"NEW TURKEY"S MEMORY REGIME: JULY 15TH AS A MEMORY FIGURE

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ABSTRACT

"NEW TURKEY"S MEMORY REGIME: JULY 15TH AS A MEMORY FIGURE

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This study examines the narrative and cultural memory constructed around the experience of the coup attempt on July 15 in Turkey. Following the event, new conditions emerged from this experience, and a new founding narrative and cultural memory reconstruction process was witnessed. This thesis argues that the AKP government utilized top-down memory-making practices to construct the most significant memory figure of its political memory regime. In this thesis, the conceptualization of memory based on its collective, cultural, and political dimensions. This entire discussion has been conducted over cultural memory carriers and memorization techniques of the narrative. To explore them, one of the significant cultural memory carriers, the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum, is chosen as a fieldsite to conduct a qualitative study. The thesis adopted the depth hermeneutics as its methodological approach. The top-down memory-building process of political power and the content of the narrative established in this process are reinterpreted by evaluating it in a formal/discursive sense in a socio-historical context. Based on the findings of this field study, it has been concluded that the narrative constructed around

the July 15 coup attempt, along with all its reminders and omissions, is constructed as the most significant memory figure of the collective-cultural memory that the government is trying to construct through politicization of memory.

Keywords: cultural and political memory, founding narratives, mnemotechnics, memory figures, museums

ÖZ

"YENİ TÜRKİYE"NİN BELLEK REJİMİ: BİR HAFIZA FİGÜRÜ OLARAK 15 TEMMUZ

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Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi deneyimi üzerine oluşturulan anlatı ve kültürel bellek inşası sürecini incelemektedir. Olayın ardından, bu deneyimden yeni koşullar ortaya çıkmış ve yeni bir kurucu anlatı ve kültürel bellek inşası sürecine tanık olunmuştur. Bu tez, AKP hükümetinin kendi siyasi bellek rejiminin en önemli hafıza figürünü inşa etmek için yukarıdan aşağıya hafıza oluşturma uygulamalarına başvurduğunu iddia etmektedir. Tezde belleğin kavramsallaştırılması, bu kavramın kolektif, kültürel ve politik boyutlarına dayanmaktadır. Tüm bu tartışma, anlatının kültürel bellek taşıyıcıları ve hafızalaştırma teknikleri üzerinden yürütülmektedir. Bunları keşfetmek için, bu anlatının kültürel bellek taşıyıcılarından biri olan Ankara 15 Temmuz Demokrasi Müzesi, nitel bir araştırma yapmak üzere alan olarak seçilmiştir. Tez, derin yorumsamacı yaklaşımı benimsemiştir. İktidarın yukarıdan aşağıya bellek inşası süreci ve bu süreçte kurulan anlatının içeriği, sosyo-tarihsel bağlamda, biçimsel/anlamsal açıdan değerlendirilerek yeniden yorumlanmıştır. Bu saha çalışmasının bulgularına göre, 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi etrafında kurulan anlatı, tüm hatırlattıkları ve unutturduklarıyla birlikte,

hükümetin yukarıdan aşağıya inşa etmeye çalıştığı toplumsal-kültürel belleğin en önemli bellek figürü olarak inşa edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kültürel ve politik hafıza, kurucu anlatılar, mnemotekni, hafıza figürleri, müzeler

To Erdal, the boy with the nightingale whistle

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"The prime function of memory ... is not to preserve the past but to adapt it so as to enrich and manipulate the present." (Lowenthal, 1985, p. 210)

In the midsummer of 2016, I was a sociology student stayed in Ankara for summer school. I still remember the sound of fighter jets flying low above us as I was returning to my dormitory on campus from Kızılay. I remember sonic booms, the calls from the minarets of the mosques to people in order to take to the street, and the horror we experienced, several of the many extraordinary situations that took place before I realized what had happened. According to the statements of state television and prominent statesmen of the time, what happened was a coup attempt. The sentence I remember most clearly from the telephone conversations between us and our elders living in other cities was, "How many coups have we seen, this is something else." In the following days, it was as if we were watching revenge of the collective effervescence in the squares in Gezi Park Protests in 2013 with the name of "Democracy Watches". After a while, we witnessed that the crowd gathered in the squares was replaced by statuettes with the inscription "The Epic of the July 15th" in huge red letters, and even the names of the squares and streets were changed rapidly. Aside from the many political, economic and legal transformations that followed accelerated, the most exciting aspect of the issue for me was the ways the government embodied, remembered and transmitted this narrative, from political discourses of the power elites to urban places. Because as someone who has educated sociology and history in Turkey, I have always been interested in the dynamic structure of collective memory, the fact that it is an area that can be intervened, and its relationship with official history and state administration. While taking history lessons at various levels

of education for years in Turkey, I have always questioned that every event we read is taught to us by whom, through whose witnessing and filtering. Therefore, witnessing this reconstruction process first-hand and government efforts to instrumentalise this narrative and turn it into an official narrative in every area where the state can intervene is the curiosity that drove me to this study.

In this thesis, the politicization of collective memory as a field of political struggle and the 'top-down' reconstruction process of cultural memory in Turkey after the July 15th coup attempt, 2016 will be discussed. The one of the main arguments of the thesis is that together with the July 15th, a new founding narrative was invented by the AKP (Justice and Development Party - JDP) government, and an ideological definition of a New Turkey and its new nation was tried to be constructed through this narrative. And in this sense, the government has made some strides to ensure hegemony and legitimacy. Especially after the July 15th Coup Attempt (2016) and its mythicizing process by the government, many considerable steps have been taken in terms of reconstruction of cultural memory, rebuilding a new national identity and ensuring cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) through memorialization practices. As Mihaela Mihai (2019, p. 1) stress a conceptualization of political memory-making as a complex, multidirectional hermeneutical exercise, involving both memory and the imagination is very critical for the theoretical framework of this thesis. The motivation that enabled me to conduct this research arose from these questions:

1. What is the relationship between collective-cultural memory and political power?
2. What is the function and importance of cultural memory carriers in this relationship?
3. What the AKP government has reconstructed, recalled, revised or invented in its effort to build a founding narrative through the July 15th coup attempt?
4. How an epic narrative was constructed over this critical point through the politicization of cultural memory, and with which cultural memory carriers was this narrative created and transmitted?

In the context of research questions, I have planned to discuss necessarily the transformation of cultural and political memory in Turkey after 15 July 2016, its relations with cultural and social dynamics and its reflections on the reconstruction of cultural memory processes in the light of academic literature on this subject. My main argument is, since 15 July 2016, when it was imagined as a founding moment/event of a new national memory, the government, which has been acting with the claim of having a founding memory, has tried to reconstruct and transform the cultural memory by the instrumentalization of narratives and using some important cultural mnemotechnics which are defined the techniques can include the use of memorialization tools such as mnemonic devices, repetition, visualization, and association, among others. The study of mnemotechnics is particularly concerned with how these techniques are used in various cultural and social contexts to shape individual and collective memory, identity, and historical narratives. Assmann defined this notion as "that is, the storage, retrieval, and communication of meaning. These mnemotechnics guarantee continuity and identity, the latter clearly being a product of memory" (2011, p. 72). Through this mnemotechnics, this date has been transformed into a memory figure for the memory regime of the AKP government. In this thesis, it will be discussed the organization of cultural memory carriers within the structure of national narrative in the process of top-down memory construction. By doing so, the ways in which today's power elites instrumentalize memory in the process of "from being the determinant of a victimized identity politics to being an important component of a proud national identity" (Koyuncu, 2014, p. 9) will be examined.

Societies always have different historicities, experiences, narratives, stories and myths, which are transmitted in many ways from generation to generation. As Bellah (1985, p. 153) asserts:

> *Communities, in the sense we are using the term, have a history – in an important sense they are constituted by their past – and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a "community of memory," one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget its past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative.*

These narratives are building stones of collective memory. However, collective memory cannot be discussed as a solidified or static construction. It can be changed, transformed, demolished and rebuilt time and again. Also, there can be different collective memories which are socially constructed in the same or near temporal and spatial context. Some of them can be described as 'founding' narratives. In contrast, the others can be described as 'alternative' narratives, which are classified according to the hierarchical, political and social power relations of their time. Power elites or different political agents have a decision and organization mechanism, like official history about which experiences or events are recorded and remembered or which of them are erased and forgotten, like a massive memory reconstruction for legitimacy and rulership. To this end, they interpret and reconstruct the past and invent different narratives, epics and myths. In doing so, they omit and do not dwell on events that would undermine this 'glorified' history. Thus, they try to build a 'supreme, homogeneous and glorious' national identity. As a matter of fact, social disasters and pains experienced in the past and entrenched in the memory of society can also be instrumentalized in this sense. Although the state is only one of the actors of social formations, it tries to spread its ideology with different hegemonic methods and tools. In other respects, social groups whose narratives or alternative memories are 'silenced' try to recall and transmit their memories in order to maintain their existence and representation. Thus, memory transforms a political arena which performed contested memories and power conflicts. Cultural memory refers to the ways in which societies remember, objectify, preserve, and transmit their collective experiences. Functional areas of cultural memory indicate specific areas in which it operates to perform specific social functions. The act of remembering and transmitting the past may serve certain purposes, such as establishing legitimacy and power over society, consolidating social identities, maintaining power structures or ensuring the continuity of cultural practices.

Collective memory constitutes a particularly important basis for nationhood and national identity. It establishes a link between generations, which creates an image of temporal continuity and legitimates the existing sociopolitical order (Gross, 2002, p. 342). Accordingly, governments try to create and define a national identity which

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properly satisfies being a nation-state in order to provide and maintain their legitimacy and survival through myths, traditions and narratives and political instrumentalization of memory. While they are doing this, they use and reshape collective memory and historiography as very essential resources for obtaining their political and ideological interests. Mihai (2019, p. 54) states:

> *Communities socialize their members into their mnemonic traditions, enabling some collective aspirations and emotional attachments and disabling others. Officially sanctioned memory serves both as a source and a constraint on the exercise of political imagination, which never functions ex nihilo: national mythologies inevitably shape its scope and content. To understand this dynamic, the concept of the "mnemonic imagination" (Keightley and Pickering) is particularly illuminating as it captures the routine interplay between these two faculties: memories are organized into coherent narratives via the imagination, while the imagination builds on sources provided by memory to help us navigate the present and articulate visions of the future.*

In this sense, all of these notions and relations about collective memory and the construction of identity should be read as crucial topics of political and social sciences. Even though they do not have clear-cut definitions, I think that discussing these concepts through today's examples is crucial to understanding the socio-political dimensions and contemporary world and relations.

In Turkey, we can observe many different narratives and collective memories intersecting, dividing and conflicting from time to time. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the proclamation of the republic after the War of Independence, the need and process of constructing a new national identity emerged (Durgun, 2020; Kadıoğlu, 1996; Özdemir & Özkan, 2020). In this manner, over the following decades, Kemalism, as the founding ideology of the republic, continued its dominance (Albayrak, 2010; Gümüş, 2010). The understanding of nation according to Kemalist ideology has moved towards a 'Turkishness' that develops on the axis of common language, culture and history, and it was defined as territorial borders (Parlak, 2005). This process supported some important reconstruction processes of collective memory by the hand of the state, such as the establishment of the Turkish Historical Society and Turkish Language Society and the formation of curriculums or national days, rites and ceremonies. These institutions and practices helped to reinforce the state's

preferred narratives about the national identity, history, and culture, and to create a shared understanding of the past that serves the interests of the ruling elite and strength its definition of nation. Thus, the Kemalist founding narrative of the Republic of Turkey is shaped by the understanding of civic nationalism (Smith, 2005). Until the AKP government, any government, despite various interventions caused some changes in this narrative - for example, Islam's gaining importance in defining Turkishness over time with the rise of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis (Copeaux, 2016) - was based on this narrative without any fundamental change. However, with the AKP government, we are witnessing steps towards constructing a new founding narrative and national identity which is rooted in the Ottoman past, which was called as Neo-Ottomanism and has been discussed since the 1990s (Çalış, 2015). And while their power elites develop their policies, they generally use some specific historical references, which are usually about the Ottoman past, in order to redefine and reconstruct a new national identity in favour of collective memory (Tokdoğan, 2018). Thus, I would like to analyse the reconstruction of collective memory and its cultural memory carriers to understand today's politics of memory in Turkey because I think that it will be an important stage for illuminating today's socio-political webs of meanings. Especially after the July 15th Coup Attempt and its mythicizing by the government, many considerable steps have been taken in terms of reshaping the collective memory, rebuilding a new national identity and ensuring cultural hegemony like memorialization practices, formation of curriculums and reflections on popular culture. In the context of the politics of memory, which can be considered an arena for hegemony and power, we can say that there are various conflicts between the dominant official history and alternative histories/collective memories in Turkey. The most important struggle for cultural power/ hegemony is observed between the founder narrative of Kemalist ideology and the AKP government. AKP has been trying to establish a counter-memory and then a founding narrative since the years they were in power (Çınar, 2020). As we can follow this conflict through various areas like transforming education curricula and historical figures, places of memory or annals, we also could observe and study this important change and memory reconstruction by looking at the cultural figures of memory.

In this thesis, I would like to discuss some of these mnemonic devices and the "mobilization of cultural memory in the sense of limitic or integrative upgrading" (Assmann, 2011, p. 141) by the government in the context of politics of memory and its relations with the construction of a new founding narrative in Turkey based on the period after 2016. According to the argument defended by this thesis, since 15 July 2016, when it was imagined as a founding moment/event of a new nation, the government, which has been acting with the claim of having a founding memory, began to make an extraordinary effort to embody this narrative and make it permanent. As we know, from the 2002 Turkish general elections to the present, with the unconditional leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the AKP declares that its target is not a "continuation project." Its target is a new country in which the "old" has been eliminated and which claims to be a total change: "New Turkey." Argumentatively, this "New Turkey" ideal was embraced by large sections of society. This process is also a period in which the founding narrative is replaced by a new one achieved by interfering with the collective memory construct. What is meant by the 'New Turkey' discourse is that it points to a transformation not only in the political but also in the social and cultural dimensions as a means of generating consent. At this point, it is necessary to refer to the Gramscian concept of cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971), which will be mentioned frequently in the study. What it indicates with this concept is that the ruling classes create a system based on consent by using various tools such as the system of education, mass media, or religious institutions in order to maintain their superiority over the other classes that constitute the society. In his theory, ideology functions as a tool of oppression and legitimacy used to impose the ideology of the ruling class on society. Declaring its sovereignty, even by force, is not sufficient to establish a class's hegemony at the mass level. In addition to sovereignty, ideology is an area where hegemony is established by consent. Because all governments need social and cultural instruments in order to establish and consolidate their ideology and legitimacy. As Çetin quotes from Berger and Luckmann (1967, p. 94), ideology has functions such as establishing a total system of integrated thoughts, which is one of the most important functions of political power, validating the actions of political power, defining life and showing this defined life to individuals as justified (2001, p. 202). Stuart Hall, who examines the concept of ideology from the perspective of

Gramscian cultural theory and media studies and is known for his studies on the functionality of the media in terms of cultural hegemony, underlines the relationship between discourse and ideology (Purvis & Hunt, 1993). He defines ideology as the mental frameworks the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works (Hall, 1983, p. 64). In his theory, ideology is a field of struggle and negotiation in which different actors coexist with their own webs of meaning. Also, this concept is very important in order to understand the socio-historical dynamics of the AKP's hegemonic struggle with the Kemalist memory regime. The victimization narrative (Yaren & Saraçoğlu & Hazır, 2021) is one of the important traits of the AKP's mindset, which is defended by conservative thinkers and opinion leaders. One of the founding narratives of political Islam's group identity claims that Islamists have been suffering in all spheres of life since the hegemony of a dominant Kemalist, secular, and Westernist ideology was established (Yaren et al., 2021, p. 418). Thus, the AKP government has increased their investments, especially in the last 5-6 years, which consist of projects where the expectation is high for the compensation of an area where the government does not see itself as competent enough, in order to build the cultural hegemony that they say they have never been able to establish yet. Although this discussion does not constitute the main axis of this study, it is an essential issue to be mentioned in order to make sense of the memory regime and motivations that the government endeavour to reconstruct.

In this study, I examine the construction of a new founding narrative through the transformation of collective memory in Turkey after 15 July 2016. I attempt to analyse its relations with cultural and social dynamics and its reflections on the reconstruction of cultural and political memory processes in the light of academic literature. The theoretical framework of this study is Halbwachs' conceptualization of collective memory, which deals with memory from a social constructivist perspective. However, for this thesis, which deals with the politicization and top-down construction of memory, I will focus on the sub-concepts of cultural memory and political memory are specifically focused on rather than collective memory. Also, I attempt a detailed

examination of relations between collective memory, identity, nation-state and recent history.

This thesis consists of three main chapters. Chapter II consists of the conceptual framework and theoretical discussion, and the Chapter III and IV are the analysis chapters that discuss the issue through the selected sample in the context of the research questions and existing literature.

In Chapter II, which is named "Conceptualization of 'Making' Memory", after presenting a conceptual framework of the collective memory; Maurice Halbwachs's definition of collective memory, which is a fundamental resource in memory studies, is explained on the axis of the concept of social framework. Also, the notion's relations with history, identity and power are examined. Cultural memory and cultural transmission ways of memory and also, the concept of memory figures, which constitutes the main conceptual framework of the study, will be clarified. Finally, the politics of memory and the concept of political memory are also discussed in the context of power relations and the top-down construction of memory by referring to the literature of theorists who have studied in this field.

In Chapter III, "The July 15th: The Memory Figure of AKP's Memory Regime", I will analyze the reconstruction process of July 15 as a memory figure of the AKP government. Firstly, I will present a description of the case with social and historical dimensions. Then, I will introduce a brief socio-historical analysis of the narrative of July 15 and a formative/discursive analysis of New Turkey's memory regime. In this chapter, I will also mention the memorialization practices and cultural memory carriers of this narrative before focusing my empirical subject.

Finally, in Chapter IV, which is named "Objectification of Cultural Memory: The Example of the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum" based on the definition of figures of memory, I will discuss the features that make the July 15th the most significant memory figure of AKP's memory regime through the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum. It is one of the very critical symbolic carriers of the cultural memory which

is narrativized, organized and concreted by the political power. In this chapter, I will interpret the reconstructed, recalled, revised and invented features of the July 15th narrativization through the findings which are acquired from the field research.

Before moving on to the next chapter, in the next section, I would like to refer to the approaches and methods I used in order to discuss the arguments of the thesis and to present an analytical study within the scope of research questions.

1.1. Methodology

The main arguments and research questions of the thesis aim to contribute to the knowledge by having a closer gaze and developing a deeper insight into the relationship between politics and cultural memory by evaluating a recent and multi-directional case: the narrativization and symbolically objectification of the July 15th through the cultural memory carriers. In this thesis, based on the definition of figures of memory, I will discuss the features that make the July 15th a memory figure through various dimensions. At this point, I adopted the depth hermeneutics approach developed by John B. Thompson in order to outline a methodological framework for the study of the meaningful constitution and social contextualization of symbolic forms (1990, pp. 278-279). To put it in his own words:

> *the depth-hermeneutical approach can be fruitfully adapted for the purposes of analysing cultural phenomena, understood as socially contextualized symbolic forms. This approach enables the analyst to do justice, in principle, to the dual character of cultural phenomena: that is, to the fact that these phenomena are symbolic constructs which are meaningful for the individuals who produce and receive them as well as for the analyst; and to the fact that these phenomena are always embedded in social-historical contexts which are structured in various ways. Depth hermeneutics, as I develop it, is a methodological framework which enables one to grasp, in a systematic and non-reductive way, the meaningful constitution and social contextualization of symbolic forms (Thompson, 1991, p. 395).*

There are three principal phases of the depth-hermeneutical approach. These are social-historical analysis, formal or discursive analysis and interpretation/re-interpretation. The first one is concerned with the social and historical conditions of the production, circulation and reception of the symbolic forms, and this phase is

essential because all of the symbolic forms are reconstructed with the aid of empirical, observational and documentary methods within specific social-historical conditions (Thompson, 1991, p. 22). Precisely for this reason, this phase is crucial to present the socio-historical context of the issue in this study, which deals with the politics of memory in Turkey and the political memory that AKP has attempted to construct from the top-down using various mnemonic devices.

Thompson (1991) defines formal or discursive analysis, the second phase of the depth-hermeneutical approach, as follows:

> *To undertake formal or discursive analysis is to study symbolic forms as complex symbolic constructions which display an articulated structure. This phase is essential because symbolic forms are contextualized social phenomena and something more: they are symbolic constructions which, by virtue of their structural features, are able to, and claim to, represent something, signify something, say something about something (p. 22).*

In this thesis, which is about the construction, objectification and transmission of remembering by the state and researching this through cultural memory carriers, formal or discursive analysis is essential in order to look at what the symbolically encoded meaning expresses for both the producer, the receiver and the researcher.

Finally, the last phase, which is based on the results of socio-historical and formal or discursive analysis, the interpretation/re-interpretation, which Thompson defines as the creative explication of what is said or represented by a symbolic form; it is concerned with the creative construction of possible meaning (1991, p. 22). Taking into account all of these, depth hermeneutics is quite a convenient methodological framework for the analysis of cultural memory carriers and their reconstruction processes ideologically. Therefore, the approach of depth hermeneutics is appropriate for this thesis, which focuses on the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum as a symbolic form of the constructed narrative, to understand where such a multidimensional issue locates within the socio-historical context, to comprehend the formal/discursive structure of this narrative, and to provide an interpretation of the issue in light of all these dynamics.

Creating a representation of the past in the present makes a difference between experiencing a past event and remembering it in a representative way. How the past is remembered, interpreted, reconstructed and transferred should be considered as an effort to reconstruct it in the present by objectifying it with figures of memory. The AKP government has tried to embody the memory of the July 15th by constructing and instrumentalizing many different cultural memory carriers. The changes in the names of places, the opening of museums concerning this experience, the July 15th narratives that entered the history books with the change of the curriculum, monuments, commemorations, its reflections on popular culture... This ever-lengthening list consists of various materials that can set an example for the cultural memory carriers of the July 15th and can be examined in studies on this. However, the "Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum", located in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, and even in front of the new Presidential Complex in Beştepe, has been determined as the object of a comprehensive evaluation for this study by using purposive non-random sampling method, with all the symbolic meanings and mnemonic tools it contains. The features that define the memory figures - these features are a concrete relationship to time and place, a concrete relationship to a group, and an independent capacity for reconstruction (Assmann, 2011) - can be analysed through this symbolic cultural formation which reconstructs, objectifies and mobilizes the semantic world of the AKP's memory regime and 'New Turkey' discourse. Because as Benedict Anderson said, "For museums, and the museumising imagination, are both profoundly political" (2006, p. 382). In this context, I will analyse how the museum represents the past, the way it constructs a narrative of memory, the symbols and images used in its exhibits, and how it relates to the collective cultural memory of its visitors. Concordantly, I conducted qualitative fieldwork, which contains research methods such as participant observation, discourse, document and visual analysis according to my sampling in order to data collection and analysis.

This thesis which examines the political instrumentalization of the July 15th coup attempt and its cultural memory carriers by conducting qualitative field research in Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum using research methods such as participant observation, discourse, and visual and document analysis, has some limitations that

should be taken into consideration. First of all, the findings of the research may not be representative of the larger sample or context beyond the museum itself. The museum is a specific site and may not fully capture the diverse perspectives, interpretations and experiences of the broader population regarding the July 15th coup attempt narrative. Although this study aims to analyse the top-down memory reconstruction carried out by the government, it contains various limitations and deficiencies in the sociological and intersubjective dimensions of the analysis. This study can be taken as a starting point for future studies that will be structured through questions such as how the national myth-making and founding narrative built on the July 15th finds a response in society, and how the receiver perceives the cultural memory carriers and practices which are constructed and organized by the AKP government through this narrative. Secondly, there may be limitations to the access and availability of information and materials within the museum, which could restrict the ability of the researcher to fully examine and analyse the content of the museum materials, like touring the museum with a guide and stop-offs. Thirdly, the study provides a detailed analysis of only one of the many cultural memory carriers that the government has constructed. However, this singular analysis may limit understanding of the symbolic meanings attributed to these carriers. It is important to note that a comparative study with other memory carriers constructed by the government to maintain and fix the world of meanings created through this narrative, would be progressive for evaluating and comprehending the content of the analysis. Fourth one, the content of the analysis is about a very recent past, even though it is being attempted to be institutionalized through intensive memory practices. To solidly contextualize the findings of this thesis that only examines the political instrumentalization of cultural memory carriers by the government, it will be crucial to look at the results of these efforts and to conduct longitudinal fieldwork to examine the changes and societal impacts over time. Finally, it should be noted that the conjunctural political conditions in Turkey may limit the researcher's ability to conduct field research and may impact the safety of the researcher. For example, during my fieldwork, while stopping to take photos of the changing street names along the way to the museum, I remembered the experiences of documentary filmmaker Sibel Tekin, who was arrested on absurd charges of "planning a terrorist attack" because she had filmed footage for her documentary some time ago.

