unconscious. Building on Spencer, he mentions three humor types as jokes, comic and mimetic, but in the end, he argues that in all cases, laughter is a form of relieving surplus energy (Freud, 1976).

Finally, the Incongruity theory relies on the assertion that what makes people laugh is the disharmony embedded in an event or a story. According to this approach, which was forwarded by philosophers, including Kant, Schopenhauer, and Kierkegaard, the element of humor can be created through an encounter with the unexpected. This type of humor can also be found in the American comedians' stand

up shows, which surprise and amuse the audience with an unexpected punchline (Morreall, 2016).

Those above theories attempting to explain why people laugh, provide a basis for the complicated relationship between humor and power as well as the function of humor. In that sense, Michael Billig makes a theoretical distinction between the rebellious and disciplinary functions of humor (Billig, 2005). Accordingly, rebellious humor as a form of ridicule mocks the social rules while disciplinary humor mocks those who break the social rules; thus, it is conservative by nature (Billig, 2005). This distinction helps us to understand the different approaches to the humor-state relationship from Plato to today's modern world. In that sense, it is well known that the Platonic state did not welcome humor or laughter since those could harm the image of the ideal state where all statesmen were cold and serious as they were representing an order that lacks pleasures and fun. As laughter was considered to be one of these pleasures, it was also strictly forbidden in order to make sure that the hierarchy and seriousness of the state are preserved. Plato, in that sense, considered laughter as a potentially dangerous act which could lead to rebellious initiatives and advised that neither the citizens nor the guardians should laugh (Plato, 2000).

As justifying Plato's fears, Mikhail Bakhtin, in his work *"Rabelais and His World"*, says that the most radical, most universal and cheerful laughter was born out of the folk culture in the Renaissance, and this laughter is an expression of a new, free and critical historical consciousness (Bakhtin, 1984). Bakhtin gave great importance to the folk culture of the Middle Ages and those inverted images which had been produced during those festive times that could further explain his admiration towards carnival and carnivalesque. While Socrates and Plato did not approve of carnivalesque humor (Billig, 2005), Bakhtin saw the possibility of another world embedded within the carnival laughter. As such, to the contrary of what has been favored by the Platonic state, *"in carnival, laughter and excess push aside the seriousness and hierarchies of 'official' life"* (Elliot, 1999, p. 129).

In those carnivals of the Middle Ages, reversed images were widespread; the poor fool could become the king, and the ugliest girl of the town could be elected as the beauty queen during those days. Eagleton draws attention to those binaries and inversions, which create the backbone of the carnival spirit that Bakhtin mentions:

All absolute values are ridiculed and relativised. Against the high-mindedness of official doctrine is pitted the lethal power of laughter. Travesty, disfigurement and inversion (nose/phallus, face/buttocks, sacred/profane, man/woman, high culture/low culture) rampage for a euphoric moment through the byways and marketplaces (Eagleton, 2007).

To put it, the importance of the carnival was lying in its capability to reverse the official hierarchy and to create an upside-down world for a few days with the power of laughter. Bakhtin explains the complex nature of this carnival laughter as follows: First, this laughter is not an individual reaction to a comic event, but it is festive laughter; therefore it belongs to all people; second, it is universal in scope, directed to all the people, including the participants in them and third, the laughter is ambivalent; since it also asserts and denies (Bakhtin, 1984). Such laughter is capable of establishing a new order by demolishing hierarchies, kings, and the church. In short, he believes that social hierarchies and proprieties are upended by laughter; therefore, the severe and cold face of the state could be threatened by humor, which forms a unique resistance.

In that sense, the Bakhtinian approach to humor has a reputation for embracing subversive laughter that is also a practical tool for resistance. For example, humorous material, including cartoons, slogans, and street writings that had been produced during the Gezi Revolt in 2013, has also been acknowledged as a tool for the insurgency by many scholars (e.g., Gökem, 2015; Karakayalı & Yaka, 2014). Accordingly, it could be mentioned that the Gezi laughter was reminiscent of carnivalesque laughter.

Similarly, Arendt finds laughter as rebellious and sees as a powerful weapon against the authority: “*The greatest enemy of authority, therefore, is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter*” (Arendt, 1970, p. 45).

On the other hand, as one of the critical questions of this study, it should be further investigated whether all forms of humor serve for resistance and if the only function of the humor is to upend power structures. More clearly, does humor have to be oppositional at all times? Does it necessarily have to undermine the authority? Those are essential questions because the main research topic of this thesis, as a pro-AKP magazine, *Misvak*, stands out as an anomaly when the oppositional character of humor is taken for granted. Therefore, to be able to pinpoint *Misvak*’s approach to humor, it is crucial to understand the function of the humor and to ask if humor could also empower the authority.

In his book “*An Essay on Laughter*,” James Sully mentions that humor can be social as well as anti-social; it has the power to unite people with the bond of joy, while in the form of mockery and ridicule it can also exclude people (Sully, 1907). Building on Sully, Micheal Billig states that humor can be a matter of controversy, for there are differences in the appreciation of humor; therefore, it is challenging to define humor in terms of the laughter it evokes; hence, humor can be paradoxical (Billig, 2005). For example, Billig shares an anecdote about then Italian PM Berlusconi’s speech in 2003 when he addressed the European Parliament. Accordingly, during Berlusconi’s speech, which was being interrupted with booings, he turned to one of the protestors, a German MEP, and he said, “*Mr. Schultz, I know there is a producer in Italy who is making a film on Nazi concentration camps. I will suggest you for the role of the commandant. You’d be perfect.*” (as qtd. in Billig, 2005, p. 177)

Using the abovementioned example, Billig asks if we should define Berlusconi’s statements as not humorous since it failed to evoke laughter in the majority of its recipients and further argues that there is a theoretical danger for the scholars to become prescriptive in their definitions of humor (Billig, 2005). Herewith,

Billig states that *there can be a mismatch between the attempt of humor and the effect of laughter* (Billig, 2005, p. 178). In the shared anecdote, it is clear that Berlusconi intended to humiliate his opponent with his remarks and caused adverse reactions rather than laughter. Still, as Billig also argues, this should not lead to the conclusion that Berlusconi's joke cannot be classified as not humorous. In fact, this single incident lays out the controversial nature of the humor; that it can upend the authority, but it also has the capacity to empower it as well. In that sense, there are *political, moral, and aesthetic dimensions* of humor, and even lousy humor has the potential not only to disrupt but also to “impose order” like in Berlusconi’s case (Billig, 2005).

In that sense, humor is not only a tool for resistance that is used by the goodhearted people for the greater good, but it can also take many forms that are destructive and even malign. There is the dark comedy, insult comedy, or roasting, which are frequently used methods as a part of offensive humor. Those comedy genres especially are used by stand-up comedians who target their audience, a social group (whether it be gender, religious or ethnic, etc.) or even themselves and produce humor with an intent to insult, humiliate and degrade their chosen subject.

Offensive humor has been subjected to many arguments and particularly within the realm of political correctness. Those jokes forwarded by the comedians can be filled with racism, sexism, and homophobia; thus, they generally cause heated debates about their function. For example, one of the famous comedians who has an offensive humor taste when performing, British comedian Ricky Gervais, does not hesitate to make fun of sensitive topics such as rape:

I’ve done it once, I’m not proud of it in the slightest. I’m fucking ashamed of it. I wasn’t drunk, I was over the limit. That was Christmas and I took the car out and I knew I shouldn’t. I knew at the time I shouldn’t be in the car. But I learned my lesson ‘cos I nearly killed an old woman. In the end I didn’t kill her. In the end, I just raped her. But as I say nothing came of it ‘cos luckily, thousand to one shot I know, she had Alzheimer’s. Yeah, not a credible witness.⁹

⁹ <https://theconversation.com/what-is-the-point-of-offensive-humour-76889>

The function of such a joke is open to debate; some may say that it is only comedy; therefore, it should not be taken that seriously while some may argue that this type of humor, which is clearly misogynistic, undermines the significance of a sensitive topic such as rape. The same arguments could be applied to the jokes on the vulnerable parties such as disabled people, or when someone's "race" itself becomes an element of offensive humor like it happens for the black people in the US. or the Kurds in Turkey.

For instance, Simon Weaver argues that the use of "reverse discourse" by black comedians has the potential to form a resistance that could act against the racist meaning; however, the same reverse discourse, which contains a *polysemic element*, could also paradoxically reproduce racism (Weaver, 2010). Besides, according to a research study conducted by the University of Kent, there is a direct correlation between the sexist jokes and rape proclivity as well as victim-blaming; moreover, the study found that sexist jokes undermined the seriousness of rape in the male perception (Viki, Thomae, Cullen & Fernandez, 2007).

Including the offensive version, humor that denigrates belittles, or maligns an individual or social group is called disparagement humor (Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Zillman, 1983). Many scholars have argued that disparagement humor has negative consequences, mainly due to its capability to create and reinforce stereotypes of social groups and increase prejudice towards those parties (e.g., Berger, 1993; Stephenson, 1951; Zenner, 1970 as cited in (Ford & Ferguson, 2004).

For example, Martinaue (1972), argued that disparagement humor has a divisive function that could create and reinforce hostility toward the targeted group (as cited in Ford & Ferguson, 2004). Ford and Ferguson, on the other hand, claim that exposure to disparagement humor increases the tolerance of discriminatory events for prejudiced people toward the disparaged group (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). In addition, after reviewing the research testing Martinaeu's theory, Ford, Richardson, and Petit argue that while disparagement humor can function as a powerful "abrasive" in social

interaction, this type of humor releases the existing prejudice rather than acting as an initiator (Ford, Richardson, & Petit, 2015).

In that sense, those offensive jokes that involve sexist, racist, homophobic, misogynistic, etc. narratives can be categorized under disparagement humor. Similarly, the use of methods such as othering, scapegoating, stigmatizing, or marginalizing certain groups or individuals while producing entertaining content points out the existence of disparagement humor.

As the main research topic of this study, political cartoons are one of these areas that disparagement humor can quickly emerge. Amongst the characteristics of a cartoon, there is typically exaggeration as well as oversimplification, and those could easily lead to sexist, racist, anti-Semitic, etc. narratives. As such, religious sensitivities may also determine the nature of the humor that is perceived. That is to say that, humor is also challenged by the contemporary norms of political correctness.



Figure 2.
(Source: cartoonmovement.com)

It is clear that the political discourse of a cartoon should be determined in the related context that it is produced. Nonetheless, racism and sexism, as well as demonizing the opponents, are frequently used methods in political cartoons. Besides

and foremost, even though it is expected that political cartoons to be critical, those offensive cartoons can also be pro-government, hence they empower the authority, which is the case for Misvak. In that sense, the below picture should provide a proportionate example to Misvak in the way they function. Besides, below cartoon is very similar to one of the Hacamat cartoons, which will be shortly examined in the following chapters.

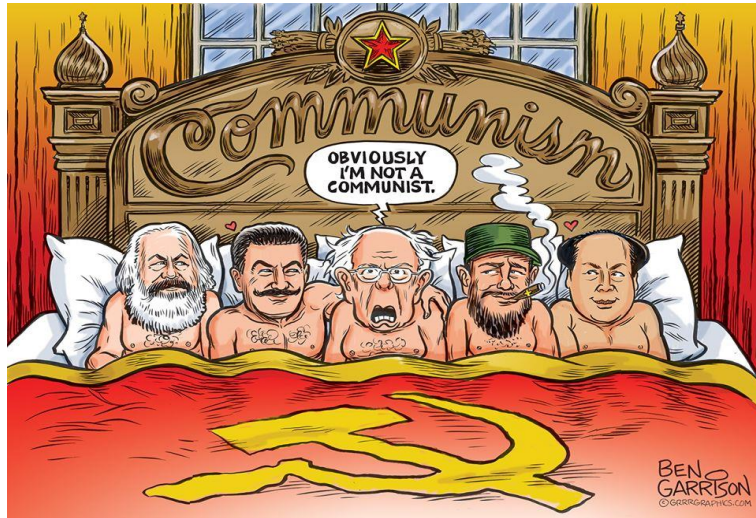


Figure 3.
(Source: GrrGraphics cartoons)



Figure 4.
Hacamat, issue 6 (April 8, 2015)

It is clear that as an art form, political cartoons have the potential to be disturbing for the people in power. However, the above example also shows that they can also empower the authority; in this case, humor becomes rather instrumental. Similarly, there are cartoons serving to conceal the criticism that the U.S. President faces, and instead of pointing out his failures and deficiencies, those images look to empower him and demonize his political opponents (appx A. fig. A.1, A.2, A.3).

In that case, such an “anomaly” should be investigated within the debates of hegemony; hence, the humor-hegemony relationship should be further explored. Therefore, it could be useful to resort to Bakhtin one more time and attempt to build a bridge between his framework and the Gramscian concept of hegemony. Such an attempt has already been successfully made by scholars working on the subject (e.g. (Brandist, 1996; Erdoğan, 1994).

First, Brandist notes that language and ideology were the main objects of analysis for both Gramsci and Bakhtin (Brandist, 1996). For example, Gramsci was disappointed with the Crocean concept of language education in Italy after 1923; he believed that by following it, subaltern classes were left illiterate and trapped in their provincial dialects, which resulted in the reinforcement of class divisions (Brandist, 1996). In that sense, it can be argued that “*for Gramsci, a social group has a conception of the world implicit in its social practice and which is manifested in the language it uses*” (Brandist, 1996, p. 99).

Bakhtin, on the other hand, with notions such as dialogism and heteroglossia, looked further for meanings that are embedded within the language. By doing that, he intended to analyze the power relations that may be concealed within discourse in a particular context; hence he also delved into the realm of ideology. Bakhtin paid particular attention to the novel, and especially Dostoevsky comes to the forefront in his analysis of polyphony, whom he believes is the inventor of the polyphonic novel. In the “Discourse in the Novel” Bakhtin argues that language is never unitary and the and the word is never neutral;

The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own. The word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 108).

Bakhtin sees the arena of language as a field that hegemonic battle consistently goes on; in that sense, his analysis is also similar to Voloshinov's, who argues that "*Sign becomes an arena of the class struggle*" (Voloshinov, 1973, p. 23).

Brandist argues that how Bakhtin handles the question of language and its relationship to the novel as well as poetry, shows that he was disguising political problems as cultural ones (Brandist, 1996). Then he points out that "*Gramsci also noted that when the political function of a party is amounting to the exercise of propaganda and public order, political struggle is shifted to the sphere of art and culture*" (Brandist, 1996, p. 101) to show the similarities in their understanding of aesthetic. Accordingly, Bakhtin comprehends novel as the aestheticized version of the carnival, where the official and serious culture can no longer separately exist (Brandist, 1996). Brandist further argues that Gramsci positions the aesthetic activity in terms of the relationship of the political party within the context of "common sense" of a nation, while Bakhtin put the relationship of the author to the diversity of social discourses (Brandist, 1996).

So, how can this discussion lead us to the humor-hegemony relationship? In fact, it is embedded within the laughter's power to upend hierarchy and its capability to become a tool for resistance. Bakhtin's carnivalesque mode of talk is nothing but the market place talk where heteroglossia can manifest, and the carnival laughter is the defiance of the monologic truth. Accordingly, laughter helps us to resist monologization of the meaning as well as experience and lets us discover new meanings.

Our ideological development is just such an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values. The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is

not finite, it is open; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer ways to mean (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 125).

Brandist concludes that along with their similarities, while Bakhtin rather focused on “anti-hegemony,” Gramsci’s main emphasis was the construction of a counter-hegemony (Brandist, 1996). In that sense, it can be mentioned that the area of culture (including popular culture) emerges as a field where the hegemonic battle always continues. Humor magazines and as an art form caricature have additional significance considering their humorous nature, which could help to find new meanings while exposing the dominant discourse of the hegemon.

However, as it also seems that the arena of humor does not solely belong to those who have been outcasted from the hegemonic bloc but instead, it emerges as a complex, ambivalent, fragmented sphere that could also serve for the benefit of the hegemon. In that framework, humor does not always become a tool for the resistance in the Bakhtinian sense, but it could also empower the authority. To sum up, according to the above-argued analyses, humor has a broad framework; that it can be hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, subversive, or instrumental; it can be freeing or racist, sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, etc. However, it does not change the fact that even bad humor is humor, and the quality is not a distinctive feature when defining what is humorous and what is not.

All in all, humor does not function in a singular way. While it could be subversive in a Bakhtinian sense, it could also impose order, hence empower the authority. While it could be freeing and supportive, it could also be humiliating and offensive. It could function as a perpetrator to develop prejudice and hostility towards targeted groups while constructing enemy images.

As a matter of fact, the use of humor in Misvak functions in a similar way, which will be discussed in the following chapters. On the other hand, there is another aspect to consider when analyzing the use of humor in Islamist humor magazines,

which, as the name suggests, is the religion factor. Therefore, the relationship between humor and religion, more specifically, Islam, should also be further examined.

2.2 Humor and Religion

Laughter, for a few moments, distracts the villain from fear. But law is imposed by fear, whose true name is fear of God. This book could strike the Luciferine spark that would set a new fire to the whole world, and laughter would be defined as the new art, unknown even to Prometheus, for canceling fear. To the villain who laughs, at that moment, dying does not matter: but then, when the license is past, the liturgy again imposes on him, according to the divine plan, the fear of death. And from this book there could be born the new destructive aim to destroy death through redemption from fear. And what would we be, we sinful creatures, without fear, perhaps the most foresighted, the most loving of the divine gifts? (Eco, 1986, pp. 277–278)

These words belong to the main antagonist of Eco's famous book "*The Name of the Rose*". Jorge de Burgos, the blind monk of the Benedictine Order, explains his hatred and anger towards Aristotle's *Second Poetics*- a book speaks of the virtues of laughter- claiming that laughter, erasing the fear from people's hearts is a tool for the Devil.

The ongoing debate between religion and humor is old as the history itself, and still, there is a lot of room for scholars to debate this two-edged topic. Gilhus also states that laughter is a fruitful subject for religion; therefore, it is a well worth investigation (Gilhus, 2004). The prominent views on the matter usually stress the impossibility of religion and humor to go hand in hand because of their contradicting nature. John Morreall argues that sense of humor is accepted as an attractive trait only in the last two centuries, and before that, it had a bad reputation from Plato to Hobbes in western culture (Morreall, 2014). He mentions that in Bible, laughter is associated with hostility, irresponsibility, and foolishness, and even God is only laughing in anger; therefore, the negative assessments of laughter and comedy were very influential in early Christianity (Morreall, 2014). Reinhold Niebuhr argues that both humor and faith deal with the incongruities of our existence, and in fact, humor is a prelude to faith; however, he adds that "*there is no laughter in the holy of holies. There laughter is swallowed up in prayer, and humor is fulfilled by faith*" (Niebuhr, 1946, p. 112).

One of the most comprehensive studies on humor and religion belongs to Vassilis Saroglou, who claims that mistrust exists in many religions towards laughter and humor (Saroglou & Jaspard, 2001). Saroglou conducts his research from a psychological perspective when he seeks answers to the question of whether humor and religion are compatible. In his theoretical work, *“Religion and sense of humor: An a priori incompatibility? Theoretical considerations from a psychological perspective”* (Saroglou, 2002) he argues the topic with five main dimensions in total:

- 1) **Incongruity, Ambiguity, and Nonsense:** According to Saroglou, comic is a celebration of contradictions in life. Therefore, in humor, there is a place for ambiguity and nonsense as well as incongruity by nature. However, one of the primary purposes of religion is to find answers to those unclear areas for all human beings. The search for meaning has so essential for the religion that it usually comes up with solutions even there is *“objectively”* no information on the issue.
- 2) **Playfulness:** Saroglou mentions that play and humor share many aspects, such as both being gratuitous and unserious. Playfulness is intrinsic to humor since the lack of engagement with truth also nourishes humor. Humor is playful because it is spontaneous and is not obliged to be morally correct all the time. Saroglou states that those characteristics of playfulness contradict with religion in a certain way. He also finds a correlation between religious personality and early Christianity’s suspicion of laughter.
- 3) **Novelty, Sensation-seeking, and risk:** According to Saroglou, sense of humor comes with the novelty since surprise and incongruity are important aspects of humor. Thus, with laughter and humor, it is highly possible to expect uncertainty, followed by sensation-seeking and the probability of taking social risks as well as physical. Uncertainty dramatically contradicts conservatism, which is accepted as one of the main characteristics of religious personality. Conservatism, as an ideology, wishes to preserve the existing values; thus, it aims to avoid new, ambiguous situations. He argues that religious people want to protect their values on issues, not only

sexuality but also political orientation, security, gender roles, etc. Saroglou mentions that according to the prior research, it has been found that conservative people prefer incongruity-resolution humor instead of non-sense humor.

- 4) **Emotional Aspects and Self Control:** In humor, the aspect of surprise could lead to a loss of control because of experiencing strong emotions. Following the ambiguous path of a joke, we could find ourselves experiencing extreme feelings, even accompanying physical symptoms such as teary eyes. That kind of momentarily control losses and involuntarily reactions are not compatible with religion by nature. Saroglou claims that “religion is associated with a need for control”. He explains that the beforementioned traits of religious personality, such as being intolerant of ambiguity and uncertainty along with risk avoidance, are indicators leading to a more inclusive aspect, which is self-mastery.
- 5) **Tendentious Aspects:** Saroglou argues that aggression/dominance and sexuality are often involved in humor, whereas religion strictly forbids those in any case. He mentions that humor may be considered as “a way to get out of a closed structured system,” therefore the asymmetrical relationship between power and aggression/dominance could easily be demonstrated in humor. As such, along with the aggression/dominance factor, sexuality is also considered as a theme of social prohibition; therefore, the sphere of humor is suitable for those to live in. However, as stated before those prohibited themes are not morally appropriate for the religion to approve them in any circumstances.

Besides his contribution to theory, Saroglou also conducted empirical research and experimental studies to further evaluate the relationship between religion and humor and found similar results.

Nonetheless, not all scholars suggest that religion and humor are not compatible by nature. In fact, it may be possible to observe a tendency towards a more

moderate approach on the subject, especially when it comes to the relationship between Christianity and humor.

In his article *“Funny as hell: Christianity and humor reconsidered,”* Samuel Joeckel criticizes Saroglou for following a black and white approach (2008). According to him, character traits such as close-mindedness, dogmatism, intolerance of ambiguity, etc. that allegedly lead to a negative association with humor, are not clarified enough (Joeckel, 2008). Joeckel makes a distinction between “flexible” and “inflexible” Christians saying while those traits could explain only the inflexible ones’ negative association with humor, flexible Christians can actually embrace humor and are able to be funny (Joeckel, 2008). Joeckel believes that it is quite possible to find humor in early Christianity as well, and, in opposition with the general belief, he insists that if explored enough to come up with fresh interpretations, it could be found in the Bible that Jesus himself used several types of humor (Joeckel, 2008). He also states that ;

(...) humor’s role in the prephilosophical process of analysis is indebted to the Christian concept of preconditionalism and this concept can, in turn, be of service to theology by removing abrasive pre-theological attitudes that cloud the mind and deter open, free inquiry into issues of theology (Joeckel, 2008, p. 431).

Donald Capps mentions that he considered religion and humor can be allies and surprised to see the research literature on the matter did not support his initial assumption (Capps, 2006). He refers to religion and humor as “estranged bedfellows” and claims that these two should overcome their estrangement and realize that they share the same bed (Capps, 2006). Capps reviews both the empirical and theoretical works of Saroglou and concludes that even though he has some fair points, most grounds for Saroglou’s analysis of religion’s existing mistrust towards humor are not legitimate (Capps, 2006). Capps believes that the major loser in the debate of estrangement is religion itself and argues that even those two resemble an incongruous couple; they can and should “*make the best of situation in which they find themselves*”(Capps, 2006, p. 437).

Although they claim to be more comprehensive, the abovementioned analyses are covering the issue mostly from a Christian perspective. Besides the similarities of those analyses about religion in general, it could be useful to take a glance at the literature on humor and Islam as well.

If one decides to examine the literature on humor in orthodox Islam, s/he will come up with the word “moderation” very frequently. To put it, moderation serves as a keyword to suggest the actual existence of humor in Islam while it demarks its limitations in practical use. In terms of theory, the Quran, the sacred book of Muslims which is believed to be the unchanged word of God, along with the Sunna and hadith, basically Prophet Muhammad’s words, actions, and teachings that accepted as religious and moral guidance for all Muslims, are the primary resources for scholars who wish to examine the existence of humor in early Islam.

Ulrich Marzholp argues that there is a bias against early Islam’s compatibility with humor based on the claim that its main features are reminiscent of the conditions described in Eco’s *“the Name of the Rose”* (Marzolph, 2011). It has also been mentioned that there is no such word as “humor” in the Quran and instead other conjugate words similar in meaning (Wensinck (1982) as cited in Uz, 2017). One of the main pieces of evidence that is proposed as an indicator of lack of humor in Quran is the Surah At-Tawbah (9/82) *“Let them laugh a little: much will they weep: a recompense for the (evil) that they do.”* (Uz, 2017). Yusuf Doğan claims that Surah al Muminun (23/3) *“And they who turn away from ill speech”*¹⁰ is another reason for people to believe that humor is forbidden in the Quran (Doğan, 2004). According to Uz, since Islam is associated with seriousness and solemnity; with reference to such verses from Quran, it is widely admitted that the ideal Muslim is a person who does not laugh a lot, instead maintains a sorrowful attitude always death in her/his mind (Uz, 2017). Having said that, those scholars also agree on the claim that the

¹⁰ In its literal meaning, ill speech is accepted as *“nonsense, senseless talk”* which brings humor into mind. <http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-muminun-3-qs-23-3-in-arabic-and-english-translation>

misinterpretations of these verses usually lead to such an assumption, and those small instances do not change the fact that there is a place for humor -at least, to an extent- in Islam.

In his work *“Humor in Early Islam,”* one of the most cited studies in the literature which covers a mass material about Muslim humor including more than 160 jokes and passages, Franz Rosenthal says that *“the otherworldliness of Islam did little stop to actual enjoyment and literary appreciation of humor”* (Rosenthal, 1956, p. 3). Along with the majority of the scholars working on the topic, Rosenthal argues that even though he was a serious man, Muhammad had a cheerful personality himself; thus, his followers always enjoyed a good joke (Rosenthal, 1956). Altınay suggests that Muhammad was well known for his humorous nature in his time, playing pranks with children as well as adults (Altınay, 2004). Altınay, with reference to medieval Islamic scholars working on Sunna and hadith, such as Al-Bukhari, Al-Jazari, Nuveyri, and Heysemi, shares several anecdotes about when Muhammad exhibited a playful attitude (Altınay, 2004). For example, Muhammad used to carry his grandsons Hasan and Huseyn on his back and compared them to riders and himself to a camel (Altınay, 2004). He used nicknames for children when he called them, playfully pulled children’s hair, and it is recorded that he sprayed water from his mouth to a 5-year old (Altınay, 2004).

Marzolph also mentions that there are several instances when Muhammad played jokes on his friends and companions (sahabe) (Marzolph, 2011). In a widely shared story, Muhammad responding to an old woman’s question tells her that she cannot enter paradise; when he sees that she became upset, he adds that all women will be young and beautiful as *huris* in heaven, as it is informed in Quran (Marzolph, 2011). It is mentioned in the research literature that Muhammad also welcomed jokes from his followers and friends. Among Muhammad’s friends and followers, Nuayman was the most prankster one, who also made him laugh the most (Altınay, 2004; Uz, 2017). Even when he played tricks and pranks that made other people angry from time to

time, Muhammad tolerated Nuayman's actions accepting his humorous nature (Altınay, 2004).

Bearing in mind that the existence of tolerance towards humor with the abovementioned anecdotes, one may wonder if the allegations against Islam being very serious to the extent that rejects humor might not be accurate. However, one should remember, it had been mentioned in the first place that "moderation" is the keyword when it comes to the association between humor and Islam, and there is a good reason for that.

Since there are undeniably contradicting opinions regarding humor in Islam, Altınay emphasizes the necessity of making a clear distinction between praised humor (*mizah-ı mahmud*) and condemned humor (*mizah-ı mezmum*) as Islamic Scholars (ulema) did before (Altınay, 2004). According to this distinction, it could be interpreted that while Islamic Scholars approve the praised/good kind of humor, thinking it would help to reinforce the love and friendship among people; dark comedy, mockery, ridicule etc. are condemned since they would allow hostility. Marzolph also mentions that mockery between humans is strictly forbidden in the Quran, as stated in surah 49,11:

O you who believe! Let not (one) people laugh at (another) people perchance they may be better than they, nor let women (laugh) at (other) women, perchance they may be better than they, and do not find fault with your own people nor call one another by nicknames (as cited in, Marzolph, 2011).

In that sense, as the messenger of God, Muhammad himself would be expected to oppose to mockery and ridicule as well. As Marzolph argues when we talk about Muhammad's approach to humor, it seems that what we have here is the subtle humor, sympathetic or relieved laughter, and most of the time, just a smile rather than bursting out into laughter with teary eyes (Marzolph, 2011). Orthodox Islam, like other religions, is against extremism in people's behaviors during their daily practices. Rather, it promotes conservatism and moderation in every aspect of life, including humor. In that sense, one might wonder to what extent Islam can embrace humor and

laughter. To be able to understand that, it could be useful to remember how Islam, and specifically Muhammad, portrayed in today's popular culture briefly.

Besides the prohibition of mockery and ridicule in Islam, one of the apparent reasons that limit the representations of Islamic figures, God and Muhammad being in the first place, is the general rule of "aniconism" in orthodox Islam. Aniconism is the proscription against the depiction of human beings, which roots back to the condemnation of idolatry in the Quran. Oleg Grabar, in his book *"The Formation of Islamic Art,"* uses the term "*aniconic*" to describe the prohibition on figural representation and painting that is widespread in Muslim communities throughout history (Grabar, 1978) "*Islamic aniconism*" has been a subject of theological debate in the culture of Islam for more than a thousand years, and the discussion is still going on (Soganci, 2004). Soğancı forms his categories to differentiate several approaches to Islamic art and concludes that it is always challenging to come up with a comprehensive response (Soganci, 2004). In short, even though today it is not practically applicable to every area, it would not be wrong to assume that orthodox Islam had always been skeptical of figural representations of human beings, especially the Prophet Muhammad.

However, the subject of Muhammad's figural representations became a hot topic after Danish Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons controversy in 2005. After the Danish newspaper published a series of controversial cartoons, some depicting Muhammad as a terrorist with a bomb, several protests occurred throughout the Middle East as well as Europe. These series sparked a problematic process of 10 years, which eventually turned to violence and resulted in deaths. After Danish and Norwegian embassies were attacked, French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo republished the cartoons. Over the years, protests, threats, and murder attempts from offended Muslim communities continued along with the republishing and reprinting of the controversial cartoons by several magazines, including Charlie Hebdo. In 2011, Charlie Hebdo's Paris offices were burned in an arson attack, and finally, in 2015, magazine's new Paris

offices attacked by armed gunmen killing 12 and injured 11 people.¹¹ Al-Qaeda took responsibility for the attack, and Nasr al-Ansi, a top commander of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, appeared in an 11-minute video posted online, saying that the massacre at Charlie Hebdo was in "vengeance for the prophet."¹²

In the light of these dramatic events, cartoons and Islam may seem like they are poles apart. Caricature is a type of illustration that is based on humor that typically includes mockery, ridicule, criticism, exaggeration as well as oversimplification. Those characteristics, along with the rule of aniconism, may put cartoon into the category of condemned humor in orthodox Islam. Hence, it would be surprising to acknowledge that this is not the case for Turkish humor magazines.

Turkey has a long tradition of humor magazines dating back to the 19th century; even though most of those magazines have a “secular” tendency, there have been some attempts to publish Islamist humor magazines starting with Necip Fazıl Kısakürek in the 1940s. After a long break, Islamist humor magazines made a comeback in the 1990s in Turkey, and now it is possible to differentiate them as a separate genre in humor magazines in the 2000s. From a historical perspective and their relation to ideology, Islamist humor magazines will be briefly discussed in the next section.

2.3 Mainstream and Islamist Humor Magazines in Turkey

2.3.1. Mainstream Humor Magazines

Contrary to popular belief, humor magazines have a long history in Turkey, dating back to the late 19th century. In the research literature, “Diyojen” by Teodor Kasap is accepted as the first humor magazine published in the Ottoman Empire in the

¹¹ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11341599/Prophet-Muhammad-cartoons-controversy-timeline.html>

¹² <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2015/01/al-qaeda-yemen-charlie-hebdo-paris-attacks-201511410323361511.html>

1870s. Although, it has also been claimed that the first Turkish humor magazine was “Terakki” which was published by Filip Efendi and Ali Raşid six months before Diyojen (Demirkol, 2016); Diyojen is still accepted as the first Turkish humor magazine by scholars since Terakki was a newspaper supplement and its content was seemed not quite adequate for a humor magazine.

Many humor magazines had been published during the late Ottoman era, in fact, there were more than 40 humor magazines published by 1908 (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). Some of those that were published by both Turks as well as Rums and Armenians after 1908 included Çavuş, Boşboğaz ile Güllabi, Eşek, Kalem, and Cem (Öngören, 1998). Karagöz was the longest-living one amongst those humor magazines of this period; it came out in 1908 and was published until 1950 (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017).

Nevertheless, when dividing the history of humor magazines into periods in Turkey, Gırgır usually has a central place since it changed the understanding of humor altogether and profoundly influenced many satirists. In the pre-Gırgır era, Akbaba (1922-1977) comes to the forefront as the longest-living humor magazine of Turkey until today (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). Cantek mentions that the long lifetime of Akbaba was due to the owner of the magazine, Yusuf Ziya Ortaç’s close relationships with the political parties in the power of their time, including CHP, then DP and AP (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). The staff of Akbaba consisted of many prominent writers and poets including Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Muzaffer İzgü, Orhan Seyfî Orhon, Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, Peyami Safa, Osman Cemal Kaygılı, Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı; as can be understood from the mentioned names, the majority of the magazine of the staff were writers (Tonga, 2008).

Having said that, the works of the great humourists including Cemal Nadir, Ramiz, Turhan Selçuk, Semih Balçioğlu, and even Aziz Nesin whose political views were in opposition with the magazine were also published in Akbaba (Yalçınkaya, 2006). Not only there was lack of criticism towards the ruling parties in Akbaba, but

Ferit Öngören also argues that the humor proposed in Akbaba was reflecting the preferences of intellectuals and the lifestyle of the urban elite (Öngören, 1998). Therefore, Akbaba could last even longer if Girgır never came out and responded to the expectations of “ordinary people”’s humor taste (Öngören, 1998).

Oğuz Aral’s Girgır started to be published in 1972 and marked the era of a new beginning for the humor magazine publishing in Turkey. Girgır, with a circulation of 750.000, was believed to be the third-largest humor magazine in the world, after Mad and Krokodil (Tunc, 2001). Girgır’s success was in its capability to meet the audience’s expectations; the magazine did not prioritize politics at first and rather addressed social issues and used sexuality as a humor element. Besides, the taste of humor proposed in Girgır also showed itself in music, literature, and cinema during the 1970-1980 period (Öngören, 1998). The political atmosphere that Girgır was born into also helped the magazine to be very popular; neither the CHP nor the AP was in power; thus, the magazine was not obliged to give its support to those parties, it also sometimes criticized impartial prime ministers and gained the identity of an independent humor magazine (Öngören, 1998). In addition, technological developments such as offset printing as well as TV broadcasting served for the magazine’s success; while the offset technique let the magazine to publish images and drawings instead of plain texts, the TV, with its colorful world was a fruitful source for the magazine (Öngören, 1998). Comparing to its predecessors, Girgır was found to be more “entertaining” rather than artistic; in that sense, the magazine was considered to be a popular culture product in the high culture/popular culture binary. On the other hand, Girgır also started the master/apprentice tradition which helped the young cartoonists such as İrfan Sayar, Behiç Pek, Hasan Kaçan, Nuri Kurtcebe, Engin Ergönültas, and İlban Ertem to come out as famous artists in the humor magazine publishing (Yalçınkaya, 2006). In time, this tradition paved the way for raising new artists and became a cornerstone for cartoonists who want to publish their work in the humor magazines. After the 12 September 1980 military coup, Girgır was temporarily banned due to the claim of “making fun of” Turkish identity and the Turkish military (Tunc, 2001). In the second half of the 1980s, humor magazine publishing had witnessed quick developments due

to changing political atmosphere. In 1986, a group of cartoonists left Gırgır and started to publish Limon while another group later established Hıbrır; these incidents were seen as the beginning of an unavoidable separation of the Gırgır staff (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017).

In the 1990s, Limon turned into LeMan, and Hıbrır turned into H.B.R Maymun; after that, humor magazines started to become financially independent (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). LeMan was the rising star of the humor magazines in Turkey during the 1990s and the 2000s; the magazine publishes apolitical content while pursuing a leftist discourse, there are political analyses in those pages along with the poems and cartoons (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). In the category of comic books, L-Manyak, Atom, and O-Haa were also published by the LeMan cadres, and in 2001 Lombok was published by a group within the LeMan staff (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017).

Today, LeMan is still one of the leading humor magazines that are active and traditionally printed along with Uykusuz, which was established in 2007. Besides, Penguen, which was also created by Lombok staff in 2002, was one of the most popular humor magazines in Turkey until recently; however, the magazine announced that it was closing down in 2017 mainly due to financial reasons¹³. As Cantek and Gönenç argue, today, there are two or three leading humor magazines that can benefit from the already small market share (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017), which in fact, shows the vulnerability of the circumstances that surround the humor magazine publishing in Turkey today. With the increased use of social media, not only humor magazines but also traditional newspapers were obligated to publish online or close down. For example, one of the daily newspapers of the (back then) Doğan Media Group, Radikal, first moved to the online platform and only published digitally in 2014 and had to close down in 2016 due to financial reasons.

Monopolization and concentration of the media in Turkey, along with the political economy of the sector is a massive topic that needs to be addressed in detail,

¹³ <https://www.penguen.com/penguendenmesaj>

but such an attempt is beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, it can be added that not only the financial hardships affect the current situation of the humor magazines, but also the changing political atmosphere in the 2000s has a significant impact on the humor magazine publishing in Turkey. Considering the restrictions brought to freedom of expression by the government, humor magazines seem to hesitate to deal with the sensitive political issues and avoid harsh criticism of ruling party politicians. In that sense, the arena of satirical humor -in the traditional sense- has gotten smaller and smaller in Turkey during the AKP rule.

A political cartoon can talk without saying much; also, it has the ability to do this in a way that even a child may understand. Most of the time, a small frame could talk louder than pages of words, cartoons' unique approach to social and political events has the potential to disturb many, and vice versa. Cantek and Gönenç define the relationship between a cartoonist and a politician as a love and hate relationship (2017). In this regard, if a politician is being illustrated frequently, it is a sign showing his/her importance, however, if the level of criticism goes beyond than acceptable, the relationship starts to breakdown and then politician may look for ways to silence the cartoonist (Cantek & Gönenç 2017). That is a common practice both in the history of Turkey and the rest of the world. For example, it has been told that, due to the prolonged repair of Yavuz battleship, a cartoon drawn by Cem, one of the most influential cartoonists of Turkish caricature, upset Recep Peker, then Minister of Public Works, for this reason, Atatürk ordered Cem to stop drawing to cover up the scandal (Ural, 1972 as cited in (Kayış, 2018).

Today, freedom of expression, let it be speech, writing, or drawing, is still facing many challenges all over the world. Rob Rogers, an American editorial cartoonist for The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette for 25 years who was also a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1999, has been recently fired when the management decided that his cartoons about US President Donald Trump were “too angry”¹⁴. Similar cases are also very common in Turkey, especially for the last 18 years. In such political tension,

¹⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/15/opinion/cartoonist-rob-rogers-trump-fired.html>

humor has become a minefield for the politicians and especially for President Erdoğan. Even though he was rather moderate when he first came into power as the Prime Minister, Erdoğan had always been in a battle with the humor magazines such as *Leman* and *Penguen* and intolerant to illustrators who were drawing cartoons about him starting from the earlier years of his career. He did not hesitate to file lawsuits against those cartoonists, claiming they were intended to assault on his personality (Aviv, 2013). Filing lawsuits against the cartoonists have become such a regular act for Erdoğan that there is even a separate page for that in Wikipedia.

