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“THIS IS NOT THE SOLDIER YOU KNOW”:
TREASON TRIALS AND THE UNMAKING OF TURKEY’S MILITARY

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“This Is Not the Soldier You Know”:

Treason Trials and the Unmaking of Turkey’s Military

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My dissertation project is an ethnographic examination of the controversial civilian trials of military officers accused of treason and coup plotting in contemporary Turkey. Since 2008, hundreds of officers of the Turkish Armed Forces have been on trial in multiple cases with allegations ranging from forming a terrorist organization within the state to leaking of state secrets for purposes of military espionage and plotting a coup to overthrow the government. Controversial from beginning to end, the trials of these military officers have been unprecedented in the country’s history where the military has had persistent involvement in politics with rather strong legal immunity. The trials, therefore, constitute a momentous attempt to challenge the military’s legitimacy and debunk its authority. Yet, despite being portrayed as a switch from a historically pervasive military exceptionalism to the rule of law, the whole process has been enmeshed in a web of legal complexity with unclear allegations, multiple waves of police operations, internments and arrests of hundreds of people, and indictments totaling thousands of pages of documents. My dissertation focuses on one of these cases in particular—the Sledgehammer coup trial, an alleged coup plot dating back to 2003, in which 365 officers were indicted in 2010, all of whom were later acquitted in 2015

(despite initially being sentenced to 16-20 years in prison) due to the presence of fabricated evidence. Aiming to capture the tension between a historically pervasive military exceptionalism and the notion of the rule of law, as well as the actors caught between that tension, my dissertation project analyzes what the trials have meant for the military members who, once privileged representatives of the state often situated outside and above civilian legal frameworks, have had to step into the public arena and grapple with their social downfall in multiple realms. Through an eighteen-month ethnographic research that goes from the courtroom and prison to the public protests on the streets of Istanbul and Ankara, and from the private opinion of military officers in good standing to the disrupted lives of the families of the accused servicemen and the public reaction against them, this dissertation project analyzes how, and to what effect, the rhetoric of the rule of law can become a tool to dismantle militaries, revert the exceptional status under which they operate, and in so doing, rearticulate the nation anew.

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Prologue

The Making and Unmaking of a Military Subject

"The ethnographer, like the artist, is engaged in a special kind of vision quest through which a specific interpretation of the human condition, an entire sensibility, is forged. Our medium, our canvas, is "the field," a place both proximate and intimate (because we have lived some part of our lives there) as well as forever distant and unknowably "other" (because our own destinies lie elsewhere). In the act of "writing culture," what emerges is always a highly subjective, partial, and fragmentary—but also deeply felt and personal—record of human lives based on eyewitness and testimony. The act of witnessing is what lends our work its moral (at times its almost theological) character. So-called participant observation has a way of drawing the ethnographer into spaces of human life where she or he might really not prefer to go at all and once there doesn't know how to go about getting out except through writing, which draws others there as well, making them party to the act of witnessing."

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil, xii

I come from a military family and have spent a significant portion of my life in heavily guarded state housing complexes, traveling from one city or country to the other, wherever my father's job took us to be. Growing up with this experience not only defined and delimited my surroundings, and the people I interacted with, but also impacted my perception of the world around me. I was raised being told that I should not tell people that my father worked for the military while living in contentious conflict zones, that unknown packages sent to our house should be met with suspicion as they could turn out to be explosives, that our phones would be tapped during foreign missions, and that I should always keep our curtains tightly shut lest somebody gain access to the minute details of our otherwise ordinary everyday lives. In some ways, as unlikely as they may have sounded for others whose lives were not bound by the unwritten rules of the state

security and intelligence apparatus, those things were possibilities in our strictly confined military world. Therefore, whether or not I liked it, I was, in many ways, a military subject, and learned to live with peculiar rules and rituals I could not share with other people unless they, like myself, were also the makings of the military institution. As much as I did not like living with them, those rules and rituals made me who I am.

My father's job in the military provided me with the chance to see so many different places I could not have otherwise seen. But it was not memories of "exotic" destinations that others pay to see on vacations that stayed with me from my years of traveling. It was, rather, the sense of unease and alienation I felt with each new move and location. My father's job also provided me with opportunities that I perhaps would not otherwise have had—considered lucky compared to the standards of my peers and what they may, at times, label as luxuries. But what may seem as opportunities to the outside world came with a price, as they also made me inherit a worldview that did not believe in pure coincidences, relationships shrouded in secrecy, and hard-to-detach labels that people saw me through without first asking me whether or not I personally embraced the military values for which they judged me. Just like in the world of the military, I did not get to have a say about my role, or who exactly I wanted to be, in the civilian one either.

I was never comfortable with the military values I was obligated to embrace and live with, but I'm not sure if getting out of the military world was something I actively contemplated—I don't think I had an alternative to compare my existence to, and as uncomfortable as it was, the military cocoon was still what was familiar to me. I studied comparative literature in college, and books were my entire life, offering respite from the dullness of my military surroundings. Dreaming of getting a PhD in Russian Literature, I

spent every minute on campus that was outside of the classroom strolling among library shelves, mesmerized by the books I discovered. Never did I know that my expeditions to the world of discovery that I so cherished would make my life take a new direction.

During one of those library visits, when I came across an ethnography of the Turkish military, aptly titled *The Myth of the Military Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey*, I don't think I had even heard of the word "militarism" or knew what anthropology was about. Having been enrolled in a course on gender and nationalism, I thought of the book as a form of independent reading that could benefit me in doing better in the classroom. But, deep down, I think the book aroused my interest more so as a questioning military subject rather than an ambitious student who was interested in getting better grades and impressing her instructors. Perhaps not surprisingly, the book did take my doubts and turned them into what later became an incipient antimilitarist identity.

The book questioned the widespread belief that the Turkish nation is a military-nation, and challenged this narrative as a nationalist myth. It was a strange, but exhilarating, feeling to have my life's layers peeled page by page, leading to an undoing of everything I had learned to that date. As unfamiliar as it may have been, that ethnography provided me with answers to questions I was long curious about, and suspicious of, both about my upbringing and the history of my country. I now understood how militaries operated, how soldiers were made, how national myths were constructed and perpetuated, and how gender was central to all of those operations.

After devouring 165 pages like I would a favorite novel, I virtually memorized the book's bibliography, hungry for more to read and discover. I started following the site of

War Resisters International and reveled in my discovery of feminist antimilitarist organizations. That same year, I attended the international conscientious objection conference organized at my university where I met numerous academics researching the military from myriad angles and perspectives.

As much as loved the comfort that fiction provided me with, my new discoveries made me feel more alive than I ever did studying literature. So, leaving my dream of a doctorate in literature behind, I decided that I would pursue a master's degree to work with the author of the book that changed my life and who became my formational role model. In other words, now with no chance of going back to the military world I had grown so critical of, I, instead, turned to analyzing it. If the military did not leave me, what better way, I thought, to deal with it than turning it into my object of study.

I could tell that my father followed these developments, as well as the growing mountain of books on my desk, with some concern, but he never directly intervened in what I wanted to do. One day, as I was working on my writing sample on gender and militarism in Turkey to be submitted as part of my graduate school application, he came into my room upon seeing the conscientious objection conference folder, a bold, bright green, placed right on top of the piles of books, and gave me the look, part smiling, part pensive, he usually has when he wants to warn me of something. "Do you know what conscientious objection is?" he asked, as if expecting to hear I had no idea what he was talking about. "I wouldn't be at a conference about it if I didn't know what it was," I said, trying not to sound too aggressive, but offended by the somewhat condescending tone of the question. "Let me tell you," he said, as if he had not heard my answer, this time his expression turning more serious, "These are people who reject the military, who make up

excuses to not do military service. You can't have that in this country. I don't want you to believe in these things without knowing what they're about." I was used to hearing these monologues and knew that there was no point in fighting back against them, so having learned my lesson from myriad interactions before, I listened without interrupting, and merely said, "OK, I won't." I'm not sure if my dad was convinced, but he had done his "duty" by warning me against what he saw as, essentially, antimilitarist propaganda. Never did he know I had long converted.

I enjoyed my newfound intellectual curiosity about the military, feeling like I had my own opinions about political matters I had long listened to at dinner conversations, carried out by "expert" men who almost always dismissed and silenced women like myself who wanted to have a say in the matter. After getting my bachelor's degree, I completed a master's thesis on mothers of soldiers in Turkey, focusing on conscripts who had completed their service in conflict zones in Turkey's ongoing contention with the Kurds. My research felt like a natural path I needed to follow and allowed me to learn a lot, both about myself and the institution I grew up in. Yet, my project did not actually require me to be with military members per se for its completion. Mothers of soldiers, after all, were just temporary members of the military institution, not insiders or dependents—a population I had to regain intimate familiarity with for my dissertation project. Therefore, as much as I thought of my master's research to be about the military, it actually always allowed me to keep a safe distance from the institution I had become increasingly critical of.

When my original dissertation project about Turkish military members in conflict zones fell through and I switched to the site of the trials, I did not take into account the

amount of discomfort I would feel by having to go back to the military world to conduct the research. Once someone becomes disillusioned with nationalist myths and military ideals, it is very difficult to be reenchanting by them. This is the difficulty I experienced among the familiar strangers that came to be my interlocutors in the field. This is why, perhaps despite my expectation of relief and understanding, and perhaps ultimately self-healing, writing this dissertation was as long and arduous as nothing I have ever done before, peppered with perpetual reluctance and resistance I was not able to overcome even during final stages of writing.

In conversations I have had over the years with fellow anthropologists, many have expressed that writing ethnography rarely provides its author with a sense of closure one deeply seeks after trying to make sense of the fieldwork experience. Under normal circumstances, I would agree. But, in my case, despite the unforeseen challenges it made me battle with, it was through ethnography that I tried to understand my life and come to terms with the military institution—what I consider to be one of the most peculiar creations of the human mind. To me, then, it is also no coincidence that former soldiers or those who have been hailed as dependents have turned to analyzing the military through the framework of fieldwork and ethnography (Arik 2016; Az 2014; Bickford 2011; Sen 2014). Ultimately, their analyses are as much about themselves as they are about the workings of the military apparatus. In a similar manner, fieldwork was my way to find closure in trying to make sense of an institution I had long rejected, but for some reason, could not let go of. After many years of scrutiny, I think I finally have.

Chapter 1

Opening the Turkish Pandora's Box:

The Anatomy of a Spectacular Trial

"Turkey is progressing towards a much better future. This pain [that we are experiencing right now] is, on the one hand, Turkey's pain of labor, and the cleansing of its bowels, on the other. This is also Turkey's progress towards a functioning rule of law."

The commentary of Bulent Arinc, former MP of the Justice and Development Party, speaker of parliament, and Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, on the trials of military officers

"We are being told that the allegations [of this trial] serve the purpose of cleaning the bowels. So some people see us as dirt, and add that it won't just be enough to clean the bowels, you should also rinse the stomach off of its poison. These children of the homeland you have been calling dirt are the grandchildren of a heroic generation who have unfalteringly obeyed the orders of Mustafa Kemal [Ataturk – founder of modern Turkey] who said, 'I don't order you to fight, I order you to die.' Whatever the verdict of this trial, no one has a right to call me dirt. That's why I return those words as they are to whom they belong."

From the in-court defense statement of Ergin Saygun, a retired general sentenced to 18 years in prison in September 2012

On January 20, 2010, Turkish newspaper Taraf produced a series of news that would change the course of history in Turkey. Delivered to the stands with the headlines that read "They were going to bomb Fatih Mosque" and "We were going to take down our own jet," the newspaper announced that it had acquired the documents for a coup plot planned in 2003. Taraf claimed that the "junta" of general Cetin Dogan, the commander of the First Army in Istanbul, had planned to overthrow the pro-Islamist Justice and Development Party. In the following days, elaborating on Taraf's coverage, Turkish newspapers and TV channels were blasting with news about how the Turkish Armed

Forces was planning to instigate chaos to pave the way for a bloody military intervention that would very much resemble the techniques of the September 12 coup. On January 29, 2010, nine days after the Turkish public was in the heat of discussing the details of the country's newest coup plot, Mehmet Baransu, the journalist who acquired from an undisclosed source the documents that allegedly laid out the details of the plan, delivered them to the Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor in his, now infamous, suitcase. Thus began the process that would cause hundreds of military officers to become defendants in one of the many spectacular trials that occupied the Turkish public scene for over a decade, starting from the mid-2000s.



Above: Fatih Mosque was going to be bombed
Below: We were going to take down our own jets

As the Sledgehammer investigation continued, the first wave of detentions took place on February 22, 2010, with 49 soldiers called to testify regarding the purported military intervention, under the intense scrutiny of the press. Soon after, another wave of detentions followed suit. The investigation was finalized on July 6, the 10th High Criminal Court of Istanbul accepted the indictment on July 19, and the trial began on December 16, 2010 with 194 defendants in the courtroom built inside the Silivri Prison Complex, which would later become the officers' home for the following four years. In 2011, two cases that were being separately handled were combined into the main trial, bringing the total number of defendants to 365 officers.

Known among the public as "Sledgehammer" (Balyoz), this trial was just one among many proceedings that involved high-ranking military officers and that inundated Turkish public life beginning from the mid-2000s. Military officers first became the legal actors of civilian courts through a series of investigations that allegedly uncovered various illegal gangs operated by military members. In 2006, for example, 11 people, five of whom were Special Forces soldiers, were put on trial with allegations of an assassination attempt against the then prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The indictment referred to this alleged organization as the "Atabeyler Guerrilla Gang" and charged the defendants with conspiracy to inhibit the functioning of the government and unlawful possession of explosives and weapons. These investigations were followed by the Ergenekon case, in which high-ranking service members, including the former chief of staff, were prosecuted in 2008 with charges of membership in the so-called Ergenekon terrorist organization alongside defendants that included, but were not limited to, famous nationalist actors, political figures, members of the mafia, journalists, professors, and

heads of NGOs (Jenkins 2009). In 2009, investigations began against 19 military members for allegedly planning to execute admirals, possessing and selling drugs, and possessing explosives for the purpose of using them as part of terrorist activities.

With the similarities between their content and procedure, the development of these trials, especially the Ergenekon case, arguably foreshadowed the Sledgehammer proceedings. And while journalist Baransu's unpacking of his suitcase only produced the Sledgehammer proceedings, it also heralded many more trials to come. In April and August 2010, prosecutors began criminal investigations in Istanbul and Izmir, respectively, against hundreds of military members with charges of running an illegal organization responsible for military espionage and prostitution. Both investigations began when an anonymous source tipped off the police through emails with the names of purported suspects. The emails also detailed the activities of this alleged illegal organization that acquired and sold military secrets through blackmailing their victims with illicit footage of prostitution dealings. When the trials began in January 2011 and April 2013 in Istanbul and Izmir, respectively, there were a total of 413 military members on trial—56 in the former and 357 in the latter.

In addition to the aforementioned proceedings, which were often hailed as the "deep state trials of Turkey," there were also trials that dealt with the country's military past. From 2012 to 2014, the two surviving members of the 1980 coup, Kenan Evren and Tahsin Sahinkaya, were tried in the High Criminal Court in Ankara. In 2013, 103 officers were put on trial for the 1997 military intervention, widely hailed as the "postmodern coup" for the nonviolent toppling of the government. In various locations across the

country, service members were also on trial for human rights violations carried out in the 1990s during the height of the country's ongoing Kurdish conflict.¹

The development of the trials came as a surprise for a public not used to the presence of military members in civilian courts, but very familiar with the omnipresence of military officers in the social and political scene of the country. Soldiers have been the primary actors of the founding of the Turkish Republic, with the founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, himself being an army officer and the commander in chief of the country—a title bestowed to him by the Turkish National Assembly, and one that, to date, remains exclusively reserved for him.² As the backbone of the cohort that established modern Turkey, soldiers made sure to have a special place among the new citizens of the country, carving a space for themselves as the exemplary citizens of the nation and guardians of the secular state (Birand 1986; Karaosmanoglu 1993). Throughout the country's history, military members have enjoyed relative privilege compared to other state employees, holding a certain social capital as well as extensive legal protection. Soldiers have also espoused a self-declared role of being the protectors of Atatürk's principles against religious (i.e., Islamist) "threats" – a role that has been very keenly taught to them through official schooling, but also supported throughout the country's history by like-minded politicians and mass media (Jenkins 2013). As a direct manifestation of this espoused role, the military acted as a shadow government no matter what the ideology of the political party in power—at times, a disciplinary father cautioning his children to follow the proper guidelines, and, at others, the executer of extreme violence, chastising

1. While I see these latter trials different and separate from the ones that took place prior to them, they still carry similar legal characteristics, which I will go on to detail in the forthcoming chapters.

2. This was true up until Erdogan recently appropriated the title in the past couple of years and started hailing himself as the commander-in-chief of Turkey.

those who refused to do so (Zurcher 2007). During its 95-year history, the country went through three military coups, in 1960, 1971, and 1980, followed by a military intervention in the form of a memorandum from the military to the government in 1997, now known as the "postmodern coup." Erdogan's AKP was no exception to military vigilance, as it had a tense working relationship with the Turkish Armed Forces since coming to power in 2002, followed by occasional memorandums from the military. A very recent addition to this list occurred on July 15, 2016 through a failed military coup that resulted in the death of more than 200 people and had cascading effects on the public and political life of the country that can be felt to this day.³

Among this historical backdrop, the trials of military officers were promoted by the government, and supported by many, as the long-awaited debunking of "military tutelage" (*askeri vesayet*) that arguably plagued Turkish politics and held back the country from becoming a fully functioning democracy. The then prime minister Bulent Arinc lauded the legal efforts to prosecute military officers and declared the trials as the country's "cleansing of its bowels"—a statement often brought up during my time in the field for the deep resentment it caused among the military members. Despite this initial proclamation, the government often changed its mind on its stance on the trials, vacillating between supporting and critiquing them, until recently declaring that they were a "conspiracy" executed by the "parallel structure." This is a euphemism that the government has picked to describe the purported network built within state structures by the sympathizers of Fetullah Gulen, the self-exiled Islamic cleric who once used to be the government's major ally (thanks to the Gulen disciples who enabled the trials due to their

3. I hold the July 15 coup attempt as separate from the former four military interventions. Although a significant addition to this list, and one that did impact the status of the military, I discuss this event at length in the epilogue of my dissertation.

ranks in the judiciary) and who turned into its arch nemesis through a series of legal investigations that took place in 2013 and that implicated Erdogan and his allies in corruption cases. Erdogan tried to shield himself, his family, and four of his ministers through a massive purge in the police force and judiciary (Jenkins 2014).



Above: The prime minister is busy trying to make peace with TSK.
 Comment bubble: Happy Valentine's Day
 Below: I can't live without you, TSK. Tayyip.

In explaining the purges to the Turkish public as the government's attempt to prevent yet another heinous coup, Erdogan utilized the Sledgehammer case as an example of Gulen's surreptitious plots to undermine state authority. While the retrial of the officers, which happened after the corruption case, brought about an acquittal for military members, it also led to a major reversal of the legal process. The journalist who

relayed the alleged coup documents to the prosecutors was arrested in 2015 for acquiring and sharing secret documents concerning the security of the state. The former prosecutor of the Ergenekon case is currently on the run with an arrest warrant while the prosecutors and judges involved in the various stages of the multiple trials involving military officers are currently under investigation, and some in pre-trial detention. Expert witnesses who approved the digital documents of the Sledgehammer case as admissible in court are also facing charges for approving the usage of fabricated evidence in the trials. As the military officers' cases are reaching a verdict one by one, the military members are now taking legal action against those who initiated the process. Especially after the July 15 coup attempt, Erdogan officially declared the trials of officers as a "conspiracy" carried out against the Turkish military and the state while the pro-government media praises the counter-trials initiated by military members—a population they once hailed as traitors and enemies.

The legal process against the officers thus constitutes a momentous attempt to challenge the military's legitimacy and debunk its authority in the social, political, and legal realms. Yet despite being portrayed as a switch from a historically pervasive military exceptionalism to the rule of law, the proceedings have been fraught with overt violations of legal procedures. Dizzying in pace and detail, the majority of the trials had strange commonalities in terms of how they made claims about and advanced their cases. They started with anonymous tip-offs sent to the police through email, had extremely long indictments, which were sometimes in part plagiarized, included fabricated or planted evidence, used unlawfully acquired phone intercepts, and relied on, often conflicting, testimonies from anonymous witnesses. They were also trials in which the

majority of the defendants' motions were denied and supplemental evidence that proved their innocence disregarded.

Similar to these cases, the Sledgehammer trial was also based entirely on digital documents, which forensic evidence later proved to be tampered with and fabricated, as the defendants had argued all along. Furthermore, in the early stages of the Sledgehammer trial, the defendants and their lawyers were denied access to the evidence due to a confidentiality order, the hearings were held without the lawyers, who stopped attending the proceedings for two months in protest of due process violations, and the verdict was announced through accelerated hearings, without giving the defendants the right to make closing arguments. Nevertheless, the trial ended on September 12, 2012 with convictions for 331 active and retired military personnel, with sentences from 16 to 20 years in prison. A year after this ruling, on October 9, 2013, the Supreme Court upheld the convictions of 237 servicemen, while approving the acquittal of 36 defendants, and overruled the conviction of 88 officers. Taken to the Constitutional Court by the defendants to dispute the verdict, the conviction was overruled on June 18, 2014 on grounds that the officers were not provided a fair trial, leading to the release of all servicemen from prison. On March 31, 2015, all defendants were acquitted as the new court based its verdict on the new expert witness reports that verified the fabrication of evidence (Agbaba et al. 2014).

Situated in the backdrop of this extraordinary legal, political, and cultural transformation, my dissertation provides a glimpse into the past decade of Turkey's history through the framework of the trials of military officers, with particular focus on the Sledgehammer case. Despite the profound shift that the trials created in Turkish

politics and society, there has been little scholarly, and to my knowledge, no ethnographic work on the trials of the officers. The majority of the literature on this topic has been produced by political scientists with particular focus on the impact the trials have had on civil-military relations and democratization (Aydinli 2009; Balci 2010; Balci and Jacoby 2012; Cizre and Walker 2010; Gursoy 2012; Kaya 2012). Furthermore, academic works produced on the trials up until the court's acquittal of the defendants in 2015 generally lauded the trials as the source of the downfall of a military that was a perpetual impediment to the country's democratic progress. As the verdicts of the court were overruled and as the status of the proceedings became dubious, these analyses now conveyed the trials as the result of a power struggle among political rivals and part of a machination carried out to eradicate military presence in politics (Mecellem 2016).

Despite the attention to the proceedings, no scholarly analysis to date has focused on the actual actors of the trials themselves. Taking a different turn and putting the accused military officers and their families front and center, my work attends to the experiences of those who form the military institution, and who were rather violently thrust outside of its institutional boundaries through this legal process. So, I ask, if, indeed, "soldiers in uniform are living memorials to the state and its history, walking monuments to memory," (Bickford 2011:3) what happens to them when their pristine image gets shattered, ruptured, or significantly questioned in the public and by the very state and the institution they were taught to serve and represent? In reflecting on this question, I not only produce a nuanced and complex analysis of the military institution, but also examine the agentic power of the law, specifically trials, in making and unmaking subjects and defining the parameters of national belonging. Through an

eighteen-month ethnographic research that goes from the courtroom and prison to the public protests on the streets of Istanbul and Ankara, my dissertation analyzes how, and to what effect, the rhetoric of the rule of law can become a tool to dismantle militaries, revert the exceptional status under which they operate, and in so doing, rearticulate the nation anew.

Expanding Anthropologies of the Law, State, and the Military

My dissertation stands at the intersection of and contributes to the anthropological studies of the law, state, and the military. In doing so, it demonstrates how each of these realms have been intricately connected to each other in the proceedings of Turkish military officers. Even though I use the phrases "treason trials" and "coup trials" interchangeably throughout the dissertation to describe the legal process that the military officers have gone through, these trials actually defy an easy and clear-cut categorization.

Bearing justice as its primary operating principle through the notion of the rule of law (Krygier 2016), courts have played a key role in rebuilding nation-states after times of war and violence through war crime tribunals (Felman 2002; Smith 2012), coming to terms with the past in cases of gross human rights violations through truth and reconciliation commissions (Grandin 2005; Humphrey 2003; Minow 1999), handling cases of transitional justice to account for the atrocities committed by dictatorships, military or otherwise (Elster 2004; Hinton 2010; Natarajan 2014), and most recently, seeking accountability on the transnational level for wartime atrocities through international criminal tribunals (Koskeniemi 2002; Wilson 2011).

Despite bearing resemblances to many such contentious legal processes, the treason trials of Turkish military officers come closest in their operations to anthropologist Christopher Kaplonski's description of the Mongolian show trials of the 1930s. Kaplonski argues that "show trials exist not to prove guilt or innocence but, rather, as stages for enactments of state power. The phrase 'show trial' must be read with the emphasis on the first word, not the second. Such trials are shows, open to the public, that are intended to perform a certain relationship between state and citizen. A show trial loses much if not all of its meaning without an audience" (2008:330). The trial, therefore, does more than just determine the defendant's culpability and decide on a verdict. It is a place where ideas of self, identity, belonging, and the state are formulated and contested. And in the case of the show trials, the trial, quite literally, shows—both the state's power and who its friends and enemies are.

While the trials were the medium through which the Turkish state undid the power of the military and the lives of its members, it was the eager embrace of the rhetoric of the rule of law that facilitated and promoted that undoing. Even show trials, after all, depend on the law to animate and enact their causes—"its ability to authoritatively determine facts, its ability to use the force of the state to ask questions and compel answers, its ability to blur the boundaries between legal and moral judgment, its ability to create deadlines and their associated crises" (Scheppelle 2003:3). To rephrase Kim Lane Scheppelle's eloquent description, the trial relies on an indictment, puts forth and deliberates on evidence, speaks its case through the many legal actors involved in the process, and ultimately, decides on a verdict. In other words, it is the word of the law that

gives the trial its force and the state the power it desires (Bourdieu 1987; Brooks and Gewirtz 1996; Conley & O'Barr 2005; Coutin 1995; Herzfeld 1998; Mertz 1994).

In his analysis of the transnational trajectory of the rule of law, Martin Krygier argues that "the rule of law's recent rise from parochial and controversial political and legal ideal to universal international slogan has, then, given it a great boost in brand recognition, but its now mandatory rhetorical presence has rendered increasingly murky what the concept might mean, what the phenomenon might be, and why anyone should care" (2016:2000). In the Turkish case, this murkiness has allowed the government to embrace the rhetoric of the rule of law to carry out the state's wielding of power through a legalization of everyday life and sweeping court cases conducted under the pretense of the rule of law. Therefore, when confronted with alarming warnings in Western media of Turkey's "slide into dictatorship" (The Economist 2017) as a result of mass trials or reprimands from the EU or US that Turkey "respect the rule of law" (BBC 2017), Erdogan's government can easily claim that the law has, indeed, been on their agenda ever since they took power—going so far as to argue that Turkey is the true bastion of democracy and that there actually is no democracy in Europe (Hurriyet 2017). Therefore, through an examination of the treason trials of military officers, my dissertation contributes to the works that have demonstrated how the rule of law can be used to make claims and establish expertise, legal or otherwise (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006; May 2014; Newendorp 2011; Seidel 2015), mobilized to reinforce new forms of authority in "post-authoritarian" regimes (Cheesman 2015; Ginsburg and Moustafa 2008; Rajah 2012), and embraced by global powers as part of colonial projects to justify plunder (Mattei and Nader 2008).

By analyzing the officers' trials, my research, therefore, sheds light on a process through which the state tries to create and maintain itself as the state. In this sense, I proceed in the footsteps of social scientists that have examined the state as a fragmented, inconsistent, and fluid structure (Abrams 1988; Aretxaga 1997, 2003, 2006; Das and Poole 2004; Feldman 1991; Foucault 2003; Goldstein 2010; Green 1999; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Scott 1998; Sluka 1999; Taussig 1991). While bearing many similarities with the states analyzed in these works, the Turkish state in the contemporary moment is different from them because of individual state actors' perpetual definition and redefinition of what or who exactly the state is. This is a state that constantly contests its own doings and denounces its actions with the same speed and certainty it embraces them. It is a state that continually changes its mind, and one that seems to have embraced consistent inconsistency as its primary tenet.

Social scientific analyses of the state have demonstrated and argued that the power of authoritarian states is derived from their purported grasp of and power on the operation of the state (Sharma and Gupta 2006). This is an all-knowing state, vigilant of its surroundings and enemies, without room for any oversight or blunder. My research challenges this assumption by demonstrating how the power of the state in the contemporary Turkish example is gathered and reified precisely through the constant questioning of its stability. As Carol Greenhouse aptly argues, "maintaining the illusion of states' concreteness calls for new kinds of creative energy on the part of the people who inhabit these states" (2002:1). In the Turkish case, vulnerability, enacted through legality, has become the means through which the Turkish state maintains that illusion

and animates and enacts power.⁴ As such, I approach the state first and foremost as a law making apparatus with (albeit fragmented) monopoly over legitimacy (Borneman 1997, 2001; Nader 1991), and examine how state actors, who are often specially protected by the law, also become subject to the state's power under shifting definitions of their value (Bickford 2011), thus contributing to the redefinition of who or what the state entails.

In focusing on this reversal of power and status (the governing now becoming the subject), my project also aims to problematize the neat distinctions the categories "victim" and "perpetrator" offer in understanding the working of military institutions. Anthropology has approached the military as an object of study by looking at the gendered implications of compulsory conscription (Altinay 2004; Gill 1997), experiences of veterans returning from war zones (Gutmann and Lutz 2010), and life on and history of military bases (Lutz 2002; 2009; Vine 2011). The study of the military and its effects on service members has also been extended to incorporate the physical body of the soldier as ethnographers have recently turned their attention to the injured, disfigured, and wounded bodies of soldiers returning from conflict zones (Aciksoz 2012; MacLeish 2012; Wool 2015; Wool and Messinger 2012).

Within the body of anthropological scholarship on soldiers, veterans have often been represented as victims of the military institution that has neglected to care for them in the aftermath of violent conflict, often overlooking the fact that they are also actors within the state apparatus who are most often bestowed with a right to harm others (i.e., to become perpetrators), sometimes even with impunity (Wool 2015). Therefore, while there is some understanding of the fluidity between the categorizations of victim and

4. This has been particularly so after the corruption allegations and graft probe directed against Erdogan and his ministers, which the government now hails as the December 17/25 coup attempt.

perpetrator in anthropological studies (Mamdani 2002), anthropology has generally tended not to explore the complexity of people who have been relegated to perpetrator status. Different from this approach, my work is critical of the de facto acceptance of military members as the unquestioning representatives of the violent arm of the state. As such, my project is inspired by and contributes to the incipient body of anthropological work on military elites (Bickford 2011; Gill 2004; Natarajan 2014; Robben 2007). And in line with Hugh Gusterson's call to analyze militarism in its various facets, "mapping the ways in which militarism remakes communities, public cultures, and the consciousness of individuals in multiple geographic and social locations" (2007:165), my project investigates how militarism contributes to the making and unmaking of legal subjects with regards to the military's tie to an exceptional legality (Taussig-Rubbo 2009; Trundle 2012). Overall, my dissertation aims to highlight the interconnectedness of the law, state, and the military through the overarching framework of the trials as a moment of moral rupture in history.

Although military members are the primary actors of my research project, this dissertation is, ultimately, about trials and trials' roles in state making processes. Therefore, I analyze the trials of the officers as a "core ethnographic moment" (Burns et al. 2008:303) that allows for both the resolution and proliferation of 'problems' targeted by the state. As such, I argue that in the contemporary moment, legal proceedings have become a way to contain the chaos through which the Turkish state operates. Through the facade of authority and orderliness they produce, trials allow for the state to carry out its operations without risking its power or reputation for those who believe in it. By delegating the task of state and citizen making to courts, the state recuses itself of any

responsibility or blame for proceedings or political plans gone awry. The Sledgehammer proceedings, the trials that my research is mostly based upon, are a case in point. By putting hundreds of military officers on trial through a manufactured coup plot, the government consolidated power in its own hands. When the government's alliances were fractured, it declared the trials null, but turned to the courts yet again—this time, to punish those that it claimed to be the actual wrongdoers. Therefore, through its enthusiastic embrace and repudiation of legal proceedings at once, the Turkish state has produced a new kind of legal pluralism, creating “uncertainty or jeopardy for individuals and groups in society who cannot be sure in advance which legal regime will be applied to their situation” (Tamanaha 2008:375). As Brian Tamanaha states, even though “law characteristically claims to rule whatever it addresses,” the legal arena in the Turkish case is riddled with uncertainty, having become a tool that the government contests but also constantly turns to in order to advance its claims.

As such, what makes the Turkish case worthy of analysis is the fact that it provides an opportunity to observe state making as it is happening, with multiple claims to who or what exactly the state is. Having transitioned from being a multiethnic empire to a homogenized nation-state as well as being a long-time NATO member and perpetual aspirant to EU candidacy, Turkey provides a rich ground to analyze the complex and shifting politics of state making in the 21st century as it is in the process of reinventing itself under Erdogan's rule and vision for the country's centennial in 2023. Countered with claims of being non-Western and antidemocratic, the Turkish state's solution in the contemporary moment has been to embrace democracy, along with its primary tools such as the rule of law, to advance the government's repressive agenda. Therefore, the trials of

the officers provide a rare glimpse into a state that has reinvented itself from a staunch secular republic of the 20th century, whose ultimate goal was modernization, into a postmodern regime of the 21st century that operates through the creative amalgamation of populist state making tactics. Therefore, in addition to their importance as a topic of study for political and legal anthropology, Turkey's trials have repercussions for both the citizens of the country and the political actors at the transnational level.

Research Design and Methods

For a period of eighteen months, from July 2014 to January 2015, I conducted fieldwork in Istanbul and Ankara, tracking the movement the families created against the trials as well as following the public reaction against them. During this time, I participated in the weekly protests conducted by military members against the trials, accompanied military families on trips to prison visits, and had numerous conversations with military members, including wives, adult children, fellow servicemen in good standing, defense attorneys, and journalists. I conducted 35 semi-structured interviews with prosecuted servicemen when they were released from prison in June 2014 after having been incarcerated for over three years. My interactions with these actors targeted three main areas of inquiry: 1) the legal processes and their effect on public memory; 2) defense efforts by the soldiers and their families; and 3) the response to the trials from various publics.

I regularly attended the weekly protests carried out by military families, which has helped me in bolstering contacts, building rapport with my interlocutors, witnessing how military families try to counter claims of guilt by addressing the historical

wrongdoings of the military, and observing public reactions of the passersby to the presence of military members on the streets, an unusual crowd to be the actors of an anti-government protest. I also accompanied the families on trips to prison visits and hearings at the courthouse, keeping track of their days in and around this legal complex. This has helped me to understand how the families step into the legal realm and come to terms with the judicial bureaucracy that involves continual travel between their homes and the prison, hours of waiting in and outside the courtroom, and unpredictable scheduling of hearings dependent on the whim of legal authorities. These visits have proved useful in building rapport and for preparing interview questions. Attending the hearings also helped me to map out the soldiers' interactions with legal bureaucracy in how they respond to the panel of judges, while also capturing the tension in the courtroom.

In addition to my activities in the field, I collected and analyzed a number of documents including civil and military laws, court transcripts, publications of officers' associations, and memoirs and letters of military families. A close reading of the court transcripts helped me to compare the differences between the official (state sources, government declarations, newspapers etc.) and unofficial (officers, families, circulation of rumors in public etc.) accounts of what is happening on the ground with regards to the trials. In addition to this, analyzing the numerous books written by military members (memoirs, essays, political analyses etc.) provided me with a chance to see how the officers have tried to counter the official, i.e. state, narrative about the trials that were circulating in the public realm through their own accounts of events. During my time in the field, I also systematically monitored the media coverage of the trials, as well as

declarations by state and military officials, alongside paying attention to the rumors and conspiracy theories that have surrounded the cases.

In May 2014, I temporarily switched my field site to Ankara where military members were holding a month-long, twenty-four hour public sit-in initiated by one of the defense lawyers in front of the Constitutional Court to protest against the Court's delay in reconsidering the verdict of the trial. The major research activity that I undertook during my time in Ankara was conducting participant observation in the protest. During these demonstrations, I was able to access and interact with a diverse group of people otherwise difficult to reach through individual contacts only. These people included many officers in good standing there to support fellow servicemen, officers acquitted in previous cases, defense attorneys, members of parliament, journalists, and civilian people joining the military community to show their support for the officers.

One of the major developments in the history of the trials that happened during my time in Ankara and that significantly and positively impacted my research was the release of all convicted military officers as a result of the Constitutional Court's verdict in June 2014 that ruled that the military members were not given a fair trial. As a result of this decision, the prosecuted officers had a retrial that began in November 2014 and ended in March 2015. The court acquitted all of the defendants based on the new expert witness reports stating that the major evidence used to prosecute and convict officers were fabricated. In the final months of my fieldwork, I attended the retrial hearings, took copious notes during the trials, and interacted with military members in court.