In the next chapter, the conceptual framework and theoretical background of the thesis will be presented. Before proceeding to the analysis part, the memory literature will be discussed, and the definition of memory figures, which form the main axis of this thesis, will be defined.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF "MAKING" A MEMORY

2.1. An Overview of the Concept of Collective Memory

Historically, memory has been dealt with through the practices of forgetting and remembering socially or individually (Neyzi, 2009, p. 1). Memory is studied by many interdependent or independent disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, sociology, history, medicine and technology. Memory studies offer a number of different models or understandings to the literature, starting from the neurological and cognitive bases of remembering to the construction of society through the storage and preservation of historical memories. However, the discussion of memory in a social context took place at the beginning of the 20th century. The wars and genocides in the 20th century and the proliferation of practices to confront them have a very important effect on the increase in interest in memory (Vinitzky- Seroussi, Levy, & Burke, 2011; Traverso, 2019). Undoubtedly, the Holocaust is a key event in increasing this interest. Confronting the past and the construction of collective memory, the possibility of witnessing, and discussions on "post-memory" in the post-Holocaust period created a turning point in the history of Europe. State violence, massacres, genocides and especially migrations with the rising identity struggles after the 1980s brought along the tendency towards remembering and preserving memories and social values. In response to the need to protect the past and the bond established with it in the face of the incredible speed of modernity, the concept of collective memory, which was introduced by Halbwachs, and memory studies have begun to be examined and gained importance in various academic circles. Thus, it has become a well-defined, functional concept, frequently explored in social sciences such as history, sociology and political science.

Also, practical and theoretical discussions about memory are shaped by the influence of tools such as technology brought by modernity. In today's world, where archiving and storage possibilities are highly diversified, the meaning of witnessing is changing, and the way collective memory is formed is also transforming. However, in contradiction with the spread of memory culture, the speed and change caused by technological developments and modernity, along with the constant demolition and reconstruction of spaces, have led to the formation of a kind of forgetting culture, which Connerton (2014a, pp. 11-15) calls cultural amnesia. Therefore, the issue of memory should be discussed and dealt with not only in relation to remembering but also to forgetting. Because, just like in Benjamin's *The Storyteller* (2018, p. 87), our age is the age of generations that have lost their connections with the past among the ruins, and the transmission of experience has decreased considerably.

What is remembered is not what has been lived but what is left of what has been lived, which leaves traces and continues to have an effect. As Boyarin (1995) clarifies, "memory is neither something preexistent and dormant in the past nor a projection from the present, but a potential for creative collaboration between present consciousness and the experience or expression of the past" (p. 22). Therefore, memory is a tool that does not tell the past but reconstructs the past and creates a new past with the reality of the present. In other words, memory's main concern is the present, not the past. Moreover, recall is not a recall of reality as it was already experienced. It is always unclear how it is remembered and to what extent what is lived is the same as what is remembered. The claim that the past is a phenomenon determined through today's conditions finds its answer in many disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology and history. What is meant by "past" here is what remains in the memory or what is recalled, or what is constructed as "past" with today's material. Because memory is to reconstruct the past in today's conditions rather than remembering it as it happened. Assmann (2011) also defines this bidirectional relation with these sentences: "Collective memory operates simultaneously in two directions: backward and forward. It not only reconstructs the past but it also organizes the experience of the present and future" (p. 28).

Therefore, it is necessary to focus on two basic actions regarding the existence of memory (remembering) and the disappearance of it (forgetting) additionally. Because forgetting and remembering are two intertwined actions that create memory, and also the relationship with the past is established through these two actions. As Douglas (1980) stated that forgetting is due to vague and piecemeal impressions, and remembering is a process of fitting them together under suitable stimulus (p. 4). Although these two concepts seem to be opposite, they are two concepts that cannot be separated from each other, and the existence of the other in the absence of one cannot be mentioned. Assmann (2011) states that remembering begins with the question of what we should forget, and he added that man's basic, natural disposition would seem to favour forgetting rather than remembering (p. 51). Remembering is the sum of what is not forgotten, and memory exists together with the acts of remembering and forgetting. In addition, in the context of the inability to answer the question independently of memory, "Who am I?" and because it is creating a social belonging, the questioning of the bond between humans and memory is carried to a psychological, sociological, cultural, historical and political point.

To sum up, memory does not just store. It structures, constructs and reconstructs what is lived and experienced and also needs to be examined in a social and political context regarding its relation with identity and belonging. There is a reciprocal relationship between collective memory and identity, which causes they can even be used with the same meanings sometimes. Boyarin (1995) says, "Insofar as consciousness, the ground of 'identity' is constituted by the sum of all impressions and imaginings retained in the brain, my hypothesis would be that identity and memory are virtually the same concept" (p. 23). Moreover, according to Bilgin (2013), memory seems to be an effective factor in identity construction on the one hand and the result of this construction on the other (p. 40). This reciprocal relationship is somewhat similar to the relationship between history and collective memory because while history shapes memory with its selected and fixed narratives, memory also provides an important source for official historiography with the increasing importance given to oral history in past decades. It is seen that studies in the field of memory, in particular in social

sciences, focus on the social and political aspects of memory. When these studies are examined, some common points are seen. The first of the common features, which is thought to be useful to be considered within the scope of this study, is that memory not only revives memories but also legitimizes the existing social order and can be reconstructed according to the needs of the moment (Özyürek, 2012). All these concepts and their relations will be discussed in the contexts mentioned here in the following chapters of the study.

2.1.1. Collective Memory and Identity

In this study, it is argued that memory is socially constructed by adhering to Halbwachs' theory because social memory can only exist together with its bearer. The construction of a collective identity is also directly related to collective memory because every collective identity construction process needs a common construction of memory, history and past. Of course, it is not possible to deal with the entire literature on the multidimensional and controversial concept of identity in this study. However, on the way to comprehending collective and cultural memory, it is necessary to explain what the concept of identity generally means on a social and cultural basis. Assmann (2011) summarizes the importance of the notion very clearly:

> *Both aspects of the 'I' identity are determined sociogenically and culturally, and both processes – individuation and socialization – follow culturally prescribed paths. They arise from a consciousness that is formed and determined by the language, ideas, norms, and values of a particular time and culture. Thus, in the sense of the first thesis, society is not a powerful opponent for the individual; instead it is a constitutive element of the self. Society is not a dimension mightier than the individual, but represents a constituent element of the self. Identity, including that of the 'I', is always a social construct, and as such it is always cultural. (p. 113)*

In this process, fictional elements of common belonging and identity are built and interlocked by way of collective memory, and this provides imagination and definition of a social group functionally. Group identity, created through collective memory, also has the function of legitimizing the existence and actions of a group today with reference to the past. Renan is one of the first nationalism and nation-state theoreticians

and historian to emphasize the importance of the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, and memory on the construction of a collective identity. In his book "What is Nation?" which is one of the first and most important sources of the literature on this subject, Renan (2018) defines the nation by emphasizing the relationship between national identity and common history with the following sentences:

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things that, in truth, are but one constitute this soul, this spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. Gentlemen, man cannot be improvised. The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of efforts, sacrifices, and devotion. The cult of ancestors is the most legitimate of all; our ancestors have made us who we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (I mean the genuine kind), this is the capital stock upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past, a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more, these are the essential preconditions for being a people. (p. 261)

Assmann (2011) underlines,

Collective memory is dependent on its bearers, and it cannot be passed on arbitrarily. Whoever shares it thereby demonstrates his membership in the group, and so it is not only bound to time and place but also to a specific identity. In other words, it is related exclusively to the standpoint of one real and living community. (p. 25)

Group belonging is defined through similarities and differences. The sense of belonging increases as the similarities increase. These similarities and differences reveal the distinction between "us" and "other." A person may belong to more than one group, such as religion, ethnicity, or class, but due to the necessity of time and the social situation and conditions of the person, one of these identities may be more dominant. Social identity is highly related to group belonging, which is shaped by a shared network of symbolic meanings and collective memory. On the one hand, memory figures such as myths, memories, traditions, ceremonies and commemorations, on the other hand, many elements that include daily life practices such as language, eating and clothing habits are important elements of this symbolic webs of meaning. The emphasis on the common past also plays an important role in

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the construction of the collective identity (Collingwood, 2007, p. 46). For this reason, in order to build a collective identity, a common past and deep-rooted historical knowledge should be reflected the group members. Also, Halbwachs defends that the sense of belonging to a group is created by collective memories through shared memories, and these memories are transmitted from one generation to the next through memory (Tunçel, 2017, p. 21). Therefore, it would not be wrong to say collective memory is the founder of social identity.

The main reason why identity and memory have such an intricate relationship is that both are constructed within the socialization process. An individual born into a community gains sociality within the symbols, definitions and moral attitudes that belong to that community, and identity is built in this interaction process. According to the social constructionist approach, which will be addressed in the identity discussion in this study, no identity has an essential reality independent of socialization processes, all identities are products of construction. Cerulo (1997) says:

> *(...) the social constructionist approach to identity rejects any category that sets forward essential or core features as the unique property of a collective's members. From this perspective, every collective becomes a social artifact - an entity molded, refabricated, and mobilized in accord with reigning cultural scripts and centers of power. (p. 387)*

It is this relationship between memory and identity, which constitutes the most significant part of the issue in terms of political science, and one of the most important reasons why even governments intervene in collective memory and turn it into a political arena. Just like collective memory, identity -if we consider these two phenomena as two separate concepts- creates an area that is open to intervention and where political struggles are permanent, as the most important means of establishing legitimacy and continuity in the hands of governments. Among the different characteristics of the individuals in the group, which ones will be taken as a reference for the society, that is, which ones will be glorified and which ones will be ignored, belong to the power elites who have the power to intervene the agents of socialization. Those who have this power reconstruct the collective memory with the features they want to be referenced and build a collective identity that includes these qualities. This

issue is also very essential in terms of making sense of the social changes experienced. Because the transformation of tradition, the reconstruction of collective memory and the past in a way to legitimize the new, and the abolition of the old will be on the meaningful ground when discussed over this starting point. As Hobsbawm indicates, most of the traditions that are tried to create an image that they have a deep-rooted history, are actually traditions invented at a date that can be described as very recent, also stated that since these invented traditions gain visibility with their emphasis on the past, they try to create an image of continuity by integrating themselves into the group's past (2006, pp. 1-17). According to Hobsbawm, the nation is formed through certain historical narratives and the invention of tradition. Substituting the old tradition by inventing new traditions that will hold a nation together, in a sense, means destroying the existing memory and replacing it with a new one. The need for institutionalized traditions brings with it norms which include repetition and constancy adapted to new situations in order to fill in and define the nation. Thanks to this constancy and repetition, formality and routine are ensured, and the 'new' traditions that have been invented begin to be accepted and adopted by large sections of society (Hobsbawm & Rander, 2006, pp. 3-5). Thus symbols, rituals, monuments, national anthems and national ceremonies are shaped for the construction of this new tradition and fall within the definition of the invented tradition. The education system and curriculums which are the most critical tool to ensure the continuous transmission of intergenerational tradition are also rearranged according to the official historical narrative, which reinforces the unity of the society and the sense of belonging to the community. Therefore, the nation shaped its own citizens. The construction of the nation as an imagined community (Anderson, 2006) is achieved by the invention of traditions. With the mass production of public monuments, various figures of national heroism, stamps and coins containing representations of the nation, various national competitions, all these and other intangible and concrete inventions of tradition, an official content of the nation is created (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2006, p. 348). And this national memory is shared among people who have never seen or heard of each other but still consider themselves to have a common history (Gillis, 1994, p. 7). Llobera also states that the needs of the present determine which traditions are remembered and which are forgotten, and which are modified (1995, p. 37). In the light of all this literature, it can

be said that collective memory can be instrumentalized in the hands of selective and decision-making political authorities to create and maintain a group identity which will be the bearer of its domination. The methods and possibilities of this instrumentalization would like to be discussed in the following sections as one of the focal points of the thesis.

In sum, it is possible to talk about communities that read the same past differently and, therefore, have different collective memories and identities, and social changes and rebuilding social identities are closely related to reconstructing the past to respond to the needs of the present.

2.1.2. Collective Memory and History

Hegel (2001, p. 76) speaks of two complementary dimensions of history: events (*res gestae*) and narratives (*historia rerum gestarum*). In other words, these two dimensions express that the difference between what it actually is and what it is told. For him, narratives, that is, memory in fact, are the internal basis of history. Therefore, what really happens is always ambiguous and unknowable.

Official history has determined the events and narratives that should or should not be remembered from the past in the construction of collective identity, as a result of a political choice. It is an important point that what is remembered about the fictional dimension of memory is remembered by whom and in what way (Tunçel, 2017, p. 22). Like Traverso (2019) says that memory, the collective representations of the past as it is formed in the present, construct social identities by incorporating them into a historical continuity and giving them a meaning, that is, a content and method.

Halbwachs makes the distinction between history and collective memory on the basis of uniqueness and universality. In his article which is named *Collective Memory Before and After Halbwachs,* Russell (2006) discusses this issue quite clearly:

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Halbwachs makes a distinction between knowing a list of dates, which he would call history or abstract knowledge of the past, and reconstruction of past lived experience, which he would call memory. According to this description, collective memory is intimately tied to a particular group, since it is the product of the group's own past experiences. Halbwachs's focus on past lived experience and his description of collective memory as part of a group's identity are interrelated because personal identity is closely tied to this particular kind of memory. According to Halbwachs, a group becomes conscious of its identity through an awareness of its own past (...) (p. 797)

As is also understood from the quote above, Halbwachs makes sharp distinctions that exist between history and memory. While memory is a dynamic, changeable and constantly reconstructed phenomenon, history is static, fixed and completed. Moreover, while history has a fragmented and artificial continuum of events that are mostly selected to be instrumentalized by the sovereign, memory has a living and natural continuum of the experiences of the communities. He also highlights that history can be represented as the universal memory of the human species. But there is no universal memory. Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time (Halbwachs, 2007, p. 143). Therefore, in Halbwachs' theory, collective memory is not something fixed in the past, but a phenomenon that continues in the present, shapes the present and is shaped with the present. For Halbwachs, history begins where tradition ends, and collective memory disintegrates. However, memory is not only constantly disintegrating and disappearing but is constantly being created and elaborated (Boyarin, 1995, p. 22). This reconstructability and objectification matter will be reconsidered together with cultural memory and memory figures discussion.

For Pierre Nora (2022), history and memory are two opposite concepts and they are absolutely separated from each other. While memory is a living phenomenon open to manipulation, in a constant transformation and formed by the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, history, on the other hand, is an analytical, universal and intellectual product, and its purpose is to dissolve memory. (Nora, 2022)

The (s)elected official history gives an idea about the relationship between collective memory and power. Dominant groups intervene in collective memory in the identity

construction process. The most obvious of these interventions concerns historiography from the very beginning in the construction of nations. History, written by manipulating around determined events and periods, tries to get a place in the memory of nations. However, it is quite critical who wrote and preserved the history. Because history is quite open to manipulation by the sovereign. This politicizes memory in all its aspects, starting with which events are remembered and which are forgotten, to the nomenclature used and the forms of commemoration. National states have likewise used history and historiography to legitimize their nationalist ideologies and to construct a national, official and constitutive narrative with heroes, commemorations and many other memory figures (Roudometof, 2002, pp. 8-10). The history, which was written in parallel with the remembering policies of the state in the nation-state process, is mostly under the control of the ideological apparatus of the state and has an imposing nature. Paul Ricoeur (2012), emphasizing that memory manipulation is a method used not only by totalitarian regimes but also by every "glory-crazy" government, states that the imposed history is permitted, official, publicly learned and celebrated history. As a taught collective memory, this memory is intertwined with "remembering the sections in the common history that are considered as the events that constitute the common identity" (pp. 104-105). Therefore, in this form, collective memory provides the formation of identity functionally as discussed in the collective memory and identity part. Nation states want to create a singular and homogeneous national identity by referring to common past and experiences. Common identities such as religion, race or ethnicity are taken as the reference point and the definition is made over them.

According to Dellaloğlu (2012), history is the ceaseless construction of the past and the mean of touching the past of the present (p. 93). In other words, history is a narrative of the past that is rewritten for today's order, in today's conditions, by breaking away from the lived past. Hobsbawm (1997) remarked in these sentences:

> *History is the raw material for nationalist or ethnic or fundamentalist ideologies…The past is an essential element, perhaps the essential element… If there is no suitable past, it can always be invented. Indeed, in the nature of things there is usually no entirely suitable past, because the phenomenon these ideologies claim to justify is not ancient or eternal but historically novel… The*

past legitimizes. The past gives a more glorious background to a present that doesn't have much to celebrate. (p. 5)

To conclude, this nurturing, as well as the conflicting relationship between collective memory and history, has led to and continues to be the cause of much divergence and development. In time, the claim of history to objectivity and universality has been broken, especially after the period called the "memory boom" (Berliner, 2005), which emerged in the twentieth century, history has started to give more space to the concept of oral history, counter, alternative narratives, and witnessing. As a matter of fact, for this study, which examines a memory figure that is the carrier of a cultural memory that is tried to be constructed from top to bottom, it is essential to examine this sensitive, tensionally relationship between history and memory.

2.1.3. Collective Memory and Power

"The sacralization of the past is not the best possible way of making it live in the present. Nowadays we need something besides pious images. When commemoration freezes into permanent forms that can not be changed without cries of sacrilege, we can be certain that it serves the particular interests of its defenders and not their moral edification."
(Todorov, 2001, p. 21)

Hirsch (1995) emphasizes that the control of memory is a form of power and "persons in a position to manipulate memory, and with it the valued symbols of a society or group hold... political power" (p. 23). Also, as Katharyne Mitchell (2003) stated that memory is bound up with power, and both memory, and its corollary, forgetting, are hegemonically produced and maintained, never seamlessly or completely, but formidably and powerfully nonetheless (p. 443). Such a memory is based on selection and exclusion, neatly separating useful from not useful and relevant from irrelevant memories. Hence a collective memory is necessarily a mediated memory. It is backed up by material media, symbols, and practices which have to be grafted into the hearts and minds of individuals. The extent to which they take hold there depends on the efficiency of the political pedagogy on the one hand and the level of patriotic or ethnic fervor on the other (Assmann, 2008, p. 55).

The intervention and constructability of the memory area for power attract it to the field of politics, and in this respect, it is a matter of particular interest to those who govern. Traverso (2019) says since memory and history are not separated by insurmountable barriers and are constantly influencing each other, a privileged relationship arises between "strong" memories and the writing of history. The stronger the memory is in terms of public and institutional recognition, the more the past that it bears is deemed suitable to be explored and included in history (p. 69). The most important point that makes memory ideological is that it is both the target of the governments and that it includes remembering and forgetting, which makes it a target. Forgetting is considered a political choice, as well as remembering. In order to forget, remembering comes first. Jan Assmann (2011) states, "Dogma has to work out and fix the framework of possible interpretations that must adapt memories to fit in with the prevailing doctrine" (p. 49). The "official history" is the area where the boundaries of the collective memory are drawn, where it is determined what will be remembered and what will be forgotten. Official history, which constructs a common past, identity and value system for group members, also creates official memory which is reshaped to meet the needs of today. Said (2000) explains this situation as "the processes of memory are frequently, if not always, manipulated and intervened in for sometimes urgent purposes in the present" (p. 179).

In terms of this study, the relationship between collective memory and power is very important because a reading about today's Turkey will be made through the issue of ensuring the legitimacy of the powers by instrumentalizing the cultural memory, which is the main concern of the study.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis of this thesis relies on Halbwachs's conception of "collective memory", and based on this conception, it consists of "cultural memory" and "political memory", which are conceptualized by Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann. Later in this chapter, this entire set of concepts will be discussed based on the literature. The definition of collective memory includes cultural and political memory as a framework

concept. However, as will be discussed in the following parts, cultural memory and political memory are more convenient tools for debating the issue of top-down memory reconstruction, the authoritative memory-makers' effort to create a memory regime, and the performance of symbolization and objectification of its founding narrative "in the sense of a past, whose memory they used to establish a sense of continuity, legitimacy, authority and self-confidence" (Assmann, 2011, p. 19). In this context, the conceptualization of figures of memory, which is the analytical framework of the thesis, will be particularly emphasized.

2.2.1. Halbwachsian Collective Memory: Contributions and Criticisms

The first use of memory with its social dimension as a modern theory was by Maurice Halbwachs in his book "Social Frameworks of Memory", published in 1925 (Olick & Robbins, 1998, pp. 106-108). Being a student of Henri Louis Bergson, who made memory the center of his philosophy, and of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who examined the concept of collective consciousness in his works, Halbwachs carried out studies that dealt with memory as a social phenomenon and pioneered studies in this field (Assmann, 2011, p. 21). Although the dichotomy of the individuality and sociality of memory, which is discussed from time to time in conflict, he states that even individual memory is social in nature and that it is social conditions and frameworks that constitute memory (Halbwachs, 2019). According to him, "No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 43). What is meant by this sentence is that it is possible for individuals to remember only with their social frameworks, so even the individual experiences about the past cannot be independent from the collective experience of the group. Halbwachs points out that the memories of individuals acquire a place in their memories through the help of social groups such as kinship, nation, religion or class. All the moral and material webs of the meaning of the society to which the individual belongs or is forced to belong include the presentation of individual memory construction. Additionally, Halbwachs emphasizes the existence of different collective memories; each group has its own collective memory, which is constructed over a specific period of time depending on the nature

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of the group (Llobera, 1995, p. 37). Consequently, collective memory is not a homogenous and static phenomenon. It has a rather more fragmented and dynamic structure, so there is no single collective memory. There may be more than one witness and narrative about the same experience. According to him, people normally acquire their memories in society, and also they recall, recognize and localize their memories in society again (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38). Connerton also supports this idea and states that every memory probe, however personal, relates to its every recollection, even their own recollection of records they have witnessed, even their next and previous memories that remain unspoken, a set that many others have as well; it happens with things like people, places, dates, terms, language structure; that is, it takes place with all the material and moral lives of the societies they are a part of or include (2014b, p. 65-66). This is a matter of not only remembering but also forgetting. What is remembered and what is forgotten is about what is inside and outside of social frameworks, and they are determined by social remembering and forgetting rules and practices. As Assmann (2011) says,

> *The advantage of this theory lies in the fact that it simultaneously explains both remembering and forgetting. If persons – and societies – are only able to remember what can be reconstructed as a past within the referential framework of their own present, then they will forget things that no longer have such a referential framework. (pp. 22-23)*

Together with this distinction, a sense of belonging to a group which is very critical in terms of understanding the relationship between collective memory and identity notions develops over common experiences and memories.

Afterwards, various contributions and criticisms have been made by other theoreticians who work in the fields of history and culture about the Halbwachsian collective memory definition. The first and the most important of these is Pierre Nora's (2022) places of memory (*lieux de memoire*) definition in terms of revealing the relationship between national-official historiography and collective memory with its spatial dimension. In his masterwork, he mentions that national memory needs memory places like museums, archives, official textbooks, memorials, symbols and rituals in order to be preserved and transmitted through the reification of memory. Thus, places of

memory contribute to nation-states in the construction of national identity and its constituent elements.

The studies of German Egyptologist Jan Assmann (2011) are illuminative in making sense of the connection between culture and memory, and demonstrating the transmission of memory not only through history but also through culture with his notion of cultural memory figures, one of the most fundamental concepts of this study. Through the dynamics of forgetting and remembering, anthropologist Paul Connerton (2014a, 2014b) has made unique contributions to the memory literature with his studies on how collective memory is shaped and transmitted in societies with modernity.