For example, the satirical magazine *Penguen* had been sued by Erdoğan many times; in 2007 over a cartoon known as “*World of Tayyips*” (*Tayyipler Alemi*), which was depicting him as several animals; elephant, giraffe, monkey, camel, frog, snake, cow and duck. The cartoon became a symbol of freedom of expression after it was published in 2005 by eight cartoonists of *Penguen* to protest the unjust decision of the court that made Musa Kart pay 5000 TL for drawing Erdoğan as a cat. Erdoğan was seeking 40 thousand TL for compensation, but the case was rejected by the 1st Civil Court of First Instance within the scope of “freedom of expression.”¹⁵

However, 4 METU students were arrested on 11 July 2018 for displaying a banner with the same cartoon printed on, during their graduation ceremony on 6 July 2018. As a reaction, main opposition CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu had tweeted this cartoon on 17 July saying that Erdoğan should tolerate humor and criticism and that he cannot prevent humor and criticism by jailing people. After that, Erdoğan filed a criminal complaint against Kılıçdaroğlu along with 72 CHP MPs who also shared the cartoon on their social media accounts. President Erdoğan finally withdrew his case against students who were detained on 11 July 2018 and released after a month.¹⁶

There are many other incidents revealing Erdoğan’s intolerance towards humor and criticism, and the example presented above only gives a snapshot of the bigger

¹⁵ <http://m.bianet.org/bianet/media/57272-magazine-sued-for-erdogan-caricatures>

¹⁶ <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201810171035699029-erdogan-odtulu-ogrenciler-dava/>

picture. He never hesitated to file lawsuits when he felt any sign of attack on his image, honor, and dignity. Morreall mentions that “*humorists and artists have traditionally been personae non gratae under rigidly controlled political regimes*” (Morreall, 1983, p. 362), and it seems his analysis is valid for the case of Turkey today. The volume of criticism towards the government and especially the President in humor magazines has been drastically and gradually turned down; in such an environment producing humor has become a real challenge in Turkey. Illustrators of secular satirical magazines and daily newspapers keep on drawing political cartoons; however, there is an observable cautious approach to their work, especially when it comes to illustrations of the President. According to article 299 of the Turkish penal code of “insulting the President,” people may be faced with prison for 1 to 4 years. In that framework, today, there is minimal space to produce humorous content, direct criticism to people in power, and mainly to publish critical political cartoons. Having said that, this atmosphere also led to a fertile ground for Islamic and mainly pro-AKP humor magazines to emerge and attempt to raise their voices in the arena of humor.

2.3.2. Islamist Humor Magazines

As argued, humor magazine publishing in Turkey has been in close relationship with the political parties in power, especially till the 1970s. Cantek and Gönenç argue that this was, in general, a result of the Turkish press’ economic dependency on the official government agencies due to lacking distribution channels, which was causing independent magazines to diminish in time unavoidably (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). In those circumstances, humor magazines remained loyal to the ruling parties, taking the possibility to publish an Islamic or a communist humor magazine off the table, as those ideologies were strictly forbidden by the Republic. As an exception, the first Islamist humor magazine in Turkey was Necip Fazıl Kısakürek’s “*Borazan*,” which was published in 1946-1950 and lasted only three issues (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). As such, prominent Turkish leftists, Sabahattin Ali and Aziz Nesin’s political satire magazine “*Markopaşa*,” which openly criticized the government for the first time, also came out in this period (İdrisoğlu, 2016). Both magazines were assumed as the

enemies of the regime, so it was no surprise they were closed down in a short time, giving the message for any oppositional magazines that they were not welcome for a long time (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017).

It was not before the 1990s that Islamist humor magazines find themselves a place in the cultural landscape of Turkey, which was dominated by the secular humor magazines before. As Cantek and Gönenç also argue, it was due to the changing political and economic atmosphere in Turkey starting in the 1980s, which led to a rise in the accumulation of the Islamic capital that allowed Islamist cartoonists not to feel as outcasts anymore (2017). Having their own media tools, several Islamist humor magazines made an attempt to fill a gap they thought existed during this period.

During the 1990s, humor magazines with an Islamic tendency, including *Cıngır*, *Ustura*, *Cümbür*, *Fit*, *Filit*, *Dinozor*, were published. Those magazines were mostly criticizing Turkish modernism and secular regime as well as the politicians while promoting an Islamist ideology and a lifestyle. However, while those magazines claimed to offer an alternative, they could not resist the urge to follow the footsteps of secular magazines, particularly *Gırgır*, when it came to form and style. Cantek and Gönenç mention that *Cıngır*, which was the prominent Islamic magazine in the 1990s, used green pages to signify their ideological position -like once *Mikrop* did with red pages to promote communism- to separate themselves from *Gırgır* which was famous with its yellow pages (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). Erdem Çolak points out the fact that *Cıngır*'s "Bücür" was a lousy replica of Oğuz Aral's "Avanak Avni" character, having similarities even in the style of columns and the page it was shown (Çolak, 2016). As such, the editor of *Ustura*, Hasan Kaçan considered his magazine as an Islamic follow up of *Gırgır* due to his student-teacher relationship with Oğuz Aral (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). None of those magazines were long-lasting and could not live for more than a year. The arena of humor once again belonged to secular magazines, which now *Leman* was replacing *Gırgır* and followed by *Penguen* and *Uykusuz* throughout the 2000s.

For the 2000s, besides small publications that are mainly active in social media, Cafcaf, Hacamat, and then Misvak can be categorized as the pioneers of Islamist humor magazine publishing in Turkey. Besides the period they were published in, all three magazines can be accepted as Islamist humor magazines in Turkey, thus what they have in common is more than their differences. In those magazines, the Islamist perspective has a loud voice when addressing the socio-political issues in Turkey through cartoons. Of course, one might ask “which Islamism” do these magazines refer to since there are many interpretations and different approaches to Islam.

The most prominent Islamist humor magazine of the 2000s, *Cafcaf* marked the beginning of a new era when it came out in 2006 as a supplement of *Genç Magazine*, which was also associated with the Nakşibendi order in Turkey (Ozgur, 2012).¹⁷ It was published as an independent humor magazine after 2008 till the end of 2015 with 72 issues in total¹⁸, which also makes Cafcaf the longest-living Islamist humor magazine till today.

The editor in chief of Cafcaf, Asım Gültekin mentions in an interview that they thought there has always been a gap in the humor arena that needs to be filled with an Islamist perspective; as a result, Cafcaf was born.¹⁹ Gültekin, supporting the clean humor approach in Islam, believed there was no place for mockery or sexuality in their magazine; on the contrary, they intended to create something new; a magazine, which does not humiliate people unlike other popular humor magazines and instead embraces people’s values with religious sensitivity. As expected, the majority of the cartoonists

¹⁷ However, it is ambiguous whether Hacamat and Misvak are also associated with the same religious sect.

¹⁸ The magazine came out monthly or quarterly during the time it was being published.

¹⁹ <https://www.dunyabulteni.net/arsiv/asim-gultekinle-cafcafli-bir-soylesi-h99246.html>

and columnists in Cafcaf have religious backgrounds, mostly affiliated with Imam Hatip schools in Turkey.²⁰

In form and style, Cafcaf is no different from its secular counterparts. In the first few pages, Turkey's political agenda and the events take place, while the rest of the magazine usually depicts people captured in humorous moments during their daily practices. Besides politics, those issues they are covering have a wide range from popular culture, Muslim youth, gender roles, consumption habits to practicing religious duties such as praying namaz, fasting, etc. In that sense, it may seem that what mainly differentiates Cafcaf from other popular humor magazines is the Islamist perspective embedded in the magazine, which reveals both a familiar and, at the same time fresh approach that needs to be further explored.

As known, during the 1990s, along with the rise of Islamic capital, religious-right parties gained more power in Turkey; hence, Islamic communities had increased visibility in the public sphere, allowing them to construct a new identity as well as a lifestyle. As a result of this change in Turkish politics, a dualist structure in the society occurred: such as Islamist media, schools, and the fashion industry started to reveal as alternatives to secular ones (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). Accordingly, Cantek and Gönenç see the rise of conservative humor as a reflection of this dualist structure and states that what distinguishes Cafcaf from others is the fact that Cafcaf was published during the AKP rule, the main Islamist political party of Turkey for the last 18 years (Cantek& Gönenç, 2017).

It is hard to find a cartoon or a column in Cafcaf that openly criticizes the AKP regime or what the party represents. While the magazine does not hesitate to give harsh criticism to political parties in opposition, there is an observable tendency to support the AKP activities in almost all areas. In Cafcaf, one may find many cartoons simply following the AKP's discourse in politics as well as culture covering a wide range of

²⁰ Only exception could be the cartoonist Niyazi Çol, who identifies himself as Marxist (Koçak, 2012).

issues from education, health, consumption, media, to gender roles and clothing, etc. Çolak proposes to address this discursive parallelism between *Cafcaf* and the AKP as an indicator showing the Islamist humor magazines' tendency to use humor as an instrument (Çolak, 2016). Therefore, he further suggests that while analyzing Islamic humor, its relation to politics must always be taken into account (Çolak, 2016). However, *Cafcaf* differs from the 1990s Islamist humor magazines with its attitude aiming to preserve already acquired achievements in terms of religion and politics - which the AKP is a symbol of- rather than drawing cartoons with a radical Islamist tone for demanding socio-religious rights (Çolak, 2016).

For scholars working on the Islamist humor magazines -which is only a handful- the claim of those magazines being instruments for promoting political Islam is more or less accurate. Although the AKP has always rejected the claims about political Islam and declared its political stance as “conservative democracy” at first, whether or not it abandoned its Islamist agenda remains as a valid question since political Islam was the main characteristic of those 1990s Islamist parties such as Refah (Welfare) and Fazilet (Virtue) in which the AKP has its origins. In time, the AKP's conservative tone has become much stronger than ever that one might wonder if this label of conservative democracy is designed to conceal the political Islamism in the first place. Nonetheless, the existence of a non-organic but still visible affinity between *Cafcaf* and the AKP plays an essential role in the magazine's approach to humor which causes the cartoonists to limit themselves about what to draw, whom to criticize and as a result, what “not” to draw and whom “not” to criticize. In that sense, this affinity contradicts the understanding of critical humor in the first place. That is one of the essential reasons that make the topic of Islamist humor magazines worth exploring.

Besides the political cartoons and columns, there are everyday events depicted in a humorous manner in *Cafcaf*, which could be categorized under the cultural axis. In that sense, one might argue whether those cultural representations of daily practices have discursive parallelism with the Islamist ideology as well. On top of that, from a broader perspective, one might ask what do those depictions stand for in general. In

“*Cafcaf*: an Islamist humor magazine, no joke!” İren Özgür handles the issue from the perspective of young Muslims. She argues that scholars studying Islamic movement in Turkey have mostly focused on the politics with social attitudes; therefore she wants to analyze *Cafcaf* which she believes fills a gap by *demonstrating how a group of Muslim youth reacts and responds to the changing outlooks and lifestyles of Turkey’s Islamists* (Ozgur, 2012, p. 1). Özgür, offering a close reading of *Cafcaf*, aims to show how Muslim youth in Turkey experiments with humor and argues that the findings could help us to understand the transformation of Islamic communities from a post-Islamist perspective (Ozgur, 2012). To put it simply, she believes that young Muslims in Turkey have been misinterpreted before, and, as being depicted in Islamist humor magazines like *Cafcaf*, they actually can find a middle-ground between their religious identities and secular surroundings (Ozgur, 2012). Özgür concludes that *Cafcaf*, with its understanding of “clean humor,” *breaks down stereotypes* and shows the possibility for Muslims to enjoy the humor and laughter (Ozgur, 2012, p. 26).

All the above-mentioned studies used *Cafcaf* for their unit of analysis since it was the only Turkish Islamist humor magazine of the 2000s for a long time. In 2015, *Hacamat*, a weekly Islamist humor magazine, came out as an addition to *Cafcaf* and published 56 issues before dying in 2016. However, *Hacamat* was also published by a group of cartoonists and columnists from *Cafcaf*, so it was very similar in the content; therefore, it would not be wrong to claim that a similar analysis could be applied on *Hacamat* as well. Of course, there are some visible differences between those two, such as *Hacamat* having a coarser language than *Cafcaf*, which is contradicting the approach of “clean humor.” Unlike the before statements of Asım Gültekin -also the editorial consultant of *Hacamat*-, there is mockery as well as ridicule in *Hacamat*, which includes cartoons with obscene hand gestures and there are -if not directly-obvious implications of swearing. The level of criticism towards opposition is much stronger in *Hacamat*, including openly name-calling, such as “terrorists.”

Finally, *Misvak*, the main research topic of this study, came out in June 2015 as an online published humor magazine. In *Misvak*, the grotesque imagery and disturbing

content are way more explicit even though it is a humor magazine filled with Islamic references. There is very limited data about the magazine, and the research literature on Misvak is almost non-existent. According to Keten, Misvak's position can be explained within the context of AKP efforts to rule in the social and cultural field; hence, the debate should be conducted within the framework of cultural hegemony (Keten, 2019). He argues that Islamic and pro-AKP humor magazines like *Cafcaf*, *Hacamat*, and *Misvak* were created as Islamic substitutions of *Leman* and *Penguen* while Islamic popular culture magazines such as *Cins*, *Lacivert*, and *İzdiham* were intended to replace *Ot* and *Kafa* (Keten, 2019). That goes without saying that a similar analysis can also be applied to the TV shows such as *Diriliş Ertuğrul* or *Payitaht Abdulhamid* that are broadcasting on the state channel TRT.

In that framework, Cantek and Gönenç question whether those Islamist humor magazines succeed in finding an alternative approach to humor as they claim or if they simply follow the path of their “secular” counterparts (Cantek&Gönenç, 2017). According to the below example, when it comes to forming and style, Misvak not only follows *Uykusuz*, the most popular humor magazine in Turkey today, it almost copies the magazine's cartoons²¹.



Figure 5.
(Source: diken.com.tr)

²¹ <http://www.diken.com.tr/uykusuzdan-misvaka-kopya-cikisi-bari-ampulleri-degistirseydiniz/>

According to the website diken.com.tr, the weekly humor magazine, Uykusuz criticized Misvak for copying their image tweeting, “*How many imitation cartoons? At least you could have changed the lightbulbs!*”²². In both pictures, a market place is described almost in the same way. However, while the Uykusuz cartoon satirized the sale of dollars at a low exchange rate due to an "operational error" experienced on the Halkbank's website, Misvak takes a pro-government stance by targeting those who criticized the high price of onions and potatoes. In that sense, Misvak uses humor as an instrument to support government actions while delivering almost the same image as Uykusuz.

In his book “*Media Representations of the Cultural Other in Turkey (2018)*”, which aims to locate the “cultural other” through a center-periphery dichotomy, Alparslan Nas, besides films, TV series, and advertisements, also analyses Misvak’s cartoons published in 2017. Building on Bourdieu, Nas claims that the cartoon must be comprehended as a “field” that consists of power relations and which in different social classes compete in terms of their habitus and cultural capitals (Nas, 2018). However, how a cartoon can constitute a field is somewhat unclear. Accordingly, Nas argues that there are three layers of meaning in Misvak’s narrative: promotion of xenophobia, counter-secularism, and discourse of nationalism (Nas, 2018). Further, he believes that Misvak uses misogyny, racism, homophobia, militarism, and speciesism as narrative strategies to provide it with “*the necessary discursive space for self-representation through the demonstration of the cultural other*” (Nas, 2018, p. 82).

While Nas’ assertions regarding the use of misogyny, racism, homophobia, etc. in Misvak are indeed relevant and correct, this study aims to position Misvak within the context of hegemony debates rather than the center-periphery dichotomy. First, the center-periphery framework has inherent problems that require further questioning. Taking a somewhat critical stance and building on Foucault, Nas argues that he treats

²²https://twitter.com/UykusuzDergi/status/1150879665541865478?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1150879665541865478&ref_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.diken.com.tr%2Fuykusuzdan-misvaka-kopya-cikisi-bari-ampulleri-degistirseydiniz%2F

these notions as “technologies of power” or “technologies of the self” and does not consider center-periphery relations as “stable, consistent, and coherent categories” and argues there are dynamic boundaries between them (Nas, 2018). However, he still finds this approach relevant and argues that “*center and periphery constitute certain positions*”; hence it is useful to remain in the framework to pinpoint centered one’s self-representation (especially in the media) through the cultural other (Nas, 2018). As mentioned before, it should be remembered that the center-periphery dichotomy is very problematic and it has been used as a paradigm at the risk of ignoring class struggles and instead worked as an agency to explain the binaries in the society from only a cultural perspective in Turkey (Erdoğan, 2015).

In that sense, Misvak’s relation to the current disposition of the politics and especially the magazine’s efforts to construct enemy images under the AKP rule, which is characterized as a struggle for hegemonic domination in both political and cultural spheres will be further examined in the following chapters.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

It has been argued in this chapter that humor is a complex notion that is also very intricate that can take many forms and has an ambivalent nature that could be shaped by those who use it. It has been claimed that humor can be articulated into many different discourses, which could be counter-hegemonic as well as hegemonic. As such, humor can be subversive and a tool for the resistance, but it also has the capability to empower the authority. Humor can be freeing and become a positive force in the hands of the outcasts, while it could easily be offensive, misogynistic, racist, and homophobic. All in all, even it is a powerful ally, humor does not solely lead to the rebellion, but it could also be used by the hegemonic discourse to silence opponent masses.

From a historical perspective, humor magazine publishing in Turkey has also been briefly reviewed through similar lenses in the chapter. Although it has been claimed that mainstream (secular) humor magazines also showed tendencies to remain

loyal to the ruling parties in Turkey, the level of criticism towards the government is almost non-existent in the Islamist humor magazines of the 2000s. In that sense, it has been mentioned that Cafcaf, Hacamat, and Misvak take a pro-AKP stance, and the use of humor in those Islamist humor magazines emerges as rather instrumental. While those magazines claim to adopt a counter-hegemonic position in the cultural sphere, they contribute to the AKP's hegemonic project, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE AKP'S IDEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE AND THE HEGEMONIC PROJECT

This thesis work aims to analyze the discourse of *Misvak*, and in order to uncover absences and silences in the discourse, it is also crucial to investigate whether there is discursive parallelism between the magazine and the AKP government or not. Considering *Misvak* identifies as a pro-AKP humor magazine, the main characteristics of the AKP need to be addressed to detect whether there is parallelism between the party discourse and representations of those main issues taking place in *Misvak*. To that end, this chapter will focus on the AKP's ideological discourse and the hegemonic project.

This chapter, drawing on Poulantzas' theory on the capitalist authoritarian state, aims to position the AKP as a representative of neoliberal authoritarianism, starting with the victory that the party achieved the first time in 2002 and till today. Gramscian analysis of hegemony will also shape the theoretical background of the study to be able to explain the position of the AKP in Turkish politics. Within the discussion regarding the party's transformation in years, it will be argued that the neoliberal authoritarian character of the AKP remained the same while the main game-changer was the transition of the AKP from an expansive to a limited hegemony project.

During its rule for the last 18 years as an authoritarian government, the AKP has been using repressive state apparatuses that enforce discipline such as the police force and the judicial system very effectively. The use of frequency of those repressive state apparatuses was highly increased in recent years in order to silence the opponent masses, as also been debated by many scholars, in the aftermath of the Gezi Revolt in 2013. On the other hand, the Ideological State Apparatus, media in the first place, was also used heavily by the party both to establish consent in society and to mobilize party

voters. Given the importance of the culture (including popular culture) in Gramscian analysis of hegemony, those efforts of the AKP to establish an Islamist culture should also be dealt with in such understanding. As argued in the previous chapter, Islamist humor magazines constitute an important part of the culture; thus, their existence also needs to be analyzed in the framework of the battle for hegemonic domination. This perspective could also help to shed light on underlying causes regarding the differences in those magazines, which will be acclaimed to be also heavily dependent on the transition of the AKP from an expansive to a limited hegemony project.

To that end, as being the product of the limited hegemony period and the main research topic of this thesis, Misvak's relation to the AKP discourse will be further analyzed. For that purpose, first, the trajectory along with the underlying causes for the AKP to come out as a hegemony project with a neoliberal authoritarian character will be shortly reviewed; and with the establishment of its hegemony, those crises that threatened the party's domination which at the end resulted in today's AKP will be briefly discussed. To that end, this chapter will attempt to briefly mention the main features of the ideological discourse of the AKP covering issues such as the construction of the enemy images, Kurdish question, Gender, the self-image of the AKP cadres along with the highly debated issue of *kulturkampf*.

3.1 Crisis of Hegemony Before the Reconfiguration of the Politics by the AKP

In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the AKP's discourse covering a handful of issues, it seems essential to briefly review those underlying causes for the party to come out as a hegemony project. To be able to that, first, one should take a step back and attempt to delve into conditions surrounding the political sphere in Turkey before the reconfiguration of the politics by the AKP, starting with its electoral victory in 2002.

It has been claimed that due to the unstable coalitions, successive political crises, and early elections, instability, and short-termism are accepted as the key structural features of mainstream politics in Turkey (Yaka, 2015). Having said that, it has also been argued that an unprecedented crisis of hegemony marked the politics in

Turkey before the AKP came into power. That is usually described as a total hegemonic crisis that its seeds were planted in the 1980s and gradually increased during the 1990s (Özkazanç, 2002). This atmosphere, which led to a traumatic era both financially and politically and finally resulted in the 2001 economic crisis, was not intrinsic to the unique conditions of Turkey but rather was a mixture of the key features of Turkish politics along with the adverse effects of globalization.

In that sense, it can be argued that Turkey experienced the echo of the crisis of neoliberal hegemony which David Harvey argues as “*While neoliberalization may have been about the restoration of class power, it has not necessarily meant the restoration of economic power to the same people*” (Harvey, 2005, p. 35). In that respect, drawing on Poulantzas, who identifies three determining elements of the contemporary dominant ideology as irrationalism, neoliberalism, and authoritarianism (Poulantzas, 2008), it can be concluded that today, neoliberalism and authoritarianism go hand by hand. Thus, it can be claimed that neoliberalism comes up as a keyword since this notion allows us to explain the authoritarian character of the AKP as well as its hegemonic project, which did not abruptly emerge but instead developed as a part of the long-term historical process. In that sense, in order to explain the continuity from the 1980s to the AKP period, analyzing neoliberal experience as the formation and consolidation of the authoritarian state form in Turkey comes handy (Karahanoğulları Y. & Türk D., 2018).

Bob Jessop, building on Poulantzas’ theory of the state, attempts to trace the patterns between authoritarian state and capitalism in his works, where he elaborates on the concepts of “accumulation strategies” and “hegemonic project” (Jessop, 1991). Those accumulation regimes were, in fact, the resonation of the global crisis of neoliberalism that helped to shape the hegemonic crisis in Turkey while they also paved the way for authoritarian statism starting with the 1980s.

In addition, Turkey’s inner dynamics also paved the way for instability, which resulted in coalition governments and a fragile economy. Amongst those dynamics were the political Islam and Kurdish opposition that posed a challenge to the

secularist/Kemalist structure of Turkey since the mid-1980s (Saraçoğlu, 2016). On the other hand, with the imposition of the 1982 Constitution and the New Labour code of 1983, the military's intervention and shutting down union confederations as well as restrictions to labor unions from political activities caused wage-labor vis-à-vis capital to erode in the 1980s (Oğuz, 2009). In short, the political and economic crisis of the late 1970s was resolved in favor of capitalism during this period (Özden, Akça, Bekmen, 2017).

The 1990s, on the other hand, is accepted as a period in which Turkey faced a total hegemonic crisis. During this period, there were fundamental issues that contributed to this crisis; the rise of the Islamic capital, *weakening of the centrist parties* due to the above mentioned political Islam and Kurdish movement along with the bad management of the economy (Özden et al., 2017). Besides, the export-oriented neoliberal growth strategy of the 1980s paved the way for corruption based on the cooperation of politicians-bureaucrats-capital trio in the 1990s (Özkazanç, 2002). During this period, the Istanbul-based big bourgeoisie was also dealing with the representation crisis (Bekmen, 2014) while the masses represented by Political Islam and the Kurdish movement were excluded from the political system after the military intervention of 28 February in 1997 (Akça, 2014) (also cited in; Özden et al., 2017).

With the articulation of the exterior factors such as the EU and IMF to the above mentioned structural problems, Turkey was indeed facing a total crisis of hegemony by the end of the 1990s. The incompetencies of the power block due to lack of a hegemonic capability to construct a broad-based consent and the very fragile economic climate, which finally resulted in November 2000 and February 2001 economic crises, completed this frame. After the collapse of the DSP-MHP-ANAP coalition, the November 2002 elections were held in such an atmosphere. The AKP, a newly formed party, gained its first electoral victory on 3 November with 34.3% of the votes and almost two-thirds of the seats of the parliament with 363 MPs. The elections in which the AKP came out as a single-party government put an end to the coalitions of the 90s and started a new era in Turkish politics.

3.2 Features of the AKP's Hegemony Project and Its Transition

The founding cadre of the AKP who declared themselves as the reformists was the young wing of the Virtue Party, and they decided to follow another approach in politics. Considering its Islamist roots, the AKP caused suspicions, whether it left its Islamist agenda or not; however, the founders declared that what they built was a conservative democratic party. After the efforts to engage with the EU reforms as well as the party statements regarding democracy and human rights, the AKP was perceived by some scholars as a political party that learned from the past mistakes of the Islamist movements that led to the 28 February process. For example, Alev Özkazanç argues that it was a negotiation between the party and the state/system that allowing the AKP to be a major power in the center-right in exchange for leaving the route of political Islam (Özkazanç, 2002, p. 211). Açikel, on the other hand, argues that the results of the November 2002 elections showed a shift in Turkish center-right tradition which is inherited from the Democratic Party and Justice Party and that this bloc lost power in favor of nationalist-corporatists and Islamic-populists (Açikel, 2003). Behind the rise of the Islamic populism, there was the competing position of MÜSİAD, small to medium size conservative business associations, aka *Anatolian Tigers*, vis-à-vis TUSİAD that represented the Istanbul based bourgeoisie (Açikel, 2003). In that sense, the AKP's electoral victory was seen as a potential for building bridges between the Istanbul and Anatolian capital, and also for integration with the EU; thus, Western values and democracy.

Overall, it has been argued that the potential of the AKP was lying in the fact that it was the only party with the potential of combining the long-term hegemonic interest of the bourgeoisie with the short-term demands of the people (Özkazanç, 2002, p. 211). Adding the use of symbolic sources to construct its hegemonic project to this potential, the reasons causing the party to come out as an important actor shaping almost the last 18 years of the Turkish politics become clearer. After coming to power in 2002, the AKP remained to be a majority party and a single-party government till

today even though it had faced some challenges and setbacks.²³ It is one of the most relevant and crucial inquiries of today's political discussions to investigate and dig up the underlying causes and reasons helping the party to be the most powerful political actor in Turkey for the last 18 years; however, such an attempt is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, some of the main characteristics of the party will be brought to the table to become familiar with the AKP discourse on many issues that will be further evaluated in the next section.

It can be briefly argued that the AKP's hegemonic project relies on two main aspects: neoliberal populism and the use of (mainly Islamic) symbolic sources (Bozkurt, 2013). In that sense, it would be useful to remember the party's ideological self-positioning, which is conservative democracy; and even though the relevance of this concept in Turkish politics today is debatable, it was the AKP's slogan when the party was first established. Can Küçükali, drawing on Harvey, argues that this notion is not a superficial choice; in fact, due to the vagueness embedded in conservatism, it provides the Islamist character or discourses of the AKP to be instrumentalized which becomes a pragmatic device that provides a type of immunity for people not to be affected from the negative social and political implications of the neoliberalist transformation of society (Küçükali, 2015).

Today, it is not a question whether the party's economic policies based on a neoliberal agenda or not. It is crystal clear from the beginning that the AKP embraced neoliberalism, which caused scholars to position the party within the center-right tradition (DP, AP, ANAP) rather than National View (MNP-MSP-RP-SP-FP) (Küçükali, 2015). The fact is, even though a young group of politicians established the AKP in the FP, the split of opinion was mainly derived from the economic policies; Erbakan heavily criticized Western capitalism and rather favored an Islamic economic unity while the AKP had no problems with the Western modernization when it comes

²³ It was only during the June 2015 General Elections that the party lost its power to form a single-party government but regained its position as the majority party after the early elections conducted in November 2015. However, the party lost a significant amount of its power during the local elections of 2019 which the AKP had lost in all of three major cities namely İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir.

to neoliberalism. In fact, the party adopted neoliberal economic policies from the early days of its rule; kept on collaborating with the IMF which had been already involved in the economy both prior and after the 2001 crisis, provided assistance of \$20.4 billion in 1999-2003; hence the AKP government satisfied the IMF demands such as reducing subsidies to agriculture, privatize and reduce the role of the public sector in economy (Erinç Yeldan & Ünüvar, 2016). The party proved its commitment to the neoliberal agenda throughout the years which, resulted in flexible labor, unemployment, and poverty. Nonetheless, the party met the expectations and achieved to forge an alliance between the Anatolian/conservative capital and Istanbul bourgeoisie, namely MÜSIAD and TUSIAD; the political consequence of this alliance was a deepened neoliberal hegemony in Turkey (Özden et al. 2017). It can be argued that this “achievement” not only strengthened the neoliberal hegemony but also became one of the cornerstones for the AKP to construct its hegemonic project along with the neoliberal populist policies.

Umut Bozkurt mentions that despite the party’s commitment to neoliberalism which harms the living conditions of the masses, the AKP receives the majority of its voters from the poorest section of the society, and she uses the notion of “neoliberal populism” to explain the reasons of this anomaly (Bozkurt, 2013). This term is mainly used to elucidate the situation in Latin America, where the political leaders apply the combination of populism along with liberal economic policies. Accordingly, the main inquiry revolves around the contradiction derived from the fact that while the AKP steadily weakens the welfare policies and still achieves electoral victory. Although it is a complex problem that needs to be further tackled, it can be mentioned that social assistance programs play an essential role in this equation, as emphasized by many scholars. Bozkurt indicates that neoliberal populism manifests itself as the neoliberal reconstruction of Turkey’s social security systems along with the burst of social assistance programs (Bozkurt, 2013).

With the application of neoliberal populism, those poor masses became dependent on social assistance programs instead of benefitting from welfare policies. Even though it was established in 1986, “The Social Assistance and Solidarity

Encouragement Fund” became the primary organization for alleviating poverty during the AKP rule; in addition, municipalities also played a key role with in-kind assistance to the poor while charity groups and philanthropic associations took over some state functions (Bozkurt, 2013).

Furthermore, those social transfers which are allocated to students, families, and entrepreneurs are being used as practical tools in the AKP’s hegemonic project to mobilize its voters. At the same time, the party discourse proposes an Islamist lifestyle. In that sense, Zafer Yılmaz argues that with the establishment of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies²⁴ which works as a main administrative mechanism supporting those social transfers, social questions are handled as a regulation of family life instead of as problems of inequality and social rights (Z. Yılmaz, 2015).

In that sense, it is not surprising that the AKP gets the most votes from homemakers as the public opinion studies on voter preferences show; after them, the highest support comes from the private sector workers engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry and unemployed people; the AKP continues to be the first in these settlements or class sections by getting over 50% of the votes from the suburbs and slums (Yıldırım, 2009). Although the AKP’s receiving the most votes from homemakers may not seem class-related, considering that the conditional cash transfers developed under the Social Risk Mitigation Project are making payments directly to the mothers, which overlap with the dependent class segments targeted by neoliberal populism (Yıldırım, 2009).

As mentioned before, the AKP’s hegemonic project not only relies on the notion of neoliberal populism but also makes use of the symbolic/cultural sphere in a way that is intertwined with those practices mentioned above to construct the Gramscian concept of consent in society. To put it, those features of the AKP hegemony is commonly associated with Islamism, nationalism, and conservatism by the scholars working on this subject (Saraçoğlu, 2016). However, since this aspect with in relation to the popular culture, is directly related to the central inquiry of this thesis,

²⁴ Currently known as the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Services

it deserves a more detailed contextualization; thus, the issue will be argued in the next section thoroughly.

Nonetheless, as mentioned before, the party policies do not aim to end poverty altogether, and instead creates an order of dependency on the government aids and social assistance programs considering its neoliberal populist character. In that framework, the loyalty of the party voters is also questionable; because it is unclear if Islamism is working as a cement ideology independently of economic conditions. For example, even though it is accepted that ideological differences shaped under the influence of religiosity are significant sources of voting behavior, financial satisfaction came up as the most crucial determinant of the 2010 referendum vote for the AKP supporters (Kalaycıoğlu, 2012). In that sense, even though the identification with the masses seems to be achieved through Islamization, it is unknown if it is a genuine identification or a superficial pretend within the understanding of a quid pro quo between the party and its voters. Suffice to say that the representation of the self-image of the AKP and the party supporters also seems ambivalent.

Finally, it has been argued that there is a significant transformation in the AKP's mode of rule, in recent years. Those claims usually rely on the assertion that the AKP first started as a conservative democratic but also a liberal party but adopted an authoritarian tone only later. However, as also Özden et al. argues, the AKP's hegemonic project needs to be considered as authoritarian for mainly two reasons;

First, the party did not dismantle the authoritarian neoliberal state form established in the post-1980 period. Second, it has continued the majoritarian and monolithic understanding of democracy it inherited from Turkey's conservative right-wing tradition which has resulted in intolerance of any kind of political criticism, collective public action, or social and political opposition (Akça, 2014 as cited in Özden et al. 2017 p.192)

In that sense, unlike the liberal and conservative analysis which positions the AKP as a historical break in politics, the party reproduces the authoritarian and repressive state structure in Turkey through an Islamist-conservative model; therefore, it represents continuity rather than a break (Bedirhanoğlu, 2009). In that regard, the hegemony crisis in Turkey before the reconfiguration of the politics by the AKP does

not necessarily mean that the party came out as a fresh and organic solution to those problems. It is clear that a new era started with the AKP rule in Turkey, but those underlying causes and the final results are reminiscent of neoliberal authoritarianism, which is not new nor only manifested in Turkey. Poulantzas defines the main features of the authoritarian state as follows;

The rise of authoritarian reason encompasses the decline of democratic institutions in modern societies, the increased importance of bureaucracy, and the particular importance of the ideological state apparatuses to an oppression based less, perhaps, on the use of physical force and more on its internalization by individuals as symbolic violence (Poulantzas, 2008, p. 377).

Even though those features mentioned above quite apply to the current conditions, it may well be argued that a particular form of neoliberal authoritarianism revealed in Turkey where the inner dynamics of politics could be overly complex and unique. For example, the emergence of the notion “Erdoğanism” is also used to define the specific characteristics of politics in Turkey today. According to Tanıl Bora, this term refers to the one person rule in Turkey after 2011 with a resemblance to the Orban regime in Hungary and Putin's rule in Russia (Bora, 2018a, p. 122). Yilmaz and Bashirov argue that Erdoganism has four dimensions as “ *electoral authoritarianism as the electoral system, neopatrimonialism as the economic system, populism as the political strategy and Islamism as the political ideology*”(Yilmaz & Bashirov, 2018, p. 1812). Nonetheless, this discussion is beyond the scope of this study; therefore, it could be useful to focus on the changing dynamics of the hegemony rather than attempting to contextualize the AKP as an actor altogether.

In that framework, it is proposed that the main game-changer explaining the party's changing rule in the recent years is the transition of the AKP from an expansive to a limited hegemony project (Özden et al., 2017). Gramsci, using the example of Moderate Party in the 19th century Italy, argues that if a ruling bloc has to resort to coercion and repression, it shows the failure of the hegemonic class to adopt the interests of the popular classes and its intention to instead neutralize or decapacitate them through depriving them of their leadership; this form of hegemony is accepted as limited rather than an expansive one (Jones, 2006, p. 52). With this contextualization

in mind, while it is also debatable to what extent the AKP's hegemonic project was expansive, to begin with, it can be concluded that the party's hegemonic project seems to be a limited one as of today.

Regardless of the AKP's electoral victory and the party's statements picturing a modern and "democratic" approach in the first years of its rule, skepticism of the Turkish military towards the AKP remained salient. Considering the complex and intertwined nature of the civilian-military relationships in Turkey, the AKP was indeed aware of the delicate situation when it first came into power, especially taking into account that many parties established within the National View movement were shut down by the military tutelage in the past. In that sense, Erdoğan's emphasis on how the AKP is different from the National View with his famous saying that "they have taken off their National View shirt" was not only targeting the secular and pro-EU civilians but also aiming to assure the military which posited the biggest threat to the party's existence. Within this framework, the political battle against the military was crucial for the AKP to establish its hegemony at the state level (Özden et al., 2017).

To put it simply, the AKP first used Turkey's EU candidacy as leverage against the military during the first a few years of its rule; then adopted a harsher tone with the help of Ergenekon and Balyoz operations which were later acclaimed to be a part of the Gülen conspiracy to weaken the military's power (Özden et al., 2017). The AKP, winning victory over the military, gradually gained control over the state apparatuses, including the education system and judiciary, and ensured their takeovers by the AKP cadres (Özden et al., 2017). On the other hand, maybe the most important part of this process was the AKP's gaining control over the media, which helped the party also to control ideological state apparatus and came out as an authoritarian state.

In brief, it can be concluded that the change in the AKP's mode of governance in recent years can be explained with the altering limitations of its hegemonic project. As argued before, this does not necessarily show a change in the essence of the party's nature but rather is a strategic choice to mobilize and consolidate its voters. That is due to certain events and developments that led to breaks in Turkish politics and resulted

in a loss of the AKP's hegemonic power. There are many intertwined factors that finally caused the transition of the AKP's hegemony from an expansive to a limited one, and the Gezi Revolt in 2013 may be the one representing the most certain break. Besides, the global economic crisis of 2007-2008, along with the party's political decisions regarding the conflicts in the Middle East as well as the Kurdish question after 2010 were effective in this process (Özden et al., 2017). As a result, the AKP lost its capacity to establish its hegemony over numerous segments in the society such as the *big bourgeoisie, urban and secular middle classes, Kurds, Alevis as well as the international actors* thus, decided to change its strategy for a limited hegemony project which manifested itself in an exclusionist way (Özden et al., 2017, p.199).

In such an environment, the AKP decided to pursue a rather Islamist political agenda while continuing with its neoliberal populist strategies. President Erdoğan being in the first place, the authoritarian tone of the AKP officials became more prominent, and the discriminative speeches became an essential part of the party's discursive strategies. Creating enemies and defeating them with the help of the "nation" came out as an ordinary way to mobilize and consolidate its mass of voters, and the debate on the *kulturkampf* came to the forefront once again.

Herewith, the pro-AKP popular culture products such as humor magazines also adopted a similar tone; for example, creating enemies while affirming the party in every circumstance turned out to be a frequently used method in *Misvak*. When considered that a work of art could affirm or negate the reality it emerges from, the AKP in that sense, needs constant affirmation to construct the Gramscian concept of "consent" in society. That is why Erdoğan does not hesitate to file lawsuits against any oppositional cartoonists since their work could negate his supremacy and harm his image that he has been working on for a long time. Of course, it should be again noted that the AKP's transformation through the years also put Erdoğan in a position to be inclusive to only a particular part of the society which the party refers to as "50 % of the Turkey".