The release of the officers provided me with access to a significant research population otherwise virtually impossible to reach since most of the officers were

imprisoned for more than three years up until their release. From June 2014 to December 2014, I conducted 35 semi-structured interviews with prosecuted military officers. During these interviews, I inquired about my interlocutors' childhood and early life, entry into military schools and life in the military, the experience of trials, and expectations from the future. The interviews compose a significant part of the research and have provided me with valuable data to analyze the potential gap between the promise of a glorious military career, the reality of the court verdict, and the reversal of events with the acquittal. They also turned out to be one of the most interesting moments of my research.

Studying Up amidst Personal and Political Turmoil

Like many anthropologists, my pathway to my field site was circuitous, replete with barriers and detours. When I first started thinking about possible dissertation topics in 2010, the contentious conflict between the Turkish Armed Forces and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), ongoing since 1984 with more than 40,000 casualties to date, had finally entered a period of calm with the peace negotiations initiated in 2009. Having conducted preliminary research in 2011 in the city of Diyarbakir, which many people label as the unofficial Kurdish capital of Turkey, my goal was to understand how military members experienced this new state of the conflict where protest and discontent against military presence in Turkey's Kurdish-majority cities could now be more openly expressed by the local population. In other words, I wanted to examine how military officers, and their families that accompanied them on their tours, lived in a post-conflict environment, which still had rampant ethnic tension, in a place where they had often come to be seen as the representatives of state violence. Due to the precarious political

climate of the time, which manifested itself in unpredictable and sporadic bursts of violence, safety concerns, both for myself and for my interlocutors, and issues of access to my field site, I finally, but reluctantly, gave up on the project.

I do not quite remember when exactly the treason trials of military officers entered my radar. And I am not even sure, similar to the majority of the lay population in Turkey, I knew what exactly they were about when they finally caught my attention. I had usually read the news in passing about how high-ranking officers were on trial for plotting a coup without paying much attention to the actors or accusations in the legal proceedings. My initial reaction was, "That is interesting (since no coup to date had been prosecuted up until that moment), but not surprising (coups have happened in Turkey almost every decade)." In sum, having been familiar with the history of coups in Turkey and the military's contentious relationship with Islamist politics, it did not come to me as a great shock that there would be another plan to execute a coup against the pro-Islamist Justice and Development Party.

The presence of the trials did not impact me very much other than those fleeting moments of recognition I had while reading the news. But talk about the proceedings was actually always a part of my surroundings. Since the cases were open to the public, my father, who is a retired military officer, would regularly go to the courthouse to watch them with one of his close friends from his military high school to provide support for his friends on trial. I had accompanied them on a couple of these expeditions, diving in and out of the overwhelming Istanbul traffic, on journeys that could range anywhere between 2-5 hours, round-trip. It was during these visits to the courthouse, seeing the most unlikely candidates among the Turkish population to be defendants in high criminal

courts be slowly prosecuted, that I first thought of focusing on these cases for my dissertation project. What had made me interested in my initial research topic was the transformation of political authority and power, and how formerly powerful state actors experienced the withdrawal of power and authority from them. If the still violent post-conflict environment could not be my field site to observe this shift, what better place, I thought, than the treason trials of military officers to study power struggles and transformations in real time? Thus began my journey into Turkey's byzantine and violent legal bureaucracy that had now picked military members to be devoured as fuel to the state's power.

Anthropologists have long conducted research in field sites not amenable to their presence (Feldman 1991; Ghassem-Fachandi 2009; Nordstrom and Robben 1995) or "unstable places" (Mertz et al. 2002) where traditional methods of ethnography (extended time spent in a grounded place, intensive participant observation, immersion in the lives of interlocutors, among others) become near impossibilities. My research is an addition to this body of work since I tried to navigate a field site that developed as a result of political turmoil in which suspicion and paranoia ran rampant among my interlocutors (perhaps for good reason) as they were grappling with the repercussions of an unforeseen legal process that violently upended their lives. The fact that I was trying to "study up" (Gusterson 1997; Nader 1972; Ortner 2010) in this fraught context made things doubly difficult for me; this was not a field site that easily lent itself to ethnographic fieldwork. In writing about the difficulties on conducting field research on law in "fragile states" (i.e., conflict-afflicted and authoritarian states), Mark Fathi Massoud states that "developing trust, ensuring safety, minimizing and disclosing conflicts of interest, being

sensitive to power relations and positionality, and ultimately translating contingent findings into readable accounts that build social theory and contribute to social policy" (2016:86) are only some of the challenges a researcher encounters in these difficult field settings. I spent every day in the field very much aware of these realities and ruminating on ways to overcome them.

While in the field, I often felt that the only way for me to achieve the expectations of anthropological demands was to *become*, as much as I could, the military members exposed to the proceedings—volunteer for protests, send petitions to authorities, engage in online activism, visit officers in jail, and fight for their cause. While it may have provided me with more intimate access to the lives of my interlocutors, that approach never felt like it would be true to myself, but also, I thought, would violate the integrity of my research. Finally giving up on trying to make ethnography work in an unworkable setting, I decided to follow my interlocutors in as much or as little as they offered me. I made use of the brief time during the protests to chat with military members, found ways to learn as much as I could from the interviews they offered me, and tried to understand their world, recognizing that I would not never be given full access to it. In that sense, more than what one would expect from a traditional ethnography (with its focus on participant observation as the prior means of doing anthropology), my research is more in line with what Hugh Gusterson (1997) calls a "polymorphous engagement" or what Sherry Ortner (2010) calls "interface ethnography." Coming to terms with the idea that this is what I had to work with, fieldwork for me, therefore, was as much about learning to let go as it was about trying to get in.

My military identity did give me a relatively easier time with access compared to the difficulties a civilian researcher would have in engaging the military population. But even though I technically could access my field site, as my above discussion also demonstrates, *entry* into the field was a different matter. As David Bayendor, in his analysis of anthropology's engagement with the military, states, "the military institution is distinctly closed to the civilian. One cannot simply walk into a military environment and write ethnography" (Bayendor 2012). But it is not just the heavily guarded bases, checkpoints, or closed doors that impede access to the military world; it is also one's level of comfort in becoming a part of or associated with an institution that is seen, at least by anthropologists, as the violent arm of the state. If anthropology's premise is to "go native" and understand the world through the eyes of one's interlocutors, how does a researcher do that in an environment that is not only hostile to the presence of outsiders, but also in which the anthropologist herself may feel extremely uncomfortable? Perhaps this is why, as Hugh Gusterson aptly observes, anthropologists "have ignored military elites even more than capitalist elites, despite militarism's evident importance as both a mode of social organization and a site of potent ideological production in America" (1997:115), and, I would also add, around the world.

Sometimes more obvious, at others unbeknownst to me, I also aroused a great deal of interest for my interlocutors, despite, or perhaps because of, their suspicions about me. They were curious about what I could be doing there if I did not know anyone that was on trial. And the reasons for my presence were tested as long as I was a part of the protests. On a busy afternoon during the flag waving ritual in Ankara, a regular part of people's daily protest schedule on site, a group of officers I was introduced to, for

instance, asked me about my "general father." When I politely corrected them by saying that my father was not actually a general, one of the officers, with a glimmering sign of content, said, "I knew that he wasn't a general, but I was just testing you to make sure." Despite the verbal correction, he, nevertheless, also wanted to see my military ID card for further confirmation, which I reluctantly pulled out of my wallet, with a remark about how the suspicion was becoming tiring at times. "We just want to make sure," he responded, "we can't really trust anyone anymore." That was one of the least hostile interactions. One military wife confronted me for being "a servant of America" (i.e., a spy) while others implied that I was there to elicit information from them. Some openly declined to talk to me, others chose to pretend like I did not exist.

The challenge of entry, in my case, became doubly difficult, as I had severely underestimated my level of discomfort with reentering into the military world whose values I had long rejected. From the very beginning of the legal process to the very end, I had a very hard time relating to the pain of military members. Having switched my topic from studying the damage caused by the military on others to the damage endured by military members themselves, it was difficult for me to feel empathy for the members of an institution that wreaked havoc on its fellow citizens. Like many others who reacted to the trials, to me as well, the prior destruction caused by the military almost justified the ruthlessness of the proceedings—whether or not the officers on trial were the culprits of that destruction did not make much of a difference. Therefore, as interesting as I found the trials as a topic of study, I grappled severely with conducting the research on the ground, each day feeling like more of a challenge than the previous one. Being brushed off by military wives (my initial contacts in the field) about my interview requests and

questioned by suspicious military eyes about my research did not help with trying to make a connection with my interlocutors either.

As much as I was frustrated by the military members' attitudes, I could also understand why they would not want to meet with me. One of the reasons was about confidentiality. The Sledgehammer trial was made possible through the leaked recordings of a command meeting, so everyone was weary of having conversations that could later be used against them no matter how ordinary those conversations may be. And while the officers faced allegations in court, they were also targeted through public defamation campaigns that included leaked wiretaps of their private phone conversations, personal photographs of themselves and their children taken from and circulated on the web, and surveillance recordings of their daily lives. Therefore, they were cautious in approaching people and talking to them about the trials, especially since they did not know how or where those conversations would end up being used.

The other reason for the reluctance I encountered was, essentially, the methods of anthropological research itself. Most of the time, the families had a hard time understanding what exactly I was doing and what outcome my research would ultimately produce. They wanted to talk to advocates of their cause and wanted to see results—ideally, fast. A military wife, who had told me to call her to schedule an interview, told me about her complicated schedule for the week, and added, "I'm waiting for a call from a major newspaper; if they call, I can't meet you on the day we arranged. They are my priority." Even though the families did not necessarily trust journalists due to, what they argued to be, their biased reporting, they were still the best available choice for the immediate dissemination of their cause. An academic study that would take years to

produce with a mild chance of even future public dissemination was not the families' priority. The immediacy of their state made ethnographic work appear redundant or perhaps even a luxury.

In addition to access, one of the most challenging aspects of conducting research on the military was learning how to respond to the reactions to my research that I received from a myriad of actors ranging from close friends to family members and from academics to civilians opposed to military members. Oftentimes, I was situated on the side of the military, automatically assumed to be the supporter of military officers merely because my research chose to look at the trials from their perspective. Friends and local academics alike could never understand why I would want to research the trials from the perspective of military members. The people whose stories were worth being studied, I was told, were the real victims (i.e., those whose lives were devastated by the state and the military) rather than the military members who only *claimed* the undeserved status of victimhood.

Finding ways to respond to such reactions sometimes felt more exhausting and challenging than being able to conduct the research itself. For the people who responded to my research with such indignation, often starting our conversations with the sentence "You know, I really dislike soldiers," the figure of the soldier possessed a core set of characteristics, most often associated with a timeless and unchanging identity: the soldier as the coup plotter, human rights violator, and privileged stakeholder of the state. In processing and making sense of these reactions, my research has ultimately become as much about the reaction to the trials (and the changing perceptions of the figure of the soldier) as about the trials themselves.

Finally, the emotional and psychological fraught of the events I was trying to study and understand also had an impact on my time in the field. It is difficult to do ethnography when someone is visiting their father, brother, husband, or son in a maximum-security prison where, for many, humanity's limits are tested. The same applies for sitting in on trials when the person with whom you are interacting is sentenced to life in prison, which, had the previous Turkish penal code been in effect, would have been the death penalty. And the same goes, again, for the awkwardness of talking to a young woman your age on the way to visit her father behind bars about the mechanisms of law and then having to leave her on her own because the long sought after interlocutor has finally become available to talk to you on the way back from the prison visit. I have numerous examples like the ones above, each of which has made me ponder on the ethical challenges of doing ethnographic research on very personal topics such as the one I picked. These were the circumstances in which I tried to make fieldwork happen.

Note on Names and Identities

Before going any further, a note on names and identities, as well as the terminology, is necessary. Throughout the dissertation, I use the words soldier, officer, serviceman, and service member interchangeably in order to avoid repeating a single word throughout the dissertation. There is a loss in translation, however, that warrants an explanation of the rather important distinction between the terms "soldier" and "officer." In Turkish, soldier (*asker*) is generally used to denote conscripts; in other words, young men who have to join the barracks for a limited period of time to complete their compulsory military service. Officer (*subay*), on the other hand, denotes members of the

armed forces who are career officers. There is a further hierarchy within the terminology since *astsubay* denotes noncommissioned officers. While still holding more status and power than the conscripts, noncommissioned officers are on the lower end of the hierarchical ladder, and oftentimes, subject to multiple forms of segregation in the military. Although officers sometimes also refer to themselves as *asker*, I came to notice, throughout my interactions with the military community, that the usage of the term by outsiders is not welcome since it devalues the status of the officer and carries the risk of conflating them with conscripts over whom officers have power and authority.

This terminology also requires a note on the identities of those who were prosecuted. The term soldier usually gets to be understood as men who serve in the armed forces even though women have long been a part of the Turkish military. Media coverage of the trials also made the same gendered assumption about the identity of the defendants. Nevertheless, there were actually three women who were indicted as part of the Sledgehammer trial—a civilian employee in the armed forces who was sentenced to 16 years in jail, and acquitted in the court of appeals after doing over 12 months in jail; a colonel and history teacher in the army who was sentenced to 16 years in jail and released after 21 months with the Constitutional Court's overruling of the initial verdict; and a colonel, who was a military judge, who fled the country after hearing the verdict, and her 16-year prison sentence, and only returned after the retrial acquitted all defendants. The stories of these women did not garner much media attention except for when they were initially detained and when they were released from jail. Perhaps aware of the oblivion, a newspaper did report on one of the women with a story, but only after a nationalist women's organization gathered in solidarity with the imprisoned officer in front of the

women's prison where she was held. The newspaper outlined how the story of the servicewoman was overshadowed by her fellow officers on trial, and how she was, essentially, "forgotten" in jail since it was only her family members that visited her (Oghan 2014).

I tried to incorporate two of these women into my research at different points during my time in the field. I was, unfortunately, not successful in either try. In the first case, the person I approached was extremely cautious about her interactions with me, and looked almost unsettled that I wanted to talk to her. I could understand the reluctance, and did not insist on trying to convince her to talk to me. The second instance was towards the end of my fieldwork when I was able to acquire one of the servicewoman's phone number from one of my interlocutors. With great hesitation, I dialed the number. Perhaps unsurprisingly, no one picked up. The result was still the same after multiple tries. An acquaintance of the person I was trying to reach later told me that the officer was not in a good state psychologically, and did not want to talk to anyone at that point. Once again, I did not insist. These women did, eventually, give interviews—not to me, but to newspapers, which I read and analyzed. Any information I have about them in my dissertation comes from these media interviews.

It is an expected professional practice for anthropologists to protect the identity of their interlocutors. At a minimum, researchers generally do so by using pseudonyms and by modifying information that could potentially give away the identity of their interlocutors. While some research settings allow for a smooth application of these basic principles, others, such as mine, can prove to be a challenge. Protecting the identity of my interlocutors was a goal I paid close attention to, but also found quite challenging at times

due to the very public nature of my research topic. This public nature made certain things easier, such as access to certain resources and information, like indictments, newspaper archives, or television footage. However, it also created a difficulty in terms of the decisions to be made in how to protect my interlocutors. Even though there were hundreds of officers on trial across multiple proceedings, it would not be utterly difficult for a reader to decipher the identities of the officers with enough relevant information about their lives, especially if they were the more public figures of the cases. Therefore, I have taken the following precautions to protect the identities of the officers I talked to.

The majority of the officers I interviewed were defendants in the Sledgehammer case, but some were also implicated in other trials. Revealing the names of the trials or details of the specific allegations would, in some cases, make the identities of the servicemen easily recognizable. Therefore, I have decided to withhold this information. In a similar manner, I have chosen not to reveal the ranks of the officers I interviewed; neither have I revealed when and where they were stationed. However, in cases where the incidents I describe are readily available in newspapers (e.g., through interviews or media coverage), I have chosen to use the real names of the officers because the information is public, and in the case of media interviews, voluntarily revealed by the interviewees themselves. In sections in which I analyze scenes from the courtroom, I have also chosen to keep the real names of the people if the scene is from a court transcript or verbatim reporting of a newspaper rather than from my direct observations in the field. I have provided the source of these observations through footnotes in relevant chapters.

Apart from a couple of exceptions, mostly with some military children and small number of wives, I did not record any of my interviews with the military members. While

interviewing the officers, I was able to take copious notes as they were speaking. This was not always the case with some wives and children. Because not a lot of recording was possible, any quote I use throughout the dissertation is from my notes, as much as I could write down during or after conversations, and from my memory, what I could remember, to the best of my ability, after my interactions with my interlocutors. Because protecting the identity of the military members has been a major concern for me throughout the research, in providing analyses of my interviews with military officers, I have created composites from the answers of a number of servicemen, following other anthropologists, such as Barbara Myerhoff (1980) or Amahl Bishara (2012), who have followed a similar method to ensure confidentiality for their interlocutors. Doing so was the best possible way to ensure confidentiality, giving me the peace of mind that the officers' identities would not be revealed even if the reader knew something about them. Working with these composites also gave me a chance to incorporate multiple officers' voices into my analysis.

Outline of the Chapters

Divided into four chapters, my dissertation provides a study of Turkey's treason and coup trials of the past decade through an analysis of how military members navigated the unmaking of their lives in and outside the courtroom. Through a detailed analysis of this unprecedented legal process and an intimate engagement with servicemen and their families, whose valorization and demonization I have witnessed at once, I provide a nuanced and complex portrait of a legal process that has redefined notions of justice, belonging, and identity for military members in Turkey.

Chapter 2 focuses on the trial process and reflects on the question, how do the indictments and the court turn the figure of the soldier into a defendant and criminal? In this chapter, by focusing on the Sledgehammer coup plot case, but also referencing other court cases in which military officers found themselves as defendants, I analyze how the indictments and the court tied the soldiers to the allegations and decided on the defendants' culpability. By drawing on particular moments from the courtroom, I discuss how the officers responded to the allegations that violently upended their lives and careers in an irreversible way. I also reflect on the question of what happens when those who belong to an institution long associated with violence and rights violations become the ones to seek justice.

Chapter 3 turns to the effects and repercussions the trials had on the military wives and children. In this chapter, by focusing on a select number of interviews with these military figures, I analyze how the military wives, in the absence of their husbands, became the public advocates of the trials and how military children navigated between the civilian and military worlds in making sense of the trials. The spaces that the trials opened up in the lives of military members (courtrooms, prisons, and protests) form the backdrop of the military members' narratives. Through their recollection of their experiences in these spaces throughout the trials, I examine how the relatives of the accused servicemen reacted to the stance of the government, the military institution, and the various publics that followed the trials.

Chapter 4 returns to the legal realm to analyze the trials from the perspective of truth and evidence, but it is not restricted to the courtroom alone. Following the conspiracy theories that manifested themselves in the narratives of state representatives,

military members, and the publics following the trials, I analyze how conspiracy, in its myriad forms, became the defining characteristics of the legal process. By focusing on the animation of conspiracy on the part of the state, I analyze how the rhetoric of the rule of law became a means to override concern of truth and evidence through conspiratorial legality. In a similar manner, I look at how the families used conspiracy to advance their arguments. Through examining the entanglement of law and conspiracy, I analyze how those two concepts continue to define the lives of citizens in contemporary Turkey.

Chapter 5 brings back the focus on the main actors of the legal process—military officers—by attending to the effects the trials had on the servicemen's sense of self and belonging. I provide an overview of the lives of military officers by chronicling how they became military subjects and how their lives were impacted by the proceedings. Through an account of the military members' lives before and after the trials, this chapter challenges the monolithic representations of the military institution and its representatives that have dominated analyses of the trials. Instead, by focusing on people who have come of age in the military institution at different historical periods, I demonstrate a fragmented, rather than an unchanging, picture of what military members think of their role as soldiers, the military institution, and the state.

The conclusion provides an overview of the dissertation and briefly analyzes how the military members who were made to become a part of the trials have tried to reconstruct their lives in their aftermath. I demonstrate how, despite the critique that the officers had a smooth transition into the lives they had left behind, incorporating themselves back into the military body and joining civilian life has actually been a challenge. I also touch open the issue of closure and what it means in the context of

ongoing legal battles that military members are now waging against those who turned them into defendants in these cases.

My research is situated in a unique position since I designed and conducted it while the trials were ongoing as I was in (and left) the field. This was both an opportunity and a challenge. While my interlocutors have continued to remain in the legal realm by becoming the plaintiffs in cases directed against those who turned them into defendants in courts, it was simply not possible for me to extensively chronicle the aftermath of their lives post-trials. In a similar manner, although pertinent for my research on multiple levels, I do not provide in-depth coverage of the July 15, 2016 coup attempt in the main analysis of the dissertation, but discuss it through a short overview in the epilogue. As my analysis will demonstrate, the legal process that entangled the officers in the country's past decade foreshadowed the aftermath of the most recent coup attempt on many levels, and reinforced the rewriting of history for the sake of approving the narratives of Erdogan's "New Turkey."⁵ Based on an analysis of a country and community in turmoil, my dissertation ends with more uncertainty for both parties in the coming years.

⁵ New Turkey is what Erdogan has officially named his vision for the Turkish Republic.

Chapter 2

"This Is Not the Soldier You Know":

Battling for Justice in and outside the Courtroom

On a regular, eventless afternoon as I was sitting with the usual crowd of people who had made the Constitutional Court in Ankara a part of their daily schedules for the past month, Nimet Abla,⁶ nimble and energetic as always, rushed towards our seats to provide us with the latest updates from the roadside interactions. The protest was a last resort effort to draw attention to the trials and resolve their pending situation. It was over nine months since the Court of Appeals had approved the initial verdict and the trial file was now sent to the Constitutional Court for final review of the verdict. If the court approved the lower courts' verdict, the officers would keep staying in prison to complete their sentence. If the court overruled it, then the servicemen had a chance of retrial. The latter was what the families and the officers hoped for. This stage held particular importance for the officers since they could take their cases to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) only after all domestic remedies were exhausted. And thanks to the a recent legal amendment passed by the parliament, legal cases needed to go through three courts before the defendants could take it to the ECHR: the initial court where the case was first seen, the higher court of appeals, and the Constitutional Court itself. The families knew the significance of this stage. However, they not only gathered for a hasty resolution of the matter, but in the belief that the overruling of the verdict by the constitutional court would finally convince the public that the lower courts' decision was

6. All names used in the dissertation are pseudonyms unless the accounts come from newspaper articles or court transcripts.

erroneous. The aim with the protest was to draw the attention of the judges of the Constitutional Court and demand that they expedite their review of the case.



Military members protesting in front of the Constitutional Court

Populated by the families of prosecuted officers as well as retired military men supporting their friends, the protests were also occasionally visited by the civilian public supporting military families. The Constitutional Court across from it were situated on a two-way road that got somewhat busy during rush hour. From early morning until late evening hours, the protestors stood on the sidewalk across from the court, waving

Turkish flags to an imaginary audience, like fans cheering for an absent team in an empty stadium. But the scene was not empty, and they did get support. Cars passing showed their support by long honks (which, later turned out, disturbed the employees of the court and their silent work schedule), sometimes also waving at the protestors from behind their seats. The protestors responded by waving back and smiling, content with the results their presence had achieved. But the interactions were not always so friendly or uplifting. That particular day, as Nimet Abla was standing by the curb, waving the Turkish flag to garner support from the vehicles passing by, a car stopped and asked what was going on. "We're here for the imprisoned soldiers," the protestors told the man in the car, perhaps thinking that that would garner immediate sympathy from the person in it. That did not turn out to be the case. As Nimet Abla recounted, the man, fierce, responded with the following words: "These are the ones that put me on trial on September 12 [1980 coup] for being a member of DEV-SOL [a Marxist-Leninist organization], shoved the *you know* up my *you know what* [censored in the original account]; I hope they'll see worse happen to them," and then drove off. Not so surprised, but still annoyed by the interaction, Nimet Abla's audience grumbled and complained: "We are the ones being turned into scapegoats right now because they couldn't shove it up to those who shoved it up to him back then. Those people [those responsible for the 1980 coup] are sitting at home right now." Others agreed, starting a conversation about the injustice of the entire legal process they were made to go through.

Although somewhat unexpected due to the graphic content of the incident, dutifully censored for those present by Nimet Abla, the military members who had taken to the streets to seek justice for their officer relatives had, by that point, become

accustomed to being challenged by the public. The trials had brought the military families' segregation from the public to an end, leading to uncomfortable encounters with the civilian population in the various spaces of the city.⁷ No longer respected for the uniform they wore, servicemen were now publicly blamed as the perpetrators of military coups who deserved to be punished for the havoc they wreaked on the country. "This is not the soldier you know" (*Bu asker o asker değil*), which came to be a recurring sentence uttered during many of my interactions with military members as well as being one of the primary placards of the weekly protests, grew out of a reaction to and defense against these public encounters where the prosecuted officers were accused of being "those soldiers" responsible for past military atrocities, particularly the 1980 coup. Anthropologist Elif Babul notes that "in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup, human rights were stigmatized as 'rights for terrorists' due to the close affinity of the human rights movement with left-leaning politics, anti-coup struggles, and the Kurdish national movement" (2012:33). In an ironic twist of fate, the officers, as now expunged and unwanted representatives of the state, turned to the language of human rights, which both the state and the military had demonized, in order to claim their status as the victims of the state. Yet, in a country where the state apparatus has historically left so many as victims of state violence, the military families' continuous attempt to claim the category of victims thus generally met with continuous failure for them to be publicly recognized

⁷ The military families' segregation from the general public stems largely from the fact that they live in guarded military housing complexes, which are not open to the general public. Some of these complexes resemble small cities, with their own grocery stores, fitness centers, restaurants, and playgrounds. Therefore, while the general public cannot get into these sites, the military population mostly does not feel the need to get out due to the presence of such amenities. There are, of course, exceptions, as officers may end up living among civilians. The officers' primary connection to the world, however, is their children's school and their wives' jobs, if they happen to be working.

as such. Indeed, those who were critical of the military often dismissed the officers' statements, as well as the swiftly growing body of literature ranging from compilations of essays to memoirs written by military members, as a belated awakening to the long history of injustice—a history in which the military was often complicit. The officers' case received limited sympathy from the public, at least on the surface.

My time among the relatives of the defendants made me become a firsthand witness to these tense encounters and unsympathetic critiques. Empathy, on my end, was not always forthcoming or easy either. But as I listened to the stories of military families who had to live with what had become of their lives as a result of the trials on a daily basis, the notion of victimhood, as well as the question of who qualified to be a victim, started to become more blurry to me. For many civilians, military members were seen as the privileged stakeholders of the state, benefiting from its many perks that were denied to the overall population. The servicemen and their families, on the other hand, argued that they led a life of sacrifice and articulated that they were victimized by the very state they were taught to respect and represent. They were thus caught within the fraught situation of representing the state's interests and being its subjects—and subject to its power—at the same time. This complex entanglement is what lies at the heart of this chapter as I turn to analyzing how the accused servicemen, and their families, have battled for justice in and outside of the courtroom. Through my analysis of the military members' efforts to seek justice and the state's response to those efforts, I hope to demonstrate the contentious status of victimhood as a category enmeshed in moral battles for those who seek to be hailed through it, especially members of an institution long associated with violence and rights violations.

Law in Erdogan's New Turkey

Entering into the domain of law in Turkey, as the military officers would now themselves experience, has generally meant entering into a temporal hold. Especially for those who have traditionally been seen as the potential enemies of the state, being prosecuted as part of a criminal trial corresponds to long periods of detention without charges, lack of due process, arbitrarily scheduled and cancelled hearings, and unfairly decided upon verdicts. The specially authorized civilian courts, the legal body then in charge of prosecuting military members, were essentially a continuation of the state security courts. They gained their power from the arbitrarily vast jurisdictional authority that was granted to them, and although military judges were now replaced by civilian ones, the still rather vague organized crime charges left the defendants at the whim of legal authorities. When military members unexpectedly found themselves as defendants in these courts, they essentially joined a long list of people the state had targeted as "terrorists" (both symbolically and literally since some trials were based on terrorism charges) and whom the military judges themselves prosecuted in state security courts. The exceptional legality that made the soldiers special was now turned on its head, and made them become a part of the system they were long held exempt from. Different from the secrecy that marked the workings of the state security courts of the 1990s, however, specially authorized courts not only conducted their proceedings as open-court trials, but also turned them into a public spectacle (Hakyemez 2015). With indictments publicly available and parts of which were published in newspapers, house searches announced live on television before they were even conducted, and verdicts making headline news as

the hearings were still ongoing (Sol Haber 2017), the entire nation now became both the prosecutor and the accomplice of the crime in question.

As the short overview above demonstrates, the law held a special place in the Justice and Development Party's trajectory and road to power. Having stemmed out of the Islamist tradition and marketed its politics as the representative of moderate Islam, AKP won the support of its mostly working-class and pious voter base through those religious ties. On the other hand, the party's progressive agenda, unexpected and unprecedented for the country's political scene, was what won the hearts and votes of liberals and intellectuals who wanted to give the party a chance. During its initial years, AKP espoused Turkey's long-pending European Union accession as one of the most important policy areas to focus on, and Erdogan vowed to make Turkey a member of what, to many in the country, looked like a Christian union, closed off to the Muslim-majority Turkish nation. Under Erdogan's leadership, the party took to rectifying the country's deficits in the legal realm one by one based on EU's recommendations (Grigoriadis 2010). In 2004, the government abolished the state security courts, which, remnant of the country's past military coups, not only established and perpetuated a system of exceptional legality, but was also among the major culprits of the EU's annual reports on Turkey. In response to the critiques stemming from these annual reviews, Turkey prepared multiple "harmonization packets" (*uyum paketi*) to revamp the country's legal system and reach the common European standards. By 2007, the Turkish parliament had already discussed and approved nine legal amendment packets, revising major laws and legal regulations, the majority of which pertained to civil and political liberties. In 2010, the government also amended certain articles of the 1982 constitution, restructuring the Constitutional

Court and the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK). In the initial years of the AKP rule, legal amendments, all of which were executed at an unprecedented rate, helped Erdogan and his MPs to not only move towards their goal of EU accession, but also convince a public skeptical of their Islamist roots and affiliations that they were genuine in their commitment to upholding civil and political liberties.

The amendments had a polarizing effect, nevertheless. Liberals and leftist intellectuals, the nontraditional voter base that supported AKP in coming to power, welcomed this new environment of what promised to be extended rights and freedom. It was unheard of for a party that openly declared itself as espousing Islamist traditions to also, for instance, provide leeway to an environment respectful of gay rights. That was an attitude to be commended, and, so, the party did get the trust it needed. On the other hand, certain political parties and segments of the population, especially CHP, the Republican People's Party and its Kemalist voter base, saw these developments as AKP's rebuttal of the country's Republican values (Ozyurek 2006). According to them, AKP was using civil and political liberties as a facade for trying to find ways to implement its own Islamist agenda. These critics were also anxious that the party's ability to change laws so freely, especially with the backing of its liberal supporters, would, ultimately, lead to increased powers for the government. This, they argued, would result in an authoritarian state with sweeping powers, ready for Erdogan to implement his own agenda of turning the country into an Islamic Republic.

AKP was clever to use the Republican skepticism to its own advantage. In its campaigns, the party started advertising the amendments as a move towards ridding Turkey off of its military past. This would be a time to shed the "military tutelage"

(*askeri vesayet*) that allowed the military to control the government in line with its own agenda and ideology. According to this argument, it was the military that restricted the freedom of the citizens and kept the country from reaching its full potential. Therefore, anyone who objected to AKP's legal amendments was a de facto supporter of the military. And supporting the military, inevitably, meant that they also supported the coups. AKP called the people to help them build a country that operated free from the shadow and control of the military, and the only way to do that was to trust Erdogan and his party to help build a "New Turkey."

AKP's strategic maneuver resonated with a wide spectrum of people since the military's presence was, indeed, felt in law and politics in both direct and indirect ways. Even though military members themselves were absent from the civilian legal arena due to the protection provided to them by special laws, the military did have influence over the legal realm. The Turkish Constitutional Court, established under the new constitution drafted following the country's first military coup in 1960, has been backed by the Turkish military and has shut down political parties that it has seen as a threat to the secular government. Despite its "selective activism" demonstrated in such cases, the court has mostly overlooked issues falling outside of this realm as trivial (Belge 2006; Cakmak and Dinc 2010; Kogacioglu 2004).

Military members have also been more directly present in the legal realm through their authority to prosecute civilians in military courts⁸ and in their role as military judges in now abolished state security courts. The country's notorious anti-terror laws also provided military personnel with legal provisions for military duties carried out during the Kurdish conflict as well as setting extremely arbitrary and broad clauses to prosecute

⁸ This was true until 2017 when the government abolished military courts.

"terror" charges. Protected by the special laws of the military justice system, the servicemen, and the institution at large, were supported by constitutional laws as well. Article 318 of the Turkish Penal Code, for instance, which defines "alienating the public from military service" as a crime, has shielded the military from any potential public criticism. In a similar manner, Article 159 of the old Turkish Penal Code, which defined insulting and denigrating the armed forces (among other state institutions) as a punishable crime, provided further legal protection for the military so much so that a public prosecutor who, in 2000, wanted to indict the head of the military junta for the 1980 coup was prosecuted under this article and ultimately debarred. As these examples demonstrate, the justice system operated on a duality that provided a distinct set of privileges for the military population.

The arguments about the military and "military tutelage" did, eventually, help AKP to pave the way to ousting the military from power. At first circuitously, later more directly, AKP's legal amendments started impacting the military institution. The harmonization packets, for instance, included clauses to streamline civil-military relations, curtailing the military's authority through increased civilian control as well as taking precautions to impede its potential intervention into the political sphere. In line with these developments, two major changes in the past decade significantly impacted military members' extensive legal immunity.

Although military officers could technically be prosecuted in civilian courts for crimes they committed while in the military, lower courts usually did not take on officers' cases by claiming lack of jurisdiction. Furthermore, even when courts tried to prosecute military members, the cases could be overruled by the Supreme Court for being

nonprocedural. Despite the fact that the lower court could dispute this verdict based on what constitutes a military offense, not all courts did or wanted to (Benli 2009; Soylemez 2017). When article 250 of the Turkish Penal Code was changed in 2009, high criminal courts were provided with the authority to prosecute military personnel for crimes that fell under their jurisdiction. Yet, this was not a legal amendment that merely transformed the jurisdictional parameters of the court – it placed the officers in the realm of the ordinary, albeit in an extraordinary way, stripping them of their exceptional status. Therefore, when the former clause regarding military courts was changed from giving these courts jurisdictional authority over servicemen at all times, "*including* states of war and martial law," to one "*in the case of* war and martial law," military members found themselves as defendants in mass trials without the protection of the military. This legal amendment also removed the jurisdictional authority that military courts had over civilians. Notorious for its harsh disciplinary procedures, the military could now no longer put conscripted soldiers on trial in its own courts.

The second major legal amendment that took place was the abolishing of the temporary Article 15 of the 1982 constitution that impeded the prosecution of the military junta of the 1980 coup. Upon this development, the two surviving members of the junta, Kenan Evren and Tahsin Sahinkaya, who at the time were 94 and 86 years of age, respectively, were put on trial in 2012. After delayed or postponed hearings, change in major legal actors, and much tension, the trial ended in 2014 with life sentences for both generals, and was officially dropped after their death in 2015. So when Erdogan puts the law front and center in his political agenda and his speeches to the nation, he is not utterly

wrong to draw attention to the power of the law in undoing the military's social, cultural, and political standing.

Law in Building the Turkish Nation

While AKP made extensive use of the law in working towards its goals, it was, by no means, the first actor in Turkey's history to turn to the legal realm to execute its mission. Law and legal regulations also had crucial importance in building the Turkish nation. Transporting legal codes from selected Western nations, in particular Switzerland and Italy, the founding fathers of the country utilized the law to fulfill their project of modernization. In first couple of years of the Republic, laws were passed to regulate clothing, names, language, and time, among others. These laws were meant to help propel the nation in moving towards the determined goal of "attaining the level of civilized nations" (*muasir medeniyetler seviyesi*). Statutes not only actualized the aspirations of the new Republic, but also signaled to its citizens the correct form of behavior. These new regulations told citizens how to dress, what to study, and what to say. This was the moment of the creation of the new Turkish citizen (Kerslake et al. 2010; Yilmaz 2016).

Although not all aspirations were turned into laws, the power of the legal realm was utilized to remind people of the delimits of citizenship and belonging. In 1928, the law students at Istanbul University, one of the oldest and most prestigious law schools in the country, initiated a campaign called, "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" Targeted against the non-Muslim minorities of the country, especially Jews and Greeks, the movement reminded the non-Turkish citizens of the country on a daily basis the conditions of what it meant to belong to the Turkish nation. Those who failed to meet what was seen as the

primary condition of citizenship, speaking Turkish, were not only harassed by others in the public realm, but, at times, also fined for their "offense" (Aslan 2007).