One of the most important criticisms of Halbwachs is about the deterministic oppositional relationship he established between collective and individual memory. However, there is a more dialectical relationship between these two memories rather than an exclusionary one. When evaluated from this point of view, more efficient results can be obtained in terms of understanding how and to what extent they affect each other during and after the formation process (Misztal, 2003, p. 54). The memory studies of social scientists such as Jeffrey K. Olick (1998), Eviatar Zerubavel (1996), and Aleida Assmann (2006), who investigated the effects of individual memory, which means individual memories, narratives and personal stories on cultural and social memory, despite Halbwachs's theory which almost ignores individual memory, are very important.

Aleida Assmann (2010) prefers to replace the "collective memory" notion with three different terms such as social, political, and cultural memory. Social memory is about the past, changing from generation to generation and nonhomogeneous, as experienced and communicated within a society. It is embodied via interaction. However, political and cultural memory are mediated and need to be re-embodied with symbols and material representations such as monuments and museums in order to become a memory and supported with performative actions such as commemoration rites and ceremonies. It is like *"making"* a memory rather than *"having"* a memory (Assmann, 2010, pp. 40-44). Precisely because of this emphasis on "making memory", the memory operationalized in this study through these two concepts as political and

cultural memory, which are conceptualized based on the Halbwachsian theory of collective memory.

Another criticism developed accordingly for Halbwachsian theory is related to his viewpoint of identity and collective memory relation (Megill, 1998). In his theory, collective identity is a fixed and stable structure. However, collective identity should be evaluated as a dynamic structure, just like the collective memory. It could change and be reconstructed over time. Along with all these approaches that developed the theory, the subject of oral history and witnessing gained importance and importance was given to these narratives in the memory literature.

Also, Boyarin (1995) criticizes Halbwachs because of his failure to historicize memory and adds that Halbwachs' analysis fails to include any awareness that the very notion of 'collective memory' must have a significant history (p. 24).

In short, at a time when memory was considered an individual phenomenon with scientific objectivity by various positive sciences, Halbwachs drew attention to the social side of memory and said that not only a group or family but also a nation or ethnic group had a memory. Halbwachs' theory is very important in that it emphasizes that memory cannot be discussed independently of social structures such as history, society and culture, and therefore, the remembering practices of communities and identity are inseparable. With the contributions and criticisms directed to him, the memory concept has become a very critical and interdisciplinary field for social sciences. One of the most important of these contributions is the conceptualization of cultural memory. Cultural memory covers the other three of the four external dimensions of (collective) memory (mimetic memory, the memory of things and communicative memory), and is considered 'the handing down of meaning' (Assmann, 2011, pp. 5-6), forms the basis of the conceptual framework of this study, and it will be addressed extendedly in the next parts of the study.

2.2.2. Cultural Memory: Objectification of Memory

Jan Assmann brought the definition of cultural memory to the by addressing Halbwachs' definition of collective memory with its cultural dimension and expanding it. He, like Halbwachs, defended that the contents of memory, the ways in which they are organized, and the length of time they last are for the most part not a matter of internal storage or control but of the external conditions imposed by society and cultural contexts (Assmann, 2011, p. 5). Also, according to him, "even the most personal collections only come about through communication and social interaction" (Assmann, 2011, p. 22). Schudson (1995) also states:

> (...) even where memories are located idiosyncratically in individual minds, they remain social and cultural in that (a) they operate through the supra-individual cultural construction of language; (b) they generally come into play in response to social stimulation, rehearsal, or social cues - the act of remembering is itself interactive, prompted by cultural artifacts and social cues, employed for social purposes, and even enacted by cooperative activity, and (c) there are socially structured patterns of recall. (p. 347)

For this study, which will focus on the reconstructable carrier figures of memory, it would be more appropriate to focus on the concept of cultural memory rather than collective memory. Because "in order to encompass functional concepts such as tradition forming, past reference, and political identity or imagination, we need the cultural memory term" (Assmann, 2011, p. 9). The construction, circulation and transformation of cultural meaning can be realized institutionally and artificially. "Cultural memory, then, focuses on fixed points in the past, but again it is unable to preserve the past as it was. This tends to be condensed into symbolic figures to which memory attaches itself" (Assmann, 2011, p. 37). Cultural memory is based on objectification, in which meaning is embedded in strict rules. It is formalized through this objectification. For this purpose, figures of memory are used functionally.

In this thesis, which examines the construction of the July 15th as a memory figure, the mythical narrative about this foundational moment established by the political power will also be examined.

What counts for cultural memory is not factual but remembered history. One might even say that cultural memory transforms factual into remembered history, thus turning it into myth. Myth is foundational history that is narrated in order to illuminate the present from the standpoint of its origins. (Assmann, 2011, p. 38)

Erll and Rigney (2009) assert that cultural memory is an ongoing process of remembrance and forgetting in which individuals and groups continue to reconfigure their relationship to the past and hence reposition themselves in relation to established and emergent memory sites (p. 2). Cultural memory is not given but is constantly in flux (Bernard-Donals, 2016, p. 10). The whole process in question will be advanced by taking into account the processive nature of memory with the dialectic of remembering and forgetting and its relationship with group identity.

2.2.2.1. Organization and Transmission Ways of Cultural Memory: Figures of Memory

Cultural memory continues to exist by being transferred between generations in various mnemotechnics. In this sense, the concept of figures of memory has a very important function. Assmann (2011) explains the figures of memory as follows:

Just as thinking may be abstract, remembering is concrete. Ideas must take on a form that is imaginable before they can find their way into memory, and so we have an indissoluble merging of idea and image. 'But if a truth is to be settled in the memory of a group it needs to be presented in the concrete form of an event, of a personality, or of a locality.' (On Collective Memory, 200). On the other hand, if an event is to live on in the memory of a group, it must be enriched with the meaningfulness of a significant truth. 'As soon as each person and each historical fact has permeated this memory, it is transposed into a teaching, a notion, or a system of ideas' (On Collective Memory, 188). That which are 'memory figures' that emerge out of this interplay between concepts and experiences. These are characterized by three special features: a concrete relationship to time and place, a concrete relationship to a group, and an independent capacity for reconstruction. (pp. 23-34)

Also, he adds that cultural memory has its fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passing of time. These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional

communication (recitation, practice, observance), and all of these are 'figures of memory' (Assmann, 1995, p. 129). Monuments, flags, myths, rituals, commemorations and ceremonies, that is, each of the embodied things that serve to transfer and maintain memory, is a memory figure. These figures not only provide cultural memory transfer but also reconstruct it. Thus, they are used in order to produce, propagate and maintain cultural memory and also dominant mindset and social mores.

Referring to Hobsbawm's concept of the 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm & Rander, 2006), Traverso (2019) mentions that ritualized practices are built around a real or mythical past, aiming to strengthen the cohesion of a particular group or community, to legitimize some institutions, and to engrave some values into the bosom of the society (p. 11). Based on this definition, the concept of culture, which is abundantly discussed in this study, should also be read together with the invented tradition because culture can be understood as an "invented tradition" used and abused by social actors to achieve particular political and ideological ends (Kusno, 2003, p. 58).

Memory landscapes, commemorations, rituals and festivals are among the most important methods of constructing, transmitting and transforming cultural memory symbolically and communicatively. It is very important to conceptualize the figures of memory such as these in terms of the transfer of memory and its use today and to analyze the present through this conceptualization. This issue will be addressed again in the following parts of the study.

2.2.3. Politics of Memory

All memory is individual, unreproducible - it dies with each person. What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, that this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds. Ideologies create substantiating archives of images, representative images, which encapsulate common ideas of significance and trigger predictable thoughts, feelings (Sontag, 2003, pp. 85-86).

Reconstructing memory can be used as a political instrument by political elites and actors in order to serve their own contemporary purposes and provide cultural hegemony, and in this respect, it has a quite similar role with official historiography. One of the most important differences between collective memory and history, which is a conventional, impersonal, rational and objective discipline, is that there can be multiple, different, alternative collective memories which are constructed by different communities and societies. Even it can be said that different communities or groups with the same or very similar past experiences have quite different collective memories. In some historical situations and conditions, a conflict may occur between these different collective memories. In such cases, memory transforms a conflict area for power.

According to Mitchell (2003), there is a deep politics to memory, and each age attempts to refashion and remake memory to serve its own contemporary purposes (p. 443). Moreover, Verovsek (2016) said that politicians frequently make use of mythologized understandings of the past to mobilize memory as an instrument of politics in the present and in many cases, memory has real perlocutionary consequences, changing the way that important actors think about and react to situations in the present (pp. 529-530). This makes the politics of memory an important new area of research for political sciences. In addition, Aleida Assman (2008) explains the importance of memory for political scientists very clearly with the following sentences:

> *The top-down political memory is investigated by political scientists who discuss the role of memory on the level of ideology formation and construction of collective identities that are geared toward political action (...) political scientists examine collective units such as institutions, states and nations and ask how memories are used and abused for political action and the formation of group identities. (p. 56)*

Collective memory and the memory struggles that have developed around it have found a ground for discussion in the memory literature, especially within the framework of political science, in relation to memory politics, state violence and control mechanisms generally. As is known, there can be many different collective memories and narratives of the same experiences and historical periods and events. Some of them can be

described as 'founding' narratives while others can be described as 'alternative' narratives, which are classified according to the hierarchical political and social power relations of its time. Also, in regards to Foucault (1977), history contains both of these potentials, like "painless exercise in patriotic fervor" or becoming "countermemory". Authoritative memory-makers have a decision and organization mechanism, like official history, about which experiences or events are recorded and remembered or which of them are erased and forgotten, like a massive memory reconstruction for legitimacy and rulership. These dynamics create the 'official' political memory. Mihai (2019) defines the 'official' political memory as a crucial part of national common sense or doxa. It shapes individuals' assumptions about the boundaries of the community, historical allies and enemies, objects of national pride and hatred, and the protagonists of the community's history, for both celebratory and vilifying reasons (p. 53). Boyarin (1995) states that what we are faced with - what we are living - is the constitution of both group 'membership' and individual 'identity' out of a dynamically chosen selection of memories, and the constant reshaping, reinvention, and reinforcement of those memories as members contest and create the boundaries and links among themselves (p. 26).

To open up the issue of legitimacy a little more, whatever past knowledge is that will dominate the memory and provide its current legitimacy, memory recalls that knowledge. It serves those who dominate it. A past that would undermine the legitimacy of the present order is denied, blocked or suppressed. Legitimacy is necessary not only in areas where political facts are the subject but also in private areas to make sense of life and justify action. Memory provides legitimacy to the one who dominates it. It selects and distorts in the service of present interests (Schudson, 1995, p. 351). In his "Distortion in Collective Memory" article, Schudson (1995) declares that there are at least four important and distinguishable processes of distortion in collective memory as distanciation, instrumentalization, narrativization and conventionalization (p. 348). All these dynamics of distortion present the methods of conscious distortion of memory by power.

In brief, the politics of memory is a concept related to the way events are remembered, recorded or discarded. The role of politics is to reproduce collective memory and make memories perceived as a single fictional reality through official historiography mostly. Avcı (2019) emphasizes that the purpose of this reproduction is to create a collective structure and to further strengthen political power. First of all, what facilitates the formation of a collective structure is the "politics of memory". The politics of memory, on the other hand, draws its strength from history, from past heritage and of course, it reconstructs and presents the legacy around its own interests and political ideology (p. 112). Memories are influenced by cultural and political forces, and they are reconstructed or 'remade' according to them. In this context, the concepts of cultural and political memory will be guiding.

Memory has been examined with its dynamic structure and started to be considered as an active field of political struggle contrary to the static approach, which interprets that memory is created from the top, so more than one subject is not included. Based on the fact that the experience is not singular, it is necessary to see that there are different memories, and the subjects diversify accordingly. From such a point of view, the state is not the only actor who establishes the memory and should not be considered the only actor who completely dominates the memory with the power it has. In this context, the question of how are memories reconstructed by states becomes very critical. This reconstruction depends on the needs of the present, the balance of hegemony and power relations. Mihai (2019) asserts that political memory includes sifting through and interpreting events, practices, and actions such that the past can be read in relation to the present and the future (p. 1). Collective memory is defined as national memory or official memory when it is constructed from above by power and creates its own mechanisms during the construction of memory. The important point here, to repeat, is that the state is seen as one of the subjects that establish the memory; because the acceptance of the state, which has a hegemonic power in the memories of societies, as a subject allows the social memory to be a negotiation area. Just like socially constructed memory, official memory is not a process that is built and finished at once. Therefore, in the whole conflict and post-conflict process, both the state and other subjects continue to shape their memories according to their own approaches. In a

sense, this continuity can also allow for a political negotiation space by containing conflicts and contradictions.

As mentioned earlier that collective memory is shaped by what is remembered and forgotten. The question of what is remembered is as crucial as the question of who or which subjects construct the memory. According to Poyraz (2013), as soon as the memory is the subject of a political struggle, of course, there is no pure form of remembering. In other words, it is not possible for any memory to preserve the past as it is. On the contrary, the group reconstructs memory specific to its context in each period. In other words, it is a cultural activity rather than an individual one, as it is based on memory reconstruction (p. 67). Each subject presents a choice of what to remember and what to forget in relation to his or her political struggle. In this sense, when the relationship between memory and politics is not clearly defined, the past often becomes a phenomenon that is manipulated, sometimes ignored or fictionalized by the state. Therefore, the choice of what to remember and how to remember the past will also determine the political position.

CHAPTER 3

THE JULY 15TH: THE MEMORY FIGURE OF AKP'S MEMORY REGIME

> *"Culture is what people bear, transmit, nourish and nurture, value, etc. is a "thing." And in society, people occupy different, conflicting positions. They also make use of cultural content in their efforts to consolidate and legitimize their dominance, or to challenge social and class domination. For this reason, the cultural content of societies consists of elements that are 'read' and interpreted differently by different segments or classes, and the re-arrangement of these elements by different actors. For those at the top, cultural content is a means of strengthening their dominance and legitimizing it, while for those at the bottom, it is a means of opposing or adapting." (Özbudun, 2021, p. 19)*

In this chapter of the thesis, a socio-historical and formal/ discursive analysis of the July 15th coup attempt, and the transformation of its narrative into a memory figure will be presented. This study focuses on the transformation process of the dominant July 15th narrative into the most important memory figure of the AKP's memory regime and into the cultural memory carriers of this narrative. In this chapter, I will analyze the July 15th narrative as a "meaningful symbolic construction" (Thompson, 1990, p. 272) which is interpreted, "produced, transmitted and received in specific social and historical conditions." (Thompson, 1990, p. 281).

Memory figures are equipped with instrumental webs of meaning of the ideologies of the power elites which invented, organized and transmitted it. One of the most important strategy of creating these figures, which serve to fix and concretize the political and cultural memory, is narrativization. Thompson (1990) illustrates that a narrative, may be regarded, broadly speaking, as a discourse which recounts a sequence of events - or, as we commonly say, which 'tells a story' (p. 288). Therefore, this analysis is also included the formal/discursive analysis of the narrative structure of the July 15th. In the forthcoming parts, what happened in this date, and the social, historical and political processes and dynamics that prepared this process will be

examined. The reasons why this date was invented as the most important memory figure of the "New Turkey" memory regime of the AKP will be discussed.

3.1. Socio-Historical Analysis of Narrativization of the July 15th

Considering the case of this thesis discuss, it can be argued that there is a pragmatic and instrumental relationship between cultural memory and political powers. The myth of the Golden Ages (Smith, 1996, pp. 583-584), which reconstructs and politicizes the collective memory for building the present, creating historical backgrounds to be proud of, and putting the past as a goal to be reached again, is the main determinant of AKP's instrumental relationship with memory. After the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, the AKP government, which reinforced the legitimacy of its founding narrative - "New Turkey" - with a founding-breaking moment, has started to work intensively in order to maintain its power and legitimacy through the narrativization of the July 15th through mnemonics. Before moving on to these memorialization process and the memory bearers of the July 15th, it is necessary to present the socio-historical context of this date. (Tee, 2018; Balcı & Yavuz, 2018; Houston, 2018)

On the night connecting July 15 to July 16, people living in Turkey witnessed one of the most critical events in recent history. In the evening hours, with the news that the Bosporus Bridge was blocked by the troops, the low-flight sounds of fighter jets began to be heard in the skies of the capital city, Ankara. Due to limited information, all these unexpected and extraordinary events became clear with a statement by the Prime Minister at the time, Binali Yıldırım, on the live broadcast of NTV, stating that what happened was the possibility of an uprising by a group within the military. In the following hours, the coup statement allegedly belonging to the "Peace at Home Council" was read on state television, and it was announced that what had happened was a coup attempt.

> *The ensuing hours saw the reading of a coup statement on public television, armed struggles for the control of key government buildings, and perhaps most traumatic for Turkish democracy, the bombing of Parliament by fighter jets*

controlled by the putschists. Following President Erdoğan's call on live television, tens of thousands of citizens went out into the streets and faced the tanks and soldiers. By the end of the night, 240 of these anti-coup demonstrators would be killed and 2,191 injured. By about 6:30 am, most pro-coup soldiers had surrendered, and the coup attempt ended in decisive failure. (Altınordu, 2017, p. 140)

Hammond (2020), on the other hand, summarises the place of July 15 in the history of coups and coup attempts in Turkey with the following sentences:

Turkey is no stranger to military interventions. In 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997, officers either dissolved the government and suspended the constitution or forced the ruling government to step down (Zürcher, 2004). In 2016, however, government and military officials used private televisions channels and the Internet to forcefully denounce the coup attempt as unlawful and unauthorized. Those speeches and the media outlets that broadcast them played an important role in drawing tens of thousands of people into the streets (Ünver and Alassad, 2016). At several critical locations, fighting erupted between opponents of the coup attempt and the military units carrying out the coup. By the morning of July 16, it was clear that a coup attempt had been defeated for the first time in Turkey's history (Esen and Gümüşçü, 2017). (p. 540)

Subsequently, it was declared by the government that this coup attempt was carried out by a 'terrorist organization' called FETÖ (Fethullahist Terrorist Organization) which is led by Fethullah Gülen who is a US-based Islamic cleric. Strangely, in the previous nation-building process of the AKP government, where religious institutions were strengthened (Koyuncu, 2014), and the religion based on Sunni Islam (Menteşe, 2014) and placed the Ottoman memory at the center (Tokdoğan, 2018), the Gülen Movement is one of the movements that benefited the most from this religious structuring (Aydıntaşbaş, 2014). These two sides had been close allies up until the end of 2010, however, once the joint struggle against the Kemalist establishment had accomplished its goals, the two entities began to clash over several issues (Altınordu, 2017, p. 152). When they were allies, the Gülen Movement was becoming considerably effective in state bureaucracy and various political and social areas. As of 2013, after developments such as the closing down the private preparatory schools which are considered by the government as the sources of people, finance and organization of the Gülen Movement, and the 17-25 December corruption scandal, this movement was blamed and started to be called a 'terrorist' group by the government

and turned into an enemy and internal threat (Martin, 2020). After the failed coup attempt, the AKP government attempted to liquidate and delegitimize this movement from all fields potently, such as education, army and state bureaucracy.

On the other hand, this coup attempt was described as a kind of deception by the opposition groups. It was claimed that this coup attempt was a simulation staged by the government itself in order to ensure mass mobilization and justify the declared state of emergency and the actions taken during this period (Lusher, 2016; Coşkun, 2016, as cited in Altınordu, 2017). Here, the most important point to be emphasized for this study is the July 15th coup attempt has a much different and founding meaning for the AKP government than its struggle with the Gülen Movement.

> *Beyond the campaign against Gülen, the government also used the coup attempt to justify a set of political, legal, and economic changes that consolidated power in the Presidency (Cumhurbaşkanlığı). While the state of emergency was in effect, 34 executive decrees were issued, voters were asked to approve a constitutional amendment expanding the powers of the presidency, the country's media landscape was increasingly concentrated in the hands of progovernment ownership, and a range of opposition politicians and civil society organizations and activists were arrested, marginalized, or otherwise targeted (Baser and others 2017; Sertdemir and Özyürek 2019). Now three years after the coup attempt power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of President Erdoğan (Erensü and Alemdaroğlu 2018; Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018; Gökarıksel and Türem 2019)" (Hammond, 2020, p. 540).*

After the July 15th, the narrativization of this event by the AKP politicians intensified among the two different discursive strands such as the "will of the nation" as the foundation of the continuity of the state and the "Gülenist Parallel State Structure" in order to strength the legitimacy and justifiability of the government policy (Altınordu, 2017, p. 154). This process paved the way for accelerating the long-awaited changes in the administrative system with the declared state of emergencies and the issued delegated legislations and expedited the serious transformations like the presidential system. Considering the rhetoric of the government that announced that "Turkey has entered a new and unprecedented period of establishment" with the declaration of the State of Emergency and that they will "start to build a New Turkey" (Yanardağ, 2017, pp. 75-77), it can be said that this is a founding moment for their founding narrative.

Again, when Erdogan's statements such as "This is a gift from God" and "July 15 has been a blessing for our country, our nation and our future in terms of its results" (Diken, 2018), it would not be wrong to say that the issue is seen as a development which has a 'positive impact' by the government in order to reinforce its legitimacy and power. According to Küçük and Türkmen (2020) the 15 July coup attempt is unlike the previous (1960, 1971, 1980) coups due to two principal features: First, a part of the public was called upon to take to the streets to prevent the coup attempt; this had never happened before. Second, the date, 15 July, became the symbolic founding moment of the new regime, which had already been long in the making (p. 248).

3.1.1. The Quest of a Founding Moment for the "New Turkey" Narrative

After all these developments, the AKP government, which claims that it has strengthened its current political power, has focused more on memorialization practices of this event as an 'alternative founding narrative' against the "Old" Turkey. Like Özyürek (2017) asserts:

> *For many years now the AKP government has been searching for new commemorations to mark their rule of almost a decade and half. They had a name for the era, "New Turkey," but not a perfect day that marked it. President Erdogan repeatedly expressed how he did not think commemorations of the Turkish Republic reflected the whole Turkish, Ottoman, and Muslim history he saw the new Turkey building upon. All national day celebrations in Turkey were established by the single party regime of Ataturk and commemorate the establishment of the Turkish Republic.*

It is precisely at this point that the AKP government needs a founding moment that symbolizes the complete break with the old and the beginning of the "new" because as Çınar (2001) says,

> *one of the vital mechanisms through which the effect of newness is produced involves the creation of a temporal rupture, a break from the immediate past which serves to mark the onset of the nation-state in a new beginning or a "founding moment." This intervention in time gives time a form, by creating a turning point which marks the end of the old and the beginning of the new. It*

is at this moment of historical rupture that the nation-state inserts itself into being (p. 368).

In addition to all of these, despite all these efforts during its long years in power, Özyürek (2017) expresses the AKP's searching process of the founding moment of the "New Turkey" with these sentences:

As old national day celebrations were getting cancelled, moved out of stadiums, and limited to brief celebrations at the President's Palace, there was a search for a new commemoration to mark the AKP rule. The conquering of Istanbul by the Ottomans in 1453 has been a heavily invested commemoration since early 2000s. Because Erdogan was initially the mayor of Istanbul, this day has a special meaning for the AKP. The commemorations emphasize how Muslims took over a Christian capital and emphasizes conquering as a political symbol that needs to be continuously maintained. Since 2010, the birth week of Prophet Muhammed is also celebrated in schools in Turkey—not a common practice in the rest of the Islamic world. Last year there were plans for officially celebrating Mr. Erdogan`s birthday on 26 February but they were cancelled. However, none of these commemorations seemed a perfect and unquestioned replacement for earlier national day celebrations.

Exactly at this point, it is necessary to focus on what the "Old" Turkey meant for the AKP government, and therefore it is necessary to mention its controversial relationship with the Kemalist founding memory and its cultural memory carriers. Because memory is objectified and transferred through cultural carriers, the memory struggle between the "new" and "old" Turkey's could be analyse the context of the transformation of cultural memory carriers and the top-down construction of political memory by different political actors. According to Christofis (2018), the dominant ideological scheme in Turkey (Kemalism) was contested by the AKP via its recycling of the past selectively and interpreting the present in terms of historical myths thus presenting a counter-memory and a counterhegemonic discourse that would challenge the dominant rhetoric of Kemalism (p. 13). Actually, the history of this old and new dichotomy is not special to the AKP period. As Bora (2018) underlines, the Old Turkey that the New Turkey was nursing a grudge was also New Turkey in its golden age (p. 13).