In that sense, the next section will try to focus on the similarities between those discursive strategies of the AKP and their echo in Misvak (which will be discussed in the following chapters) by pinpointing those prominent themes of the AKP discourse covering some of the issues including enemy image construction, the Kurdish question, gender, the self-image of the AKP cadres along with the highly debated issue of *kulturkampf*.

3.3 Cultural Hegemony and the Ideological Discourse

It is generally accepted that the symbolic/cultural sources of the AKP hegemony lean on the ideological positions of Islamism, conservatism as well as nationalism. Those three also constitute the backbone of the ideological sources of the Turkish right (Bora, 2018b). However, the volume and the dominance of those ideologies in the AKP discourse have been frequently changed from time to time during its rule. Especially after the global economic crisis in 2011, party discourse evolved into a more authoritarian one comparing to before, while neoliberal populist policies, along with Islamism, also gained momentum during this period. Although the party declared many times before that, they were not interfering with anyone's lifestyle; those statements of the AKP cadres, including Erdoğan, revealed quite the opposite mindset. For example, then Prime Minister Erdoğan mentioned that "*female and male students living together is against our conservative, democratic character*" in 2013²⁵. In another incident, a TV presenter was fired due to AKP spokesman Hüseyin Çelik's statements regarding her clothing, Çelik expressed his discomfort about the woman's attire by saying "*We do not intervene against anyone, but this is too much. It is unacceptable*".²⁶ Along with the similar statements coming from the

²⁵ <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/female-male-students-living-together-is-against-our-character-turkish-pm-57343>

²⁶ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2451439/Turkish-TV-presenter-sacked-wearing-low-cut-coming-ruling-political-party.html>

AKP officials, severe restrictions against alcohol use were presented as religious necessities.

Many of those statements and sanctions that were mostly targeting the lifestyle of the youth, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals caused strong reactions and created social unrest mainly amongst the secular segment of the society. This process resulted in a wave of cumulative anger, which finally manifested itself as Gezi protests in 2013. With the use of excessive police force and the irreconcilable stance of the AKP, Gezi protests became more than a youth movement and turned into a revolt, which finally resulted in the most significant hegemonic break for the party. Gezi Revolt not only stands out as a critical incident in politics, but it is also culturally significant considering the use of humor during the protests as a tool for resistance; in that sense, it also has a central place in this study. The use of political humor revealed via slogans, street writings, cartoons, and drawings during the Gezi uprising. Along with the battle against the police violence, criticism of Erdoğan and the AKP emerged in the form of mockery and ridicule, aiming to upend the hierarchy, which was perceived as it was reminiscent of the features of a Bakhtinian carnival (Görkem, 2015; Karakayalı & Yaka, 2014).

For instance, Jeremy Walton mentions how Gezi Revolt could be perceived as carnivalesque by describing a video about the uprising published on Youtube;

A young man in a gas mask performing Michael Jackson's signature 'Moon Dance'; groups of demonstrators performing a folk dance (halay çekmek) in a circle; and, a cloaked protestor wearing a Guy Fawkes mask, the preeminent global icon of anarchic carnival. Despite the evident violence depicted – water cannons and teargas – the mood of the video is unambiguously one of celebration and jubilation, a fact that the drum-and-bass beat accompanying the visuals underscores (Walton, 2015, p. 52).

On the other hand, Walton also concludes that his interpretation of Gezi is similar to those analyses of Žižek and Tuğal and mentions that “*the subtle social and cultural transformations entailed by neoliberalism are fundamental to protest movements throughout the globe*”. (Walton, 2015, p. 52). In that sense, Žižek argues that “*people who occupied Gezi were mainly secular educated protesters, and their target was neither neoliberal capitalism nor Islamism, but the personality of Erdoğan*”

(Žižek, 2014, p. 182). Sociologist Cihan Tuğal also emphasizes the (new) middle-class characteristic of the Revolt and argues that defining Gezi as a working-class movement is an illusion (Tuğal, 2013).

Following the above-mentioned points, and considering its secular character, the political humor embedded in the Gezi spirit was also revealing the deep-rooted binaries in the cultural sphere, as Dağtaş argues. Many middle-class protestors adopted a Kemalist/secularist stance; with those slogans of “*Mustafa Kemal’in askerleriyiz*” (We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal), the Revolt had also gained a character similar to the war of liberation as they almost intended to defend the nation from reactionism (Dağtaş, 2016). In that sense, the use of humor during the protests is worthy of attention since, as the product of the hegemonic form, the political work of humor entails power struggles along the secular/religious binary in Turkey (Dağtaş, 2016). Even though the partisan media chose to ignore the Gezi Revolt and TV channels aired penguin documentaries instead (which also later became an ironic symbol of the protests), with the help of broad social media coverage and the support of the secular humor magazines such as *Leman*, *Penguen* and *Uykusuz*, the effectiveness of the political humor unfolded.

Since producing humor considered a significant aspect of the culture, it was clearly the seculars (whether it be Kemalist or leftist) who dominated the cultural sphere during the Gezi Revolt. However, those counter-protests in the city squares such as the Man Standing Against the Standing Man (*Duran Adama Karşı Duran Adam*) were indicators of things to come. In that regard, it is meaningful that the pro-AKP humor products started to appear at an unprecedented scale after the Gezi Revolt. As mentioned before, *Cafcaf* was the only published Islamist humor magazine during the AKP period till 2015, and it was only later that other magazines such as *Hacamat* and *Misvak* started to reveal along with the pro-AKP culture magazines such as *Cins*, which also started to be published in the same year. This inquiry should be further examined within the context of cultural hegemony which could let us making sense of the AKP efforts to show dominance also in the cultural sphere in order to establish its hegemony project as well as to preserve what has already been won; meaning the

loyalty of its voters and supporters. Briefly mentioning, those latest developments regarding the pro-AKP publications were indeed about the highly debated issue of the *kulturkampf*.

The reproduction of the cultural hegemony debates resurfaced after the Gezi Revolt in 2013. During this period, it has been mentioned many times that the importance of cultural production was somehow overlooked, or those efforts were insufficient amongst the AKP supporters, and the discussion was heated after Erdoğan's statements about cultural hegemony. He even mentioned that *"they managed to gain political power; however, they have not managed to gain cultural power"*.

While delivering his speech at the 38th General Assembly of the Ensar Foundation in 2017, Erdoğan also said;

We have been in government for 14 years without interruption. Still, we have problems regarding social and cultural power. Undoubtedly, there have been promising developments. There is now more interest in İmam Hatip high Schools. Quran, Ottoman Turkish are now elective courses in all schools. Still, we have much to do in terms of cultivating the generations that we dream of and our nation needs and demands. (DHA 2017, as cited in (Bulut & İleri 2019).

Those above statements of President Erdoğan lay out the essence of the subject in a nutshell. While it can be derived from his remarks that he is in remorse due to lack of cultural capital within the AKP intelligentsia, such discourse also caters to awake deep-rooted secular/religious binary in society. In fact, such self-criticism involves a narcissistic and condescending stance towards the secular domain, which was believed to be the cultural hegemon in Turkey so far. However, it should be delicately questioned the scope and extent of the notion of "culture" before finger-pointing and attempting to stigmatize those cultural products of Kemalist modernization for being produced under the influence of Westernization, which has been the main counter-argument of conservative circles in Turkey.

Whether it be popular culture, folk culture, or high culture, the scope and extent of the notion "culture" is very broad. Highly intertwined with the ideology, culture can

be articulated into many segments such as education and media; thus can be observed within many small details that many overlooks, including street signs, people's names, etc. In that sense, it can be claimed that a form of Islamic culture (rather a Sunni Islam with a pro-AKP political position) is widespread in Turkey today.

One of the areas that Islamic culture is visible to the extent that it attempts to replace the older, secular, Kemalist version is the field of education and youth policies. As is known, one of the purposes of the AKP and President Erdoğan himself was to create “a pious youth” that will replace the Kemalist and rebellious generation. According to Erdoğan, “an ideal young person is who carries a computer in one hand and the Quran in the other” (İHA 2012, as cited in Lüküslü, 2016, p.2).

Demet Lüküslü argues that the myth of the creation of a pious generation also reveals the dichotomies in the AKP discourse which is catering to stigmatize the remaining parties as threats; such as “the atheists” or “glue-sniffers”²⁷, while positioning the pious youth as the ideal generation (Lüküslü, 2016). For the construction of this desired pious youth, the Ministry of Youth and Sports adopted many projects and organized many events. Those mass events organized by the Ministry such as the commemoration of the battle of Manzikert, Sarıkamış or Gallipoli were filled with symbolism aiming to create a new social memory coherent with the goals of the AKP which is to create an alternative link with the past and the ancestors different from the Kemalist narrative and instead promoting Turkishness and Muslimness (Lüküslü, 2016).

The dramatic reforms and constant alterations made in the education system also comes to the forefront when exploring the AKP's intervention to the sphere of culture. The AKP's educational policies are not only promoting Islamism but also shaped by the neoliberal economic policies. The deregulation and privatization enabled the Islamic communities to intervene in the educational system; such as the

²⁷ Do you want this generation to be a glue-sniffing (*tinerci*) youth? Do you want this generation to be a rebellious one against their elders? Do you want this youth to be torn apart from their national and moral values, to become a generation without a certain direction or any mission? (*ntvmsnbc* 2012, Lüküslü's translation)

publication of the textbooks and preparing cultural materials by those Islamists publishing houses resulted in significant profits (Kandiyoti & Emanet, 2017). As Kandiyoti and Emanet argue, the linkages between the Directorate of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education tightened during the AKP rule in defiance of the Kemalist secular principles. For example, at the risk of overshadowing the republican celebration of the 23 April Children's Day, the celebration of the prophet Muhammad's birth was scheduled on 24 April as a new official school commemoration (Kandiyoti & Emanet, 2017, p. 2). It is clear that with the increasing number of Imam Hatip schools and newly opened dormitories and foundations that are affiliated with the Islamic communities caused the resurgence of Islam and undermined the secular education model that was fundamentally important for the Kemalist ideology.

Another branch that has gone under severe transformation is the media sector in Turkey during the AKP rule. It is a fact that the media's position in Turkey was somehow always dependent on the political parties in power and rarely functioned as a 4th branch in the system of the separation of powers that autonomously controls over the other branches and especially the government for the public interest. However, it could be easily argued that the media has never been such a strong ideological state apparatus before, as it currently is under the control of the AKP government. Today, the broadcasting media's priority is to relay frameworks that promote a particular lifestyle and the sacred cause rather than being a watchdog (Kaya & Çakmur, 2010). It is possible to go further and claim that the framework of the mentioned lifestyle and the cause is determined by the government and promoted as (Sunni) Islamism and a pro-AKP stance.

Starting with the confiscation of the Sabah-ATV group as well as the Çukurova Group's media outlets, the AKP gained an incredible amount of power over media in Turkey, especially after 2007. Today, mainstream media became the partisan media, and the oppositional broadcasting in major TV channels became almost impossible. In that sense, it is meaningful that Kaya and Çakmur suggest that *"The majority party is*

more concerned to show that the country is ungovernable than to try to govern it itself.” (Kaya & Çakmur, 2010, p. 534).

Media and especially broadcasting media is an irreplaceable tool for the AKP, considering that the *“Islamist identity, which has been revitalized by the hegemonic social imagination and intensified by a reactionary mood, is organized by pro-government media opinion technicians”* (Yılmaz, 2017, p. 483). In that sense, those efforts to stigmatize the anti-AKP segment of the society as the “others” and “enemies” mostly conducted via media products and the pro-government media became a resourceful propaganda tool for the AKP circles.

As can be understood from the above discussion, the AKP did intervene in the cultural sphere, and it is possible to mention that a form of Islamist culture is widespread in Turkey today. However, it is also true that in the issue of high culture, the AKP attempts are not salient, and the cultural production remained insufficient.

The ambiguity regarding the meaning of the high culture aside, those pro-AKP attempts to be actively involved in the cultural sphere, whether it be music, cinema, or literature, mainly emerged in the area of popular culture, serving to a war of position. It was the result of such attempts to start a “cultural war,” thus airing TV shows such as *Diriliş* and *Payitaht Abdülhamit* that are glorifying the Ottoman roots of Turkey on the state-owned TV channel, TRT (Bulut & İleri 2019).

In that sense, the function of Misvak also needs to be analyzed in a similar context with those mentioned media products. The hostile discourse of Misvak is reminiscent of the AKP’s, and the parallelism between the magazine’s and the party’s tone stands out as a determinant factor when examining Misvak as a product of the limited hegemony project. In that framework, the debates on *kulturkampf*, which has been brought to the table by the AKP in recent years, became a convenient tool to reproduce secular/religious binary in the party discourse, which is also embedded with anger, victimization, suffering as well as vindictiveness.

The AKP's authoritarian tone became a cornerstone in the party discourse, especially after the Gezi Revolt, and this hegemonic break also evoked the past traumas and discourse of victimization along with the "conspiracy theories" that helped the party to find enemies under every stone. The conspiracy mentality, which is a common mindset in Turkey in general, and specifically in the Islamism and National View movement gained momentum after the Gezi Revolt (Bora, 2018a). As Bora argues, this mentality is not unique to the AKP nor invented by the party as a new strategy; instead, it has ideological sources that are rooted in the discourse of the Turkish right and, more specifically, Islamism. Fethi Açıkel examines this conspiracy mentality which is embodied in the form of a suffering political subject through a sociological and psychoanalytical analysis (Açıkel, 1996). He argues that suffering, helplessness, and frustration are common themes in monotheistic religions and that religious discourse and prophecy also involve suffering before God intervenes and helps the innocent and punishes the cruel (Açıkel, 1996). However, in spite of the initial discourse of suffering of those oppressed masses, those religions such as Christianity and Islam created big empires whose discourse also turned into a powerful political device that affirms the fighting for the land (Engels, 1969 as cited in Açıkel, 1996). Briefly, those psychologically oppressed masses are contradictorily the candidates to be the cruel ones (Açıkel, 1996). A very similar mindset shows itself in the discourse of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, one of the leading ideologues of Islamism in Turkey. Necip Fazıl seems that he is in constant agony, but he does not suffer in silence and submission like a dervish; instead, he uses a hateful language and proposes a vengeful discourse. The Turkish right has used this approach in their conservative populist discourse throughout the Turkish political life, and in all these scenarios, the main antagonist emerged as the Kemalist modernization. In that sense, it can be mentioned that the AKP reproduces this deep-rooted mentality as a discursive strategy, especially after coming to terms with the reality that it failed to find a balance in the equation of consent/coercion binary after the Gezi Revolt.

This process is also highly interrelated to the imaginative aspects as it embraces strong emotions such as hate, anger, suffering, rage as well as revengefulness; thus,

those features also shape the representation of the self-image of the AKP cadres, Erdoğan being in the first place. Othering, scapegoating, and stigmatizing have become practical tools to be able to conduct such discourse and mobilize the party voters. For example, Erdoğan mentioned that they (AKP cadres as well as its voters) have been the “Black Turks” of Turkey and stigmatized for being “ignorant” by Kemalists and CHP supporters (Yılmaz, 2017). He also cried many times in front of the cameras to strengthen the image of victimhood and self-pity (Yılmaz, 2017). Those behavioral patterns are typical, considering that the conservative populism is above all a discourse of victimization surrounded by a mystical aura (Bora & Erdoğan, 2013).

For Bora and Erdoğan, the oppressed righteous subject, following the discourse of conservative populism, own their misery and suffering and masochistically love their wounds; paradoxically, they find power and legitimacy within their traumas while they also identify themselves as the victims (Bora & Erdoğan, 2013). As Açıkel argues, being content with the misery and suffering also reveals narcissistic tendencies of the oppressed, victim subject which can be referred from the efforts regarding the aestheticization of the pain (Açıkel, 1996). Even though it seems contradictory, the ego-centric discourse of the victim subject who believes is surrounded by the enemies throughout history, and finds the power within this mythical moralization reveals the narcissistic ideology (Açıkel, 1996).

While it can be mentioned that the discourse on victimization and suffering still stands out as a cornerstone feature of the conservative populist policies in Turkey, there is also a visible shift towards the narrative of victory in the AKP discourse. Nagehan Tokdoğan argues that the 15 July coup attempt paved the way for a new political myth in Turkish politics, thus created a new narrative for the AKP by changing its victimization discourse to a discourse on victory (Tokdoğan, 2018). Tokdoğan argues that it is the national or collective narcissism that was aroused after 15 July as a prominent feature in the identity construction efforts which had begun to show its signs after Erdoğan’s Davos speech in 2009 when he stormed out the panel on the Middle East process at the World Economic Forum (Tokdoğan, 2018).

In that framework, “ordinary people” confronting tanks and bullets became the national heroes, and this narrative was also crowned with the “democracy watch” and rallies such as the one held in Yenikapı. Accordingly, the creation of this 15 July myth, which is called an “epic,” not only strengthened the AKP’s image as the victorious but also gave people the power by lending them this victory.

This narrative first seemed to be inclusive; all remaining inner conflicts seemed to put aside for a while, and the focus was to unify against the common enemy FETO. However, the so-called social inclusion turned out to be a temporary approach; with the declaration of the state of emergency in the country, “friends vs. enemies” understanding became a prominent feature of the AKP politics and the discourse on Islamization got stronger. In that sense, it could be mentioned that the AKP still makes use of conservative populism by positioning its voters as oppressed masses and the party (specifically Erdoğan as the leader) as the savior. On the other hand, with the discourse of victory that has been mainly shaped after the 15 July coup attempt, narcissism also dominated the AKP discourse more than ever.

As mentioned before, conspiracy mentality became a resourceful tool for the AKP to identify the enemies of the party and the nation. However, those notions of “enemy” as well as “nation” are empty signifiers considering the ambiguity embedded within those terms and the context which in they are used. Nonetheless, this type of policymaking that manifests itself in the speeches of the AKP cadres and President Erdoğan results in a polarized society. To put it, Islamism comes up as a dominant ideology and a constitutive element in the party discourse to identify those enemies. Accordingly, as mentioned before, Kemalism is the main antagonist for the AKP, due to its secular and allegedly elitist character.

Gender issues arise as problematic areas in the AKP discourse as well. Women's rights and gender equality are undermined, overlooked, and ignored during the AKP rule for the last 18 years. Although the party concealed its Islamist agenda to a degree when it first came into power and pictured a democratic conservative party similar to center-right European parties, hostile arguments regarding gender have been

unfolded in recent years. Determinant to pursue a misogynistic and anti-gender narrative, there have been many controversial statements and sanctions regarding women's rights and gender equality. For example, Erdoğan, who frequently recommends having at least three children, mentioned that *"if a woman fails to reproduce and rejects motherhood, she denies her femininity, and her life is deficient"*²⁸; while Minister of Health Recep Akdağ argued that *"the birth-control was an outdated method"*²⁹. Another misogynistic remark about the issue of abortion came from then AKP's Mayor of Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Melih Gökçek, who said that *"If a woman is raped, then she should die, not the child"*; this statement was supported by the AKP MP Ayhan Sefer Üstün who even mentioned that *"rapists are more innocent than those who abort their babies"* (Gürcan & Peker, 2015). The AKP is also known for its anti-Pride stance and homophobic declarations. Many times LGBTQ+ rights have been undermined, pride parades were canceled due to Ramadan, and police violence emerged during these peaceful protests and marches. On the other hand, pro-government people's reactions on Tweeter regarding pride also revealed the understanding that *"the promotion of homosexuality is part of a global conspiracy"* (Özkazanç, 2019). In that regard, it can be argued that the conspiracy mindset is embraced by those who support the AKP government as well.

In the AKP discourse, one of the topics that the mentality of conspiracy theories revealed is the "Foreign Powers" (dış mihraklar). This narrative has been surfaced many times and in different forms with various targets and enemies. For instance, Erdoğan uses the term "mastermind" (üst akıl) when defining those outer enemies who plot against Turkey and its nation while many think that this mastermind refers to Jews (Yılmaz, 2017, p. 494). Anti-Semitic discourse is not unusual in Turkish right; in fact, it forms the backbone of the nationalistic-conservative narrative where the Jews are accepted evil, immoral, and secret plotters against the nation's wellbeing. This

²⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/06/turkish-president-erdogan-childless-women-deficient-incomplete>

²⁹ <http://bianet.org/english/women/181223-minister-of-health-we-don-t-have-such-outdated-methods-like-birth-control>

presumption has been forwarded many times by both Islamists such as Necip Fazıl and Necmettin Erbakan and nationalists like Nihal Atsız and Cevat Rıfat Atilhan. In addition, this “mastermind” has many hats in the AKP discourse, such as it can be “the West” in total like the European countries, the EU, or the U.S., when the party interests conflict with those values represented by those foreign powers. Those foreign enemies are also called “interest rate lobby” or directly as the “IMF” according to the current status of economic stability. Nonetheless, it became a new empty signifier referring to any form of enemies and their so-called internal partners such as Kemalists or FETO; as a result, this approach enforces people to decide between only two choices; “*become friends of the AKP, nation, country, and ummah or become the enemy*” (Yılmaz, 2017, p. 495).

The irony here lies in the fact that those enemies and friends of the AKP are not unchanging just as the party discourse. On the contrary, while the AKP uses Islam as an instrument to achieve necessary means, those enemies and friends also move between these two camps are serving the daily agenda of the party. For example, the MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli was seen as an enemy of the party before the establishment of the people’s alliance between the AKP and the MHP, and now he is presented as one trustworthy friend of the “Cause” (dava). The opposite version could be applied to the Davutoğlu case, once he was the fellow companion of Erdoğan, although now he is considered as a dishonest man by the party.³⁰

Kurdish question could also set an example of the AKP’s changing discourse in the enemy construction process. Intending to curb the military’s power in politics, the AKP aimed for the de-militarization of the Kurdish question through some limited reforms and promises for further democratization in the first years of its rule (Özden et al., 2017). As known, it was none other than the AKP who openly acknowledged the Kurdish identity and the fact that Kurds had been suffered due to state politics, the party also established TRT Kurdi, a state-owned channel broadcasting in Kurdish in

³⁰ The CHP, on the other hand, remains to be one of the AKP’s arch enemies as the main opposition party and the representative of Kemalism.

2009 (Saraçoğlu, 2016). It was also the AKP who launched the “Democratic Initiative Process” that was targeting to end terrorism as well as provide those ethnical and religious groups better standards and answer those demands for equal rights; the Kurdish Initiative maybe was the most well-known and noticed project in this scope. In that sense, it was highly unexpected to witness that those circumstances, along with the AKP’s peaceful talks, drastically changed in the opposite direction.

The failure of back then Prime Minister Davutoğlu’s Zero Problem Policy and the collapse of the Kurdish Initiative could be addressed as some of those factors that led to today’s understanding regarding the Kurdish issue. However, it was after the 7 June 2015 elections where the AKP failed for the first time that the government ended the Solution Process and declared that there “*no longer existed a Kurdish question in Turkey*” and that “*all possible rights had already been granted*”(Derisiotis, 2019, p. 60). To sum up, it was a party decision to replace the Kurdish votes with the nationalist votes after the HDP’s electoral success; especially after the 15th July coup attempt, the AKP decided to ally with the MHP; thus it became clear that the Kurdish votes were instrumental in the early years of its rule (Derisiotis, 2019).

Today, the AKP discourse on terrorism made a stronger come back then ever; the peace petition signatories have been arrested and fired from their positions, elected mayors of those southeastern cities like Van, Mardin, and Diyarbakır were removed from the office and replaced by government appointees while there had been terrible bombings and bloodshed in those areas.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

It has been mainly argued in this chapter that the AKP shows the features of an authoritarian neoliberal government from the beginning, and while the party pursued a similar approach, the main game-changer was the transition from an expansive to a limited hegemony project. It has been mentioned that the AKP’s hegemony project has two sources; neoliberal populism and the use of cultural/symbolic sources, which were mainly built on Islamism.

The Gezi Revolt represented the most significant hegemonic break for the AKP, and it also resurfaced the debates on cultural hegemony and kulturkampf. The AKP decided to pursue a limited hegemony project mainly after the Gezi Revolt in 2013, and the authoritarian tone became a characteristic of the party discourse. Determinant to ignore the rest of the society and only interested in mobilizing and consolidating its own voters, the understanding of “friends vs. enemies” unfolded, stigmatizing othering and scapegoating became practical tools in the party discourse while the conspiracy mentality also revealed as ideological means.

As a product of the limited hegemony project, and as a pro-AKP magazine Misvak shares a similar discourse with the AKP in many issues and follows an approach of the enemy image construction via cartoons. As a preliminary chapter, some of the issues taking place in the AKP discourse have been briefly argued here to be able to show the parallelism between the magazine and the party discourse, which will be further examined in the following chapters.

In that sense, in addition to the humor-ideology relationship, the next chapters will focus on the construction of the enemy images as well as the representation of the self and other in Misvak. In this respect, the discursive parallelism between the AKP and the magazine will be brought to the table.

CHAPTER 4

MISVAK, HUMOR, AND IDEOLOGY

This chapter aims to analyze the humor and ideology proposed in Misvak by offering a closer look into the discourse presented via cartoons.

First, the production process of the magazine will be briefly mentioned, and then the type of humor and its function in Misvak will be examined. A concise comparison between Misvak and other prominent Islamist humor magazines, namely Cafcaf and Hacamat, will be made to enlighten some of the distinctive features of Misvak. In addition, the proposed ideology will be detected in the discourse and presented through the representation of the self-image in the magazine.

4.1 Production Process of Misvak

Despite Misvak's popularity, there is minimal data about the staff as well as the production process of the magazine. In that sense, the below information about the cartoonists mainly gathered from an interview that took place on Akit TV on 24 August 2018 with the attendance of three Misvak cartoonists Şahin Güneş, Şeyhmus Güneş, and Merve Dere ³¹; illustrators' social media accounts have been used to gain an impression as well.

Accordingly, Misvak had begun its journey with mainly Şahin and Şeyhmus Güneş (twin) brothers' efforts due to their desire for recognition in the arena of humor where they felt the urge to respond to daily political events with an Islamic sensitivity. As mentioned before, their first cartoon was criticizing METU students for the banner they carried during the traditional graduation ceremony which they thought was an outrageous insult and a blasphemy to Islam; thus, Şahin Güneş's cartoon depicting

³¹ <https://webtv.akittv.com.tr/bayram-ozel/misvak-dergisi-akit-tvde-6723>

students as ignorant animals, precisely as donkeys in their graduation gowns was a message.

During the interview, Şahin Güneş mentions that he comes up with the name Misvak for two reasons: firstly, it was because he saw a chew stick (miswak) laying before him and secondly, he favored the term “Misvak” since it was ending with “ak” as it was reminding the AK Party (AKP). Güneş brothers also mention that they were always drawing non-political cartoons and sharing them on social media before, but it was after their above mentioned first cartoon was digitally published that they decided to form a political humor magazine, which finally resulted in Misvak.

According to their statements during the above-mentioned interview, the profile of the Misvak cartoonists is diverse, and they usually have another occupation to earn money while Misvak is rather a side-project that they voluntarily contribute to. Almost all of them are living in different cities and even different countries and frequently communicate with each other through online meeting applications such as Face Time, they do organize in-person meetings as well. For example, Şahin and Şeyhmus Güneş brothers are living in Düzce and working in the public sector whereas Merve Dere lives in Rize, Çayeli who is graduated from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, Vocational School of Technical Sciences.

During the interview, Dere, 25 years old at the time, mentions that she first started drawing cartoons for Sumak when he met Şahin Güneş via Instagram and after her skills and technique improved with the help of Güneş (who thinks is her master), she became a part of the leading magazine Misvak. The cartoonists mention that there is a crowded team behind Misvak, and they frequently meet online to discuss the daily political events to come up with an idea as a foundation of a new cartoon. Şahin Güneş mentions that Misvak team consists of many people with different backgrounds and occupations, but they are all ordinary people (*“hepimiz halkın içindeniz”*) such as Yasemin Tekin from Ankara whom they define as the mastermind (*fikir babamız*) of the team, Hikmet Çil from Sivas who is using the nickname of Melankoli, Mustafa Şahin from Tokat but lives in İstanbul, Mustafa Said Sarı who is working as a factory

laborer in Germany (*gurbetçi çizerimiz*), Fethi (*abî*) who is working in a doner shop in İstanbul as well as Miralay from Sakarya who was working for the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality till recently.

In her article “Who are the illustrators of Misvak?” Ezgi Akgül also shares similar anecdotes with Şahin Güneş about the cartoonists’ profile Akgül has recently published a book which was advertised by Misvak, and she sometimes writes small pieces³² for the magazine as well. In one of the articles she mentions about the Misvak staff without giving out any names:

One of the Misvak cartoonists is unemployed. Another one installs bumpers to BMW cars in Germany; one of them is a waiter who draws between service breaks, one is a call center representative working in shifts whom you treat as your slave when you pick up the phone, and another one is working in a doner shop.³³ (my translation).

Akgül’s description of Misvak staff is also supporting the self-image of the cartoonists as they also perceive themselves as “ordinary people”. In addition, her remarks seem to underline the class struggle while she addresses the elite and privileged people considering her statements position the audience as “the other”. Akgül also mentions that what Misvak contributes to is an “act of volunteerism,” and therefore, “*the motive behind the will of drawing is the desire for neither glory nor money but only patriotism.*” (my translation).

In that sense, the veil of mystery surrounding Misvak staff -including Ezgi Akgül- is also worthy of attention. However, with his dismissal, Miralay was exposed as a person; it has been revealed that his real name was Miralay Selami İlkay³⁴. Amongst all of them, Miralay is possibly one of the cartoonists who draw the most provocative images in the magazine. His cartoons criticizing the modern Republic, Atatürk, and the opposition politicians caused strong reactions many times. He also

³² <https://www.facebook.com/misvakdergi/posts/2272587642963852/>

³³ <https://www.beyazgundem.com/misvak-cizerleri-kim-makale,1131.html>

³⁴ <https://www.tozlumikrofon.com/ataturke-hakaret-eden-misvak-cizeri-miralay-selami-ilkay-kimdir/>

attracted attention with his pictures illustrating Ekrem İmamoğlu, the current Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality as a liar, dishonest and a hypocrite man before, during, and after the March 2019 local elections.

In October 2019, it was announced by Misvak that he was fired from his position in the Municipality, where he has been working for 19 years, with a cartoon³⁵. The cartoon is a self-image of the illustrator in which he uses the famous Rabia sign, which could be interpreted as a symbol of his allegiance to President Erdoğan (and hereby the AKP) who is also known to use the Rabia gesture during his speeches many times.³⁶

On the other hand, Misvak is being affirmed by some social media platforms and foundations; for example, Misvak announced that the magazine had been awarded 2019 Prof. Fuat Sezgin Social Media awards by “MismedDer” (Mismed Social Media Foundation) in November 2019, due to the Magazine’s “national stance” (milli duruş)³⁷.

Misvak cartoonists emphasize that what they do is volunteer work, and they gain no profit from the cartoons; having said that, there is another account named “Misvak Bakkal” where merchandise of the magazine -mainly coffee mugs with

³⁵ <https://www.instagram.com/p/B3MUxIDhqv3/>

³⁶ Miralay also tweeted on the 4th of October that his dismissal was not resulted from his performance at work but instead his ideological position Although he later deleted this tweet, its snapshot can be found here <https://twitter.com/vaziyetcomtr/status/1180167416837484544>. Many newspapers also brought this issue in a way that shows parallelism to Miralay’s ideas on the matter that is his dismissal was about his political views rather than his work; however, those were mainly anti-AKP news sources and social media platforms that perceived this incident as a positive development and a well-deserved punishment:

<https://www.haber.com/ataturke-hakaret-eden-ibb-calisani-kovuldu-97363/>

<https://odatv.com/ataturku-esek-olarak-cizen-ismi-kovdu-04101926.html>

<https://www.birgun.net/haber/ibb-ataturk-u-esek-olarak-betimleyen-misvak-cizerinin-isine-son-verdi-271359>

³⁷ <https://www.instagram.com/p/B4-oGSaBffo/?hl=tr>

pictures on them- is being sold to make additional income³⁸. Those coffee mugs usually have the illustrations of those Misvak cartoonists admire such as President Erdoğan, Abdul Hamid II., Mehmet the Conqueror as well as popular culture figures like Bob Ross or Müslüm Gürses and even the folk poet Neşet Ertaş. In addition, those mugs with political text and messages* help to signify Misvak's ideological position.



Figure 6.

**It takes one Soylu -to eliminate- all those corrupt people.*

As mentioned before, Misvak is affirmed by those media outlets which are known with their affinity to the AKP circles such as Yeni Akit (newspaper), Akit TV, Beyaz TV or A Haber³⁹ while the anti-AKP segment of the media including newspapers Cumhuriyet, Sözcü, Birgün as well as social media platforms such as Ekşi Sözlük and Onedio.com heavily criticized the magazine. In that regard, either through affirmation or negation, Misvak reaches a high traffic rate on the internet, which is causing the magazine to gain even more popularity.

Even though the magazine has a vast number of followers, it is difficult to make any assumptions about Misvak's audience since they could be recognized only via comment sections of the social media platforms. After gazing upon those comments, it could be estimated that most of the fans share a similar political position with the

³⁸ <https://www.instagram.com/misvakbakkal/?hl=tr>

³⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jif4_dZ_37M

magazine; most of them favor the AKP and President Erdoğan; thus, they comprehend the messages transmitted through cartoons positively.

Although it has also been observed that oppositional comments have also been made, those are coming mainly from the anti-AKP circles. It could be mentioned that Misvak fans usually share the same ideology with the magazine and the rare times they posit criticism to the cartoons is when Misvak ignores and instead chooses to stay silent about the current state of the economy; the fans sometimes complain that the magazine does not mention the price rise and the high costs of living as well as the common dissatisfaction towards the increase of the minimum wage.

Besides their political views, the Misvak audience seems to be heterogeneous, considering the social and economic classes. It is accepted that the readers of the humor magazines usually have a profile of young and urban; more specifically, the audience of the secular humor magazines are generally high school and university students. This argument could also be applied to readers of Cafcaf even though those were mainly pious students of Imam Hatip high schools between the ages of 14 and 18 (Ozgur, 2012).

As a first impression, Misvak differs from Cafcaf and Hacamat when it comes to the audience profile since the followers' age range seems much broader, and the level of education seems rather diverse. That is indeed not only about the content of the magazine but is also related to the production process, considering it is digitally published; it has a significant advantage for reaching out to the masses via social media. Having said that, the above-mentioned arguments are rather observations filtered through those followers' comments, which present a vague picture. However, the reliability of the feedback is also questionable, considering there would be fake accounts as well as internet trolls among them. Nevertheless, the impression suggests that the Misvak audience seems to be a heterogeneous mass with diverse social and economic backgrounds, and the age range also differs significantly.

Finally, it could be mentioned that there is not enough data about the illustrators' profile, including their income, households, and level of education;

similarly, there is not a reliable source of the magazine's finances. However, Misvak now also shares a Gmail account for the advertisement and sponsorships on their Facebook page, which was not there for many years. In that sense, this development indicates that the Magazine is prone to change in the economic sense and may look for making a profit out of the social media accounts.

4.2 Humor in Misvak

Misvak, as an online humor magazine, aims to produce comic content via (mostly) political cartoons; however, one of the main criticisms brought towards the magazine is that the cartoons, in fact, are not funny. It is not surprising that the element of humor is somewhat shaggy in the magazine since the primary function of Misvak is to react, respond, and agenda-setting in alignment with the AKP's discourse in Turkish politics. Another reason behind this criticism may result from the magazine's tendency to copy and imitate the style of the secular and mainstream humor magazines. Nevertheless, it may be expected that the political cartoons to question authority, to point out the controversies, lies, corruptions, and any other social problematics using satire. As such, it may be claimed that the political cartoons are harsh by nature since they often are the ones saying, "the emperor has no clothes!" hence, humor has the power to raise social awareness in a simplistic but effective way. However, this is not the case for Misvak, and in that sense, Misvak stands out as an anomaly that needs to be addressed within the political conjuncture of Turkey today.

Misvak started its journey in 2015 in an environment that political cartoonists felt trapped in their small spaces and were hesitant to move another finger to draw anything critical about President Erdoğan. Ironically, this period also provided Misvak the most fruitful times to produce humor in the scope of cartoonists' ideology and humor sense; hence, the magazine had the opportunity to publish political cartoons that are found to be bold and reckless.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the satirical humor magazine, Penguen's cartoon, with the caption of "The World of Tayyips" that was depicting him in several animal forms, profoundly disturbed back then PM Erdoğan. The issue brought to the

table one more time when METU graduates carried a banner with the same image on it during the graduation ceremony in 2018, and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and other CHP MPs shared the same cartoon on their Twitter account to support these young people.

Although it did not spark many attentions, right after Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu tweeted the World of Tayyips cartoon, Misvak responded it with a similar work entitled “World of Kemals” (Kemaller Alemi).



Figure 7.

This cartoon was a response from Misvak which is depicting Kılıçdaroğlu in several “enemy” forms: as a PKK terrorist, as Fethullah Gülen, as U.S. President Trump, as an LGBTQ+ activist, as a Gezi Protestor and a piece of feces as well as the fly flying over that Kılıçdaroğlu formed feces. The cartoon aims to respond not to *Penguen* but Kılıçdaroğlu, also while doing that it lacks originality and in addition to the hateful humor, the homophobic discourse is very explicit. Also, while METU graduates were faced charges of 1 to 4-year prison sentence just because they were holding a banner with a cartoon on it which also had already come clean after the court decided it should be evaluated in the scope of freedom of expression, there were no legal sanctions against Misvak for drawing such a pointless and vengeful cartoon. Having said that, this was also one of the Misvak pictures that took criticism from an

AKP MP, namely AKP İstanbul MP Markar Esayan. Esayan tweeted about the cartoon comparing this one to the banner at METU and mentioned that they were similar in nature and both were at fault⁴⁰.

On the other hand, Misvak almost always glorifies Erdoğan in those political cartoons; he is often depicted as “The Chief” (Reis), “The Tall Man” (Uzun Adam) and “The Man of the People” (Milletin Adamı) and never criticize him in the same way as they criticize the oppositional politicians.



Figure 8.

The above illustration of Erdoğan has been published on 26 February 2019, on his birthday and says “*The first elected President of the Republic of Turkey is 65 years old. Man of the people, may your life be as long as your height.*” With those cartoons not only the President as a human being and a leader, but governmental actions are also affirmed by the magazine.

In that sense, it can be argued that Misvak does not use political humor to convey criticism against the political status quo and instead acts as an organ of the mainstream media, which lacks criticism towards the AKP; hence merely acts as a

⁴⁰ <https://twitter.com/markaresayan/status/1019494809340448769>

government agency. It is unknown if there is an organic collaboration between the AKP and Misvak, but Misvak defines itself as “volunteer and advocate,” which leads to a break from the satirical political humor.

The use of language also determines Misvak’s approach to humor; the cartoonists claim that since they are producing comic content with Islamist sensitivities, they intend to avoid vulgar language and sexual implications, and that is what separates them from other “leftist” humor magazines in the first place.⁴¹ Thus, they mention that their job is even harder since it would be easier to produce entertaining content with using sexuality and vulgarism. However, after taking a glance at the cartoons, it becomes clear that the situation is the opposite. Misvak does use vulgar language and sexual implications even though the pictures might not have explicit swearing or nudity. In that sense, Misvak instead embraces a tactic of implying what they intend to say while not hesitating to use slang words. For example, the cartoon below shows a typical use of vulgar language, and the representation also supports this argument.



Figure 9.