While laws and statutes delimited the characteristics of the desirable Turkish citizen, trials continually defined and redefined Turkishness and the contours of the nation (Nieminen 2016). From 1920 to 1927, the Turkish government operated the so-called Independence Courts (*Istiklal Mahkemeleri*). Initially designed to prosecute those opposing the Turkish struggle for independence, the courts later became an apparatus through which any kind of dissent against the Turkish Republic was punished, mostly through public executions (Aybars 2009). Therefore, the trials and their verdicts not only allowed the new Republic to silence dissent, but also sent a message to those thinking of dissenting about what would become of them if they chose to pursue that path.

Trials continued to be a regular part of Turkish nation making throughout the history of the republic. Most of the time designed as a spectacle, each trial created its own spectators, some willing, some reluctant. In 1960, when the military ousted the ruling party from power, the then prime minister, Adnan Menderes, and his cabinet members were brought to court. The Yassıada Proceedings, which took place on the Yassıada Island thus giving its name to the trial, were broadcast live to the citizens of the country through the national radio every night. The radio broadcast was complemented by footage of the trials that were broadcast to the public in movie theaters (Pelt 2014). In 1999 when PKK's leader, Abdullah Ocalan, was captured and put on trial for charges of terrorism and crimes against the state, veterans, as well as the families of veterans and martyrs of the Kurdish conflict, were among the most diligent attendees of the trials. Held on the İmralı Island under strict security measures, the trial turned into a nationalist

spectacle, as the aforementioned military affiliates were invited to the court by state officials. While some were there to merely observe the proceedings, others also demanded to be plaintiffs in the trial (Aciksoz 2011:202).

In the case of Sledgehammer, the families responded to the "invitation" of the state to be its next public spectacle through acts of protests they deemed fit for their experience. They demanded that the trials be broadcast live on television by gathering fifty thousand signatures, and sent their petition to the Ministry of Justice. They staged performative protests, flying balloons towards justice and lamenting the death of it by distributing a traditional dessert that is made to commemorate the deceased. Unseen in the history of the country, some military members, including retired officers in good standing, stood for hours in front of the Ministry of Defense (*Genelkurmay Başkanlığı*) with signs that read "How can a soldier be a gazi (wounded veteran) and a terrorist at once?" challenging the military authorities on their silence related to the trials.

While the above activities provided the military members with a chance to make their case known in physical spaces, they waged a similar battle online. With the growing means of disinformation, mostly executed by the pro-government press, and almost nonexistent channels to convey their version of the story other than news outlets sympathetic to their plight, the families created their own archives. Pinar Dogan, the daughter of the most important defendant in the trial, and Dani Rodrik, her husband and a famous academic specializing in political economy, became one of the major public faces of the trials. Through their website, *Balyoz Davası ve Gerçekler (The Sledgehammer Trial and the Truth)*, they publicized court transcripts, forensic evidence reports, and

articles to counter disinformation. Over the course of six years, they also published two books, detailing the suspect evidence that the trial was based on (Parry 2015).

While the families strove to draw attention to the trials on the streets and public spaces of the city, officers fought a similar battle inside the courtroom and the prison. One day, the officers decided to protest the attitude of the court by making use of their bodies. As they entered and took their seats in the courtroom, they showed their t-shirts, all of which read "Justice is against science" (*Adalet bilime karsi*) on the front and "We want a fair trial" (*Adil yargilama istiyoruz*) on the back, to protest against the court's dismissal of the forensic evidence that would acquit the soldiers. The protest led to tense discussions with the trial judge. In prison, some military officers went on a brief hunger strike to draw attention to how their demands were not taken seriously. The protests themselves did produce their own form of contention among the imprisoned officers. Some critiqued their fellow servicemen for engaging in improper behavior, some refused to participate and thought negotiating was a better way to have their demands heard, and others simply ignored the struggle. Although these actions of protest may seem ordinary, or even minor, to many, anyone familiar with the military community would immediately notice how engaging in any of these actions would be unthinkable for military members. Officers and their families are strictly instructed to stay away from politics, the violation of which may result in putting one's career in jeopardy.

ASKERLER AÇLIK GREVİNDE!
MILITARY OFFICERS ARE GOING ON A HUNGER STRIKE!

Asrın iftirası olan Balyoz tertibinde, özel yetkili mahkemece hukuken kabul edilemeyecek, hiçbir maddi delil olmaksızın, sadece uydurulmuş, imzasız bilgisayar yazıları ile 20 yıla kadar varan açık hapis cezalarına çarptırıldık.

Mahkemenin vicdanları yaralayan bu karardan sonra, hiçbir Türk vatandaşının hukuki güvencesinin kalmadığını, her vesile ile anlatmaya gayret sarf ettik. Çünkü her yurttaşımızın, günün birinde böylesine ağır bir hukuksuzluk ile karşılaşabileceğini düşündük.

Şimdi de üzülerek ifade ediyoruz ki, Yargıtay Cumhuriyet Başsavcılığı da bu haksız, hukuksuz ve adaletsiz yerel mahkeme kararını teyit etmekle kalmayıp, daha da ileri götürün bir tebliğname yayımlamıştır.

Türkiye’de hukuk ve adaletin bitme noktasına geldiğini, yüce Türk Milleti’ne göstermek ve bu konuda aziz milletimizin dikkatini çekmek amacıyla toplam 36 Türk subayının katılımı ile 29-30 Haziran ve 01 Temmuz 2013 tarihlerinde 3 günlük açlık grevi yapacağız.

Kişisel hiçbir beklentimiz ve talebimiz yoktur.

Aziz milletimize saygıyla duyurulur

HASDAL’IN ESİR SUBAYLARI

In the Sledgehammer (Balyoz) plot, the biggest defamation of the century, we have been given sentences up to 20 years in jail by the specially authorized courts, based solely on manifestly fabricated evidence. The so-called evidence were forged on computers and had no signatures on them, so can in no way be counted as legally valid evidence.

After this conscience-disturbing court verdict, we tried to express over and over again the fact that no citizen of Turkey has any legal assurances in this judicial system anymore, because anyone can come face to face with such severe lawlessness.

We now sadly state that the Office of Public Prosecutions for Supreme Court of Appeal (Yargıtay Cumhuriyet Başsavcılığı) not only confirmed this unlawful and unjust local court verdict but also has furthered the injustice by its notice (tebliğname).

In order to draw the great Turkish nation’s attention to the fact that law and justice in Turkey are at the point of coming to an end, with the attendance of 36 Turkish military officers we are going on a hunger strike for 3 days, on June 29-30 and July 01.

We have absolutely no personal expectations or demands.

We announce this to our mighty nation, with our respects.

HASDAL’S CAPTIVE MILITARY OFFICERS

Pamphlet on military officers’ hunger strike in prison

By looking at the long history of trials that took place throughout the history of the republic, one can see that the law was one of the primary mechanisms through which the state came to a conviction about who belonged in the Turkish nation, and what happened to those who were seen as trying to test the limits of the conditions of belonging. Trials, in other words, were, and continue to be, an important part of Turkish nation building project. Yet, what exactly belonging to the nation meant also varied across time. In determining the parameters of national identity, the law in Turkey, in all its forms, including statutes and trials, has delimited belonging by defining the enemies of the state. By placing citizens in pre-defined categories of enemy and ally, the state allowed for the criminalization of opposing views and dissent. Socialists and Kurds have

almost always been a part of the enemy category and criminalization. But under the rule of Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party, there has been a significant expansion of the definition of who the state's enemies are, with those even minutely discontent with the workings of "New Turkey" acting as potential candidates for the enemy category (Saymaz 2013).

Starting from the mid-2000s, through the expansion of the powers of the police and judiciary, who mostly worked hand in hand to prosecute individuals, the law became solidified as *the* tool to reward or punish citizens, with every act now holding the potential to be labeled as terrorism (Saymaz 2013). In other words, with the now murky boundaries between ally and enemy, and how easily one could switch from one to the other, the law became the means to protect Erdogan and his ideology. In the last three months of 2015 alone, for instance, when the trials were still ongoing, 93 people faced charges for insulting Erdogan and his family (bianet 2015). This is a tally that does not even include hundreds of others on trial with charges of terrorism and conspiracy to overthrow the government or those taken to court by the president's entourage.

As a result of this expansion of the enemy category, it is no longer the content of a particular case, but the legal procedure itself that has become the center of attention, determining the fate of defendants. Therefore, while the trials themselves are judicial (as Erdogan's numerous proclamations aptly underscore), they are not necessarily judicious, as anyone can be made a part of the legal realm. No longer in need of special laws to justify the trial of "terrorists," courts now prosecute crime as a legal technicality. In other words, with its whimsical arbitrariness, the law has become an "indeterminate and

unpredictable patchwork of legalities" (Belge 2015), and trials are the primary means through which the government contains the chaos of the Turkish state.

Prosecuting the Soldier-Terrorist

While it is true that the trials have led the Turkish military to experience a serious fall from grace, the fissures in the military's unquestioned stance and authority actually date back to an earlier period, related to the country's ongoing Kurdish conflict.⁹ Starting from the early 2000s, there was a gradual—if not complete—dissipation of the military's status caused by a couple of developments.¹⁰ First, the increasing death toll and the rise in the numbers of those returning wounded and traumatized from the conflict zone showed that deploying soldiers and expecting unquestioning acceptance of their deaths was no longer a viable option. Parents, both mothers and fathers, started questioning the purpose of the "martyrdom" of their children. Moreover, the conscientious objection movement that had started to gain momentum in the 1990s gained more visibility in the 2000s, culminating in the establishment of *Vicdani Ret Derneği* (Conscientious Objection Association) in 2013. The increasing visibility of soldier suicides and suspicious deaths during military service also started to raise questions and concerns about what goes on behind the closed doors of the barracks, cut off from the civilian public apart from the symbolic oath-taking ceremonies people can attend during their sons' service. The establishment of *Asker Hakları* (Soldier Rights), a platform seeking to document and take action against abuse during compulsory service also demonstrates the need for a vocal scrutiny of military service as an obligation where people's rights are usually suspended.

⁹ Some paragraphs in this section have previously appeared in the article I published in the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*; see Kaptan 2017.

¹⁰ See Sünbuloğlu 2013, pp. 18-33 for a comprehensive summary of these developments.

In addition to opening fissures that made the questioning of the military's authority more possible, the trials of military officers also happened at a moment in time when debates on historical and cultural memory was a prevalent matter of concern for the Turkish public. Starting from the early 2000s, memoirs, biographies, and historical novels smashed bestseller lists, TV channels were inundated with series, part critique, part nostalgic, concerned with the country's recent past, and people, in general, became more interested in family histories and the "multicultural" heritage that once was a vital component of Turkey—a heritage, some may argue, that was eradicated in part through a militarized state ideology that equated citizenship to an ethnically Turkish and religiously Muslim population, and saw everyone else as a threat to its existence (Ungor 2012; Yildiz 2001). The 2000s saw a sharp increase in the number of memoirs written by victims of past military atrocities, the 1980 coup in particular, especially by prisoners held in military jails. Works of fiction dealing with the 1990s, the darkest years of the Kurdish conflict, accompanied these memoirs. And human rights organizations published report after report, documenting the rights violations inflicted on citizens during the conflict.

With the constant visibility of the higher echelons of the military in the social and political life of the country, it might not be surprising that Sledgehammer made it to the headlines as the "generals' trial" despite the fact that only a quarter of those on trial were actually generals. Yet, it was not just what the military members were accused to have done that marked discussions on the process, it was also the figure of the privileged soldier. For many who eagerly tracked the progress of the proceedings, this was seen as the long awaited chance to hold the military accountable for its prior deeds in time, but

the accountability, at least in public debate, seemed to focus more on the purportedly lavish lifestyle military members led – a lifestyle, according to many, based on exploiting the unpaid labor of conscripts and resources of the state – than about the legal claim itself. The proceedings were about an alleged coup plot, but they resulted in the rupture of long suppressed hostilities toward the military other. The trials, or at least the news produced about them, appealed to a particular memory of military officers that, apparently, was a lingering, but publicly invisible, presence for many: the soldier as the coup plotter, human rights violator, and privileged stakeholder of the state. A military wife's description of her struggle to reach out to people about his husband's innocence is befitting of this preconception:

When I went to our summer house, a neighbor of ours told us, 'Your people may not have plotted a coup, but my husband was tortured in Diyarbakir, so you can't convince me about anything.' But we didn't know any of that. And these soldiers are not the ones that did those things. I don't even properly know about the military coups cause we were never taught those in school, so how could I know about all that happened?

Befitting the prevalence of the memory work of the past two decades and the gradual undoing of the Turkish military's social and political authority, especially because of the casualties in the Kurdish conflict, the major tactic through which the court decided to go about prosecuting the servicemen was to turn them into terrorists. In some cases, the soldiers were literally being charged with forming a terrorist organization with the purpose of overthrowing the government, and this choice is no coincidence. While the words “terror” and “terrorism” have become an omnipresent part of the contemporary political moment, especially in reference to Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism in Turkey is mainly associated with the PKK and the Kurdish conflict. When the PKK started an armed uprising against the Turkish state in 1984 demanding an independent Kurdish state

and the recognition of Kurdish rights, the word terrorism acquired a connotation that is engrained in the mind of the Turkish public to date. With the deployment of conscripts to combat Kurdish guerrillas on the mountains, the increasing number of casualties, and the haunting presence of those who returned home wounded and traumatized by the violence they were exposed to, military service became a feared potential death sentence for thousands of men. As the death toll increased and the conflict reached its peak, the media was inundated with news about "martyred soldiers" and "killed," "captured," or "neutralized terrorists." The conflict turned men into wounded veterans (*gazi*) and martyrs (*şehit*), and women into martyrs' mothers.

The state refused to officially recognize the struggle between the military and the PKK as a war, and both the government and the military, instead, labeled this as a problem of separatism. In government declarations, military memorandums, and media reports from the region, the conflict was mentioned through the overarching category of "terror" – which included a wide spectrum of events ranging from Kurdish dissent and political demonstrations to actual attacks by Kurdish guerillas against Turkish soldiers – while the PKK was referred to as "the separatist terrorist organization" (*bölücü terör örgütü*). The conflict made the Kurdish region synonymous with "terror," which became the major buzzword to describe ethnic tension without having to talk about it through the language of rights and identity. The word "terrorist" denoted Kurdish guerrillas, fighting against the Turkish soldiers on the mountains. And because they targeted the nation's sovereignty, the terrorists, even though they are also citizens of the country, could be subject to violence with impunity.

In his book about the former East German military officers, who have experienced a similar fall from grace like the officers in my research, Andrew Bickford states that "soldiers do the dirty work of the state, and the state needs to maintain the illusion that soldiers are valued members of society, even though they are the ones to be sent to fight and die, kill and maim, and live to think about it for the rest of their lives" (2011:25). The servicemen, and their families, also need to believe in their identity as soldiers, as people whose place among the order of things ultimately serves for a higher good. Rejecting the widespread image of a life of comfort and abundance as well as social, political, and legal privileges associated with Turkish military members, the families recount stories of hardship that often entailed long days the wives and children had to spend away from the officers, life in precarious conditions, and the soldiers' selfless dedication for the state and the homeland. Being tried under the anti-terror law, initially prepared as a legal supplement to the state's armed conflict with the PKK, and with allegations of forming a terrorist organization working against their fellow citizens, creates a crisis in the basic premise of what the officers thought their duty was—serving for an ultimate good for the nation and the homeland. The question that I was frequently asked by the military families about what they have done to the people to deserve such treatment also attests to the significant shock experienced by many military members.

That is why, the Kurdish conflict was almost always a lingering image in the military members' experience of the trials – sometimes seen through a placard held during the demonstrations asking "how can a soldier be a gazi and a terrorist at once," through circulating rumors of the soldiers being held as a bargaining chip for Abdullah Öcalan's release, and through the disfigured body of the disabled veteran appearing in

protests as a constant reminder of the nation's sovereignty crisis incarnate (cf. Açiksöz 2012). When the wife of an officer sentenced to 18 years in prison says, "We didn't deserve what this nation did to us. My husband could have died in Şırnak, fighting the terrorists," she underscores the precise tension brought about by the switching of these two roles. Similar comparisons between the soldiers and terrorists were also a recurring part of my interactions and conversations with people. Deniz, for instance, whose father had been diagnosed with an autoimmune disease that was exacerbated by the prison conditions, commented on the treatment of the officers with the following words, "They let those PKK members out [out of prison] when they say they have a cold, and all appeals by my father's doctors have been rejected." Therefore, being put on trial like "criminals" and treated as "terrorists" when they have actually fought the "real" terrorists who, according to them, should have been the ones behind bars, was a major source of frustration for military members.

The figure of the veteran is an important one to reflect on as it is both the symbol of the nation for which the ultimate sacrifice has been (Açiksöz 2012). One reason why the proceedings caused such immense frustration among military members is precisely the unrecognized status of the conflict as one that was worth fighting for. As soldiers who have been a part of the conflict, the officers and their families now resent being punished by the state, which, according to them, has reversed the status of the soldier and the "terrorist." Commenting on the trials and the military's stance towards them, an admiral who had resigned from his post as a protest against the proceedings said that "the state devoured its soldiers' flesh like a cannibal." I find this statement important to reflect on for a couple of reasons. As many theorists of the state have skillfully detailed, the state

contains violence in the name of the people, and it bestows certain populations, like soldiers, with a right to employ that violence to ensure the rights of others. In the words of anthropologist Andrew Bickford, "the soldier is the personification, the sign, the representation of the state; its arm, its agent of violence, the tip of the spear, the means by which the state comes into being, is maintained, and continues to be" (Bickford 2011:3). According to the prosecuted officers, the state, likened to that of a ravenous cannibal, now unleashes its power on the soldiers, as if unable to contain it, through the public punishment executed through the ritual of the trials. And instead of targeting its 'enemies,' it now devours those it once embraced and cherished. In line with the above sentence of this officer, the presence of the figure of the veteran – having sacrificed himself for and in the name of the sovereign nation – thus stands as a symbol for the officers on trial who feel like they are now being sacrificed yet again by the state. As the same admiral told me in a personal interview, the state who used to be a father, "is now just a distant relative" for the soldiers.

In addition to causing a crisis in the soldiers', and their families', sense of self and identity, the label of the soldier-terrorist followed the military members on trial in every step of the process, from beginning to end.¹¹ I was told many times, for instance, how even though the police could not find any incriminating evidence against the officers despite thorough searches in their homes, they still left the house with bags of materials, mostly books, documents, CDs, and DVDs. This, the families argued, was a deliberate decision to make the search resemble those conducted at the houses of terrorist

¹¹ See Aciksoz 2017 on how the government used the same tactic of turning soldiers into terrorists in the aftermath of the July 15 coup, which, Aciksoz argues, justified the kinds of violence ordinarily inflicted upon PKK members to be transposed to the bodies of conscripts who were assumed to be behind the coup attempt.

organizations. At times, the police also did "find" evidence against the servicemen. Mostly planted on the spot by the police officers conducting the search, the evidence sometimes consisted of Kurdish books, writings by Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the PKK, and various other publications that belong to illegal organizations. Faruk Akin, a lieutenant who had to experience a similar situation, struck back against the court by reclaiming the identity of the soldier against being labeled as a terrorist. In his defense, Akin said, "I'm the child of a family who became martyrs in the southeast [against the PKK]. As the child of a family who has given a martyr to terror, how can I be a sympathizer of the PKK?" Such questions usually did not receive responses from the judges present. By labeling the soldiers as terrorists, the government and its legal agents justified all actions against them.

The trials were replete with instances of similar tension in which the expunged agents of the state were trying to seek back admission to it through their contestation of the title that they were now deemed worthy of. The following discussion between Lieutenant Akin and the trial's judge is interesting precisely because of the negotiation of this dynamic:

Judge Sarac: You mentioned in your defense that the goal of the tip-off was to defame the Turkish Armed Forces. The tip-offs are not about the Turkish Armed Forces. How did you reach the conclusion that they are?

Officer Aksoy: We are a member of the Armed Forces. They are trying to defame the Armed Forces through individuals. This is my personal opinion.

Judge Sarac: There isn't an allegation against you regarding an attempt to assassinate admirals. You are being prosecuted for membership in a [terrorist] organization and drugs. Why did you testify as such?

Officer Aksoy: There is an indictment in the public that is known as the plot to assassinate admirals. This is what we've constantly been hearing in the newspapers and on TV. This is what they're accusing us of. That's why we felt the need to testify in that manner.

Judge Sarac: We are proud of the Turkish Armed Forces. You are being prosecuted for membership in a [terrorist] organization and drugs.¹²

This scene is interesting not merely because of the tense negotiation of what exactly the charges are and what the trial is exactly prosecuting, but also because of the temporal dimension of the interaction. If, as the judge argues, the court respects the military, are the soldiers terrorists or not? Or *when* exactly are they terrorists and when can they be soldiers? And if the transposition is nonnegotiable, is a reversal ever possible? To put it simply, can someone who was once a soldier, one day become a terrorist?

These questions were not just rhetorical exercises, but inquiries that led to existential dilemmas and tensions amongst prosecuted officers, whose only commonality, as aptly indicated by an officer on trial, was being a soldier, which did not achieve much in establishing solidarity and defiance against the court. The following account of an officer is testament to this conundrum:

Some people [officers] wouldn't participate in our efforts to save ourselves from this. They wouldn't sign common petitions or announcements. Some, those who were on trial without arrest, for instance, wouldn't pay for the expert witness reports, but when they got arrested, they wanted to contribute to the pool of money. When we wore t-shirts that read "Justice is against science," for instance, an officer on trial gave a petition to the court the next day, telling the judge that he didn't want to insult the court. When there is no crime or organization that you're accused of being a member of, the only common thing that keeps you together is soldiering, but that led some people to think every man to himself, so they just focused on themselves. And we were also limited in what we could do. When we reacted, the court counter-sued us for insulting the judges. Some actions were also contested amongst ourselves. When we decided to go on hunger strike, some officers objected because they always associated the strikes with the PKK. The hunger strike finally drew the attention of the military and they were interested in finding out the names of those who participated in it, but the prison didn't provide the names.

¹² The full court transcripts of the Sledgehammer case hearings that I have excerpts from in my dissertation (as well as the entire archive of transcripts) can be found on the following website: <https://balyozdavasiyegercekler.com/category/durusmalar/>

In response to being labeled as a terrorist, the officers based their defense on reinserting themselves back into the national narrative. One way to do this was to make use of the repertoire of the nation-state literature. Bilgin Balanli, one of the top defendants in the Sledgehammer case, stated the following in his defense:

The traitors and their abettors who have betrayed their military will one day be held accountable for this in front of the Turkish judges who are using their right to independent judiciary on behalf of the Turkish nation. As is it is said in our national anthem, 'Who knows, maybe tomorrow, or even sooner.' [The lyrics that precede this line are "My friend! Leave not my homeland to the hands of villains! Render your chest as armor and your body as trench! Stop this disgraceful raid! For soon shall come the joyous days of divine promise..."].

The officers used a similar tactic of assertion to the national narrative when the court announced its interim verdict. As the panel of judges announced their interim verdict and as the gendarmerie officers locked and held the doors of the courtroom, a moment almost everyone brought up as deeply hurtful and offensive in my conversations with them, the officers started singing the military anthem. What began as a spontaneous chant of one person later turned into a mass protest against the court.¹³

Despite the seeming solidarity, being accused of being terrorists had a dire effect on the self-image and self-worth of officers. Furthermore, they were frustrated by the arbitrariness through which they were defined thrown outside of national recognition by being labeled as terrorists and reincorporated back into it when the government deemed suitable. A military officer, for instance, was resentful of the fact that the government would imprison an officer of the state and then organize an official military funeral for him:

¹³ The video that shows the announcement of the interim verdict and the officers' chant can be seen in the following footage from the court: https://odatv.com/vid_video.php?id=8D922.

The state organized a military funeral for the people [the officers] who were declared in newspapers as terrorists and whose ranks were going to be rescinded from them as a result of these trials. The deceased Murat Ozenalp,¹⁴ for instance, is charged with terrorism, his funeral is brought to the prison for the military ceremony, and his coffin is wrapped in the Turkish flag. On paper, there is no difference between Abdullah Ocalan [the head of the PKK] and Murat Ozenalp. Would the state provide a ceremony like this to anyone charged with terrorism? And look at me. Just across from you sits someone who served the state for over twenty years. But I also served Abdullah Ocalan, not his terrorists, but I served so that someone wouldn't blow him up in his prison in Imrali.

While the above comments focused on the status of deceased soldiers, other officers also brought out what they saw as the government's hypocrisy in its approach to the military, especially when it needed the very soldiers it prosecuted for counter-terrorism operations.¹⁵ An officer described his frustration with what he labeled as the government's hypocrisy with the following statements:

If the Turkish Armed Forces is not responsible for internal security, then why are there armored units on the streets of Diyarbakir right now? After the terror attacks in Paris and the explosions, who went [to help the people]? It was the soldiers. In London, it was the soldiers as well. Did you hear anyone in the public telling the military not to go [to sites of terrorism]? They [the Turkish government] became desperate and they asked for help again [from the military]. And while I respect the state, the state goes and negotiates with terrorists [referencing the peace negotiations with the PKK]. They wanted to turn this into a professional army, and no one applied! So for what purpose or goal am I going to die as a soldier?

The above narratives not only attest to the frustration experienced by officers as they were made to go through public shaming and humiliation, but also demonstrate the confusion regarding the definition of who a soldier is. Just as the trials and the government's vacillating stance on their legitimacy demonstrates the difficulty of talking about a single "Turkish state," the vacillation about the attitudes towards the servicemen, and the use of their services, attests to the malleability of the definition of who is a (good

¹⁴ Ozenalp was a defendant in the Sledgehammer trial. He died as a result of a heart attack while in prison.

¹⁵ At the time of this research, the government passed a law that removed internal security from being a matter of military concern.

or bad) soldier at a given moment of state making. Even efforts to seek justice can lead to a reminder by the state of who qualifies for validation as a soldier and who, on the other hand, deserves rebuttal. An officer's description of seeking justice for his case is a testament to this predicament:

I wrote multiple letters to the Investigative Commission on Prior Coups. I told them if they're investigating all coups, including the most recent February 28 intervention, and you're prosecuting us, then why don't you come and listen to us? They ignored my first letter, responded to the second one by saying, 'Don't expect us to acquit you,' and they didn't even bother respond to the third one. I also wrote letters to all of the commanders of the different forces that have been in duty up until this moment, and none but one responded to me.

The narratives and experiences of the officers thus attest to the difficulty of evading legal labels as fixed categories of identity that do not allow for much flexibility, not just for marked populations of society (Cole and Lynch 2006), but also for formerly privileged state actors. Victimhood is a contentious arena, intricately tied to political claims and legitimacy (Hite 2007; Jeffery and Candea 2006), and not one that is easily attained by the simple virtue of having suffered harm or an injury. Soldiers are no exception to the processes of recognition and legitimacy.

Conclusion

Soldiers hold a crucial place in the construction of the nation's collective memory (Halbwachs 1992; Nora 1989) embodying its triumphs, victories, and glories (Anderson 2006; Mosse 1991). Yet, they also hold an ambivalent position within the national imaginary, cherished as heroes during wartime, but renounced when they seek care after them. Unlike the deceased, the silent witnesses of war, maimed soldiers remind the public of the atrocities and sacrifices of war—secrets that need to be left in the battlefield rather

than brought back to the home front (Mosse 1991). When wars are over, but their effects still linger, soldiers in need turn into liabilities because they impede closure and become the representatives of "the wrong kind of memory" (Connerton 2009:29). The soldier also holds a special place in the sociolegal arrangement of the state as he is placed outside of civilian law, assumed to hold a distinct position among other subjects. He stands external to the imaginary of the ordinary citizen through his intricate connection to the state—acting as its representative and embodiment at the same time (Bickford 2011:3). It is precisely because of this elevated status of power that it is difficult to imagine soldiers as victims since a victim is often defined as a person who endures some kind of harm by another party—unlike soldiers who usually happen to be the ones who do harm. Yet, reaching a consensus on who "qualifies" to be a victim becomes difficult once it involves dealing with competing claims to legitimacy in the social realm. Victimhood seems to be a category deserved for those who cross a certain threshold, meeting standards of "true" suffering. A victim is thus a "fabricated" category, in legal and anthropological theorists Alain Pottage and Martha Mundy's (2004:1) usage of the term, gaining relevance in the social realm, just like other similar legal labels as citizen or criminal, through complex layers of meaning and contestation. So how can we make sense of the claim for victimhood by actors who belong to an institution that has often been the culprit of widespread victimization and rights violations? Can we, for instance, ever think of soldiers, who are often bestowed with a right to harm with immunity or who have "come to occupy various states and spaces of exception, outside, below, and above civilian legal frameworks," (Trundle 2012:359) as victims whose narratives are worthy of attention?

In turning the officers into terrorists and prosecuting them as such, the Turkish state achieved two things at once. First, now that the soldiers had been transposed with terrorists, any treatment against them in court was justifiable on the part of the state. By replacing the figure of the soldier with that of the terrorist, the state could evoke the kind of extraordinary legal procedures employed in the case of the officers.¹⁶ Therefore, when the courts denied the soldiers the right to due process or multiple motions in court, they were actually doing nothing different than their approach to "terrorists" in the state security courts. No justification regarding the due process violations or the nature of the trials was necessary. The terrorist, whose identity and rights are delimited by the clauses of the counterterrorism laws, could be subject to any treatment. Second, the fact that the soldiers were being charged with terrorism already proved their guilt. In the Turkish context, the terrorist, by default, is the one that has done wrong against the state, and the state is always the one that sets the truth about the terrorist. Therefore, no investigation, evidence, or witnesses were necessary. As a result of the employment of this narrative, the court managed to defame the military while, at the same time, reminding the spectators of the trial that the state was prosecuting terrorists and not soldiers thus recusing itself from any responsibility of damage to the armed forces. This was the state's performance of legality (Kaplonski 2008) in working towards its political goals. While this chapter looked at the repercussions of this decision on the military members' search for justice in and outside the court, the next chapter will focus on the worlds of military dependents as they were unmade through these proceedings.

¹⁶ As mentioned previously in the chapter, Can Aciksoz (2017) makes a similar argument about the treatment of the soldiers on the night of the July 15 coup attempt as terrorists.

Chapter 3

Caretakers, Mediators, Public Relations Specialists:

Military Dependents and the Trials

"Meet me at 9 o'clock," Feride Teyze said, with her usual tone of a soft command, "We'll eat something and talk, and then head to the van." I could not tell if she was just suggesting or ordering me to do what she had just said. We were in the midst of the military members' weekly protest that brought us together every Saturday afternoon. Situated in the outskirts of the crowd, listening to the press statements given by military wives, we were trying to hear each other over the loud chants and proclamations. Feride Teyze was wearing her usual green wind breaker, dark blue jeans, and carrying her small, grayish-blue backpack that she always had with her. Her hair, almost trimmed down to a buzz cut, and her face, adorned with a mischievous smile and always without make up, imprinted an image of her on my mind as an impatient tomboy for whom the pace of the world was just too slow. Perhaps this was somewhat true since Feride Teyze was, indeed, generally critical of the way people did things. She also had thoughts about the speed I was going about in trying to conduct my research. I was in favor of slowly introducing myself to people through mutual contacts, having them become adjusted to my presence amongst them; she, on the other hand, wanted me to be more "assertive" in reaching people. "You're just too kind," she said multiple times, with the usual smile on her face, "kindness won't get you anywhere; you just have to push your way in sometimes. That's how life is. Otherwise, you can't do anything." So, reaching the verdict that I would probably get nowhere at this pace, she decided that it would be best if I started

accompanying her on prison visits. She had already prepared a detailed research plan for me: I would ride on the van that a number of wives, who either could not or preferred not to drive, pooled money and rented to go to their weekly prison visits. The long drive to the prison would give me a chance to interact with other wives and introduce my research to them. While at the prison, I could meet more people since they would be there all together in one place as they were waiting to be processed by the prison officials for their visit. And when the families were inside the prison, seeing their relatives, I would hang out around the complex to meet more people. But before all of that, of course, I would meet her in the morning, on the day of the prison visit, at the small patisserie on the corner for tea and breakfast. Feride Teyze was the perfect ethnographer, but after all, even ethnographers needed to eat.

I met Feride Teyze through one of my father's close friends. Our introduction happened at a moment during my fieldwork when I was trying to get in touch with the wives I had first met during my pre-dissertation research the previous year, but my efforts were unsuccessful every time I attempted to initiate a conversation. Feride Teyze was my most enthusiastic interlocutor to date, and her eagerness gave me a renewed sense of zeal for the research. As time went by and my research progressed, Feride Teyze became my protest partner, my friend, my confidant. I gave her chocolates for her birthday because I knew how much she liked them, called her on special occasions, and let her know when I'd be missing the protests. We shared tea and pastries as we were waiting to catch the van to Silivri, we had coffee after the protest on Saturdays, we took strolls in the park with her daughter and her grandchild. I also met all of her children and, later, her husband when he was released from prison. While Feride Teyze became my source of support in

the field, she also made me become better aware of how important women were to the entire legal process that the officers were made to go through. It was the military wives who started and conducted the public protests against the trials, the ones that became the mediators between the public and the officers, and the ones that took over the burden of caring for the reputation of their husbands. The reaction to the trials was largely made possible through and relied on the wives' labor. In the absence of the servicemen to defend themselves from the accusations, the wives became the officers' advocates in the public realm. Forced to confront a discontent audience about the military's wrongdoings, of which their husbands were not necessarily the culprits, the wives had to step into the public and speak for the military institution, even when the institution itself did not stand by the officers or their families.

Like other military wives whose husbands were serving their sentences in prison, Feride Teyze had to readjust her needs, priorities, and schedule based on the outcome of the proceedings. The main priority of those with young children was to keep the prison sentence and visits a secret. This became more difficult to achieve as children started growing older. Some started to learn how to read and eventually deciphered that the place they were going to every week was not a castle or a special military base built to protect the soldiers on a secret mission, which was what the children were told, but a prison. Some women were the mothers of adolescents and had to deal with both their psychological state and interactions with their peers in school. Those whose husbands were retired and had grown children sometimes became the caregivers of elderly parents. And then there were adult children who lived abroad and could not come back to the country, making it difficult for both the officers and the wives to get through the period

of trials and imprisonment. The challenge for the wives lay in not only keeping intact the pieces of their personal lives and also making sure to relay their husbands' messages to the outside world, but doing so in a way that would not bring damage to their identity as military dependents. After all, no matter how little support the wives received from the military institution, they were still its official representatives, bound by the rules that not only encouraged, but also dictated their behavior in and outside of their military surroundings.

Putting the experiences of the military dependents front and center, this chapter focuses on how the dependents' lives have been unmade with the development of the trials. If my time with Feride Teyze and among the military members has taught me one thing, it was that one could not approach the military as a monolithic whole, no matter how hard the institution itself tried to form its members in a certain way. Among the people I talked to, each person had their own opinions about what the proceedings were about, with each having a different mechanism to cope with their repercussions. Here, I have chosen to focus on the select stories of those whose lives I came to witness closely, and offer snippets from my interactions with a number of women and children in the field, through their own words on the trial process, their roles as military dependents, feelings about the military and the state, and experiences during prison visits. Through this chapter, I hope to demonstrate the predicament that the military members were put in by having to be made the public relations specialists for the officers on trial.

The Invisible Pillars and Public Targets

Researchers who have studied the military institution from a gender perspective have demonstrated militarism's dependence on a gender ideology to successfully fulfill its operations. Scholars working on militarism have highlighted the ambiguous relationship between militarism, military service, and (gendered) citizenship (Feinman 2000; Kerber 1987; Moon 2005; Sinclair-Webb 2000), traced the historical reactions to compulsory conscription (Kiernan 1973; Zeiger 1996), analyzed the nexus between militarism, nationalism, and gender (Nagel 1998; Saigol 2008), and dealt with women's place within militarization at the transnational level (Enloe 2000). These studies have pointed out the ways in which the military operates on the inculcation and acceptance of certain gender roles. Military dependents, often hailed together as "womenandchildren" as if one is inseparable from the other (Enloe 2000; Sen 2014), are vital to the operations of the military. A quasi-civilian, quasi-military population, they are the public representatives of the military world as well as the ones that upkeep military ideals, both inside and outside the military complex, especially in the absence of the officers. In this military scheme, military wives hold a particularly important place. After all, it is their support that allows the officers to focus on being soldiers alone without having to worry about other roles or duties in life (Birand 1986). Therefore, they constitute the backbone of militaries, as they hold the potential to uphold or challenge military values, and hence disrupt or buttress the workings of the military institution. Despite their crucial significance for the institution, military dependents have been surprisingly understudied, and anthropological research on the matter is gapingly scarce.