3.1.2. The Dichotomy of "Old" and "New" Turkey

In this sub-topic of the chapter, the formal/discursive analysis of the narrative of New Turkey discourse will be presented together with socio-historical dynamics in order to contextualization of the transformation of the July 15th into most critical memory figure of the AKP government.

Schmitt's (2016) dichotomy of friend and enemy, the existence of an enemy and reinforcement of a state of defence against the enemy by constantly defining it is also essential for determining the boundaries of national identity. Because the definitions and limitations of the individual about 'Us' gain meaning with the 'Other'. For this reason, the questions posed as 'Who are we?' are shaped by the answers given about 'what we are not.'. When evaluated in the historical process, in the Early Republican Period, The Ottoman cultural memory carriers are erased, ignored and abolished in accordance with the new Turkish identity, which is constructed by the Kemalist constitutive narrative, as well as the coding of the Ottoman and Islamic components as the other of this identity (Gençkal Eroler, 2019, p. 46; see also Bora, 2012, pp. 41-43). On the other hand, during the reconstruction of collective memory and identity in the AKP period, the government adopted an othering attitude against Kemalism which was regarded as an ideology that broke Turkish nation ties with the Ottoman Empire and Islam. In this process Kemalist dominant narrative stigmatized as defending military domination, 'western wannabe', 'elitist', 'pro-coup mindset' (Bora, 2020, p. 80). Gümüş (2019) uses the concept of "De-Kemalization" to describe this process and explains this concept as follows:

> *(...) the Muslim redefinition of the collective memory through the so-called process of 'coming to terms with the past'. The de-Kemalisation has enabled political and criminal prosecution of leading Kemalists in the so-called arguments against putschists, Sunni revision of the current education policy and legislation and the pursuit of an anti-Kemalist policy of memory and, subsequently, the removal of Kemalist symbols from public institutions. The de-Kemalisation was linked to a mildly-Islamic transformation (p. 146).*

It can be said that the cultural carriers of the Kemalist founding narrative were changed, obscured or discredited in accordance with the AKP's memory regime. There have been changes in the content or form of many ceremonies, celebrations, and memorialization belonging to and related to the Kemalist founding narrative. Practices have been implemented to make some of them completely forgotten and some to be coded with a new meaning. Again, in this period, new celebrations and ceremonies, which are alternatives to institutionalized national holidays, which are important dates and turning points of the founding narrative of the Republic like May 19, April 23, and October 29, began to be invented (see also Kaya, 2021).

It is a very critical question how this narrative which started to use the "New Turkey" discourse after 2010, emerged as an alternative to the Kemalist founding narrative and took its source from Ottoman and Islamic references, instrumentalized the cultural memory while building the 'new nation of the New Turkey'. During the AKP rulership, the Ottoman past was mythicized in all its glory and exercised as a political instrument. The effect of this memory was consulted as a political reference point by the government was became easily observable in daily life through investments made in many different fields such as education, architecture, and popular culture. Also, various ceremonies were added to the calendar, such as conquest celebrations together with namings and symbols which belong to this narrative. Therefore, Banal Ottomanism (Ongur, 2014) which is produced regarding the concept of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995), is a very critical concept that can be discussed in Turkey's context. Because, the concept of banal nationalism is used to indicate the reproduction of a nation constantly by way of symbols, rituals and practices of everyday life. For a detailed and systematic analysis of this memory struggle, and all these practices of replacing, inventing tradition and cultural memory carriers during the AKP era, it would be appropriate to refer to Reyhan Ünal Çınar's "Ecdadın İcadı" (2020). In this source, Ünal Çınar (2020) claims that the AKP government aimed to establish a founding narrative rather than an alternative memory politically with various politics of memory, and over time, it started to recall the memory figures of the Islamist/conservative ideology which gathered from Ottoman heritage by forgetting the memory figures of Kemalism. The belief that social change could be designed and

implemented from the top-down construction affected both founding Kemalist ideology and nationalist conservative ideology of the AKP. As Maessen (2014) states:

> *National memory is a crucial component of nationalism, but as the nation itself it is not naturally 'there' and requires mediation. (...) Institutions and larger communities 'make' a memory by the use of monuments, museums, commemoration rites and ceremony. The process in which the formation of national identity in Turkey during the hegemony of Kemalism and later as the rise of Islamism came about, holds strong similarities with the top-down imposition of political or national memory. (p. 311)*

For this reason, it was believed that if the official historical theses of the state and cultural and political memory of the society could be changed, society could also change. Thus, collective memory has emerged in the service of politics.

This intervention in collective memory primarily aims to destroy the function of being a memory figure by removing or changing the meaning of 'old' memory figures (monuments, museums, architectural works, national holidays and celebrations, symbols, etc.), and instead, with new official historiography, invent some historical experiences, including them in the memory pool or bringing them to the fore. Therefore, memory figures are equipped with instrumental and ideological webs of meaning in the nation-state and national identity projection of the political powers. Also, Volfova (2016) underlines,

> *the revival of Ottomanism in the current Turkish political discourse also illustrates that the AKP is trying to shift popular allegiance from the secular, republican Turkey to a 'new pious Turkey', conscious and proud of its imperial Ottoman past. The AKP's neo-Ottoman rhetoric and acts aim at replacing the secular symbols of the nation with religious ones (p. 495).*

Alongside, this contest among these 'founding' memories is also seen as a struggle for cultural hegemony, as can be understood from the statements of the government and important political figures. Power elites frequently and directly stated that they could not achieve dominance within the context of 'social and cultural power' yet. It is also possible to see in various statements of Erdoğan that he thinks that they are not capable of power in the meaning of social and cultural and he states that they attach special

importance to the reconstruction of 'native and national' culture on their work in the process of building the 'New Turkey':

> *Being in power politically is another thing. Social and cultural power is something else. We have been in power for 14 years without interruption. But we still have problems with our social and cultural power. Of course, very pleasing and promising developments have taken place. The increase in the interest in imam-hatips, and the fact that elective courses such as the Qur'an, Siyer-i Nebi, and Ottoman Turkish are taught in all schools are very good things in themselves, these are important developments. However, we still have many shortcomings in terms of our country's needs, our nation's demand, and our dream of raising generations. The curricula, which have been prepared with an approach that is the product of the hostility towards our ancestors and culture in many areas from our language to our history, are just recently changing. I know that there are still people, teams and factions who are foreign to their country and nation in the most effective places in many fields from media to cinema, science and technology to law. To be honest, I am very sorry about this situation. (Hürriyet, 2017)*

And he continues his speech with these remarkable sentences:

> *Young people, you will soon take over the watch in the relay race. It is up to each of our young people to determine their sides. Those before us had endured the persecution of the one-party CHP. The 1960 coup passed like a cylinder. We were among the generation that was exposed to the 1980 coup. You may have heard from those who experienced the persecution of February 28. We lived the 15th of July together. Those who have gotten away with what they have done so far learned a historical lesson on the night of July 15. Our nation did not allow the same game this time, as it saw what the putschists, puppets whose rope is in someone else's hands, could do to their country and to themselves. Those who came there that night were not the youth of Gezi Park. Those who came there that night were young people who loved their homeland, who loved their nation, who set out for their flag and for the call to prayer. There is a beauty here. (Hürriyet, 2017)*

As can be understood from this quote, the government has an imagination and an effort for the new generations who will establish the "New Turkey" and it is concerned about not being able to provide the cultural hegemony necessary for this. In his book titled "Zamanın Kelimeleri" (2018), Tanıl Bora claims that the AKP means the cultural hegemony concept as a dominance and superiority based on a set of power possibilities that the "other" is alleged to still hold, rather than addressing a deficiency, inadequacy,

or lack of effort. He says that the subject of this cultural power, which is the source of AKP's victimization, is a group consisting of "white Turks", Kemalists and leftists, with an imitation of the Western culture indifferent to the "native", preventing the growth of native and national culture and making it invisible (Bora, 2018, p. 56). Perception of a 'silenced conservative/Muslim nation, excluded from the power and dignity it deserves' (Taşkın, 2019, p. 382) supports the pursuit of a return to native and national culture and return to the self through a victimization discourse. Two of the most important words in the New Turkey's vocabulary, "native and national", of course, form its content through some memory figures and symbols. In this sense, it has gained a very critical function to construct the cultural memory carriers of this founding narrative and memory figures of AKP's memory regime.

In addition, another striking element is the way in which "Old" Turkey is identified with the "pro-coup mindset", and the form it articulates the July 15th to this history of coups. With this speech, the President transforms the coups experienced in the history of the Republic into the memory figures of the Old Turkey, and positions the rupture experienced over the July 15th as the foundational myth of the New Turkey. Finally, the "Youth of the July 15th" is positioned opposite the "Youth of Gezi Park", which is the constitutive other of the narrative of the July 15th (Küçük & Türkmen, 2018, p. 257). The "Youth of the July 15th" is described as "young people who loved their homeland, who loved their nation, who set out for their flag and for the call to prayer", reflects the nationalist-conservative definition and characteristics of the new nation and patriots of the "New Turkey" in an ideological way. These qualifications were also used to describe the people who filled the squares at "Democracy Watches" which were made following the coup attempt. These demonstrations were carried out each evening for one month with the government's support and appeal. These street actions took place on the squares in almost all major cities, and ultimately became the stage for the consolidation of the new authoritarian regime. (Küçük & Türkmen, 2018, p. 248)

3.2. Cultural Memory Carriers of the July 15th

15 July 2016 should be considered a turning point in the 'accelerating' reconstruction process of cultural and political memory. The AKP government, which determined the founding moment of their founding narrative as this date and ground its legitimacy on this event, has made an extraordinary effort to keep alive, construct and strengthen the political and cultural memory of this narrative. It is tried not to be forgotten through many different ways and methods. After the July 15th coup attempt, the carriers of cultural memory in which remembering are embodied were reproduced through monuments, texts, images, memory places built in different provinces of Turkey and the July 15th constructed as a memory figure through these carriers. Thus, these symbolic productions provided the memory with a concrete content. Thereby, this date and everything built around and about it began to function as the carrier of a political and ideological narrative. These cultural memory carriers that figuratively represent the formal, symbolic and political meaning that this period coincide in the political memory are the fictionalized manifestations of the recall of the past in order to keep this memory alive. In his article about the reading politically the process of place (re)naming and changing city text, Özberk (2018) states that it is seen that the great "The Epic of July 15th" narrative about the coup attempt and implicitly regime change of the political power manifests itself in new "memorial places" with all its political dimensions in line with the goal of coding and keeping alive the urban text, collective and political memory (p. 676). Also, in their article, Arslan and Uludağ (2020) explain the relationship between place names, collective memory and ideology with the following sentences:

> *Place names are public by nature; as such they belong to the collective memory. Besides their physical characteristics, they convey social and cultural meanings and messages. Place names that connect language and space; are means/forms of production of official history, recording memory and a political representation both as a part of daily life and bureaucratic field. Place naming as a political practice "embedded in language" connects the ideology with the daily activities of human life to construct a new social reality. The renaming of the places is relatively a simple political action/process/practice according to long-term ideological and structural*

changes since it has an immediate effect on human life and perception with its power of declaration. (p. 1448)

Before discussing the issue through a sample, I would like to present a general picture of this reconstruction process in terms of carriers of cultural memory. First of all, the July 15th, memorialized and declared a new national holiday with the name *The Democracy and National Unity Day of Turkey*, was described by President Erdoğan as "a second War of Independence of the Turkish nation" (Tccb.gov, 2016). A few days later, the Bosporus Bridge, one of the symbolic places where clashes and deaths took place, was renamed *July 15 Martyr Bridge* by act of parliament. In addition, the name of the Kızılay Square, which is very important for the urban culture of the capital Ankara, was changed to *July 15th Kızılay National Will Square* by the metropolitan municipality. In addition, some of the decisions taken by the city council of the municipality, which met in August, right after the coup, can be listed as follows:

- One of the important streets of Ankara, the street named after Brigadier General İrfan Baştuğ, who participated in the May 27, 1960 military coup, was changed to the name of Martyr Petty Officer Ömer Halisdemir, who shot one of the putsch generals Semih Terzi.
- It was also decided to change Gülen Street in Keçiören to "Güldalı Street", as it evokes the name of FETÖ leader Fetullah Gülen.
- In order not to forget July 15, a museum will be established in a suitable place in the city. In the museum, there will be vehicles crushed by tanks, information and memories of martyrs and veterans, photographs, video and audio recordings of that day.
- A decision made to form the 'July 15 Commemoration Week' every year, and various activities will be held this week.
- In order to convey what happened on July 15th to future generations, informational books, brochures, CDs, publications which prepared by other methods deemed appropriate will be generate
- A plaque representing the martyr's certificate will be made to be hung in the house or apartment where they live, and a corner will be created in their homes.

- A special area for the 15 July Martyrdom will be allocated within the Karşıyaka Cemetery (Anadolu Ajansı, 2016).

With these promotions and regulations, this "heroic victory" not only against members of the army who planned the coup, but also against Western powers and the "superior mind" (Özyürek, 2017) was invented and constructed that can be used as an instrument in the construction of the national memory regime of the AKP's New Turkey. The construction of national identity is also based on the creation of a common past, the existence of common narratives and heroism, and it is possible through the institutionalization of these narratives. In other words, just like socially produced memory, national identity is shaped by state institutions, particularly through official historiography produced by the military and power. Because dependence on shared frames of reference about the common past and memory helps to maintain the identity of the individual and society in ways that are meaningful (Zelizer, 1995, p. 227).

The July 15th coup attempt is a founding moment for a new founding memory that is tried to be made a part of the "national spirit" with a great variety of cultural memory carriers like commemorations, marches, monuments and changing the names of places. After the coup attempt, the names of many public places like squares, parks, bus stations, and bridges were changed to July 15, and efforts were made to consolidate this history as a common element and memory figure of national memory. All of these examples have functioned as a reminder of an invented narrative with the formal and symbolic meanings they carry. The symbolic memory places of the July 15th are the places that recalled the past and concrete it in the present. The existence of these monuments reminds the 'unity and solidarity' around the 'common' values like 'being native and national' expected from the nation by the government, as well as the symbolism of the July 15th. As Sancar (2016) says, in the process of constructing the nation, national identity and national memory, 'historical science' is used multi-directional and extensively. School textbooks are arranged accordingly, and state institutions are created to process and disseminate "official history theses" (p. 12). In this context, the names of the schools were also changed with the names of the people who died on July 15, and the textbooks started to be published with the July 15th

narratives and figures. In addition, commemoration activities have started to be organized by the decision of the Ministry of National Education, in all primary and secondary schools within the scope of the July 15 Victory of Democracy and Martyrs' Memorial Week - *15 Temmuz Demokrasi Zaferi ve Şehitleri Anma Haftası.* (see also Cumhuriyet, 2017). Altınordu (2017) summarizes the details of this process:

> *In addition, the ministry made available visual material about July 15 for use in the classroom, including two professionally produced videos. In the first of these, Erdoğan's voice is heard reading all ten stanzas of the national anthem against news footage of the coup attempt and the Democracy and Martyrs Rally. The second video inserts July 15 into a series of heroic acts by the Turkish nation, constructing a historical thread running from the Dardanelles Campaign in World War I and the Battle of Dumlupınar in the Turkish War of Independence to the defeat of the coup on July 15. (pp. 159-160)*

Cultural memory remains alive with rituals and memorials. From the organizations held every year on anniversaries to the way they are handled in history books with both the statements of the people in the AKP politicians and the works of museumification, 15 July 2016 are trying to be reconstructed and kept alive in the cultural memory of the society, and the 'new nation of the New Turkey', which contains many religious and national elements, has been tried to be built with vigorously contested by creating a founding narrative based on this 'milestone' date. Especially, museums are very important tools to keep alive, disseminate and support the founding ideological narrative. In many provinces in Turkey, lots of museums and monuments have been built with names the words like "democracy", "national unity", "patriotism" and "freedom" attached to and associated with this date, next to July 15 like the July 15 Martyrs' Monument - *15 Temmuz Şehitleri Anıtı*. One of them is located in front of the Presidential Complex as a solidified badge and symbol of its founding narrative. Also, there is a museum which is also the empirical material of this study where "visitors will listen to the stories of 251 martyrs by passing through the 'Sela Corridor' and aim to experience what happened on July 15 through digital methods for future generations" is located in the Presidential Complex in Ankara with the name of 15 July Democracy Museum (TRT Haber, 2021). Another museum was built at the entrance of the Bosporus Bridge, which was later changed the name as July 15 Martyrs Bridge, under the name *Memory July 15* - Hafıza 15 Temmuz, in

accordance with the phrase 'To Keep Alive in Your Memory the Traitorous Coup Attempt of 15 July' on its official website (Hafıza 15 Temmuz, 2022). In addition, Kahramankazan July 15 Martyrs and Democracy Museum was opened in the Kazan district of Ankara, which was given the title of 'Kahraman' (*Hero*) after July 15, similar to the cities that were given titles such as *Kahraman*, *Şanlı*, and *Gazi* to honor them for their struggles in the War of Independence. The purpose of opening this museum is explained as "keep alive the heroic struggle against the coup plotters and what happened after, and to pass on the great disaster our country has been through to future generations." with sentences taken from the museum introduction page (Turkish Museums, *Ankara Kahramankazan July 15 Martyrs and Democracy Museum*).

Finally, I would like to refer to a non-governmental organization as an example of where the effects of this top-down memory-making effort could be monitorized. The vision of the association named *15 Temmuz Derneği* (15 July Association), which was established on 20 August 2016 with the partnership of various state institutions right after the coup attempt, is indicated as:

> *create a collective memory, and to transfer what happened before and after the treacherous coup attempt on 15 July 2016 to future generations, and that the scoundrels who carried out this treacherous coup attempt are revealed, and to ensure that the memory of our martyrs and veterans, who make epic history with their brave stances against this treacherous coup attempt, is not forgotten, and that every citizen has this consciousness by spreading the consciousness of national unity and solidarity. (15 Temmuz Derneği, 2021)*

On the home page of its website, slogans such as 'For the Love of the Country and Nation...' ('Vatan Millet Aşkına...') and 'Don't Forget the Epic of July 15, Don't Let to be Forgetten!' ('15 Temmuz Destanı'nı Unutma, Unutturma!') draw attention. It also strives to construct and form the cultural and political memory of this narrative with activities such as the "International July 15 Symposium" organizations, meetings with the families of those who lost their lives on July 15, the "251 Hatim Program on the 15th of Every Month", the "Collective Memory" presentations in high schools and universities, and lastly, publishing a journal with the same name (*Ortak Hafıza*). The first issue of this publication, which was only published in two issues, with the title

"The Milestones of the Nation and the State" and included President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's "Address to the Nation", dated 19.07.2016, at the entrance (Ortak Hafıza, 2022). The second issue was published with the title "The Exam of the Media with Coups" and its content consists of articles on the history of coups in Turkey and in the world and the memorialization methods of the July 15th. The most important point to note here in terms of 'memory-making' is that non-governmental organizations, which are considered as private and independent from the state in terms of memory policies and social justice, exist as an institution that acts with the state partnership and auspices of the state in the context of the July 15th experience in Turkey.

In general, when looking at the quest to constructing a founding moment of this memory, it is seen that the carriers of cultural memory are instrumentally used in the reconstruction of the political memory building for a founding narrative of the "New Turkey". After the 15 July 2016 coup attempt, which their "fully-fledged" narrative identified as its founding moment, the AKP government tried to intervene and manipulate the collective memory it sees as a political battleground, and thus to construct a national identity in which there were definitions suitable for its own political ideologies and requirements. The coup attempt on 15 July 2016 served as a founding moment for the AKP government, was considered a victory instrumentalized as a memory figure in the AKP's identity construction and the "New Turkey" narration.

> In her book "New Ottomanism," Nagehan Tokdoğan argues that the suppression of the July 15 coup attempt created a significant rupture in the emotional climate characterized by the political tradition from which the AKP emerged, which was characterized by the "victimhood narrative." She suggests that this event replaced a narrative of defeat and suppression with a new narrative of triumph and self-worship, which can be described as a new "present" narrative. The government, led by Erdogan, certainly took pride in emphasizing its "firm stance" against the coup, but they also elevated the Turkish people who protested the coup, confronted the armed coup plotters, and even engaged in combat on the night of the coup, to the status of heroes and the subjects of the national epic. Tokdoğan interprets the massive "Democracy Vigils" held for 7 days and 24 hours in the large public squares of 81 cities following the suppression of the coup as a collective narcissism ritual. These events, which nourished this collective narcissism, became continuous and the July 15 "Democracy and National Unity Day" was included as a national holiday. (Tokdoğan, 2018, as cited in Bora, 2020, p. 81)

In this chapter, I have analysed the socio-historical context and formal/discursive structure of the narrativization of the July 15th, which aims to reconstruct the political and national memory regime of the AKP. I have also provided a general overview of the cultural memory carriers associated with this process. To illustrate this issue more concretely, I will discuss the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum in the next chapter. This museum is a symbolic and cultural memory carrier that plays a significant role in the transformation of the July 15th into the most crucial memory figure and founding moment of the AKP's memory regime.

CHAPTER IV

**OBJECTIFICATION OF CULTURAL MEMORY: THE EXAMPLE OF
ANKARA 15 JULY DEMOCRACY MUSEUM**

In this chapter, based on the definition of figures of memory, I will discuss the features that make the July 15th a memory figure of AKP's memory regime through the 15 July Democracy Museum (Ankara), which is one of the very critical symbolic carriers of the cultural memory which is narrativized, organized and concreted by the political power. In this regard, the focus will be on what the AKP government reconstructed, which past memories it invoked, and what it invented during the process of constructing its own founding narrative, by examining the 15 July Democracy Museum as a constructed place of memory that serves as a carrier of this narrative. The past, reconstructed for current political projects, functions as a forgettable/rememberable fiction; for this reason, the cultural products that makeup it gains special importance. In particular, areas that directly concern the past, such as the education and archive system, museums, are indispensable for political projects that want to manage memory and create memoria (Başaran İnce, 2010, p. 9).

Founding narratives needs memory figures that sustain, support and reproduce them. Like Mihai (2019) asserts:

> *Self-serving hegemonic visions of history are institutionalised by dominant memory entrepreneurs, simultaneously imposing an authoritative version of 'what happened' and their right to articulate it. These visions and the hierarchies of honour they consecrate are cultivated transgenerationally via history textbooks, memorialization institutions and rituals, compensation policies, and the canonization of certain artworks, aiming to ensure the stability of the community's identity, as well as the emotional attachments that can ensure its reproduction over time (p. 52).*

Museums, exhibitions, archives, national holidays, commemorations, ceremonies, monuments and architecture are the figures of memory (Özyürek, 2020) that serves authoritative versions and interpretations of the historical experiences and articulate them in order to stability of the identity. The governments in power need to construct places of memory and invent new traditions in the process of national identity construction for an imagined community (Anderson, 2006). Nora (2022) develops a definition of memory places with these sentences:

> *Museums, archives, cemeteries, collections, holidays, anniversaries, treaties, minutes, monuments, holy places, associations, these are witnesses of another age, dreams of eternity (...) are signs of group belonging in a society that serves only to recognize equal and similar individuals. (...) Moments of history that have been cut off from the movement of history but returned to history. (pp. 26-27)*

In addition to the above quotation, in their article addressing the issue the reconstruction of the past retrospectively, and the roles of museums as cultural institutions in the construction of national identity through the fixation of national mythologies, Yılmaz & Erol (2021) state:

> *Art historian Donald Preziosi argues that the evolution of the modern nation-state was made possible by the organization of a set of cultural institutions that allowed the imaginative enactment and effective embodiment of national mythologies and the myth of the nation-state itself. The modern nation-state as an imaginary entity relies on a powerful apparatus of cultural fiction, initially the museum and the novel, in order to prove and maintain its existence.*

To answer the research questions and to (re)interpret the outputs of the socio-historical and formal/discursive analysis, the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum (2021), which is one of the most symbolic cultural memory carriers of the works of engaging the July 15th narrative to political memory, has been determined as the research object of this study. This museum plays an important role in the reconstruction of the memory regime symbolically and is also a clear-cut sample of the memory figures of AKP's founding narrative. It was built in the capital Ankara, one of the cities where conflicts are experienced intensely, and just across the Presidential Complex (Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi). It also constitutes a very suitable sample to be

examined in the context of 'making' memory, and instrumental relationship between politics and cultural memory in terms of its content. In the following section, this content and the fieldwork carried out here will be reinterpreted.