*-We lean on the PKK/PYD
-By the way, the T.C leans on us
-I think we should lose the middle man, come again in skirts.*

⁴¹ <https://webtv.akittv.com.tr/bayram-ozel/misvak-dergisi-akit-tvde-6723>

The cartoon which sends the message of the superiority of the Turkish military over PKK/PYD, as well as HDP, is explicitly homophobic in the first place; sexual intercourse between men is negated and presented as a weakness while the men are identified with women, which at the same time shows the misogynistic perspective. In the cartoon, slang words such as “dayamak” which implies the male sexual act, have been used in order to produce humorous content, and the positions of the bodies also reminiscent of sexual intercourse. While presenting a patronizing and condescending discourse, the claim of avoiding the use of vulgar language and sexuality seems not relevant for Misvak cartoons. It is remarkable that the condescending attitude with the bold and reckless use of language shows parallelism with the discourse of the government officials who were highly criticized for making hateful and discriminative speeches that were also found to be inappropriate as well as informal for statesmen.

As often mentioned, besides being pro-government, Misvak also identifies itself as a conservative and Islamist humor magazine, which is a claim that is worthwhile to examine. However, using Islam as a prominent theme does not necessarily show that the magazine’s approach to humor aligns with the Islamist codes. As argued before in previous chapters, the clear distinction between praised humor (*mizah-ı mahmud*) and condemned humor (*mizah-ı mezmum*) determines the limitations of comics in orthodox Islam, which expected to be applied in cartoons as well. Accordingly, while praised/good kind of humor is approved by Islamic scholars who believe it could reinforce the friendship and love among people, mockery and ridicule are strictly forbidden; it is because dark comedy, mockery, and ridicule which would emphasize the defects and failures of people, could easily lead to hostility.

In Misvak’s case, it would not be wrong to assume that the latter is applied in the cartoons that are filled with offensive jokes. Considering the prominent themes of othering, scapegoating, stigmatizing the use of humor can be categorized as condemned rather than praised. In addition, it is hard to mention of a sympathetic or relieved laughter, the kind of laughter approved in orthodox Islam; on the contrary, the laughter proposed in the magazine is condescending and mostly narcissistic. It has also been mentioned that, like other religions, orthodox Islam promotes conservatism and

moderation in every aspect of daily practices, including humor. In that sense, as it will also fall under the category of condemned humor, depictions of grotesque imagery are not welcome in Islamist humor that goes without saying for bad language, including swearing and cursing. Considering that depictions of human and animal feces, sexual implications, and a coarse language are quite common in Misvak, the magazine does not meet those qualities which are approved in orthodox Islam.



Figure 10.

-I have fabricated news that Hasan Karakaya died in Mecca due to the use of Viagra
-Whoa! Did anyone believe this?
-Indeed! You know, people in our community love filth and slander.



Figure 11.

-Freedom...!



Figure 12.

Herewith, how the humorous content in Misvak needs to be addressed? First, it can be argued that Misvak's approach to humor does not align with the understanding of the humor-freedom relationship. Accordingly, it is argued that this relationship forms the basis of the liberating effect of humor, especially when it comes to the political sphere. Morreall suggests that "*the person with a sense of humor can never be fully dominated, even by a government which imprisons him for his ability*" (Morreall, 1983, p. 101). Having said that, considering the numbers of jailed cartoonists, it seems that the power elites of Turkey perceive humor as a threat to the regime, which is reminiscent of Plato's ideas on humor and state relationship. The Bakhtinian approach to humor, on the other hand, presents a positive and constructing power against the state and hierarchies. Bakhtin's analysis is based on medieval folk humor, which he thinks could establish another world, different from the official one; therefore, he sees a connection between laughter and freedom. In this respect, the humorous material in Misvak needs to be addressed within a different approach.

Humor presented in Misvak aims neither to establish a new world order nor to demolish the existing one; in fact, it intends to do just the opposite. Laughter proposed in Misvak is not expressive like Bakhtin's Carnival laughter but is rather instrumental. It is sarcastic, condescending, and seeks to secure the existing political structure by affirming the AKP government while marginalizing and othering every form of opposition; therefore, the humor proposed in Misvak cartoons is far from being liberating. The Misvak case presents the controversial nature of humor; it shows us that political cartoons do not solely upend the hierarchy, but they can also be pro-government; hence, they have the capacity to empower the authority as well. In fact, by having discursive parallelism with the hegemon, political cartoons can be used as propaganda tools in order to construct "the consent" and strengthen the hegemony.

Besides, the use of humor in Misvak is highly offensive; a lot of images contain racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, and misogynistic elements. In that sense, as argued in the first chapter, the use of humor in Misvak can be categorized as the disparagement humor which belittles, denigrates, or maligns an individual or social

group (Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Zillman, 1983). Disparagement humor indeed has the potential to cause hostility while creating stereotypes of those social groups and hereby cause prejudice towards them (Berger, 1993; Stephenson, 1951; Zenner, 1970 as cited in (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). Those representations of any kind of opposition in *Misvak* lead to the construction of enemy images in the magazine, which will be argued in the next chapter.

As Billig argues, humor could evoke laughter or cause adverse reactions; in any case, it should be accepted that even bad humor is humor (Billig, 2005). Ultimately, the *Misvak* case proves that humor is a complex notion that should be addressed within the discursive text that is proposed. While it can be a tool for resistance, it could function in the opposite direction and suppress those opponent masses.

4.3 Cafcaf, Hacamat and Misvak: Some Distinctive Features of the Islamist Humor Magazines of the 2000s

Attempting to make a concise comparison between *Misvak* and other Islamist humor magazines of the 2000s could also present some insight into the humor and ideology proposed in *Misvak*. If a classification regarding the place where *Misvak* stands amongst other humor magazines is needed, it could be sided with beforementioned Islamist humor magazines like *Cafcaf* and *Hacamat* rather than the “secular” (*Misvak* cartoonists refer as *leftist*) humor magazines such as *Leman*, *Penguen*, and *Uykusuz*. Although *Cafcaf* and *Hacamat* are not published anymore, there is an observable continuity as well as a break between those magazines and *Misvak*.

Cafcaf (to this day) is the longest-living Islamist humor magazine in Turkey, published from 2006 (first as an addition to the *Genç* Magazine) till 2015. Although *Hacamat* was a separate magazine, it came out as a follow up of *Cafcaf* in 2015 when *Cafcaf* turned into the culture magazine “CF” (*Cezbeli Feylesof*); therefore, those two could be analyzed together as the similar consecutive products of the same team. However, as mentioned before, there are some differences between them, as well.

Considering the time period of Cafcaf and Hacamat were published, it could be argued that those witnessed the different periods of the AKP; thus, the change in politics has also affected the magazines greatly. This remark should be relevant since there are slightly different approaches to Cafcaf and Hacamat by scholars. For example, İren Özgür takes Cafcaf as a symbol of clean humor (Ozgur, 2012) while Taylan Şengül proposes that humor in Hacamat not only aims for symbolic lynching but also targeting and scapegoating certain parties (Şengül, 2018). Considering those magazines were published by the same team, it could be inferred that this change in the tone of the magazines is directly related to the AKP's hegemonic project and its changing scope. In that regard, it could be concluded that Misvak has more in common with Hacamat than Cafcaf, even though Cafcaf also framed and stigmatized certain parties. In fact, Misvak shared two Hacamat cartoons on its Instagram page as its own (appx. A. fig.A.4, A.5).⁴²

When it comes to the use of language, it could be mentioned that Misvak tends to be more assertive when Cafcaf and Hacamat were somewhat cautious. Having said that, there are many examples of the use of vulgar language and imagery in Hacamat, while Cafcaf was indeed leaning towards the understanding of “clean humor” understanding in Islam. On the other hand, depicting women in the veil instead of using sexual images or slang words does not ensure that the humor presented in the magazines is Islamic (Cantek&Gönenç, 2017). For example, in below Hacamat cartoon published in 2015, it has been depicted that some oppositional politicians and media members sharing the same bed, naked, making the implication of they had group sex to refer to their collaboration on terrorism.

⁴² One of the cartoons was belonged to Cafcaf and Hacamat cartoonist Ahmet Altay and it has been mentioned in the comment sections that it was used with his permission.



Figure 4.

-We were all swearing at Tayyip; I do not remember the rest.

Hacamat, issue 6 (8 April 2015)

For a group of Muslim people who started their journey to promote “clean humor” such cartoons indicate that there is a tendency to follow the style of “secular” humor magazines that they were criticizing before. Cantek and Gönenç in their analysis on Cafcaf, argue that the magazine is no different from its secular counterparts when it comes to forming and style regardless of their claim of producing an alternative humor style (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). Their remark indeed shows parallelism with the thoughts of Asım Gültekin, editor in chief of Cafcaf who also mentions that the magazine first came out as an alternative to those secular magazines, to fill a gap that they thought existed in the cultural arena with an Islamist perspective⁴³. Mostly Cafcaf but also Hacamat could be seen as popular culture products that were trying to replace secular magazines such as *Leman*, *Penguen*, and *Uykusuz* to a degree or at least provide an alternative perspective which is mainly Islamist. In that sense, the similarities, especially in the form and style of those magazines with the secular ones, point out that they were making Islamist replicas.

Misvak also represents a new era as a digitally published magazine; the rapid uploads of the cartoons to social media pages provide an advantage over those still

⁴³ <https://www.dunyabulteni.net/arsiv/asim-gultekinle-cafcafli-bir-soylesi-h99246.html>

traditionally published magazines. Founder of Misvak, Şahin Güneş also mentions that they are able to respond to daily political developments quickly and set the agenda before those printed ones, and this ability carries the magazine a step further.⁴⁴

In addition to those mentioned secular humor magazines, Misvak also does not seem as professional as Cafcaf and Hacamat considering their layout and staff profile. Cafcaf and Hacamat as Islamist replicas of *Leman*, *Penguen*, and *Uykusuz* were printed magazines, and their layouts were also similar to those; in the first few pages, there were mostly political cartoons, and remaining pages were containing images about daily life with an Islamist touch such as the veiling issue, Ramadan and praying. Those were more formal-looking traditional humor magazines; the cover page was usually an image depicting a recent political event, there was a masthead indicating the names of the owner and staff, the editors, cartoonists, writers, and the publisher of the magazine. Unlike the clarity about the production process of Cafcaf and Hacamat, what is known about Misvak is little to none. The staff who have additional occupations hide behind nicknames mostly, and it seems they still prefer to remain behind the curtains.

Nevertheless, what is observed about Misvak's staff profile reveals another difference between the magazine and its Islamist counterparts Cafcaf and Hacamat. In general, Cafcaf and Hacamat cartoonists and writers seem to have a higher level of open-mindedness. They mostly represent the urban Islamist middle class, and they are aiming to produce a cultural product in the end, even though most of them are also involved in other professions. For example, Cafcaf and Hacamat cartoonist Yusuf Kot owns an organic food store in Fatih, İstanbul, while Asım Gültekin is a high school teacher (Ozgur, 2012). Gültekin has been involved in literary circles and has colleagues such as writers Ömer Faruk Dönmez and Cihangir Bayburtoğlu (Ozgur, 2012). Cafcaf cartoonist Niyazi Çol who is known to drawing for another Islamist magazine, "Cıngar" before (Çolak, 2016) identifies himself as a Marxist (Koçak, 2012) which poses another distinction between Misvak and Cafcaf since it would be highly

⁴⁴ <https://webtv.akittv.com.tr/bayram-ozel/misvak-dergisi-akit-tvde-6723>

unlikely to expect a Marxist person to draw for Misvak considering the enemy images regarding the left in the magazine. Besides, Emre Bilgiç is a Bilkent University graduate who writes children's books and keeps drawing and publishing professionally.

The magazines' audience profile seems to be different, as mentioned before; with circulation figures around 9000, Cafcaf was followed mostly by Imam Hatip high-school students (Ozgur, 2012) while Misvak seems to have followers from a wide range of age and level of education. In that sense, the reader profile of Cafcaf and Hacamat is reminiscent of the audience of Leman, Penguen, and Uykusuz, considering high-school and university students compose the most significant portion of those magazines' followers.

When it comes to ideology, it is clear that all three Islamist humor magazines share a similar understanding; they are all pro-AKP magazines. In all three magazines, there is minimal criticism of the AKP, especially in Misvak, which identifies itself as the volunteer advocate of the AKP already. All three magazines aim to strengthen and affirm the AKP's hegemony project; however, Misvak is much more aggressive, and it does not intend to stay in defense and instead proposes offense as the method. Misvak not only comes up with an alternative to those secular humor magazines but also claims to be the one setting the tone of politics that is represented through humor. Nonetheless, all three magazines represent a defiance of secular codes while they promote Islam as a mechanism regulating daily life. Amongst them, Misvak is the most passionate supporter of the AKP, and the magazine shares a similar discourse with the party. All three magazines follow an Islamist as well as right-wing position; they all refuse class struggles and instead propose loyalty to the state; hence the left is ridiculed in the magazines.

As mentioned before, while Misvak publishes almost exclusively political cartoons, Cafcaf and Hacamat's focus was also the cultural sphere like other secular humor magazines. To that end, what Cafcaf and Hacamat were trying to accomplish cannot be labeled as only advocacy; in addition to the magazine articles, with those

images covering a wide range of issues from popular culture, Muslim youth, gender roles, consumption habits to practicing religious duties such as praying namaz and fasting, they were indeed proposing an alternative perspective for young Muslim people, at least to a degree.

While doing so, Cafcaf and Hacamat did not hesitate to use popular culture references, including Western oriented ones such as depictions of those soap operas and superhero characters like Batman or Spiderman; however, those Western values are harshly negated in Misvak. There are some examples given below to be able to point out the differences between Misvak's position as well as Cafcaf and Hacamat's about the use of Western-oriented references.



Figure 13.

-Neo, blue or red pill?

-Thanks bro, I am fasting.

Cafcaf, issue 61.5 (July 2014/01)



Figure 14.

-Orko, I have the farmer's tan. I will be humiliated...

-It is only expected since you walk around like an animal. Change your hairstyle already.

Hacamat, issue 16 (17 June 2015)

As also can be seen above, both Cafcaf and Hacamat frequently used Western popular culture references; sometimes those were implanted within Islamist values to create humor such as it was presented in the Matrix reference and other times those were directly used as an element of comic, like Hacamat used He-Man figure even though there is mocking involved. On the other hand, Western values, including those

popular culture references, are rarely used and strictly negated in Misvak almost exclusively.



Figure 15.

**We do not want to see fake heroes of the imperialist West but our real heroes on the schoolbags*



Figure 16.

-Back off you old chap before I knock your head off. We do not need you but those like Zeynel Abidin, grandson of the Prophet, whose back is injured due to carrying supplies to the poor.

As proposed in the above images, Misvak's position manifests itself with arrogance towards those western values; thus, they are negated constantly to create a narcissistic identity, which will also be argued in the next chapter. That could also be the result of the transformation of the AKP politics regarding Western countries and organizations such as the EU as well as the U.S. and also about the magazine's eagerness to polish the Islamist identity before Christianity. Nevertheless, this comes up as a feature that distinguishes Misvak from Cafcaf and Hacamat.

In sum, there are some qualities that separate Misvak from other Islamist humor magazines of the 2000s, which are proposed in this study as Cafcaf and Hacamat. Those three all identify themselves as Islamists, and besides some slight differences in their form and style, it could be concluded that the affinity between them reveals itself louder than those differences. Because in any case, humor presented in Cafcaf and

Hacamat is also instrumental like it is in Misvak. While those magazines also propose an alternative humor style, since they could not be critical towards the AKP and the values that are represented within the party, all three serve as mediums for strengthening the AKP's hegemony project, especially in the cultural sphere. The change in the tone of those magazines is also relevant to the breaking points of the mentioned AKP hegemony, which was severely damaged during Gezi Protests in 2013. This remark could also be meaningful for understanding the significant differences between Cafcaf and Hacamat, along with the reasons lying behind the hateful tone of Misvak.

4.4 Islamist Ideological Discourse of Misvak

It has been argued in the previous chapter that the AKP came out as a hegemony project, that when it first came into power, the party somehow concealed its Islamist agenda and instead proposed a conservative but also neoliberal democracy. The AKP, which was highly supported by the business circles, then prioritized economic issues as well as integration to the EU along with human rights, at least to a degree, to construct the Gramscian concept of "consent" in the society. The party's liberal formula in Turkish politics was first welcomed and worked for a long time until it did not.

As mentioned, today the AKP is not looking for the consent of the "others" who compose the remaining "50 percent" of the people of Turkey, the tone of the discourse of the party has been drastically changed from moderate to authoritarian, and its hegemony has faced political as well as social threats Gezi Revolt coming in the first place. Instead of retreat, the AKP decided to continue further its authoritarian style, reconstructed even stronger the discourse of victimization, suffering, and vindictiveness, the terms belong to political Islam's vocabulary, to create enemies and chose to deepen the polarization in society.

Today, the AKP is only interested in consolidating the party voters whose loyalty had already been gained with social and economic aids while the remaining parties have been framed as others and marginalized. In that sense, both consent and

coercion come at play in this formula for the AKP to stay as the hegemonic or even authoritarian power. Accordingly, this study proposes that the AKP, who, of course, uses RSAs such as police force quite often to silence opponent masses, also uses ISAs, media in the first place to infuse the dominant ideology, which is Islamism. To that end, Misvak plays an essential role as being a popular culture product in the intersection of communication and cultural ISAs.

Althusser proposes that *“no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the Ideological State Apparatuses”* (Althusser, 2014, p. 245). In that framework, it is argued in this study that Misvak is a part of the media, which is an Ideological State Apparatus in Turkey; hence, the magazine’s relationship with the ideology is highly intertwined. Even though Misvak cannot be an ISA by itself, it certainly acts like one since it is sided with the partisan media; more precisely, without the “humorous” content, Misvak is no different from Yeni Akit; one of the pro-government daily newspapers. Advocacy of the AKP, along with the shared discourse of hate, victimhood, and vindictiveness between those media outlets and Misvak, is also highly explicit. In addition, Misvak has a particular character as a humor magazine that is positioned in the center of cultural power debates.

In that framework, one of the main questions is how the message mediated; thus, the ideology proposed through humor, more precisely, through the cartoons in Misvak. The attempt to answer this question would also provide insight into the nature of the humor delivered in the magazine. As mentioned before, like Cafcaf and Hacamat, the humor in Misvak also revolves around an Islamist discourse parallel to the AKP’s understanding of an Islamist, neoliberal society. Understanding the instrumentalist use of Islamic humor in Misvak is important because while showing parallelism to the AKP discourse in politics as well as culture, Islam has also come up as a convenient tool as a part of the hegemony project, particularly in the cultural sphere. In that sense, Islam being a prominent theme in the magazine also has significance since it proposes an alternative lifestyle in defiance of the Kemalist ideology, which is open to different interpretations but embraces secularism as a must.

As such, with all the problematic practical aspects aside, Turkish laicism strictly accepts the separation of state and religious affairs in theory. This understanding has been tremendously damaged, especially after the 1980s, and the AKP has been criticized many times for violating this principle as well. Not surprisingly, secularism is one of the featured topics that Misvak cartoonists like to draw upon. Suffice to say that, the magazine openly criticizes secularism and finds the idea of a secular state very disturbing.



Figure 17.

- What is laicism?
- That religion does not involve within state affairs.
- We did not put sugar in tea, what happens?
- Well, sugar-free tea
- We did not let religion involve with the state affairs, what happens then?
- Religion free state...
- There you go.



Figure 18.

- Religious and state affairs should be separated. Bla..bla..
- You are so secular; I wish you die.

The above cartoons also intend to point out a change in power relations. One of the central claims of political Islam is that Muslims were deliberately excluded from politics and culture, that they were oppressed due to their religious values by the Kemalist ideology. In fact, this narrative has been shaped the backbone of the AKP's populist discursive strategies and remains a convenient one when needed. However,

those above presented cartoons present a distinct view; that the Muslims are done with being left out, that the situation is reversed, and instead of answering to the accusations, they are one the ones setting the agenda and having the final words. To that end, while political Islam declares its supremacy over the Kemalist ideology, both cartoons point a status reversal while laughter proposed is also condescending and narcissistic.

As could be seen in the below picture, the magazine proposes regulating people's daily life including their way of salutation and disapprove the modern sayings such as "good morning" and instead suggests using "selamun aleykum" which is an international Muslim greeting. That may sound like a detail, especially from a non-Turkey resident perspective; however, the determination of which form of salutation to use has long been and still is an argument in Turkey between those who identify themselves "secular" and who does not. This single expression, which leads to a discourse of othering, came handy whenever polarization was the goal, and the way the magazine puts it, is reproducing that discourse.



Figure 19.

*-Good morning Faruk.
-Why do you report the weather every morning instead of greeting me with God's salam?*

Islam, as a powerful tool in the AKP's hegemony project, is also used in the magazine to identify the friends and enemies, signify "us vs. others," which will be examined in the next chapter in detail and is used to provide simple answers to complex problems such as the Kurdish issue. For instance, the cartoon below proposes that PKK sets mosques on fire because it is an "atheist, socialist and impious organization," and its arch-enemy is the religion itself.



Figure 20.

-Why do we burn down the mosques?

-Because our organization is atheist, socialist, and impious. Religion is our arch-enemy.

-Reporter: As you see, dear audience, it is unclear why the PKK burns down mosques.

The above examples are provided to be able to show that Islamism is presented as the dominant ideology in Misvak. It should be mentioned first hand that other political ideologies such as Neo-Ottomanism as well as Nationalism are also affirmed by the magazine; however, in the sense that how ideology works and how it "calls the subject" it has been observed that Islamism as a cement ideology comes to the forefront as it plays a more comprehensive, umbrella-like function. Having said that, those mentioned political ideologies will also be briefly displayed in the next section to

illustrate the representations of the self-image of Misvak cartoonists and their apprehension of the ideology.

Nonetheless, Islamist ideology plays a vital role in Misvak; it does not only meet expectations of the audience which seems to be a pro-government Muslim mass but also “hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects by the functioning of the category of the subject”(Althusser, 2014, p. 264) via cartoons. For example, in the below cartoon that does not aim to create laughter but instead acts as a warning sign, parents are reminded to choose religious courses for their primary-school-age children’s curriculum. That is to signify Misvak’s interest in the education system, which is an integral part of the culture, and the magazine here calls the individuals to be more careful and mindful of their “true self,” which is being a pious Muslim.



Figure 21.

**For the future of our children, do not forget to choose courses on the Quran, the life of our prophet, basic religious knowledge, and the Arabic language. It takes one minute to add them, but they will benefit you in both worlds. Be mindful of the dates.*

Islam has also been used by Misvak to delve into the cultural sphere in a way casting modernity aside in unfamiliar ways such as by making a comparison between Santa Clause and Prophet Muhammad. In such cartoons, the debate between modernity and Islam is displayed to remind the religious identity to keep themselves apart from

western values and symbols such as Santa Clause. From an Althusserian reading, below Misvak cartoon could be interpreted as another example of *interpellation* of the Islamist ideology since it is addressing the individual to create a self-identity embedded in Islamist values.



Figure 22.

-We are the ummah of Prophet Muhammad, not the Santa Clause, who brings presents through a chimney!

In short, while Islam is being used as a prominent theme in the magazine as a humor element, it is also instrumentalized to infuse the ideology which serves not only Misvak as a humor magazine with ideological concerns but also the AKP who needs Misvak-like publications to be able to pursue its hegemonic project. To that end, it can be claimed that Misvak indeed acts like an Ideological State Apparatus hailing the subject while creating others and enemies as a biased popular culture product. In that sense, Misvak acts as a medium for transmitting propaganda, and humor presented in the magazine benefits the hegemonic bloc rather than who resist it. The point is that regardless of Misvak is a voluntary project or not, the AKP as a political party needs Misvak-like publications to ensure its legitimacy is also supported by popular culture products to be able to pursue its limited hegemony project. Similar to the approach AKP adopted during the limited hegemony period, Misvak also does not aim to “win”

the other 50 percent but intends to ensure that whose royal to the AKP will remain loyal. It is clear that Misvak does not look for affirmation from the oppositional groups; also, the magazine has a reckless and condescending stance towards whom poses criticism to their work unless that criticism comes from “within.”

4.5 Representation of the Self-Image Through Ideology in Misvak

It has been mentioned in the previous section that the ideology calls or interpellates individuals, and when subjects answer this call, it shows the success of the ideology. In this framework, it also seems important to look further into how these individuals or, in that case, pro-AKP masses, including Misvak cartoonists, are being illustrated in the magazine. Examining the representations of the self-image would provide insight into the discourse of hate, suffering, and vindictiveness and also could shed light on a pro-AKP perception that creates the distinction of “us vs. others,” which will be examined in the next chapter. In addition, to be able to deepen the arguments proposed in this section, it could also be helpful to attempt to explore the ideological positions that are affirmed by the magazine via cartoons. Such an attempt would provide a rather comprehensive perspective to be able to perceive the components lying beneath the “us” part of the “us vs. others” formula. The ideological position of Misvak seems to be the articulation of Islamism with Nationalism, along with Neo-Ottomanism, and selected cartoons have been presented to support this argument.

First, it has been observed that the identification with President Erdoğan as a person plays a significant part in the identity construction process. Misvak depicts Erdoğan as a strong but humble leader; according to those images, sometimes he has been left alone in his “cause” (dava) even by his fellow companions, that he has been betrayed, but still carries on his duty even by himself. This kind of representation also aims to strengthen the legitimacy of the one-person rule.



Figure 23.



Figure 24.

In that sense, Misvak proposes ordinary people to have faith in the “cause” (dava) as well, even betrayed they should not lose hope because *“the only thing that can protect their daughter’s headscarf is the cause”* itself as the below cartoon proposes.



Figure 25.

As can be imagined, Erdoğan depictions also involve a deep admiration towards him, he is being illustrated as the “world leader,” not only he is the true leader of the people of Turkey, but he is represented as a wise President that other country leaders may learn a few things from him.



Figure 26.



Figure 27.

Apart from all these mentioned qualities, Misvak positions Erdoğan as a positive force against the Kemalist ideology and elitism that comes with it; in that sense, he represents the ordinary, “real people” that are homemakers, craftsmen, small business owners as well as shepherds.



Figure 28.

-My vote counts as the same with a shepherd's vote who lives in the mountains.

-So what? My vote counts as the same with a terrorist's vote who lives in the mountains.

Besides the illustration of Kılıçdaroğlu who has been depicted as the supporter of terrorism (which will be discussed in the next chapter), the above cartoon shows that a shepherd puts his hand on Erdoğan's shoulder and gives the message that he trusts and supports him. Firstly, the picture conceals the reality which it is difficult for such a scene to happen in reality, considering many incidents that both Erdoğan and other AKP officials treated those "ordinary people" not with respect but utter humiliation such as when Erdoğan insulted a farmer (*"anani da al git"*) who was complaining about the hardships that the farmers had been going through in 2006 when he was Prime Minister⁴⁵ or when Yusuf Yerkel, then advisor to the PM Erdoğan, kicked a grieving protestor during the protests in the aftermath of Soma mine disaster that resulted in the death of 301 mine workers in 2014.⁴⁶

On the other hand, those ordinary people who are said to be the primary AKP voters are highly praised in the AKP discourse; in the last few years, they have been given even a new title "Heroes of July 15". According to this narrative, those were homemakers, students, craftsmen, truck drivers that saved the nation from the coup attempt; those who died while fighting with the armed soldiers became martyrs. Misvak embraces the same discourse without question and presents those ordinary people as the real owners of the nation and the country while concealing the fact that they have not been treated as such heroes.

While underlining the power of the ordinary people, Misvak proposes "Beyaz Atletli", the man in white undershirt as the real hero of the 15 July coup attempt; it is a symbol that before mocked and overlooked men in their undershirts and pajamas are now the true representatives of the Turkish nation.

⁴⁵ <http://www.diken.com.tr/erdoganin-anani-da-al-git-dedigi-ciftci-ne-zaman-gelse-hayatim-zehir-oluyor/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/24/turkish-pm-aide-sacked-kicking-protester-mining-disaster>



Figure 29.

**There are secret heroes of 15th July coup attempt*

The duties of Beyaz Atletli do not end after the coup attempt; in fact, he is depicted as a conscious citizen who keeps an eye on the daily political developments and interferes when necessary. He is now the one who says the last word, makes the final comment on an issue to show the will of the nation and since he gives utmost importance to the matter of survival (beka meselesi), he poses a threat to those who consider endangering the country.



Figure 30.

-Just like checking up on children during the night, he wakes up and checks up the country.



Figure 31.

- We are all on the same boat
- Oh, do not be the captain...



Figure 32.

- Should we protest like the Yellow vests in France?
- Shhh be quiet, Beyaz Atletli...

In Misvak, Beyaz Atletli is represented as a figure who is capable of reminding a deputy of her responsibilities as a politician and his representative; he expects nothing less from her but to do her job, including issues such as the veil.



Figure 33.

- Cockroach!
- She is calling out to you, deputy!

Use of Beyaz Atletli as the true representative of the nation is not an arbitrary choice, it symbolizes a significant transformation in the society and has ideological roots related to the changing AKP discourse from victimization to the discourse of

victory (Tokdoğan, 2018). In fact, this typical character is not new in humor magazines; it is based on Ahmet Yılmaz's former character of "Killanan Adam" from Leman Magazine.⁴⁷

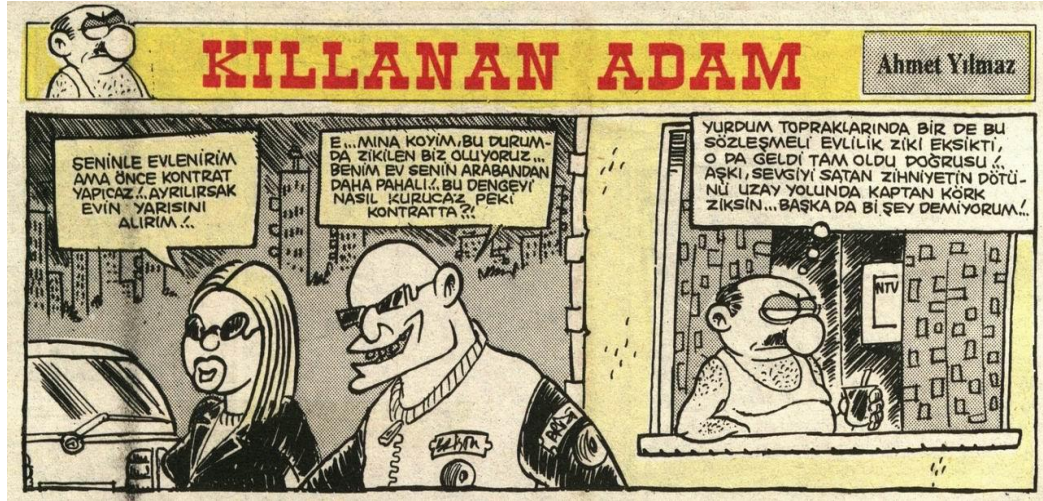


Figure 34.
(Source:cizgidiyari.com)

Although Killanan Adam as a cartoon character is atypical to the extent that maybe even considered a wise person considering his unusual and sarcastic comments about the daily life, he later became a symbol of the “ordinary men” mostly due to his outlook. In that sense, this character represented the men who sit by the window all day in their undershirt and blue striped pajamas with a cup of tea in their hands and make observations and judgments about everything they see with their shallow world view, grumbling and discontent (Şimşek, 2014). This typical character has been used many times in Turkish popular culture in different forms; it was Gaffur from sit-com Avrupa Yakası and Recep İvedik character of comedian Şahan Gökçek (Erdoğan, 2015), Finans Bank even used the original Killanan Adam in their commercials⁴⁸. This character represents an ignorant person, possibly uneducated, member of the subaltern,

⁴⁷ Uykusuz, today's most popular humor magazine also used their version of Killanan Adam drawn by Yiğit Özgür for the magazine's logo.

⁴⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIgtsSqjSY>

a typical “*yurdum insanı*” who thinks roadsides are picnic spots and swims with his underpants on (Şimşek, 2014). Suffice to say that, this character represents the elite-view on the ordinary, uneducated people and involves a condescending perspective towards the subaltern. Misvak, redefining this character, seems to challenge all these stereotypes and points out the changing structures of power; herewith, it is implied that before mocked and overlooked, ordinary men are the true owners of the nation, which indicates a status reversal. That may sound like a new idea, but what Misvak mainly does is to reproduce the right-wing populist discourse; the only difference is that the level of narcissism, which is increased.

Considering Islamism reveals as the prominent ideology in Misvak, it is only expected that one of the leading ideologues of Islamism, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek is highly appreciated and depicted as the master (üstad) in the magazine.

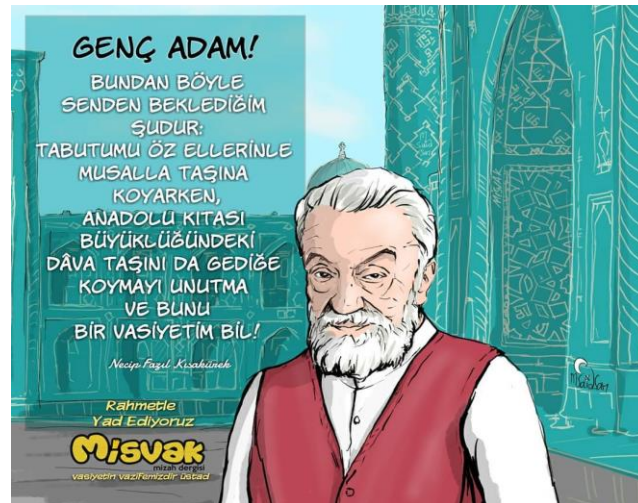


Figure 35.

-Young man! This is what I expect from you: When you carry my casket to the coffin rest with your hands, do not forget to fulfill your duty to your cause which is as great as Anatolia, this is my will for you!

Kısakürek is a significant figure since the discourse of hate, suffering along with the victimhood and vindictiveness, which, as mentioned, has significance in political Islam and also shapes the backbone of the AKP discourse, is mostly based on his ideas. For example, the incidents that took place after the below cartoon was

published, shows the features of a suffering, victim subject of the Islamists discourse that has been embraced by Misvak cartoonists.

The below cartoon was published on Misvak’s Instagram page on 18 March 2019, on the anniversary of Çanakkale (Dardanelle) Victory, the day of Ottoman Empire’s World War One victory:



Figure 36.

In the cartoon, Corporal Seyit –a war hero who is believed to carry three artillery shells weighing 275 kg during 18 March Naval War- is answering to the commander who points out that the direction of the artillery is wrong since the enemy is on the other side by saying “*Just you wait, pasha. Let me deal with the infidels within first; others are easy.*” Along with the opposition, this cartoon also received the reaction of AKP İstanbul MP, Mustafa Yeneroğlu. Yeneroğlu, who finds the cartoon disturbing, tweeted about it saying: “*For God’s sake, what kind of sense of humor is that used in commemoration of Çanakkale victory, our common value as a nation ?*”⁴⁹ After that, an explanation came from Misvak with a tweet mentioning that the cartoon was a reference to traitors of 15 July coup attempt, and Corporal Seyit was pictured as a hero and that they were deeply saddened because they were targeted. It was also stated that this was a witch hunt attempt conducted by some dictionary (sözlük) writers

⁴⁹ <https://twitter.com/myeneroglu/status/1107576282735349760>

and that they were even more upset to see their fellow companions (davadaşlarımız) were in favor of this attempt.^{50 51}

Misvak's twitter response is a perfect example of signifying their ideological position because it involves an Islamist discourse wrapped around resentment, suffering, and victimization. First, they feel like their fellow companions somewhat betray them because they beg to differ about their common cause, and now, they are suffering. Second, they perceive this incident as a conspiracy against them to make them look bad in the eyes of their followers and fellow AKP members. They define it as a "witch hunt," meaning they are being punished despite their innocence; hence, they are the real victims. And the hunters are some dictionary writers (which is a reference to Ekşi Sözlük) because they dig up this cartoon to use it as an attack against them since they are the actual enemy. The process of reasoning here may seem too simple, but this tiny example reflects Misvak's ideological position basically in a nutshell. They are following their fellow brothers' footsteps in this path of suffering, facing enemies every day, and as victims, keep battling with the strength of their faith.

Neo-Ottomanism also reveals itself quite often in Misvak. For example, in one of the below cartoons, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs has been illustrated while wearing a fez, and his name is also somewhat Ottomanized. The combination of his confident attitude that resonates with his smile, as well as his posture, is reminiscent of a powerful Ottoman Pasha as it is proposed. In the other one, President Erdoğan is being pictured in a talk with the Sultan Abdulhamid II.; the image depicts Erdoğan as the Sultan's apprentice who is looking for comfort in his words and Abdulhamid II. reminds him his glorious past to sweep away his worries. Besides Misvak's open

⁵⁰ <https://twitter.com/misvakdergi/status/1107590333200781313>

⁵¹ https://twitter.com/misvakdergi/status/1107594883290882049?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1107594883290882049&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Ftr.sputniknews.com%2Fturkiye%2F201903181038262323-ak-partiyeneroglu-misvak-dergisi-canakkale-karikatur-tepki%2F

support, those cartoons could be perceived as particular references of the AKP sympathy to the Ottoman roots.



Figure 37.



Figure 38.

Lastly, Nationalism also emerges as an affirmed ideology in Misvak. Those below depictions of Alpaslan Türkeş and Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu reveal the sympathy of Misvak cartoonists towards those figures who are known as the symbols of far-right Nationalism in Turkey. It is worthy of attention that those realistic representations of the politicians remind of pictures rather than illustrations; in fact, a photograph has been used for Yazıcıoğlu in the caps.



Figure 39.



Figure 40.

The below cartoon, on the other hand, had raised eyebrows of the opponents and eventually was removed from Misvak's social media pages due to reactions.



Figure 41.

-One night we can come suddenly!

In the cartoon, President Erdoğan and his ally of the recent years MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli are pictured in white Renault 12 cars, known as “white Toros” in Turkey; the plates of the automobiles also draw attention; 82 KKK and 83 MSL. According to the website demokrathaber.org, “*One night we can come suddenly*” slogans were shouted when speaking at a group meeting of the AKP after the Kurdistan independence referendum; at the group meeting Bahçeli had said, “*No one can stop us from saying 82 Kirkuk, 83 Mosul.*”⁵² However, those White Toros cars used in the cartoon were the symbol of the counter-guerilla; in other words, “deep state” in Turkey in the 1990s. Back then, those cars were used by the members of the deep state to kidnap mostly Kurdish people in the eastern part of Turkey, and those who were

⁵² <https://www.demokrathaber.org/cizgi/erdogan-la-bahceli-beyaz-toros-larda-h90673.html>

kidnapped were never to be found again. In that sense, such controversial cartoons could affirm racism, which is embedded in the far-right Nationalist ideology.

Also, it is noteworthy that in *Misvak*, in addition, those images of President Erdoğan, the illustrations of those government officials such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu or favored politicians as well as ideologues from the past like Necmettin Erbakan, Alparslan Türkeş or Necip Fazıl along with the historical figures from Ottoman-era such as Abdulhamid the II., are represented through picture-like drawings instead of caricatures which typically involve exaggeration or oversimplification. That sort of representation has much to do with the defiance of the understanding of the distorted body images. Bakhtin's theory of carnivalesque and grotesque realism, on the other hand, sees the grotesque body imagery as a celebration of life and death and as a way to unleash people's power against the official stratum. While the grotesque imagery of the body requires the degradation of the ideal and instead inscribes the body images of copulation, defecation, etc. it turns the world inside out by parodying and mocking authority (Erdoğan, 2013, p. 24) . Herewith, those images of the people who represent the authority are depicted through picture-like illustrations, which, in fact, serves to empower the authority.

Even though certain ideological positions are stated in the discourse, it does not mean that those representations and that the magazine's stance would be free from contradiction. In fact, the approach to those positions is frequently ambivalent and inconsistent. The main reason behind this inconsistency is related to the magazine's political stance, supporting the AKP in practically every decision taken eventually leads to slippery ground. It is known that the decision-making mechanisms of the party tend to be ambivalent that is even opposing calls are celebrated equally. To put it, the boundaries between conflicting decisions are so fluid that the party's discourse is easily changeable from today to tomorrow.