In Turkey, military dependents are often portrayed in the public realm as leading a privileged existence, benefiting from the unjust advantages the military world has provided them with. In his study on Turkish military dependents, Sertac Sen states that "in the media there are occasional reports about the male ones [dependents] being favored in drafts for compulsory military service. Or about their lives in lush conditions, on the bone-weary bodies of conscripts and exploited public resources, without doing much to earn them." (Sen 2014:5). The narratives that emanate from the side of the military, however, usually portray a hard-earned life full of hardships, spent with the continual relocations and absence of military fathers. Demonstrating itself in the titles of the literature produced by military families during the trials (*Babamı Beklerken* [*Waiting For My Father*] or *Vardiya Bizde, Bugün Silivri* [*The Shift is Ours, Today is Silivri*], for instance) and the media ("The Daughters of Balyoz" and "The Trial of Women Who Never Left the Men They Love") and resentful online reader comments about the "free rides" of military life inundating newspaper interviews with military children, the tension between these two realms have permeated public debates about the trials.

The wives each had a different way to react to this tension. Some wives, for instance, took to responding to the allegations about their lives by conveying their version of the story to the public. In the memoir she wrote right after the trials, Nilgül Dogan, the wife of the most high profile defendant in the trials, detailed out what she had gone through as a result of her husband's career in the military. Below, she describes what it means to be a soldier's wife:

I never had the chance to work enough to make it to retirement. Because we, as military wives, always lived the lives of our husbands. For this cause, we got together with their classmates for the sake of ours. We couldn't keep in touch with the friends with whom we grew up together and went to school with; instead, we

participated in the tea ceremonies and dinner banquets hosted by commanders' wives. And we had to be meticulous in those meetings. One could never cross their legs or smoke in the presence of a commander's wife. Those who were real smokers pretended like they were going to the restroom, had a hurried smoke somewhere outside, and then returned back to the room." (Dogan 2012:56) ... Being a soldier is a difficult job, but being a soldier's wife is equally so. You are required to dress appropriately at all times and to properly represent your husband and his post at all social functions. And you don't have the liberty to spend money on these things either. As you try to juggle your military rent, monthly bills, your children's clothes, and school expenses all at once, you will oftentimes be left with no money to spend on clothing [for these functions]." (Dogan 2012:57) ... Things [the difficulty of life in the military] don't appear as such to those on the outside [the civilians]. Most of our civilian friends thought that we didn't pay any rent to live in military housing and ate at officers' clubs without paying anything. And when they found out about the truth, they would be so surprised that they had a hard time believing it. They never knew that most families could only benefit from these facilities only once every three or four months, even though the service was cheap." (Dogan 2012:59)

As Dogan outlines above, military wives are expected to occupy a position that is essentially an extension of their husbands' rank and duties. They build a life whose sole purpose is to support the officers. Therefore, due to the fact the life in the military, and the obligations brought with it, is a full time job in and of itself, some wives either cannot or prefer not to work, even though there are, of course, exceptions.¹⁷ They turn their husbands' promotions into their own, help them study for the military academy exams, and rebuild their lives as they move to another city every couple of years. Women are the invisible sources of support that uphold the soldiers and the military institution. And while one could assume that this life would, inevitably, lead to female solidarity, the role established for women by the military institution is actually one that undercuts the potential for community building. Success for the officers, after all, is dependent on competition, and competition in the military is, for the most part, possible through rivalry. Therefore, when the trials brought the wives together due to their husbands' trials

¹⁷ It is important to note that this also varies based on generational dynamics.

and incarceration, similar to the officers' situation, the only common bond the women had was having been a member of the military institution.

With the advent of the trials and the absence of the officers, military dependents, who had become the de facto representatives of the military institution, now had to deal with a different kind of representation, one that focused on clearing the names of the officers. Yet, the allegations of the court cases did not remain in the courtroom alone. As I outlined in the previous chapter, the families were confronted in the public realm by people who wanted justice for prior wrongdoings of the state. And because the wives were the primary actors of the protests, they became the ones to have to respond to these critiques, which were sometimes verbally abusive. The wives were aware of their problematic status as victims. Some even acknowledged that it was difficult for them to garner sympathy when the military "made so many mistakes," as they often said. But they did not necessarily have a solution on how to address this problem or an agreement on the best way to effectively deal with it. They all agreed that they were made to go through an injustice, whatever the name for their experience was, be it victims or sacrifices for the state. Yet, how to talk about that experience and to convey it to the public was not easy to achieve.

As military members had to literally come face to face with people and the allegations in the public spaces of the city, they were also the targets of online slurs. Some military members drew more attention for the media than others. In an interview with *Radikal*, a left-leaning newspaper, Burcu Kutluk, a former model and an actress whose father was a defendant in the trials, detailed what the trials had done to the military dependents' lives and how they had impacted their interactions with even their closest

friends. Kutluk also mentioned how military members felt like they were being treated as if they had leprosy since their friends and many others did not want to have any contact with them (Basaran 2013). One of the comments written below the interview online read as follows:

This [statement] is like killing your mother and father and then seeking forgiveness from the court for being an orphan. Wasn't it this military tutelage that threw hundreds of people into acid wells during the 30-year war in the east, that burned down and evacuated thousands of villages, and that cut off people's fingers to turn them into keychains? And we haven't even addressed those yet, the people haven't come to terms with all of that. And you dare to talk about leprosy? Excuse me, but there are still bones erupting from the soil. You first have to apologize from those whose rights were violated to seek rights yourself.

According to the author of this comment, the defendants of the trials had no basis or right to seek victimhood since they had victimized so many people themselves.

The military members occupied a strange position. Through the trials, they had become the persona non grata of the nation. For the victims of the past coups, the officers were human rights violators; for the supporters of the new government, they were terrorists conspiring against their own nation and the government. Yet, it seems like they would be under attack no matter what they did. Asli Igsiz, the daughter of a general and an academic who lives in the United States, was profiled for being the daughter of a terrorist when her father became a defendant in the trials. Later, when she signed a petition condemning the Turkish military's bombing of Uludere/Roboski, in which 34 Turkish citizens were killed, newspapers relayed this information with the following headlines: "A pasha daughter's support to treason" (Yeni Safak 2016). Labeled as a terrorist's daughter in the first place for the trials, Igsiz now was made to become a terrorist herself for going against the state. Labels in this process were fluid and often inconsistent.

The slurs directed against the military dependents also extended to their families, taking on the form of direct attacks on their identity, often in a xenophobic way. During the early stages of the trials, in 2011, *Vakit* (later named *Yeni Akit*), a pro-government, Islamist newspaper published an article entitled "The Generals' Jewish Sons-in-Law" (Gumus 2010). Profiling the children of four generals and the details of their marriages, the article ended with a comment about how non-Muslim conscripts in the Turkish Armed Forces are generally held in service command as well as how the military banned officers from marrying foreign nationals until very recently. Asli Igsiz and her husband sued the newspaper for defamation, and the paper was made to pay damages to the couple. After the court verdict, the editors, protesting the court's decision, published the paper with the headline: "Why did you get married if it's defamation: It's a crime to make news from the marriage of general Igsiz's daughter to a foreigner" (KeHaber 2013). Although taken to an extreme, such attacks on personal life were not uncommon, especially during the initial stages of the trials when military families were harassed online through an intrusion into their private lives.

The Trials and the Military Wives

When the news about the allegations that became the basis of the trials started spreading through various media channels, the majority of the people who were later made defendants in the trials did not take it seriously. There were, of course, exceptions. Idil Teyze was one of them. Idil Teyze had moved to Istanbul as a result of the trials, and was now living with her daughter who, she said, had generously opened her home to her in this process. When talk of the trials was spreading among the military community, Idil

Teyze's husband had recently retired. Having bought a house on the coast, they were ready to take the next step in their lives and leave behind their military obligations. Their days at that time were spent trying to pack their house in Izmir and making plans for their future. But Idil Teyze was worried. Amidst a batch of packed boxes, she asked her husband, "Do you think what's going on will also reach us?" Her husband did not even take the thought seriously: "My husband just laughed at what I said and told me to not be silly, how on earth could any of this be related to us, being his primary reaction. And then one day, when we were both away from home, they came to search the house. They sent 17 police officers to carry out the search. Can you believe that? Seventeen men rummaging through your life and belongings..." I had hear similar stories from others about the kind of zeal the police force showed in searching for the houses of military members. Idil Teyze looked so calm in these instances in which she told me about what they were made to go through. Despite talking about how tired she was with all of this, she always looked so cheerful and energetic.

As she took a bite from the lemon cheesecake that we were sharing in the hip coffeeshop in a trendy Istanbul neighborhood (different from the modest corner patisserie I frequented with Feride Teyze for our morning tea before the prison visit), Idil Teyze continued to explain what had happened after the search and the arrest warrant—a seemingly endless period of uncertainty and legal oblivion. Idil Teyze's response to what they had been dragged into was to investigate further and seek answers. She started with the only document they were provided with, which was the indictment: "When we read the indictment, we thought that this case would collapse immediately. I thought the court wouldn't even accept this as a case to prosecute. But that's not what happened. They did

accept it. And here we are, just waiting." And as she was waiting, Idil Teyze took to making sure that their voices were heard as much as possible by trying to reach out to people who could help them and reading more to find out about her husband's supposed crime: "We didn't know what they [the officers] were being accused of when they were first arrested. They were in prison, but no one told us what the crime was. We went and bought the book of Mehmet Baransu [the journalist whose reporting initiated the cases] and that's how we found out about what we were being accused of." Once again, this was a story that I had heard from many others. Some wives, I was told, had even arranged to meet with Mehmet Baransu himself so that they could tell him about the innocence of their husbands.

In the midst of this legal confusion and personal turmoil, the wives decided to establish a platform that would help them better form a collective voice to draw attention to the trials. Referring to their shouldering of the officers' ordeal, they decided to call their organization *Vardiya Bizde Platformu* (The Shift is Ours Platform). During my first pre-dissertation visit to the field, when I first met military wives who were actively engaged in the platform's activities, I had asked them how the idea of the protests (named "Silent Scream" by the platform) had started. I learned that one of the wives had told her friend that she would gather her Turkish flag and go protest in Taksim until the trials came to an end. The friend gently reminded her why Taksim would not be the ideal spot for this—that is where the Saturday Mothers, relatives of those looking for their loved ones disappeared by the state, gathered every weekend to silently protest. This grim history was also brought up in sarcastic comment that talked about Vardiya Bizde on a crowdsourced online Turkish "dictionary" that operates as a commentary platform:

"[Vardiya Bizde is] the platform that was established by the wives of officers arrested as a result of the Sledgehammer trial. I would recommend that they take a look at the Saturday Mothers for their structure of organization. They can pour out their grief to each other (because they have a lot to discuss) and they'll get to learn about the problems they'll encounter [because of the protests]." The public reaction to the trials, and the lack of sympathy that accompanied it, followed the wives at virtually every step they took.

**VARDİYA
BİZDE
PLATFORMU**

ADALETSİZLİĞE KARŞI BİR SÖZÜNÜZ VARSA

KÜRSÜ SİZİN

Türkiye de yaşanan büyük adaletsizliği
Balyoz Davasından yola çıkarak kamuoyuyla paylaşan

KADIN HAREKETİ

olarak, tüm kadınları, 8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar Gününde
76. kez gerçekleştirecek

SESSİZ ÇIĞLIK

etkinliğine bekliyoruz.

8 Mart 2014 - 13.00 - Beşiktaş Demokrasi Parkı

"If you have a word against injustice, then the stage is yours. As the women's movement that shared the great injustice that we're experiencing in Turkey as a result

of the Balyoz trial, we invite all women for our 76th Silent Scream event to take place on March 8 International Women's Day."

The military members were not oblivious to the country's contentious history (and the military's role within it) or the spatial dynamics of the city. Therefore, looking for a more suitable location for their protest, the wives decided that Besiktas, one of the unchanging bastions of the Republican People's Party and nationalist politics, would be a better option. This was a space where the victims of the state could not speak back to those representing it. So, every Saturday, at 1 pm, the wives started gathering right next to the statue of Ataturk (also called the Democracy Memorial) to carry out their protest. With the Republic's tenth anniversary march blasting from the speakers, the wives devoted their one hour to make press declarations about the state of the trials and offer messages sent by the officers in prison, and ended their protest with either the singing of the national anthem or the student oath (the equivalent of the pledge of allegiance in the United States). Despite their presence in the public realm, however, the appeal of the military members was not always successful. In Istanbul, barring exceptions, passersby mostly ignored the presence of the crowd. "These girls asked me if this is a group of teachers protesting!" told me a military member, one day, frustrated that the public was oblivious to their cause.

As I was interviewing Ceren, a military wife, who still lived in the military housing complex at the time of her husband's imprisonment, we were joined by two other wives who lived in the same apartment building and who were also regular attendees of the protests to seek justice for their husbands in prison. Over tea and cake, I asked them about why they thought the public was indifferent to their cause. "Well, we don't know,"

they answered, unanimously, "you see the protests, you see what we do every week, you have witnessed what we've gone through." Ceren chimed in: "Sometimes I think we would have gained more support if we were on Muge Anli [a daytime women's show in which the host looks for missing people and profiles murder victims]; that's the kind of stuff this society cares about." A loud laughter filled the room and the women started nodding in agreement. In utter hopelessness, sometimes humor became the way to cope with the situation. But the laughter did not last long. "At this point," Ceren continued, "even if we catch lightning in a bottle, there is no way to evoke sympathy." Perhaps she was right.

The wives that organized the protests and became their regular participants believed that making an effort to relay their cause to the public (no matter what the reaction) was still their best choice to seek justice. So they kept researching the legal inconsistencies in the evidence, showed up patiently at the protest site every Saturday, and tried their best, as much as they could, to not let the grim conditions impact their everyday lives. Not everyone responded to the process with the same kind of investigative patience, zealous activism, or humor, however. Ferzan Teyze was one of them. The wife of a retired officer who had traveled with her husband to the most remote corners of the country, she was devastated by the allegations and by the way they were treated in the process that led to her husband's ultimate incarceration. Unlike Idil Teyze's response to her situation, instead of calling for action, fighting for justice, or seeking truth, Ferzan Teyze's response to everything that was going on was to shut down. She did not go to the protests, did not interact with other people, civilian or military, and generally did not leave her apartment. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Ferzan Teyze was

one of the only women who had invited me to her house for our interview when almost all of my interactions with other wives had taken place during protests or in coffeeshops of their choosing. But what I initially took as a sign of Ferzan Teyze's warm hospitality and trust to open her home to me would later make more sense as I stepped into the apartment.

Having left the house with ample time to find my way through the buildings that resembled each other in the neighborhood that Ferzan Teyze lived in, I arrived a little early for our meeting time. Thinking that a couple of minutes would not make a lot of difference, I decided to head towards the apartment. I was able to get in the building thanks to a resident who had opened the door despite the fact that I had buzzed the wrong door bell. I walked up the stairs of the dark apartment building, made sure I was on the right floor, and rang the bell with some hesitation. There was a long silence, which made me doubt whether I had come to the right apartment, but then silent footsteps approached the door. Ferzan Teyze looked surprised, almost puzzled as to why I was at her doorstep. Her confused state made her appear like a ghost who had unexpectedly been woken up from her sleep, asked to perform a duty she had never volunteered for. "We had talked on the phone," I said, "I'm here for our interview," hoping that that would remind her who I was, "I'm sorry I'm a little early," I added. "Oh, yes, of course," she said after looking at my face for a couple of more seconds, as if the inspection would make her remember, "I was waiting for you, please come in." Despite her warm welcome, the house felt dark and empty.

Ferzan Teyze gave me guest slippers and directed me to the living room where we would be having our conversation. As expected, the living room was pristine and orderly,

but there was an unnerving stillness to it, making me feel like time had come to a halt. We chitchatted for a couple of minutes after which Ferzan Teyze went to the kitchen to prepare our tea and pastries. When she came back, she had a tea cup full of hot water and a selection of teabags for me to pick from. The tea was accompanied by store bought cookies and cake, immaculately displayed on what looked like a silver tray. I was a bit surprised since I was generally treated to brewed tea and homemade pastries and dessert in the other homes I had visited so far. To serve a guest anything else was almost unthinkable by Turkish standards as it would be thought of as unwelcoming and unkind. The choice made more sense when Ferzan Teyze told me about the days when she did not want to cook or do anything else around the house. While she made sure to refresh my tea and offer more pastries, she herself did not eat or drink anything throughout our interview.

We chatted slowly, and I let her tell me what happened as much and as freely as she wanted to. I could tell that she was not utterly comfortable talking about any of this, so I was grateful that she had even accepted my request for an interview. "I was really in a bad place before," Ferzan Teyze said, "I do feel a bit better now. Compared to the state I was in, I *am* better. I used to have this condition where I would start crying uncontrollably and not be able to stop for hours. Imagine we're talking right now and tears just start flowing from my eyes. That's what would happen all the time. I just couldn't stop it. I went to the doctor, they gave me some pills, and that helped a bit." Ferzan Teyze still looked so fragile to me. The state of the house, clean to the point of immaculate, almost seemed like it tried to defy that fragility, but sparkling floors and surfaces were not enough to conceal the state Ferzan Teyze was in.

This was a strange position to be in for me. The wives I had talked to always treated me like I was their daughter, and most of the time, I did not mind being treated that way. It did not necessarily feel awkward since I, mostly, was around the age, sometimes the same age, as their children. But, now, I felt like I needed to be the parent to console Ferzan Teyze and provide her with words for a situation I knew had no consolation. So we took frequent breaks throughout our conversation, and even when she did not want them, I gave her space to breathe and stop her tears. In those moments, the immaculate state of the house felt even more unsettling to me. The living room looked unlived-in, as if it had been abandoned. With the pictures of her husband adorning the room alongside a miniature statue of Ataturk, the space almost felt like a shrine to Ferzan Teyze's husband and the nation at once. The scene made me feel like Ferzan Teyze lived in only one part of the house, and closed up the rest until her husband's return. And I felt like she *was* waiting for his return to come back to life herself as well.

"This is how it all started," Ferzan Teyze said, as she started telling me about the first days of the investigations:

One day, the doorbell rang. I went and opened the door, only to see that there were two police officers standing in front of me. I felt horrified when they told me that they were from the anti-terror branch. I told them I honestly didn't understand what was going on. I will never forget the shock that I experienced after they told me that. I thought, your husband devotes his entire life to the homeland and the country, for you, he's a hero because of his acts of valor, he leaves his children and his home behind, seeing his job as his priority, he goes to the mountains for his country, fights against terrorism, and then one day, at the most unexpected moment, two policemen from the anti-terror branch come and take away your husband as a terrorist. I will never forgive the people who made us live through that. My husband says that he doesn't hold a grudge against anyone, and the officers who have been acquitted [at the appeals stage] also say the same, but I don't feel that way. I'm full of grudge, I'm so angry. I can't be that forgiving because they stole our life that day and they continue to do so. They made us live through so much injustice, but I never experienced anything like the one I lived that first day. Every soldier's wife, all military families know how much the job

takes priority over them. So while you wait for a recognition for all you have gone through, without knowing what you did, which terrorist organization you belong to, two cops come and take you away for being a member of a terrorist organization. It's just not possible to understand that. It's even more difficult to accept; it just defies all logic.

The resentment that Ferzan Teyze felt towards the military for the way her husband, and herself, had been treated was a common reaction I heard from other wives as well.

Having had their hands tied and warned by their husbands to not make negative public comments about the military, the way some wives responded to this frustration was to get rid of any object that reminded them of the military institution, sometimes with resistance and objections from the officers themselves. Some executed this mission by getting rid of their husband's keepsakes from the military or unsewing the ranks from their uniforms. A military wife who I had talked to in the company of another military member over coffee explained her feelings with the following words: "I told my husband, 'I packed all of your military belongings and your uniform, and they all fit into a single trash bag; that apparently was all you had.'" Ever since I heard this statement, I interpreted it as one that not only conveyed their anger against the military, but also one that sent a message to the officers themselves for still being loyal to an institution that had left them all alone to face the accusations. The feeling of the dependents were, at times, more clear-cut and sharper than those of the officers, but there was little they could do to manifest them publicly.

The Trials and the Military Children

While the wives were left to take care of the lives left behind and think about how to keep up the morale of their husbands in prison, the children, navigating between the

civilian and military worlds at once, had a different set of issues they had to deal with. Demre, a military daughter in her teens, was in high school when the trials were still ongoing. Enrolled in one of the most prestigious private schools in the country, Demre could only visit her father in prison once a month since her school was very faraway from the prison complex. Demre was an exemplary student with a stellar GPA. She enjoyed the classes, liked being in school, but her father's case was known among her classmates. She was in a Human Rights course that she had excitedly enrolled in. She enjoyed the fact that she got to learn a different history of the world, one that was often skipped in her regular history textbooks. And she liked the course very much, until one day, the instructor brought up her father's trial as an exemplary case study to talk about democracy and coming to terms with the past. The case was especially relevant, the instructor argued, as the country's first trial in which military officers were being prosecuted for a coup attempt. Some students supported the trials and argued that the military men must be guilty since the military had executed so many interventions. Demre was frustrated by the instructor's decision and the students' reactions. "Do you even know what is being prosecuted in those trials," she asked her classmates, angry, she added, "Do you have any idea what happened in the courtroom?" The class discussion proceeded with Demre educating her peers, and the instructor, about what she, and her family, had to go through as a result of this process. She felt like she succeeded in conveying the truth, but it was an uncomfortable position to be in and a tiring one to occupy.

Nazli, a military daughter in her late twenties, pointed out a different side of the repercussions of the trials for the dependents' daily lives that I had not thought of until I

met her. This was the issue of what the effects of the trial would be on her day-to-day functioning and work. This was the first thing she mentioned when I asked her how the trials had impacted her. "Well, I, of course, was afraid whether or not I could keep my job. I had to visit my dad in prison, which would interfere with my work, and if word got out, I didn't know how my colleagues would react. My boss was very understanding throughout the entire period, so my fear, I saw, was unfounded."

While Nazli was relieved to find a supporting environment in her workplace, she was mad at the public for believing in what she called a "ridiculous plot"—allegations that brought the officers to court. She said that she came to the conclusion that people's feelings towards the military were mixed with fear. "You know how you love someone, but you're also afraid of them?" she asked, "So they saw that the thing that they were so afraid of was actually not that powerful. They saw what could happen to it, so they sided with the powerful." She was angry at the people for always calling on the military to take things into hand when the political situation was not at its best, but for abandoning the soldiers when they needed support. "Everyone expects the military to take care of everything. When there's some trouble, everyone always asks, where's the military, where are the commanders, why aren't they doing anything? Well, why aren't *you* doing anything, why are you always putting the responsibility on someone else, why don't you rebel? Then [when things go awry] soldiers become the ones to blame." Nazli wanted people to reclaim agency rather than expecting the military to take control of the country's future.

Despite her critique of the people for their attitude towards the trials, Nazli had a hard time grasping why the military, such a powerful institution, could not react to the

officers' situation either. "If it was such a powerful institution," she said, "why didn't it see any of this coming?" This attitude not only impacted Nazli's thoughts on the people, but also on the state: "If you ask me how I was as a person before these trials, I was a more statist person. I used to accept certain things without questioning them, you could even say I was a little bit fascistic. Through this process, I saw the mistakes that were made, the mistakes the military made." Mistakes were a common way to describe the situation they were in by other dependents as well, but Nazli carried on: "We were also raised very apolitically. I noticed that we lived inside a bell jar, leading insulated lives. These trials did lead to a trauma, but alongside that trauma also came something I could call enlightenment." For Nazli, that enlightenment was a more critical mindset about the state and the military and how they operated.

While Nazli's experience with the trials led her to question life in the military bubble, Duru, a military daughter in her mid-thirties, had a different kind of questioning about her choices and loyalties as her father's status as a defendant in the trials requested her allegiance. Although she was not a regular attendant of the weekly protests, Duru had become one of the more public faces of the movement against the trials with the effort she put into drawing attention to the injustice in the legal process. Duru had an immense calmness to her that I always admired, and she was always very articulate in expressing her opinions. She also came to be one of the people I identified with most in the field. This was partly because of her opinions about the military. Duru defined herself as an anti-militarist, and was against the institutionalization of armed power and militaries. I wondered what it felt like for her to have her father be accused of plotting a coup and

having to counter the allegations daily when she herself was extremely critical of the military institution. Duru explained this with the following words:

That situation [defending those on trial with an antimilitarist identity] created an immense tension for me. I did ask myself multiple times what exactly I was doing. I even told my father, 'Dad, please let me know if you did something.' I just could not reconcile my identity with what I did [speaking for the officers], and it took me a long time to overcome that feeling. But I trusted him because when I was in high school, my dad and I wrote letters to each other, and I remember asking him about coups and why they happen. I remember my dad telling me very clearly that that period [that of the coups] is over, and that military interventions are detrimental to a country's progress.

Despite the trust in her dad, Duru still felt uneasy to be forced to live with and account for a history she did not create.

I could relate so much to what she described in terms of how I felt about my research that I started talking about my own discomfort with the protests and the way they were organized and carried out. I mentioned, for instance, how uncomfortable I became when the protestors started chanting the "Anthem to the Youth" or made ultranationalist proclamations. Duru started laughing and nodding, and said:

I know, right?! I told my mom so many times, 'Mom, really, do you *really* have to chant that you're the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal, is there no other way of conveying what you feel? Don't get me wrong, I support that they have the protests, and have supported them since the very beginning, but the way they hold them and the things they say during it just alienates some people. I still think that they could reach more people if they changed that rhetoric, but that's, perhaps, the only thing they know, so I'm not sure if I can blame them.

I listened and nodded with excited agreement. "You know what," she added, "This also reminds me of those times when we lived in military housing and the apartment was always sparkling, always immaculate. You always had to put everything in a certain place, and could never leave the place untidy." I could very much relate. Duru continued, "I would rebel and ask my mom why the house always needed to be this tidy," she said,

“and she always responded by saying it just needs to be that way. I could never understand that logic, that military unquestioning and immaculateness.” Instead, Duru chose a life that could be as faraway from military values as possible.

Despite her discomfort, Duru fought to the last point she could to make the inconsistencies in the trials known to the public, at the sake of jeopardizing her own relationships. She lost friends who did not want to contact her lest they get in trouble if it was noticed that they were communicating with a relative of someone on trial and accused of coup plotting. It also took time to convince people of her father's innocence. Her then boyfriend was one of the people with whom she had this constant battle. Duru described a moment of tension with the following words:

We were talking about the trials one day, and I told him about the fabricated evidence and the fake documents. My boyfriend looked at me with a snarky face, and said, 'Come on, do you really think they did nothing, absolutely nothing?' I got really mad and just went to bed without further discussing the issue with him. It turns out that he was also bothered by our exchange that he stayed up all night and researched the trials. The next morning, he came to me, and said, 'You were right, and now I see what you mean, and believe you.' Ever since that day, he's been fighting alongside me and against those who argue about the veracity of the allegations.

While Duru's boyfriend believed her cause, convincing others was not as easy. Duru also took her fight to the transnational level, contacting human rights organizations to draw attention to the due process violations in the trials. As she would see, that was a much harder task than convincing her boyfriend about the presence of fabricated evidence or the injustice that the entire process entailed. "I first contacted various human rights organizations in Turkey, but didn't receive any proper response," she explained:

I didn't want to just let it go or assume disinterest, so I flew to Europe and scheduled a meeting with two prominent human rights organizations there. They met with me, I explained the state of the trials, they listened, and then they told

me that the trials of the officers were not their priority and that they had more urgent matters to focus on. With all the rights violations that took place, I don't even know how they could even say that.

She narrated the story calmly, but her face still conveying her shock and frustration that resulted from the treatment. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Duru had experienced similar reactions in Turkey, brushed off as the undeserving newcomer to the scene of state victims.

Nevertheless, Duru believed that things happened for a reason, and tried to make the best of the situation they were put in, which was the framework through which she tried to approach the trials. "I don't know," she said, with the calm, but contemplative look on her face, as if thinking about an impossible conundrum, "I can see how some people may be uncomfortable with that idea [that there is a reason behind every experience]," she continued, "but every experience we go through fulfills a certain stage in our lives. That's how I see it." But she also knew that she could not hold up that approach all the time. As we were having our conversation, she got a call that erased the calm smile on her face. "I'm sorry for the interruption," she said, "That was my brother, he's having surgery next week, he's developed a lump in his arm and needs to have it removed. I do believe that this [the trials] is really what caused it. It's his body's way of reacting and resisting to everything that's been going on." While trying to draw attention to the trials, supporting her brother in the process, and making sure that her father was in a good state as well, Duru could not do much with her life. "I put the thought of having a child on hold, for instance," she said, "because I don't want to do something like that before my dad is out [of prison]. We all put our lives on hold." The trials had exacerbated the status of being in limbo that she had experienced as a military dependent. The limbo

had now taken on a legal quality, impacting the decisions she made in her daily life and for her future.

Military Identities in Prison

One of the major place where the military families most intimately felt the effects of the trials and the loss of their once respected status was the weekly prison visits they had to make to see the officers. Military members were scattered across the country in different prisons, some civilian, some military. For the majority of the military families in Istanbul, their weekly destination was the Silivri Prison. For these military members, visits to the prison represented a Sisyphean weekly routine, making Wednesdays the centerpiece of the week, structuring the other days based on the prison visits, and rewinding their lives every week to go through this routine again. Prison visits were also times that included unpleasant encounters with the corrective representatives of the state apparatus as well as with other prisoners' relatives. Conscripts who were serving the military members in military facilities and officers' clubs now became their official gatekeepers, holding the privilege of allowing or impeding access to their husbands and fathers. The prison visits were the times when the military members' feelings of belonging were stretched and contested, and the visits were not easy to experience for many military members. While they did look forward to seeing their fathers, husbands, sons, or brothers every week, the military dependents were bothered by the way they were forced to interact with their loved ones. Open visits were held only once a month, with the remaining three visits in the month conducted behind a glass barrier through prison phones. These were the visits that some wives and children could not bear to have

so much so that some people decided to only visit the prison once a month when open visitation was allowed. They resented these visits for being the barriers between them and their loved ones.

I was often asked by those who knew about my research and that my father was a military officer whether or not my father had anything to do with the trials. I found this question somewhat odd since it made me feel like the person who asked it intimated that I would *only* be interested in the officers' cases if my father were a defendant in the trials. "No, he's not and hasn't been a part of the trials," I responded every time, feeling like my patience dwindled each time I had to appease people's curiosities. The significance of the query hit me on one of the prison visits I could not be on one day. There was a miscalculation of the number of people who would be taking the van to the prison that week, and when time came for us to board, it turned out that it would be either me or my father that could go. I knew that he wanted to visit his friends, and I was not feeling so well that day, so I said that he could go and I would head back home. It felt strange to not be on the van, but I was actually relieved to not go. I was exhausted by the end of those prison visits and felt like there was always some tension in the air when I accompanied the wives to prison. As the automatic door shut and the van departed, I experienced severe panic, and wished that the van would stop. I watched the vehicle move forward, stop at the traffic lights, and make a turn, but it never came to a stop. I called my dad to hear his voice and apologized for not being on the van. "It's okay," he said, "Just go home and rest." I went home, experiencing, on my way back, a dizzying mix of emotions—sadness, fear, panic, anxiety, regret—and cried unstoppably, as if the van was taking my father to Silivri to be a prisoner. The visits to the prison were times when the limits of participant observation

were tested. It felt odd to observe people walk into misery, and I could not truly participate in those visits since no relative of mine was a prisoner. This time, I could see how devastating of an effect the trials must have had on those who were made to go through them. And I only felt it once. It was life shattering.

Below, I would like to offer a detailed description of the prison complex both to provide a better sense of what it felt like to travel to and be in the prison and to offer a picture of the ghastly presence of this place in the lives of those who had to make it a part of their weekly routine for years. The military members usually avoided talking about the prison and these prison visits when I tried to talk to them about it. Perhaps that is why, unlike Feride Teyze's predictions that the trip to the prison would give me time to talk to people, the ride was a quiet and somber one with almost sheer silence taking over the entire time we were on the van. And I could understand that. I, myself, was not quite sure how I would feel about chatting with a stranger about the trials as I was on my way to visit my husband in prison for a crime he had not committed. The return trip was even worse since everyone was emotionally drained after those visits and, at times, agitated for what they were made to go through. Because the entire experience, coupled with the commute, caused a heavy physical exhaustion and took a toll on those who had to repeat it every week, people preferred to be left alone on the way back, with most resting or napping until we arrived in the city. The journey was an immensely tiring one to make.

Silivri Prison, officially known as the Silivri Penitentiaries Campus, is a massive complex built in 2008 that houses both a prison and the public courtrooms where the open trials of the military officers took place. Promoted by state officials as "the most modern and secure prison in Turkey, and the biggest prison in Europe" (Dogan 2015),

Silivri stands as a majestic structure in a vast, empty land, situated 70 kilometers (about 50 miles) away from the center of Istanbul, and a symbolic site of the state. Despite the fact that the urban area of Istanbul itself has grown out of its original boundaries to almost turn into a city without limits (hence the difficulty of defining a "center" per se) Silivri still stands as out of reach for the residents of the city unless they actually happen to live there or use it as their summer lodgings. On a regular day without traffic, it takes about 90 minutes to reach the prison complex, that is, if one has the luxury to own or make use of some means of private transportation. The travel back may even take longer, bringing the total commute time to over three hours round-trip. Those who had to use public transportation usually spent more time, having to transfer from various means of transportation due to the lack of direct access to the prison from Istanbul. On the way to the prison, one drives through highways, what feels like an endless mass of concrete, and does not see much other than the hundreds of cars similarly occupying the roads. It is a tiring trip to make, even if one's ultimate destination is not the prison itself.



On the road to the Silivri Prison

The prison complex is situated even farther away from the municipal area of Silivri proper, thus befitting the phrase and a potential description of it being "in the middle of nowhere." There is a separate road that leads to the prison, leading one away from the residential zones. In fact, excluding the state lodgings built to house prison employees and their families, the area itself has no trace of human life. During the summer, the surroundings look like an abandoned farmland, exuding a tiringly yellow hue. In transition to other seasons, especially the spring, the land turns green, making the landscape at least somewhat bearable to look at.



"Day 1017 in Homeland Watch, June 22, 2014"

One sees the state lodgings before reaching the prison itself. This is a guarded lodging complex, very similar to those in the military, with armed soldiers greeting one at the gates, dotted with houses that look like boringly predictable boxes. A familiar scene to behold for me as I have spent a significant portion of my life being the one inside the complex, inhabiting those boxes. If one has not driven to the prison, then they need to

take the path that they could walk on that leads to the prison gates, or rather, the gates of the complex. Reaching the prison itself takes more scrutiny than merely alleviating the concerns of the guards.

At the entrance of the prison complex, the conscripted gendarmerie soldiers, who always appear to me as much younger than the minimum obligatory age of 21 for compulsory service, carry out the first ID check before they let people in the compound. If one has arrived by car, then the car gets screened for potential explosives. It takes a couple of minutes to walk from the parking spots to the building where one needs to apply for the prosecutor's permission for a prison visit. As weekly visitors of the prison, the regulations were different for the military families as they could go directly to the prison building where the officers were kept and go through individual body searches and retinal scans as IDs were checked and approved by the prison officers.

My presence here was an awkward one. Once the van arrived outside of the respective buildings, the wives (and, at times, their children) would rush to get in line to be processed to go inside the prison. They would head inside a small administrative building situated right outside the prison building, where they were met with a long table with two prison officers waiting to review their papers. The process started with presenting their IDs to the prison officers, handing them the bag of clean clothes that they had brought for their husbands, going through a body search, before heading towards a retinal scan as the final step of their pre-visitation process. The visiting times were limited and only immediate family members were allowed inside the prison. Of course, the boundaries of what constituted a family also depended on the whim of prison

authorities. While grandchildren were allowed to visit, for instance, sons-in-law were required to seek the prosecutor's special permission.

I saw Dilek Teyze in one of the visitor rooms, waiting quietly by herself for the prison van to arrive to take her to the building her son was held in. Her long, white hair was tidily put together in a bun, her hands clutched together on her lap as she looked intently towards the wall, as if trying to solve a puzzle. I wondered what she thought in that moment and whether or not she felt the same way I did about the prison. Dilek Teyze was almost 80 years old, but defying her age, she took three different means of public transportation, each more crowded than the other, traveling over two hours each way to get to the prison every week. She came to visit her son in the prison and always sat on the same bench in front of the processing building while waiting for her designated time to arrive to go inside the prison. She had a calm demeanor, a gentle kindness, and an endearing curiosity that came out in the myriad questions she asked me about myself, my research, and my thoughts on the officers' trials. She was the sweet grandmother who kept me company and introduced me to others as we shared the bench, watching those who went in and out of the prison building.