4.1. Re-interpretation of a Concrete Carrier of AKP's Memory Regime

In this section, based on the main argument of the thesis and the research questions it aims to answer, the building of the narrative constructed around the July 15th coup attempt through cultural memory carriers, as well as its form of transmission and content, will be discussed. Therefore, details of the fieldwork conducted at the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum, which was selected as the sample, will be included. The experience at the museum visited in March 2023 in several times will be narrated in line with the museum's design, and the findings will be presented at the end of the section.

Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum, which is opened by the government in 2021, is located at Cumhurbaşkanlığı Boulevard No:18, Yenimahalle. The Presidential Complex and Millet Mosque, which were built on the land of the Atatürk Forest Farm (Atatürk Orman Çiftliği-AOÇ) during AKP rule, are located directly right across from it. The museum was also built on the same land, and there is the July 15 Martyrs' Monument just ahead. To open a parenthesis here, AOÇ, one of the important places of Kemalist memory, first lost its natural protected area status with legal regulations, and then the Presidential Complex, which was built as an alternative to Çankaya Palace (Çankaya Köşkü), was built in a part of it (for a detailed analysis, see Batuman, 2019, pp. 230-264). According to President Erdoğan, built with Ottoman-Seljuk architectural influences, this complex reflects the fusion of national and Islamic content within "our own culture" (Batuman, 2019, p. 244). In this sense, it is necessary to evaluate this transformation in terms of the relationship between memory and space, in the context of the liquidation of the old and the establishment of the new. This politically motivated location choice has a very symbolic and strategic meaning in terms of memory politics in Turkey in the context discussed in the previous chapter. As Vale (2008) says,

Political power takes many forms. In addition to the power evinced by a charismatic leader, an indomitable military presence, an entrenched bureaucracy, or an imposing network of laws and statutes, many political regimes make especially powerful symbolic use of the physical environment. Throughout history and across the globe, architecture and urban design have been manipulated in the service of politics. Government buildings are, I would argue, an attempt to build governments and to support specific regimes. More than mere homes for government leaders, they serve as symbols of the state. We can, therefore, learn much about a political regime by observing closely what it builds. (p. 27)

As "the subject of the hegemonic war on different identities", reconstruction of urban space has been used as a means of transforming ideologies into a concrete form and consolidating the symbolic power of state in everyday life and reproduces the past, constructs the "new" and reflects state-society relations (Korkmaz, 2019, p. 233).

On the deserted roads leading to the museum, there are many security measures and checkpoints due to its proximity to the Presidential Complex. The Presidential Complex and the Gendarmerie General Command, located in its immediate vicinity, are among the places targeted, opened fire and civilian casualties on the night of the July 15th.

On the way to the museum, one passes over the Gendarmerie Underpass right in front of the Gendarmerie General Command. The parts of the building that were damaged as a result of the gunfire were left as they were and are exhibited behind a glass partition with the inscription as "As a result of one of the bombs dropped on the Presidential Complex by the coup plotters, members of the FETÖ/PDY Terrorist Organization, hit this point on July 16, 2016 at 06:16, 31 of our citizens became martyrs and 188 of our citizens became veterans". In addition, a military vehicle that was hit by F16s and burned is on display in a glass partition above the underpass. After passing through the police control and body search point, visitors reach the museum's large entrance gate, which is descended by symbolically 251 steps to the underground. The entrance is constructed in a manner similar to a mausoleum, with the name "15

July Democracy Museum" prominently displayed in large letters at the top. One thing to note here is the juxtaposition of the July 15th date with the word "Democracy".

Figure 1. The exhibited military vehicle that was hit by F16s and burned.

Figure 2. Exhibited parts of the Gendarmerie Underpass damaged as a result of gunfire from the air

Figure 3. Museum Entrance

The narrative asserts that the coup plotters aimed to undermine the democratic institutions and values of the country and that the people (*millet*), through their resistance to the coup, defended democracy and the will of the people. As a result, the term "Democracy" is often associated with the events of the July 15th in AKP's memory regime, and it is prominently featured in the name of the 15 July Democracy Museum. This association is intended to reinforce the idea that the coup attempt was a threat to democracy, and that the people of Turkey successfully defended it. Cultural memory carriers of this memory, such as the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum, were quickly established in the aftermath of the coup attempt to ensure that the event would never be forgotten and would instead be remembered as "a symbol of democratic unity". These carriers were carefully constructed and organized with the goal of constructing a lasting memorial that would reinforce the importance of "democratic values and solidarity". The July 15th events are framed as "a unification of the people, the leader, and the state, working together in a united action to defend the state and preserve democracy". This unification is portrayed as "being always ready to act, whenever the need arises".

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This museum is a thematic museum, which does not contain any objects belonging to that night, and where only the narrative is exhibited through some visual and auditory digital methods, so much so that there is not even any written material like a brochure at the entrance. Based on the museum, one of the most important things that can be said about the characteristics of the memory carriers of the cultural and political memory constructed about the July 15th is that many of these mnemonics and chosen materials are highly mediated. The narrative is constructed and transmitted through videos, photographs and texts about this experience. These videos, photographs and texts content mostly consist of documents circulated in the media about the event. It should be noted that such mediated mnemonics are used for spreading this narrative and reaching wider audiences. Also, the documentary content and style that make up the museum are conveying this narrative with a rather didactic figuration.

The museum has been prepared in a timeline manner which is a tool for selection and exclusion. By linking together particular actors, places, and events, timelines can help to authorize certain narratives while bracketing off other questions and alternatives (Hammond, 2020, p. 544). Also, in the museum, it is not possible to pass from one hall to another without the directions of the attendant or to stay longer in any hall despite the attendant's warning to continue. Every half hour, visitors can take a tour with a guide who accompanies the group. Museum consists of 8 halls named "Coups in Turkey and Around the World", "Threat of a Bullet", "Plunge into the Darkness, "The Longest Night", "Those Who Leave Traces", "Sela", "Respect to Martyrs" and "Democracy Watches".

Hall of Coups in Turkey and Around the Globe is the only part of the museum that can be visited without a tour guide attendant. In this hall, there are five separate chambers built in the form of small domes in which a few minutes of short informative videos on five different subjects are played.

The material form of the dome thus symbolically links the museum design to Ottoman and Islamic traditions (Batuman, 2018, as cited in Hammond, 2020, p. 547). The first

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of these videos is about the history of colonization, mandate and coups in the world, the second is the history of coups in Turkey, the third is about the history of coups around the globe, and the fourth is about the historical development, transformation and parallel structuring tactics of the FETÖ, and finally, fifth video is about the FETÖ's preparation process of the July 15th coup attempt.

Figure 4. Chambers built in the shape of a dome where informative videos are watched.

The material form of the dome thus symbolically links the museum design to Ottoman and Islamic traditions (Batuman, 2018, as cited in Hammond, 2020, p. 547). The first of these videos is about the history of colonization, mandate and coups in the world, the second is the history of coups in Turkey, the third is about the history of coups around the globe, and the fourth is about the historical development, transformation and parallel structuring tactics of the FETÖ, and finally, fifth video is about the FETÖ's preparation process of the July 15th coup attempt.

First of all, the predominant discourse on coups in many of the informative videos in this room is quite remarkable. The reason why the name of the hall is "Coups in Turkey

and Around the World" is because military coups are defined as 'the international tool of tyranny today' (see Video Text 1). These sentences in the first informative video provide insight for visitors with a sharp definition of the government's perspective on coups and their function and instrumentalization by the external powers:

> *The colonizers of the old world attempted to continue their economic and political exploitation of the new world order by instigating or creating the conditions for coups. Coups are not necessarily carried out by juntas or networks within the army alone. Many coups either have direct roots or supporters in foreign countries. Coups are the continuation of a system of hegemony created under the names of colonialism and mandated rule. (see Video Text 1)*

> *Coups drive their respective and surrounding countries to instability. At times coups drive their countries to civil war, and at times they leave them vulnerable to intervention from surrounding nations. Puppet regimes are established. (...) Coups can be triggered by internal and external circumstances. Many times in history, countries resorted to coups as a strategy to destabilize and weaken other countries. The puppet regimes that were established in the wake of the coups served external powers. (...) As a result of the interferences of external powers in Africa and the Middle East, democracy was unable to be established in the lands and coups and instabilities marked their unfortunate fates. (see Video Text 3)*

According to Houston (2018), the first aspect of the political narrative constituting the meaning of the event has been its annunciating of the coup's perpetrators: *here, know thy enemy* (p. 534). The Gülen Movement, which would later be called the "Fethullahist Terrorist Organization" or "the Fethullahist Parallel State Structure" by the government, has been addressed in terms of the similarities with some "terrorist" organizations such as Assassins in terms of their strategies and structures in these informative texts in the hall. In the fourth video, this organization is defined as "an armed terrorist group formed under the directives of the retired imam, Fethullah Gülen, and constituted by people whose ideas and worldviews have been "molded/programmed", and their aim as "to brainwash young minds in order to infiltrate government, and to take over control of the nation first, then of leadership wherever it was based, through cadres that answered to the FETÖ Leader alone" through "brainwashing centers such as training sells, schools, and dormitories" (see Video Text 4).

It is also crucial to what the epic narrative tries to make us forget, as well as what it recalls. A remarkable factor in this respect is the government's attempt to use this narrative to forget the alliance with the Gülen Movement. In the section with informative videos in the first hall, the historical narrative timeline watched in the video describing the historical transformation of the Gülen Movement since the 1960s jumps quickly from the beginning of the 2000s, when the AKP came to power, to the 2010s when the conflicts and ruptures begin, without any emphasis on their strategic partnership in the cooperation process. While there is no reference made to the existing relationship until this time period, it is only hinted at with these sentences:

> *The FETÖ establishment, which always displayed support for elected leadership, showcased a stance in favour of democracy until 2010. The organization, which used the presence of pro-coup elements to its advantage, continued its public diplomacy during this time with several events. (see Video Text 4)*

Despite the historically close ties between the government and the Gülen Movement and their joint policies, the narrative has conveniently ignored their past association and instead portrayed the Gülenists as a terrorist organization of both internal and external origin and a parallel state structure, and a narrative constructed and presented focusing only on the tactics used by the Gülen Movement to infiltrate the state cadres.

> *The FETÖ establishment, which carried out its activities in great secrecy, forbade the wives of its members in the Turkish Armed Forces from wearing headscarves, advised officers to consume alcohol to evade any association with FETÖ, and branded them with diverse identities, sometimes Kemalist, sometimes Alawi, while using code-words and encrypted communications for the past 35 years, was dealt repeated and heavy blows. Various factions are forming inside the organization, whose financial resources have become depleted, and that has lost thousands of members it used to infiltrate the Turkish government, signaling dissolution since the traitorous July 15 coup attempt. Through its complex shadow network, FETÖ continues to carry out dark propaganda and lobbying campaigns against Turkey in the various nations where its based. (...) FETÖ members that infiltrated military academies in those years (the conditions of the military coup in the 1980s are being referred to) emerged before us as the very sergeant-uniformed traitors who gave orders to fire at the people during the July 15 coup attempt. (see Video Text 4)*

Figure 5. Narrativization of tactics of FETÖ

According to narrativization, the Gülen Movement is portrayed not only as an internal threat, but a tool used by the Western powers to take control of Turkey, and the coup attempt is imaged as the last game played on these lands that have been tried to be colonized for years.

> *FETÖ opened school after school in Turkic republics. Nuri Gündeş, the National Intelligence Organization's Head of Foreign Intelligence wrote in his book, A Close Witness of Revolutions and Anarchy, that: "In schools opened by the Gülen community, especially in the Republic of Turkey, CIA agents with diplomatic passports were harbored as 'English teachers'" Similar information was contained in the 2017 American Global Research report. The National Intelligence Organization's 1991 report showing FETÖ members' support of CIA agents in Turkey emerged years later. Gülen went to USA in 1992. After this 55-day visit, FETÖ began expanding. (...) Three of the letters presented by the FETÖ leader for his lawsuit to obtain indefinite resident status in the USA, bear signatures by high-level CIA agents. The FETÖ leader escaped to the USA, but the organization continued to establish itself in all strategic branches of government. (see Video Text 4)*

Overall, the way in which the July 15th events have been memorialized highlights a troubling trend of selective memory based on forgetting. These events have been retroactively framed as part of "the democratic struggle against coup plotters", further erasing any nuanced understanding of the complex political dynamics at play. It is noteworthy that in the narration of the museum, there is almost no reference to the period of the First World War and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, despite its founding narrative being highly based on independence and liberation from imperialist external powers. In this sense, this symbolic and ideological subtext should be considered an important indicator of the rupture from the old founding narrative.

It can be inferred from the prevalence of the narrative regarding the history of coups in Turkey in museum that there is a deliberate attempt to incorporate the events of July 15, 2016, into the country's political memory as a significant episode in its coup history. The discourse in this section heavily emphasizes the "will of the people", being "elected", and the narrative of "pro-coup forces trying to suppress this will of the people through an anti-democratic act of military coup". When we look at how it was constructed and transmitted, it is seen that this narrative is portrayed based on the duality of the pro-coup mindset of the single-party period and the will of the people that took care of their elected government in the AKP period. This is also a critical point in terms of symbolizing the rupture between the past founding narrative and the narrative constructed today. Because the government aims to strengthen its legitimacy by establishing this narrative in this way, emphasizing popular will, democracy, and being elected or chosen. Moreover, as can be understood from their reading of the 2002 elections as a response to the will of the people against the coup mindset which is identified with the Kemalist ideology, the government also reconstructs its own historical narrative based on this duality.

> *The public showed their reaction to the depression the country was dragged into by the February 28 coup at the ballot box. At the November 3rd, 2002 elections, AK Part, led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, won by a landslide. (see Video Text 2)*

It is noticed that in the narrative of the history of coups in Turkey, especially the 1960 coup and the execution of Adnan Menderes and the post-modern coup of February 28, are emphasized preferentially.

Figure 6. Narrativization of history of coups in Turkey.

> *The bloody hands of coup instigators have intervened in our democracy and left marks on the history of our country many times. (...) The wide masses who were alienated by the one-party system began to be treated as equal citizens under the rule of the Democratic Party but this antagonized certain groups in Turkey. (see Video Text 2)*

In light of this narrativization of the history of coups in Turkey, it can be inferred from the present discourse and the historical context that the AKP government has sought to foster a sense of belonging within a specific right-wing tradition and historical background which includes the Democratic Party, the Justice Party and the Welfare Pary and their leaders. However, as a point of departure from this tradition, it is emphasized the strong stance the government has taken against coup attempts.

> *(...) The government party gave a stern reaction to the e-memorandum. As the chosen party, they didn't let up as easily as Demirel had on the 12th of March. They reminded the Turkish General Staff that they worked in association with Prime Ministry. (see Video Text 2)*

Here, opening a small parenthesis to examine this issue of historical and traditional continuity and belonging will make the issue clearer. The conversion into a site of memory of Yassıada during the AKP era, which President Erdoğan described as "a new symbol of our nation's victory against the putschists", provides a concrete illustration of the content of the memory regime of the period. In the same speech in which this description was made, President Erdoğan emphasized,

> *The nation, which had been groaning under the heavy pressure of single-party fascism for many years, is now the only sign of life, and that with July 15, the doors of coming to power in the country with antidemocratic methods were closed forever. (İletişim Başkanlığı, 2022)*

As evident from this statement, the contemporary memory regime is being deliberately and selectively constructed through the politicization of the past. A closer examination of this historical and traditional continuity and the question of belonging will further clarify this issue (for a detailed analysis see, Bezirgan Tanış, 2022).

The second hall to start the accompanying tour, "Threat of A Bullet", is designed as a hall surrounded by giant screens on all four sides. On these screens, the events that took place in the first hours of the coup attempt are narrated to the visitors through computer-generated graphic visuals and auditory methods. On the screen, the events that happened in the first hours of the coup attempt and that could not be known or witnessed by everyday citizens are visualized hour by hour. Some of them are that the coup attempt, which was planned to be launched at a later time, was applied at an earlier time due to the activity in the military communication network, Chief of Defence Hulusi Akar was offered to be on their side by the putschists, and Akar sharply rejected this offer, and the murder of soldier Bülent Aydın, who was described as the first martyr of the July 15th and whose name would later be given to Iğdır Airport. All of them are conveyed through visualization accompanied by a narrator speaking in a very theatrical tone and background music that stimulates the feeling of uneasiness.
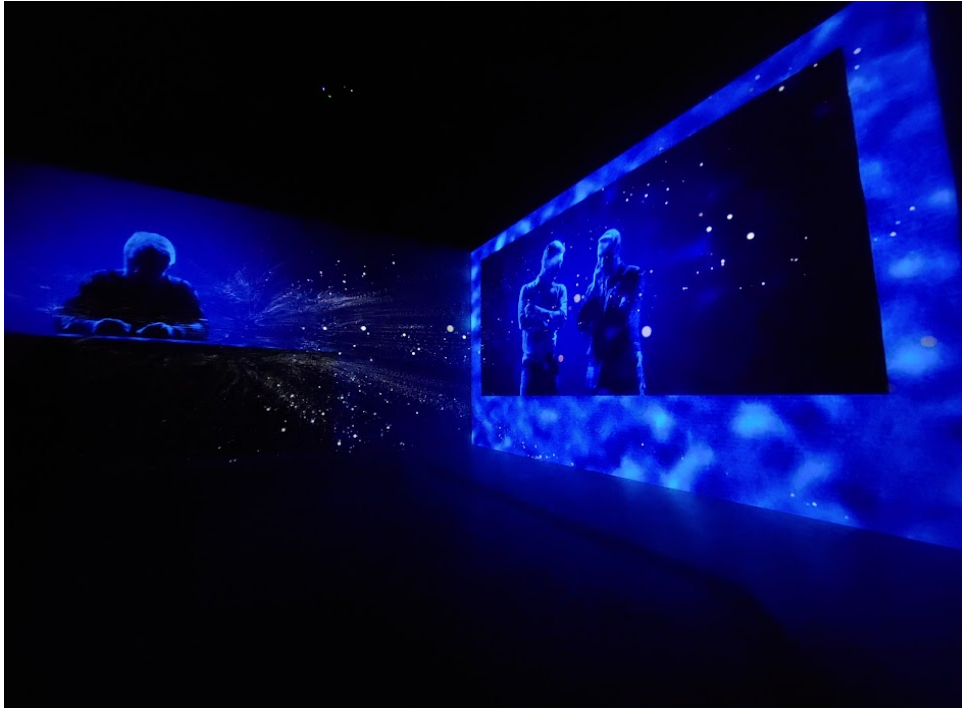
Figure 7. The Second Hall: Threat of a Bullet

Figure 8. Giant screens in the hall

AKP's mnemonic strategies and methods are based on a relatively simple narrative. This narrative dictates certain dichotomies such as "Heroes" versus "Traitors", "Pro-Coup Mindset" versus "National Will", and "Victimization under Military Coups" versus "Democracy", which reveals 'friends and enemy' distinction. By means of this narrative based on certain dichotomies, on the one hand, the boundaries of the collective identity are determined, on the other hand, a retrospective reconstruction of the memory is realized. This museum also is created to transmit a specific narrative about the "heroes" and "traitors" of the coup attempt. This narrative has actors positioned on opposite sides of each other. On the one hand, the side that carried out the coup attempt is often called "terrorists", "putschists", or "traitors"; on the other hand, there is the people or nation (*millet*) and "heroes" of the nation that "defends its will and makes the supreme sacrifice for the homeland". These are the anti-coup civilians and soldiers who were killed and get injured at the time of the coup attempt and declared by the government as "martyrs and veterans of the July 15th" (*15 Temmuz şehit ve gazileri*). Hammond (2020) discusses the use of the terms "*vatan*" and "*millet*" in Turkish nationalist politics in his article about the politics of commemoration after the July 15th. According to him, while both terms have nationalist associations, "vatan" refers to a mappable territory and is an object of political identification, while "millet" can refer to both an abstract nation and the embodied people and is a political subject and actor in its own right. Both terms help to create a narrative in which the nation is under threat by internal and external enemies, and their use helps to unite the people in defense of the nation. He also notes that the use of these terms is not reflective of a preexisting reality but rather is used to create a politically effective condition (Hammond, 2020, p. 542). The narrative seems to have started to be constructed around this theme from the second hall.

Afterwards, it continues to the hall called "Plunge into the Darkness." The corridor, which is equipped with the sounds of guns and explosions at a very loud volume, is aimed that the visitor's experience of the moment artificially by giving the impression of military jets flying with various light plays.

Figure 9. Pro-coup soldiers, which were created with the hologram technique.

At the end of this corridor, there is an area where the pro-coup soldiers, which was created with the hologram method, point their guns at the visitors and their tanks in order not to allow passage over the Bosporus Bridge, which was closed during the coup attempt. Together with these applied digital methods, the aim of this thematic museum could be interpreted as the transmission of the memory of this narrative to the visitors through the revitalization of the experience.

The hall entitled "The Longest Night" represents the most capacious space within the premises of the museum. Positioned at the entryway of this hall is a prominent display screen, which features a video montage that showcases some of the most intense and turbulent moments of the July 15th night, as documented by various media outlets and surveillance cameras. The hall is enveloped on all four sides as well as the floor with oversized screens. Other screens adorning the hall display various visual effects in line with the content presented on the primary screen. This application of multimedia technology serves to enhance the immersive experience of the visitors in a visually striking manner, aligning with the museum's overarching aim of transmitting the

memory of the July 15th narrative through experiential revitalization. A tank mock-up which symbolizes the discourse of national will against the coup plotters, is placed directly opposite to the main screen, with its barrel pointed towards the screen, and can be observed under the glazed floor of the hall. In accordance with a chronological pattern, a narrative of the July 15th is presented, as it was reflected in the media, ranging from the announcement of the coup attempt on the news channels to the statement of the Peace at Home Council read on state television. Afterwards, images of President Erdoğan's video call on the people to take to the streets against the putschists, followed by very violent images of people and soldiers taking to the streets in Ankara and Istanbul, are shown. In the footage where President Erdogan connects via video call and urges people to fill the squares, he is heard saying, "No one can destroy our determination, and I call on our nation to gather in the squares and the airport. And this minority can do whatever they want. I do not know any power stronger than the will of the people" (Bianet, 2016).

As can be understood from here, Erdogan is constructing a narrative that bases his political authority on the power of the people. This is also an indication of the political power's effort to point to its source through concepts such as democracy and popular will. Thus, the people and national will are added to the New Turkey's founding narrative as new grounds for the legitimacy of political power. All of the museum's remaining narrative methods also support this claim. The tempo of the visual and audio effects drops with the images of the putschist soldiers surrendering and the photographs of celebrations and Democracy Watches. Finally, the President appears on the screen with the Turkish Flag covering the entire hall and his speech cursing the putschists and glorifying the nation poetically in order to provide an emotional attachment to this constructed heroic narrative. This image portrays him as a "national hero".

After this hall, "The Hall of Respect for the Martyrs" is reached by passing through a small corridor which is named Sela Hall, where the visitors listen to Sela and the words of this prayer are reflected on the screens in 3 different languages (Turkish, Arabic and English). On the day of the coup, the Sela prayer that was recited every hour from the

minarets of mosques has become one of the most important religious components of this epic narrative, which has been incorporated into the commemoration of the July 15th anniversaries, funerals of martyrs, and even the contents of museums.
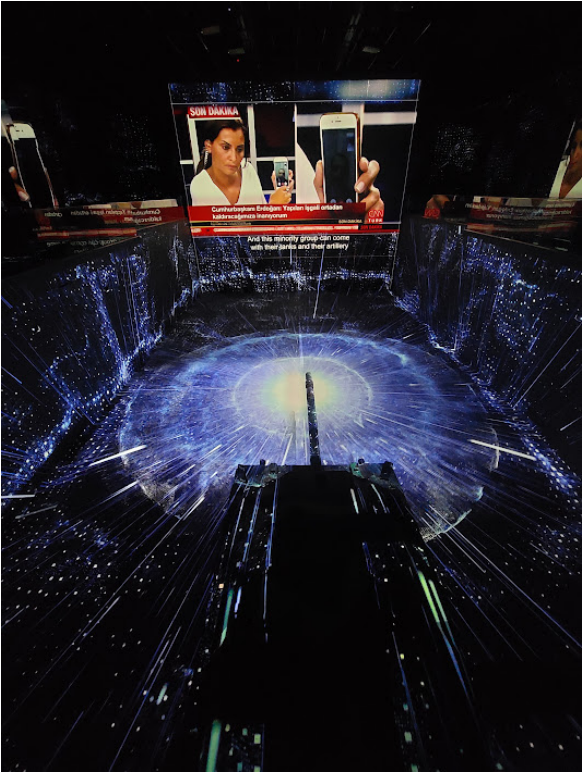
Figure 10. The Hall of "The Longest Night"

Figure 11. Portraying a "national hero"

After this hall, "The Hall of Respect for the Martyrs" is reached by passing through a small corridor which is named Sela Hall, where the visitors listen to Sela and the words of this prayer are reflected on the screens in 3 different languages (Turkish, Arabic and English). On the day of the coup, the Sela prayer that was recited every hour from the minarets of mosques has become one of the most important religious components of this epic narrative, which has been incorporated into the commemoration of the July 15th anniversaries, funerals of martyrs, and even the contents of museums.