The irony that in each circumstance, those conflicting decisions are ignored and, in fact, applauded both by the party officials as well as its supporters, even though the reason requires otherwise. As such, *Misvak* also seems to unquestioningly embrace

that kind of logic, which eventually creates the contradictory nature of the magazine. In that sense, it becomes easy to detect those contradictory cartoons in the magazine, typically following the political agenda day by day. For example, during the crisis of Turkey-Russia relations due to Turkey's downing a Russian warplane in 2015, the cartoon below was published to demonstrate the weakness of the Russian S-400 missile system.

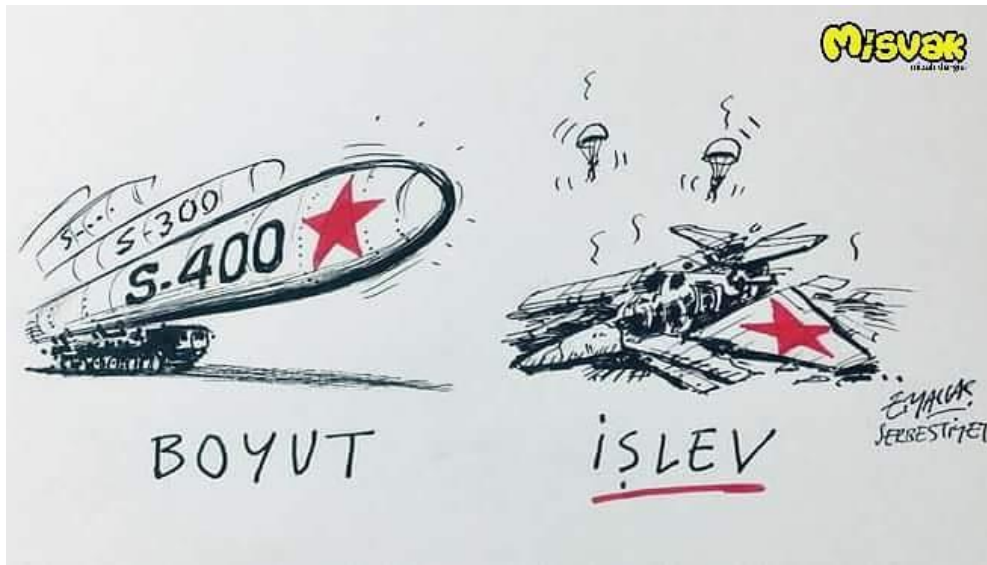


Figure 42.
*size- function

However, right after Erdoğan declared that they sealed the deal with the same missile system purchase from Russia to secure the country's air defense, below cartoon was published by Misvak this time. The cartoon shows that Erdoğan decided to purchase the S-400 missile system despite opposition's objections and everyone else must embrace this fact; as such, the cartoon depicts Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu while washing the truck carrying S-400s.



Figure 43.

In both cartoons, Erdoğan's and naturally AKP government's actions are affirmed even though each cartoon depicts quite conflicting political decisions.

On top of that Misvak, contradicts itself even ideologically, meaning that even though that any left-wing ideology is being negated and ridiculed in the magazine with unspeakable words and vulgar language, it was also affirmed one time to continue the AKP advocacy. Below cartoon was published after President Erdoğan gave his support to Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro during the political crisis in Venezuela, which deepened after the opposition leader Juan Guaido declared himself as the interim president of Venezuela in January 2019⁵³. Since both Venezuela as a country and Maduro, who became president after Chavez, represent Chavismo, a particular ideological position in the left-wing spectrum, this declaration of support was also found surprising by many parties, on the other hand, publishing of the cartoon below seems even more interesting.

⁵³ <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-and-venezuela-the-rise-of-a-new-alliance/a-47302588>



Figure 44.

-I call the brave and belligerent Venezuelans to occupy the streets.

In the above cartoon, Maduro is illustrated using Rabia gesture, which is almost identified with President Erdoğan and never been used by Maduro himself. Here, Maduro is being depicted as a hero and a fellow brother of Erdoğan in their common cause. In that sense, Misvak puts ideology aside as well as its hateful tone when the politics require otherwise.

As such, it is possible to observe that the before favorable politicians can be negated in alignment with the changing political discourse of the AKP. One of those notable figures is Ahmet Davutoğlu, back then Prime Minister of Turkey. Earlier, Davutoğlu was being pictured as a respectable politician and a fellow companion of Erdoğan, he was mostly illustrated as a sidekick and was being supported strongly by Misvak.



Figure 45.

-We cannot help laughing when we try to become seculars.



Figure 46.

**Chief and Hodja, happy birthday.*

After the conflict between Erdoğan and Davutoğlu was revealed day by day, Misvak's support to Davutoğlu has also started to decrease drastically.



Figure 47.

-Is this too much?



Figure 48.

*-Populism corrupts the foundation of democracy...
-I am sorry that pessimism has become widespread.
-What are they talking about?
-They are saying, " Oh, West! If you appoint a president to Turkey, we are candidates."*

Below cartoon was published by Misvak on 21 August 2019 after Abdullah Gül and Davutoğlu tweeted about the removal of the elected mayors of Van,

Diyarbakır, and Mardin from the office and replacing them with government appointees. In sum, Gül and Davutoğlu were criticizing the decision of replacements due to its undemocratic nature.^{54 55}



Figure 49.

*-Ouch, it feels like a pinprick!
-Same here!*

The same attitude applies to other figures, such as the MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli. He was before criticized heavily by the magazine when he declared that he was strictly against the presidential system back in 2015; he was even depicted as the devil for basically saying “no.”

⁵⁴ https://twitter.com/ahmet_davutoglu/status/1163406144519516161

⁵⁵ <https://twitter.com/cbabdullahgul/status/1163406000608686081>



Figure 50.



Figure 51.

-Mr. Bahçeli, why have you never been married?

-Then I would have to say “yes”.

However, when he changed his mind and especially after the MHP started to ally with the AKP, the magazine's illustrations of Bahçeli had transformed as well. Now, he is pictured as a hero and a fellow companion of the AKP and Erdoğan. Although, it is highly unlikely to assume that this support would remain the same if Erdoğan and Bahçeli decided to separate their ways.



Figure 52.

-Go on, chief?
-Go on.

To sum up, Misvak is dedicated to discriminate against people, including politicians, and illustrates them not according to their actions in politics but their affinity to the AKP and mostly to Erdoğan. In such a framework, friends and enemies of Misvak are changing by the day just like Erdoğan's are. For a political humor magazine, this type of side-taking is not only damaging the magazine's reliability but also weakens the element of humor since those inner contradictions become quite apparent.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

It has been argued in this chapter that the humor presented in Misvak can be categorized as disparagement humor that aims to belittle, denigrate and insult certain groups in Turkey while the discourse intends to strengthen the AKP, hence empower the authority. The use of humor in Misvak is not subversive in the Bakhtinian sense

but rather instrumental. Besides, despite the claim of being an Islamist humor magazine, the humor proposed in Misvak does not meet the qualities of a praised humor understanding considering the excess use of offensive jokes as well as a coarse language and grotesque imagery.

It has also been argued in the chapter that Islamism comes to the forefront as the prominent ideology in Misvak. Through a discourse of Islamization, individuals are hailed as subjects via cartoons; hence Misvak acts as an Ideological State Apparatus. In addition to Islamism, Nationalism and Neo-Ottomanizm are detected as the affirmed ideological positions, and it has been argued that the representation of the self-image is conducted through those ideologies. It has also been mentioned that there are absences, silences, as well as contradictions in the discourse which manifest in those images and representations and in fact, is related to magazine's unconditional support for the governmental actions.

Also, othering, stigmatizing, framing, and scapegoating are frequently used methods in Misvak, which lead to a hostile discourse towards any form of "other," which shows parallelism with the AKP discourse as well. This issue will be argued in the next chapter in detail.

CHAPTER 5

THE CONSTRUCTION OF ENEMY IMAGES IN MISVAK

This chapter, with an analysis of Misvak cartoons, aims to present how enemy images are constructed through visual texts and in which ways those could serve as discursive strategies. The data has been derived from Misvak's Instagram page and has been classified into the enemy image themes, which are given below as the left in Turkey, intellectuals, Gezi protesters, political parties in opposition, women, and LGBTQ+, foreign powers, and Kemalist modernization.

"Hostis" is the Latin word for "enemy," which means a stranger, a person who is connected to us by kin (Zur, 1991). Accordingly, the nature of enmity is embedded within the process of making a distinction between the self and other. Thus, as a notion that intersects many social science fields, including psychology, sociology, and political science, "otherness" is essential when contributing to the formation of enemy images. To that end, a split between us and them and consequently good and evil lies at the heart of the enemy making process (Zur, 1991, p. 345). In that sense, to be able to construct the self-identity, one must first decide on the features and qualities that distinguish the self from the other; hence this reasoning rather emerges as an intertwined thinking process while idealizing and victimizing the self and position the other as a subject of fear and threat.

Nonetheless, it can be argued that those categories of friends and enemies are not given but instead constructed. According to Post,

If the fear of enemies is biologically rooted, the identification of friends and enemies is socially conditioned, and this fear of the stranger and projection of hatred upon the other are the psychological foundation of the concept of the enemy (Post, 1999, p. 339).

In that sense, enemy images can be constructed with the demonization or dehumanization of an individual or a group that is classified as the “other”. Such attempts lead to building negative stereotypes that become permanently intrinsic to language and imagery. Those enemy images contribute to the reinforcement as well as the maintenance of hostility and antagonism between certain segments of the society (Staub, 2009). Such hostility is also related to “cultural violence,” as Galtung argues. Galtung defines this notion as;

The symbolic sphere of our existence -exemplified by religion and ideology. Language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) – that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence.' Stars, crosses and crescents; flags, anthems-and military parades; the ubiquitous portrait of the Leader; inflammatory speeches and postersall these come to mind (Galtung, 1990, p. 291).

Accordingly, enemy images involve psycho-cultural dispositions about the characteristics of the culture and the political ideology of a particular group (Oppenheimer, 2006). Zur argues that propaganda is a convenient tool to spread enemy images since it functions through the modes of communication such as visual images, written and spoken words, music, and other art forms (Zur, 1991, p. 351). Similarly, Fabick mentions that enemy images may be verbal as in slogans or pictorial as in posters or political cartoons (Fabick, 2007, p. 75).

As a humor magazine that mainly digitally publishes political cartoons, Misvak’s approach to the construction of the enemy images is argued in this thesis chapter. The chapter argues that Misvak, as a pro-AKP humor magazine, follows the party’s discourse on many issues from politics to the culture. As for humor being used as a medium for propaganda, the below chapter will trace the absences, silences, and controversies embedded within the discourse presented in the magazine to show that Misvak serves to nurture the AKP’s limited hegemony and to protect it from future threats. It will be argued here that employment of the conspiracy theories, political myth-making and finally enemy construction are essential maneuvers for authoritarian governments, which are uninterruptedly used by the AKP today to mobilize masses and hereby to nurture the AKP’s hegemony project following the same discourse and

with the efforts of othering, stigmatizing, and scapegoating, Misvak acts as an ideological state apparatus.

5.1 Representations of the Left in Turkey

The way that Misvak handles Marxism, socialism and any left-wing ideology in general, is similar to its previous counterparts that were publishing hateful images, including cartoons about communism, back in the 1960s and 1970s in Turkey. For example, in *Toprak*, a far-right monthly magazine, images of socialism and communism were being depicted in threatening forms, such as snails, mice, owls as well as skulls and crossbones like death's head on the magazine's cover to draw attention to the danger of communism back in the 1970s (T. Öztan, 2016). In that sense, representative images of the left taking place in Misvak also remind those enemy images created before them in the way delivering similar messages. Even though Misvak does not necessarily feel obliged to use solely animal symbolism, in both cases, those magazines construct enemy images regarding left while promoting Islamism, nationalism, and conservatism, which all together form the basis of Turkish Right (Bora, 2018b) which is represented by the AKP today.

Considering the period and political tension between left and right in the 1970s, *Toprak*-like magazines as being mediums for propaganda were the concrete results of the daily struggles and ongoing battles on the streets of Turkey; to put on a finer point, those magazines were serving as instruments to benefit the right. However, since “the enemy” of the right has been already “defeated” or at least silenced for a long time in the political arena in Turkey, one might expect to see lesser of those enemy images of left in the nationalist-conservative and Islamist humor magazines. Nonetheless, it could be stated that this is not the case for Misvak, and the ideological war between the left and right still takes place in the magazine in numerous ways.

Broadly comparing to its predecessors, one of the prominent distinctive features of Misvak could be observed in the discourse that manifests in a narcissistic way; underestimating and ignoring the effectiveness and even existence of a Turkish Left for most of the time.

Below cartoon depicts an old man writing on a wall “Prayer is the only way” (instead of “Revolution is the only way”). He explains to the police that he is now getting older, and police realize he is a former communist who decides to return to religion.



Figure 53.

This cartoon openly mocks with communism as well as atheism while implying that a leftist person’s political orientation is prone to change in time because being a communist is signified as a whim of youth. In that sense, communism is ridiculed rather than perceived as a threat in the cartoon. When this particular perspective considered in the context of the current political atmosphere, with a right-wing and Islamist party, AKP in power, such tendency could be explained with the assumption that the AKP’s hegemony project cannot be threatened by left-wing politics since communism allegedly is history.

In the cartoon below, two older men who claim to be leftists are sitting face to face on the U.S. flag patterned chairs; one is appeared to be smoking a cigarette while

the other one is holding a pipe. One of them brings up that they would not even smoke American cigarettes back in time, and the other points out that the situation has been changed since they are sitting on those chairs. Use of language here is a slang expression simply meaning that they are licking America's boots.



Figure 54.

Again, what is portrayed here is a story of apostasy, implying that old communists are now supporting the world's biggest capitalist. However, such claims that could only be defined as ill-thought and not grounded lead to a distortion or mystification of reality by concealing historical truths within the silences in the discourse. To put it another way, left's relation with the U.S had always been troubled in Turkey while Turkish right had primarily targeted left at the expense of being affiliated with the U.S. For instance, during the anti-imperialist demonstrations to protest the U.S 6th fleet İstanbul visit, it was the right-wing counter-protesters who attacked left-wing students with sticks, stones, and knives after a collective prayer which resulted in the death of two leftists as well as hundreds of injured on February

16, 1969. Today, known as the Bloody Sunday, the fascist attack was an example of the violence conducted by the well-organized mobs (Ahmad, 1977, p. 381).

Moreover, like the before mentioned cartoon, a similar message is conveyed in this one; the men here are portrayed as “white Turks” since the pipe is one of the common symbols to signify someone’s wealth in Turkish context which is also a mystification since it contradicts the foundation of the left-wing ideologies. To sum up, in both cartoons, the left is ridiculed and perceived as that it has no relevance in Turkey today.

Nevertheless, Misvak does not hesitate to convey criticism against those humor magazines, which they believe are leftists. According to the below cartoon humor magazines *Leman*, *Penguen*, and *Uykusuz* belong to the left in the political spectrum, and they are accused of being ignorant to the country’s national issues such as the 15 July coup attempt as the caption refers to the three wise monkeys meaning they see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil. The cartoon also depicts those magazines as supporters of the Gülen movement since the magazines’ logos are portrayed as Fethullah Gülen forms referring their silence is associated with their support to the organization.

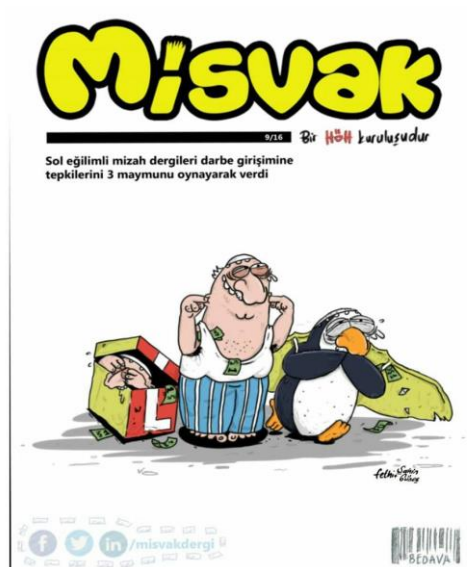


Figure 55.

The above image, in that sense, is showcasing how a cartoon could be effective in the process of political myth-making. There is not any data indicating Leman, Uykusuz, and Penguen's affiliation with the coup attempt; however, this cartoon contributes to the stigmatization of those magazines in a way that is eventually constructing the enemy images. In addition to the explicit hostility towards left and for this case towards those humor magazines, Misvak favors the AKP in a way that manifests itself with remarkable silences in the discourse. Those silences cover up and conceal the existence of important political affiliations by not mentioning those former alliances.

In some cartoons, left is associated with violence and terrorism, and below examples are portraying young people in violent acts. In the first cartoon below, two young men are firing a gun on opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu shouting "legacy!" and the caption is quoting Kılıçdaroğlu's tweet "*The courage of Deniz, Hüseyin and Yusuf is a legacy to all patriotic youth!*".⁵⁶ In that sense, Misvak identifies those mentioned names with common vandalism who were indeed pioneers of the left in Turkey in the 1970s and eventually put to death by the state at a very young age. An interesting detail lies in the fact that, besides their tattoos, earrings, and colored hair, the young men are appeared to belong to "Çarşı", a famous supporter group of the BJK sports club. The reason they were depicted as Çarşı supporters, is related to this group's active involvement in the Gezi Revolt during 2013. As mentioned earlier, as a youth movement and representing a resistance towards the authoritative regime as well as being a breaking point for the AKP hegemony, Gezi remarks a significant era in Turkish politics. Moreover, since Misvak as a pro-AKP, Islamist, and the nationalistic-conservative magazine is sided by the government, the magazine loathes Gezi and every symbolism reminding this movement just as the AKP does. Therefore, it is no surprise for Misvak to attempt an analogy between Gezi protests and leftist movements of the 1970s.

⁵⁶https://twitter.com/kilicdaroglu/status/728502513486409728?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E728502513486409728&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.birgun.net%2Fhaber%2Fkilicdaroglu-deniz-yusuf-ve-huseyin-in-cesareti-tum-yurtsever-genclere-mirastir-111433



Figure 56.



Figure 57.

In the second cartoon, two young people who are about to die after an armed conflict are depicted, and it is inferred that they belong to a revolutionary group. One of them is a young woman lying in a blood bath and mentioning they have failed the revolution using a slang expression for her last words. The cartoon also draws attention to what appears to be drugs in her pocket, which is also demonstrated with the writing

“ecstasy”. This is a classic example of hateful image use in Misvak, and there are many issues within this cartoon that needs careful examination.

To put it simply, leftist people are represented as armed terrorists and drug users, which is a claim without any basis that leads to othering as well as stigmatizing. Besides, two dark figures are pictured at the back; one of them is holding the gun that killed those young people and saying: “*May Allah bless the youth of the Ummah to give their lives in the way of Islam, not of Taghut⁵⁷. Blasphemy leads to Hell*”. With those words and image use, the death of those young people is affirmed in the cartoon. The dark figures are representing the far-right, their existence serves as a warning sign, and a threat message is delivered through this cartoon; it proposes for people to follow Islamist codes and reveals what would happen if they choose to do otherwise. In that sense, it could be said that the enemy construction process is highly explicit, strong emotions such as anger, hatred, and rage are evidently presented.

Another cartoon underlines the narrative that is the left politics is useless for the nation by quoting from Turgut Özal. Özal himself was a critical figure representing a specific break from Kemalism and is the symbol for the rise of conservatism, Islamism, and nationalism in Turkey after the 1980s. In the matter of presenting “self and other” in the magazine, this illustration of Özal is not aiming to produce entertaining content but rather acts as an ideological signifier, and this sample could be applied to other figures like Tayyip Erdoğan, Necmettin Erbakan, Necip Fazıl, etc. whose depictions also frequently take place in Misvak.

⁵⁷ Quranic term for false god or idol. See <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2301>



Figure 58.

-When I attempt to do a project, I observe what leftists write about it. If none of them opposes the project, I put it aside. If half of them oppose, then I apply the project after renovation. If all the leftists are making a fuss to prevent it, then I apply it as it is because it is a good project for the country.

In the chosen cartoon above, Özal is portrayed as surrounded by “Thug Life” references. Thug Life was a popular internet meme based upon rap artist 2pac (Tupac Shakur) and is an acronym for “The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everyone”. This meme is generally used to imply that someone made a point of something and had the final word about the debated topic; thus, there is nothing left to say for the other side. In that sense, it incorporates an arrogant tone and exudes a supercilious vibe when used, which applies to the mentioned cartoon as well. The image while picturing another example of othering towards leftist people leaves no further comment to be made when it comes to national matters since “they” already figured out what needs to be done and come up with the solution which came into existence in the thoughts of Özal and represented by his illustrations. This narcissistic approach to politics and society presents itself in many ways, and about numerous subjects in the magazine that needs to be addressed as a phenomenon that is part of Misvak’s characteristics.

The way Misvak addresses questions such as labor rights, resistance, and International Workers’ Day- 1st of May is consistent with the ideology proposed in the magazine. First, as integral parts of the democracy, protesting, demanding rights, and

claiming justice are not welcomed, and those issues are used to produce content to layout the “humorous essence” of the subject.

The cartoon below was firstly published by Hacamat, in the magazine’s 33rd issue, which was drawn by cartoonist Ahmet Altay and as per magazine’s Instagram account, it was republished this time by Misvak with the cartoonist’s permission. Besides showing the collaboration between Hacamat and Misvak, approach to labor rights emerges as ridicule in a way that demanding rights have been identified with begging since the laborers are portrayed as street beggars. Also, it is written, “When we beg, we win” on the banner which supposed to be “When we resist, we win”.



Figure 59.

In some other images, International Workers’ Day is ridiculed, and the efforts to build a just and egalitarian society are found disingenuous. It is implied in the magazine that such events are conducted only for “show,” and workers could benefit more from real money instead of this type of “hypocritical” initiatives.

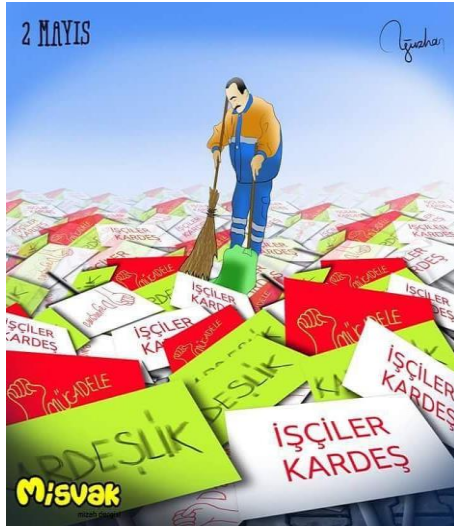


Figure 60.

*May 2



Figure 61.

*It would be nice to have a 1-month salary instead of (pointless) 1May.

Misvak embodies the right-wing politics, which comes into existence as the AKP today; thus, it follows a similar discourse with its predecessors about human rights and equality.



Figure 62.

- Look at that, we are working for bread, and they are working for evil.

The above cartoon illustrates a typical International Workers' Day gathering but with some small details laying out the distinction in the ideology that Misvak proposes. In the image, a laborer is actively working during the 1st of May and watching the parade from the top of a building, and it is implied that he does not approve people demonstrating for equal rights and solidarity. In fact, he separates himself from the crowd, thinking they are causing disturbances and intentionally doing evil. As argued in the previous chapter, this image could also be perceived as the "call" in the sense that Althusser argues which is hailing the subject -in that case, workers- and offering a separate identity that ignores class conflicts but instead proposes loyalty to the state.

A small detail supporting the above claim catches the eye in the frame, which is the magazine's logo used on a police car. In that sense, Misvak identifies itself with the police, taking a side by the state and exhibits a threatening existence that keeping an eye on the crowd, ready to intervene if necessary. That is the typical narrative of the Turkish right, manifesting with a commitment to a holy trinity composed of police, state, and the nation, which also could be a reference to and hereby the affirmation of Turkey's emergence as a police-state in the latest years.

The color scheme used in the image also speaks up for itself. Using only red and yellow in some distinctive parts of a black and white cartoon draws attention to the colored parts. Red as the color of communism is used in the image to signify some slogans, which are mostly based on anti-AKP or homophobic phrases. Yellow, on the other hand, is used on the worker's vest besides the Misvak logo, which is to remind people of their position in the "us vs. others" problematic. It should be reminded that even it does not take place in this image, the AKP's logo is also yellow-colored like Misvak's. Herewith, in one small frame, people are identified, classified, and the majority is stigmatized as the "enemy".

This is how ideology works; constructing enemy images by promoting scapegoating, othering, and stigmatizing. Left is negated through those above

cartoons, and what the magazine proposes instead is a simple solution that is to follow the Islamist codes.



Figure 63.

According to the above image, which is quoting from Prophet Muhammad, “*Pay the laborer his wages before his sweat dries*” implies that there is no need for labor unions, resistance, or a fundamental change in the political system. The magazine, in that sense, proposes Islam as a mechanism regulating daily life covering both politics and society.

5.2 Representations of Intellectuals

Another prominent category that Misvak targets as the enemy are intellectuals, mainly represented by academia, hereby scholars and students. This subject has been issued in the magazine several times and in a similar context, which resembles the AKP discourse on the matter. While magazine’s labeling efforts of a certain part of the academia show parallelism with the AKP’s current war on dissident academics, it could be mentioned that such tendencies are not unfamiliar given the historical and ideological background of the topic.

The main concern here may be revolved around the highly debated issue of anti-intellectualism which became an outstanding characteristic of the right-wing

populism in Turkey, especially after the 1980s. This is not to say that the Turkish right lacks intellectual capital altogether; in this regard, the criticism of anti-intellectualism rather targets the center-right circles which embraced the neoliberal values in politics and culture that were mainly introduced to Turkey by Turgut Özal and supported with the apolitical atmosphere consciously created after the 1980 military coup. During this period, while popular culture started to become an important factor shaping society, including youth, the establishment of the Council of Higher Education took the role of supervision of universities, and for the first time (after 1984), private universities started to appear in Turkey. Although it had always been embedded within the populist policy strategies in Turkey, anti-intellectualism became a major actor in right-wing politics during the 1980s. After the AKP came into power in 2002, this game-changer started to emerge with a louder voice than ever before and shaped the party's political agenda in an unprecedented way.

Gençoğlu argues that anti-intellectualism is an ideological state apparatus consciously used by the AKP to re-produce and strengthen the neoliberal conservative hegemony as well as a distinguishing characteristic of the latest version of populism in Turkey (Gençoğlu, 2018). Her analysis seems valid, given many cases supported with the frank statements of the cabinet members and the AKP supporters. For example, during an interview conducted in 2013, then Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Taner Yıldız, mentioned that as the education level of the voters' increases, the AKP's vote rate decreases.⁵⁸ Those statements of Yıldız could be perceived as a confession hereby indicates the awareness of the party members about their voters' profile, including their cultural capital, in the sense that Bourdieu argues. This perspective could help us understand the use of anti-intellectualism by the AKP as an ideological apparatus, hence the main motive behind the war on academia.

Having said that, those discussions about the AKP officials' own intellectual capitals have been an issue of debate as well. Those critiques towards the party members lacking cultural capital became a soft spot for the pro-government circles.

⁵⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrz53vbrRcg>

For example, the authenticity of President Erdoğan's university diploma has been questioned by many after the claims of an opposition MP, and the controversy has been submitted to the court. Nonetheless, the AKP further continues to pursue a populist discourse and points out a status reversal in the society, meaning that those former uneducated people who were overlooked by the elite are now the righteous representatives of the nation.

Another shocking statement came from Prof. Bülent Arı, then vice-chancellor of the Sebahattin Zaim University, when he mentioned that he always trusted the insight of illiterate people and intellectuals ever caused nothing but harm to the country thus he becomes exasperated (*hafakanlar basıyor*) as the rate of education increases.⁵⁹ He was referring to peace petition signatories with those statements, and after the reactions received, he declared his resignation from the university allegedly not to harm its image; however, it was later revealed that he was appointed as a member of the Audit Board of the Council of Higher Education.⁶⁰ Considering he was rewarded for his statements that were highly unexpected coming from a scholar, it is no surprise that as a pro-AKP humor magazine *Misvak* follows the same discourse on academia while stigmatizing universities and marginalizing the students as well as the faculty for being terrorists.

⁵⁹ <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/275541/sabahattin-zaim-universitesi-rektor-yardimcisi-cahil-halka-guveniyorum>

⁶⁰ http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/645718/Cahil_kesime_guveniyorum_diyen_profesör_YOK_Denetleme_Kurulu_uyeligine_atandi.html



Figure 64.

-We have raised you; I am a teacher.

-Get in the car old chap, the ones you have raised become bombers.

As known, after the state of emergency was declared due to the 15 July coup attempt, thousands of academics lost their job by decree-laws, and today not one person feels safe since they are constantly under the stress of being dismissed from their positions with arbitrary reasons. Those were mostly dissident academics, and the AKP did not hesitate to frame them as terrorists for signing the peace petition calling the government to take action in order to end the violence against the Kurds in south-east Turkey in 2016. Those cartoons portraying them traitors and terrorists align with the AKP discourse on the subject as well.



Figure 65.

**1128 traitors*



Figure 66.

-Murderer state, murderer state...

In another cartoon, Turkish Military seems to be targeted, due to the Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University Aslı Iğsız, daughter of the Former Head of First Army Hasan Iğsız also signing the before mentioned peace petition. Hasan Iğsız was criticized and blamed for being a PKK sympathizer when he responded to criticisms declaring that he expects from his children not to obey his truth but to question and examine to find their own.⁶¹ Below cartoon depicts a woman in veil asking Iğsız why he chose to torture them if he is a supporter of the free will.

⁶¹ <https://t24.com.tr/haber/emekli-orgeneral-hasan-igsiz-baris-bildirisine-imza-atan-kizi-icin-nededi.324465>



Figure 67.

This cartoon points out another motive behind the witch hunt that targets academicians as well as the hateful discourse on the issue, which is rooted back to the 28 February Period, also known as the post-modern coup. This is a meaningful period for the Islamists, and its effects were presented as a non-healing wound created by the secular academics and mainly by the Turkish military. As such, the 28 February process enabled the AKP to continue the discourse of victimization, which has also been pursued before by the Islamist parties such as the Welfare Party and Virtue Party since it is a characteristic of the political Islam. In that sense, considering the fact that the AKP had already lifted the ban on headscarves in universities in 2007 and the civil service in 2013, the cartoon above serves to keep those emotions like hatred and rage alive while continually reminding the audience the troubles of the past.

Amongst all universities in Turkey, enemy image construction in Misvak is the strongest when it comes to METU. It was mentioned before that, strong negative emotions of the Misvak cartoonists about METU was the primary motive for them to decide to publish this magazine in the first place. Both the students and the faculty of METU are frequently targeted since the university has been a symbol of secularism as well as the left-politics in Turkey from the beginning.



Figure 68.

*The famous donkeys (students) of METU who mocked Ramadan, now want to stop the construction of a mosque on the campus.

-He-Haw!

-Alright, alright, we will also build a barn for you.



Figure 69.

*Demolish METU and build a barn instead.



Figure 70.

As can be seen in the above images, Misvak cartoonists use almost solely animal symbolism in their depictions of METU; students are almost exclusively portrayed as donkeys while METU is identified with a barn to signify the “ignorance” which is attributed to the what university symbolizes. As before mentioned, dehumanizing is a typical method for nationalist-conservative magazines to signify the enemy in a patronizing and condescending manner; following a similar approach, Misvak does not seem to be original either.

5.3 Representations of the Gezi Protesters

Gezi Revolt is significant in many ways and will be studied for many years to come. To put it, it was important in the way showing how could democratic and peaceful protests lead to a turning point in society as well as politics. Despite the conscious efforts to create a depoliticized environment in the post-1980 era, it has also revealed that young people of Turkey were not apolitical as thought. It was a unifying civil youth movement composed of people coming from many different political and ideological backgrounds, and it blindsided the AKP since it posited a certain threat to its hegemony, which finally resulted in the form of limited hegemony project of today. It could be said that its impact remains to this day, and it is a topic for Misvak cartoonists like to draw upon frequently as well.

In Misvak, Gezi protests are portrayed as violent acts, identified with vandalism to the extent that resembles almost an act of terrorism. In the magazine, young people's demands are overlooked, the protests seem to destroy the police and government; hence, they are marginalized.



Figure 71.

*-Do not touch the tree!
-What is going on?*

The enemy images regarding Gezi are mostly constructed through the illustrations of Berkin Elvan, who was hit by a tear gas capsule on his head at the age of 14 during the protests, hereby killed by the police after staying in a coma for 269 days.



Figure 72.

*-Give me two more pieces of bread so that police can also benefit on the way
-Here you go, freshly-baked from the sidewalk. Should I wrap them, or will you throw them here?*

The above image presents Misvak's position on the sensitive issue and answering the claims that Berkin Elvan was killed when he was out to get some bread during the protests. In the drawing, with sharp teeth and yellow eyes, Berkin Elvan is dehumanized, and the image openly implies that he was a terrorist; thus, his death is affirmed by the magazine aligning with the relevant statements of the President Erdoğan. For example, he openly said that Berkin Elvan was "connected to terrorist organizations" during a campaign for the local elections on 30 March 2014.⁶²

⁶² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26594922>



Figure 73.

**Kartal Municipality Berkin Elvan Football Tournament Award Ceremony*

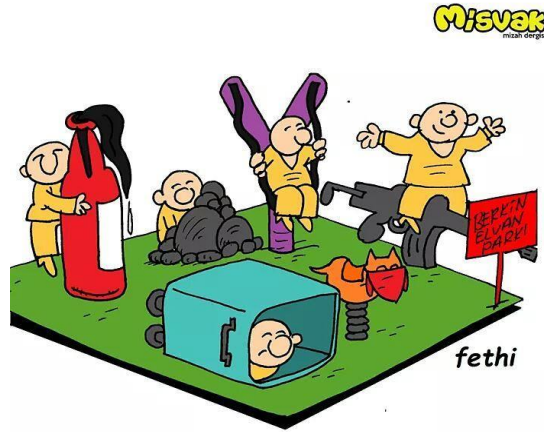


Figure 74.

**Berkin Elvan Park*

Below cartoon, on the other hand, using 1 US Dollar bill as a symbol implies that Gezi protesters belong to the same camp with the FETO members, and they are labeled “traitors” as well.



Figure 75.

-What is that one-dollar bill? Poor thing, you are sold off cheaply. See, Gezi protesters do not betray for less than 200 Turkish liras.

Misvak also seems to feel obliged to make a comparison between Gezi protesters who occupied Taksim square and then many other arenas in numerous cities and people who filled the streets during the night of 15 July coup attempt. This is an

interesting comparison that contributes to creating and further strengthening the polarization between people of Turkey in the same axis of us vs. them/ self and other dichotomy.

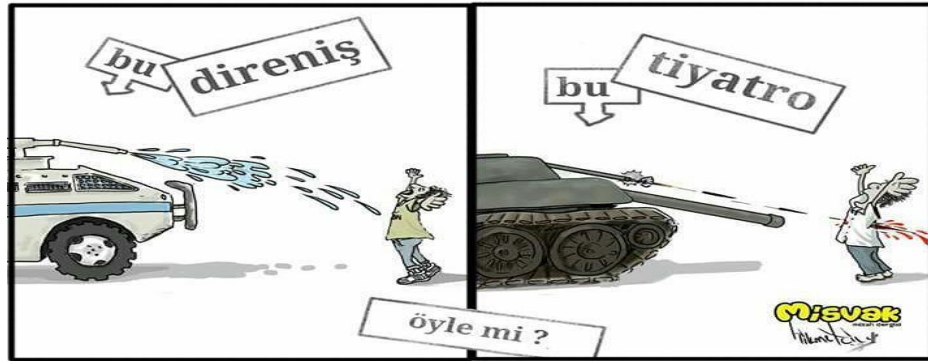


Figure 76.

**This is resistance; this is a play. Is it?*

The above cartoon compares the protesters of Gezi and the 15 July coup attempt and affirms one's commitment to democracy and the state while picturing him in front of a tank, and negating other's behavior since the image underestimates the resistance.

This image only presents a small part of the more comprehensive understanding and representation of the 15 July coup attempt in Misvak. As argued in the previous chapters, the 15 July coup attempt led to a fertile ground for an unprecedented political myth-making process in Turkish politics and created a new narrative for the AKP by changing its victimization discourse to a discourse on victory (Tokdoğan, 2018). According to this narrative, it was not the power elites but the ordinary people confronting tanks, occupying streets, and giving their lives while defending democracy; hence they were the main actors who played the most crucial role during that night. In other words, it was farmers, villagers, housewives, laborers,

craftsmen, and their children who fought the rogue soldiers and defeated the coup attempt; ordinary people achieved something out of the ordinary that night.⁶³

In the aftermath of the coup attempt, politicians from all parties were stressing the importance of following an inclusive approach towards everyone; the emphasis was to end polarizations and unify as the nation against the current enemy: FETO. However, this relatively inclusive approach lasted for a short period, and with the declaration of the state of emergency in the country, dichotomies made a stronger come back than even before and evolved into a “you are either with us or against us” policy.

It could be claimed that this is the current snapshot of Turkey today, in such a framework beforementioned collective narcissism defines a specific part of the society: supporters of the AKP who mostly identify themselves with Erdoğan. As narcissistic groups expect continuous approval and admiration, their perceptions of threats and intolerance towards them are highly intense; as a result, aggression and hostility can become the dominant pattern of behavior of the group (Tokdoğan, 2018). Suffice to say that Misvak cartoonists seem to embrace the same position since the representations of the coup attempt mainly focus on the “others”, that are depicted as “the enemy”.

Below unrealistic drawings such as portraying “the bulletproof soldiers of the ummah” contribute to the construction of narcissistic identity within the scope of coup attempt illustrations.

⁶³ <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/the-brave-who-defeated-the-july-15-coup-attempt-18889>



Figure 77.

**nation*



Figure 78.

**This nation knows the soldier of the ummah and the puppet of the traitor... 15 July is the evidence that ummah is bullet-proof.*



Figure 79.

-Some people are talking about a coup, what do you think?

-This time we will not throw jimmy bars to the planes; we will directly sting it in their eyes.

In short, enemy images are constructed through a people vs. elites dichotomy stigmatizing white Turks as cowards and ignorant about national problems through the representations of the coup attempt.



**Elite squad on the tenth day of
the coup
-Mommy hand me a flag!*



-Does my vote count as the same as a shepherd's vote?

5.4 Representations of the Political Parties in Opposition

Considering its pro-AKP position, criticism towards the mentioned party is almost non-existent in Misvak; however, representations of its political opponents constitute one of the main themes in the magazine. Herewith, while this serves the AKP the most, considering the frequency of this issue in the magazine, it also shows humor being a medium for propaganda in Misvak. In that sense, enemy construction efforts can be so excessive that even the death of a politician could be affirmed through Misvak cartoons, which an example is given below.



Figure 82.

*-Breaking news! Saddening political developments... Is it true that Leyla Zana is found to be alive at home this morning?
-Unfortunately, sir.*

However, there are significant issues and controversies within those depictions of the opponents as well. First, as it was argued before, those representations of the political opponents are not consistent since they can change very quickly; those who are stigmatized as the enemy could easily move to the other camp and become “friend” and vice versa. This is a result of the Misvak’s commitment to follow the AKP discourse on the enemies vs. friends dichotomy. Considering this, below cartoon, which accuses Meral Akşener to form alliances with different political parties poses a controversy. While doing that, the picture does not hesitate demonizing Akşener, using a common method in the construction of the enemy image, it is implied in the cartoon that even the devil himself is not capable of the evil that Akşener does.



Figure 83.
-You are great, sister.