As much as Silivri was the place that both impeded and allowed access to the military members' relatives, it was also the public discussion ground where relatives discussed, on a regular basis, why the trials were taking place and when the convictions would be overruled. These were also the kinds of situations where people discussed what it meant to be a victim in the context of what they had gone through. The only times I witnessed Dilek Teyze raise her voice was during these moments when she was talking to other people in the complex about the politics behind the officers' imprisonment. At those

instances, she became a passionate debater, defending her child, criticizing the military for imprisoning her son whom she said she had entrusted to the state at age 14. "What are we paying the price for here," she asked, "don't they have any pity?" The calmness of her face had transformed into fierce anger, "I gave away my son when he was 14 years old, and this is the price they make us pay? Did my son work for years so that they [the government] could negotiate with the bandits [the PKK]?" Dilek Teyze believed that the soldiers were held so that the government could reach an agreement with the PKK for a ceasefire. According to her, the government would end the trials overnight, just as they had started them in the beginning, telling the officers that they were now forgiven. Perhaps she was right in the political nature of the trials. As I have outlined in the previous chapters, it was the government's falling out with its major ally, Fetullah Gulen, and the corruption probe that implicated Erdogan and his family that paved the way for the officers' ultimate release from prison. Disappointed in the efforts of the military to draw attention to the status of the officers, Dilek Teyze did something unexpected and said the following: "If there will be an amnesty, then I'll give my vote to BDP [the Kurdish party], that's my thought, because they are the ones who caused all of this, not us. They've worked for the past 30 years [referring to the Kurdish conflict], worked hard, persisted, and got what they wanted. Well, then I congratulate them. They wrote their scenario, and they're acting it." Dilek Teyze would not forgive the military for the damage they caused, but had no way of demonstrating it other than these public discussions at the prison.

Conclusion

Zeliha, an active attendee of the military protests and the wife of a veteran, was the usual witness to or victim of the tense encounters military members had with the public since she still navigated in and out of military facilities, mostly out of necessity, that were now open to the civilian population. One day, as she had to take her mother for her regular treatment at the military hospital, she witnessed the following:

I took my mom to GATA [the military hospital in Ankara] for her treatment this morning, and here's what happened: We were sitting on the seats in the hallway, waiting for our appointment. There was an old man who wanted to go and wait in the doctor's office. The soldier [the conscript in charge of the area] tells him that he can't allow him in the room since there's a general's wife in there. The woman sitting right across from us starts commenting, 'God bless this Tayyip [Erdogan]; he stopped these generals, pashas from commanding us. Whatever life I have left, may God take it away and give it to him.' And I'm sitting there thinking, these *are* Tayyip's soldiers; it's precisely the soldiers of this moment that serve him, not us. And I just could not believe how they could not see that the system of privilege is still intact, it's only the actors that have changed.

Zeliha had stayed silent in the face of this interaction, deciding that it was not worth trying to argue with this woman. But she was angry and frustrated, having had to deal with people's, now publicly voiced, reactions to the military whenever and wherever she went. And her case was not an exception. The protests were the only space through which Zeliha could express her frustration, but even protesting had to follow rules in the military world. On a quiet day at the constitutional court, when I told Nimet Abla that I wish Zeliha was there to invigorate the passerby, "That's not how we do things here," Nimet Abla responded coldly, reminding me that protests needed to be conducted "with respect and dignity"—no matter what the occasion was, military standards always needed to be upheld.

As I have tried to demonstrate throughout this chapter, military dependents were made to carry the burden of taking care of the lives that the officers had left behind while also required to face the public reactions against the military. As representatives of the military institution, they were the ones that had to face the blame for an institution's wrongdoings, but precisely because of their status as military dependents, they could only express their grief and anger in a way that still upheld the expectations of being a representative of the institution. Unlike relatives of political prisoners (Hakyemez 2015) or those whose loved ones became the victims of state violence (Guzman Bouvard 1994), military dependents' ordeals did not have a chance to be transformed into an experience that was political or empowering against the state. After all, no matter how much the trials may have told them otherwise, military members were still a part of the state—labeled through that framework by the public critical of the military as well as reminded by other military affiliates who had grown to know the world through institutional rules and expectations. As a result, in the case of the wives particularly, the punishment was not only taking on the burden of the trials, but also being confined to military parameters to express the pain of their ordeal.

Chapter 4

All True, All Fiction:

Constructing the Trials' Truths through Conspiratorial Legality¹⁸

"Straight away went Rumour through the great cities of Libya—Rumour, the swiftest traveller of all the ills on earth, thriving on movement, gathering strength as it goes; at the start a small and cowardly thing, it soon puffs itself up, and walking upon the ground, buries its head in the cloud base. The legend is that enraged with the gods, Mother Earth produced this creature her last child, as a sister to Enceladus and Coeus—a swift-footed creature, a winged angel of ruin, a terrible grotesque monster, each feather upon whose body—incredible though it sounds—has a sleepless eye beneath it, and for every eye she has also a tongue, a voice, and a pricked ear. At night she flits midway between earth and sky, through the gloom screeching, and never closes her eyelids in sweet slumber: By day she is perched like a look-out either upon a roof-top or some high turret; so she terrorizes whole cities, loud-speaker of truth, hoarder of mischievous falsehood equally.

This creature was now regaling the people with various scandal in great glee, announcing fact and fiction indiscriminately."

(Virgil, Aeneid, pp 96-97, translated by C. Day Lewis, Oxford University Press)

"This structure, as a result of a 40 year process, has found a place for itself in our armed forces, security forces, and other agencies of the state; it has taken multiple forms and covers, and reached this day by flitting in disguise."

(Recep Tayyip Erdogan's speech on the development of "the parallel state structure" on July 16, 2016)

On March 19, 2015, two weeks before the Sledgehammer defendants would be acquitted as a result of a retrial, president Recep Tayyip Erdogan made the proceedings of military members the centerpiece of the speech he presented at the military academies in Istanbul. Addressing an audience consisting of cadets and high-ranking military officers, including the Turkish chief of staff, Erdogan, in what resembled an apologetic confession, uttered the following words:

¹⁸ The last two paragraphs of the introduction to this chapter are based on an abstract I wrote for the panel I organized on conspiracy theories at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Law, Culture, and the Humanities in Washington, D.C. The full abstract can be found at the following link: <https://networks.h-net.org/node/16794/discussions/40598/cfp-aslch-2015-all-true-all-fiction-conspiracy-theories-contours>

Through these operations [the trials of military officers], the entire country, myself included, was misled and deceived. We have all witnessed a conspiracy, a coup attempt, executed by a structure that has leaked into our institutions, and equipped with strong media support, that aimed to take over Turkey. I say this with all sincerity that I could never reconcile myself to the arrest of the many commanders, including the general chief of staff, with whom I have worked closely. During that time, I voiced my hesitation and objections to those responsible for the trials; I even voiced these concerns in public. But because of the documents that were presented to us at the time—documents that turned out to be fabricated and distorted—our hands were tied due to our respect for the law. In this process, as the prime minister and as the government, and as the chief of staff and the Turkish Armed Forces, our approach was to respect the principle of the rule of law.

Respect for the law holds a significant place in Erdogan's speech. And while those who have witnessed the mass trials that took place in the past decade in Turkey's legal scene might scoff at his remarks, Erdogan is ironically right in emphasizing the significance of the law in building his "New Turkey" as the "loud-speaker of truth, hoarder of mischievous falsehood equally." Thinking about Erdogan's remarks, then, I could not think of a more appropriate way than to preface this chapter with Virgil's description of Fama—the Ancient Roman Goddess of Rumor or PHEME in Greek mythology—as she spread the love affair between Dido and Aeneas. My rephrasing of the gradual rise of Fama, and its emboldened rage, would not do justice to Virgil's magnificent literary talent. But the embodiment of news, reputation, gossip, and fame all at once, Fama's journey is the perfect summary of the treason trials of military officers in Turkey. Indeed, one cannot help but notice the striking similarity between Virgil's description of the transformation of Fama and Erdogan's depiction of the "parallel structure" (the presence of his ally-turned-nemesis Fetullah Gulen's disciples in state governance) as a formation in disguise, "a terrible, grotesque monster." Similar to Fama's fate—"at the start a small

and cowardly thing"—the trials of military officers "puffed" themselves up growing in numbers.

While Fama gathered its strength through its travels of gossip, the trials of military officers gained their power through conspiracy, which was, ironically, achieved through the power of the law. What makes the trials of military officers worthy of analysis, therefore, is not merely their significance for reverting the status of the military as an exceptional institution operating outside the parameters of the civilian (hence purportedly ordinary) legal realm. Instead, it is the way the prosecutors chose to execute this reversal of status. While claiming to prosecute a conspiratorial plot against the state and its citizens, the courts turned to the genre of conspiracy itself in both starting and ending this legal process (Ertur 2011; 2014:181-185). In turn, failing to have their voices heard in court, one way the families have responded to the allegations was by producing their own versions of facts—explanations about why the trials happened in the first place.

Situated in the backdrop of this complex entanglement of rumor and truth, this chapter aims to examine the trials through the world of conspiracy, focusing on both the lives of conspiracy theories themselves and the lives of those who produce and consume them. My goal in this chapter is twofold. First, I analyze how military members, while being thrust outside the registers of the nation-state through the language of the law, which they do not have a command of, have reestablished that community through the language of conspiracy theories. By extracting the conspiracy theories produced by military members, I do not mean to insinuate that all officers are a part of the world of conspiracy theorizing. Yet, conspiracy theories, from the most extreme to the more mild, were almost always a part of my conversations with military members. Focusing on the

repercussions of such conspiracy theorizing, I reflect on how conspiracy theories helped the military officers grappling with the accusations to retain their sense of self and dignity as well as forming a way for them to reinsert themselves into the national narrative. In elaborating on military members' reactions to the trials, I also analyze conspiracy theorizing as a doxic act (Goker 2011) and trace the historical background and social networks conspiracy theories find life in.

Second, I analyze conspiracy theories in their connection to law and their effect on people's relationship to legality. At first glance, law and conspiracy theories seem to share similar qualities. Both are initially suspicious of the knowledge they are provided with, both employ methods of elimination, and, ultimately, both establish a certain 'truth' about their cases. Yet they are situated on a conflicting ground ontologically, ultimately aiming to achieve very different purposes. Furthermore, the law's verdict is supposed to be final, but conspiracy theories change, differ, become amended, and get replaced by others as agendas shift. Unlike legal proceedings with a conclusive endpoint, the act of conspiratorial thinking thus needs to be constantly fed with new information. In this sense, with its claim on the finality of its verdict and authority to establish facts, the law is in a position to contain conspiracy theories. However, the law also holds the potential to produce conspiracy by its very insistence on the certainty of the truth it engenders.

This chapter aims to reflect on this tension by analyzing the murkiness and (un)certainly that conspiracy theories generate at once as they confront the rituals of law, captured in such realms as courtrooms, legal documents, and government declarations. Yet, rather than approaching conspiracy theories as the final contenders on a hierarchical ladder of informed knowledge, a product of a "crippled epistemology" (Sunstein and

Vermeule 2009), or a potential threat or risk to society, it analyzes them as a narrative genre (Brooks 1984; Bruner 1991; Culler 1983; Mink 1978) that helps establish people's relationship to the state and the legal field around them. As Jerome Bruner aptly states, “unlike the constructions generated by logical and scientific procedures that can be weeded out by falsification, narrative construction can only achieve ‘verisimilitude.’ Narratives, then, are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and ‘narrative necessity’ rather than by empirical verification or logical requiredness” (Bruner 1991:4). Therefore, following in the footsteps of Bruner, my analysis takes as its starting point anthropological analyses that seek to interrogate the intersections of conspiratorial thinking with rumor, gossip, secrets, witchcraft, and magic as they vacillate between the contours of legality and the purported transparency of the state (Besnier 2009; Gusterson 2017; West and Sanders 2003). In so doing, this chapter is also in conversation with what anthropologist Nils Bubandt (2009) calls the “ethnography of fakes.” Ultimately, the chapter aims to reflect on conspiracy theories as a form of legal fiction, demonstrating how people's belief in the law does not always mean that the law itself is credible. Indeed, as my analysis demonstrates, it was the use of conspiratorial legality, executed mainly through disinformation and fabricated documents, that enabled the officers' trials and garnered public support for the military members' prosecution.

The Doxic World of Conspiracy

Conspiracy theories energize and enervate at the same time. They give hope, power, and agency to those who have been thrust outside the regular registers of accessible knowledge (Melley 2000). Yet, they also create an environment of profound

and tiring suspicion, approving entry into the world of those who believe in, produce, or reinforce them only upon proof of mastery of being able to 'speak' conspiracy. It is a world of doubt and certainty at once; while every source of information can be scrutinized, the 'real' explanation behind an event, or the ultimate conspiracy, cannot be questioned.

The scholarly literature on conspiracy theories has evolved over time from an approach that sees the production of conspiracy theories as irrational and pathological to one that takes their rational irrationality seriously as an object of study (Knight 2003). Yet, there still seems to be a tendency that almost insinuates that one only gets wrapped up in the world of conspiracy if they belong to a particular social group. Some authors also attribute the development of conspiracy theories as endemic to particular world regions. Historian Daniel Pipes (1998), for instance, draws attention to the tendency of "Middle Easterners" to interpret the world around them through conspiracy theories — while, surprisingly, claiming that "conspiracism has little real impact on the mainstream of public life in Turkey" (1998:5). Yet, conspiracy theories grow out of certain historical contexts and gain life in social networks rather than being coded in one's genetic makeup. And one does not become a conspiracy theorist only because they are ultranationalists or paranoid about the world around them. Conspiracy theorizing runs rampant among different groups of people regardless of its producer's ideological beliefs.

Conspiracy theorizing is a doxic act as it is "a peculiar disposition that also guides a person's practices," a mental and emotional investment that channels one's energy into fiddling with conspiracy (Goker 2011:68-69). One cannot necessarily prove that conspiracy theories are not real; they are built on a bulk of information whose source one

can usually never reach. They involve actors that may or may not exist—shady, nefarious figures, entering and exiting the scene like phantom characters. And proof is not really the major concern of the conspiracy theorist. Both the theories and the theorist gain their power precisely from this dubious nature of the knowledge produced. Yet, the power emanating from the authority to speak conspiracy does not dissipate once the theories end up having to be let go of. Conspiracy theories never get discarded; they become amended and get replaced by others as agendas shift. The conspiracy theorist, then, can never be wrong. Conspiracy theorizing is a mode of thinking that eliminates the chance of error from its inception. If the theory somehow proves to be insufficient, then that is yet another proof that the theory itself does work—it is the plot of the phantom figure that makes it stagger. These are, generally, the major characteristics of the conspiracy genre.

Conspiracy theories can take a toll on one's thoughts. They are captivating just like all other fantasies, providing one with the opportunity to idle away in their magical reality. I am not sure if one would call them convincing since, for the skeptic, they impede complete surrender to the fantasy, just like a non-believer refusing to be swept away in a religious sermon. Yet, they are living, breathing creatures that not only take a life of their own, but also shape the lives of those that choose to live with and entertain them. While the conspiracy theorist speaks to an audience that has an equally good grasp of how to "speak" conspiracy, his co-conspirators are never his ultimate listeners. Instead, the conspiracy theorist seeks the attention and recognition of the nefarious figure he vehemently opposes against (Byford 2011:97).

Aydinlik, Perincek, and Conspiracy

My first entry into the world of conspiracy theories in the field happened in one of the smoke-filled offices of the newspaper *Aydinlik* (meaning light or clarity). I was in the initial stages of my research, trying to find my way through fieldwork, striving to make sense of the contentious trials I found myself in the midst of. I was not quite sure who to contact or how to proceed, so I started to begin with journalists. Various news mediums — mostly newspapers and TV channels — were an integral part of the trials since their inception. Suspects were announced through breaking news, house searches were broadcast live to the nation, and even verdicts of pre-trial detentions were published as part of news tickers before the prosecutor had decided on any judgment.

Aydinlik chose to take the side of the defendants, especially those that became a part of the notorious Ergenekon case. The first among many other court cases that involved military members, Ergenekon comprised a variety of actors as suspects, but the trial came to be known for its diverse population of defendants, which ranged from journalists to academics and military officers to ultranationalist mafia leaders. Dogu Perincek, the head of the then Workers' Party (*Isci Partisi*), was one of the main defendants of the trials. *Aydinlik* is closely affiliated with the party, coming close to being its agent of propaganda, and, like the members that make up the party, sees and analyzes the world through a conspiratorial mindset — a world in which there are always shady, nefarious figures, who always happen to be foreign actors, plotting against the welfare of the country.

Since the beginning of the process, *Aydinlik* has not referred to the trials using the original names assigned to them, but has, instead, hailed them as *kumpas davalar*

(conspiracy plots). *Kumpas* can be translated into English as a setup, plot, or conspiracy, but encompasses all of those meanings at once to indicate that someone has been framed for something they did not do. Refusing to recognize the procedural and contextual differences among the trials, *Aydinlik* sees them all as part of a great conspiracy to weaken the Turkish military and the pro-military secularist elite. My conversations with the major journalists working for the paper and covering the trials produced similar responses about how the trials were prepared by a "gang" (*cete*) that prepared a setup against the defendants.

Aydinlik's primary perpetrator is almost always the US, hailed as "America," trying to carry out the acts of its "Greater Middle East Initiative" (GMEI) by playing tricks on Turkey. Translated into Turkish as the "Grand Middle East Project," the title easily lends itself to a surreptitious conspiratorial plot. Usually discussed as if it is a grand secret that only those who belong to a special political club can understand, the GMEI was actually a part of the foreign policy agenda of the George W. Bush government, designed as a strategy to stabilize the tumultuous politics of Middle Eastern countries in an effort to prevent the surge of fundamental terrorism. Announced in 2004 to US allies at the G-8 summit in Georgia, GMEI was actually not a surreptitious secret, but, rather, a publicly discussed agenda. Yet, perhaps because the document itself was leaked to the public by the London-based Arabic newspaper Al-Hayat in 2004 before its circulation in the G-8 summit (Al Jazeera 2004), its history verified its perception as a secretive conspiratorial plot.

Not having any particular interest in American foreign policy or Middle East politics at the time, GMEI generally came to my attention through conspiratorial

publications that discussed it as the detrimental plans of the US to control the Middle East. And, to my naive self, GMEI did seem to be a conspiratorial plot indeed, but one that I thought was invented and believed by the ultra-nationalist conspiracy theorists. In my initial conversations with gatekeeper military officers and Ergenekon lawyers, for instance, GMEI almost became an agent by itself, popping up as the primary actor of discussions peppered with endless conspiracy theories. "In order to understand these trials," demanded the omniscient lawyer, "you have to start with the Grand Middle East Project." His statement garnered immediate support from the officers that were present in the room, with my father contributing to the conversation by stating that he had already told me I needed to read widely about the Grand Middle East Project.

Dogu Perincek is an interesting figure within the conspiratorial tendencies of the trials since he himself is a prolific conspiracy theorist. A quick glance at the titles of Perincek's works will provide one with a sense of his widespread interests ranging from books on society in the Ottoman Empire, the socialist revolution, religion and secularism, the state's US backed surreptitious operations, homosexuality and alienation, imperialism and capitalism, and the workings of the Turkish military. A lawyer by training, Perincek started his political career in the left, embracing a Maoist agenda, espousing a revolution of the peasantry and working class with the support of the military. Yet, he was continually targeted by the military after the two consecutive coups in 1971 and 1980 for his socialist agenda. He is perhaps mostly known outside of Turkey for his court cases, first in Swiss courts, then in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), for his public proclamations that denied the Armenian Genocide as an "international lie." Perhaps an

apt summary of his conspiratorial trajectory would be his proclamation in court, "I have not denied genocide because there was no genocide" (BBC News 2007).

Conspiracy in the Field

While *Aydinlik* and Perincek may represent extreme examples of conspiracy theorizing, speculation about the trials was actually an ordinary part of conversations I had with both the civilian and the military population. A close family friend of ours, for instance, sincerely believed that the prosecuted officers were in a secret agreement with the military. While it looked like the servicemen were imprisoned, they actually used the prisons they were kept in as the headquarters to work on their clandestine project to save the country from the then prime minister and current president Tayyip Erdogan's rule. Because the mission was top-secret, the trials were invented as a cover-up to protect them from potential ramifications and the well-known fury of Erdogan. This was one of the more imaginative theories that I came to learn over the course of my research.

Despite their pervasive presence around me, it took a surprisingly long time for me to notice the hold of conspiracy theories among prosecuted military members and their families. Midway through my time in the protests against the proceedings, and later during my interviews, I started experiencing *deja vus*, initially reliving moments, and then starting to conflate conversations and people. I was very sure that I had previously heard that certain phrase that I was told, but I just could not remember in what part of our conversation. After many similar and frustrating experiences, I realized that I was not actually conflating moments or faces, I was, rather, being recited the same stories over and over again. Throughout my interactions with military members, inundated with

stories about how nothing is what it appears to be, I was told, time and again, how I could not understand what was really happening without attending to the "bigger schemes" at work in these trials. Yet, the primary sources of these stories were never known, I was never able to find out how or when the stories got into circulation, the evidence was hearsay, and yet the overall intelligence was never questioned by the people who recited them. Furthermore, I was usually brushed off as the naive young girl who just thinks the world is as simple as it looks when I tried to provide alternative explanations to events by mentioning other possibilities. Those who recounted the accounts always served as the ultimate authority on the matter in hand.

Conspiracy in the world of military members took two different forms. For some, conspiracy theorizing came in the form of everyday chatter—it entered their realm through conversations with fellow military members and was conveyed to others in similar conversations. This was more of a leisure activity; it was done lightly and did not require particular effort or attention. Then there was the kind of theorizing that stood closer to the scientific investigation. Those who were more interested in this strand studied politics intensely, were knowledgeable about historical developments, and did their research thoroughly. This was also the more intimidating kind. Coming across and talking with a scientific conspiracy producer meant that I would be tested on the breadth and depth of my knowledge, challenged with questions about my questions, and cross-examined about all of the information that I had previously provided. This was also the kind of interaction when, upon being asked the answer to the question they posed, my interlocutor would almost always tell me that it is now my job to find that out. George Friedman was a famous name among this latter category of people. Whenever I probed

into conspiracy theories about the trials and tried to even slightly question them, I was told to read Friedman's *The Next 100 Years*, "a very important book for my study." Friedman became a recurring part of my conversations with officers as the all-knowing predictor of the future. Aptly bearing the subheading, *A Forecast for the 21st Century*, his book would be recommended to me as the key to understanding the trials.

Friedman is an American political scientist that aligns with the realist tradition that, essentially, espouses the idea that power holds utmost importance for a state's survival and status, among others. He is also the founder of Stratfor, a private intelligence corporation that produces strategic analyses of political developments worldwide. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Friedman's career has been intertwined with the military world, having acted as an advisor to the US military and various security-oriented organizations. His book, strongly recommended to me by countless military officers, starts with an epithet by Hegel: "To him who looks upon the world rationally, the world in turn presents a rational aspect. The relation is mutual." Friedman's choice of the quote to precede his book is meaningful for the officers' approach to the world on many levels. In fact, by infusing their investigation with military rationality, they are, ultimately, producing the way they were taught to approach the world; a suspicious inquisition into the underlying rationale behind what appears to be irrational. The book itself involves a variety of predictions of worldwide events that are supposed to take place in the next 100 years, including a World War III, in which Turkey and Japan will be allies fighting against the US. But the most important prediction from the perspective of the officers is the significance Friedman places on the Turkish Navy as the next potential superpower. The

officers think that the majority of the defendants in the trials were naval officers precisely because the US wanted to use this as a chance to impede the rise of the Turkish Navy.

In addition to this theory, the conspiracy literature on the trials consists of a long list that usually starts with the argument that the officers were being held as a bargaining chip for the release of Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), or that "America" (i.e. the United States) prepared this plot because, as I was repeatedly told, the Turkish police "is incapable of crafting such an elaborate plan," finally ending with the argument that the trials were "a CIA-Pentagon joint operation" planned by a team of people in the secret headquarters in Ankara. One prosecuted officer also believed that numbers had a special meaning. In his memoir written on the legal process, he elaborates in depth on how the arrest warrant issued as part of the Sledgehammer case in 2011 for 163 people is reminiscent of Article 163 of the former Turkish penal code that ensured the protection of the secular state by penalizing extreme religious activity. The number of defendants in the second wave of operations for Sledgehammer, 28, is reminiscent of the February 28, 1997 military memorandum. And, finally, the addition of the total number of defendants in the trials, 367, adds up to the total number of votes that was required for presidency in the much-debated elections of 2007 when the pro-Islamist Justice and Development Party's Abdullah Gül became president. Among all these numerical puzzles, the officer asks, "Shall we call this the power of numbers, the power of the law, another power, or an utter coincidence?" (Önsel 2014:127-128).

Similar stories and queries followed me throughout my time in the field, reaching an epitome during my time among the military members as part of their protest in front of

the Constitutional Court in Ankara. I took the bus to the court early one morning for my usual trip to the protest site, enjoying the fact that my timing had helped me avoid the suffocating crowd and provided me with a pleasant ride. I got off at my usual stop and started walking toward the traffic lights to cross the road to join the protestors at the park. Both the road and the park seemed rather empty that day. These were the mornings that I liked and dreaded most, both, ironically, because there was not much to do or anyone to talk to. I saw police officer Hakan around the traffic lights, standing their for his usual morning shift as he greeted me. "Good morning, Miss Senem," he said in his chipper tone that I could not quite make sense of, "you are a little late today." I returned his greeting, wondering how he remembered my name. Not so much out of a sense of astonishment, but perhaps a slight disturbance that I was not only talking to a policeman (my general distrust of whom had grown after they became the primary actors of the trials through their house searches and planted evidence), but also being greeted by him as if rejoiced at the sight of a long-lost friend. I was always cautious at these lights since one was a delayed green, which meant that I could essentially be run over if I stepped on the road. So I observed the protestors while I waited, hoping that a driver would make a ridiculous mistake and distract Hakan from interacting with me. I saw two protestors intently observing the gates of the constitutional court as I waited to cross the road. The lights turned green, saving me from further small talk with Hakan, and I crossed, happy that I had people to talk to.

"Good morning!" I said, in my, to me, unpleasantly cheerful and friendly attitude. Two women, one whom I had talked to the day before, the other a new face for me, were standing on the sidewalk and looking at the guarded gates of the constitutional court,

discussing the traffic that the court had witnessed since the morning. I was greeted back with polite indifference. My presence could not distract the intense surveillance of the women. "He hasn't left yet," one said, with the heavy aura of secrecy that surrounded their overall conversation. I knew that this was an opportunity to communicate, so I tried (or so I thought) my best to find a meaningful sentence with which to enter the cryptic conversation. "Who is that?" I asked, disappointed at myself that that was the best I could come up with. "Ricciardone," the familiar woman said, "he came early this morning and hasn't left yet." I had no idea who Ricciardone was and knew I was missing out on something big by lacking that information. The name sounded Italian to me, perhaps a famous football player, I thought, not understanding why an Italian football player would want to visit the Constitutional Court of Turkey on an early morning, reflecting on the ridiculousness of my idea. It was not a particularly interesting spot, let alone being a tourist attraction.

I kept listening to their conversation, hoping that the context would give me a clue about who this apparently important person was. I was desperate. I decided that perhaps my ignorance would prove useful as it usually has when I asked people about the overall development of the trials, so I went ahead and made the tragic mistake of inquiring, "Who is that?" sounding like a broken record. That, apparently, was really the best I could come up with. While being a clumsy attempt at being a part of the experience, my question did, magically, draw the attention of the other woman that I was not officially introduced to yet. "You don't know who Ricciardone is?" she asked, with great disbelief in her tone, as if I had told her I really had no idea that the Earth is round. My next move would really be a game changer; I knew that for sure. "I really don't," I said, once again,

failing to come up with that thoroughly impressive remark, hoping that my naiveté would, somehow, pay off. "What are you doing here at the protest," she responded, in a somewhat passive aggressive way, as if having come to the realization as to why, all of a sudden, a stranger walking towards two women from a traffic light would be interested in what they were talking about. I had thought that my acquaintance at the scene would save me from getting into this awkward position. Instead of introducing me to my new interrogator, however, she decided to walk away, smiling as if content with the inquisition I was about to be put through.

Refusing to play the military daughter card every time I was asked this question, I responded in my, now, almost memorized speech of who I was: "These trials are the subject of my doctoral dissertation, so I come here to observe the protests and talk to people about how they feel about the overall process," I said, knowing that that answer was far away from being my savior. "Then how can you *not* know Ricciardone?" she snapped. How could I not know him, indeed. I was usually at a loss during these encounters, drowning in a desperate attempt to both keep the conversation going and to dispel the suspicion that accompanied the interrogation. "If you want to understand the trials," she said, with the authority of a political expert, "you have to start analyzing them by first paying attention to what's going on in Cyprus, Syria, and the Greek Islands." According to her, no analysis would be correct or complete without this information. But, to me, those seemed like an unlikely triad to be brought together in the context of the trials. Yet, I held my tongue, waiting for the next sentence to follow. "The aim here is to partition the country. America, Israel, England, and France all have their hand in this," she continued. I could understand the United States, as it was the unchanging protagonist

of almost all conspiracy theories produced in Turkey. Israel was also an understandable addition as the Turkish conspiracy theory literature abounds with anti-Semitic conspiracies (Bali 2013). But the idea of England and France conspiring to partition Turkey seemed to be rather passé, belonging more to the early twentieth century history — a conspiracy that one frequently encounters in Turkish history textbooks as the prime narrative regarding the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire (Bilgin 2007; Ozkan 2012).

The Italian football player, who turned out to be the then US ambassador to Turkey, Francis Ricciardone, went adrift in the maze of conspiracies that we turned to as she swiftly pulled me back into our conversation with further details. "Pay attention to the cues," my interrogator said, as if noticing that I had drifted apart from the important briefing she was about to give me, "What is happening in Syria, Cyprus, and the Greek Islands; these are all cues for you to understand this trial. Now you can go and report this to whoever or wherever you want, or perhaps write it in your thesis. You can say that you met a woman there and this is what she told you." I usually stayed silent or tried to appease concerns after such remarks that tried to associate me with a role that I was not in and did not embrace. But, I was tired of being the easy target of conspiratorial allegations that early morning, so I told her that it was, perhaps, a bit unkind of her to respond to me with such insecurity after all of this conversation. "Well, this is how we live now," she said, and added, "Are you from here [Ankara]? Were were you born?" as if my place of birth would automatically qualify me for empathy. Unfortunate for the purposes of our conversation, I was, indeed, born in Ankara. "You can't understand this in Ankara," she continued, without waiting for my response, her tone still very serious, "but in Adana [a city in southern Turkey with a large population of internally displaced

Kurds and back then occupying the news with its population of ISIS fighters] everyone is looking at each other like this, expecting people to do something to you. No one trusts each other anymore, it's like we're living in a conspiracy theory." What an apt analogy to make, I thought to myself, as she started walking away. Our conversation ended rather abruptly without me getting a chance to respond to her remarks as she walked away after telling me that she also wrote a master's thesis, but that hers was on public law, so she knows the academic world. I could not help but think, looking at her dark brown suit and tightly pulled up hair and, to me, the aura of masculinity she embraced and exuded, how befitting her attitude and demeanor were to the unquestionable expertise conspiracy theories produced.

In his brief analysis of the trajectory of conspiratorial thought in Turkey, Bulent Somay (2011) argues that a psychocultural link to the politics of the Ottoman Empire could explain the pervasiveness of conspiracy theories in contemporary Turkey. Somay traces the origins of conspiratorial thinking to the practice of fratricide in the Ottoman Empire. He argues that because fratricide was the legitimate for of succession to the throne, distrust among brothers ran rampant, thus producing an immensely paranoid state of mind, which ironically, also became the key for survival. One can extend this analysis to the chaotic atmosphere of the Turkish war of independence where, according to official narrative, people from all paths of life came together to fight for the Turkish nation against imperial forces. Yet, alternative histories of the era have demonstrated how this unified ethnic voice was actually constructed in official historiography, which also glossed over the widespread disagreement and dissent within a diverse population. This history is, similarly, followed by the trajectory of the Republic, and the difficult-to-

appease anxieties of the secularist elite, often backed up by the military, who have seen any trace of religion as a threat to the foundation of the Republic (Ozkan 2012).

The production of conspiratorial thought in Turkey is generally reserved for theories that involve foreign actors plotting against the integrity and indivisibility of the country. Conspiracy in the domestic realm, on the other hand, generally involves a coalition of actors that act against the purported enemies of the state. Therefore, despite having left the scene after my initial encounter with him, Francis Ricciardone continued to be an important presence during my time at the Constitutional Court in Ankara. I had no idea how the protestors recognized him, but stories of his trips in and out of the court seemed to escalate during days when gossip about potential negotiations with the court and an impending verdict was more prevalent than others. To me, what seemed evident during those days was not a sense of agency, but the lack of it, trying to find a means to survive among the misinformation that circulated about the potential decision of the court. Ricciardone, at least during those days, was, apparently, an important actor regarding the court's decision. And, of course, as with all foreign people that become prime actors of conspiracy theories, he represented the darker force of power — he was there to conspire against the Turkish military and the officers rather than be the helpful ally who was trying to save them.

One day, as I moved through the multiple spots of people and went up the gates of the park to the pavement where protestors stood, a group was excitedly describing Ricciardone's visit. I could never catch these mysterious moments and always got recited nebulous descriptions when I asked people to tell me more about his visits. I stood with them for a while in what seemed like a futile spying attempt. Not seeing any results, I

decided to wander around to catch up on what others were doing. I came back to the spot to follow up on the developments. "He just left," they said. "When did this happen?" I exclaimed, frustrated that I had missed the chance to see him again. According to the observers, he not only drove around in an armored vehicle, which, I would assume, was quite ordinary for a senior figure such as himself, but, I was also told, "His bodyguards rolled down the windows and showed and pointed their weapons at us when they left." Apart from conveying my astonishment, I changed my mind about asking them why on earth the US Ambassador's security details would threaten a group of people who, according to my idea of what protestors would do, did not even look at all like they were protesting.

In addition to his unwanted presence for military members, Ricciardone was not a particularly popular figure within the Turkish government either. In fact, after his critical remarks of the abruptly closed up graft probe that involved not only Erdogan himself, but also four ministers from his party, Ricciardone joined Erdogan's long list of enemies. Erdogan, who, at the time, had reoriented the direction of the judicial investigation through multiple political maneuvers and by declaring it as an international conspiracy to weaken Turkey, had accused Ricciardone of meddling in the country's internal affairs and threatened to expel him if he did not "do his job" (Filkins 2012). Yet, perhaps unbeknownst to them, Ricciardone's stance on the trials of military officers would, in my view, please military members had they happened to follow his statements on the matter. Refraining to make specific comments on the content of the allegations and usually stating that they are following the cases, Ricciardone continually expressed the

importance of the presumption of innocence and transparency in judicial processes (Hurriyet Daily News 2013).

I did not know then, having briefly become a part of the protestor surveillance team that tracked Ricciardone, that I would end up taking on his role for the military members. This happened as my involvement in the conspiratorial repertoire of the protest participants reached its climax with my introduction to a potential new interviewee. Having exhausted my official interview list (I had either talked to the people who happened to be there on a rare occasion or had already made friends with the more frequent visitors) and not having a lot of conversation to follow on that particular day, Muge Abla, the wife of a retired officer coming to the protests for support and one of my biggest supporters in Ankara, called my name with excitement as two new faces approached us from the gates of the park. Both were wearing freshly ironed, bright-colored shirts as well as eye-catching jewelry and make up, something I did not see very often on other women attending the protests. They almost seemed like they did not quite belong there, as if they had decided to take a stroll in the park after having left early from their military function for the day.

Muge Abla greeted the newcomers with her usual smile and started with a very direct (and what would later turn out to be a very unfortunate) introduction: "Our girl here is getting her PhD in America, her dad is also a military officer, and the topic of her dissertation is these trials. She's been interviewing people here, but she doesn't use any real names. So I'll leave you to talk about what she's doing." And with that she left me with the two women, one preserving the big smile on her face the moment she walked in, the other still quite stern, piercing me with her stare. I felt that something was not quite

right, but I had to do my best with yet another introduction about the dissertation and my interest in people's lives. "As Muge Abla has said I'm conducting a research on these trials and I'm interested in hearing as many different perspectives as possible, but I don't record names, and you're free to answer as many questions as you want and to skip whatever you don't want to talk about." This was my usual introduction to strangers, which, most of the time, worked in drawing their attention. But the looks kept piercing me, and uninterested in what I was telling her, the woman interrupted me and asked, "Where are you from?"