Figure 12. The Hall of "Those Who Leaves Traces"

The concept of martyrdom in Turkey has a very loaded ideological meaning bundle. Although it is often used to describe soldiers or people who died for a national cause, it also has a religious subtext. Those who died in the fighting on the night of the July 15th are not simply referred to as 'civilian casualties or victims'. The commemoration of these civilian citizens as martyrs give a sacred meaning to their action (Hammond, 2020, p. 543). Assmann (2011) states:

> *Cultural memory is imbued with an element of the sacred. The figures are endowed with religious significance, and commemoration often takes the form of a festival. This, along with various other functions, serves to keep the foundational past alive in the present, and this connection to the past provides a basis for the identity of the remembering group. (p. 38)*

Figure 13. Touchscreens

Figure 14. The Sela Hall

The Hall of Respect for Martyrs is an area where the labels containing biographical information such as names, photographs, hometowns and occupations for each of the

251 people who lost their lives on the night of the July 15th and told how and where they were killed in a narrative style are displayed on glass prism pedestals. Also, there is information about where the names of these people are given on these labels.

Figure 15. The Hall of "Respect for Martyrs"

The tendency to build heroes/others enables place names to become a place of memory while reconstructing the past. In the design and content of the museum, the emphasis on "martyrdom" (*şehitlik*) and heroism is quite dominant. The national identity, which aims at a homogeneous social structure in its essence, is based on the common memories of the members of the society while constructing this structure. It determines the boundaries of 'us' and ensures homogeneity by making use of it, and creates unity against the other. As one of the political actors that shape and reproduce collective memory, the state instrumentalizes official historiography for this purpose. An official narrative of history which is full of wars, heroism and victories and sacrifices, with an emphasis on martyrdom, patriotism and homeland, all are used to construct a defined and bordered national identity. A separate hall was created for the "martyrs" in the museum, and separate memorial areas were created here for each person. In this way,

individuals from different backgrounds are associated with each other as members of a common group. This reveals the feature of the concrete relationship with a particular group feature of the memory figures. Also, the July 15th narrativization centres around "the sacrifices of heroic civilians, military personnel, and law enforcement who put their lives on the line that night". Martyrdom and its Islamic symbolism play a central role in the sacralization of the death of the people who are the subject of political violence and in commemorating the event. This also reveals the reconstructed ideological definition of the changing martyrdom image in the government's effort to build a founding narrative through the narration of the July 15th.

Figure 16. The Hall of "Democracy Watches".

Finally, after passing through all this dark atmosphere, a high ceiling and very bright glass dome are reached. This hall is called "The Hall of Democracy Watches". There is "Turkey's largest artificial plane tree" in the middle, and under and around this tree, wax statues of many people of different age groups and genders holding Turkish flags

in their hands are placed, which symbolizes Democracy Watches. The choice of the plane tree is intentional, as it is historically and culturally associated with Ottoman heritage and symbolizes longevity and strength in the Ottoman cultural memory. Photos of the July 15th veterans and martyrs are placed on the walls along the stairs leading up from around this high-ceiling hall.

In Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum, due to the digital techniques used, this quite concrete representation is being attempted to be experienced and kept alive by the visitors as it is with the intensity and impact of the July 15th experience. In fact, this symbolic extremism is not unique to this museum alone. The symbols and carriers of this narrative, intentionally created in accordance with a certain ideology and political purpose, can be found in monuments that adorn cities, materials in established museums, focuses in commemoration programs, and Selas from mosque minarets on anniversaries. The museum, when considering the features of reenactment through visual techniques and storytelling with a didactic style, it is one of the most obvious mnemonic organized by the state in the top-down political construction of memory. It frames thematic the narrative as a completely artificial and directed experience. In the context of this narrative which helps to justify a pro-government agenda, an anti-colonial and anti-Westernist discourse has been formulated to ensure the legitimate sovereignty and continuity of "the victors of the July 15th coup attempt.", thus, the AKP government itself.

The main argument of this thesis is that the July 15th intentionally transformed the most important memory figure of the memory regime of the AKP government through top-down memory-making practices by the government. An epic narrative has been constructed based on this experience, and this event has been fixed as a founding moment in the founding narrative of the "New Turkey" through organized mnemonics and cultural memory carriers. Starting from the assumption that cultural memory is related to the remembered history rather than the factual experience, the boundaries of what should be remembered and what should be forgotten in the epic narrative constructed around this experience have been sharply defined by political power. Thus, it has been constructed as a memory figure loaded with the ruling power's own societal

imagination, doctrine, or ideology by using some important methods of conscious distortion of memory such as distanciation, instrumentalization, narrativization and conventionalization. As discussed in the previous chapter of the thesis, the most dominant method among these techniques is the narrativization method, which includes selective emphasises, omissions, exaggerations, and inventions.

The July 15th, as a memory figure that emerged from the interaction between concepts and experiences, holds a significant place in the political instrumentalization of memory in the construction of the semantic world of the government today, with its independent capacity for reconstruction and concrete relationship with time, space, and a group. The government has instrumentalized this memory figure, which was constructed top-down, along with the memory carriers related to it, for the legitimacy of its political actions and the formation of group identities by defining the boundaries of the community, its historical allies and enemies, national objects of pride and hatred, and heroism.

This chapter of the thesis presents the findings of the fieldwork conducted at the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum, which has been constructed as one of the most prominent carriers of the narrative discussed based on these arguments. First of all, the term "Democracy" is associated with the events and featured in the name of the 15 July Democracy Museum to reinforce this idea. The museum serves as a carefully constructed and organized carrier of cultural memory to ensure "the events are never forgotten" and to promote "democratic values and solidarity". The museum narrative portrays the events of the July 15th as a threat to democracy and a successful defence of it by the people. The events are framed as a unification of the people, leader, and state working together to defend the state and preserve democracy, always ready to act when necessary.

However, a highly didactic and instructive style was used in the construction of this narrative. All the details of the narrative are presented in a way that leaves no room for any alternative interpretation or understanding, and they are imbued with the ideological subtexts that the government has attached to the experience. Both the informative videos at the entrance and the sharpness of the language used throughout

the museum can be interpreted as a concrete representation of the AKP's top-down memory construction efforts. In addition, due to the preferred methods of transmission, such as timeline manner, selective memory construction is witnessed. The transmission methods preferred in the museum aim to support the reconstruction of the narrative with highly mediated materials by reviving the experience in an artificial environment. Thus, the goal is to ensure that the constructed narrative has a character that is not remembered but rather reconstructed anew each time.

In terms of content, the political narrative constructed by the government is built upon various sets of concepts and dualities. First of all, a very sharp and clear definition of "internal and external enemies" is made. Coups are depicted as "the most important weapon in the hands of these enemies". In this context, the government focuses particularly on the tactics and strategies of the coup plotters, trying to prove its own innocence through its victimization narrative, thus reconstructing its own historical narrative from scratch. Additionally, in this way, the tightened security measures after the coup - such as the never-ending state of emergency and the decree laws - and consolidation of the new authoritarian regime are justified as a reasonable and acceptable response to a "terrifying enemy with both internal and external sources, against whom a comprehensive struggle is needed". Concepts such as "national will" and "elected government" are frequently emphasized in the narrative in an attempt to establish and impose the sources of the legitimacy of the government. "Old" Turkey is portrayed as synonymous with the "pro-coup mindset" and articulates the events of the July 15th to the country's history of coups. By doing so, the past coups experienced by the Republic are transformed into memory figures of the old Turkey, and the break that occurred on July 15 is presented as the founding epic/heroic narrative of the New Turkey. Also, through the constructed heroic narrative, an emotional attachment is attempted to be established. The most functional part of this epic narrative in terms of emotional attachment is the reconstruction of the concept of martyrdom with a religious and sacred meaning.

This chapter of the thesis is devoted to the evaluation and interpretation of the fieldwork carried out at the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum, which was

determined as the research object to answer the research questions by using visual, document and discourse analysis methods. The narrative constructed in the museum has been evaluated in the context of the reconstruction of political and cultural memory and the top-down memory-making process of the AKP government in accordance with the claims of the thesis. By this means, the instrumentalization of cultural memory carriers by the political power, and the dynamics and the semantic world of the newly constructed symbolic and ideological narrative of AKP's memory regime have been analysed.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In Turkey's recent history, after the July 15th coup attempt of 2016, people witnessed a new founding narrative and cultural memory-building process based on this experience in the new conditions created by the event. The main argument of this thesis is that the July 15th experience has been transformed into the most important memory figure of the memory regime of today's political power, in this construction process in which a top-down policy of commemoration is carried out through the organisation of various cultural memory carriers and the objectification of memory. The experience is mythologized with an epic narrative and transformed into a memory figure that can be associated and reconstructed with a concrete time, place and group. In this sense, the thesis's conceptual framework is generally discussed around collective and cultural memory, the instrumentalization of memory by the state, the politicisation of memory and cultural memory carriers.

The thesis methodologically adopted the approach of depth hermeneutics which consists of three essential phases, socio-historical analysis, formal/discursive analysis and re-interpretation to analyse symbolically constructed forms. This reconstruction process is examined in this study through the example of Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum, which is a memory space and cultural memory carrier of this narrative. Data collection and analysis used qualitative methods such as participant observation, visual, discursive, and content analysis. The designed study aims to answer four basic questions. We can list them as follows: What is the relationship between collective-cultural memory and political power? What is the function and importance of cultural memory carriers in this relationship? What did the AKP government re-establish, remember, revise or invent in its effort to construct a founding narrative through the

July 15th coup attempt? What kind of an epic narrative was constructed over this critical point through the politicisation of cultural memory, and with which cultural memory carriers was this narrative created and transmitted?

In response to the first question, this thesis demonstrates a close and instrumental relationship between collective-cultural memory and political power. Cultural memory can be used as a tool for political power in various ways. Above all, it can strengthen the legitimacy of those in power by shaping public perceptions of the past and present. This instrumentalisation can be done through selective memory by highlighting certain events or figures aligned with the political agenda of those in power while ignoring or belittling others. Also, through the instrumentalisation of collective-cultural memory politically, nationalism and patriotism are promoted, which can be used to justify political power and control. By creating a shared sense of history and identity, those in power can unite the people around a common goal or ideology that can strengthen their political power. Finally, in this relationship, collective-cultural memory can be used to control public discourse and shape public opinion. By controlling cultural memory carriers, those in power can promote their own interpretations of the past and present while silencing alternative voices and perspectives. As a result, together with the above-mentioned interpretations, it can be said that the thesis shows that there is a highly functional and instrumental relationship between collective-cultural memory and political power.

Regarding the second question, this study showed that cultural memory carriers organised and constructed by political power have a critical role in this instrumental relationship. Cultural memory carriers are institutions and artefacts that transmit and reconstruct cultural memory, including museums, monuments, education, media and other cultural institutions. Functionally, they serve to (re)construct, preserve and transmit cultural memory intergenerationally as mnemonics. Cultural memory carriers or mnemonics also shape people's perceptions of the past and present through the stories they tell, the images they display, and the messages they convey. Also, by constructing and organising these mnemonic carriers, those in power can strengthen their own legitimacy by supporting a particular version of history and present that is

compatible with their own political ideology. Another importance of cultural memory carriers is constructing a society's public memory identity. Cultural memory carriers can strengthen dominant ideologies and political power structures with past narratives or challenge them by promoting alternative narratives and perspectives. These carriers should be considered a field and tool for societal struggle and negotiation. Nevertheless, within the scope of this thesis, it should be emphasised as the basis that dominant ideologies and political powers organise them for their political purposes in terms of constructing and representing memory and, fixing point, forming and carrying dominant narratives.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be said that in response to the third question, the AKP government has reconstructed, recalled, revised, and invented various features of historical and political elements of Turkey in its effort to build a founding narrative through the July 15th. First of all, the AKP government has emphasised the role of Islam in Turkish history and politics, positioning themselves as defenders of Islamic values against secularist forces through the dichotomy of "Old" and "New" Turkey. This narrative was also used in the context of the July 15th, with the government framing the coup attempt as an attack on Islam and the will of the nation by the external powers, which were portrayed as Westernist and colonialist. Alongside, it has revised the role of the military in Turkish politics, casting the military as a threat to democracy and the will of the people as a result of the effort to articulate the July 15th in the history of coups in Turkey. By means of this revision, the government framed the coup attempt as a military intervention against the democratically elected government. While recalling this historical narrative of coups, he also benefited from selective mnemotechnics, focusing mostly on narratives in which the political tradition from which it came was victimised. Moreover, the AKP government has reconstructed the concept of the nation, emphasising the idea of a "Turkish-Islamic" nation through the instrumentality of the concepts of *vatan* and *millet,* which are composed of its semantic world intensively. While doing this, it used the July 15th narrative to frame the coup attempt as an attack on the Turkish nation and its sovereignty. Additionally, the AKP's own history is reconstructed through this narrative to construct itself as the heroic defender of democracy against the pro-coup mindset. In brief, the role of Islam

and the military, the concept of the nation, and the AKP's own history has reconstructed, recalled, revised, and invented elements in its effort to build a founding narrative through the July 15th. The government has used this narrative to strengthen its own legitimacy and control over society while marginalising opposition groups through the dualities on which the narrative is constructed and promoting a specific vision of national identity and its politics.

Finally, with regard to the last research question of the thesis, the construction of an epic narrative over the July 15th in Turkey involved the politicisation of cultural memory and the use of various cultural memory carriers to create and transmit the narrative. The government actively organised public speeches and utilised media organisations to frame the July 15th as an epic and heroic narrative. The government presented the event as a founding moment in the national memory of Turkey, emphasising the importance of democracy and the heroic resistance of the nation in the face of threats. The AKP government also organised new cultural memory carriers and places of memory to consolidate and objectify this narrative. For example, the Bosporus Bridge which is one of the most important symbolic places of this narrative is renamed the 15 July Martyrs' Bridge. The government invented national holidays like the July 15th Democracy and National Unity Day, which have become annual commemorations of the event. Lots of museums were also established such as the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum to exhibit mediated materials about the July 15th and embed the official narrative of the event. Furthermore, the government has used existing public institutions such as schools and mosques for construction, reinforcement and dissemination of its narrative. Selas and preachs which emphasised the sacred meaning of this brave experience and its spiritual significance were said in mosques. Schools and textbooks were arranged to dictate to students about the events of the July 15th and instrumentalized in terms of the hegemonic memory-making process of the dominant epic narrative of the July 15th. Finally, they utilised highly mediated and easily reproduced and distributed materials, such as images and videos of the events, so that they could be received by the masses and disseminate social influence of it. The Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum also plays an important role in the epic narrative construction process surrounding the July 15th in Turkey. By

means of the museum, AKP's government supports its standard historical narrative on this event and claims that the people and the government have a heroic role to play in protecting democracy. The museum is organised as a repository of cultural memory of this event, and it disseminates to the public an official narrative of the July 15th.

In this thesis, I argue that together with the memorialization practices of the July 15th, the AKP government have been tried to construct it as the most important memory figure of its own cultural and political memory regime. Various memorialization practices for the July 15th have been carried out by the AKP government in Turkey. Some of these practices are invented national holidays, construction of monuments and museums around this narrative, incorporation of the events of the July 15th into the education curriculum with a focus on promoting national unity and democratic values, using media tools to promote the narrative of the July 15th as a heroic resistance against the coup attempt and to praise the will of the people for defending democracy. In reconstruction of cultural memory of the July 15th, the government's ideological background and political position played an important role. The AKP government has utilised the narrative of the July 15th as a means to provide its political legitimacy and to promote its ideology of Turkish nationalism, Islamism, and a strong centralised government. The July 15th was portrayed by the government as a heroic struggle against antidemocratic forces who seek to undermine Turkey's sovereignty and national identity. In support and justification of the government's crackdown on political dissidents and critics following the event, this narrative was used on the purpose of promoting a sense of nationalism and patriotism in the public through mnemotechnics. Furthermore, this extraordinary effort to establish the dominance of a new founding narrative can be evaluated as part of the cultural hegemony struggle that the power claims to have not yet established, and reflections of this concern can be monitored by the effort of control over various cultural institutions, such as museums, education, and media.

The Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum is an example of the AKP government's efforts to reconstruct the cultural memory of the July 15th in line with its political ideology. The museum was opened in 2021 and is located near the Presidential

Complex in Ankara. It serves to promote the government's the July 15th narrativization as a heroic struggle between "Heroes" versus "Traitors." The materials include documents related to the coup attempt, such as photographs, videos, and personal information of the victims or "martyrs." The museum also includes a section on the government's response to the coup attempt, highlighting the bravery of the Turkish nation and the government's commitment to defending democracy as a reflection of yet another dichotomy like "Pro-Coup Mindset" versus "National Will". By establishing the museum as a carrier of cultural memory, the AKP government seeks to reconstruct a national memory while also promoting its political agenda and reinforcing its power. The museum serves as a mnemonic device of the government's version of the July 15th narrative that represents the government as the defender of democracy in Turkey. The Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum is a cultural memory carrier of the political memory constructed around the experience of the July 15th. The museum serves as a physical and symbolic representation of the government's narrative and interpretation of the July 15th, and it plays a role in the construction of cultural memory of the AKP memory regime. It was organised as a visual and educational tool for shaping the public's understanding of the event and contributes to the construction of a memory around the July 15th, which is linked to the government's political ideology. Hence, the Ankara 15 July Democracy Museum is a very specific example of how cultural memory carriers can be used to promote political ideologies and reinforce power and control over cultural memory by governments in terms of top-down memory-making process.

There are several determinant reasons why July 15 was constructed as the founding moment of the New Turkey discourse and the most critical memory figure of the new memory regime. The AKP government has utilised the occasion of the July 15th event as a means of promoting the idea of a resilient and cohesive Turkey, thereby reinforcing one of the dominant factors of its political image. Also, the government's narrative of the July 15th portrays the people as heroic defenders of democracy against anti-democratic powers. This narrative has been used to cultivate a sense of national pride. In addition, AKP has promoted the idea of martyrdom around the narrative of the July 15th, portraying those who died during the coup attempt as martyrs who

sacrificed their lives for the nation. This narrative has been used to evoke feelings of nationalism and to construct the idea that the AKP government is the protector of the people. The July 15th was evaluated as a founding moment of its founding narrative by the AKP government in the sense that it represents a critical moment in the party's history and identity. The July 15th, which was framed as a failed coup attempt, was interpreted as an important challenge to the political power and legitimacy of the AKP government. Therefore, defeat of the attempt, therefore, represented a turning point in consolidating the party's power and authority in Turkey. The AKP government has interpreted the July 15th as the founding moment of their political narrative that emphasises the party's role in defending democracy and protecting the nation from internal and external threats. This narrative strengthened the AKP's position as the dominant political force in Turkey and has been used to justify the government's policies and actions. In this sense, the July 15th has transformed from a breaking moment in the AKP's political identity and memory to a founding moment of its memory regime. This is also related to the "New Turkey" discourse. The "New Turkey" discourse can be related to the July 15 coup attempt as a founding moment in the sense that the failed coup represented a significant breaking moment for the AKP's vision for a new and transformed Turkey. The AKP has promoted the idea of a "New Turkey" as a key element of its political discourse, emphasising the need for a break from the "Old" Turkey and the construction of a new political and social order radically. In the aftermath of the coup attempt, the AKP government has instrumentalized the event to consolidate the idea of a "New Turkey" and to justify its authoritative policies and actions.

The AKP government's political instrumentalization of the July 15th narrative refers to the use of this event as a political tool to further its political agenda and maintain its hold on power. It is clear that the government has engaged in a top-down political memory construction by organising the past to meet and respond to the current needs of the present, and by acting as an authoritative decision-maker about what to remember and forget. This narrative is utilised to maintain the support of their political base by promoting on all occasions the idea that the AKP is the only political power that can safeguard Turkey's democracy and protect it from external threats. Also, it

serves to suppress dissent and opposition by portraying anyone who opposes the AKP government as a threat to the democracy and as being aligned with the forces that attempted the coup. Considering the post-coup attempt process, political instrumentalization of this narrative allows the AKP to further consolidate their power by presenting themselves as the sole defenders of the will of the people and democracy and by justifying any actions they take in the name of preserving these values.

In this thesis, which argues the top-down political construction of memory and the relationship between cultural memory and political power, it is controversial how artificial and fictional the memory constructed by the government is. However, it is worth noting that the construction of a collective memory or narrative around a particular event is always subject to interpretation, distortion and manipulation by those who have the power to construct it for political affairs and purposes. In the case of the July 15th in Turkey, the AKP government has been actively involved enormous effort in constructing and promoting a particular interpretation of the events and objectifying its cultural memory. Nevertheless there are those who argue that this narrative is artificial or exsufflicate, meaning that it has been inflated or exaggerated for political purposes. Actually, this super controversial character of this event is one of the key reasons why the AKP government invested intensively in the commemoration of the July 15th. The fact that this event is a very fragile narrative of the past is the reason for the extra effort by the government to construct solid commemoration projects. This study should be evaluated as a reinterpretation of the cultural and political memory of the July 15th through the socio-historical context and the formal/discursive structure of the constructed narrative.

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A. VIDEO TEXTS

Video 1: Colonization, Mandate and Coups

The roots of certain human groups exercising tyranny over others go back to far earlier periods of history. And the system of certain states subjugating others and their people to their own rule is called hegemony. Although the international tool of tyranny today is the military coup, different methods were used in the past to exercise tyranny over various geographies. In premodern times, colonialism used to empires' number one aim in instating tyranny over distant geographies. Western states that discovered the "New World" established local settler administrations to exploit these lands' rich resources. These colonial systems of rulership resemble coup regimes in their neglect of human welfare and rights in the lands where they were established. Just like juntas, colonizers exhaust the human resources of the geographies they control, impede their economic development, and concentrate power among a privileged elite. With the world's changing economic and political landscape, colonial rule gave way to proxy leadership and mandated territories. Colonizers had the chance to continue business as usual. Peoples that were forced to live under so-called independent mandated territories had no say in critical decision-making, and no way to force hegemonic powers to pay for the cost of human crises. Mandated rules used sectarian conflict and ethnic violence as tools to maintain their existence. Kashmir, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Palestine exemplify just a handful of the issues created by the false borders of colonial logic today. Although mandated territories officially ended after the Second World War, they continued their colonial structures in post-colonial lands grouped under the "Global South" through economic dependence and cultural imperialism. And in nations where this cycle was broken, military coups were put into

effect. The colonizers of the old world attempted to continue their economic and political exploitation of the new world order by instigating or creating the conditions for coups. Coups are not necessarily carried out by juntas or networks within the army alone. Many coups either have direct roots or supporters in foreign countries. Coups are the continuation of a system of hegemony created under the names of colonialism and mandated rule.