Besides from this inconsistency, the problem starts with the tendency to treat everyone as the same; regardless of the party and ideological background, all opponents are represented as they belong to the same camp: enemies. In that sense, media moguls like Aydın Doğan along with Fethullah Gülen, the leader of a religious sect that is now accepted as one of the most menacing terrorist organizations FETO, could be sided with the political party leaders such as Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Devlet Bahçeli, and Selahattin Demirtaş, the representatives of three distinct political positions as the below image suggests which names them “as the miserable ones” referring to the book and the movie “*Les Misérables*”.



Figure 84.

For example, below cartoon indicates that the CHP's Ekrem Imamoğlu, the Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, is affiliated with both PKK and FETO while Canan Kaftancıoğlu is illustrated as a hypocrite with a piece of meat in her hand during Ramadan. In one frame, accusing both Imamoğlu and Kaftancıoğlu, CHP as a political party is represented as a dishonest and terrorist organization. The second cartoon also showcases another example of stigmatizing the opponents of the AKP that are portrayed as a union whose allegiance is to the devil.



Figure 85.

-Eko, we just do not fit in here, order an armchair.
-And there is the fast-breaking meal organization to deal with in the evening for appearance sake.



Figure 86.

-As you know, they will tie me up during Ramadan. I am assured that you will be equally good during my absence.

Moreover, those opposition politicians are depicted as they are all affiliated with “foreign powers” whether it be US., Russia, or EU, whichever suitable to their political interests at that moment. Herewith, the “otherness” of those politicians is implied to strengthen further the perception management conducted by the AKP regarding it is the genuine party of the people and the nation since they are the “servants,” while remaining parties pursue other goals, that they have a hidden agenda which lead them to form alliances with foreign powers.



Figure 87.

-Hooray! Hooray! Moscow! Moscow!



Figure 88.

-Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu, wait. You are not the opposition leader that Trump appointed.

In that sense, Misvak follows the AKP discourse claiming to lead the “domestic and national” (yerli ve milli) camp which accepts the party as the authority that gets to decide whether other parties would be worthy of joining their side, or should they be labeled as “infidels”.

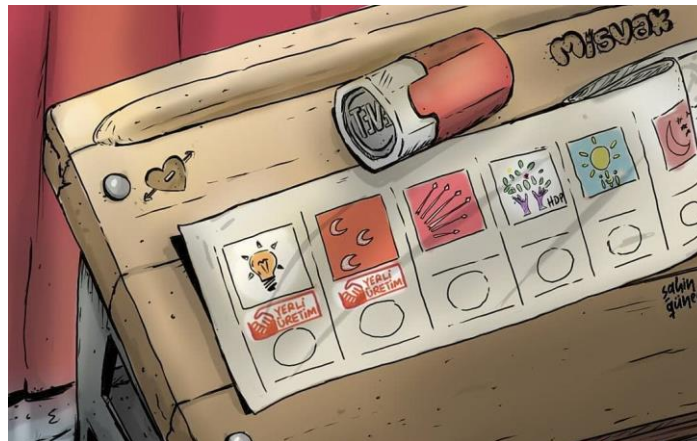


Figure 89.

The above cartoon proposes those camps of domestic and national as the AKP and the MHP (the People’s Alliance) during the 2018 General Elections, which leaves the remaining parties (mainly Nation’s Alliance) the other side; who would be stigmatized as the others, as infidels within us.



Figure 90.

-Dear audience, after the French national anthem singing CHP MPs, another CHP MP complained to Russia about Turkey. It has been claimed that the MP was a secret agent of Iran.
-Look at that... There is not one national and domestic person at the party. At least there is me. Anyways, I should report these to Merkel.



Figure 91.

-Can I call you father too?

One of the main indicators of being domestic and national in Misvak is embedded in religion, which is offered as Islam. Tanıl Bora argues that even though the term of “domestic” (and national) was used by Kemalism back in the 1940s as well as left in 1960s as a form of resistance to anti-imperialism, it was lately embraced by reel-Islamism (which came into existence as the AKP today) within efforts to hegemonize nationalism as a part of the realist discourse (Bora, 2018c). He offers that by incorporating this notion into cultural hegemony against the left, this theme has become vital for Islamists who have no problems with Turkey or “being Turkish” anymore (Bora, 2018c).

In that sense, those depictions in the magazine claiming the existence of the hypocrisy within the actions of the political parties in opposition are being rationalized with a premise of impiety that is presented as a part of their characteristic. For instance, below cartoons propose that using religion, the CHP manipulates the voters to attract their sympathy; however, this is only a diversion since at the end of the day CHP was

the one saying “no” to the Presidential system, which marks the party’s status as the irreligious party of Turkey considering its secular roots in politics.

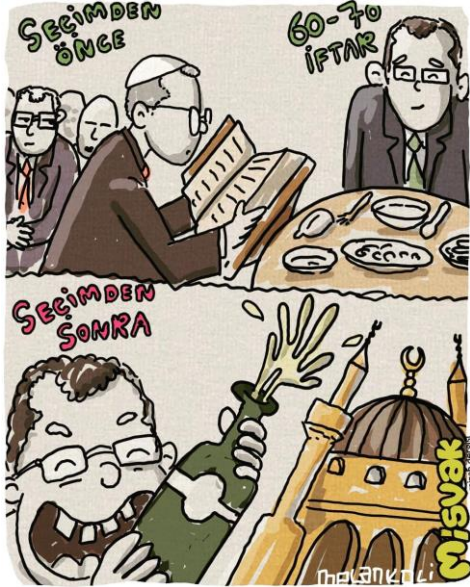


Figure 92.

**Before & after the elections*



Figure 93.

-Dude, they are saying no before even reading it. Why is that?

-Brother, it is because our book says “read” and theirs “do not read.”

Amongst other parties, representations of the CHP come to the forefront in the magazine, herewith it could be worthy of attention to gaze upon some of those depictions of the main opposition party of the years.

First and foremost, the CHP is depicted as an elitist party, an allegation used to signify Kemalism as the other/enemy for years, which is allegedly showing itself within the party’s discourse. According to this narrative, the CHP as the founder party of the Republic had achieved nothing but to erect statues of Atatürk while the AKP built roads and airports to serve the nation. It also needs to be addressed that those party representatives are shown as drunks in the below cartoon which reminds when (then PM) Erdoğan referred to Atatürk and İsmet İnönü as “two drunks”. The cartoon also does not hesitate to openly insult Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu by emphasizing the “M” letter in the middle of his name which leads to a play on words as calling him a tool.



Figure 94.

-Listen, how about we organize a rally in Kütahya? I have heard there are wonderful double highways there. There is also an airport. I do not know how to go there. It is a tough choice!

-We need to go there somehow and reach out to the public. We need to tell them about our new statue projects.

Illustrations of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu sets the tone of the magazine regarding representations of the CHP as well as the party's followers. In that sense, Misvak proposes a dishonest and clueless leader image for the main man while also framing its voters for being stupid in a similar way. (appx A. fig. A.6, A.7)



Figure 95.

**Master liar Kemal*

-Son, he is rather stupid. Poor thing, tolerate him once in a while

-How come?

Kılıçdaroğlu: Dictator, corrupt, inglorious!



Figure 96.

-I voted for the CHP because I do not want headscarf freedom, or airports, highspeed trains, highways. Because...

-Because?

-Because I am a tool!

Misvak, taking an offensive position, keeps on embracing the AKP's discursive strategies while blaming opposition leaders for being jealous of the AKP as well as Erdoğan himself as a leader. According to this narrative, opposition leaders are useless for the people; while the AKP is characterized by being humble servants of the Turkish nation, the opposition is characterized by envy.



Figure 97.

**Those who did not do anything but to erect statues for 100 years are jealous of the domestic car.*



Figure 98.

*-Dear audience, The G20 summit has ended gloriously.
-We are not jealous of Tayyip, are we?
-No*

Below cartoon, on the other hand, brings up the issue of Kılıçdaroğlu's appointment as the General Director of the Social Insurance Institution in 1992 in order to blame him for bankrupting the Institution which is showing parallelism to President Erdoğan's allegations of him on the matter.



Figure 99.

*-Have we lost that amount of money?
-Yes sir, that much.
-Well, this is nothing compared to the bankruptcy of the SSK.*

The above cartoon is presenting an example of how silences and concealment could work in political discourse through visual texts. To put it, while Misvak chooses to mention specific incidents in a certain way; the narrative almost always favors the AKP; on the other hand, there is no criticism brought to the government. In that sense, within those cartoons covering the political opponents of the AKP, humor has been used as a medium to transmit propaganda rather than being a tool for criticism.

5.5 Representations of Women and the LGBTQ+

5.5.1 Representations of Women

The portrayal of women in Misvak is also consistent with the Islamic as well as the nationalist-conservative discourse. Suffice to say that women's attire has become a determining factor when deciding whether an ideology is leaning towards Islamism or not. In that sense, Turkish right deals the issue of the headscarf more flexibly while Islamism as an ideology puts it in the center of identity construction politics (Köse, 2016). Ideologically speaking, it is worthy of attention that since most of the representations of women are depicted in the veil, an Islamic tone is somewhat dominant in those gender portrayal cartoons in the magazine. As might be expected, this is related to the magazine's tendency to advocate AKP policies in almost all areas, including women's rights as well as their role in society.

Islamist elements resurface, and appropriation of Islamist codes more explicitly and directly manifests themselves in the AKP discourse when it comes to issues such as women and family. Accordingly, the ideal modern family, which should be perceived through Islamist norms, is a patriarchal one that accepts that women and men are not equal but have complementary roles and responsibilities (Saraçoğlu, 2016). Considering the dominance of the Islamist tone in the AKP discourse, it could be mentioned that those portrayals of women and family in Misvak handle the issue with similar lenses.

Those below cartoons reveal the classic Islamist mentality regarding women's role in public and private spaces. Accordingly, while the public world of men is

associated with power, status, and decision making, women who are portrayed as helpless, powerless victims, and dependent on their male kin are associated with domestic life (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2001, p. 303). In the Turkish context, this narrative has been associated with agoraphobia that effected Islamist women in society after the foundation of the Republic (Aktaş, 2018, p. 826). Similarly, cartoons are emphasizing the public/private space dichotomy while offering women's interaction with their home as significant since this residential area is associated with women's main characteristics as wives and mothers. As such, the first cartoon is negating the efforts of women empowerment in business, stating they already have duties in their home from a male perspective; the second cartoon is aiming for audience identification with the use of a young woman (who ironically seems to be outside of the home) to affirm the importance of domestic responsibilities such as cooking.



Figure 100.

-Authorities stated that they were aiming to increase the rate of working women from 35 % to 60 %.
-Women already have jobs at home; find jobs for their husbands first!



Figure 101.

**Do not cook ashoura for me; teach me how to cook it!*

Above stated remarks are neither new nor only pertain to AKP politics but instead are reflections of a long-standing Islamic discourse on women that have been

brought up by many conservative nationalist writers and politicians such as Osman Yüksel (Serdengeçti) and Necip Fazıl (Kısakürek). For example, Kısakürek specifies the occupations that are appropriate for women of the Islamic revolution. Accordingly, those women can pursue professions such as teaching or medicine only to help and teach other women however they cannot work as *“drunk bar singers, prostitutes, dancers as well as laborers or public servants as those would only lead to filth”* (Kısakürek, 2019, p. 265).

While women’s attire was embedded in discussions on national identity, secularization, and modernity, it was a question of civilization after the establishment of the Republic (Saktanber & Corbacioglu, 2008). Having said that, headscarf and veiling, in general, come out as significant components when deciding whether a (Muslim) woman has dignity or not, according to Islamists. In that sense, veiling was perceived as a means of the real civilization, which is different from the Republican, modern, and secular sense; instead, it argues that covering oneself is what distinguishes people -in this case, women- from animals. Below cartoon is emphasizing this analogy between covering and civilization which is also consistent with the ideas of Necip Fazıl who claimed;

The secret of the veil, which takes the brutality of the bare meat that is skinned out to the tail in the butcher's shops, to a captive talisman, is only in Islam with its exclusive (aesthetic) eyes. (Kısakürek, 2019, p. 138).



Figure 102.

-We were normal people 100 years ago. When did we become like that?

In a similar sense, the veiling issue is used to signify the discourse of victimization in the magazine. Below cartoon is both creating and reproducing the narrative of “past troubles” of Islamist women who suffered heavily due to their headscarves, which has been a political symbol (Saktanber & Corbacioglu, 2008) in Turkey for a long time.



Figure 103.

- Islam captivated this woman, let's free her
- Beat her, make sure she becomes free!
- Remove her chador, break her bones.

On the other hand, Misvak does not hesitate to bring criticism to “modern Muslim women” in the veil, claiming that all those past troubles have been forgotten, referring to the 28 February process. In addition, the male gaze is worthy of attention within below cartoons since this form of criticism targets only women and their attire.

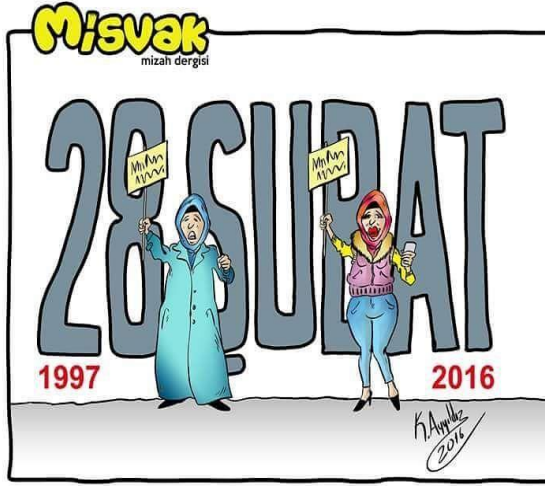


Figure 104.

*28 February



Figure 105.

-Which one of the women in the image is covered?

-I quit!

Below cartoon, on the other hand, aims to bring hate to the issue of feminism and prevails the efforts of the women collectives by criticizing the annual feminist night march that has been organized since 2003. Herewith, hegemonic masculinity emerges which indeed is interlinked with current politics that is also embodied in the character of President Erdoğan (Ekşi, 2015).



Figure 106.

-Do not get wasted here, come tomorrow and start working as a documented worker.

Tanıl Bora also mentions that hegemonic masculinity is embedded in conservative nationalist circles in Turkey who are eager to label women as “prostitutes” whenever they intend to cross the limits of their given roles as mothers, sisters, and wives (Bora, 2019). This is indeed not a peculiar perspective considering Serdengeçti’s (whom Bora also refers to) accusations of modern women whom he thinks are “*simple whores*” since they abandon their duties as housewives and mothers. For example, in his “Asri Aile” poem, Serdengeçti criticizes “*modern family*” in which he uses words such as “*şıllık*”(slut), “*metres*”(mistress), “*kaltak*” (whore) and “*orospu*”(prostitute) to describe women and even goes further to claim that any woman “can be bought” with enough money (Serdengeçti, 2014).

Another cartoon below showcases Misvak’s position on marriage at an early age, aka child marriage problem⁶⁴. This is significant since this term is blurring the lines between a child and a woman; thus, it should be carefully dealt with. In the cartoon below Selahattin Demirtaş is “accused of” being an atheist or (even worse!) “a Zoroastrian and a bit of Armenian” due to posters of “*There is no child bride, there is a rapist man*” hung on Diyarbakır’s Yenişehir municipality billboards in 2015.



Figure 107.

- Why do you put up posters that give away we are non-believers?
- But we are not atheists; we are Zoroastrian and a bit of Armenian.

⁶⁴ The term of child marriage is also found to be problematic since it is normalizing the phenomena

Back then, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University students reacted to those posters by marching from the Faculty of Theology to the Central Refectory. According to students' statements, they were condemning the Directorate of Women's Policies and the Municipality of Yenışehir since this poster was insulting Prophet Muhammad similar to those Danish cartoons that caused an outrage in the Muslim world⁶⁵. In a similar vein, there had been some attempts to legalize early age marriage in Turkey by the ruling AKP in recent years. In 2016, AKP MPs proposed a bill that pardoned men convicted of sex with underage girls if they have married them; after strong reactions and protests, the proposal was withdrawn by then PM Binali Yıldırım⁶⁶. Similarly, in 2018, it was stated by the Directorate of Religious Affairs that girls as young as nine years old could marry according to Islamic laws. Considering such incidents, what Misvak cartoon does is again to affirm the practice of child marriage with Islamist justifications, while doing that, the same cartoon does not hesitate to imply Demirtaş's affiliation with PKK by using the PKK flag's color scheme on his tie.

The below carton also showcases Misvak's approach to the child marriage problem. According to the image, those who marry with children should not serve prison time, considering President also advises marriages at a young age.

⁶⁵ <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yerel-haberler/van/cocuk-gelin-yoktur-tecavuzcu-erkek-var-dir-afisine-tepki-11021600>

⁶⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38061785>



Figure 108.

-Do not get married late; get married young.

5.5.2 Representations of LGBTQ+

While LGBTQ+ depictions are not common in the magazine, those dealing with the issue are embedded with homophobia, and representations are quite stereotypical, ignoring human rights and activism altogether. The use of vulgar language is explicit within below cartoons as well as the symbolism, which openly leads to hate and discrimination. For example, according to the below image, Misvak affirms excessive police force against LGBTQ+ individuals and justifies it through the Islamic norms due to the sacredness of “Ramadan”.

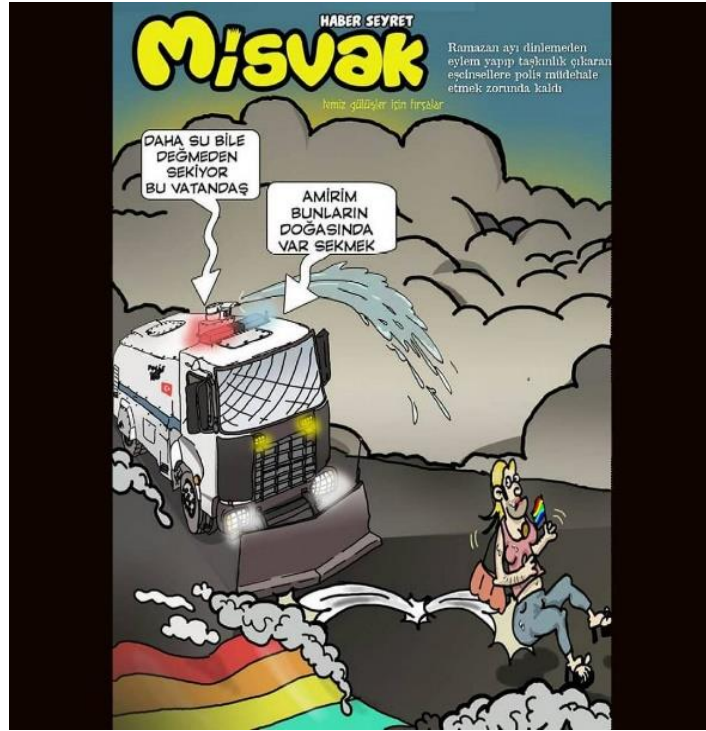


Figure 109.

-This citizen is bouncing even before the water touches.
-Sir, bouncing is inherent to them.



Figure 110.

-Are you sure we are in the right place for walking?
-Move, move. Let's run away before we get into trouble.

On the other hand, homophobic stigmatization is quite common in the magazine, and problematic representation of gender needs a bit detailed attention since it has been observed that this method is heavily used to construct enemy images while framing politicians as well as the Kurdish movement.

5.5.3 The Use of Hegemonic Masculinity for the Construction of Enemy Images

Affirming hegemonic masculinity is a common approach in the magazine with the intent of “ridiculing,” “insulting,” and “humiliating” the enemies, whether it be the political opponents of the AKP or PKK/PYD. This typical patriarchal method results in misogynist and homophobic representations and targets anyone who identifies themselves other than a straight male.

Below cartoon showcases one of those homophobic illustrations which depicts Kılıçdaroğlu and Gülen in bed as lovers to imply a secret political collaboration between them.



Figure 111.

*-Love, I lie before you but, is this our presidency thing done?
-All it takes is a videotape.*

In another one, not only Kılıçdaroğlu but CHP as a party is mocked due to the party's support to LGBTQ+ rights, including the pride parade as shown in the below cartoon.



Figure 112.
-We support LGBT.

In Misvak, sexual potency is identified with the vulgar display of power. For example, in the below cartoon, male sexuality is used as an agency of power as well as dominance, which is consistent with norms of a patriarchal society (Khan et al., 2008, p. 37). In that sense, cartoon uses male sex act as a means to humiliate Demirtaş as well as PKK/PYD; herewith Turkish military is represented as a form of hegemonic masculinity, while the Kurds are identified with women to imply their weaknesses and subordination.



Figure 9.

Hate and disgust towards LGBTQ+ and women, which are derived from hegemonic masculinity could be observed within the below cartoons that Demirtaş is portrayed as a part of the organizations PKK/PYD and whose militants are almost always illustrated in women's clothing to imply their weaknesses. Opposition leader Kılıçdaroğlu who has been depicted in the skirt seems to be affiliated with those organizations according to cartoons.



Figure 113.

-Hi there, come here!



Figure 114.

*-We appreciate you very much boss.
-No one really appreciates me, only you guys.
-You know what they say, "it takes one traitor to know one."*

In those representations of HDP as well as PKK/PYD, the same problematic symbolism showing men in women's clothing emerges. Misvak intends to claim that they believe a unified nation as Turks and Kurds, hence racism is off the table. However, creating and using a "stereotypical" Kurdish man image who is dark-skinned, hairy, and speaks Turkish with an eastern accent shows the racist essence of those offensive cartoons.



Figure 115.

**Turk & Kurd*



Figure 116.

**Terrorist Organization in skirts
-It makes you feel really free, although there is some breeze from down below.*

Last but not least, below cartoon proposes an Ottoman man who is “putting his woman her place” by slapping her to show dominance. While glorifying the Ottoman roots of Turkey, the image uses hegemonic masculinity to ridicule PKK/PYD militants; at once, violence against women is normalized, and hateful and homophobic discourse is reproduced.



Figure 117.

The above-presented image of the Ottoman man could also be perceived as the defiance of Western modernization, which at the same time emerges as a fear of the

losing national identity that reminds Gürbilek's term of "anxiety of feminization" (Gürbilek, 2016). In that sense, reclaiming Eastern masculinity, Misvak proposes a strong male image that is so powerful and dominant that PKK/PYD would fall on their knees. On the other hand, considering that homosexuality was common and ordinary among the upper classes during the Ottoman period, the cartoon also ironically intends to nurture recreating the history to construct the narcissistic identity.

5.6 Representations of the Foreign Powers (Dış Mitraklar)

Creating enemies to secure the status quo and further strengthen the hegemony is a common and deep-rooted approach in politics. Herewith, this leads to the safe ground to point out an outer target to blame when problems arise; thus, the responsibilities of the power elites are somewhat externalized through this formula. Moreover, by creating a culture of fear, political leaders increase their power, which they use to control the society; keeping insecurities and threats alive let them continue to take repressive measures.

This approach indeed forms the backbone of the AKP's discourse on almost every subject; according to President Erdoğan, there are hidden enemies threatening the wellbeing of Turkey almost in every area, from economy to politics and culture, etc. Besides the enemies within us, Erdoğan often points out outer sources such as the "interest rate lobby" whose members are unknown or gives names like IMF, otherwise directly mentions about countries or organizations such as the US., Germany, European Union, Russia, etc. which altogether forms the entity of "foreign powers" (dış mitraklar) as he prefers to call them. Creating enemies also helps to construct the confidence in people when those enemies are "defeated," which naturally results in trust in government; thus, again leads to a narcissistic identity formation in society.



Figure 118.

-Damn it! If there are more children with a turban on their heads and Quran in their hands, we cannot overthrow the tall man! I am glad my father John did not see these days... Aagh...

-Calm down sir, your heart...

As a pro-government humor magazine, a significant portion of Misvak cartoons reflects a similar understanding of the above mentioned “foreign powers”. Regarding this perspective, outer enemies could be newly formed according to daily political events or could be recalled from the past to remind their unchanged agenda towards Turkey or sometimes towards the Muslim world. For example, the below cartoon serves as a warning sign to the U.S while reminding President Trump that the Great Wall of China was built to prevent Turks from invading China before; thus, he should be careful when dealing with Turks. In that sense, the cartoon uses a former enemy to threaten the current one as asserting the power of the Turkish nation while establishing a sense of relief and confidence in the audience.



Figure 119.

-Mate, do not mess with the Turks. We built the Great Wall of China for a reason.

While the above illustration refers to an era before Turkish people migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia, below cartoon emphasizes the religious identity and recalls another enemy from the past, which is Christianity here represented in the form of a Crusade soldier.



Figure 120.

-Isn't ours a democratic country?
-That is a cover-up to fool Islamist countries, how naive you are Roben!
Remember, if Turks invade here, you will run towards the sea.

This cartoon was published on 12 March 2017, during the diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Netherlands occurred due to travel restrictions by Dutch

authorities on Turkish officials including Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Family and Social Policies when they intend to rally a “yes campaign” targeting Turkish people living in the Netherlands for the upcoming constitutional referendum. Even though such initiatives are also illegal in Turkey, the image claims that the real motive behind the crisis is rooted back to history and related to the Christian heritage of the Dutch.

There are many different enemy forms pictured in the magazine following the daily discourse of the AKP politics, which causes apparent conflicts and contradictions since those framed as enemies could become friends the following day, and Misvak follows the same narrative. This issue was also mentioned in previous chapters and stays relevant to this topic as well. Despite the ambiguity in the subject, some thematic representations of the foreign powers in the magazine are presented below.

5.6.1 Russia

First, it should be stated that the cartoons picturing Turkey-Russia relations may tell different and even confronting stories according to daily changing political events; however, Russia image in the magazine is generally consistent within the historical context of those two countries. In that sense, acknowledging Russia as the nemesis relates to the 16th century, when the two great empires of their time constantly threatened by each other from the beginning, which resulted in numerous conflicts known as Russo-Turkish wars. After the dissolution of both Ottoman and Russian empires, Turkey-Soviet Union relations took another approach in which the Soviets supported the newly formed Kemalist Republic, and those two countries managed to establish friendly relationships in the beginning. However, this caused the creation of the “Communist Russia” image, which was introduced as a new and even worse enemy than ever before by the nationalist conservative circles in Turkey. As a symbol of communism, the Soviet Union was stigmatized as the enemy during the Cold War by the DP, AP governments, and their successors.

Öztan mentions that while the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 comforted the right-wing circles in Turkey, it did not calm down the nationalist

conservatives, and their anger was kept alive towards the Russian image (G. G. Öztan, 2016). He argues that it was because of the disappointment that Turkey failed to establish its hegemony over the newly independent Turkic states in central Asia; thus, the historical understanding of nemesis Russia image was kept alive by republishing the books which discuss this historic hostility and written during Cold War era in the 2000s (G. G. Öztan, 2016, p. 97).

In that sense, cartoons taking place in Misvak follow a similar point of view; for example, dehumanizing the enemy while picturing Putin as a “bear” when it comes to torturing Muslims.



Figure 121.
-Hey! No backstabbing!

The below image is also showcasing a typical example of narcissistic identity construction efforts via visual texts by referring Turkey’s downing Russian jet plane in 2015.



Figure 122.

-Brothers from Turkey shot down the Russian jet plane.

-Not only the Russian jet, but they also harmed the immunity of a superpower.

Another picture of the same topic relates to a historical myth claiming an affair between Baltacı Mehmed Pasha (Ottoman Grand Vizier) and future Empress Catherine I of Russia during the Battle of Pruth. The cartoon re-calls the enemy from the past while reminding this myth in a way that the pilot downing Russian jet plane was identified with the endeavors of Pasha, thus encompasses a sexist and vulgar narrative. In that sense, the message conveyed here is similar to the texts written back before during the Cold War era, which refer to this myth as well (G. G. Öztan, 2016, p. 86).



Figure 123.

-Go away!

-Hmm captain Mehmet Baltacı, if read backward, Baltacı Mehmet. Meaningful

5.6.2 Anti-Semitism

According to the nationalist-conservative discourse, along with communism, Jewish society in Turkey has been considered as one of the arch enemies. As such, it has been argued that Jewish people have been stigmatized due to their easy integration into modern life and the capital accumulation they have (Cankara, 2015, p. 307). It is often mentioned that the theme of the “*Jewish conspiracy*” emerged in the 1930s after the Kemalist regime implemented the politics of Turkification, and the Jews were mostly identified with communists and *Donmehs* (Karaca, 2008, p. 8). As Žizek argues, whether those claims against the Jews are valid or not has no relevance in the sense that ideology works. Because

(...) those anti-Semitic idea of Jews has nothing to do with Jews; the ideological figure of a Jew is a way to stitch up the inconsistency of our own ideological system (Žizek, 2008, p. 49).

This could be easily applied in the Turkish nationalist conservative discourse where anti-Semitism manifests itself as a combination of xenophobia and racism. In such texts of Cevat Rifat Atilhan, Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti or Nihal Atsız, anti-Semitic discourse is crystal clear, and enemy construction efforts are at highest stake. The emphasis on the “Jews’ immorality” forms the background of this conspiracy, and it goes hand in hand with the desire of purification as well as repressed envy of Jewish society’s wealth.

Following a similar discourse, it is easy to pinpoint anti-Semitic images in Misvak. The below cartoon that had been published on 28th October 2018, a day before the anniversary of the Republic of Turkey. The cartoon was harshly criticized, the hashtag #MisvakKapatılsın (#shutdownMisvak) became a trending topic on Twitter; people accused Misvak Magazine of being the enemy of the Republic and Atatürk. Eventually, the cartoon was later removed from Misvak’s social media accounts due to massive reactions.



Figure 124.

*-We ended the caliphate; we disrupted their unity. We changed their alphabet and broke their ties with the past. They are celebrating it as a feast.
-We are busted if someone makes them realize.*

However, besides from the hostility towards the Republic, the anti-Semitic symbols embedded in the cartoon is also worthy of attention. The picture was harshly criticized on the website, “avlemoraz.com”, due to the use of a menorah, seven-branched candlestick, which is a typical Jewish symbol as well as the men’s fedora hats and depictions of their noses⁶⁷. What the cartoon symbolizes is also consistent with the nationalist-conservative narrative, which claims the “donmehs” from Salonica were the founders of the Republic, thus the foundation of the modern Republic was indeed a conspiracy against Ottoman and Abdulhamid II (Bali, 2005). This cartoon was proposed as one of the ten options of the survey “The Most Anti-Semitic Case of the Year” conducted in 2018 by the mentioned website to draw attention to the anti-Semitism.⁶⁸ Another anti-Semitic cartoon was also directly removed from Misvak’s

⁶⁷ <http://www.avlaremoz.com/2018/10/30/misvak-karikaturunu-kaldirdi-ancak-kimse-antisemit-ogeleri-elestirmedir/>

⁶⁸ <http://www.avlaremoz.com/2019/01/01/2018-yilinin-en-antisemit-vakasi-anketi-sonuclandi/>

Instagram page by the social media platform’s admins due to the use of “hate speech” symbols.⁶⁹

In that sense, it could be argued that anti-Semitism lies at the root of the efforts of stigmatizing Israel as the enemy in the magazine. There are several cartoons depicting Israel as the enemy, as well as the secret force keeping the U.S. on a leash.



Figure 125.



Figure 126.

While sending their regards to Erbakan who is also known with his anti-Semitic statements, Misvak proposes a secret collaboration between Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu. The cartoon also indicates the multi-lateral partnership composed of Kılıçdaroğlu, US President Donald Trump, Netanyahu, and Fetullah Gülen.

⁶⁹ https://www.instagram.com/p/B29ZEnXhy_x/



Figure 127.

-Who says the land between the Nile and the Euphrates belongs to Jews? You filthy pig.



Figure 128.

*-Netanyahu, he is very eager to join the team. Should we let him?
-I have listened him talking recently, he was speaking fine. Let's take him as a backup player.*

On the other hand, narcissistic identity construction efforts are explicit when it comes to anti-Semitic representations in the magazine. Below cartoon re-produces the nationalistic discourse about the image of “the invincible Turk” while calling Kara Murat figure from history.



Figure 129.

-It says here that your name is Murat. You certainly cannot enter. How do I know that you are not Kara Murat?

5.6.3 The Western Foreign Powers

Finally, European countries, including the EU as an international organization and the US, compose the Western side of the foreign powers that are targeted as the enemy in the magazine. Those representations regarding western countries are usually stressing the superiority of the Turkish nation over others. Besides, the condescending and one-sided narrative is pervasive, while the language used is explicitly vulgar in the cartoons.



Figure 130.

*-How was your trip to Turkey?
-Hard (it refers to İbrahim Kalın)*

Despite the narrative accepting the US and Turkey as long-term allies, Misvak also portrays the US. as an unreliable and hypocritical partner in international affairs.



Figure 131.

-Hey Turkish fellow, can we speed up this patrol? I have deliveries to make for PYD in the evening.

As such, the US. President Trump's threatening tweets regarding the Turkish economy are ridiculed, and the superiority of the nation is constructed through Ottoman history.



Figure 132.

-At least let me threaten you with the exchange rate of the Dollar, will you?

Misvak is answering the claims for Erdoğan being a dictator by reminding European countries their past, particularly Germany, by illustrating Merkel as Hitler in Nazi uniforms.



Figure 133.

*-Dictator! Genocider! Authoritarian! One man! Sultan! Tyrant!
-Nazi... Fascist...*



Figure 134.

Narcissistic identity and enemy construction efforts go hand in hand in Misvak. In addition, narcissistic identity is constructed through Turkey's Ottoman roots instead of emphasizing the characteristics of the modern Republic, which reveals the fact that Misvak embraces the first and instead tends to ignore the latter.



Figure 135.

-No, no, no



Figure 136.

-Now, just move up a little and watch me quietly.
-No, no, no

5.7 Representations of the Kemalist Modernization

Kemalism, as the founding ideology of the Turkish Republic, covers a broad spectrum of ideas as it is supported by both liberals and social democrats as well as republican conservatives. Nonetheless, it could be mentioned that its defining characteristic is almost always embedded within the prerequisite of a modern and secular state understanding. Keeping this in mind, it could be mentioned that as an Islamist magazine, *Misvak* targets Kemalism mainly with strong reservation to secularism, which emerges within those cartoons that are criticizing Atatürk himself as a leader and especially for being the founder of the modern Republic. In that sense, *Misvak*'s relation with Kemalism emerges in the form of reckoning with the past, longing to the Ottoman period, which shows itself in a vindictive discourse of victimization that results in hate and resentment towards the fundamental pillars of the modern Republic. The magazine presents the AKP and President Erdoğan as the game changers while celebrating the party's hegemony project in politics; therefore, it underlines a significant change in the Kemalist structure of the state in a victorious way.

Below cartoon showcases that *Misvak* embraces an anachronistic perspective when referring to the liberation of Istanbul in 1923, taking a skeptic attitude towards the Republic, which results in both demonizing and trivializing the foundation of the Kemalist state.



Figure 137.

**6 October 1923, the liberation of İstanbul*

-Man, the British are leaving İstanbul without a gunshot!

-They are going after closing down the 1st Assembly, seizing oil resources and the islands, and leaving the management of military, media, and finances to their followers. British only feed the sheep that they will slaughter.

The British guy: -It will be completed when we end the caliphate.

Like the beforementioned accusation towards the founding party of the modern Republic, the CHP, Misvak reflects the same disturbance regarding the erection of Atatürk statues all over the country in years. The below cartoon presents this discomfort by referring to the famous saying, “*If not for you, we would not be here*” (*Olmasaydın olmazdık*), which is attributed to Atatürk to signify his greatness. However, in this case, the cartoon illustrates his statue in the form of a donkey while claiming, “*if not for him, we all would be donkeys*”. Considering that this conversation already takes place between donkeys in their suits, the cartoon shows that the strategy of dehumanizing comes to the forefront once again to stigmatize Kemalism in order to construct the enemy image.



Figure 138.

- It is magnificent; we are the best when it comes to erecting statues.*
- This is our holy donkey.*
- If not for him, we would all be donkeys.*

Tanıl Bora argues that the systemic recreation of Atatürk's charisma, especially with the adaptation of religious terms, points out the construction of secular holiness which contradicts with the Kemalist laicism; having said that this approach triggers Islamists in a way to perceive Kemalism as a blasphemy (Bora, 2018a). In the light of this argument, the above cartoon represents the Islamist perception of Atatürk statues, which is identified with the idolatry that is accepted as a practice of shirk; therefore the cartoon aims to damage Atatürk image which is embraced with the utmost value by Kemalists.

From a similar point of view, the cartoon below criticizes that many roads, streets, schools, etc. in Turkey are named after Atatürk. The picture depicts a scene that one man is asking for directions who realizes the use of frequency of Atatürk's name and adds a sarcastic utterance *"if not for him, we even would not find an address"*.



Figure 139.

- Excuse me, do you know where this school is?
-Do you mean Atatürk Elementary?
-Yes.
-Go through Atatürk Boulevard when you pass the Atatürk statue, the Atatürk gym...
-If not for him, we would not even find an address.

What the cartoon symbolizes is, in fact, important because it is not a common complaint since it coincides with a concrete fact that points out the existing alteration within the names of those buildings and structures which were named after Atatürk. For example, starting from 2010, many football stadiums in different cities named after Atatürk were demolished by the Housing Development Administration (TOKİ) and given the name of “Arena” when they were rebuilt. It caused reactions back then with the claim that the motive behind this change was to erase the name of Atatürk from the collective memory deliberately.

Another criticism posited to Kemalists and Atatürk himself is revolved around the highly debated issue of alcohol consumption, which was also one of the main problems that need to be dealt with in the agenda of the AKP from the beginning.

Along with the headscarf problem, the regulations on alcohol consumption such as increasing the taxes on alcoholic beverages while at the same time bringing severe restrictions of its usage like banning sales between 10 pm- 6.am as well as banning alcohol services during Republic Day receptions have been thought as major steps taken by the AKP aiming to undermine laicism in Turkey. As mentioned before, submerged into a populist discourse, President Erdoğan used “two drunken men” when referring to Atatürk and İsmet İnönü to diminish the value of their actions regarding state affairs and instead managed othering them. In that sense, insulting the founders of the modern Republic due to using alcohol consumption has become a conventional approach in governmental circles.

As it could be seen with the below examples, Misvak also adopted the same methodology to undervalue Kemalism while frequently depicting Kemalists as drunk and useless people. Here works the dichotomy between politics of serving (hizmet politikası) and incompetent drunken politicians who are illustrated as the followers of Kemalism.



Figure 140.

*-It would be better for Turkey if Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had one beer.
-What did you do for this country except drunk rambling for 90 years?*



Figure 141.

*-Blonde hair with blue eyes, where are you? (singing)
-Did you ask for me?
-It does not matter, come if you are the enemy of Erdoğan.*

The below cartoon shows that while dealing with Kemalism, the intense emotions are at play as it targets Atatürk while calling him a “dictator, impious, and drunk” in the same frame, which serves to reveal the vindictive nature of the magazine that is embedded in the discourse of victimhood. On the other hand, as it has been shown before, Misvak does not accept the allegations for Erdoğan being a dictator and rather conceals his authoritarian style in the magazine and instead presents him as a defender of the democracy and human rights.



Figure 142.

-He hung those did not wear a hat, but he was not a dictator, he hung the religious scholar, but was not faithless, he drunk a lot but was not drunken. Do not believe those bigots who say otherwise.

The caption of the below cartoon is “*The Crash of the Secular Mankurts*”. Mankurt is a term derived from Chingiz Aitmatov’s “*The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years*”(1983), which mentions a Kyrgyz legend. According to this, Mankurts were slaves that were captured and left under the hot sun in the desert with camel skin wrapped around their heads; the motive was that while the camel skin gets tighter around the head, it would lead to a painful death; otherwise, survivors would lose their minds and memories. In this regard, “mankurt” or “mankurtism” is transformed into a metaphor for the loss of culture and one’s place in a newly formed society (Ploskonka, 2015, p. 50).