As a person who has had to answer similar curious queries her entire life, I was not really surprised by the question. Because I have blonde hair and blue eyes, as well as being tall (all of which, I came to learn growing up in Turkey, are markers of foreignness), people generally assume that I have to be a foreigner, so not convinced that I'm from Turkey, they always ask me where I'm really from, sometimes complimenting me on how great my Turkish skills are. Yet, this was quite an awkward moment to be facing that question, and in quite an aggressive way, especially after having been introduced to people with the reference of someone. "I'm Turkish," I responded calmly. "Are your mother and father Turkish?" she snapped, not convinced by my answer. "Yes, they are," I responded. "So who assigned you this topic?" she asked, maintaining the aggressiveness. "We're not usually assigned topics like people in the biological sciences," I tried to explain, trying to convince her of my sincerity regarding my interest in the topic. At that moment, the other woman, who kept smiling throughout the conversation, silently slipped away, telling me that we could talk later. I was alone now, waiting nervously about what was to come. "You go do your research in America," the woman

who stayed responded, the tense voice now yelling at me. It drew the attention of those around us, who now became our excited audience, waiting for next scene to be acted out. I had been the target of such accusations before, being placed in a different role with each different scenario, but I was caught off guard by this one, not quite knowing how to respond to her remarks. As peculiar as it may sound now, "Okay" was all I could say, added with the rather unfortunate response, "I wouldn't come here if I could do my research in America," as I was walking away. She responded by saying that no more words are needed since she is skilled at spotting American spies.

The rest of the day for me was tense. I was also worried that this event would impact other people's thoughts about me and dissipate my already hard-earned network of contacts. I did not really do much that day other than quietly participating in conversations as people trickled in and out of the protest. At one moment, as I was sitting around a table of people discussing the civilian population's disinterest in the trials, my interrogator decided to join the conversation. I stayed silent throughout the entire time, glad by her indirect approach, but also nervously waiting for the moment in which I would openly be attacked for my presence. That moment never came. Instead, I was subjected to her tirade on how she can read American servants no matter where they are, in the military or at one's elbow, but that the Turkish nation has finally waken up, that they will send these servants back on American planes, just as they came here, and that they [the servants] have had their eyes on Turkish lands since the founding of the Republic. The conversation ended as she reached her cathartic end and left the table. After that unpleasant encounter, my name was changed to *ajan* — agent or spy — among the group of people that I came to be close with during my time in Ankara. So much so

that Filiz Abla, the lawyer who was defending a relative in court as part of the trial and one of the few people I had a close affinity for, saved my number on her phone with my new nickname that I, ultimately, came to embrace.

Conspiracy in Court

When journalist Mehmet Baransu delivered the suitcase that started the Sledgehammer investigation, there were a total of 19 CDs, 10 audio recordings, and a total of 2229 pages of documents that formed the basis of the trials. Yet, the Sledgehammer grew with two additional "waves" of searches—one with an anonymous email tip off in December 2010 and another tip off in February 2011, both of which were sent to the Istanbul Police. The hard disk drive that was found in the former and the USB drive that was found in the latter also became incorporated into the trial, leading to the growth of the evidence, accompanied by the arrests caused by them. The allegations were based on these digital documents alone, and none of the physical electronics bore the fingerprints of the defendants. Furthermore, although three CDs, one hard disk, and the USB drive become the primary evidence of the trials, the first time the defense lawyers got to see this evidence was 22 months into the trial, in November 2011. The military members objected to the evidence by arguing that the Word documents that the court based its allegations on were fabricated as well as containing hundreds of factual errors. The defense tried to provide the court with forensic evidence reports to demonstrate that the evidence was tampered with, but the Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor never sent the reports to the court. Midway through the trial, the court issued a mass arrest warrant in February 2011 without giving the officers any due process rights (Agbaba et al. 2014).

This complex backdrop of developments have led some people to argue that the trials of military officers lacked transparency, as no one had a clear sense of what the officers were being accused of other than a generic coup plotting charge. During a conference presentation I gave, for instance, a member of the audience responded to my research by saying, "I felt that the officers were guilty, but I couldn't really support it [the Sledgehammer trial] because how can you support something that is not transparent?" I would argue, however, that it is conspiracy rather than transparency that permeated the entire legal process. After all, unlike the secretive hearings of the terrorism trials of the 1990s, in which one barely had any knowledge of the allegations other than vague terrorism charges, let alone being able to watch the trials (Hakyemez 2015), the proceedings of officers were open to the public, indictments were made available to the media, and all procedural changes were made on a legal basis. Yet, conspiracy was the underlying theme of almost all major trials that concerned military officers. Indeed, the Sledgehammer case gains its momentum precisely from the power of the language and genre of conspiracy. It acts on a plausible plot – a military coup that the army has periodically been the culprit of – and places it within the authoritative domain of the law, which questions, eliminates, and establishes the final verdict. But just like the conspiracy theorist who leaves it up to the non-believer to disprove his theory, the state leaves it up to the defendants and those skeptical of the trials to disprove the allegations while purposefully impeding any effort to question them. The state used conspiracy to animate its purposes – creating trials that are based on conspiracies or turning real events into conspiratorial plots. In doing so, it has actually demonstrated the malleability of truth — the same people who lauded the verdict of the court for the officers' conviction quite

easily changed their opinion once the verdict was reversed to an acquittal. Similarly, newspapers that became the wholehearted supporters of the trials equally espoused the idea that all of this was a conspiracy to disempower the Turkish military. So, one can ask, if the fact was all fiction, then where does the truth of the conspiracy theorist begin? Or to go back to how the audience member "felt that the officers were guilty," what are the exact qualities for a legal process to be transparent if feelings are a valid determinant of culpability?

During the midpoint of my research, I attended a conference where I presented my initial findings of my dissertation research. A friend and her husband kindly offered to put me up for the duration of the conference. Perhaps because the conference was abroad, my presentation received interest (unlike the tense encounters I had in Turkish academic venues) as well as giving me the chance to receive productive feedback on the project so far. On the day of my departure, as I was waiting for my friend to arrive so that I could say goodbye and leave for the airport, my friend's husband, Mehmet, started asking me about how everything went with my presentation. What I initially thought to be small talk, however, later provided me with an anecdote to share with the officers. When I told him about the problematic evidence in the trials, Mehmet offered what he perhaps considered to be his sympathies for the officers on trial. "I'm actually pretty happy about the fact that the military is being beaten down right now [through the trials]," he said, "but of course, I can see that there's some blaming the innocent alongside the guilty. Nevertheless, in a country such as Turkey, they couldn't have disempowered the military through democratic means; they needed to do something like this." This comment stuck on my mind throughout the duration of my research, as it was the perfect

example of how people thought that it was okay to put hundreds of officers on trial without providing sufficient evidence as to why exactly they were brought to court. The explicit acknowledgment of the antidemocratic nature of the trials was a startling revelation for me of how consent to the law (not matter how unjust the legal process is) depended on who was put on trial. According to this line of thought, the officers deserved to be punished due to the sheer fact of being military members.

All of the officers that I talked to throughout the duration of my research had sharp responses to such reactions. One officer explained how he thought the trials operated with the following words:

What happened to us is like arresting a doctor with chargers of murder. The doctor says, 'I didn't kill anyone; I was just in a surgery.' And they tell him, 'But other surgeons may be killing people, so there's a chance that you probably did as well.' So is the burglar's son also guilty? That's essentially what you're saying when you follow the line of thought that assumes that soldiers have been the culprits of coups before, so they'll do it again. I was a child when the coup happened. So how can I be guilty?

In a similar manner, an officer who was one of the defendants in the Sledgehammer case and who was interviewed by the media site Al-Monitor likened the trials to "being ticketed in absentia for a nonexistent traffic infraction," describing the process as follows:

One day, you receive a traffic ticket for going through a red light. There is no name of the officer who issued the ticket. You realize you were not in town that day, so you prove your absence with hotel receipts and witnesses from another city from that day. They tell you, 'A patriot police officer issued this ticket, so trust the courts and pay the fine; then you can appeal the charges.' You pay the ticket and then are arrested for your appeal that points out 'There are no traffic lights on the street where I was accused of going through a red light.' This is what the court cases have been like for us.' (Tremblay 2015).

I received similar explanations of the legal process throughout my interaction with military members whose relatives were being tried in court.

The few scholars who have paid attention to the actual allegations of the trials through a close reading of the indictments have also drawn attention to the conspiratorial mindset following the registers of the conspiracy genre that have permeated these legal documents. Written by prosecutors and read by judges and lawyers, indictments are a genre without an audience. Even the defendants themselves may not necessarily concern themselves with the content of the indictments. After all, their attorneys are there to decipher the language of the law for them. Unlike works of literature, indictments do not go into widespread circulation or have devoted readers that peruse the final product. But, just like works of literature, indictments are narratives conveyed through the filter of their authors. The indictment, at least in the case of these trials, seems mostly to be a reflection of the prosecutor's world. And if one acknowledges that prosecutors in Turkey have, historically, acted as the representatives of the state (Bakiner 2015; Parslow 2015), the indictment, then, is also the product of the fantasy of the state. Therefore, going through the texts themselves also means becoming a part of that fantasy (Hakyemez 2015). The indictment of the 1980 coup trial is a case in point. Having two surviving members of the junta on trial, the indictment actually fails to link the two generals to a specific crime in particular. Instead, it identifies a series of political incidents (labeled as "terror events"),¹⁹ all of which culminate in the military's execution of a military coup, followed by the same evaluation coming after a descriptive paragraph for each incident: "It is understood that this event was staged by powers aiming to instigate chaos in society and usurp the government." Instigating chaos is an underlying theme in the indictments of Balyoz and Ergenekon as well. And similar to the indictment of the generals' trial, the indictments in

¹⁹ While the words "terror" and "terrorism" are used to refer to the Kurdish conflict or the PKK, the turmoil of the 1970s caused mostly as a result of political violence also gets hailed as "terror."

these cases also fail to not only identify a crime, but also to link individual suspects to the allegations. Or in some cases, punish certain defendants as culprits while acquitting others with the same allegations (European Stability Initiative 2014). Through these tactics, the law itself is actually producing a conspiratorial mindset while precisely claiming to keep the conspiracy under control. But because the trials—with their procedural mimicking of legality—are still donned with the authority of the language of the law, conspiracy may easily be represented as the truth, which, then, also becomes embraced as the ultimate verdict by the publics that follow the trials.

The trials based their cases on both rumor and conspiracy alike. Here, I use the former to refer to the common beliefs that circulate within a particular social realm (and which have been highlighted by the media) while I use the latter to refer to what the court presented as allegations based on some partial truth. As one officer explains, the court's tactic for establishing the validity of its claims was to base the allegations largely in truth: "They show you ten photos, nine of which is authentic, but that tenth one isn't. And because the others are authentic, the viewer focuses on the tenth one, assuming that that photo must also be authentic. This is what the court did, how they created evidence. The fact that the general staff confirmed the authenticity of the documents made people assume that *all* documents were authentic." And while the indictment dealt with specific allegations to a vague set of charges, the public prosecution conducted over the media targeted the officers through the characteristics long attributed to military members as the reason for their purported distance from their fellow citizens. One of the sources of this target was playing on the narrative of soldiers as elites. And one way through which the officers tried to object to the allegations was through a pushback against this narrative.

Mehmet Orhan Yucel, a navy colonel, based his defense on rejecting the label of elite: "I come from the heartland of Anatolia. I am not an aristocrat."²⁰ As a Turkish officer who lives for his dignity and honor, I reject the allegations in the indictment. I saw that there was no serious evidence when I analyzed the indictment and its appendices" (Cumhuriyet 2010). Distancing themselves from the notion of being an elite was thus one way to fight against the circulation of rumor that the court was playing with and to seek innocence for the officers.

There were also other strategies that the officers and their lawyers used in countering the court's tactic of conspiracy. Some officers responded to the allegations in court by taking the route of due process and seeking an explanation from the court for their detention and accusation. Ali Turksen, a marine, who was filming an underwater video shooting at the time that he was accused of plotting the coup, decided to take the path of evidence tracing. Showing a video in court filmed for the state television, Turksen demanded an explanation for why he was still held in prison despite the fact that it was impossible for him to have committed the acts of which he was accused (Balyoz Davasi ve Gercekler 2011). An officer responded to the court with the methods of the allegations used against him, described in the following words: "I gave my defense statement to the panel of judges, and they wouldn't accept it because it didn't have a signature. So I said, 'Well, you're prosecuting me with life in prison based on a document that just has my name typed on it with no signature, so what's the logic there?' They just laughed, and made a note that I had given them my statement without a signature." Taking a step further, one of the defense lawyers, Huseyin Ersoz, did a "show and tell" in court by

²⁰ In comments referring to the military, the words "elite" and "aristocrat" are sometimes used interchangeably. Both words are used critically to insinuate that military members see themselves above ordinary members of society due to their segregation.

placing a CD in an undisclosed location on the judges' desk. In it was a Word document he had peppered with the names of the trial judges as authors and also changed the creation date of the document. When the hearing resumed, Ersoz walked the judge through the steps of preparation, explaining how the fact that Ersoz "found" the CD on the judge's desk did not mean that the CD belongs to him just as the names of officers on digital documents does not mean that they created them. Ersoz was silenced after his defense and later tried for insulting the court (Odatv 2012).

In responding to the fantasies of the indictment, defense efforts sometimes also reached the level of the farcical. A lawyer, for instance, decided to counter the allegations by claiming that they were offensive to those on trial. If the state had put them on trial for a conspiracy (alleging to overthrow the government), then the officers, it looked like, could defend themselves with the very allegation the state provided them with. The following excerpt from the court hearings demonstrates how the lawyer made his claim:

Engin Nacak: I would also like to bring something to your attention with apologies. I don't think that the commissioned and non-commissioned officers have the capacity to carry out this alleged Balyoz coup plan. This is such a bad plan, such a bad scenario. Let alone the officers here, we would have to apply clause 2 of the article 301 of the criminal code here [this is the clause that makes statements that openly denigrate the military or the police punishable]. This is an insult against the military, an insult against the officers here. Not even a non-commissioned officer here would prepare such a Balyoz coup plan your honor.

Chief Judge: Now, let's set something aside. It is not the Turkish Armed Forces that is being prosecuted here. There has been a charge against individuals. The Turkish Armed Forces is in a separate realm. The fact that the defendants are working in a particular institution does not mean that that institution is being prosecuted. Let's keep these two things separate.

Engin Nacak, advocate of the defendant Engin Alan: Your honor, the Turkish Armed Forces...

Chief Judge: We're not prosecuting the Turkish Armed Forces here.

Engin Nacak, advocate of the defendant Engin Alan: The Turkish Armed Forces...

Chief Judge: We're prosecuting the real people against whom there has been a charge.

Engin Nacak, advocate of the defendant Engin Alan: I already said the members of the Turkish Armed Forces, your honor. The 196 commissioned and non-commissioned officers on trial here comprise 10-15% of the Turkish Armed Forces. Therefore, before the officers, my personal opinion is that it is the Turkish Armed Forces that is being prosecuted here. None of these officers will attempt to carry out such a dishonorable act as a coup. And they never can ... Look at all the criminal investigations in the US; 196 people are asked questions independent of each other. And all of them give the same responses. So there is no crime. If more than 10 people are responding in the same manner then criminally there can be no offense. There can be no offense psychologically either. Because of this I would like to reiterate, and I have said this numerous other times that I think that what is being done here to these officers is torture. I thank you for your kindness.

Despite responding to the officers' prosecution with the very same tactics used by the court, this and other lawyers' efforts remained futile in the face of a court that insisted on the officers' culpability. No matter what tactic they employed, the officers' hands seem to have been tied in addressing the court's claims. Furthermore, turning the right to due process on its head, the court benefitted from the defense efforts of the officers to further the allegations. One officer describes their fear of speaking back against the court with the following words:

Everything that we pointed out to the court as inaccuracies or inconsistencies in the indictment got corrected and then incorporated into the second indictment. Some witnesses testified in favor of the defendants, and the interim verdict said that the court doesn't trust the witnesses. So everything is dependent on the prosecutor's whim. Therefore, we [the soldiers] never thought of taking any legal action or going to the prosecutor to explain our course because we were afraid that they would say, 'Well, you did this, and now you're reporting it beforehand for precaution [against prosecution]. Because despite the fact that the tip-offs were extremely vague, they [the police] did searches and found things like they had placed them. My friends were all hurriedly imprisoned. We were all in great shock.

Going back to my discussion of conspiracy as a genre, the court's tactics is a case in point about how conspiracy theories never expire; they evolve and become amended as agendas shift. This is precisely how Turkish courts made use of conspiracy to make and advance their claims against the hundreds of military officers that were put on trial.

Conclusion

The trials of military officers have been labeled by their critics as "political trials" – trials, in other words, that are not conducted on a legal basis, but that operate to serve a political purpose. These are the kinds of trials that are not taken very seriously by their critics because, people argue, they mimic the law rather than being the law itself. Yet, considering this legal background, one is tempted to ask, what actually and exactly is the law? As I have indicated before, in the case of the trials of servicemen, what makes these proceedings worthy of analysis is not merely their significance for reverting the status of the military as an exceptional institution operating outside the parameters of the civilian (hence purportedly ordinary) legal realm. Instead, it is precisely how the trials operated through a redefinition of the law in the way the prosecutors chose to execute this reversal of status. The courts claimed to prosecute a conspiratorial plot against the state and its citizens. While doing so, however, they made explicit use of the genre of conspiracy throughout this legal process (Ertur 2011; 2014:181-185).

As I have argued in this chapter, the trials were not necessarily non-transparent; in fact, anyone interested in them could become a part of the proceedings – the hearings were there to watch and the indictments there to read. But it did not even matter whether or not the process was available to and accessible by the general public; the word of the law – no matter how untrue it was – now became the ultimate authority in determining the defendants' culpability, even for those who were once victimized by and skeptical of that very word. Ultimately, and in a similar manner, it did not even matter what the verdict was; the officers were already guilty by the simple virtue of being present in court. This is why Erdogan wholeheartedly embraced the law in both defending and

critiquing the trials. And this is why, I believe, the proceedings were conducted under the gaze of a very uncritical European audience, content that the military, the longtime villain of human rights and European Commission reports, was no longer dominating the political realm in Turkey. But if the initial verdict of guilt was the result of a political trial, like so many now would like to claim, what qualifies the word and the verdict of the new court issuing an acquittal to be exempt from being labeled as political? To phrase it in a different way, what makes the law so dependable and trustworthy in both convicting and acquitting defendants? Going back to the analogy of the traffic infraction used by an officer on trial, at the end of the day, it seems like it does not actually matter whether or not the traffic lights ever existed – the law, somehow, proves the act, donned with the consent of those following it.

Chapter 5

Ordinary Soldiers, Military Heroes, Reluctant Terrorists:

Officers' Narratives on Military Subjectivity

He was not what I expected him to be. He was wearing a brown leather jacket, which I remember vividly to this day, a red plaid shirt, dark blue jeans, and brown leather shoes. Unlike my imaginary version of him, tall and scary, he was actually shorter than me, and had a more pleasant demeanor. He looked younger than the photos I had first seen him through in newspapers. There, he was usually in his military uniform, clean-shaven, always stern, and never smiling. Befitting, I thought, for the kinds of allegations he was facing, going against the presumption of innocence I had critiqued others to be lacking as they made comments about the military officers on trial. The man in front of me was much more relaxed than what one would encounter in those photos. It seemed like he had lost some weight and was now wearing glasses. I looked at him, as much as I could, trying not to give away my curiosity. Nevertheless, I was almost mesmerized. There he was, standing right across from me, the most wanted man of the extrajudicial murder trials and the prime culprit of the reports on the military's human rights violations.

The Major was never supposed to be a part of my research, even though I wondered, at times, whether I should make an effort to contact him. I never acted on the idea. This was the day I would be interviewing an officer after a retrial hearing before he left back for his hometown after the proceedings. As the session ended, we met outside the courtroom, left the building, stepping into a cloudy, overcast afternoon, and started walking towards the subway station; the officer, his wife, and myself. As we missed the

previous train and were waiting for the next one to arrive, killing time with small talk on the gleaming floors of the new subway station, the Major joined us. The officer looked into the distance, at a point I could not see since my back was turned against the escalators, and started smiling. "There you are, my Major!" said the officer, walking towards the Major to hug him. The officer was somehow in the habit of addressing the major by his rank. It turns out, it was a joke from the times they had worked together. They started talking about their work days and exchanging comments about their observations on the trial. I stood by them as the silent, smiling participant of the conversation, taking in the presence of the Major. A couple of minutes later, the train arrived, the doors opened, and the Major gestured towards me, with a kind smile on his face, to step inside before him. We all stood in the middle of the car, watched the doors shut, and held on to the poles as the train swiftly made its way towards our destination.

For some reason, the major started telling us about his time in the notorious military prison where he was sent while his trials were ongoing and where his fellow prisoners were PKK members. He looked oddly joyful, talking with a big smile on his face, as he was detailing his daily routine in his ward, where he was placed alone for fear that other inmates would harass or attack him. The story just felt so strange and so out of place to me, even though we had just left a courtroom in which the officers were being prosecuted with charges of coup plotting—something I never thought I would witness. The Major spent his days in prison with his pet parakeet who would land on his shoulder after touring the cell, slide from his arm to move towards his hand, continuously repeating the Major's name as he moved forward, where, in its ultimate destination, it would be fed from the hands of the Major. One day, as the Major was preparing his

dinner, stirring soup in a big, boiling cooker, the parakeet made his regular tour, but, this time, instead of landing on the major's shoulder, it ended up in the cooker. I do not quite remember how we all reacted, in part because we arrived at our stop before the Major's, but more so because everything seemed like a surreal dream to me. Before I knew it, we were telling the major goodbye and stepping off the train for our stop and heading towards the escalators in the station. I wondered if I would ever see him again.

"Do you know who he is?" the officer asked me after we got out of the subway station and started walking on the narrow sidewalk towards where we would be having a late lunch. "Yes, I do," I responded, trying to make sure that my voice wouldn't give away any prejudice. "You probably read news about him, about the trials," he said, "he has been targeted for his fight against the PKK." I felt like he was trying to gauge my reaction, but I could not tell what exactly he thought from the look on his face. I just listened, nodding, without making any remarks. The officer continued, "His family and his children were made to go through so much with all the accusations put forth against him. He really didn't deserve this." His wife, who had been silent up until that point, nodded in agreement and added, "He's being punished for all his hard work in fighting against the terrorists; in this country, that became a crime now." I looked at her attentively, nodding, wishing that we would reach our destination before I was asked my thoughts on the Major's trials. I really preferred not to offer an opinion. As I was going through the dreaded repercussions of that possible conversation in my mind, the officer's voice pulled me back into the present. "Here we are!" he announced, pointing towards his left to an upscale restaurant, "I hope you're okay with the choice." The comment could not have come at a better time. "Of course," I answered, with excess excitement,

"Whatever you pick is fine with me." And so we left the world of trials, and the drizzling rain, behind and walked towards the smell of freshly cooked delicacies. At least food was a topic we could all agree on.

I do not know what a perpetrator looks like. But I do know that, perhaps because of the gravity of the deeds perpetrators commit, we expect them to be different from ordinary people, different from our mundane appearance. This was the type of reaction through which people against the military officers responded to my research. For them, the officers were perpetrators that deserved to be punished. This was also the feeling I grappled with throughout my time among military members. I did not know how much empathy meant getting too close to the officers, so I consciously monitored myself to keep my feelings in check lest I become too attached to the military members or even find them relatable. This was, perhaps, a similar fear of "seduction" that Antonius Robben (1995) mentions in his work with Argentinian military officers. But seduction based on what? I knew that the officers on trial were accused based on fabricated evidence; I had reviewed the indictments, sat in on the trials, and talked to multiple people who had witnessed the development of the proceedings from beginning to end. My discomfort, however, stemmed from the feeling of being on the side of the wrong actors despite the fact that my interviews with the officers always surprised me, making me reconsider the presumptions I had about them. Yet, the feeling lingered, reaching an uncomfortable climax through my interaction with the Major. I now, for sure, unwittingly or not, had committed a crime for being in the presence of a perpetrator. But who, really, was that perpetrator beyond the label that was affixed to him? This was a question that I

pondered upon throughout my research, seeking answers through my interactions with military officers.

In pursuit of that precise question, this chapter turns to the primary actors of the trials, the military officers themselves, and reflects on the trial process through their perspective. My goal here is twofold. First, I would like to challenge the easy categorizations offered by studies of the military that mark conscripts as the powerless victims and career officers as the default power holders of the institution (Wool 2015). As my analysis in the preceding chapters has demonstrated, the categories of victim and perpetrator are laden with charged meanings and always intertwined with politics. Second, by offering a glimpse into the worlds of the officers through their own narratives, I would like to challenge anthropology's ongoing reluctance to study up as well as its reasons for shying away from or engaging in the examination and analysis of those it deems perpetrators. For focusing on the victims alone (no matter who they may be) offers us only a partial picture of the human experience we so seek to understand.

The stories of the officers my research is based on are particularly valuable for furthering our understanding of the experiences of military members since the idea of military officers becoming prisoners has been unfathomable in Turkish history up until the moment of these trials. In Turkey, high-profile trials have historically been those of PKK members or political activists. Therefore, the literature on prisons is usually restricted to the memoirs of political prisoners or reports produced by various human rights organizations. While military prisons, especially the Diyarbakir Military Prison, are notorious for the rights violations inflicted upon those confined to them, having military officers themselves occupying those spaces is unheard of. In a similar manner,

while there is a plethora of writing on prisoners of war (Davis 2000; Rochester and Kiley 2013; Vance 1994), the literature is sparse when it comes to analyzing the experiences of officers *as* prisoners. Therefore, while the legal process that the officers were made to go through is already humiliating for military members on multiple levels, placing them in prison, particularly prisons designed to hold conscripts, is the ultimate stripping of the military body to bare life (Agamben 1998).

Situated in the backdrop of this extraordinary stage in the lives of military subjects, this chapter offers a glimpse into the worlds of four soldiers, two from the navy and two from the army, and how they navigated the legal process. Throughout the chapter, I use extended quotes from my interviews with the officers. My choice to provide these direct quotes rather than offer them in narrative form through an interpretation of what I was told is a conscious one. As I have discussed and tried to demonstrate in the preceding chapters, the trials reduced the identities of the officers to labels, without giving them much opportunity to exist outside of them, at least throughout the duration of the legal process. I, myself, may have had a similar approach before I met the officers, reducing them to two-dimensional characters without much to say in depth about soldiers and the institution to which they belonged. Therefore, I see conveying their lives before and after the trials through their own words and voices as my way of giving them the due process they did not get. The choice, I hope, will also allow skeptics (like my previous self) to listen to military members through their own words, for they will see that soldiers are much more complex than what their critics have come to believe.

From Bionic Men to Eviscerated Soldiers

Mehmet is in his 50s and was a high-ranking officer in the Navy who had served the institution for over thirty years when he was arrested. Unlike the imaginary officer I had created in my mind, he is extremely cheerful, demonstrating a great sense of humor even when describing the most dire circumstances he had to be in because of the trials. As we spoke, his loud laughter echoed in the restaurant where we met to have lunch together. I remember him most for his big ears and the goofy hand gestures he makes while telling stories.

Like many of his fellow officers, Mehmet's reasons for joining the military were financial, mostly stemming from the fact that his family knew that the military would provide him with the opportunities that they could not even dream of having. Although he struggled during his military school years, noting the harsh and arbitrary discipline exerted upon cadets as the reason, Mehmet enjoyed the sense of self-worth and purpose that being an officer brought to his life. As much as he claimed his military identity, however, Mehmet frequently used the phrase "carrots and sticks" in our conversation, as he argued that the entire military system was based on artificial steps and milestones that were set to keep soldiers in the military and moving forward. Even though Mehmet described military identity as a process, focusing more on *becoming* rather than *being* a soldier, I was interested in hearing more about how he would define a soldier. After all, when he had first heard about my research, Mehmet had reacted to it by saying, "So, you're essentially interested in the question, who is a soldier?" Indeed, I was, and here is how Mehmet responded to the question:

Who is a soldier? A soldier is the founding element of the Turkish Republic, the person who won the War of Independence and who reveled in the glory of that

victory. He is the one who lives with the bare minimum, the one who has abandoned his own interests for the sake of the military since he was 14 [the age cadets enter military high school]. A soldier works 24/7, and continues to do so for forty years without any rewards, and doesn't expect any. But when you demand that the police or an employee live the same way, then you have to compensate them for that work. A soldier is someone who protects the homeland with great dedication without seeking or demanding compensation.

Mehmet's description of the characteristics of a soldier reminded me of an officer's description of soldiers as "bionic men"—an ideal version of servicemen that the military created on paper, but was an impossibility to attain since, as the officer said, it was a "utopia" that they could never live up to. As much as they knew that they were the creations of the military institution, officers were well aware that, after all, they were also human.

Not all officers responded to my question of what they thought of soldiers with the generic description that one would expect them to recite. In fact, they wanted civilians to recognize the multifaceted definition of what a soldier could be. An officer, for instance, pointed out how people needed nuance in their approach to their perception of soldiers: "The notion of a soldier is a very broad one. A lieutenant is a soldier, but so is the chief of staff, so we need to differentiate between different *types* of soldiers." Another officer went further than underscoring the differences amongst soldiers themselves, but also touched upon the different roles a soldier himself may have: "The soldier is at the same time a father, husband, boyfriend, neighbor. He has many other identities than just being a soldier, but those identities are often ignored." Having been judged through a monolithic approach to the soldier identity throughout the trials (hence, the effort to counter that approach with the slogan, "This is not the soldier you know"), the officers

were careful about making sure that those outside of the military institution understood how they were not merely soldiers and soldiers alone.

No matter how they answered the question of who a soldier is, it was obvious that the officers were actively thinking about how they came to be creations of the military institution. During an interview, an officer, for instance, responded to my question about soldiering by pulling up books from his library: Morris Janowitz's *Professional Soldier* and Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn's *Soldiers and Civilians*. "You should read these," he said, with a tinge of excitement and authority in his voice, "They all deal with issues of what a soldier's role in society is and should be. They're both very interesting studies." He continued by telling me how much the Turkish military needed studies like this: "The biggest lack of the armed forces is that they haven't conducted sociological studies like these because the armed forces never asked themselves where exactly they made a mistake; instead, they said, 'We never make mistakes.' We may not like him, but, say, someone like Serif Mardin [a prominent sociologist] should have conducted a research on the military, but they never said that." As much as they were seen by others as the unquestioning products of the military system, and as much as the military wanted to keep them that way, the soldiers wanted to understand themselves and how they were made.

In line with their awareness of being made into soldiers, the officers that I talked to were also very much cognizant of the strength of labels, and what being affixed with one could do to one's status and life. They had been grappling with their fall from grace ever since the trials began. But before they were publicly attacked as the coup plotters, human rights violators, and privileged stakeholders of the state, the officers mostly led

ordinary lives with ordinary routines in the military. Therefore, I wondered what they thought of the military and their status as military members after having gone through a process in which they felt abandoned by the very institution they had served. No matter how hurt or angry they were, every single officer that I spoke to, even the ones extremely critical of the military and the state, urged me to differentiate between their identity as soldiers and their stance about the institution. Ahmet, an army officer in his late 60s, who was one of the oldest servicemen I talked to, was one such soldier.

We discussed these issues at Ahmet's immaculate house, extremely organized and sparkingly clean, where his wife served us tea and cake and joined our conversation from time to time with her own set of comments about the trials. Both Ahmet and his wife were neatly dressed, with Ahmet's ironed shirt tucked into his work trousers, equally immaculate. Befitting the order, his wife welcomed me to the house by offering me clean and pretty guest slippers, tiny as always for my oversized feet by Turkish standards. As our conversation progressed, Ahmet lamented how the cadets nowadays, unlike the soldiers of the past like himself, were swept away by "the jean vogue," lacking in style and discipline. Having worn jeans that day (an exception to my otherwise formal interview outfit routine), I was not sure if I should take the statement as a comment on my lack of discipline as well.

Ahmet had a gentle demeanor, and patiently answered each question I had with the gravity of an official military representative, as if wanting to make sure that I had the one correct answer that I needed to have about the experience of the soldiers in the trials. His thick eyebrows raised every time he made a statement that was particularly important. "I want you to understand this clearly," he told me, as if I would make the

mistake of assuming otherwise, when I asked him what he felt towards the military after having been through the trials, "No one can erase the sense of belonging I have for the military. I served this institution for over forty years. If I deny the institution, then I will have denied my existence. This is the place that raised me and gave me everything I have." Ahmet was very fond of his military school days and grateful for what the military had provided him with. His words had the bearing of great debt for a place that gave him what he otherwise would not have even dreamt of having. He spoke of the military as if it was the gracious adopted parents that took him and provided him with a new beginning accompanied by infinite possibilities:

It was the armed forces that first gave me pants that didn't need patching up. The first day of school, they gave us clothes and then took us to the mess and fed us chicken and dessert. There was so much food that we tried to fill them in our pockets so that we could eat it later on as well. We had no idea that they'd also be serving us dinner! You forget your mom and dad in the school after a while. The state takes you when you're 14, and your parents become the state. The principal was our father; he was the most handsome man on earth for us. I used to go back home on breaks, have my mom's meatballs and homemade French fries, and then I just wanted to go back to school. In high school, we [the cadets] felt like we belonged to the armed forces. We always thought that the armed forces had the best of everything. It never even occurred to me to think about how people were in other schools. I had all these comfortable amenities, food, clothes, while other kids had no opportunities; that's why I was never curious about what life outside the military looked like. I liken myself to the janissaries. It might not be a very good analogy, but they don't have family ties. The military schools wouldn't allow us to leave on official holidays, so the school became our family. One of the most important things of military schooling is that you don't notice that you're changing. You can't recognize the difference in yourself from one day to the other. You get programmed to think and react in a certain way. Without realizing, one day, you become a soldier.

I remember listening to Ahmet describing the sense of alienation he felt at home during breaks, wanting to return to the place (i.e., the military school) that gave him everything, with a mixture of sadness and fascination. It had struck me how Ahmet likened himself to a janissary to indicate how the state had replaced his own parents and then, having

perhaps realized the negative connotation of the word janissary in Turkish (due to the fact that they were torn away from their parents, essentially becoming properties of the Empire), how he mentioned the ban against leaving the school on holidays. By pointing out Ahmet's analogy, I do not mean to argue that the bond between the military and the cadets was not always established naturally, as the joy in Ahmet's eyes when describing the military would defy that argument. Nevertheless, based on my conversations with other officers and Ahmet's later reflections, the bond itself was perhaps more complicated than it appeared to be on the surface of the narrative. After all, even though the school fed and clothed the cadets, "while other kids had no opportunities," it also demanded obedience and an erasure of former family ties.

Since I had frequently heard about opportunity being the primary contribution to cadets' lives, I wanted Ahmet to elaborate on what else the military schools did for cadets other than provide them with what they lacked as they were turned from children into soldiers. Ahmet continued with great enthusiasm, his face lit up by my curiosity and question:

Military schools taught you how to be a good citizen, how to protect state property, and how to prioritize your country and homeland. We were taught there that the homeland is above anything else and that the armed forces are the founding force of the country. Military schools inculcate you with the idea that you are the owner of the state. Soldiers always aim to improve themselves in whatever field would be best for serving the state. That's why soldiers don't see themselves as civil servants. They think that they're the owners of the state rather than being its butlers and workers. It's almost an insult [for them] to be called civil servants. And we felt that way, too. They *made* you feel that way. When you took the bus in your military uniform, everyone back then, regardless of their age, would get up and give you their seat out of respect for the uniform. I can never forget the day I went to Taksim with my military uniform on—I was elated, I felt like a king! The uniform was a beautiful thing for me. When I strolled down the streets, I felt like everyone was looking at me, and they *were* looking. Those were the years when the military was respected. Everyone around me was mesmerized by my military uniform, as if I was going to be the next president of the country. I

saw how ridiculous that was later on, but to be honest with you, it was a very flattering feeling to have as a child in military school. The uniform made you feel powerful. But if you couldn't get over that feeling of power even after reaching a certain level of education, then there's problem, then come the coups.

Ahmet's description of his uniform as a symbol of power also appeared in many of my other interviews. The uniform was not only what standardized and disciplined the cadets, it also gave them self-worth and respect from fellow citizens. Donned with the power of the uniform, the soldiers felt like they *were* the state. With the advance of the court cases, however, the officers' identity, a source of authority at one time, was now being used against them.

The officers' contemplation during our interviews of what made them into soldiers and what being a military officer meant for them was not merely a philosophical exercise, however. That thought process had deeper effects on their reaction to the legal process. To put it more simply, if the institution they served for so long did not support them and the court used their identity as soldiers to advance the allegations, would the officers reject what made them who they are? I tried to address this question in each interview, and one of the most interesting responses came up during my conversation with Mehmet. As he put down his post-lunch Turkish coffee, Mehmet let out a loud laugh, gesturing that he had remembered a funny story from his initial days of the trials. His story is a testament to how out of place the officers felt in the legal system, astounded by the suggestions of civilians as to how they should act in court:

My lawyer told me that I would be arrested when I went to testify and that I should wear my uniform to the prosecutor's office in defiance, and I said, 'But that's forbidden. I can't wear the uniform outside of work.' And my lawyer laughed at me, and said, 'You're being charged with the death penalty, my friend; what you're describing [wearing a military uniform outside of work] is disciplinary action—nothing will happen, don't worry.'