Video 2: History of Coups in Turkey

The bloody hands of coup instigators have intervened in our democracy and left marks on the history of our country many times. The Democratic Party won the first elections in the country since the end of the one-party system. Led by Celal Bayar and Adnan Menderes, they put the country on a course of developmentalism. The wide masses who were alienated by the one-party system began to be treated as equal citizens under the rule of the Democratic Party but this antagonized certain groups in Turkey. The political climate in the country suddenly shifted, triggered by provocations like student upheavals and the events of the 6th and 7th September. The so-called close-circle committee founded by a junta in the army took advantage of the unrest and seized control of the government on the 27th of May. At the end of trials, Turkey's elected Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and the prominent leaders of the Democratic Party were executed. In the general elections held on October 15th, 1961, the right-wing parties, the successors of the Democratic Party, reached a vote rate of %60. This time, however, coup supporters in the Turkish Armed Forces challenged the election's capacity to reflect the nation's political will. Cemal Gürsel was made President. What is known in Turkey's political history as the Çankaya Protocol was signed thereafter. The coup efforts didn't stop there. On February 22nd, 1962, Colonel Talat Aydemir attempted a coup but it was unsuccessful. On May 20th, 1963, Aydemir attempted another coup. It was once again unsuccessful and he was executed. In 1971, the Justice Party was in power under the leadership of Süleyman Demirel. Although the development movement was successfully underway, chaos was spreading in the country with right and left-wing groups being provoked to incide demonstrations. On March 9th, 1971, there was an unsuccessful coup attempt. It was stopped before it

began. On March 12th, another incitement took place, this time within the army's chain of command. Chief of Defense staff Memduh Tağmaç and its commanders-in-chief handed a memorandum targeting the government to President Cevdet Sunay. It demanded that above-party government be established. If the terms were not met, a coup would be instigated. Faced with this threat, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, resigned, which gave way to the political term 'hanging up his hat and leaving.'. The era that succeeded the 12th of March saw various political parties being dismantled, people undergoing tortures at Ziverbey Villa unconscionable executions being carried out and the freedom of press being destroyed. In the period of instability that ensued as a result of the memorandum, there were 11 changes in government in 9 years. Chief of Defense Staff Kenan Evren took advantage of the Internal dividedness of the country and instigated a coup on September 12th, 1980. Just one day before the coup, on September 11th, the General of the Air Forces Tahsin Şahinkaya had returned to Turkey from United States. The period that succeeded the September 12 coup painted a grim picture. 650 thousand arrests, 171 people tortured to death under custody and 50 people for whom the execution sentence was carried out. In the 1990's, Turkey was grappling with economic and political crises. In the 1995 elections, the Welfare Party came in first under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. The period saw the gradual recovery of public economics. Prime Minister Erbakan put the D-8 project into action, which signaled that Turkey was becoming more independent in its foreign policy. The Prime Minister was met with reactionism despite his policies, however. The news articles from that period indicated that reactionism was taking place in the country. On the 4th of February 1997, following a theater play about Jerusalem at a district municipality, tanks were mobilized in the Sincan district of Ankara. Then on the 28th February, the Postmodern Coup was carried out within the National Security Council. In the period that succeeded the 28th of February, 600 thousand kerchiefed students weren't allowed into schools and universities. More than a million government officials lost their jobs, amongst them mayors and high-ranking managers. More than 7 thousand publications were confiscated. 26 banks went bankrupt. 1732 Quran courses and 21 charitable foundations were shut down in a 5-year span. Istanbul's then-mayor Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was imprisoned for a poem he read. The public showed their reaction to the depression the country was dragged into by the February

28 coup at the ballot box. At the November 3rd, 2002 elections, AK Part, led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, won by a landslide. The political ban placed on Erdoğan was lifted following an amendment to constitution. With Turkey in talks to join the European Union, certain democratic reforms started taking place. The state of emergency that had lasted 15 years was lifted. Turkey began recovering from the effects of the '99 and '01 crises and was on a fast-paces rise. The stand-by agreements Turkey had signed with IMF became a thing of the past. This period saw resistance from anti-democratic powers, however. Those weren't pleased with new order incited what's now referred to as the 367-seat crisis. They put forth the two thirds rule, which states that parliament needs to have at least 367 members present at the assembly for an election to take place. The 27th of April in 2007 was the day the first round of elections was held. It was a long process. On the night of April 27th, an e-memorandum that weighed in the Presidential Elections was published on the Turkish General Staff's website. The government party gave a stern reaction to the e-memorandum. As the chosen party, they didn't let up as easily as Demirel had on the 12th of March. They reminded the Turkish General Staff that they worked in association with Prime Ministry. Following the political and judicial crisis, an early election was held and AK Party emerged as the winner. Subsequently, a referendum for an amendment to the constitution was passed that allowed the people to choose their President. AK Party is the only party in Turkey's political history that's had a closure case filed against it and concluded during its time in power. The case was opened on the 14th of March, 2008. It requested that AK Party be closed and that its political leaders, including Erdoğan be placed under political ban. It was concluded on July 30th. AK Party was not shut down and the indictment, commonly referred to as "the internet indictment" because it relied heavily on internet articles, was archived. In the years to come, Turkey faced its history with coups and people who had instigated them. The surviving members of the September 12 and February 28 coups answered for their actions in court.

Video 3: History of Coups Around the Globe

(...) Prime Minister Adnan Menderes had also been executed following a so-called trial by members of the 1960 coup in Turkey. Coups drive their respective and surrounding

countries to instability. At times coups drive their countries to civil war, and at times they leave them vulnerable to intervention from surrounding nations. Puppet regimes are established. For this reason, a rise in the number of such coups was observed right before the Second World War and in the span of the Cold War, for instance. Certain coups throughout world history bore consequences that affected Turkey closely. In 1974 the Greek junta conspired to take over the entirety of the Cyprus Island by bringing the puppet leader Nikos Sampson to power. After acts of violence targeting Turks increased in the island, the Cyprus Peace Operation was launched and safety was restored. Southern Cyprus' puppet leader and government fell. Coups can be triggered by internal and external circumstances. Many times in history, countries resorted to coups as a strategy to destabilize and weaken other countries. The puppet regimes that were established in the wake of the coups served external powers. During World War I, the coups that took place in the Middle East served the interests of foreign figures such as Gertrude Belle and Thomas Edward Lawrence also known as 'Lawrence of Arabia', who aimed to take those lands from the Ottoman Empire. Gertrude Belle claimed to have 'drawn the map' herself, Winston Churchill, was rumored to have hiccuped while drawing the borders, his shaking hand deciding where the lines would lie. As a result of the interferences of external powers in Africa and the Middle East, democracy was unable to be established in the lands and coups and instabilities marked their unfortunate fates. The Algerian War of Independence begun in opposition to France's 132-year colonial rule, lasted in 8 years and resulted in Algeria's independence in 1962 at the price of 1.5 million lives. After choosing independence with a %99,72 referendum vote following its victory, Algeria lost its democracy in a coup that took place in 1965. It is widely known that sovereign powers instigate coups for economic profit. Operation AJAX was planned and executed by the U.S. and U.K. Mohammad Mosaddegh. Their aim was to retain control over Iran's petrol reserves. It was discovered that the street incidents that occurred in Tehran prior to the coup were paid for and provoked by Kermit Roosevelt Jr. In 1979, Kermit Roosevelt Jr. boasted with pride that they'd only had to spend 60 thousand dollars of the 1-million-dollar budget they initially thought would be necessary to instigate the coup. Although Operation AJAX is one of the better-known examples, it is by no

means the first time an imperialist power has launched an operation to take over a foreign government. (...)

Video 4: Historical Transformation of FETÖ

The Fethullahist Terrorist Organization is an armed terrorist group formed under the directives of the retired imam, Fethullah Gülen, and constituted by people whose ideas and worldviews have been "molded/programmed". The organization whose origins lie in the İzmir Kestane Bazaar of 1966, has for many years concealed itself behind a program of educational support for children of lower-income families. FETÖ's true objective was to brainwash young minds in order to infiltrate government, and to take over control of the nation first, then of leadership wherever it was based, through cadres that answered to the FETÖ Leader alone. With this aim, FETÖ founded the 1972 Akyazılı Foundation, and with the funds it has accumulated, opened brainwashing centers such as training cells, schools, and dormitories. The FETÖ Çatı indictment contains the verdict that the organization attempted to place the youth it had brainwashed in military high schools and sergeant training programs since 1974.The FETÖ Leader begins to call its indoctrinated members the 'golden generation' by 1976. The FETÖ establishment launched its magazine Sızıntı in 1979 to expand its propaganda. It published an article with Gülen's signature on October 1980, in support of the September 12 military regime. After the coup, FETÖ's infiltration of military academies and government branches increased. This intensive infiltration tactic drew attention and made news in NOKTA magazine in 1986, but the results did not change. FETÖ members that infiltrated military academies in those years emerged before us as the very sergeant-uniformed traitors who gave orders to fire at the people during the July 15 coup attempt. In 1985, the first tutoring institution connected to FETÖ, FEM, was founded. FETÖ, which wanted to increase its power in the media, took over Zaman newspaper in 1987. And in 1989, it opened the first Gulf or Körfez Tutoring Centers. The Soviet Union's dissolution became a period of expansion for FETÖ's shadow alliance network that has been under investigation for 40 years. FETÖ opened school after school in Turkic republics. Nuri Gündeş, the National Intelligence Organization's Head of Foreign Intelligence wrote in his book,

A Close Witness of Revolutions and Anarchy, that: "In schools opened by the Gülen community, especially in the Republic of Turkey, CIA agents with diplomatic passports were harbored as 'English teachers'" Similar information was contained in the 2017 American Global Research report. The National Intelligence Organization's 1991 report showing FETÖ members' support of CIA agents in Turkey emerged years later. Gülen went to USA in 1992. After this 55-day visit, FETÖ began expanding. In 1993, it founded the Samanyolu TV channel, in 1994 the Journalist and Writers' Foundation, and in 1996 Bank Asya. This was a time when FETÖ fostered closer relationships with politicians. The FETÖ leader, who met with important Christian ministers in New York in 1997, also met with the Pope at the Vatican in 1998. He was taken to the Vatican inside the Turkish Ambassador's vehicle. The FETÖ leader, who took a stance in favor of the soldiers during the February 28th postmodern coup, could still not escape investigation. After intelligence from high sources in government, Gülen escaped to the USA. Since then, he resides in Pennsylvania. Three of the letters presented by the FETÖ leader for his lawsuit to obtain indefinite resident status in the USA, bear signatures by high-level CIA agents. The FETÖ leader escaped to the USA, but the organization continued to establish itself in all strategic branches of government. Along with the rise of members who had infiltrated the Turkish Armed Forces and Law Enforcement, FETÖ's activities increased in such institutions as the Council of Judges and Prosecutors the higher education council ÖSYM, the military medical academy, The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, ASELSAN, the telecommunications presidency, and TÜRKSAT. The FETÖ establishment, which always displayed support for elected leadership, showcased a stance in favor of democracy until 2010. The organization, which used the presence of pro-coup elements to its advantage, continued its public diplomacy during this time with several events. Since the 1980s, it utilized the giant media conglomerate comprised of 3 news agencies, 16 TV and 23 radio channels, 45 papers, 15 magazines, 29 presses, and hundreds of websites, with the nation's political design and hegemony in mind. FETÖ, which attempted many investigations, chief among them Ergenekon and Balyoz, in order to prosecute and suppress anyone opposed to their interests, also began to put its plans to take over the state into effect in 2012. The plans of National Intelligence Undersecretary Hakan Fidan and FETÖ members operating through him

to prosecute then-Prime Minister Erdoğan on February 7, 2012, failed. After political leadership decided to close down FETÖ's tutoring centers, which acted as its greatest human resource, in November of 2013, FETÖ proceeded with a prosecutorial coup. It was discovered that the prosecutors linked to the 17-25 December operations had referred, in their official documents, to Prime Minister Erdoğan as the 'Prime Minister at the time'. As a result of the struggle of that period, FETÖ, which understood it'd be losing the cadres it had spent decades infiltrating government through, decided consequent to the November 1, 2015 election in which AKP won, to stage a coup. The FETÖ establishment, which carried out its activities in great secrecy, forbade the wives of its members in the Turkish Armed Forces from wearing headscarves advised officers to consume alcohol to evade any association with FETÖ, and branded them with diverse identities, sometimes Kemalist, sometimes Alawi, while using code-words and encrypted communications for the past 35 years, was dealt repeated and heavy blows. Various factions are forming inside the organization, whose financial resources have become depleted, and that has lost thousands of members it used to infiltrate the Turkish government, signaling dissolution since the traitorous July 15 coup attempt. Through its complex shadow network, FETÖ continues to carry out dark propaganda and lobbying campaigns against Turkey in the various nations where its based.

Video 5: FETÖ's Preparation Process of the July 15 Coup Attempt

After the December 17/25, judicial coup attempt was eradicated, there began a struggle against the supporters of the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) within the public and the army. After the elections on November 1st, 2015, the nation gave the government full authority to rid the community of this terrorist organization. The nation's unwavering stance against FETÖ, who conspired to start a coup through the court system, helped foundations rid themselves of its supporters who had infiltrated their infrastructures. With many of their members dismissed from various foundations, FETÖ realized that they couldn't take the country by conspiring with their connections in the court system, so they decided to instigate a coup with the help of their members within the army instead. As of December 27th, 2015, FETÖ's coup coordinator Adil

Öksüz started visiting the Akıncı Air Base which served as the organization's headquarters. Until July 15th, he was seen there 12 times. (...) The FETÖ members in the army were prompted to action with the code word "Cappadocia residents." Adil Öksüz conveyed the ringleader's instructions to high-ranking FETÖ members, and they conveyed them to FETÖist imams. The meetings began in Ankara and continued in İstanbul and parts of Anatolia. While the preparations for the treason were underway, FETÖ-associated media outlets and mostly-fugitive FETÖ members signaled the coup. At meetings that took place in Konutkent, Ankara on July 6th-9th, which troops would be employed, critical locations that would be bombed and which generals would be detained were discussed. The 38 members of the so-called Peace at Home council who would lead the treacherous insurgence were selected. This group decided on matters pertaining to the period succeeding the coup such as designations, dismissals and the judges and prosecutors who would serve at so-called martial law courts. On July 7th, under the leadership of the İzmir Deputy Chief Public Prosecutor, the first phase of the operation to catch FETÖist officers took place. The second phase would begin on July 16th. From 10-15 of July, the Eğirdir Mountain Commando School and Training Center Commander worked to dispatch hundreds of commandos to Ankara for the night of the coup. Between the 10th and 15th of July, th so-called Manisa and İzmir Martial Law Commander made preparations to invade İzmir's crucial public enterprises.On the 12th of July, a portion of FETÖist soldiers and FETÖist imams came together for the first time. Everyone was asked to follow the distribution of roles. At the July 13th meeting, pilots who would play an active role on coup night end members of the so-called Peace at Home Council met. They announced that the coup would begin on July 16th at 03:00. On the 14th of July, the pilots who would play an active role on coup night gathered again, The F-16s that would be used in bombings had targeting pods placed on them. In meetings that took place July 14th, coup members discussed how they would 'fight fire with fire' and made decisions on high-ranking officers that would be captured at the Moda Deniz Club. On July 14th, assassination plans aimed at President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan were also discussed.

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Toplumlar, nesilden nesle birçok farklı şekilde aktarılan çeşitli tarihselliklere, deneyimlere, anlatılara, hikayelere ve mitlere sahiptir. Bu anlatıların tümü, kolektif belleğin içeriğini oluşturur. Ancak kolektif bellek, katılaşmış veya statik bir yapı olarak ele alınamaz. Zamanla değişir, dönüşür ve sürekli yeniden inşa edilir. Yanısıra, aynı veya yakın zamansal ve mekânsal bağlamlarda, toplumsal olarak inşa edilmiş farklı kolektif bellekler mevcuttur. Bunlardan bazıları kurucu veya hâkim anlatılar olarak tanımlanırken, diğerleri zamanlarının hiyerarşik, siyasi ve sosyal güç ilişkilerine göre alternatif anlatılar olarak sınıflandırılır. İktidar seçkinleri veya farklı siyasi aktörler, hangi deneyimlerin veya olayların kaydedileceği ve hatırlanacağı veyahut hangilerinin silinip unutulacağına karar verip, bunları organize edebilecekleri resmi tarihyazımı mekanizması üzerinde kontrol sahibidir. Bu amaçla, kolektif belleğe müdahalelerde bulunarak geçmişi yeniden yorumlar, yeniden inşa çabasına girişir ve farklı anlatılar, destanlar ve mitler icat ederler. Bunu yaparken, bu 'yüceltilmiş' tarihi sarsacak olaylara odaklanmaz, onlara dair bilgiyi atlar ya silikleştirirler. Bu yolla ulusal kimliğin sınırlarını belirleyerek, 'yüce, homojen ve şanlı' bir kimlik tanımı oluşturmaya çalışırlar. Geçmişte yaşanan felaketler ve toplumsal travmalar bu anlamda araçsallaştırılır. Devlet, bu inşa sürecinin aktörlerinden yalnızca biri olsa da farklı hegemonik yöntemler ve araçlarla ideolojisini bu anlatıları kurumsallaştırarak sabitlemeye ve yaymaya çalışır. Bir diğer yandan, anlatıları veya alternatif bellekleri 'sessizleştirilen' sosyal gruplar, varlıklarını ve temsiliyetlerini sürdürebilmek adına yine çeşitli anımsatıcı teknikleri kullanarak bu anlatıları hatırlamaya ve aktarmaya devam ederler. Böylece, kolektif bellek, çatışan belleklerin sürekli olarak çarpıştığı bir müdahale ve müzakere alanına dönüşür.

Bu tezde, kolektif-kültürel hafızanın politik bir mücadele alanı olarak araçsallaştırılması ve 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi (2016) sonrasında Türkiye'de kültürel hafızanın 'yukarıdan aşağıya' yeniden inşa süreci ele alınmıştır. Tezin temel

argümanlarından biri, AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) hükümeti tarafından 15 Temmuz ile birlikte yeni bir kuruluş anlatısının inşa edildiği ve bu anlatı aracılığıyla "Yeni Türkiye"nin ve onun yeni ulusunun ideolojik bir tanımının oluşturulmaya çalışıldığıdır. Bu anlamda, hükümet, kendi politik konumunu güçlendirmek ve meşruiyetini sağlamak adına bazı kritik adımlar atmıştır. 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi, yeni bir kurucu anlatı oluşturma amacı ve kültürel belleğin yeniden inşası ve hafızalaştırma yöntemleri aracılığıyla inşa edilmiş ve AKP hükümetinin bellek rejiminin en önemli bellek figürü haline gelmiştir.

Tez, siyasi iktidar ve kolektif-kültürel bellek arasındaki ilişkiye, bu ilişkide kültürel bellek taşıyıcılarının işlevi ve önemine, AKP hükümetinin 15 Temmuz anlatısı ile kültürel bellek taşıyıcılarını organize ederken içeriğe dair nelerin üzerinde durup neleri silikleştirdiğine ve bu epik anlatıyı inşa etmek ve aktarmak üzere kültürel bellek taşıyıcılarından nasıl yararlandığına dair sorular sormakta ve tez boyunca bu sorulara cevap aramaktadır.

Tezin amacı, yakın tarihli ve birçok farklı sosyal ve tarihsel dinamiğe sahip bir deneyim olarak 15 Temmuz'un çeşitli kültürel bellek taşıyıcıları aracılığıyla anlatılaştırılması ve sembolik olarak somutlaştırılmasıyla, iktidar ve kültürel bellek arasındaki ilişkiyi daha yakından inceleyerek bu ilişkiye dair daha derin bir içgörü geliştirmek ve bu sayede literatüre katkıda bulunmaktır. Bu çalışmada bellek figürleri tanımına dayanarak, 15 Temmuz'u farklı boyutlarıyla bir bellek figürü yapan özellikler tartışılmıştır. Bu noktada, John B. Thompson tarafından geliştirilen derin hermeneutik yaklaşımı, sembolik/ kültürel formaların onlara yüklenen anlam ağları ve ideolojik olarak biçimlendirilmesini incelemek ve bu formların sosyo-tarihsel analizini yapıp ona yüklenen anlamları yeniden yorumlayabilmek için metodolojik çerçeve olarak benimsenmiştir.

Geçmişin günümüzde temsili, geçmişte yaşanmış bir deneyimi tecrübe etmek ile temsili bir şekilde hatırlamak/ geri çağırmak arasındaki farkı oluşturur. Bellek sadece saklamaz. Yaşananları yapılandırır, inşa eder ve yeniden inşa eder, kimlik ve aidiyet ilişkisi açısından da toplumsal ve siyasal bir bağlamda incelenmesi gerekir zira

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toplumsal bellek ve kimlik arasında karşılıklı bir ilişki vardır. Bu çalışmada ele alınan şekliyle, bellek sadece anıları canlandırmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda mevcut toplumsal düzeni meşrulaştırır ve anın ihtiyaçlarına göre yeniden yapılandırılabilir. Geçmişin nasıl hatırlandığı, yorumlandığı, yeniden inşa edildiği ve aktarıldığı, onu bellek figürleri ile nesneleştirerek günümüzde sürekli olarak yeniden inşa etme çabasının içeriğini oluşturan dinamik olarak değerlendirilmelidir. AKP hükümeti, birçok farklı kültürel bellek taşıyıcısı inşa ederek 15 Temmuz'a dair oluşturduğu anlatıyı somutlaştırmış ve araçsallaştırmıştır. Yer isimlerindeki değişiklikler, müzeler, müfredatın değişmesiyle ders kitaplarına giren 15 Temmuz anlatıları, anıtlar, anmalar, olayın popüler kültürdeki yansımaları… Bu giderek uzayan liste, 15 Temmuz'un kültürel bellek taşıyıcılarına örnek teşkil edebilecek çeşitli materyalleri kapsar ve bu konudaki çalışmalarda incelenebilir örneklemi sunar. Ancak, başkent Ankara'da, ve hatta Beştepe'deki yeni Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi'nin hemen önüne inşa edilen Ankara 15 Temmuz Demokrasi Müzesi, taşıdığı tüm sembolik anlamlar ve hatırlatıcı araçlarla kapsamlı bir değerlendirmenin konusu olarak bu araştırmanın ampirik nesnesi olarak belirlenmiştir. Bellek figürlerini tanımlayan özellikler - zaman ve mekan ile somut bir ilişki, bir grup ile somut bir ilişki ve yeniden inşa için bağımsız bir kapasite (Assmann, 2011) - AKP'nin bellek rejiminin semantik dünyasını yeniden inşa eden, nesneleştiren ve harekete geçiren bu sembolik kültürel oluşuma bakarak analiz edilebilir. Bu bağlamda, müzenin geçmişi nasıl temsil ettiğini ve anlatıyı nasıl inşa ettiği, müze envanterinde kullanılan dokümanlar ile beraber irdelenmiştir. Bu doğrultuda, veri toplama ve bu verinin analizi için, seçilen örnekleme uygun olarak, katılımcı gözlem, söylem, doküman ve görsel analizi gibi araştırma yöntemlerini içeren nitel bir alan araştırması yapılmıştır.

Tez üç ana bölümden oluşur. Bunlardan ilki kavramsal çerçeve ve teorik tartışmayı içeren birinci bölüm iken ikinci ve üçüncü bölümler araştırma soruları ve mevcut literatür çerçevesinde seçilen örnek üzerinden konuyu ele alan analiz bölümleridir. Tezin teorik çerçevesinin sunulduğu ikinci bölümde, kolektif bellek kavramına tarih, kimlik ve iktidar kavramları ile ilişkisi bağlamında genel bir bakış sunulduktan sonra bellek çalışmalarında temel bir kaynak olan Maurice Halbwachs'ın kolektif bellek tanımı, hafızanın toplumsal çerçeveleri bağlamında açıklanmıştır. (2019) Tezin teorik

çerçevesi, Halbwachs'ın (1992) toplumsal bellek kavramından yola çıkarak, bu teori temelinde, Jan Assmann (2011) ve Aleida Assmann (2010) tarafından geliştirilen kültürel bellek ve siyasi bellek kavram setleri üzerine inşa edilmiştir. Resmi tarih, kolektif kimliğin inşasında geçmişten hatırlanması ya da hatırlanmaması gereken olayları ve anlatıları siyasi bir tercihin sonucu olarak belirler, dolayısıyla iktidar için hafıza alanının müdahale edilebilirliği ve inşa edilebilirliği onu siyaset alanına çeker. Böylece, bir hafızaya sahip olmaktan ziyade "hafıza oluşturmak" olarak nitelenebilecek politik bellek kavramı ortaya çıkar. (Assmann, 2010, pp. 40-44) Toplumsal bellek tanımı, kültürel ve politik belleği çatı kavram olarak içerse de, aşağıdan yukarıya belleğin yeniden inşası meselesini tartışmak, iktidar sahiplerinin otoriter bellek rejimi oluşturma performanslarını ve kurucu anlatıların sembolizasyonu ve nesneleştirilmesi yoluyla süreklilik, meşruiyet ve otorite sağlanması amacıyla belleğin araçsallaştırılmasını tartışabilmek adına kültürel bellek ve politik bellek daha uygun araçlardır. Jan Assmann'ın kavramsallaştırmalarına dayanarak kültürel bellek ve kültürel belleğin aktarım yolları tartışılmış, bu bağlamda, tezin ana kavramsal çerçevesini oluşturan bellek figürleri tanımının üzerinde özellikle durulmuştur. Kültürel bellek, toplumların kolektif geçmişlerini hatırlama, koruma ve aktarma yollarını ifade eder. Kültürel belleğin işlevsel alanları, kültürel belleğin belirli toplumsal işlevleri yerine getirmek için araçsallaştırılması anlamına gelmektedir. Başka bir deyişle, geçmişi hatırlama ve aktarma eylemi, toplumda belirli bir amaca hizmet eder. Kültürel anlamın inşası, dolaşımı ve dönüşümü kurumsal ve yapay olarak gerçekleşebilir. Kültürel bellek, anlamın katı kurallara gömülü olduğu nesneleştirmeye dayalıdır. Bu nesneleştirme yoluyla resmileştirilir. Bu nesneleştirmenin en önemli aracıları ise bellek figürleridir. Belleğin yukarıdan aşağıya şekillendirilebileceğini düşünen statik yaklaşımın aksine, deneyimin tekil olmadığı gerçeğine dayanarak farklı öznelerin, hafızaların ve anlatıların varlığı tartışılmazdır. Bu bakış açısından iktidar sahipleri hafızayı tesis ve inşa eden tek aktör değildir ve sahip olduğu güçle hafızayı tamamen domine eden tek aktör olarak değerlendirilmemelidir. Fakat bu tezde, yukarıdan aşağıya bir hafıza inşasının mümkün olup olmadığından ziyade, iktidar sahiplerinin belleği bugünün ihtiyaçları ve politik amaçları doğrultusunda inşa ve organize etme çabası ve yöntemleri ele alınacaktır.