Figure 143.

- Atatürk was very good at syrtaki.
- Isn't it a Greek dance? I thought your ancestor was Turkish?
- I am a Turk.
- Now that is suspicious.
- I am honest.
- You are at fault in every aspect.
- I am hardworking.
- You are very hardworking, indeed! What you could not in 90 years, we achieved in ten years. Now get lost Mankurt!

The image depicts Kemalist as “seculars mankurts” implying that those who turned their back to their Ottoman roots have lost their identity and culture. In the illustration, the dichotomy is constructed through men’s headwear, considering one is pictured in fez while the other wears a modern hat, which is the typical symbol of the modern Kemalist Republic. At the end of the conversation, it is once more mentioned that in only ten years, the AKP managed to achieve what Kemalists could not in 90 years. Use of the notion mankurt in order to construct the enemy image is not only inherent in Misvak’s hateful discourse; instead, the term seems to be borrowed from President Erdoğan’s vocabulary. Erdoğan used “mankurt” several times to define the nation’s enemies; they were once in the form of academics when he mentioned:

I call those mankurts. When a bridge is to be built across the Bosphorus, they take a stand against it. When a dam is to be built, they take a stand against it. Foreign policy is pursued to the benefit of the victim and the oppressed; those take a stand against it. We regretfully see the efforts of those so-called academics, alienated to their own people, to corner the government through terrorism⁷⁰. (my translation)

Otherwise, those who allegedly oppose any kind of progress could also fall into this category as he preferred to call them “*The Mankurt Gang*”⁷¹ who were acting with some ambiguous global alliance. In that sense, it could be concluded that Misvak uses a shared language with the AKP and President Erdoğan.

Critical of Kemalist modernization, Misvak has a rocky relationship with the modern institutions, which reveals itself in the form of a desire to retaliate against those, such as the secular education system. According to below cartoon, modern schools are identified with *toxin where children are planted in with false information on history instead of glories of the past, knowledge of the evil instead of education, perversion under the name of laicism instead of Islam, eagerness to visit Anıtkabir (the tomb of Atatürk) instead of Kaaba and idolatry instead of divine love.*



Figure 144.

⁷⁰ https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/10/151019_erdogan_mankurt

⁷¹ <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-karsimizda-mankurtlar-cetesi-var-3494606>

Similarly, the discourse of victimhood presents itself through this image, which is accompanied by strong emotions such as hate, resentment, and revengefulness towards Kemalist modernization, and the cartoon implies a call for the retribution.

As been argued before, strong emotions such as hate, revengefulness as well as victimhood and suffering come to the forefront within the AKP's self-image as a political party. Identification with the masses has been mostly succeeded through those strong emotions while it also helped to create a people vs. elitists dichotomy.

As Yılmaz argues, "Accordingly, it is *they* who suffered at the hands of the Kemalist state elites, who were collaborating with Western forces to oppress 'innocent,' 'devout,' and 'authentically' Anatolian children of the country"(Yılmaz, 2017, p. 483).



Figure 145.

Coming from the same perception, the above cartoon pictures this social suffering and trauma that is embedded within the conversation of those who are shown as the mentioned *Anatolian children of the country* (Bora, & Erdoğan, 2013)

In the cartoon, one of the men says that “*while the school principal who took students to a mosque tour in Tokat was dismissed, the teacher who had the kindergarten students prostrating to Atatürk in Antep is still in office*” and other one replies in agony with the famous saying “*We are in power İbraam, but we are not capable*” (İktidar olduk ama muktedir olmadık). Those words which are summarizing the typical narrative of “conservative populism” (Bora, & Erdoğan, 2013) have been attributed to Adnan Menderes and been used frequently since, especially by the AKP circles that embraced such methodology within their discursive strategies to establish hegemony.

5.8 Concluding Remarks

It has been argued in this chapter that Misvak targets and frames certain groups and ideologies as enemies which were put into categories in the above analysis as the left in Turkey, intellectuals, Gezi protesters, political parties in opposition, women, and LGBTQ+, foreign powers and Kemalist modernization. As frequently mentioned, there are apparent resemblances within the representations of all those groups, which finally construct them as the enemies in the same way the AKP does.

By building those enemy images, Misvak cartoons contribute to nurturing AKP’s hegemonic project considering the shared discourse between the party and the magazine. To put it, the AKP’s before mentioned discursive strategies emerge via visual texts and, for this case, in the form of Misvak cartoons. Those constructed enemy images, which are accompanied by intense emotions such as hate, revengefulness, and suffering, point out Islamism as well as conservative-populism that is being represented by the AKP today.

Considering the general characteristic of the magazine, it could be concluded that Misvak follows the AKP discourse on many issues from politics to culture; hereby,

those messages conveyed through images point instrumentalist use of humor in the magazine. This chapter also aimed to show that within and among the representations of each enemy group, there are remarkable similarities in the narrative along with the minor differences. Accordingly, dehumanizing and demonizing along with stigmatizing, and scapegoating are frequently used to define and frame those groups as “others”.

It should be mentioned in the first place that the use of language in *Misvak* is tricky in the sense that the imagery could work within different dynamics. To be more clear, the wording is usually twisted, and the meaning could be implied rather than directly stated with an intention to avoid a direct act of swearing. Still, metaphors or slang words, as well as implications used in those images, are explicit enough to convey the cartoon’s message. Having said that, the tone of the magazine is far from being gentle; on the contrary, it is coarse, vulgar, misogynistic, and homophobic. As such, modern women could be identified with prostitution while almost all women are portrayed as weak characters; the message conveyed is that women are only strong as mothers and wives in their residential area. LGBTQ+ individuals, on the other hand, have to face intense homophobia in those drawings; besides, illustrating enemies (mostly Kurds) as women and emphasizing the hegemonic masculinity is a tool used to insult them independently of their sexual orientation.

“Terrorist” is one of the most frequently used terms to define enemies in the magazine, whether it be leftists, intellectuals, Gezi protesters, or the AKP’s political opponents. It has been frequently implied in the magazine that anyone who belongs to anti-AKP circles is somewhat affiliated at least one of the terrorist organizations of PKK/PYD and FETO. Those who are framed can be children such as Berkin Elvan, opposition politicians like Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and Selahattin Demirtaş, or even Turkish Military members such as Former Head of First Army Hasan İğsız along with his daughter Aslı İğsız, who happens to be an academic. Those mentioned parties are all framed as traitors in the magazine and represented as they work for the evil to undermine the nation’s unity and solidarity since they “betray” the government.

“White Turk” (usually mentioned as “el-it Squad”) has been used in the magazine to define artists, the CHP, as the main opposition party, along with the Kemalist ideology. However, leftists in Turkey are also represented as White Turks as well as the U.S. supporters in Misvak, which is a claim based on fallaciousness rather than truth. Such distorted representations lead to the question of whether those efforts to frame leftists aim to conceal ideological and historical backgrounds, which could harm the self-image of the Turkish Right. In addition, both leftists and intellectuals have been accused of ignorance through animal symbolism in the depictions, which poses a significant controversy. Kemalists and Atatürk have been heavily negated with the claims of being impious and drunk people, and Kemalism has been identified with idolatry, which is also presented through the dehumanization approach, such as using donkey statues.

In Misvak, hypocrisy and uselessness are frequently implied notions to define opposition politicians, foreign powers as well as the leftists in Turkey. According to this narrative, the AKP follows the politics of serving while the remaining groups only take advantage of the situation. When it comes to foreign powers, the message conveyed is that “The Turk has no friend other than but the Turk” (and in this context, by default Muslim) hereby international politics is perceived as a zero-sum game. This narrative, which argues that Turkey is surrounded by the enemies along with the infidels within, is widespread in the magazine; basically, Misvak acts on conspiracy theories that lead to the creation of fear and intimidation among people. As mentioned before, it is indeed an essential part of the AKP’s discursive strategies to act on many international as well as local conspiracy theories that allegedly target the nation’s wellbeing. Real or not, defeating those inner and outer enemies, contribute to nurturing the AKP’s limited hegemony project but also to leads to a narcissistic identity formation in society, mainly among the party supporters.

Misvak’s role in the strengthening of the AKP’s discursive strategies could be perceived as an ideological state apparatus in the sense that Althusser argues. Recreating conspiracy theories and constructing enemy images, the Islamist ideology which is embedded in the cartoons calls the subject and offers them a separate identity

(mainly a narcissistic one) to make sure that its followers remain loyal to the AKP. Sharing the same victimhood discourse, Misvak not only reminds those “past troubles” and sufferings that they had to endure so far, but it also calls for retribution. Intense emotions such as hate and revengefulness have significance in this type of approach since the identification with the masses is mostly achieved through those emotions. This method, by all means, favors the AKP the most; just like a shield, the interpellation aims to contribute to preserving the party’s limited hegemony against future threats as once Gezi Protests were.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Humor magazines have always been an interesting topic for researchers to make sense of the current social and political trends in a certain period. Even though Turkey has a long history of humor magazines dating back to the 19th century, Islamist humor magazines -a few exceptions aside- rather emerged as a new phenomenon during the 1990s and made a stronger come back in the 2000s. In that sense, this thesis work attempted to analyze the discourse of Misvak, one of the most popular Islamist humor magazines of these days in Turkey. The study aimed to reveal the function of humor and ideology presented by the magazine through cartoons. Herewith, the purpose was to investigate whether there is parallelism between the discourses of the magazine and the AKP government or not. To that end, the study also aimed to show how enemy images are constructed in the magazine by analyzing visual texts. Interrelated with the current *kulturkampf* and hegemony debates, analyzing Misvak provided some essential findings that will be briefly summarized below.

First, as one of the main objectives of this research, the general characteristics and the function of humor in Misvak have been evaluated. Considering that element of humor is the most important characteristic of a humor magazine, the use of humor presented in Misvak constituted one of the main research topics of this thesis. First of all, the nature of humor in the magazine is offensive; as mentioned, many images contain racist, anti-Semitic, misogynistic, and homophobic elements. Suffice to say that the use of humor aims to belittle, denigrate or insult certain oppositional groups in Turkey along with some international actors that are represented as enemies in the magazine; that is why the nature of humor in Misvak is defined as the disparagement humor. On the other hand, even though there is no female nudity in Misvak, there are sexual implications in those images that are used to picture enemy images, the language is highly coarse, and there are depictions of obscene gestures throughout the

cartoons. Those mentioned features pose a controversy with the claim of using Islamist humor. Considering that offensive humor, including mockery, and ridicule is not welcomed in orthodox Islam, Misvak does not meet the necessary Islamic humor qualities despite being an Islamist humor magazine.

Another distinctive feature regarding the humor proposed in Misvak is observed in its function. Unlike other mainstream or secular humor magazines such as *Leman* and *Uykusuz*, Misvak does not use political humor to convey criticism against the political status quo. In fact, considering its pro-government stance, the use of humor in Misvak contributes to nurturing the AKP's hegemonic project. In that sense, the laughter proposed by the magazine cannot be explained through the Bakhtinian approach, which argues that humor has the capability to establish a new world order by demolishing the existing power structures (Bakhtin, 1984). Laughter in Misvak is not like a Carnival laughter but rather is propagandistic, instrumental, and aims to preserve the hierarchy instead of upending it; that is why every form of opposition is marginalized and stigmatized as the enemy in the magazine.

The above-proposed arguments provided a critical finding for the study because it showed that political cartoons do not possess such laughter that is solely oppositional, but they could also be pro-government; hence, they may empower the authority as well. In fact, it showed that political cartoons could be powerful vehicles to propagate the hegemonic discourse to construct the Gramscian notion of "consent" by having discursive parallelism with the AKP's hegemonic project. In that sense, the Misvak case also presented the controversial nature of humor.

This thesis work has also attempted to make a concise comparison between Misvak and the other two well-known Islamist humor magazines of the 2000s, namely *Cafcaf* and *Hacamat*. Accordingly, it has been found that Misvak is more similar to *Hacamat* rather than *Cafcaf* considering framing, othering, and stigmatizing were more explicit in *Hacamat* even though the same team published both magazines. It has been argued that the use of language in Misvak is rather vulgar comparing to the other two; however, *Hacamat* also used depictions of obscene gestures and implications while

Cafcaf was somewhat following the “clean humor” approach in orthodox Islam. Cantek and Gönenç argue that Cafcaf is not different from its secular counterparts when it comes to forming and style regardless of their claim of producing an alternative humor style (Cantek&Gönenç, 2017). In that sense, mostly Cafcaf but also Hacamat attempted to replace secular humor magazines such as *Leman*, *Penguen*, and *Uykusuz*, especially with their similar technique they aimed to produce Islamist replicas. *Misvak*, on the other hand, is the product of the latest trends; since it is digitally published, cartoons can be uploaded to social media pages such as Instagram rapidly, which distinguishes it from those still traditionally published magazines.

As an impression and due to the accessibility to the data about their staff, it has been argued that Cafcaf and Hacamat cartoonists and writers represent the urban Islamist middle class. In that sense, it has been stated that Cafcaf and Hacamat staff seems to have a higher intellectual and educational capital than the *Misvak* team. Another distinctive feature of *Misvak* that it mostly publishes political cartoons while Cafcaf and Hacamat also cover a wide range of issues from popular culture, Muslim youth, gender roles, consumption habits to practicing religious duties such as praying namaz and fasting; as a result, those magazines, and especially Cafcaf has the potential to provide an alternative perspective for the Muslim youth in Turkey.

Finally, it has been argued that even though some qualities separate *Misvak* from other Islamist humor magazines of the 2000s, there is also a quite resemblance; all three are pro-government Islamist magazines, and even though the advocacy level is the highest in *Misvak*, other two also refrain from criticizing governmental actions, maybe there was a minimal criticism towards the government in Cafcaf. Still, in any case, all three magazines do not hesitate to share the AKP discourse, thus contribute to nurturing the AKP’s hegemonic project. The change in the tone of those magazines is also related to the period they were published; hence, it is directly affected by the transformation of the AKP’s hegemonic project, especially after Gezi.

Another objective of this thesis work was to determine how Islamism is presented as the primary ideological position in the magazine. To that end, in order to

analyze Misvak's discourse and to further explore the similarities with the AKP discourse, the ideology presented in the magazine has been investigated, which manifests as the articulation of Islamism with Nationalism, along with Neo-Ottomanism. From an Althusserian reading, it has been argued that individuals are hailed as subjects via cartoons through a discourse of Islamization in Misvak. For example, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, one of the leading ideologues of Islamism, who also is an important figure for the AKP circles, is highly praised and depicted as the master in the magazine. As such, the discourse of hate, suffering along with the victimhood and vindictiveness, which has significance in Islamism and frequently emphasized in Kısakürek's works, is explicit in Misvak discourse as well.

As mentioned, along with Islamism, Nationalism, and Neo-Ottomanism are found as the affirmed ideological positions in Misvak, and it has been argued that representations of the self-image of Misvak cartoonists are depicted through those positions. According to those representations, it has also been revealed that Misvak illustrators tend to identify with President Erdoğan as well. In that sense, while pursuing a discourse of suffering and victimhood, on the one hand, the discourse on victory, which led to a narcissistic identity formation and became a dominant characteristic of the AKP politics especially after the 15 July coup attempt (Tokdoğan, 2018) determine the tone of the magazine.

As such, those representations of the self-image in Misvak also contribute to the formation of the narcissistic identity and point out a status reversal with cartoon characters such as the "Beyaz Atletli". Beyaz Atletli is a frequently used character in Misvak; he is depicted as a hero of the 15 July attempt and is a symbol for before mocked and overlooked men in their undershirts and pajamas now becoming the true representatives of the Turkish nation. In fact, this character is based on Ahmet Yılmaz's "Kıllanan Adam" from *Leman Magazine* who sits by the window all day in his undershirt and blue striped pajamas with a cup of tea in his hand, making observations and judging everything with his shallow mindset (Şimşek, 2014). However, in Misvak Beyaz Atletli is a wise person; he also sits by the window with the same undershirt and pajamas, but his primary duty is to protect the nation's

wellbeing by keeping an eye on the political developments, and he does not refrain from intervening if necessary (such as when he did during 15th July coup attempt). This character points a change in the power structures; it represents that before mocked and overlooked, simple men have become true owners of the nation. Here the purpose is to somehow position this character from the ridiculous to the sublime, whose portrayed to be the representation of “the ordinary men”; however, what the cartoons do is, in fact, to reproduce the typical right-wing populist discourse.

The representation of the self-image of Misvak cartoonists in that sense seems a bit tricky. To be able to do a cross-check, it has also been researched the cartoonists' backgrounds and their social class. Unfortunately, there is not much data about the cartoonists,' they instead tend to remain behind the curtains. Some use their names on the cartoons while some prefer to sign their work with nicknames. Having said that, it has been found that during an interview conducted on Akit TV which three of the Misvak cartoonists (Şahin Güneş, Şeyhmus Güneş, and Merve Dere) attended, they also identify themselves as “ordinary people” (halkın içindeniz) with different backgrounds and occupations. According to their statements, there are factory laborers, doner kebab shop workers among Misvak illustrators as well as public sector workers including Şahin and Şeyhmus Güneş brothers and Miralay Selami İlkay (uses the Miralay nickname) who has been exposed after his dismissal from the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in October 2019.

Accordingly, the impression is that there is heterogeneity regarding the illustrators' social class, which is consisted of both middle-class public sector workers, along with the working class. Besides, Misvak seems to be a side project which they voluntarily contribute to, and cartoonists have other occupations to earn money. Having said that, “Misvak Bakkal” where merchandise of the magazine -mainly coffee mugs- is being sold to make an additional income is another active social media account⁷². Usually, there are illustrations of people who Misvak cartoonists admire including President Erdoğan, Abdul Hamid II., Mehmet the Conqueror as well as

⁷² <https://www.instagram.com/misvakbakkal/?hl=tr>

popular culture figures like Bob Ross or Müslüm Gürses and even the folk poet Neşet Ertaş. Also, the political text and messages such as “*One Soylu is enough -to eliminate- all those corrupt people (Bu kadar soysuza bir Soylu yeter)*” on the mugs help to reveal Misvak’s ideological position.

Another purpose of the thesis was also to investigate whether there is discursive parallelism between the magazine and the AKP government or not. Therefore, in order to detect the parallelism between the party discourse and Misvak, the main characteristics of the AKP have also been shortly evaluated. To that end, this thesis has tried to briefly mention the main features of the ideological discourse of the AKP covering topics such as the construction of the enemy images, Kurdish question, Gender, the self-image of the AKP cadres along with the highly debated issue of *kulturkampf*. It has been shown that Misvak shared a similar discourse with the AKP in various aspects, which manifested via cartoons.

In accordance with the presented findings above, the study has also tried to show the underlying causes for the AKP to come out as a hegemony project, and, with the establishment of its hegemony, those crises that caused the party’s transformation have been briefly reviewed. Accordingly, it has been argued that the main game-changer was the transition of the AKP from an expansive to a limited hegemony project (Özden, Akça, Bekmen, 2017). As mentioned earlier, Gramsci argues the establishment of a limited hegemony form if a ruling bloc has to resort to coercion and repression when it fails to adopt the interests of certain parties and instead intends to neutralize or decapitate them of their leadership (Jones, 2006). For the AKP, as argued by many scholars, this transition manifested within the years. Although it is also debatable if the AKP’s hegemony project was ever an expansive one, it is clear that today the party pursues a limited hegemony project. Accordingly, it has been argued in the study that when the party first came into power in 2002, its capability to combine the long term interests of the bourgeoisie and the short term interests of the people put the party in a position that may be comprehended as an expansive hegemony project even though it has also been mentioned that the AKP always represented an authoritarian government model. In anyways, due to certain events and

developments such as the global economic crisis of 2007-2008, along with the conflicts in the Middle East as well as the Kurdish question after 2010 and of course with the Gezi Revolt in 2013 which represented most crucial break for the party, caused the transition of the AKP's hegemony from an expansive to a limited one. Therefore, the AKP lost its capacity to establish its hegemony over numerous segments in the society such as the *big bourgeoisie, urban and secular middle classes, Kurds, Alevis as well as the international actors* thus, decided to change its strategy for a limited hegemony project which manifested itself in an exclusionist way (Özden et al., 2017, p.199). After that, Islamism became a prominent feature of the party politics, the authoritarian tone of the AKP officials became more explicit, discriminative speeches appeared more than before. As a discursive strategy to mobilize and consolidate its mass of voters, which the party officials refer to as "50 % of the nation", the party creates enemies and defeats them with the help of "this nation". Especially after 2013, the AKP followed a policy that is only focused on mobilizing and consolidating its own loyal voters, and the "friends vs. enemies" understanding has strengthened than ever before. During this period, conspiracy mentality peaked while othering, stigmatizing, and scapegoating revealed as practical tools in the party discourse. In order to deepen the conflict among people, the debate on the *kulturkampf* was rekindled once again to trap the issue within a cultural problem context.

After Gezi, the focus was on the cultural production and especially the cultural power debates. As such, those remarks of President Erdoğan about how the conservative circles lacking cultural capital, and even though the government had political power, it did not gain cultural power, came to the forefront. Hence, cultural hegemony debates again rekindled by the government, and the issue was brought to the table with a typical discourse of suffering and victimhood. This narrative was crowned with the TV shows, soaps, films, etc. such as *Payitaht: Abdulhamit* or *Diriliş Ertuğrul* which their scripts were tailored according to the needs of the government. In a similar vein, those Islamic magazines such as Cins, Lacivert, and İzdaham started to be published with an intent to replace Ot and Kafa, while Hacamat and Misvak were created as Islamic substitutions of Leman and Penguen (Keten, 2019).

Suffice to say that those developments occurred at the same time with the transition of the AKP's hegemony from an expansive to a limited state; hence, the function of those products, including *Misvak*, needs to be addressed in a way that is nurturing this hegemony project. This framework helps us to comprehend the increased number of pro-government cultural products as those are used to empower the Ideological State Apparatus. As such, those publications like *Misvak*, nurture the hateful and othering discourse that is pursued by the AKP as it is found to be an effective political tool. In that sense, the significance of humor magazines emerges, considering that those contribute to cultural production within a paradoxical and ambivalent field, which is humor. In sum, considering the situation is similar to those conditions of a limited hegemony in Turkey today, it is clear that the government needs *Misvak*-like publications to maintain the consent of its already loyal voters to keep mobilizing and consolidating them. Hence, *Misvak* also serves for propaganda as a means of further strengthening and nurturing the AKP's limited hegemony project. That is why showing parallelism with the party discourse, *Misvak* also does not aim to receive the support of those groups that are framed as "the others"; thus, through framing, stigmatizing, and scapegoating, those parties are presented as the enemies by the magazine.

Finally, this thesis work has attempted to show how enemy images are constructed in *Misvak* by analyzing visual texts. As argued, modes of communication can become effective tools to spread propaganda, and enemy images may be verbal, written as well as pictural, such as political cartoons. In that sense, this study has attempted to show how enemy images are constructed through visual texts in *Misvak*, and the findings revealed a number of enemy themes. After examining the discourse of the magazine, representations of the left, intellectuals, Gezi protesters, political parties in opposition, women, and LGBTQ+, foreign powers, and Kemalist modernization have been explored as those fall into the enemy categories in *Misvak*. Accordingly, *Misvak*'s approach to certain parties manifested the understanding of a split between the "self and other;" the others are presented as enemies since the process of creating negative stereotypes has been achieved through strategies such as

dehumanization or demonization. While exploring each enemy image category, it has been found that those efforts of stigmatizing and scapegoating revealed the dominance of a hateful discourse in the magazine. Prevalent use of misogynistic, homophobic, racist, and anti-Semitic representations also confirmed this finding. In addition, after a detailed examination of the cartoons, it has been detected that there is significant parallelism with the AKP discourse, as mentioned. Shared enemies being in the first place, numerous crucial similarities with the AKP discourse in the magazine have been revealed in many layers embedded within the meaning.

The negation of the left in the magazine manifests in a narcissistic way; in general, Misvak underestimates and ignores the effectiveness and even existence of the left in Turkey. Hence, many cartoons openly ridicule communism and atheism while being a communist is signified as a whim of youth; on the other hand, the left is associated with violence and terrorism in many images as well. Besides, the International Workers' Day is ridiculed and found to be a "hypocritical" initiative, according to Misvak, labor unions, resistance, or a fundamental change in the political system is not needed. Instead, the magazine proposes Islam as a mechanism regulating daily life, including labor rights.

Misvak's efforts to frame intellectuals as the "terrorists" who are mainly represented by academia, hereby scholars and students, show parallelism with the government's war on dissident academics due to signing the peace petition to end the violence against the Kurds in south-east Turkey in 2016. Accordingly, one of the main reasons behind academia is found to be related to the use of anti-intellectualism as a state apparatus (Gençoğlu, 2018). The result of right-wing populist discourse, it is implied that those former uneducated people who were overlooked by the elite, are now found to be the true representatives of the nation. Another motive behind the construction of intellectuals as enemies in Misvak is rooted back to the 28 February Period, which manifests as a non-healing wound in those cartoons and is consistent with the discourse of victimization in the magazine. In addition, Amongst all universities in Turkey, enemy image construction in Misvak is the strongest when it

comes to METU since the university has been a symbol of secularism as well as the left-politics in Turkey.

In Misvak, Gezi protests are pictured as violent terrorist acts and identified with vandalism. While the enemy images of Gezi mostly constructed through depictions of Berkin Elvan, the magazine also consistently makes a comparison with the Gezi Protesters, and people rallied during the night of 15 July coup attempt. Contributing to the “self and other” dichotomy, Misvak affirms one’s commitment to democracy while negating other’s behavior and underestimates the resistance.

The representations of the AKP’s political opponents constitute one of the main themes in the magazine, and even the death of politicians such as Leyla Zana could emerge as wishful thinking in Misvak. CHP is represented as a dishonest and terrorist organization, while the CHP politicians are illustrated as hypocrite and impious people. According to those images, political parties in opposition are affiliated with the “foreign powers” and the AKP represents the “domestic and national” (yerli ve milli) party while others are framed as “infidels”.

The representation of gender, in general, arises as a problematic area in Misvak as well. For example, modern women are generally identified as “prostitutes,” and it is clear that the term connotes a negative implication, unlike the term “sex worker”. Besides, almost all women are depicted as weak characters; and it is claimed that women can be strong and precious as long as they become mothers and wives. The homophobic discourse is very explicit in Misvak, and while those images aim to insult LGBTQ+ openly, Kurds are almost exclusively illustrated in women’s clothing in those depictions. Hence, hegemonic masculinity is heavily used to mock, ridicule, and humiliate the “enemy” independently of their sexual orientation.

“The Turk has no friend other than but the Turk” (and by default Muslim) is the standard approach when picturing “the foreign powers” (dış mihraklar), which could be Western countries, Russia, China, or international organizations according to the daily political atmosphere. Besides, anti-Semitism and the “Jewish conspiracy” mindset, which belongs to the nationalist-conservative narrative that claims the

“donmehs” from Salonica were the founders of the Republic, is prevalent in the magazine. Those foreign enemies in Misvak are either recently formed according to daily political events, or they are recalled from the past to remind the audience that they have an unchanged agenda towards Turkey or the Muslim world. The mindset shows that Misvak cartoonists believe that Turkey is surrounded by foreign enemies in addition to the “infidels within,” which results in those representations that act on conspiracy theories that may cause fear and intimidation among the audience.

Misvak also targets Kemalism mainly due to its secular nature; numerous cartoons criticize Atatürk as a leader and the founder of the modern Republic. It is argued that Misvak’s relation with Kemalism emerges in the form of reckoning with the past, there is an explicit longing to the Ottoman period that manifests in a vindictive discourse of victimization in the magazine which results in hatred and rage towards the modern Republic. The magazine presents the AKP as a game-changer and celebrates the significant change in the Kemalist structure of the state. There is a quite disturbance regarding the use of Atatürk's name for streets, schools, etc. he is depicted as an impious dictator while Kemalists and Mustafa Kemal himself are labeled as drunk useless people.

In short, the leftists, intellectuals, Gezi protesters, or the AKP’s political opponents are all framed as “terrorists” by the magazine. In that sense, including children such as Berkin Elvan, political party representatives such as Kılıçdaroğlu or former military members are illustrated as they belong to at least one of the terrorist organizations of the PKK/PYD or FETO claiming they are traitors who betray their country. As can be understood, there is a tendency to equate all those parties, including Kemalists, leftists, and white Turks, as the same, independently of their political or ideological orientation. For instance, artists, leftists, or CHP members and supporters are all defined as “white Turks” in the magazine, which is a claim based on a groundless allegation. Similarly, those distorted representations of intellectuals or the left who are depicted as U.S bootlickers not only aims to harm the image of the mentioned parties but also serve to conceal historical facts such as the close relationship of the Turkish Right with the U.S. Frequent use of animal symbolism,

which leads to demonization and dehumanization, targets many parties, including leftists, Kemalists, and Atatürk himself, with intent to associate them with “ignorance.” In addition, by using “donkey statues,” Kemalism is identified with idolatry while Atatürk and Kemalists are depicted as drunk and impious people. In a similar vein, the leftists, opposition politicians, and “the foreign powers” are accused of being useless hypocrites. In *Misvak*, it is implied that only the AKP, as a political party with an understanding of selflessness, serves the nation while remaining parties take advantage of the situation.

The critical point is, those depicted internal and external groups are also framed as the enemies by the government; hence the parallelism in the discursive strategies of the AKP and the magazine is worthy of attention. As a pro-AKP magazine, while *Misvak* chose to refrain from criticizing the governmental actions, the silences and absences in the discourse also served to conceal facts; and instead provided a biased frame regarding the current social and political atmosphere. For example, *Misvak* portrays the government officials as they are taking sides with the “ordinary people”; meaning, that the party serves to shepherds, laborers, craftsmen, farmers, home persons, etc., basically, it is pictured that the priority of the party politics is “the working class”. However, while *Misvak* proposes such narrative, there are not any images portraying those government officials when they treat those “ordinary people” with utter humiliation such as when Yusuf Yerkel, then advisor to the PM Erdoğan, kicked a grieving protestor in the aftermath of Soma mine disaster that resulted in the death of 301 mine workers in 2014 or when PM Erdoğan insulted a farmer (“*anani da al git*”) who was complaining about the hardships that the farmers had been going through in 2006.

In addition to absences and silences, there are apparent contradictions within those representations in *Misvak* resulting from the fact that the magazine follows the AKP discourse in any circumstances. That is why, when the party discourse tends to change or those enemies and friends move between the camps, so does *Misvak*’s. For instance, while one cartoon demonstrates the weakness of the Russian S-400 missile system during the crisis of Turkey-Russia relations due to Turkey’s downing a Russian

warplane in 2015, another picture celebrates the decision of purchasing the same missile system after President Erdoğan declared their decision to launch them in Turkey. Similarly, political figures can be portrayed as both friends and enemies according to the daily political atmosphere and their affinity to the AKP at the time. Such as there are many images in Misvak illustrating Davutoğlu as a trustworthy companion of Erdoğan, however after the conflict between Erdoğan and Davutoğlu revealed, those illustrations started to portray him as a dishonest man and the enemy. Likewise, Devlet Bahçeli once was among those politicians that were criticized by Misvak heavily; in fact, he was being depicted as “the devil” for saying “no” the presidential system earlier. Since the AKP-MHP alliance started, the same demonized person now replaces Davutoğlu in the cartoons as the main fellow of Erdoğan in his cause, and now they are fighting the enemies together.

In sum, there is a terrible amount of fluidity and instability within those images of Misvak, considering their narrative is prone to change by the day while at the same time showing strict parallelism with the AKP decisions. In every circumstance, changing party decisions are equally applauded by the magazine even though those decisions might also be conflicted. The magazine’s overly flexible and contradictory position reveals the fact that those claims transmitted through cartoons seem to be without the proper foundation and instead serves for propaganda. In that sense, it has been argued that without the humorous content, Misvak is similar to pro-government media outlets such as daily newspapers like Yeni Akit or A Haber, a private news TV channel and functions similar to an Ideological State Apparatus.

The discussion on *kulturkampf* entails power struggles with an emphasis on the cultural hegemony debates. Suffice to say that those arguments are based on the claim that conservative circles were left illiterate and excluded from the cultural sphere in Turkey by those Kemalist and leftist groups who were assumed to have the cultural hegemony so far. While this narrative aims to equate all those parties, including Kemalists, leftists, and white Turks, as the same (Bora, 2017), it also needs to be addressed that such discourse has been reproduced throughout the years by the parties which tend to analyze the situation through a cultural perspective at the cost of ignoring

class struggles in Turkey. As a result, there is a tendency to label those pro-government popular culture products as concrete outputs of a so-called counter-hegemonic movement exercised by the pro-government groups. Below remarks of Gramsci about the state- cultural hegemony relationship help to explain why those pro-government cultural products in Turkey should not be evaluated as outputs of a counter-hegemonic movement:

The school as a positive educative function, and the courts as a repressive and negative educative function, are the most important state activities in this sense: but, in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end - initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes (Gramsci, 2000, p. 234).

In that sense, the culture of the ruling class in Turkey needs to be addressed and whether those initiatives and activities function as the state apparatus should be investigated. Whether it be high culture, popular culture, or folk culture, the notion of culture is extensive, intertwined with the dominant ideology, it encompasses daily life practices, and it is embedded in many details from those street signs and children's names. To that end, it has been argued during the study that an Islamist culture that is articulated into neoliberalism can be observed in Turkey today. Such as, media and especially broadcasting media became a convenient tool to spread Sunni Islamism with a pro-government outlook, which proposed a particular lifestyle. On the other hand, it is suggested that cultural production efforts remained insufficient for the AKP if the issue needs to be addressed from a high culture perspective.

In light of those arguments above, it is clear that a cautious approach is necessary when analyzing those popular culture products within the hegemony debates; hence, it is important to explore the discourse and examine what is proposed in those magazines. To that end, if we accept the cultural hegemony claims in a way that the cultural sphere of Turkey is divided between two main camps as the Kemalists, leftists, white Turks *vis-à-vis* conservatives wouldn't we fall into the trap of allodoxia? Gramsci formed the cultural hegemony theory to contribute to the formation of a working-class intelligentsia for further promoting the establishment of organic intellectuals so that they could replace the dominant ideology. Herewith, it can be

mentioned that this is clearly not the case for Turkey today. There cannot be mentioned a cultural hegemony of those mentioned parties, including Kemalists, leftists, and White Turks, considering the widespread neoliberal Islamist culture of the ruling class in the country. In that sense, the constant tendency to revive the debates on *kulturkampf* needs to be addressed. The deep-rooted narrative recreates the hateful and discriminative discourse, which consequently does not allow any space for producing any oppositional cultural products. And yet, whom does it serve to complain about a so-called ongoing *kulturkampf* in Turkey today in such circumstances? As long as the existing binaries and dualism remain to be proposed as inherent structural problems in Turkey, those theories such as center-periphery dichotomy which suggests the *kulturkampf* as one of the main characteristics of the modern Republic will be used as practical tools by certain groups. Such a framework, which traps the debate in cultural power discussions, mainly revolves around the religious-secular binary, not only ignores the reality of class struggles but also goes together with the discourse of victimization. And yet, such an instrumentalist approach is so prevalent that it is constantly ignored that an Islamist culture that is articulated into neoliberalism is being proposed by the ruling class for the last 18 years in Turkey. As a pro-government humor magazine, Misvak's position within those debates contributes to the reproduction of such a narrative.

During the thesis, it has been argued that the field of humor has particular importance for many reasons, not only because of its ambivalent nature but also due to government efforts to further recontextualize and make sense of the issue, especially after the Gezi Revolt. In this context, the emergence of Misvak as a humor magazine that is clearly produced only for certain circles is not surprising. As a concrete indicator of the importance given to the humor and humor magazines by the AKP, particularly after the Gezi period, it would be appropriate to conclude with reference to the SETA report that has been discussed in the introduction part of the thesis. As mentioned, pro-government think-tank SETA published a report on humor magazines and cultural hegemony in 2016. Analyzing four mainstream humor magazines, Girgır, Leman, Penguen, and Uykusuz (for the period after the 3rd November 2002), the report simply

accuses mentioned magazines for being Islamophobic and anti-Erdoğan. In addition, it is claimed that the discourse of the cartoonists (who are allegedly constantly angry) is trapped between curse and ridicule, while there is no hope proposed in their sense of humor, hate speech is explicit in those magazines. As a follow-up to this analysis, it has been asked what does Misvak contribute to, what does it propose in return, considering it came out as an alternative to those mentioned magazines. During the thesis, those similar questions were explored, and the study attempted to answer them by trying to analyze the Misvak discourse. Accordingly, findings showed that what Misvak does is to reproduce the hateful discourse that contributes to the polarization of an axis of friends vs. enemies in Turkey. To that end, as a product of the AKP's limited hegemony project, it is clear that Misvak feeds on hostility and can not exist without an "other." Using humor as an instrument for propaganda and having a shared language with the government, Misvak's discourse contributes to nurturing the AKP's hegemonic project. It neither provides a solid world view nor offers hope, it could only serve for the party's agenda of mobilizing and consolidating its own already loyal voters.

Considering its scope and extent, this thesis mainly embraced a cultural analysis framework that attempted to answer related research questions by examining visual texts. Having said that, there are many other angles that researchers might want to address within this discussion. For example, a study that focuses rather on the audience still awaits as another critical research area. Looking for answers to the questions, including whether Misvak succeeds to be effective on the audience or whether those messages transmitted via cartoons are received by the audience as intended, may propose a complete frame about the issue. In that sense, the findings also showed that there are other aspects to examine, inquiries that need to be addressed, and opportunities for future research.

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APPENDICES

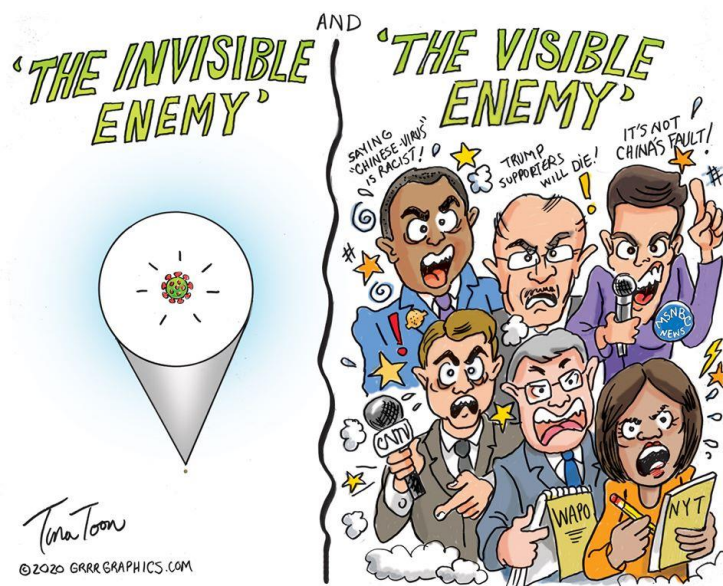
APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL FIGURES



(Figure A.1- GrrGraphics cartoons)



(Figure A.2-GrrGraphics cartoons)



(Figure A.3- GrrGraphics cartoons)



(Figure A.4 (figure 59 in the text)- Hacamat, issue 33- October 16, 2015)



(Figure A.5- Hacamat, issue 27- September 2, 2015)



(Figure A.6)



(Figure A.7)

APPENDIX B: TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez, 2000’ler Türkiye’sinin en bilinen İslamcı mizah dergilerinden biri olan Misvak’ın ideolojik söylemine odaklanmakta, dergi karikatürlerini analiz ederek Misvak’ta sunulan mizahın genel özelliklerini ve işlevini ortaya çıkarmaya girişmektedir. Ardından, dergide ideoloji olarak İslamcılığın nasıl sunulduğu tartışılmaktadır. Söylemdeki eksiklikleri ve suskunlukları ortaya çıkarabilmek amacıyla bu tez ayrıca derginin ve AKP Hükümetinin söylemleri arasında paralellik bulunup bulunmadığını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Son olarak, hegemonya ve *kulturkampf* tartışmaları bağlamında düşman imajlarının dergide nasıl inşa edildiği görsel metinlerin analizi yoluyla gösterilmektedir.