I am not sure if I asked Mehmet if he did, indeed, decide to wear his uniform that day, though, I doubt that he would have. He was arrested regardless of what he was wearing.

In the following months, when the trials were ongoing, his lawyer, this time, kept insisting that he resist the proceedings and put forth a strong reaction against them.

Mehmet's narrative is telling of how the protest against the court, in the way that the lawyer instructed him to carry it out, would unmake him not just as a soldier, but also as a person:

As we were approaching the end of the legal process, my lawyer told me 'Go to court in the last hearing and declare that this is a political court,' and I responded by saying, 'I am an officer of this state. If I come out and declare that I don't recognize this court, then who does this court belong to?' But I don't believe or trust anyone that represents the state right now. I won't believe anything unless I see it with my own two eyes. I see all these news on TV now, but they're all suspect for me because I don't trust them.

Mehmet's dilemma is a common one I witnessed among officers who had become defendants in the trials. The servicemen were made to counter an apparatus of the state of which they were also representatives. Therefore, protesting against the court or rejecting its status as political (thus illegitimate) put them in a predicament. To paraphrase Mehmet's statements, if this was the court of the state and if they were the officers of that same state, then what happened to their identity if they denied the status of the court? Did that also mean rejecting who they were, unmaking themselves through their own hands, in a way the court tried to but could not achieve? The defendants' identity as military members became the curse that they had to deal with throughout the trials. Having been inculcated into being soldiers, with a particular way of acting, talking, and behaving, the officers did not know how to *be* in any other way.

The predicament related to how the officers should act in response to the treatment they encountered in court marked my conversations with other officers as well. Caner, a navy officer in his early 40s, was one of the more outspoken names of the trials, having published frequently in various media outlets to defend his case and that of his fellow soldiers. He is tall and muscular, and speaks with a sense of excitement, each statement also marked by a wry sense of humor. Unlike his appearance, which exudes pride and confidence, creating the impression that he is impervious to feelings, he was one of the most emotional officers I had met. The questions that I used to prompt other officers were almost unnecessary in my conversation with Caner as he spoke continuously as if unloading a burden he had long carried with him. He looked at me enthusiastically as I asked him if he could tell me how he became a soldier and started with his story, which was eclipsed almost immediately by how the trials had shattered his life and social status. He was baffled by how the officers were treated in court and hurt by the attitude of the military. Caner describes the trial process and his feelings about it with the following words:

When the proceedings were started with the detention of marines, the military said that these marines are very zealous and excitable, and they didn't bother to back those men up because of that mindset; they even asked whether or not they could have really done something [plot a coup]. Ilker Basbug [then chief of staff] supposedly consented to the marines' arrests and then he saw how others also started getting arrested one by one. It was like an Indiana Jones movie, like the first one, where he's attacked by snakes, he throws one and then another one hits him, and then another one; that's what those arrests felt like. I told the commanders to do something about the situation, and warned them that all of this is going to end badly. They never believed me, and then the court arrested 163 people in February [2011]. The verdict... Your feelings die, it's like a virtual death. It's an unnamable situation, as if you're no longer a part of this world. It's a really bad feeling. You feel like your life ended at that point, you just step into your own grave, but you're also a part of two worlds; you're both dead and alive. On the day of February 11 [2011] during the interim verdict, the head judge asked the gendarmerie to lock all the doors. At that moment, I felt like I was in a Nazi

concentration camp rather than in my home country. That's how you torture someone. We sat in the courtroom for 12 hours, really just like in a concentration camp. We went to the hospital to get our medical assessment around 4 am and then to the prison around 8 am.

Caner tried hard to hold his tears back as he described his experience in court. I let him take as much time as he needed to proceed, sitting across from him, trying not to look him in the eye, and surprised at how forthcoming he was in his responses to my questions in the very public spot that we were in the coffee shop that we had met.

The image of officers in uniforms also came up in Caner's description of the proceedings and how he thought the court would react to the allegations. Mehmet's lawyer had suggested using the uniform as a weapon against the legal process. By wearing his uniform against the prosecutors, Mehmet would defy the investigation's status as legitimate thus repudiating the charges that were forced upon him. In other words, through the uniform, Mehmet would unmake the authority of the law by reclaiming his status as the legitimate agent of the state. Caner, on the other hand, had thought that the court would bestow innocence upon the soldiers simply as a result of seeing their uniform. In other words, according to Caner, the officers did not need to make a special claim to disavow the charges; the uniform already spoke for them. Caner described the legal process with the following words:

The Silivri trials proceeded much faster than regular criminal trial proceedings. But we were very naive; we always had this hope in us that things would get better. Hope is a peculiar thing. We thought that once we were in front of the judges, they would see our uniform and say, 'After everything you've done in your career, you must have lost your mind to do this [plot a coup] or there must be a conspiracy against you.' But they never said that. I never did anything but serve this country. I chose to talk one day in the trial. Where the judges sit, there is a flagpole behind them, with two Turkish flags on it, which they essentially used as a coat rack. They would hang their coats there behind the flag, and I told them,

'We've spent our entire lives for the flag you just use as a rack to hang your coats on.'

Having seen the attitude of the judges myself, with some busy doing crossword puzzles, some dozing off during the defense, I could empathize with Caner. Yet, this was not just one officer's disillusionment against what he saw to be an insult against his life's work and the national symbols he cherished. It was also the military members' reckoning with a changing state order where they were no longer considered the de facto representatives of the state.

Soldiers as Victims and Perpetrators of the State

Perhaps as a result of having to grapple with questions of identity and belonging in court, the trials led the officers to witness firsthand the workings of the state in which they functioned and the effects it had on people targeted by it. Now, perhaps for the first time, the soldiers could understand what it meant to be subject to the power of the state and see the kind of devastation the unleashing of that power could cause. They had become the victims of the monster they helped create. Mehmet elaborated on this trajectory of and transformation in his relationship with the state through the following words:

I was a blank page when I was 14, and they [the military] filled that blank page with Ataturk's principles. The state took me and raised me. *I* was the state. But now the state is working towards the lynching of a particular group of people. But the people in Anatolia believe the state, they think that the state would never do wrong. My dad, for instance, when I was first arrested, had apparently asked, 'How could my son do this [plot a coup]?' The state in our case became a terrorist organization; it terrorized us. And then the system that turned us into terrorists just released us from jail one day. I was silent in the courtroom for a long time because I resented so much just being accused the way I was without any evidence. But I later thought that these are going to be historical defenses, so I started asking for time to talk in court every week.

Mehmet's description of the state as a terrorist organization, labeling it what the soldiers themselves were accused of being, is striking in many ways. As I have tried to demonstrate throughout the dissertation, the state has a quasi-sacred status for the officers. As Mehmet's description aptly demonstrates, military members are instructed to feel like they are the state. And even when they may be critical of state practices, officers are forbidden from making public proclamations about it. Therefore, having a military officer talk about a state terrorizing its own citizens is perhaps one of the most extraordinary moments an ethnographer of Turkey could experience. Mehmet's story is valuable not just because it demonstrates a moment of transition within state structures, but also because it displays the very real effects that transition has on previously powerful state actors.

While military officers came to experience that loss primarily in courtrooms, fighting against a justice system that seemed oblivious to their cause, the rippling effects of the loss came in prison. Vedat, an army officer in his 50s, was one of the only officers that talked so openly about his experience in the military prison he was put into. Being among the officers who had served one of the longest time in prison, Vedat detailed how he grappled with a deep sense of depression as he was trying to process what he could have done to be in this situation. Unlike Caner, Vedat had a calm demeanor, as if he had realized that anger, no matter how strong, was futile in saving the officers from their ordeal. Yet, one could see the darkness that eclipsed his face as he described the prison conditions and the effects his time there had on him. In moments of that conversation, Vedat looked far away as if deep contemplation would provide meaning to what he had

experienced. His cheer swept away by the gloominess of the situation. He described the prison experience with the following words:

The military prison was awful. We heard that they disappear people, so you inadvertently assume that that could happen to you, so we wanted to let the families know that we were sent there. The soldiers in the prison were also very rude towards us. We later found out that they thought we were PKK members. They were apologetic later on. The cell I was kept in was horrible. There were PKK slogans everywhere, shit wiped on the wall; I cannot even describe it. And that situation continues beyond the four walls of the prison. When you get in the prison car, they give you a document that's stamped with the words that says, 'This is a terrorist, he can run away, or be abducted.' I can't tell you how horrible that feels. They've used every single legal means to humiliate us in these trials. And I cannot even start to describe the prison environment. It's so bad. An officer's wife, for instance, brought him slippers, and the head officer in charge of the prison did not give those slippers to his brother-in-arms by saying that he needs to check whether or not the slippers have drugs hidden in them. So we kept getting shot in that prison, one bullet after another, and those bullets are the kind that psychologically kill you. And the people who sent us to prison did this knowingly and willingly.

What strikes me most in Vedat's narrative is his fear of being disappeared by the state. A long-time state practice against political activists and PKK members during the 1990s (Goral et al. 2013; Human Rights Watch 2012), forced disappearances are still not acknowledged by the Turkish state. Therefore, hearing a military officer express fear of being disappeared is quite unfathomable. Yet, coming to terms with being what Vedat called a "reluctant terrorist" also meant becoming aware of the kinds of violence the state deemed suitable for those it shunned.

As much as it hurt him personally, Vedat's encounter with the state not only caused a feeling of deep resentment and betrayal, but also led to a state of realization and epiphany about historical narratives. Without anything else to do all day in his cell, of which he was the sole occupant, Vedat turned to reading books and devoured any text that he could get a hold of. He was particularly interested in and read a lot of history

books. This was the first time, as he described in detail below, that Vedat would come to realize the repercussions of state policies and politics on the lives' of his fellow citizens, ultimately led him to question his own role as a soldier and his trust in the state:

I sometimes think that we were blind to everything else that was going on in life as we led our own. Such horrible things happened in this country. I also came to face my own history through these trials. There's the September 6-7 incidents [pogroms against non-Muslim minorities in Istanbul], there's Sivas [a massacre where 35 people, mostly Alevi, leftist intellectuals were burned alive in a hotel], and then there's the Armenian incident. Before all of this [the trials], I used to think, with nationalist feelings, that we didn't do it [the genocide], and object people with counter arguments, but now I cannot say for sure that we didn't do anything after what I went through. Now I think, if this society did all of this to us, its own soldiers, then what else did they do to other people? They prosecuted us with a bill passed overnight, very similar to the wealth tax through which they made people [non-Muslims] pay heavy taxes and sent those who couldn't pay those taxes to labor camps to pay for it. Such horrible things happened in this country.

Vedat was one of the few officers that was as open about his thoughts on the state's crimes. What Vedat describes as the major events (September 6-7 pogroms, Sivas Massacre, the Armenian Genocide) where the state violated its agreement to protect its citizens and, instead, unleashed violence on them would even be taboo to discuss for an ordinary Turkish citizen inculcated with official state ideology. Therefore, to hear an officer articulate these thoughts, as mentioned above, is quite extraordinary. Yet, while Vedat describes an epiphany about state crimes, the vagueness of his language (using the word "incident" rather than pogrom or massacre, for instance) is indicative of how difficult it is even to register this violence for him as an officer of the state that he lovingly served. As such, Vedat's case demonstrates the difficulty of easily placing officers in the category of perpetrators, not just because not all may have committed acts of atrocity, but because some may not even be aware of the history of atrocity other

citizens experienced in their own country. Therefore, soldiers are both victims and perpetrators of official policies, and the line between those two identities is quite blurry. This is the realization through which Vedat would continue to live his life.

As I mentioned before, while Vedat was an exception among the officers I spoke to for making the violence of the state the centerpiece of his narrative, he was not the only officer who questioned his own role within the making of the very state that now terrorized the officers. Caner's description of what he thought about the state before and after the trials bears a striking self-evaluation as well:

The trials prompted me to see and come to the ultimate realization that we [the soldiers] were very ignorant about many things. I had a left-leaning girlfriend in the '80s, for instance, and she asked me what I'd do if I came against her as a civilian on the street, and I told her, well, I would kill you. Of course, looking at it now, killing someone is an overreaction, but I wouldn't approve of being against the state back then in any way. I would think, when Ataturk has drawn a path for you that you could follow, why are you going after all this Marxist/Leninist stuff? For us, the state was something that always needed to be respected. My sister had a traffic accident back in the day, and I couldn't go visit her when that happened. My priority was the state's work, and I made a choice to make it that way. But my sister didn't say, I'm a civil servant, so I won't support my brother in these trials. The state didn't do what my sister did for me. Having said that, I still think that we need to protect the state. This time, we need to protect it from those who govern. And I don't want a restoration of honor from the state; my honor is intact. It's not shameful to have been in prison. But I do want an apology. I want the state to come out and say, 'My duty was to protect you, and I couldn't do that.' Being in prison does not damage your honor, but I want that apology for the sake of the public.

Caner describes the trajectory of his relationship with the state as one where the state took precedence over his then girlfriend to one where he demands an apology for not being provided with the protection from the state he once respected so much. There is an important distinction to make here, however, as Caner uses the words respect and protection in describing the state. It is as if the state for Caner has two different versions—one before and one after the trials. While the former (the path that Ataturk has

drawn) is the one that deserves its citizens' respect, the latter is the one that needs protection for having deviated from that path.

I find Caner's distinction between the different *kinds* or *times* of state making important to reflect on. After all, as much as the officers were now hurt by and resentful of the state, it would be hasty to assume that they were in a position to fully repudiate the state. Therefore, while the officers' remarks are surprising in entailing the kinds of audacious proclamations about the state, one should not mistake them as a complete undoing of it. Vedat's ambivalent narrative below will better demonstrate my point:

Before the trials, the state for me was an organization, a structure that I used to be a part of, that I served, and that compassionately embraced me and the entire nation as its child. But now I don't see myself as part of the state; this state is not my state. It's not the state that used to affectionately protect me. Previously, I had identified myself with the state. I used to get angry at the people who threw rocks at the police, who caused riots in prison, I used to think, 'Why are they doing this to our state?' But now I think maybe their actions had a reason. I remembered how I smoked one cigarette after another out of mere anger during 'Operation Return to Life' [a security raid conducted in 2000 against the ongoing hunger strikes in prisons, which resulted in the death of over thirty people], but now I understand those people.

Readers familiar with Turkish history and the dreadful violence enacted by the Turkish state upon its own citizens may be startled by Vedat's comparison of himself with the victims of what the state ironically labeled "Operation Return to Life." After all, these were political prisoners who had gone on hunger strike to demand that the state put an end to the mandatory solitary confinement they were forced to endure. As a result of the day-long carnage, political prisoners were burned alive by the state security forces through a televised raid after refusing to end their hunger strike (Soylemez 2011). Yet, the severity of the analogy is also remarkable in extracting Vedat from the level of the state and, perhaps for the first time, looking at the state as the one who endures violence

rather than the one who has the one who has the potential to exert violence. In this narrative, the stories of those who Vedat saw as the enemies of the state now turn into incidents relatable for him in light of the suffering that he endured in the hands of the state.

Nevertheless, going back to my point about how the officers' remarks about the state should not be seen as a completing undoing of it, the way Vedat's narrative took a sudden turn by critiquing protesters is indicative of this suggestion:

Some people claim that the children who throw rocks at the police to support the PKK do so because they can't express themselves in any other way. I couldn't express myself either, I couldn't express myself in the state's own court, they wouldn't listen to me. What did I do? Did I go and throw a molotov bomb to the court, should I go and stone them because they wouldn't listen to me? And they wouldn't. I am someone who has served the state and I wasn't able to have my voice heard. The state is the only thing that can take your life through legitimate means. But if you can't touch the state, then that's fascism, that would lead to a fascist way of governing.

By pointing out the sharp critique in Vedat's narrative, I do not mean to suggest that Vedat's sympathy against those who have endured state violence is only fleeting. Rather, what Vedat's remarks indicate is his reckoning with how the court not only turned a deaf ear to his plea, but also rejected his right to the state. In other words, this is perhaps Vedat's coming to terms with the impossibility of communicating with the state once the channel of conversation has been shut down. Therefore, rather than reading Vedat's remarks about political protestors as deserving of the state's violence because they were not, unlike Vedat, representatives of the state, I would instead suggest that viewing as a sign of helplessness in the face of desperation.

Of course, there were other manifestations of the officers' questioning of the state apparatus. One officer, for instance, engaged in this questioning after I asked him what he thought about the military's past actions in the country:

The things that were done after the [1980] coup were extremely inhumane. We learned about this very later on. What went on in the military prisons in Mamak, Diyarbakir [military prisons notorious for their practice of torture], these are all unacceptable, but was it only the soldiers who did all those things? No, the police were also responsible. And the reason for these coups is partly civilian governments. If they were respectful to the values of the Republic, then soldiers would not intervene. However, Kenan Evren and his friends [the masterminds of the 1980 coup] can't be tried because they are the ones who set up the constitution, and the people accepted that [through a referendum]. The temporary article 15 of that constitution stipulates that the founding council did not do anything wrong legally and that they cannot be prosecuted. The coup has got nothing to do with the post-coup torture that was inflicted on people. Those two things are unrelated. Therefore, either legally or politically, you cannot prosecute those who executed the coup. There were 350,000 people who were prosecuted after the trial. Even I found out about that very recently. But the police did all of this. The two police unions got in a fight with each other and caused all of this. If there was any inhumane treatment, people should be prosecuted. But I don't believe everything I hear, things like they did this or that in this particular prison. Maybe there was torture, I can't claim against that, but what country doesn't have torture, Germany, the US? They all do.

In responding to my question, the officer first acknowledged the harm that was done, then distributed the blame across different state actors, only to retract his initial assessment and render the violence as an ordinary mode of operation for militaries around the world. The critique and defense of the state went hand in hand in such narratives.

While I knew how ambivalence marked the officers' narratives about the state, I was also curious about what they thought of the law in Turkey in general, especially after they themselves became a part of the legal system. Caner elaborated on his thoughts with the following words:

The law was problematic before as well, but at least, you knew not to expect anything from the proceedings of the coup era. But now, they're presenting these trials as a path to the rule of law. So you get legally raped in a country where a

democratically elected prime minister comes out and announces every single day that we live in a state of "advanced democracy" (*ileri demokrasi*). The judges during the coup era at least tried to conduct those trials according to proper legal procedure. It's not us who makes this claim; it's the victims of the coup era, the people who were tried in those post-coup courts. But now there are no regulations, there are no rules. Judges have no function in our legal system. It's a system that's entirely set up for them to accept the prosecutors' requests. The police reports are all being turned into indictments with the addition of a couple of legal terms. And then those indictments become verdicts. And we couldn't do anything to defend ourselves. We were tried in a legal system that did not recognize its own lawyers. Maybe, just maybe, I may have been able to accept these trials if I were a political person. But they arrested me for something I didn't do, and expected me to put forth a defense. But what can I defend when I don't know what I'm being accused of? I was just dumbfounded. The prosecutor asked me, during the first time I went to testify, whether or not I knew the Yassida trials [the trials in which the then prime minister Adnan Menderes was prosecuted and hanged after the 1960 coup]. I wasn't even born when those trials happened! So he was telling me that they're going to make us pay for that.

I find Caner's narrative valuable in demonstrating the multiple levels of political entanglement the trials entailed. On the one hand, Caner saw a political motivation behind the proceedings since the prosecutor that questioned him was interested in his knowledge of the repercussions of past military coups rather than his response to the allegations. This was the first level. On the other hand, and perhaps more interesting than the first level, Caner highlighted how the fact that he was not a "political person" (not embracing a certain ideological stance) caused even a bigger problem for him during the trials. He was merely a soldier, lacking the resources and the kind of language to use in dealing with the demands of the state. Based on Caner's narrative, and my personal experience of the trials, the identity of the officers as soldiers was the only common thing that kept the servicemen together.

The issue of politics is worthy of further exploration, as it came up mostly with officers' surprised remarks against my question of whether or not they were taught

politics in military schools. When I asked Ahmet if politics ever held a role in the military's escalating tension with the government, he stayed silent for a couple of seconds, clenched his hands together, and raised his eyebrows, hinting that this was an important point I should pay attention to:

There was never any ideological propaganda in the military academies, but they did mention Ataturk's reforms and principles, and they mentioned it quite often. We were even made to buy the books *Tek Adam* and *Ikinci Adam* [canonical books on Ataturk and Inonu, the founder and the first prime minister and second president of the country, respectively] with our own money in installments. I am from the East, so I knew the atrocities committed by Russians and Armenians, so I valued the principles of Ataturk. The soldiers were raised to uphold those values and principles.

Ahmet's narrative is a mirroring reflection of the official narrative that sees the military as the protector of its citizens. In Ahmet's case, Russians and Armenians appear as the "enemies" that Ataturk's principles and the military saved the people from. I was surprised by how many other officers responded to the question about the military's relation to politics in the same way, not seeing the institution's emphasis on Ataturk's ideals as politics. To them, just like the military had argued, Ataturk's path was the ideal one, and if something was so natural and right by the virtue of its naturalness, why would it be political? Vedat's thoughts on the matter below further illuminate this query:

I don't say this in a critical way, but military schools are the kinds of places that allow certain skills to improve while impeding others to be better. I used to feel really weak in terms of my political knowledge, for instance, when I was with my civilian friends. But I used to try and hide that deficit by claiming that soldiers do not interfere in political issues, so it's normal that they don't have an opinion [about politics]. We didn't even know political parties; we were raised in a completely apolitical manner. Believing in Ataturk's values was the one thing I can identify as political in our education. So you had to respect those values, not knowing what the left or the right means let alone being a member of either one of those. I only noticed that deficit when I started reading books in prison. But this is not to say that they taught us these things wrong; it means that they never taught us anything. But, then again, they did a good job in doing that since no one

[among the officers] bothered to question why we didn't know anything about politics.

Therefore, without an understanding of the historical context in which the trials were carried out, the officers were in a difficult position to be in.

Amidst their critique of the state, I was also interested in hearing more about what they thought about how the military, as an arm of the state, responded to the trials. Despite the emotion he demonstrated while talking about the state's history of crimes and the military's role in it, Mehmet, for instance, somewhat surprisingly to me, was not angry at the way the military responded to the trials, at least not in the way other officers were. He thought that the chief of staff had his hands tied not only because of the impossibility of resistance, but also because of the way the defamation campaign was run against the officers. According to him, the chief of staff acted just like he was raised—as a soldier:

We get mad at the way the armed forces responded to the trials, but the basis of that response is actually being cultivated in military schools. The chief of staff, as a soldier, has always reported to his commander, and his commander now is Erdogan, so what did we expect him [the chief of staff] to do? There was no way for the chief of staff to provide a democratic response to a man like Erdogan. It just wasn't possible. He [the chief of staff] could have resigned, but that wouldn't have been a solution either. This campaign [against the officers] was run based on the following goal: We should show everyone how the armed forces are devoid of the values that Turkish society embraces: religion, morality, loyalty. For instance, they had so many witnesses in the prostitution cases against the military. And then the members of the armed forces started doubting each other, asking others whether or not they were called to testify. They damaged the sense of loyalty that we had amongst ourselves. And then the society starting asking what kind of people we were to engage in those acts and to not trust each other like that. After we were arrested someone said on a press statement, 'We cleaned the armed forces from those that aren't Turk or Muslim.' So it's not really important who you are; what counts is how people see and define you. And this is what happened in these trials.

While Mehmet did not elaborate further on the latter part of his comments (that the trials were applauded for cleansing the armed forces of non-Turks and non-Muslims), his remarks deserve more attention than he devoted to them. As the preceding sections of this dissertation tried to demonstrate, the building of the Turkish nation state was based on defining the acceptable parameters of belonging, with non-Turks and non-Muslims being excluded from the national narrative. Therefore, by playing on that precise narrative, the state made sure that the soldiers were seen by their fellow citizens as outsiders as well.

Military Values, Symbols, and Allegiance

In listening to the Mehmet's and other officers' description of the military's stance against the trials, I could not help but remember the confusion and resentment that the families described to have gone through during the initial days of the trials. Excluding the mass resignations of the top commanders in 2011 as a reaction to the trials, the Turkish Armed Forces was generally silent throughout the proceedings, not making statements about the allegations – or underscoring that they do not want to create the impression that they are trying to influence the development of a legal process while making declarations – not demanding to be an intervening party in the trials, and, up until very recently, not supporting its officers either in the public or private realm. Listening to the narratives of military members, it seems like the military chose to pretend that the trials never happened; that is, as long as the officers did not demand to be recognized by the institution. In that case, the military did try to counter the opposition and the movement created against the trials by military members through certain measures like banning them from entry into military facilities as well as taking legal action against

them. The reactions to such measures among military members were mixed, with some finding them as an immature stance on the part of the senior cadres of the military while others criticizing the officers themselves for the public besmirching of the military institution of which they are still members.

In trying to process the officers' questioning the notion of the state and their prior self as soldiers dedicated to its protection in this contentious backdrop of events, I often wondered what the service members now felt about the symbols that were attached to the military. Caner explained with the following words:

I'm not going to claim that notions like the nation or the homeland were empty, but I do think that they were maybe somewhat fluff. I apparently created an imaginary world. I thought that the military would support me to death, but that's not what happened. Now I don't even want to go to a military facility. My hands get all sweaty, I get nervous; maybe that's trauma. Because of that, I find the saying 'We're the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal' [a common slogan of the military members' protests] a bit meaningless at this point because once Atatürk leaves your heart and becomes a ring on your finger or the glass you drink water out of, a mere commodity, then that saying has no significance.

Despite the fact that the trials led to a questioning of the very notions he was raised to believe in, Caner was still not immune to the effects they had on him. One of his children was partly raised in the United States when he was stationed in the country for special training courses. Having been there at a young age, his son liked the American way of life better than what was offered to him in Turkey. And after the trials and what his father had gone through, he had lost all attachment he had to his home country. Caner was sad to witness this transformation:

When you're working for the flag and the homeland, it, of course, hurts when your child says, 'I'm not Turkish, I'm American.' Since these trials, he has a particular dislike of Turkey. He watches American action movies and comes and tells me, 'The Americans save everyone, but you Turks always wait to be saved.' It hurts to hear that, and you know, they'd label you as a fascist if you said stuff like that in

Turkey. People here are trying to get rid of our national anthem, but they still have it in America; no one says anything. Instead, they protect it.

Caner's remarks are reminiscent of the debates on how the Turkish government was trying to rid the country of its national symbols. Caner was hurt that his son's allegiance had now shifted to belong to another country (one that some officers, as I detailed in the preceding chapter, saw as the primary culprits of the trials). The commodification of national symbols and feelings that he previously lamented had now also become an unwanted but integral part of his life—this time with his son's embrace of what Caner saw as foreign values.

Perhaps as a reaction to the military or perhaps because it was the only form of protest he knew, some officers still clung to the very symbols that they questioned after the trials in order to remind the military of the existence of the soldiers the institution chose not to see. One officer, for instance, described his symbolic protest that led to a tragicomic moment that still marks his encounters with military authorities:

There's been a Turkish flag hanging from our balcony ever since I was sent to prison. We didn't take it down after I got out [of prison] either. And then the military housing administration called me and said, 'Could you please take down your flag since October 29 [Republic Day] has passed?' I responded by telling them that that flag was going to be on that balcony until all of my friends are released from prison. And then they tell me, 'Well, no, if you borrowed the flag from us, then the colors fade after a while, so we wanted to ask.' Can you imagine? I'm talking about prison and can you believe how he's responding? These are the kinds of absurd things we've had to deal with.

While it is true that the officers may have used symbols that they ended up questioning with the trials as a form of protest against the military, they were also critical of the military role in giving way to the segregations of service members from society, which they thought had a big impact on how people reacted to the trials. Mehmet, for instance,

lamented about the military's ultimate segregations from the society in the following words:

We created our own ghetto. This ghetto has a school, a pool, a mall, a hair dresser, playgrounds... In the naval base in Golcuk, for instance, a person could spend 365 days without leaving the base. But before September 12, all doors to the base there were open, and people saw what the place looked like. Maybe that's why people now assume that we despise them because they can't get in, so they don't know how we live, and we can't get out, so we can't tell them what the reality is. And when the conscript doing his service cannot explain properly who I am to his parents, then their image of me is a very different one. I went to elementary school in Golcuk, and I remember having these neighbors that dressed differently. It turns out that they were going to the officers' club to listen to jazz and dance. That neighbor invited the children to his home one day. Our street didn't even have proper roads, but here we were, in that house, listening to music and dancing. That's where I first got to know dance. So I don't know if you would call that "elite," but the officers *are* leading a different life. The institution has a sense of freedom when you're in it, but we also have to acknowledge that we built beautiful facilities with the resources of the state. Golcuk is a very different, very special place, for instance. However, having said that, I'm also very ashamed that the entire place is surrounded by walls and wires, completely shut off from the public. Some people think and decide how an officer should live, but there is a cost and price to that. The cost you have to calculate for an officer to be able to afford that, and the price you need to pay because you're isolating those people from the public. I don't know if it would change the public if we placed some of these officers among civilian people, but that man, the neighbor whose house I went to, influenced me when I was ten years old. So that, apparently, meant something to me, and I wouldn't have gotten the same benefit if this man lived in military housing.

Mehmet had a visceral reaction to the way people responded to the trials. As he told me the above thoughts, his narrative switching back and forth between the status of the military and the military's own stance to its soldiers, his face would turn red and his eyes fierce, transforming into someone quite unlike the cheerful man I had initially met. But Mehmet, ultimately, believed that it was the military itself that caused the public to react against the trials the way they did

In response to Mehmet's lengthy lament about the state of the military, and his objection to the segregation of military members from society, I wondered what he

thought about whether or not soldiers set themselves apart from civilians in any way. His response alluded to the status bestowed on the soldiers, almost in the form of an obligation, rather than one that soldiers themselves created to be held in higher regard than the civilians:

By the virtue of the work you do, you're not just a simple civil servant. In addition to representing the state, you're also representing its power. So the powerful need to protect the powerless in society; this is the culture you represent. On the other hand, you are an officer of the state, but your status is different; it's different even in international law. I'm treated according to the Geneva Convention, but they treat you as a civilian. But you [as a soldier] do see yourself as the state, if that's what you're asking. You represent the flag. You're also the executor of the state in the international arena. For instance, you're supposed to stop pirates in international waters. It's not a question of whether or not you would do it; you have to do it because you will be held accountable. There are rules and regulations. If you juxtapose the soldier with another civil servant, then you'll make him ordinary.

Even though he did not necessarily agree with soldiers having a special status domestically, Mehmet was frustrated by and resentful of the changing role of the armed forces. This frustration was particularly about the cases to which he referred to as a hypocritical use of military power. When I asked Mehmet to elaborate, he responded by conveying his thoughts on what he saw as a tension between expectations from the military and future repercussions for military actions:

I think the military needs to start moving to a direction in which they are only responsible for security matters. And this *was* happening before the trials because the world is changing. If you try to rule the entire country like the barracks, then you'll only have failure. However, having said that, I would also like to add that we're not an ordinary military, as we have been dealing with terror in this country for over thirty years now. Nowadays, killing terrorists in this country is portrayed as executing an extrajudicial murder. This is an effort to vindicate terrorists. If we're going to be a part of this [rhetoric], then let's forget about all the people that were killed [by the PKK]. Is that what we're supposed to do? Soldiers should have legal liability, but also have legal protection. They should not be subject to special laws.

Mehmet's response was a reaction against the way the officers were put on trial through a legal amendment that, quite literally, changed their lives overnight. Nevertheless, even though he was frustrated by the fact that he was tried, arrested, and then retried for a crime that did not exist and that he did not commit, Mehmet did not think that seeking compensation was the answer to his anger:

You're on a ship and there's a flag on it. The flag is important because you can't do this kind of job without loyalty and attachment. I'll be perfectly honest with you, I don't know if I'd be able to do what I did as a soldier if I entered the military, say, when I was 25 years old. Maybe becoming a part of everything as a child makes the difference. Nevertheless, some people that were prosecuted took their cases to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), asking for compensation. I couldn't do that because you know how the ECHR cases appear as "Name vs. Turkey," I didn't want my name to appear against my country. I represented this country's armed forces. The people I worked with abroad saw me as the officer representing the Turkish Armed Forces. So after having lived all of that, I couldn't take action against my country. And what's really going to happen if I did? The court is going to recognize you as a victim and give you 15,000 euros, so was what I did just all about money? I don't think so.

All of the officers I talked to shared similar feelings with Mehmet, as each one of them described their role as soldiers not in terms of financial gain or status, but as one that served a bigger purpose in life and order of things. As critical as he was about the military, Mehmet still said that he is who he is because of the military institution. So what was next if not recognition or compensation? Mehmet offered his thoughts through the following words:

I cannot accept the fact that all of this happened in front of the media in the 2000s. If these trials become a conduit for people to ask why our system couldn't prevent them, then I'll say that I wasn't in prison for no reason. But, of course, we didn't care either when so many people were imprisoned before, when they went on hunger strike. And if there wasn't this much pressure, we would have wasted away in prison like the civilians who couldn't have their voices heard like us. This was a well-executed project from the perspective of the police and prosecutors that were a part of this. The fact that you work so hard or that you were a hero at one point doesn't mean that you won't attempt a coup. The alleged crime isn't something that heroes can't commit.

Mehmet's response is indicative of the whirlwind of feelings so many officers like himself were made to experience as a result of the trials. Once ordinary soldiers and military heroes who were now turned into reluctant terrorists, the post-trial period continued to be one of contemplation for the officers about the meaning of the roles they had devoted their lives to.

Conclusion

Anthropological accounts of the fieldwork experience—historical and contemporary alike—are replete with stories of transformation; encounters thanks to which the ethnographer lives a quasi-epiphanic moment of enlightenment and continues to be something other than she originally was. This is a story that also relays the idea of fieldwork as an anthropologist's rite of passage—an experience through which the ethnographer becomes whole only after the completion of the time in the field. Surely, this transformation is, to a large extent, retroactive; the chance for and need to reflect on the fieldwork experience in order to render it meaningful gives a romantic quality to fieldwork. The ethnographer attributes meaning to what she lived thus transforming it into something that it originally was not. Much like novelists, ethnographers, after all, are observers and writers of the human experience—an experience that comes to life through interpretation (Geertz 1989; Narayan 1999).

Very similar to the novelist, the ethnographer creates a cast of characters, protagonists and antagonists, entry and exit scenes, and development of plots. Making or breaking worlds is at the tip of the ethnographer's fingers. As hands touch the paper, snippets of experience now turn into a cohesive whole. Yet, unlike literature,

anthropology has historically been somewhat lacking in the cast of characters it has chosen to focus on, and perhaps insufficient in the way it has handled their choices and experiences. Good literature thrives in the complexity of its characters, shunning simple reductions of the range of human experience, and focuses on heroes *and* villains, or victims *and* perpetrators, alike. Anthropology has generally chosen to focus on the former, without paying much attention to or interest in the perpetrator. Victims, in other words, have become the heroes of ethnographic writing.

There are reasons for this ethnographic choice of cast. One is anthropology's complex entanglement with power and powerful actors, starting from its colonial past. As anthropologists became more critical of the discipline's contributions to colonial governments and governmental power, the focus of the discipline stabilized in the direction of doing research on those in the margins of society, often impacted and oppressed by agents of power. Even though Laura Nader urged anthropologists to "study up" in the 1970s and Hugh Gusterson renewed this call in the 1990s, there is still only a handful of ethnographies that make actors in power their central focus (Crapanzano 1985; Ho 2009; Hughes 2010; Ozyurek 2006) and those that focus on people labeled as perpetrators are even fewer (Civico 2015).

The reasons for this are, to a certain extent, understandable. If the ethnographic encounter mostly happens through the identification of the ethnographer with the interlocutor, then those in power, especially perpetrators, are not the easiest or most ideal people to identify with. Even beginning to think like, or through the eyes of, the perpetrator, let alone understand him, is a scary experience to go through. Understanding implies that the ethnographer could also *become* the one she identifies with (Civico

2015:10). Perhaps this is why the writings of anthropologists on the military, for instance, have often involved a notion of "seduction" in which the ethnographer almost always carries the fear of being lured into the world of the military culprit (Bayendor 2012, Robben 1995). As Aldo Civico (2015) aptly states in his study on Colombian death squads, it is as if identification with perpetrators would make us lesser humans, moving into a side of the human mind and history we have long left behind.

This approach—one that rests on distancing ourselves from perpetrators—also seems to have impacted the reasons why anthropologists should study power. The manifesto of the Upward Anthropology Research Community (2014), for instance, sketches an ambitious rationale for studying up: "By turning ethnography on those in power, we can also make the invisible more visible, and – hopefully – make it possible to 'hack' the structures of power in order to undermine their inherent inequalities and create a more just and sustainable world." Yet this is a rather simplistic approach to the realm and study of power, devoid of the primary tenet of cultural relativism through which anthropologists approach their field site—with an open mind and without judgment. The statement above already identifies power as evil without having even seen through what complex means and actors power operates. This is also the kind of approach that is precisely in line with the tendency to either identify those who hold power *as* perpetrators or easily associate them *with* perpetrators. Through the analysis of the stories of five military members in this chapter, I hope to have demonstrated that the lives of those who have held, and lost, power are far more complex than we, as social scientists studying power, have believed so far.