"15 Temmuz: AKP Bellek Rejiminin Bellek Figürü" başlıklı üçüncü bölümde, 15 Temmuz'un AKP hükümeti tarafından bir bellek figürü olarak yeniden yapılandırılma süreci tartışılmıştır. Bu bölümde, 15 Temmuz anlatısının kısa bir sosyo-tarihsel analizi ve Yeni Türkiye bellek rejiminin biçimsel/diskursif yapısı tartışılmıştır. Bu bölümde, 15 Temmuz anlatısı, belirli toplumsal ve tarihsel koşullarda "üretilen, iletilen, alınan" ve yorumlanan, "belirgin sembolik bir yapı" olarak (Thompson, 1990, ss. 272-281) ele alınmıştır. Bellek figürleri, onu icat eden, organize eden ve ileten iktidar elitlerinin ideolojik anlam ağlarıyla donatılmıştır. Politik ve kültürel belleği sabitlemek ve somutlaştırmak için hizmet eden bu figürleri yaratmanın en önemli stratejilerinden biri, anlatısallaştırmadır. Bu nedenle, bu bölümde yapılan tartışma, 15 Temmuz anlatısının biçimsel/ söylemsel analizini de içermektedir. Bu tarihte yaşananlar, deneyimi hazırlayan toplumsal, tarihsel ve siyasi süreçler ve dinamikler irdelenmiş, bu deneyimin, AKP'nin Yeni Türkiyesi'nin en önemli bellek figürüne dönüşme süreci tartışılmıştır. "Eski" ve "Yeni" Türkiye dikotomisinin de incelendiği bu bölümün gösterdiği üzere, AKP hükümeti, eskinin tamamen terk edildiği ve yeninin başlangıcını simgeleyen bir kuruluş anına duyduğu ihtiyacı 15 Temmuz'a dair oluşturduğu anlatı üzerinden tesis etmeye çabalamış ve bu sebeple bu deneyimi, "eski" Türkiye kurucu anlatısına alternatif bir kurucu an olarak kurumsallaştırmıştır. Akabinde, 15 Temmuz 2016, kültürel ve siyasi belleğin 'hızlanan' yeniden inşa sürecinde bir dönüm noktası olarak ele alınmış, kurucu anlatısının kurucu anı olarak bu tarihi belirleyen AKP hükümeti, bu anlatının siyasi ve kültürel belleğini diri tutmak, yapılandırmak ve sağlamlaştırmak için birçok anımsatıcı teknik kullandığı topyekün bir seferberliğe girişmiştir. Çalışmanın ampirik nesnesinin ele alındığı son bölüme geçmeden evvel, bu anlatının hangi anımsatıcı yöntemler ve kültürel bellek taşıyıcıları ile inşa edildiğine dair bir perspektif sunulmuştur.

Tezin gövdesini oluşturan son bölümde ise, yaratılan kültürel belleğin, gerek inşa edildiği alan, gerekse içinde yer alan materyaller ve onların içeriği açısından oldukça sembolik bir taşıyıcısı olan Ankara 15 Temmuz Demokrasi Müzesi'nde gerçekleştirilen saha çalışmasının ayrıntılarına ve bulgularına yer verilmiştir. Sosyo-

tarihsel ve biçimsel analizin bulgularından yola çıkılarak yorumlanan müze deneyimi, müzenin tasarımına uygun bir izlek ile aktarılmıştır. Ankara 15 Temmuz Demokrasi Müzesi, AKP hükümetinin 15 Temmuz'a dair kültürel belleği kendi siyasi ideolojisi doğrultusunda yeniden inşa etmek için oluşturduğu bellek mekanlarından biridir. Ankara'da, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi yakınında yer alan müze, 2021 yılında ziyarete açılmıştır. Müzedeki anlatı, 15 Temmuz'u ulusun "Kahramanlar"ı ile ulusa ihanet eden "Hainler" arasındaki mücadele olarak tasvir etmektedir. Materyaller arasında, darbe girişimiyle ilgili belgeler, fotoğraflar, videolar ve kayıpların veya "şehitlerin" ayrıntılı kişisel bilgileri yer almaktadır. Müzede üzerinde durulan bir diğer önemli anlatı ise, hükümetin darbe girişimine verdiği yanıta dairdir. Bu anlatıda, Türk milletinin darbecilere karşı sergilediği cesur duruş ve hükümetin demokrasiyi savunmaya olan bağlılığı, "Darbe Yanlısı Zihniyet" vs. "Milli İrade" gibi bir başka ikilik üzerinden kurgulanmaktadır. AKP hükümeti, bu müzeyi olaya dair organize edilen kültürel belleğin taşıyıcısı olarak inşa etmiştir ve onun aracılığıyla, milli hafızayı yeniden inşa etmeyi ve aynı zamanda kendi siyasi gücünü pekiştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Müze, hükümetin darbe girişimi anlatısının anımsatıcısı olarak hizmet verir ve hükümetin kendisine dair anlatısını da Türkiye'de demokrasinin savunucusu temsiliyeti etrafında örer. Hükümetin 15 Temmuz deneyimine ilişkin anlatısının ve kendi ideolojik yorumunun fiziksel ve sembolik bir temsili olan müze, AKP hafıza rejiminin inşasında oldukça önemli bir rol oynar. Müze, darbe girişimi hakkındaki kamuoyu anlayışını şekillendirmek için görsel ve eğitsel bir araç olarak hizmet verir ve 15 Temmuz etrafında oluşan hafızanın hükümetin siyasi ideolojisi ile uyumlu bir şekilde inşasına katkıda bulunur. Anlatının inşasında son derece didaktik ve öğretici bir dil kullanılmıştır. Anlatının tüm detayları, alternatif bir yorum veya anlama hiçbir mahal vermeyecek şekilde sunulmuş ve deneyime yüklenen ideolojik alt metinlerle doldurulmuştur. Girişteki bilgilendirici videolarda ve müzedeki her türlü materyalin sunumunda kullanılan keskin ve kesin dil, AKP'nin üstten aşağı bellek inşa çabalarının somut bir temsili olarak yorumlanabilir. Ayrıca, zaman tüneli şeklinde tercih edilen aktarım yöntemi, seçici bellek inşası savını güçlendirmektedir. Müzede tercih edilen anımsatıcı yöntemler, deneyimi yapay bir ortamda yeniden canlandırarak yüksek oranda dolayımlı malzemelerle anlatıyı yeniden inşa etmeyi desteklemeyi amaçlar. Böylece, inşa edilen anlatıyı hatırlatmaktan ziyade her seferinde yeniden inşa

eden/ canlandıran bir karaktere sahiptir. Kurulan ideolojik anlam ağları ile yüklü anlatıyı tahlil edebilmek adına, kullanılan video metinleri, görüntüler ve metinler analiz edilmiş, bu sembolik form tüm dinamikleri ile yaşanan deneyim üzerinden tartışılmıştır.

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmanın gösterdiği gibi, kolektif-kültürel bellek ile iktidar arasında oldukça yakın ve araçsal bir ilişki bulunmaktadır. Kolektif kültürel-bellek, iktidarın meşruiyetini güçlendirmek için kamuoyu algısını şekillendirmede bir araç olarak kullanılır. Bellek seçici bir şekilde biçimlendirilir ve iktidarın politik gündemi ve amaçları ile uyumlu olayları veya durumları vurgulayıp, diğerlerini görmezden gelir veya önemsizleştirir. Ayrıca, kolektif kültürel bellek, Türkiye'de ulusal hafızanın en çok üzerinde durduğu milliyetçilik ve vatanseverlik gibi ideolojileri teşvik etmek için amacıyla kullanılır ve bunlar da siyasi gücü ve kontrolü sürdürmek ve meşrulaştırmak için araçsallaştırılır. Güç sahipleri, ortak bir hedef veya ideoloji etrafında halkı birleştirerek politik hakimiyetlerini güçlendirir. Son olarak, kolektif-kültürel bellek, kamuoyunu denetlemek ve şekillendirmek için organize edilir. İktidar, kültürel bellek taşıyıcılarının kontrolüyle geçmişe ve günümüze dair belleğin kendi versiyonlarını teşvik ederken alternatif sesleri ve bakış açılarını susturur, sessizleştirir.

Yanısıra, bu çalışma, kültürel bellek taşıyıcılarının bu ilişkide önemli bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir. Kültürel bellek taşıyıcıları, müzeler, anıtlar, eğitim, medya ve diğer kültürel kurumlar da dahil olmak üzere kültürel belleği ileten ve sürekli yeniden inşa eden yapılardır. Bu taşıyıcıların işlevi, kültürel belleği sabitlemek, bir nesilden diğerine aktarmak, korumak ve yeniden yapılandırmaktır. Ayrıca, kültürel belleğin hep yeniden inşa ve müzakere edildiği mekanlar olarak da hizmet ederler. Anlattıkları hikayeler, sergiledikleri görüntüler ve ilettikleri mesajlar aracılığıyla geçmiş ve bugün hakkında kamu algısını belirleyebilirler. Aynı zamanda, siyasi ideolojilerine uygun bir tarih anlayışı ve mevcut durum değerlendirmesini destekleyerek, iktidardakilerin meşruiyetini pekiştirebilirler. Kültürel bellek taşıyıcılarının önemi, toplumun grup kimliğini oluşturmak için operasyonel olmalarından kaynaklanmaktadır. Baskın ideolojileri ve siyasi iktidar yapılarını güçlendirebilirler veya alternatif anlatı ve perspektifleri teşvik ederek ona meydan

okuyabilirler. Bu nedenle, farklı çıkarları ya da toplum için farklı vizyonları olan gruplar için mücadele mekanlarıdır. Kültürel hafıza taşıyıcıları, siyasi güç bağlamında özellikle önemlidir çünkü mevcut durumu meşrulaştırmak veya meydan okumak için kullanılabilirler. İktidardakiler, kültürel bellek taşıyıcılarını meşruiyetlerini ve toplum üzerindeki kontrollerini pekiştirmek için kullanabilirken, alternatif anlatılara sahip gruplar bu anlatıları desteklemek ve baskın ideolojiyi sorgulamak için kullanabilirler. Bu çalışmanın bulgularına dayanarak, AKP hükümetinin 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi üzerinden kurucu bir anlatı inşa etme çabasıyla, Türkiye'deki tarihsel ve siyasi unsurların çeşitli yönlerini yeniden inşa ettiği ve geri çağırdığı görülmüştür. İlkin, AKP hükümeti Türkiye tarihinde ve siyasetinde İslam'ın rolünü vurgulayarak, kendisini seküler cenaha karşı İslami değerlerin savunucusu olarak konumlandırır. "Eski" ve "Yeni" Türkiye ayrımı ise temelde bu dikatomi ile birlikte bu anlatıyı şekillendirir. 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi bağlamında, bu deneyim, batıcı ve sömürgeci güçler olarak tasvir edilen iç ve dış tehditlerin İslam'a ve millet iradesine yönelik saldırısı şeklinde sunulmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, AKP hükümeti Türkiye siyasetinde askeri gücün rolünü yeniden gözden geçirerek, tarihsel olarak askeri gücü demokrasiye ve halkın iradesine karşı bir tehdit olarak tasvir etmiş ve böylece 15 Temmuz'u, Türkiye'deki darbeler tarihinde demokratik olarak seçilmiş hükümete karşı bir askeri müdahale olarak nitelendirmiştir. Bu yeniden inşa sürecinde, hükümet, seçici bir hafıza yöntemi kullanarak, yoğunlukla kendisini ait hissettiği siyasi geleneğin darbeler tarafından mağdur edildiği bir anlatı kurarak bu deneyimlere daha fazla odaklanmıştır. Ayrıca, AKP hükümeti *vatan* ve *millet* kavramları aracılığıyla "Türk-İslam" milleti fikrini vurgulayarak ulusal kimliği yeniden tanımlamıştır. Bunu yaparken, 15 Temmuz darbe girişimini Türk milletine ve egemenliğine yönelik bir saldırı olarak çerçevelemiştir. Ayrıca, AKP'nin kendi tarihi de bu anlatı aracılığıyla yeniden yapılandırılmış, hükümet kendisini darbe girişimine karşı demokrasinin kahramanca savunucusu olarak konumlandırmıştır. Özet olarak, dinin ve askeri gücün rolü, ulus kimliği ve AKP'nin kendi tarihi, 15 Temmuz aracılığıyla bir kurucu anlatı oluşturma çabasında bu anlatının içeriğini oluşturan ana unsurlar olarak yeniden inşa edilmiş, hatırlanmış ve icat edilmiştir.

Türkiye'de 15 Temmuz darbe girişimine dair destansı anlatının inşası, kültürel belleğin siyasallaştırılması ve farklı kültürel bellek taşıyıcılarının kullanımını içermektedir. Hükümet, kamuya yönelik konuşmalar ve medya organlarının yoğun kullanımı aracılığıyla darbe girişimini kahramanca bir epik anlatı olarak kurgulamıştır. Olaya dair anlatı, Türkiye'nin milli hafızasında kurucu bir an olarak sunulmuş, demokrasi vurgusu ve ulusun zorluklarla mücadeledeki dayanıklılığı özellikle vurgulanmıştır. Hükümet, bu anlatıyı pekiştirmek için yeni kültürel bellek taşıyıcıları ve anma mekanları inşa etmiştir. Örneğin, Boğaziçi Köprüsü'nün adı 15 Temmuz Şehitleri Köprüsü olarak değiştirilmiş, 15 Temmuz Demokrasi ve Milli Birlik Günü gibi resmi tatiller icat edilmiş, darbe girişiminin yıldönümlerinde anma törenleri düzenlenerek anlatının kalıcılaştırılması çabasına girişilmiştir. Ankara 15 Temmuz Demokrasi Müzesi açılmış ve bu müze, darbe girişimine dair medyada dolaşan materyallerin sergilenmesi ve olayın resmi anlatısının tanıtılması amacıyla hizmete sokulmuştur. Hükümet ayrıca camiler ve okullar gibi mevcut kamusal kurumlardan, anlatının inşası, pekiştirilmesi ve aktarılması açısından yararlanmıştır. Camiler, bu deneyime yüklenen kutsal anlamların ve bu deneyimin dini öneminin vurgulması hususunda buna dair duaların okunması ve vaazların verilmesi için yoluyla; okullar ise, 15 Temmuz deneyimi üzerine öğrencilere dersler vererek, bu anlatıya ders kitaplarında yer vererek temel hafıza oluşturma sürecindeki resmi hakim anlatının kurumsallaşması amacıyla araçsallaştırıldı. Son olarak, bu anlatının kurgulanması sürecinde, yaşananlara dair fotoğraflar ve videolar gibi kolayca çoğaltılabilen ve yayılabilen görsel materyaller yoğun bir şekilde kullanıldı. Ankara 15 Temmuz Demokrasi Müzesi de, 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi etrafındaki epik anlatının inşa sürecinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu anlatının temel odağı "halkın ve hükümetin işbirliği içerisinde demokrasiyi kahramanca savunduğu" argümanıdır ve sergilenen materyallerin içeriğinden, müzenin dizaynına kadar tüm bileşenleri ile bu müze, ziyaretçilere darbe girişiminin resmi anlatısını aktaran bir kültürel bellek taşıyıcısı olarak görev yapar.

15 Temmuz, AKP hükümetinin bellek rejimindeki en önemli bellek figürü olarak çeşitli nedenlerle belirleyici bir konuma sahiptir. AKP hükümeti, 15 Temmuz olayını, "güçlü ve birleşik bir Türkiye" kavramını yaymak için bir araç olarak kullanarak, politik imajının temel ilkelerinden birini pekiştirmiştir. Ayrıca, daha evvel de

bahsedildiği üzere, hükümetin 15 Temmuz anlatısı, halkı, "anti-demokratik güçlere karşı demokrasinin kahraman savunucuları" olarak tasvir eder. Bu anlatı, milli gurur duygusu oluşturarak duygusal/ manevi bağlılığı pekiştirmek için kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca, AKP, 15 Temmuz anlatısında şehitlik kavramı üzerinde oldukça baskın bir şekilde durmuş ve darbe girişimi sırasında yaşamını kaybedenleri "vatanı ve milleti için canını veren şehitler" olarak tasvir etmiştir. Bu anlatı, milliyetçilik fikrini desteklemek ve bunun üzerinden kurulan duygusal/ manevi bağlılığı uyandırmak, son olarak da AKP hükümetinin halkın ve onun çıkarlarının mutlak koruyucusu olduğu fikrini oluşturmak için kullanılmıştır. 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi, AKP hükümetinin kuruluş anlatısında kritik bir anı temsil etmektedir, yanısıra partinin tarihi ve kimliği için de oldukça kritik bir dönüm noktasıdır. Başarısız olan darbe girişimi, AKP'nin siyasi gücüne ve meşruiyetine yönelik önemli bir meydan okuma olarak yorumlanabilir, ve yenilgisi, partinin Türkiye'deki güç ve otoritesinin konsolidasyonu için kritik bir anı temsil etti. Nitekim, AKP hükümeti, 15 Temmuz darbe girişimini, her daim demokrasiyi savunmak ve iç ve dış tehditlerden ülkeyi korumak için partinin kritik rolünü vurgulayan politik anlatısının kırılma noktası olarak kurgulamıştır. Bu anlatı, AKP'nin Türkiye'deki hakim siyasi güç olarak pozisyonunu güçlendirip, politikalarını ve eylemlerini gerekçelemek üzere araçsallaştırılmıştır. Bu anlamda, 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi, AKP'nin politik kimliği ve hafıza rejimi için bir kırılma noktasını temsil eder ve bir kuruluş anına dönüşür. Bu aynı zamanda "Yeni Türkiye" söylemi ile yakından ilgilidir. "Yeni Türkiye" söylemi, AKP'nin siyasi söyleminin en önemli unsuru olarak kabul edilmelidir ve barındırdığı ideolojik anlam ağlarının yeniden yorumlanması ile, erken Cumhuriyet döneminden bu yana hakimiyetini sürdürüren Kemalist kurucu anlatıdan kopuşu ve radikal değişiklikleri içeren politik ve sosyal bir düzen inşasının gerekliliğini vurgulayan bir kavramdır. Darbe girişiminin ardından, AKP hükümeti yaşanan bu deneyimi "Yeni Türkiye" söylemini güçlendirmek ve otoriter politikalarının ve eylemlerinin meşrulaştırmak için kullanmıştır.

AKP hükümetinin 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi anlatısını ve bu deneyime dair hafızayı politik olarak araçsallaştırması, onu kendi siyasi ajandasını ileriye taşımak ve iktidarını sürdürmek için işler bir şekilde organize etmesi kendi ideolojik temsiliyetleri

ile örülü bir anlatı olarak dolaşıma sokması anlamına gelmektedir. Hükümetin, geçmişi mevcut siyasi ihtiyaçlara cevap verecek şekilde organize ederek ve neyin hatırlanıp, neyin unutulacağını belirlemek konusunda otoriter bir karar verici gibi hareket ederek, yukarıdan aşağıya politik belleği inşa etme çabasında olduğu aşikardır. Öncelikle, bu anlatı, mevcut hükümetin Türkiye'de demokrasiyi, iç ve dış tehditlerden koruyabilecek tek siyasi parti olduğu fikrini pekiştirerek kendi siyasi tabanlarının desteğini sürdürmek için kullanılmaktadır. Ayrıca, kendisine, ideolojisine ya da politik eylemlerine karşı çıkan, muhalefet eden herkesi Türkiye'deki demokratik düzeni tehdit eden bir unsur olarak mimleyerek ve darbe girişimini gerçekleştiren taraflarla bağlantılı addederek, varolan muhalefeti bastırmaya hizmet eder. Son olarak, darbe girişiminden sonra toplumsal ve siyasal düzende yaşanan radikal değişiklikler göz önüne alındığında, hükümetin, kendilerini halkın iradesinin ve demokrasinin savunucuları olarak, ve yaşanan tüm bu değişiklikleri ise bu değerleri korumak adına alınan önlemler şeklinde çevreleyerek, alınan tüm kararları ya da gerçekleştirdikleri tüm eylemleri gerekçelendirmek adına bu anlatıyı araçsallaştırdığı söylenebilir.

Bu çalışmanın önemi, resmi tarih yazımının ve toplumsal hafızanın ortak ana dinamiğini oluşturan hatırlama ve unutma diyalektiğinin, iktidar tarafından çeşitli müdahalelerle, kültürel bellek taşıyıcıları aracılığıyla yukarıdan aşağıya inşa edilen politik hafızayı güncel bir toplumsal olay üzerinden okumasından gelmektedir. Bu inşa sürecine birincil elden tanıklık etmek, gelecekte bu çabanın sonuçlarından ve dönüşümünden bağımsız olarak, geçmişte yaşanmış bu gibi inşa süreçleri hakkında birtakım ipuçları yakalayabilmek açısından değerli bulunmuştur. 15 Temmuz 2016 deneyiminin özgül yanı, mevcut iktidar tarafından ona atfedilen kuruculuk işlevidir. Bu yaşanan deneyim ve ona dair kurulan anlatı, AKP hükümetinin iktidara geldiği ilk yıllardan bu yana çeşitli alanlarda ve dozlarda çatışma içerisinde olduğu Kemalist kurucu anlatıdan kopuşu simgelemesi ve kendi kurucu anlatısının kurucu anı olarak kurumsallaştırılması olarak yorumlanmıştır. Tezin ana argümanını oluşturan bu sav, hükümetin hafızalaştırma yöntemleri ve inşa ettiği kültürel bellek taşıyıcıları ele alınarak tartışılmıştır.

Belleğin yukarıdan aşağıya siyasal inşasını ve kültürel bellek ile siyasal iktidar ilişkisini tartışan bu tezde, iktidar tarafından inşa edilen belleğin ne kadar yapay olduğu, gerçeği yansıtıp yansıtmadığı veya içeriğinin niteliği sorgulanabilir. Bununla birlikte, belirli bir olay etrafında bir kolektif hafızanın veya anlatının inşasının, onu inşa etme gücüne sahip olanlar tarafından her zaman yoruma ve manipülasyona tabi olduğunu belirtmekte fayda var. Türkiye'deki 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi örneğinde, AKP hükümeti olayların belirli bir anlatısının inşa edilmesinde ve desteklenmesinde aktif olarak yer almıştır. Nihayetinde, anlatının yorumlanması ve özgünlüğü tartışmaya tabidir ve bu çalışma, evvelden yapılandırılmış olan bir sembolik ve ideolojik inşayı yeniden yorumlama çabası olarak değerlendirilmelidir.

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