Misvak 2015 Haziran ayında online olarak yayınlanmaya başlamış bir İslamcı mizah dergisidir. Mayıs 2020 itibariyle Misvak’ın Facebook’ta yarım milyona yakın, Instagram’da 408 bin ve Twitter’da 68 bin takipçisi bulunmaktadır. Mayıs 2020 itibariyle Instagram üzerinde sayısı yaklaşık 4600 olan karikatürlerin çoğunluğu politik içeriklidir. Misvak’ın yayın yaptığı sosyal medya sayfaları incelendiğinde derginin AKP hükümeti yanlısı olduğu ve bu bağlamda paylaşımlar yaptığı ortaya çıkmaktadır. Karikatüristler de Facebook üzerinde dergiyi “taraf ve gönüllü” olarak tanımlamaktadırlar. Dergi özellikle de Atatürk, İş Bankası, Cumhuriyet rejimi ve laiklikle ilgili karikatürleri ekseninde temelde AKP karşıtı ve seküler olarak tanımlanabilecek kesimlerden irticai olduğu gerekçesiyle büyük tepki almıştır. Öte yandan Misvak, Yeni Akit, ATV, A Haber, Beyaz TV vb. hükümete yakın olduğu bilinen medya yayın gruplarında sıklıkla olumlanmaktadır.

Misvak’a ilişkin literatür maalesef oldukça kısıtlıdır ve bu durum tez çalışması için de bir zorluk oluşturmıştır. Öne çıkan bir kaynak olarak Alparslan Nas’ın “Media Representations of the Cultural Others in Turkey” (2018) isimli kitabının bir bölümü 2017 yılında yayınlanmış Misvak karikatürlerinin analizine ayrılmıştır. Nas, karikatürleri Bourdieu’nun “alan” teorisine dayandırarak bir çatışma alanı olarak konumlandırmış ve merkez-çevre teorisi ekseninde incelediği Misvak dergisini çevreden merkeze taşınan belli bir toplumsal sınıfın temsilleri olarak ele

almıştır. Bu bağlamda dergideki temsillerde sıklıkla ırkçılık, anti-Semitizm, misojini gibi temaların hakim olduğu konusundaki Nas'la ortak düşünceye rağmen, bu çalışma Misvak'ı merkez-çevre teorisi ekseninde tartışmayı uygun bulmamakta ve hegemonya tartışmaları içinde konumlandırmayı hedeflemektedir.

Bu bağlamda Misvak dergisinin Haziran 2015-Mayıs 2020 tarihleri arasında Instagram üzerinde yayınlanan yaklaşık 4600 karikatürü tematik bir analize tabi tutulmuş, politik bağlamı olmayan karikatürler dışarıda bırakılmış ve geriye kalan karikatürler içinde iktidar partisi taraftarlığı ile muhalif kesimlere ilişkin temsillerdeki düşman inşası iki temel ana hat olarak belirlenmiştir. Buna göre dergideki mizah anlayışı ile ideoloji, Misvak dergisi çizerlerinin ve hükümet yanlısı olduğu düşünülen kitlenin temsili ile düşman imajları temel tematik kategoriler olarak belirlenmiştir. Bunların dışında düşman imajları ayrıca incelendiğinde Türkiye'de sol, entelektüeller, Gezi Park protestocuları, muhalefet partileri, kadın ve LGBTQ+, dış mihraklar ve Kemalist modernleşme kategorilerine ilişkin temsillerin öne çıktığı görülmektedir. Bahsekonu temaları kapsayan yaklaşık 150 Misvak karikatürü örneklem olarak kullanılmış ayrıca perspektif sunabileceği düşüncesiyle 2000'lerde yayın yapan diğer iki İslamcı mizah dergisi olan Cafcaf ve Hacamat dergilerinin 2013-2016 yılları arasındaki sayıları da incelemeye tabi tutulmuştur. Misvak'ta düşman olarak inşa edilen kesimlere ilişkin temsiller incelendiğinde ötekileştirme, yaftalama, şeytanlaştırma, canavarlaştırma ve günah keçisi ilan etme gibi yöntemler kullanıldığı görülmektedir. Bu çalışma, yukarıdaki temalar kapsamında derginin söylemini analiz ederek derginin mizah yoluyla AKP hegemonyasını beslediğini iddia etmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın anahtar kavramlarından biri olarak mizah öne çıkmaktadır. Aristo'dan Hobbes'a, Bergson'dan Freud'a kadar pek çok düşünür tarafından katkıda bulunulan geniş bir mizah literatüründen söz etmek mümkündür. Gülmenin sebeplerini araştıran filozoflar tarafından konuya ilişkin farklı açılımlar getirilmiş, üstünlük, rahatlama ve uyumsuzluk gibi çeşitli teoriler ortaya atılmıştır. Bu teoriler genellikle insanın gülmesinin arkasında yatan sebepleri araştırmaktadır. Öte yandan mizahın işlevi ile mizah ve güç arasındaki ilişki gibi kavram setleri daha fazla

incelenmesi gereken ve bu tez için de önemli konseptler olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu bağlamda teorik bir ayrıma giderek mizahın isyankâr ve terbiye edici işlevlerinden söz etmek mümkündür (Billig, 2005). Örneğin Platon mizahı sakıncalı bularak fazla gülünmesinden kaçınılması gerektiğini belirtmektedir, ona göre gülme devletin resmiyetiyle ve ciddiyetiyle bağdaşmaz ve bu bakımdan arzu edilmez zira tehlikeli olabilir (Platon, 2000). Platon’un korkularını haklı çıkarırcasına Bakhtin karnavaleskden ve karnaval gülüşünden söz ederken mizahın özgürleştirici yönüne vurgu yapar (Bakhtin, 1984). Yıkıcı bir gülmenin özellikle alt sınıflar elinde güçlü bir silah olabileceği ve otoriteyi zayıflatacağı kanısı mizah literatüründe önemli bir yere sahiptir. Benzer şekilde Arendt de otoritenin en büyük düşmanının küçümseme olduğunu ve bunu sağlamanın yolunun da gülmekten geçtiğini söyler (Arendt, 1970). Öte yandan Misvak’taki mizah anlayışının tam aksine otoriteyi zayıflatmayı değil güçlendirmeyi amaçladığı görülmektedir, bu bağlamda yukarıdaki analizler kapsamında Misvak’taki mizah anlayışı bir anomali sayılabilir. Misvak karikatürleri incelendiğinde dergide AKP her koşulda olumlanırken muhalif kesimlere ilişkin temsillerdeki mizah anlayışının ofansif bir karaktere sahip olduğu, seksist, misojinik, homofobik, anti-Semitik ve ırkçı öğeler barındırdığı tespit edilmektedir. Bu yönüyle Misvak’taki mizah anlayışı daha ziyade propogandiftir. Bu bağlamıyla mizahın işlevinin tek yönlü olmadığı, yalnız özgürleştirici bir karaktere sahip bulunmadığı da anlaşılmaktadır.

Diğer yandan İslamcı mizah dergilerini incelerken din faktörü de ele alınması gereken bir başlık olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu bakımdan mizah ve din ilişkisini inceleme gerekliliği doğmaktadır. Ortodoks İslam anlayışında “kararında” bir mizahın olumlandığı iddia edilebilir. Mizah-ı mezmun ve mizah-ı mahmud ayrımına göre İslam yerinde şakalaşmaya ve gülümsemeye karşı değildir; ancak taklit, dalga geçmek ve aşağılamak gibi ofansif öğeler barındıran bir mizah türü insanlar arasında husumete sebep olabileceği gerekçesiyle İslam’da hoş karşılanmaz (Altınay 2004). Bunların yanı sıra anikonizm ilkesi gereği İslam dini, başta Hz. Muhammed olmak üzere insanların resimler yoluyla tasvir edilmesine oldukça karşı çıkmaktadır. Bu sebeple abartının ve basitleştirmenin sıklıkla kullanıldığı karikatür sanatının İslam diniyle bağdaşması ve

İslamcı mizah yoluyla karikatürler üretilmesinin olağandışı bir durum olduğu düşünülebilir. Oysa ki halihazırda köklü bir mizah dergisi ve karikatür geleneği olan Türkiye için bahse konu anlayışın yerleşik olmadığı, İslamcı mizah dergilerinin varlığı göz önüne alındığında görülmektedir.

Türkiye’de 19.yy’da başlayan ve halen devam etmekte olan köklü bir mizah dergisi geleneği olduğundan söz edilebilir. Temelde politik konjonktür sebebiyle bu mizah dergileri ana akım ya da seküler olarak adlandırılmış, uzun süre Markopaşa ve Borazan gibi istisnalar dışında komünist ya da İslamcı mizah dergilerinin üretimi söz konusu olmamıştır. Bununla birlikte, 1980’lerde İslami sermayedeki birikimin de etkisiyle 1990’larda bir İslamcı mizah dergisi geleneği oluşmaya başlamıştır. 1990’larda çoğunlukla kısa ömürlü olan ve İslamcı ideolojinin taraftarlığını yapan *Cıngar*, *Ustura*, *Cümbür*, *Fit*, *Filit*, *Dinozor* gibi dergilerin varlığından söz etmek mümkündür (Cantek & Gönenç, 2017). Ancak özellikle de 2000’li yıllara gelindiğinde sayıları çok olmasa da *Cafcaf*, *Hacamat* ve nihayetinde bu tezin konusu olan *Misvak* gibi dergilerin varlığı İslamcı mizah dergilerini bir tür olarak ayırsıllaştırmıştır denilebilir. *Cafcaf* ve *Hacamat*, *Leman* ve *Penguen* gibi “seküler” mizah dergilerine alternatif olarak AKP döneminde piyasaya sürülmüşlerdir. Bu bakımdan AKP hegemonyasının kültürel ürünleri olarak varlık göstermeyi amaçlamışlardır. İslamcı bir kültürün somut ürünleri olarak popüler kültür alanında kendine yer bulan bu dergilerin sonuncusu ve günümüzde en bilineni olan *Misvak* da bu bakımdan AKP’nin “sınırlı hegemonya projesinin” bir ürünüdür.

Bahsedildiği üzere bu çalışmada *Misvak* dergisinin ideolojik söylemi analiz edilirken söylemdeki eksikleri ve suskunları da tespit edebilmek maksadıyla dergi ile AKP söylemi arasında paralellik bulunup bulunmadığı da incelenmektedir. Bu amaçla siyasi bir parti olarak AKP’nin ideolojik söylemi ile partinin hegemonik projesi de tez kapsamında tartışılmaktadır. AKP, 2002 yılında iktidara geldiği zamandan beri Poulantzas’ın çerçevesini çizdiği otoriter neoliberal hükümet anlayışının bir örneği olarak görülmelidir. Bu bakımdan partinin iktidara ilk geldiği dönemde daha “liberal” bir yaklaşım sunduğu ancak daha sonra giderek otoriter bir yönetim moduna evrildiği görüşü doğru değildir. Temelde AKP’nin hegemonik bir proje olarak ele alınması ve

partinin yakın zamandaki “dönüşümünün” temel bir karakteristik değişimden ziyade hegemonya projesinin kapsamının değişmesiyle anlaşılması gerekir. AKP'nin hegemonya projesinin temelde iki kaynağı vardır; neoliberal popülizm ve esas olarak İslamcılık üzerine kurulmuş kültürel / sembolik kaynakların kullanımı (Bozkurt, 2013). Bu bakımdan AKP iktidara ilk geldiğinde daha kapsayıcı bir hegemonik proje anlayışına sahipken birtakım siyasal ve toplumsal olaylar neticesinde bu yeteneğini kaybederek sınırlı bir hegemonya projesine yönelmek durumunda kalmıştır. Gezi Kalkışması, AKP için en önemli hegemonik kırılmayı temsil etmiş ve aynı zamanda kültürel hegemonya ve *kulturkampf* ile ilgili tartışmaları yeniden canlandırmıştır.

Bu bakımdan temel olarak AKP, 2013'teki Gezi Kalkışması'ndan sonra sınırlı bir hegemonya projesi sürdürmeye yönelmiş ve otoriterlik parti söyleminin yerleşik özelliği haline gelmiştir. Bu dönemle birlikte AKP sadece kendi seçmenini mobilize etmeye odaklanarak toplumun geri kalanını görmezden gelen bir siyasi tavır benimsemiştir. Bunun neticesinde “biz ve onlar” anlayışı yerleşik hale gelmiş, komplo zihniyeti tavan yapmış ve ötekileştirmek, günah keçisi ilan etmek gibi uygulamalar pratik siyasal araçlar haline gelmiştir. Sınırlı hegemonya projesinin bir ürünü ve AKP taraftarı bir dergi olarak Misvak, birçok konuda AKP ile benzer bir söylemi paylaşmaktadır ve karikatürler yoluyla parti söyleminde öteki ilan edilen kesimlere ilişkin düşman inşası da bu paralelliği göstermektedir.

İnceleme konusunun bir mizah dergisi olduğu düşünüldüğünde, Misvak'ta sunulan mizah da bu tezin ana araştırma konularından birini oluşturmaktadır. Her şeyden önce, dergideki mizahın doğası ofansiftir; birçok imaj, anti-Semitik, misojinistik ve homofobik unsurlar içerir. Misvak'taki mizah dergide düşman olarak temsil edilen Türkiye'deki bazı muhalif grupların yanı sıra bazı uluslararası aktörleri küçümsemeyi, zayıflatmayı veya aşağılamayı amaçlamaktadır. Öte yandan, Misvak'ta kadın çıplaklığı resmedilmese de, düşman imajı temsillerinde cinsel imalar var ve kaba bir dil kullanımı fazlasıyla mevcuttur. Bahsedilen bu özellikler, İslamcı mizah kullanma iddiası ile çelişmektedir. Taklit ve alay dahil olmak üzere saldırgan mizahın Ortodoks İslam'da hoş karşılanmadığı düşünüldüğünde, Misvak, İslamcı bir mizah dergisi olmasına rağmen gerekli İslami mizah niteliklerini karşılamamaktadır.

Misvak'taki mizahın bir diğer farklı özelliği işlevinde saklıdır. Leman ve Uykusuz gibi diğer ana akım veya laik mizah dergilerinden farklı olarak Misvak, siyasi statükoyu eleştirmek için politik mizah kullanmaz. Aksine, hükümet yanlısı duruşu göz önüne alındığında, Misvak'ta mizah kullanımı AKP'nin hegemonik projesine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bu anlamda, dergide sunulan mizah, mizahın mevcut güç yapılarını yıkarak yeni bir dünya düzeni kurma yeteneğine sahip olduğunu savunan anlayış (Bakhtin, 1984) ile açıklanamaz. Misvak'taki gülme bir Karnaval gülmesi değildir, aksine propagandacı ve araçsaldır ve hiyerarşiyi sarsmak yerine korumayı hedeflemektedir bu sebeple her türlü muhalefet, dergide düşman olarak marjinalleştirilmekte ve damgalanmaktadır. Yukarıda önerilen argümanlar çalışma için kritik bir bulgu sağlamıştır, çünkü siyasi karikatürlerin sadece muhalif bir mizah anlayışına katkıda bulunmadığı, aynı zamanda hükümet yanlısı olabileceğini dolayısıyla otoriteyi de güçlendirebileceğini göstermiştir. Siyasi karikatürlerin, AKP'nin hegemonik projesiyle söylemsel paralellik kurarak Gramscici “rızaı” inşa etmek için kullanılabilecek güçlü araçlar olabileceği ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu anlamda Misvak, mizahın paradoksal niteliğini de gözler önüne sermiştir.

Bu tez çalışması, Misvak ile 2000'li yıllarda yayınlanan diğer iki İslamcı mizah dergisi olan Cafcaf ve Hacamat arasında kısa bir karşılaştırma yapmaya çalışmıştır. Buna göre, yaftalama, ötekileştirme ve canavarlaştırmanın Hacamat'ta daha yaygın olduğu düşünülürse Misvak'ın Cafcaf'tan ziyade Hacamat'a daha çok benzediği düşünülmektedir. Misvak'ta kullanılan dilin diğer iki dergiye kıyasla daha vulgar olduğu ve Cafcaf'ın Ortodoks İslam'daki “temiz mizah” anlayışına kısmen daha yakın olduğu söylenebilir. Cantek ve Gönenç, alternatif bir mizah stili üretme iddialarına bakılmaksızın, stil söz konusu olduğunda Cafcaf'ın ana akım seküler mizah dergilerinden farklı olmadığını savunmaktadır (Cantek ve Gönenç, 2017). Bu anlamda çoğunlukla Cafcaf ve kısmen Hacamat, İslamcı kopyalar olarak Leman, Penguen ve Uykusuz gibi laik mizah dergilerinin yerini almaya çalışmışlardır. Öte yandan Misvak, yeni dönemin bir ürünüdür; dijital olarak yayınlandığından, hala geleneksel olarak basılan mizah dergilerinden ayrılmaktadır.

Cafcaf ve Hacamat karikatüristleri ve yazarları şehirli İslamcı orta sınıfı temsil etmektedirler. Bu anlamda Cafcaf ve Hacamat çizerlerinin Misvak ekibinden daha yüksek bir entelektüel ve eğitim sermayesine sahip oldukları söylenebilir. Cafcaf ve Hacamat popüler kültür, Müslüman gençlik, cinsiyet rolleri, tüketim alışkanlıkları, namaz ve oruç gibi dini görevleri yerine getirmeye kadar geniş bir yelpazede konuları ele alırken, Misvak çoğunlukla politik karikatürler yayınlamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu dergiler (özellikle Cafcaf), Türkiye'deki Müslüman gençler için alternatif bir bakış açısı sağlama potansiyeline sahiptir. Son olarak, her ne kadar bazı nitelikleri Misvak'ı diğer iki İslamcı mizah dergisinden ayırsa da üç dergi de hükümet yanlısı İslamcı dergiler olduklarından büyük benzerlikler göstermektedir. Her halükârda üç dergi de AKP söylemini paylaşarak AKP'nin hegemonik projesinin beslenmesine katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Misvak'ın ideolojik pozisyonu için milliyetçilik ve Neo-Osmanlılıkla harmanlanmış bir İslamcılık denilebilir. Althusserian bir okumayla Misvak'taki İslamcı söylemin okuyucuyu özne olarak konumlandığı ve “çağırdığı” gözlemlenmektedir. Örneğin, AKP çevreleri için de önemli bir figür olan İslamcılığın önde gelen ideologlarından Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, dergide usta olarak büyük övgü almakta ve sıklıkla tasvir edilmektedir. İslamcılıkta da önemli yeri olan mağduriyet anlatısı Kısakürek'in eserlerinde sıkça vurgulanan bir konu olduğu gibi Misvak'ta da kendine yer bulmaktadır.

İslamcılık ile birlikte Milliyetçilik ve Neo-Osmanlılık Misvak'ta olumlanan ideolojik pozisyonlardır ve Misvak karikatüristlerinin benlik imajları da bu ideolojilerle uyumlu şekilde temsil edilmiştir. Bu temsillere göre Misvak illüstratörlerinin Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan ile özdeşleşme eğilimi gösterdiği ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu anlamda, bir yandan ızdırıp ve mağduriyet söylemi diğer yandan ise, özellikle 15 Temmuz darbe girişiminden sonra AKP siyasetinin baskın bir özelliği haline ve narsistik bir kimlik oluşumunun inşasına işaret eden galibiyet anlatısı (Tokdoğan, 2018) derginin tonunu belirlemektedir.

Bu nedenle, Misvak'taki benlik imgesinin temsili narsisistik kimliğinin oluşumuna da katkıda bulunmakta ve “Beyaz Atletli” gibi karikatür karakterleriyle statüyü tersine çevirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Beyaz Atletli, Misvak'ta sıkça kullanılan bir karakterdir; 15 Temmuz darbe girişiminin bir kahramanı olarak tasvir edilmekte ve *beyaz atleti ve mavi çizgili pijamasıyla bu zamana kadar dalga konusu olan sıradan insanların (yurdum insanı)* (Şimşek, 2014) şimdi Türk ulusunun gerçek temsilcileri haline gelmesi iddiasının bir sembolüdür. Burada amaç bir şekilde bu karakteri “sıradan, halkın içinden insanların” temsili olarak bir şekilde yüceltmektir; bununla birlikte dergi aslında, tipik sağcı popülist söylemi yeniden üretmektir. Ne yazık ki, karikatüristler hakkında çok fazla veri bulunmamaktadır, bazıları karikatürlerde isimlerini kullanırken bazıları çalışmalarını takma isimler ve rumuzlarla imzalamayı tercih etmişlerdir. Oluşan izlenim neticesinde Misvak çizerlerinin kısmen heterojen bir toplumsal sınıfı temsil ettikleri düşünülmektedir. Misvak ekibinde hem kamuda çalışan orta sınıfa hem de işçi sınıfına ait çizerler olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Parti söylemi ve Misvak arasındaki paralelliğin tespiti için AKP'nin temel özellikleri de kısaca değerlendirilmiş bu amaçla AKP'de düşman imgelerinin inşası, Kürt sorunu, toplumsal cinsiyet meselesi, AKP kadrolarının benlik imgesi vb. konuları kapsayan ideolojik söyleminin ana özellikleri kısaca incelenmiştir. Misvak'ın karikatürler yoluyla AKP ile benzer bir söylem paylaştığı gözlemlenmektedir. Yukarıda sunulan bulgulara göre, çalışma aynı zamanda AKP'nin bir hegemonya projesi olarak ortaya çıkmasının altında yatan nedenleri göstermeye çalışmış ve hegemonyasının kurulmasıyla partinin dönüşümüne neden olan toplumsal ve siyasal krizler kısaca gözden geçirilmiştir.

Bahsedildiği üzere Gezi'den sonra, kültürel üretim ve özellikle kültürel güç tartışmaları yeniden gündeme gelmiştir. Bu süreçte Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın kültürel sermayeden yoksun muhafazakâr çevrelere ve hükümetin siyasi gücü olmasına rağmen, kültürel güç kazanmamış olmasına ilişkin açıklamaları ön plana çıkmıştır. Dolayısıyla, kültürel hegemonya tartışmaları yine hükümet tarafından yeniden alevlendirilmiş ve konu tipik bir ızdırap ve mağduriyet söylemiyle masaya getirilmişti. Bu anlatı, bu süreç boyunca senaryolarının hükümetin ihtiyaçlarına göre

uyarlandığı Payitaht: Abdulhamit veya Diriliş Ertuğrul gibi TV şovları, diziler, filmler vb. taçlandırıldı. Benzer bir şekilde, Cins, Lacivert ve İzdaham gibi İslami dergiler Ot ve Kafa'nın yerini almak niyetiyle yayınlanmaya başlanırken Hacamat ve Misvak, Leman ve Penguen'in İslami ikameleri olarak yaratıldı (Keten, 2019).

Bu gelişmeler AKP'nin hegemonya projesinin kapsamının değişmesine paralel yaşanmıştır; dolayısıyla Misvak dahil bu kültür/popüler kültür ürünlerinin de bu hegemonya projesini besleyecek şekilde ele alınması gerekmektedir. Bu çerçevede, Devletin İdeolojik Aygıtını güçlendirmek için kullanılan hükümet yanlısı kültürel ürünlerin sayısındaki artışı anlamamıza da yardımcı olmaktadır. Etkili bir araç olduğu düşünülen AKP'nin ötekileştirici söylemi Misvak gibi yayınlar tarafından da bu süreçte beslenmektedir. Bu anlamda, bu dergilerin mizah gibi çelişkili ve ikircikli bir alanda kültürel üretime katkıda bulundukları göz önüne alınırsa önemli oldukları anlaşılmaktadır. Özetle, durumun bugün Türkiye'de sınırlı bir hegemonyanın koşullarına benzer olduğu düşünüldüğünde, hükümetin halihazırda sadık seçmenlerinin rızasını korumak için Misvak benzeri yayınlara ihtiyacı olduğu açıktır. Bu nedenle Misvak, AKP'nin sınırlı hegemonya projesini daha da güçlendirmek ve beslemek için bir propaganda aracı olarak hizmet etmektedir. Misvak, “diğerleri” olarak belirlenen muhalif grupların da desteğini almayı amaçlamamakta, aksine bu gruplar dergi tarafından düşman olarak sunulmaktadır.

Derginin söylemi incelendikten sonra, Misvak'ta düşman kategorilerine giren sol, entelektüeller, Gezi protestocuları, muhalefet partileri, kadınlar ve LGBTQ +, dış mihraklar ve Kemalist modernleşme kategorilerine ilişkin temsiller düşman olarak sunulan başlıca gruplar olarak ortaya çıkmıştır.

Dergide solun olumsuzlanması narsisistik bir şekilde tezahür etmektedir; genel olarak Misvak, Türkiye'de solun etkinliğini ve hatta varlığını görmezden gelme eğilimindedir. Bu nedenle, birçok karikatürde komünizm ve ateizmle dalga geçilmekte, solculuk bir gençlik hevesi gibi gösterilmektedir. Öte yandan, sol birçok imgede de şiddet ve terörle ilişkili olarak temsil edilmiştir. Ayrıca Misvak'a göre, sendikalara, direnişe veya siyasi sistemde köklü bir değişime gerek yoktur; bunun

yerine, dergi İslam'ı, işçi hakları da dahil olmak üzere günlük hayatı düzenleyen bir mekanizma olarak önermektedir.

Misvak'ın entelektüelleri ve temelde, akademisyenler ve öğrencileri “teröristler” olarak temsil etme çabası hükümetin barış için akademisyenler imzacılarına açtığı savaşa paralellik göstermektedir. Buna göre, akademinin düşman olarak inşasının arkasındaki ana nedenlerden birinin anti-entelektüalizmin bir devlet aygıtı olarak kullanılması ile ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur (Gençoğlu, 2018). Misvak'ta entelektüellerin düşman olarak inşasının arkasındaki bir başka sebep, iyileşmeyen bir yara olarak kendini gösteren ve dergideki mağduriyet söylemiyle tutarlı olan 28 Şubat Dönemi'ne dayanmaktadır. Misvak'ta düşman imajı inşası, üniversiteler düşünüldüğünde, Türkiye'de solun ve laikliğin de sembolü olduğu için ODTÜ'ye ilişkin temsillerde en belirgin halini almaktadır.

Misvak'ta Gezi protestoları şiddet içeren terörist eylemler olarak resmedilmekte ve vandalizmle eş değer düşünülmektedir. Gezi'ye ilişkin düşman imajları çoğunlukla Berkin Elvan'ın tasvirleri yoluyla inşa edilirken, dergi aynı zamanda Gezi Protestocuları ile 15 Temmuz darbe girişiminde sokağa dökülenler arasında sürekli bir karşılaştırma yapmaktadır. Bu temsillerde Misvak, birinin demokrasiye olan bağlılığını teyit ederken, Gezi direnişini hafife almakta ve düşmanca bir eylem olarak göstermektedir.

Muhalefet partilerinin temsili dergideki düşman imajına ilişkin en belirgin temalardan birini oluşturmaktadır; öyle ki muhalif politikacıların ölümü bile Misvak'ta olumlanabilmektedir. Dergide CHP karakersiz bir siyasal parti ve terör örgütü olarak temsil edilirken, parti politikacıları ikiyüzlü ve saygısız insanlar olarak resmedilmektedir. Bu anlatıya göre muhalefet partileri “dış mihraklara” hizmet eden “gavurları”, AKP ise “yerli ve milli” partiyi temsil etmektedir.

Toplumsal cinsiyete ilişkin temsiller de Misvak'ta problemlili bir alan olarak gözükmeaktadır. Örneğin, modern kadınlar genellikle “fahişe” olarak tanımlanmaktadır ve “seks işçisi” teriminin aksine bu söylemin olumsuz imalar barındırdığı açıktır. Ayrıca, neredeyse tüm kadınlar zayıf karakterler olarak tasvir

edilirken kadınların anne ve eş oldukları sürece güçlü ve değerli olabileceği iddia edilmektedir. Homofobik söylem Misvak'ta çok belirgindir, konuya ilişkin temsiller LGBTQ+'yi açıkça aşağılamayı amaçlarken, erkek Kürtler neredeyse sadece kadın kıyafetleri içinde resmedilmektedir.

“Türk'ün Türk'ten (ve Müslümandan) başka dostu yoktur” desturu “dış mihrakların” temsiliinde standart yaklaşımdır. Bu dış mihraklar politik konjonktüre bağlı olarak batı ülkeleri, Rusya, Çin veya uluslararası örgütler olabilmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, Selanik'ten gelen "dönmelerin" Cumhuriyet'in kurucuları olduğunu iddia eden milliyetçi muhafazakâr anlatıya ait anti-Semitizm ve "Yahudi komplosu" zihniyeti dergide yaygındır. Bu temsiller Misvak karikatüristlerinin Türkiye'nin “içimizdeki gavurlara” ek olarak dışarıda da düşmanlarla çevrili olduğuna inandığını ve okuyucuda korku ve sindirmeye neden olabilecek komplo teorilerine işaret eden temsiller kullandıkları görülmektedir.

Misvak, esas olarak laik doğası nedeniyle Kemalizmi de hedef almaktadır, çok sayıda karikatür Atatürk'ü modern Cumhuriyet'in lideri ve kurucusu olarak eleştirmektedir. Misvak'ın Kemalizm ile ilişkisi geçmişle hesaplaşma şeklinde ortaya çıkmakta ve Osmanlı dönemine açık bir özleme koşut olarak modern Cumhuriyet'e karşı nefret ve öfke ile sonuçlanan bir mağduriyet anlatısı bu temsillerde açıkça görülmektedir. Dergi AKP'yi reformist görmekte ve devletin Kemalist yapısında meydana gelen siyasal değişiklikleri kutlamaktadır. Atatürk'ün adının sokaklar, okullar, vb. için kullanılması konusunda dergide büyük rahatsızlık vardır. Aynı şekilde Kemalistler sarhoş ve faydasız insanlar olarak etiketlenirken, Mustafa Kemal'in kendisi bir diktatör olarak tasvir edilir.

Tüm bu temsillerde kritik olan, Misvak'ta tasvir edilen “düşmanların” hükümet tarafından da düşman olarak belirlenmesi, dolayısıyla AKP ve derginin söylemsel bir paralellikte buluşmasıdır. AKP yanlısı bir dergi olarak Misvak, hükümet eylemlerini eleştirmekten kaçınırken, söylemdeki suskunluklar ve boşluklar da gerçekleri gizlemeye hizmet etmektedir; bunun yerine mevcut sosyal ve politik atmosfere ilişkin taraflı bir çerçeve sunulmaktadır. Söylemdeki eksiklik ve suskunlara ek olarak,

Misvak'taki temsillerde, derginin her koşulda AKP söylemini takip etmesinden kaynaklanan belirgin çelişkiler de bulunmaktadır. Bu yüzden, parti söylemi değişme eğilimi gösterdiğinde veya düşmanları ve dostları yer değiştirdiğinde bunun yansıması Misvak'ta görülebilmektedir. Örneğin, bir karikatür, Türkiye'nin 2015 yılında bir Rus savaş uçağını düşürmesi nedeniyle iki ülke ilişkilerindeki kriz sırasında Rus S-400 füze sisteminin zayıflığına vurgu yaparken, bir başka görselde Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın açıklamasının ardından aynı füze sisteminin satın alma kararı kutlanabilmektedir. Benzer şekilde, siyasi figürler günlük siyasi atmosfere ve o sırada AKP'ye olan yakınlıklarına göre hem arkadaş hem de düşman olarak tasvir edilebilmektedir. Misvak'ta Davutoğlu'nu Erdoğan'ın güvenilir bir arkadaşı olarak tasvir eden birçok görsel olduğu gibi, Erdoğan ve Davutoğlu arasındaki çatışma ortaya çıktıktan sonra aynı dergi bu defa Davutoğlu'nu dürüst olmayan bir adam ve düşman olarak göstermeye başlamıştır. Aynı şekilde Devlet Bahçeli de bir zamanlar Misvak tarafından ağır eleştirilen siyasetçiler arasındayken ve hatta daha önce başkanlık sistemine “hayır” dediği için “şeytan” olarak tasvir edilirken AKP-MHP ittifakı başladığından beri Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın “davadaşı” olarak temsil edilmeye başlanmıştır.

Özetle, Misvak'ın düşman imajlarına ilişkin temsillerinde olağanüstü derecede bir tutarsızlık ve istikrarsızlık olduğu söylenebilir. Bu bakımdan dergideki anlatıların gün geçtikçe AKP kararlarıyla birlikte değişmeye eğilimli olduğu ve bu sebeple de sıkı paralellik gösterdiği düşünülmektedir. Derginin aşırı esnek ve çelişkili pozisyonu, karikatürler aracılığıyla iletilen iddiaların temelsiz olabileceğini zira görsellerin propagandaya hizmet ettiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bağlamda, mizahi içeriği olmadan Misvak'ın Yeni Akit veya A Haber gibi hükümet yanlısı medya kuruluşlarına benzediği ve Devletin İdeolojik aygıtına benzer iş gördüğü öne sürülebilir.

Kulturkampf ve kültürel hegemonya tartışmalarının muhafazakâr çevrelerin bu zamana dek cahil bırakıldıkları ve bu zamana dek kültürel hegemonyayı temsil ettiği “varsayılan” Kemalist ve solcu gruplar tarafından Türkiye'deki kültürel alanın dışında bırakıldıkları iddiasına dayandığını söylemek gerekmektedir. Bu anlatı Kemalistler, solcular ve beyaz Türkler de dahil olmak üzere tüm tarafları aynı kefeye koymayı

amaçlarken (Bora, 2017), bu söylemin yıllar boyunca Türkiye'deki sınıf mücadelelerini görmezden gelme pahasına belli taraflarca yeniden üretilmesi de aynı şekilde ele alınmalıdır. Sonuç olarak, bu hükümet yanlısı popüler kültür ürünlerini hükümet yanlısı gruplar tarafından karşı-hegemonik bir hareketin somut çıktıları olarak görme eğilimi olduğu aşıkardır. Oysa ki Gramsci'nin devlet ve kültürel hegemonya ilişkisi hakkındaki analizleri, Türkiye'deki hükümet yanlısı kültürel ürünlerin neden karşı-hegemonik bir hareketin çıktıları olarak değerlendirilmemesi gerektiğini açıklamaya yardımcı olmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'deki yönetici sınıfın kültürünün ele alınması ve bu girişimlerin ve faaliyetlerin devlet aygıtı olarak işlev görüp görmediği araştırılmalıdır.

Kültür kavramı dominant ideolojiyle iç içe ve sokak işaretleri ve çocuk isimleri dahil gündelik faaliyetleri de kapsayacak şekilde birçok ayrıntıda gömülü geniş bir kapsama sahiptir. Bu amaçla, bugün Türkiye'de neoliberalizme eklemlenen İslamcı bir kültürün var olduğu gözden kaçırılmamalıdır. Türkiye'de ana akım medya Sünni İslamcılığı belirli bir yaşam tarzı olarak sunan hükümet yanlısı bir perspektifi yaymak için uygun bir araç haline gelmiştir. Öte yandan, konunun yüksek kültür perspektifinden ele alınması gerekiyorsa, AKP için kültürel üretim çabalarının yetersiz kaldığı da ileri sürülebilir.

Sonuç olarak, hegemonya tartışmaları içindeki popüler kültür ürünlerini analiz ederken temkinli bir yaklaşımın gerekli olduğu açıktır; bu nedenle bu dergilerde neler vaat edildiğini söylem üzerinden incelemek önemlidir. Bu bağlamda, kültürel hegemonya iddialarını ve Türkiye'nin kültürel alanının Kemalistler, solcular ve beyaz Türkler'e karşı muhafazakârlar olarak iki ana kampa bölündüğünü kabul edersek, allodoksia tuzağına düşmüş olmaz mıyız? Gramsci, kültürel hegemonya teorisini organik aydınların kurulmasını teşvik etmek amacıyla bir işçi sınıfı entelijensiyasının oluşumuna katkıda bulunmak için geliştirmiştir. Halbuki bugün Türkiye için durumun böyle olmadığı söylenebilir. Ülkedeki egemen sınıfın yaygın neoliberal İslamcı kültürü göz önüne alındığında, Kemalistler, solcular ve Beyaz Türkler de dahil olmak üzere söz konusu grupların kültürel hegemonyasından söz edilemez. Bu bağlamda, *kulturkamp* ile ilgili tartışmaları canlandırma eğiliminin ele alınması gerekmektedir.

Bu köklü anlatı, nefret dolu ve ötekileştirici söylemi yeniden yaratmaktadır ve sonuç olarak bugün muhalif kültürel ürünler üretmek için herhangi bir alana da izin vermemektedir. Türkiye'deki mevcut düalizm ve kutuplaşma yapısal problemler olarak anlaşılmaya devam edildiği sürece, modern Cumhuriyetin temel özelliklerinden biri olarak *kulturkampf*'ı sunan merkez-çevre ikiliği gibi teoriler bazı gruplar tarafından pratik araçlar olarak kullanılmaya devam edecektir. Esas olarak dindar-laik ayrımı etrafında dönen ve meseleyi kültürel iktidar tartışmalarına hapseden böylesi bir çerçeve, sınıf mücadelelerinin gerçekliğini görmezden gelmekle kalmamakta, aynı zamanda mağduriyet söylemiyle de kol kola ilerlemektedir. Ancak de böyle bir araçsal yaklaşım günümüzde o denli yaygındır ki, neoliberalizme eklemlenmiş bir İslamcı kültürün son 18 yıldır Türkiye'de yönetici sınıf tarafından önerildiği sürekli olarak göz ardı edilmektedir. Hükümet yanlısı bir mizah dergisi olan Misvak'ın bu tartışmalardaki konumu ise böyle bir anlatıyı yeniden üretmeye katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Bu bağlamda Misvak'ın Türkiye'de dost ve düşman ekseninden beslenen bir kutuplaşmaya katkıda bulunan nefret dolu söylemi yeniden ürettiği görülmektedir. Bu minvalde, AKP'nin sınırlı hegemonya projesinin bir ürünü olarak Misvak'ın düşmanlıktan beslendiği ve bir "öteki" olmadan var olamayacağı açıktır. Mizahı propaganda aracı olarak kullanan ve hükümetle ortak bir dil geliştiren Misvak'ın söylemi, AKP'nin hegemonik projesinin beslenmesine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bu kapsamda Misvak ne tutarlı bir dünya görüşü ne de ona dair bir umut sunmaktadır, yalnızca partinin kendi sadık seçmenlerini mobilize ve konsolide etme gündemine hizmet etme potansiyeli vardır.

Kapsamı da göz önüne alındığında, bu tez esas olarak görsel metinleri inceleyerek ilgili araştırma sorularını cevaplamaya çalışan bir analiz yapmaya girişmiştir. Bununla birlikte, bu tartışma kapsamında ele alınabilecek başka pek çok araştırma alanı bulunabilir. Örneğin, okuyucuya odaklanan bir alımlama çalışması yapılabilir; Misvak'ın izleyici üzerinde gerçekten etkili olup olmadığı veya karikatürler aracılığıyla iletilen mesajların okuyucu tarafından niyet edilen şekilde alınıp alınmadığı yeni bir araştırmanın konusu olabilir. Bu anlamda, bu tez böylesi geniş bir

konu bağlamında ayrıca incelenecek başka yönler, ele alınması gereken sorular ve araştırma fırsatları olduğunu da göstermektedir.

APPENDIX C: THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

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Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Marine Sciences ☐

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TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English) : THE IDEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE OF THE ISLAMIST HUMOR MAGAZINES IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF MISVAK

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE: Yüksek Lisans / Master ☒ Doktora / PhD ☐

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