Conclusion

"This is Just the Beginning, Keep on Fighting":

Reconstructing Lives after the Trials

In May 2014, a month before the Sledgehammer defendants would be released from jail as a result of the Constitutional Court's overruling of the trial verdict, I met Serap on a quiet morning in Istanbul in one of her favorite neighborhood coffee shops. Unbeknownst to me, Serap had also arranged to bring along a friend who happened to be the wife of another officer on trial and who was intrigued by my research topic. Having met numerous military wives up until that point, I could pretty much anticipate the direction of our conversation, hearing similar stories recited by my other interlocutors. What made this meeting different from others, however, was the sense of grim exhaustion that usually did not mark my conversations with other people. Serap and her friend were fed up with the legal process that had turned their lives upside down and wanted the ordeal to end as soon as possible. Yet, it was not a sense of justice or closure that they sought since they did not believe that either one of those things was a possibility. Serap explained what she meant by that with a chilling description:

Closure can only happen for me through the following terms: They need to find the people who put us through this nightmare, make them appear in front of me, and then I'll just shoot all of them. Only then will I have closure. But since we know that won't be possible, I'm not interested in having the culprits identified and brought to justice through prosecutions. I just want my husband to be released from prison, I want us to leave all of this behind, and I want us to move on with our lives.

Justice and closure were two things that I often thought about throughout my time in the field as I came to be a close witness to the undoing of military members' lives. What did

justice mean after having your whole life be publicly unraveled and your career destroyed? How could or did one get justice after having spent years in prison for a crime they did not commit? Would finding the culprits, putting them on trial, and expecting the same courts and legal actors that had convicted military officers to now punish the actual perpetrators bring justice? Could justice, then, also undo the years of torment that military members were made to go through, or “bring back their lives” as often said by military members, with a simple court verdict, and ultimately bring closure?

For Serap, the responses to these questions were a clear and simple “No.” Perhaps that is why I stopped seeing her in most protests and post-trial efforts that had now come to mark the lives of military officers once they were released from prison. Even though the verdict of their court cases was overruled, the legal process for the servicemen had still not ended. Indeed, the end of their own trials produced a new set of proceedings for military members in which they now turned into plaintiffs of those who once prosecuted them in court. Military members had become regular attendees of court cases against former judges and prosecutors who unleashed the authority of the law onto them. To have a better collective voice in this new legal effort, a group of officers even established a foundation called *Association for Victims of Conspiracy Trials (Kumpas Magdurlari Yardimlasma ve Dayanisma Dernegi)*. As such, they made it a regular part of their lives after the proceedings to track counter trials and hold the perpetrators of their suffering accountable for what they brought upon them. One of the officers, for instance, who became a prolific author during and after the trials, had one of his books incorporated into the indictment of the July 15 coup proceedings (Milliyet 2017). In the aftermath of their acquittal, the officers, quite literally, became the authors of their own history, fighting for

the recognition of the "martyrs of justice" (*adalet şehitleri*)—the name that they attributed to the soldiers who lost their lives during the legal process. As a reflection of these post-trial efforts, "this is just the beginning, keep on fighting" became one of the most popular slogans of the weekly protests of which the officers now became the primary actors.



Military members protesting in Ankara after their release from prison

In addition to their efforts in the legal realm and activism in the courtroom, the military members made it one of their primary goals to take back the national sites and narratives of which they were thrust outside and to commemorate their fellow servicemen who were no longer with them to fight for justice. In June 2014, only days after their release from prison, the officers organized a visit to Anitkabir, the mausoleum of the country's founder Ataturk, in Ankara. The event drew hundreds of people to the site—a

crowd I had not seen up until that point throughout my 18 months in the field. For military members, this was a particularly important visit since they often hailed themselves as “the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal” [Ataturk’s first name] and argued that the trials were an attack against republican values.



Military members visiting Anitkabir after their release from prison

After their visit to Anitkabir, military members then visited the cemeteries of Murat Ozenalp and Ali Tatar, two officers who had lost their lives as a result of the trials. While Ozenalp died in 2014 from a cerebral hemorrhage he suffered during one of the open visits in prison, Tatar committed suicide in 2009 when the court issued a warrant for his arrest after he was released from jail only weeks before that. Therefore, these post-trial commemorative visits made sure that the officers were never forgotten as much as the proceedings tried to erase their identity.



Military members in front of officer Murat Ozenalp's grave

This busy post-trial legal scene may provide a misleading image of the officers' current lives. Unlike the portrayals of the officers appearing in newspapers and TV forums, which has led the critics of the military to argue that the prosecuted officers have seamlessly transitioned back into their previous lives, the trials left behind servicemen perplexed by what they went through, not quite being able to situate themselves within or outside of the military institution even after their acquittal. A minority among them chose to go back to work and pick up their careers from where they left. But the transition has not been easy. As I have elaborated on in Chapter 5, one officer, for instance, told me how difficult it was for him to wear his uniform during the first couple of days, and how heavy it felt for him to be in it after all that happened: "It took me an hour to put on my

uniform when I went back to work. And I just don't feel the same amount of joy to be at work. When it's 5:30 pm, I tell myself to just stop and go home. If this were ten years ago, that would definitely not be the case." The choice to voluntarily return has also been critiqued by some military members. "I don't want to judge anyone; I understand that they probably have reasons for going back," one officer told me, "but I would have a very hard time returning to the place that rejected me." Others were not so sympathetic and labeled the officers' choice of return as a "betrayal" to those on trial.

Officers who have returned to work mostly out of obligation have also seen how the institution found the returning soldiers rather out of place, and did not quite know what to do with them. As a result, both the officers and the military developed strategies to overlook the fact that the servicemen were now back at a work place that never really supported them in the first place. As a result, in order to avoid strange encounters for all parties, some officers took unusually long sick leaves, some were appointed to menial tasks not commensurate with their level of authority, and some were sent to posts they refused to show up for. One officer detailed this tension as follows: "I'm technically on duty right now as we're talking, but I've actually been away for months now. I took a sick leave, and then got another medical report when that was up, and then another one. They [the military] know I'm not sick, I know I'm not sick, so everyone's essentially pretending like everything's okay, but it's not, and we all know it." In the aftermath of the trials that left multiple state institutions in turmoil, the military mostly chose to deal with its returning members by ignoring them.

Those who have not returned to the military and still young enough to seek alternate career paths, on the other hand, did not quite know what to make of their lives.

Trained as soldiers with skills not easily transferable to the civilian world, they were in search of a way to remake their identities and redefine how they fit into the new order of things. They were also broken with feelings of betrayal to an institution that most of them served for starting from age 14—an institution that did not take care of them when they most needed to be taken care of. While some try to remake their lives by early retirements, others try to reenter the civilian world, unfamiliar with its rules and rituals, by seeking jobs that they can do for the remainder of their lives. Perhaps this is why, out of a search for a way to reclaim their sense of belonging, keeping diligent track of court cases against the perpetrators has become one of the primary cornerstones of the officers' post-trial lives. So, for the most part, officers are still seeking justice for the ordeal they were made to go through. Whether or not justice will also bring closure is a question that is up for debate.

Situated in this extraordinary backdrop of events, my dissertation provides a portrait of a legal process that has both redefined notions of justice, belonging, and identity for military members and changed the parameters of state making in Turkey. In Chapter 2, I examined the trials through the notions of law, justice, and victimhood, demonstrating military members' efforts to undo the repercussions of the proceedings both in and outside of the courtroom. By looking at the distinct methods through which the officers and their families sought justice, I argued that the court's strategic usage of terrorism charges in the proceedings allowed the government to justify the extraordinary legal procedures employed against officers. Through this analysis, this chapter also demonstrated the contentious politics surrounding the status of victimhood and the question of who qualifies to be a victim. Chapter 3 turned to the experiences of military

dependents and analyzed how military wives and children navigated the trials as they became the public representatives of their husbands and fathers. As my discussion demonstrated, military members, while being shunned by the institution itself, still had to express their grief and anger in a way that upheld military expectations. Therefore, unlike relatives of political prisoners or victims of state violence, their experiences did not have a chance to be transformed into a political or empowering action against the state. In Chapter 4, I returned to the legal case and examined the trials through the framework of conspiracy. Paying particular attention to the government's usage of conspiracy to further legal claims, I discussed how the authority of the law allowed for different parties' support of the trials as legitimate, even when it was known that the cases were not judicious. Chapter 5 turned to the primary actors of the trials, military officers themselves, and analyzed what they thought of such notions as the state, country, identity, and belonging before and after the trials. I argued that the officers' stories defy the easy categorization of labeling them as perpetrators. As such, the chapter urged for a more complex approach to the study of state actors, as these actors occupy a more nebulous position with stories that deserve more than just easily affixed labels.

Overall, by focusing on the trials as a "core ethnographic moment" (Burns et al. 2008:303), my dissertation has demonstrated how legal proceedings have become a way to contain the chaos through which the Turkish state operates in the contemporary moment. Officers became a part of that chaos through a series of unprecedented trials that not only unmade their lives, but also transformed the military's status within Turkish culture, society, and politics. Yet, as my epilogue will demonstrate, legality in general, and trials in particular, continue to operate as the primary means of state making in

Turkey. As much as it makes for opportunities for a great ethnography, the current state of affairs in the country predicts more uncertainty and a normalized sense of turmoil for years to come for citizens of Turkey.

Epilogue

Democracy Must Be Defended:

The Failed Coup and Its Aftermath in Turkey²¹

On the night of July 15, 2016, Turkey witnessed a bloody military intervention. Executed by the soldiers affiliated with the Parallel Structure led by the US-based Islamic cleric Fetullah Gulen, the coup wreaked terror on the cities of Ankara and Istanbul. Starting from the late evening hours, armed soldiers occupied and shut down traffic on the two main bridges in Istanbul. As the streets were being populated by the soldiers as part of their plan to seize control of the city, a group of officers invaded the headquarters of TRT, the state's major broadcasting agency, forcing the terrified anchor to read their memorandum to the nation. People's reaction to the coup was fierce. Heeding to the calls of president Recep Tayyip Erdogan to take to the streets, the public flooded the spaces of the city, occupying streets, squares, and bridges, defending their country against this vicious attack on democracy. As the tension between the crowds and the military increased, the soldiers opened fire on innocent civilians and trampled them with tanks. In Ankara, the coup plotters bombed the Turkish parliament, opened heavy fire on the headquarters of the Police Special Operations Forces and the National Intelligence Agency, attempted to attack the president's residence, and harassed the city's people by flying F-16s over the city. Furthermore, a group of soldiers held the chief of staff hostage for hours and took several high-ranking officers to an undisclosed location. The coup plotters also occupied the air traffic control tower in the Istanbul airport, deployed a

²¹ There have been numerous articles and op-eds written on the failed coup attempt. For a comprehensive summary of events that took place on the night of the coup as well as an analysis of how the government's narrative achieved success, see Altinordu (2017).

special forces team to assassinate Erdogan at the hotel where he was vacationing in the southern city of Marmaris, and harassed the president's plane through F-16s as it was on its way to land in Istanbul. The bloody intervention was suppressed in hours, but resulted in more than 200 casualties and left thousands injured.

Despite sounding more like an action-packed thriller than what one would expect to witness on an ordinary day, the above narrative has now become the default official explanation of the July 15 coup attempt in the Turkish public realm. My summary tries to mimic the temporal and linguistic structure of the description of the events since such descriptions have become emblematic of government proclamations in the contemporary moment where the failed coup has become a blessing for Erdogan and his ruling party. Having shielded the fifth military coup in the country's history, Erdogan was quick to embrace this incident as the founding myth of his "New Turkey." Oddly joyful for a leader whose country was in turmoil, the president declared the coup "a great gift from God" to a group of journalists in his initial statement at the Istanbul Ataturk Airport in the early morning hours following the failed coup. He went on to elaborate how the attempt was "an act of treason" executed by the "parallel state structure who could not tolerate the national unity of the people." Once the government's biggest ally in eliminating secularist and military actors from cadres of power, Gulen's followers were now declared to be a part of this "parallel state," also hailed by the government as Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO). "We had already said that this [structure] is a terrorist organization," Erdogan declared, "This event [the coup] has now revealed that this is also an *armed* terrorist organization." Continuing his speech, the president stated that "since every cloud has a silver lining," the attempt will enable the government "to cleanse the

armed forces," which, he added, "needs to be immaculate." He was content with the reaction of the people, taking to the streets to repel the "invaders" that were being "governed by Pennsylvania," Gulen's place of residence in the US and one of Erdogan's favorite ways to address the self-exiled cleric. In the president's narrative, the people were the unrelenting soldiers fighting against the coup plotters, Erdogan the invincible commander in chief, and FETO, the invented terrorist organization, which now became the common enemy of the nation.

As the night unfolded and the anchors and multiple commentators were trying to make sense of the unprecedented developments, the AKP leadership underscored the significance of not calling this a military coup. Prime minister Binali Yildirim announced on a major news channel that what was taking taking place "is an attempt (*kalkisma*). We will never ever allow such attempts [to take place]. It wouldn't be right to call this a coup. Those responsible will heavily pay for it." Critiquing the Western press that relayed the news as the Turkish military's seizure of power, the government made sure to emphasize that power was still intact. In the days following the failed coup, the president reiterated his call to the people to not leave the streets, in some ways quite literally. Those who had a registered Turkish cell phone number at the time received text messages from their local municipalities, urging them to stay put on the streets in order to "protect the people's will." Public transportation operated free for days to allow people to reach the squares to protest with ease. While many, indeed, heeded to the call, others countered that presence on social media, declaring the coup a hoax, and conveying their version of the narrative through tweets that read #darbedegiltiyatro (not a coup, but a theater). The spectacular nature of the event, alongside the many inconsistencies in the timeline of the coup

attempt, made the coup, in these people's opinion, a staged event. Similar narratives about how the coup attempt was orchestrated by Erdogan himself to consolidate power circulated over other social media platforms.

I lived through these confounding developments miles away from Turkey, in the United States, literally watching history unfold on my computer screen as I switched back and forth between all the Turkish television channels I could access online. I can only describe what I saw as surreal. Listening to a distressed anchor read the military memorandum on Turkey's state television at one moment and watching the country's president on a FaceTime call, speaking through the small screen of an anchorwoman's iPhone and calling the people to the streets the next, I followed the developments, trying to overcome the shock of witnessing this impossible incident. In addition to my profound surprise regarding the coup attempt, what I found unbelievable amidst this chaos was how each and every channel announced what was taking place as a “democracy fest” and “a victory of democracy,” sometimes using the terms interchangeably. Every anchor and commentator condemned the coup attempt and celebrated how “the public protected the national will,” a phrase that became the cornerstone of Erdogan's post-coup public speeches to the nation. The media was inundated with images and videos of squares and streets flooded by thousands wrapped in or carrying the Turkish flag, chanting slogans against the coup plotters.

Despite the vision of patriotism and solidarity conveyed on national television, the unending Twitter feed I tried to keep up with and friends with whom I communicated over the next few days told me a different version of the story. This version included enraged crowds storming the streets with Islamic chants and a request to bring back the

death penalty for the coup plotters, mosques incessantly reading out the Islamic prayer to commemorate the dead, and images of bruised, beaten, and terrified conscripts being harassed by the crowds. To me, what the July 15 coup attempt revealed was a dormant lynch mob ready to be mobilized by the populist politics of Erdogan, a crowd ready to kill whatever and whoever they deemed to go against the dream their president created for his "New Turkey," a dream that many came to believe in no matter what the cost. In that sense, the crowds on the streets on the night of the coup were, mostly, celebrating Erdogan himself, rather than democracy. This was Erdogan's new army.

What happened on the night of July 15 not only opened up a new era in Turkish history, but also changed the course of the legal process through which hundreds of servicemen were indicted and prosecuted in mass trials throughout the past decade in Turkey. Erdogan, who had once declared himself "the prosecutor of the trials" in which military officers were brought to courts as defendants (Sozcu 2016), publicly announced that he was deceived. Having vowed to end the "era of coups," Erdogan now promised to the public that those who orchestrated the officers' trials, who, he said, were also the masterminds behind the coup attempt, would be brought to justice. Even though the soldiers were not forgiving of the president's statements, the military had now become Erdogan's major ally. The days following the failed coup, the officers whose lives I had watched turn into shambles through these proceedings were the most sought after guests on Turkish news channels. The officers whose motions were denied time and again in court and who had been ruled guilty in the court of public opinion were now applauded for their vision and foresight for having predicted and warned the public of a potential coup threat. The military, despite being beaten down, was now back in the picture.

Although not a part of my dissertation, the July 15 coup is echoed throughout my analysis of the officers' trials in the preceding chapters. Those familiar enough with the cases may even claim that the trials I analyze in my research foreshadowed the most recent coup attempt. Despite this resemblance, it would be an impossible endeavor for me to provide an in-depth summary and exploration of the state of affairs in post-coup Turkey. The reasons for this are multiple, starting with the dizzying pace of change that takes place in the country on a daily basis, the most recent of which was a referendum that now allows president Erdogan sweeping powers and a green light to change the country's political system into an executive presidency. Nevertheless, I think that any analysis of the trials of the past decade would be incomplete without paying attention to the social, cultural, and political developments that took place after July 15. Therefore, this epilogue aims to provide a brief overview of the aftermath of the failed coup with particular focus on the effects this intervention has had on the redevelopment of the notion of belonging in the current moment, acting as the master commemorative narrative (Zerubavel 1997) of Erdogan's "New Turkey." My brief summary below not only complements my analysis of a state that is constantly reinventing itself, but also reminds us of the significance of being critical of state processes that are presented in the guise of democracy as much as we are critical of state actors themselves.

Rewriting the Nation's History

In the days following the coup attempt, Erdogan and his government responded to the threat to their power with a crackdown on anyone and everyone they deemed to be a part of the military intervention and a member of what they labeled as the "parallel state

structure." Days after the coup, on July 20, 2016, Turkey declared a three-month state of emergency. Reassuring the public that "citizens would not be affected by the emergency rule," the government announced that the state of emergency was a necessary measure to allow authorities to find and punish the coup plotters (Hurriyet 2016). By the end of July, Erdogan had announced that more than 18,000 people were under custody. In addition to mass arrests, the government pressed charges against those who claimed through their social media accounts that the coup was a hoax, and vowed that those who questioned the veracity of the military intervention would be held accountable. Other set of developments followed suit. The government dismissed over 80,000 state employees, over 4,000 of whom were from the military, suspended the work of over 2,000 institutions, including schools, universities, radio and TV stations, and unions, and shut down all military high schools and military academies. Furthermore, as part of the emergency rule, statutory decrees allowed the government to bypass parliamentary approval in enacting laws, giving Erdogan and his allies immense authority on anything they wanted to address and act upon. By December 2016, the government had passed 12 decrees, five of which were turned into actual statutes later on with the parliament's approval. And by January 2017, 103,850 people have been under custody, 41,326 of whom were arrested. The emergency rule continues to date.

Erdogan's move to purge the Gulenists from the cadres of the various public and private institutions was seen by some as a way for the president to silence dissent. Looking at the aftermath of the failed coup, the critiques are not necessarily unfounded as Erdogan has used the military intervention to his advantage on multiple levels. As it shut down various media outlets, as well as deleting all of their online content, and silenced

dissent through detentions and arrests, the government took to writing its own version of history. In late July 2016, the Office of the Presidency produced a documentary entitled "July 15 Democracy Martyrs." Peppered with Islamic chants and verses from the Turkish national anthem read by Erdogan himself, the documentary described the coup as "an unprecedented event" in which the "the forces of evil who targeted the people's will attacked their own nation" (*millet iradesine kast eden ser odaklari*). The documentary has been accompanied by multiple books, *10 Questions to Understand 15 July Coup Attempt and Fetullah Terrorist Organization* (2016), *15 July Coup Attempt and the Parallel State Structure* (2016), and *July 15 Coup Attempt and People's Victory in Turkey*, the latter of which has also been translated into multiple languages, including English, Arabic, French, Spanish, and Russian. In August 2016, the Office also created a website devoted entirely to what it has called "the July 15 Resistance." Comprising a summary of the events that led to the failed coup, names of the "heroes of the resistance" and "hero martyrs," photos, videos, accompanied by a "corner of disgrace" to shame the foreign press critical of Erdogan, the site was an addition to the many others created by local municipalities. During the same month, the public also saw the announcement of the "democracy anthem," the official march to commemorate those who fought on the night of July 15.

In all declarations on the coup, Erdogan announces himself the "commander-in-chief," a title, while familiar to the American people, quite foreign to Turkish ears as it was only bestowed upon Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, by the Turkish parliament during the years of the Turkish war of independence. As journalist Mustafa Akyol (2016) has also noted, Erdogan's "New Turkey" has found its founding

myth in the failed coup; Erdogan is now the country's Ataturk, and July 15, the country's new War of Independence, which Erdogan has also quite literally declared to be in some of his speeches. The reverberations of this myth were evident in the government's call to people to hold "democracy vigils" on the streets for days on end, which culminated in the "Democracy and Martyrs Rally," held on August 7, 2016. The celebration of the myth has already been made official with the government's declaration of July 15 as a national holiday to be commemorated as the "Democracy and Martyrs Day." As these events will demonstrate, in removing the officers from power, Erdogan replaced the shadow of armed force with his own patriotic militarism in which the resistance to the coup became his master commemorative narrative and martyrs the protagonists of his "legend."

Through intense efforts of state propaganda, Erdogan has turned democracy into the invented tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012) of the country and anyone opposed to his power into his enemy. And while the commemorative publications all focus on the ordinary people's role in stopping the coup and reclaiming democracy, they all profile a very important and unchanging protagonist: Erdogan himself. In the current moment, history is being rewritten in Turkey, and Erdogan is, quite literally, its primary author.

Since the failed coup, various organizations, public and private alike, have been competing to contribute to the reinvention of the country's founding myth. The story of the coup is now becoming a \$10 million feature entitled "Awakening." Released with the tagline "From the coups that silenced calls to prayers to the calls to prayers that silenced coups," intimating the military secular politics against religion, the film will depict the night of July 15 through the perspective of the president and the first lady. The state channel, TRT, also prepared a documentary series, with 100 episodes, devoted to the

retelling of the coup, focusing on the "heroes" of the coup night. Multiple TV shows (ranging from sitcoms to dramas and political thrillers) have made the failed coup a part of their episodes, establishing comparisons of the 2016 coup attempt with the 1980 military coup, and condemning efforts to overtake a democratically elected government. Expanding the audience of the founding narrative, Istanbul's Umraniye municipality published a cartoon video, geared specifically towards young children, in which they detail the coup attempt through the eyes of a boy whose father was "martyred" on the bridge on July 15. The cartoon starts in 2023, the date that AKP has long since publicized as their target for the country's transformation, coinciding with its 100 years of existence, and situates the failed coup as the turning point in the country's history. Complementing these multimedia efforts, some municipalities have also organized tours to visit the graves of martyred soldiers who have been declared as the heroes of the coup as well as providing citizens with photo backdrops of "July 15 remembrance" in front of which they can have their photographs taken to keep as a memento (BirGun 2016). Commodities produced after the names and events that marked the night of the coup now circulate for public consumption while a Turkish designer picked July 15 as her theme for her fashion show in London (Diken 2017).

In Turkey, institutions also responded to the coup with a wholehearted embrace of the theme of democracy. In the early hours of July 16, for instance, as the US Federal Aviation Administration banned all commercial and private flights to and from Turkey, Turkish Airlines, Turkey's major air carrier, published an announcement on its website that denounced the military intervention and celebrated the victory of "the people's will." In a similar manner, the August 2016 edition of *SkyLife*, the airline's complimentary

passenger magazine, adorned its cover with the juxtaposition of a Turkish Airlines plane and the Turkish flag, published with the headline, "The Victory of People's Will." The airline also announced in August that it will be renaming its international departure lounge, Lounge Istanbul, to "July 15 Heroes of Democracy Lounge," as well as imprinting seven of its planes with the names of the Istanbul districts that stood out with their resistance to the military coup. Yet, Turkish Airlines is just one among many examples, as such renaming has become commonplace in post-coup Turkey. Istanbul's famous Bosphorus Bridge, for instance, which was occupied by armed soldiers on the night of the attempted coup, is now called the "July 15 Martyrs Bridge." And the change is not limited to Istanbul alone. Around the country, bus stops, terminals, roads, intersections, streets, schools, classrooms, campuses, and parks have been renamed to commemorate July 15 (T24 2017).

The failed coup has already made its place into the national curriculum as well. In September 2016, thousands of students in primary and secondary schools started the academic year by watching a video that depicted the night of July 15. Weaving together multiple moments from Turkish history, the video sequences the battle of Gallipoli and the Turkish War of Independence as the events that form the Turkish national narrative leading up to the July 15 coup. The film describes the failed coup as the "treacherous parallel structure members' attempt to inflict a blow to the people's will" (*devletin icinde yuvalanan hain paralel yapi mensuplari, millet iradesine darbe vurmak icin harekete gecti*). To complement the video, every student was given a booklet entitled "July 15 Democracy Fest and Our Martyrs," whose preface was authored by Erdogan himself. Students were also required to participate in various commemorative events, announced

by the Ministry of Education to be a yearlong effort, ranging from writing letters to the "democracy heroes" and participating in "homeland and flag" themed poetry recitations to taking part in prayers for the "July 15 martyrs who have sacrificed their lives to defend the homeland, independence, and the future," as announced by the Ministry of Education.

The Demands of Democracy

The appropriation of the new national narrative—which came with the writing of a new founding myth for the nation, the invention of a terrorist organization, and a series of conspiracies to bolster the story—did not come without mistakes and confusion. President Erdogan, at times, seemed to share the confusion. On July 2016, in his first-ever interview after the attempted coup, Erdogan, to the surprise of many, announced on Al-Jazeera that he found out about the coup through his brother-in-law later on in the night, which contradicted official statements that the government had intelligence about the attempt during the day. What was nebulous was not only the timing of the coup, but also the naming of the actors behind it. Some media outlets, for instance, which started using the now popular acronyms for Fetullah Terrorist Organization and Parallel State Structure, made a political error. Written as FETO/PDY in Turkish, some newspapers published the acronym as "FETO/PYD," the latter half referring to the Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria, declared as a terrorist organization in Turkey alongside the PKK. Perhaps the mistake was not unintentional, as one can argue that FETO has now replaced the PKK as the nefarious enemy of the nation. Other newspapers have responded to the confusion with the production of conspiracy theories. Looking for the "mastermind" (*ust akıl*) behind the coup, one, for instance, pointing at the Wilson Center

and its fellows for orchestrating the attempt. Some accounts have often taken the form of additional xenophobia in which the Western press was accused of sounding disappointed for the failure of the coup and was targeted for not congratulating the Turkish people for the reclaiming of democracy (Kutahyali 2016; Yozoglu 2017).

Despite the celebratory nature of official accounts inundating the public realm, myriad people who watched the post-coup developments with profound confusion brought about question marks, doubts, and inconsistencies that they wanted to see answers for. The timeline and the details of the event were much more complicated than the straightforward narrative presented and embraced by official outlets, and many people, to date, have reflected on the questions that still remain unanswered (Karaca 2016). The government was quick to try and rectify the cloud of uncertainty hovering over the details of the failed coup. Resembling products of a freedom of information act, the booklets published by the Office of the Presidency are a case in point. The booklets address the questions that many have posed in the aftermath of the post-coup political atmosphere, not shying away from addressing questions such as why the government is removing people from public service or whether it is against the law for the government to remove civil servants from their post (to which the authors respond with a firm "No."). The booklet also has extensive information on FETO, defining it as "an armed cult of fanatics led by the retired imam Fetullah Gulen" (2016:26). For readers familiar with popular culture, foreign and domestic alike, the booklet explains the coup in reference to a popular American show and states that *The Following* is "a good example to understand the structure of the FETO," likening Fetullah Gulen to the serial killer in the show, whom the authors of the booklet describe as "a psychopathic English professor, who mobilizes

his cult like followers to help him with his deadly objectives and achieve his ultimate goal." While the English translation of the booklet remains vague by not specifying what the "ultimate goal" is, the original Turkish version of the text is slightly more dramatic as it focuses on how the show's character "transforms people into crime machines for his sick character" (2016: 39). Inadvertently or not, this is the prime example of a state blending fact with fiction to make a case for its own doings. And the power of Erdogan's state comes precisely from its proactive stance. The government does not avoid or circumvent responding to questions. Instead, it writes its own versions of those responses thus creating its own facts and history.

In the post-coup era, in addition to its proactive (dis)information campaigns, Erdogan's government has made prime use of the institutions that form a democratic state, albeit in a rather twisted understanding of democracy. Therefore, the law, ironically, is an integral part of Erdogan's project of reforming and transforming the Turkish nation. Instead of ignoring critiques or responding to them publicly, both of which are tactics that he usually utilizes, Erdogan, uses the law as his primary means to deal with his critics and opponents. In one of the first public statements about the coup, the president emphasized how the law would be "taking care of" the coup plotters: "The law has already responded to those who have treaded without my knowledge as the commander-in-chief. They will pay a heavy price for what they did in front of the law." As one of the major cornerstones of his new founding myth, democracy was also a part of his narrative: "This [the coup] will make the jobs of those who believe in democracy much easier, but it will also make them [the coup plotters] pay heavily for this." In instances like this, and many others seen in Erdogan's legal realm, due process rights and

actual verdicts do not seem to matter. The law is there to punish those regardless of whether or not they are guilty, and not agreeing with Erdogan can easily put one on the latter end of the spectrum.

In addition to being his primary means to silence his critics, the law has also become Erdogan's ways of showing gratitude to the citizens. On July 17, 2016, two days after the failed coup, at the funeral of one of the "martyrs," when the crowd chanted "We want the death penalty," during Erdogan's speech, the president responded by making law and democracy the centerpiece of his answer: "As I indicated yesterday, you cannot ignore the request of the people in a democracy. This [the request or the death penalty; unclear] is your right. This right will be evaluated and decided upon by the authorities determined by the constitution." On multiple occasions, Erdogan has declared that he would consider the reinstatement of the death penalty if a bill was presented to him, and would even have a referendum if that is what the people wanted. If the idea becomes a legislative decree, and then turned into a law, the death penalty will be Erdogan's next gift to the nation. In addition to considering the requests of his followers, on July 30, Erdogan announced that he would be "forgiving" and dropping all lawsuits against those who insulted him as a token of gratitude for the people's support in deflecting the July 15 coup (Deutsche Welle 2016). Taking the gift a step further, in November 2016, the government changed its conscription laws so that the children and siblings of the "July 15 martyrs," as they have now come to be called, would be exempt from military service unless they volunteer to serve (Kizilkoyun 2016). The law has now, more than ever, become a way to respond to citizens' actions to sustain the system, rewarding the people by recognizing their participation in power, and going after those who don't support this

endeavor, or are critical of it, through trials. Erdogan skillfully uses all means of legality provided to him to maintain the facade of a democratic state.

The Vigilant(e) Nation

Despite being the primary architect of the nation's new founding myth, Erdogan is right to emphasize the role of the people in keeping his government alive. It was, after all, the citizens that filled the streets, bridges, and airports on the night of the failed coup, and, quite literally, stood against the tanks and weapons of the military. While banning the squares to antigovernment protests and heavy-handedly keeping the protestors away from the streets, the government now officially invited the people to the public spaces of the city to "take back the national will." Erdogan reciprocated to the people's response with the gift of sovereign power. First, by inviting people to partake in the protection of democracy, Erdogan recognized the co-constitution of power. He was the leader, but the people were the ones that kept him alive, both literally and figuratively. Second, by giving the authority to the people to cleanse the nation of "infiltrators," Erdogan bestowed the crowds with the right to sovereign violence. In participating in this call, the people, quite literally, became the state. They were now the eyes, ears, and heavy-handed force of the state, watchful to spot and catch those who caused the invasion. (Wall n.d.). Erdogan's new nation is made of vigilant(e) citizens that are alert and immediately responsive to the threat of disruption.

I would like to expand upon the attributes of this vigilance by focusing on the violence perpetrated against the soldiers who were assumed to be coup plotters on the night of the failed coup. As the night unfolded, people on social media accounts started

sharing photographs of beaten and bruised faces and bodies of soldiers. The epitome of this violence was an image of a decapitated soldier, the authenticity of which was later questioned by people. Regardless of whether or not the image was real, the fact that soldiers, ordinarily valorized and respected, were now being battered on the streets by their fellow citizens was a shock to many. People on social media talked about how those on the streets should be wary of the difference between "coup plotter terrorists" versus the "innocent soldiers" required to take and follow orders. Those who were awake throughout the night to keep up with the developments and upset by this treatment took the level of differentiating terrorists and soldiers a step further and urged the public to not hurt the "innocent conscripts." In his twitter feed for the night, for instance, Metin Gurcan, a previous Turkish military officer turned security analyst and frequent commentator on military issues, implored the people to use good judgment about the soldiers and to "separate the hennaed sheep from the wolves" (@Metin4020, July 16, 2016). In Turkey, henna is traditionally applied to sheep before they are sacrificed, brides before their wedding, and soldiers before they join the barracks. The henna symbolizes the innocence of those it is applied to, and marks a rite of passage. In the case of the soldiers, the service is their passage to manhood, the ritual that enables them to take on the various duties assigned to them in society (Altınay 2004). As Can Aciksoz indicates, "this is why the lionized and masculinized male conscript is also seen as a childishly innocent figure and is affectionately called little Mehmet (the generic term for a common soldier), suckling, and hennaed lamb" (2017). Gurcan's usage of the hennaed sheep is, therefore, no coincidence in reminding the people that the soldiers on the bridges and streets were one of the people rather than being one of the "terrorists" who were "the

masterminds of the coup." This is also precisely why henna was a part of one of the democracy vigils where people celebrated the departure of conscripts to the barracks to become the "real" soldiers to fight against the "terrorist-soldiers" in disguise.

In the previous chapters, I have elaborated on how the courts employed the label of "terrorist" against the officers who were brought to trial with charges of treason and coup plotting. This, I argued, is what made the trials proceed as effortlessly as they did against the prosecuted servicemen. The July 15 coup attempt now turned other soldiers into terrorists while cleansing the prosecuted officers of the trials from their charges.²² Now that the coup plotters were declared as terrorists, any violent action against them was justifiable. As Can Aciksoz (2017), in his analysis of the militarized and masculinist responses to the coup, states:

The constant iteration of the phrase 'terrorists in soldier uniforms' evoked a political fantasy in which the soldier body was displaced by the terrorist body. While these terrorist-soldiers were said to belong to the Gülenist 'parallel state,' the mobilization of the terrorism discourse whose primary reference point was the Kurdish conflict made it possible to subject soldiers to the forms of gendered and sexualized violence that have been long inscribed on Kurdish guerrillas.

In a way, the unsuccessful coup was a ritual transfer of power; the sacrifice of the officers on trial now paved the way to the recognition of the "real" terrorists that they were long trying to make the government aware of. But now, instead of containing the right to violence against the terrorists in the hands of the state, the state would allow the citizens to take an active role in their punishment. This is manifest in how Erdogan not only engaged the people by giving them the right to take down the "terrorist soldier" attempting to invade the country, but also by entertaining their wish to bring back the death penalty on multiple occasions. In the aftermath of the coup, as the epitome of this

²² This has happened mostly due to Erdogan's proclamation that those who plotted the coup were the culprits of the treason trials of military officers.

violent marking, the government established a "traitors' cemetery" in which the soldiers who participated in the failed coup would be buried.

There are, of course, other interpretations of what I have claimed to be a reversal of power. Officers, who are not affiliated with the trials, I have spoken to after the failed coup have told me how they are "ashamed to say that they are soldiers" since the military has been defamed so much. Metin Gurcan, the soldier turned journalist, had a similar comment in the early hours of the coup: "History, people, and the soldiers who have taken the military oath will never forgive those who have put the Turkish Armed Forces in this state" (@Metin4020, July 16, 2016). The establishment of the "traitors' cemetery" is, perhaps, a reminder of the fine line that soldiers tread in living with the possibility of being valorized or demonized at once, with each category being a likely possibility in their time of duty.

Conclusion

Anthropologists have long written about the complex and complicated relationship states have with their citizens. Yet, rather than being another example of the citizens responding to a failed state, the mobilization of the people in the Turkish case resembles the workings of the security state that now operates on a deterritorialized basis (Feldman 2004). In his analysis of the post-9/11 state security practices in the US, Tyler Wall (n.d.) argues that "through the security state's admission of its own limits to seeing and knowing, the state simultaneously bolsters its own power by inducing fears of insecurity and disorder and hence legitimates its own 'securing' response – while in the process aiming to produce subjects that not only 'see' for the state, but actually come to

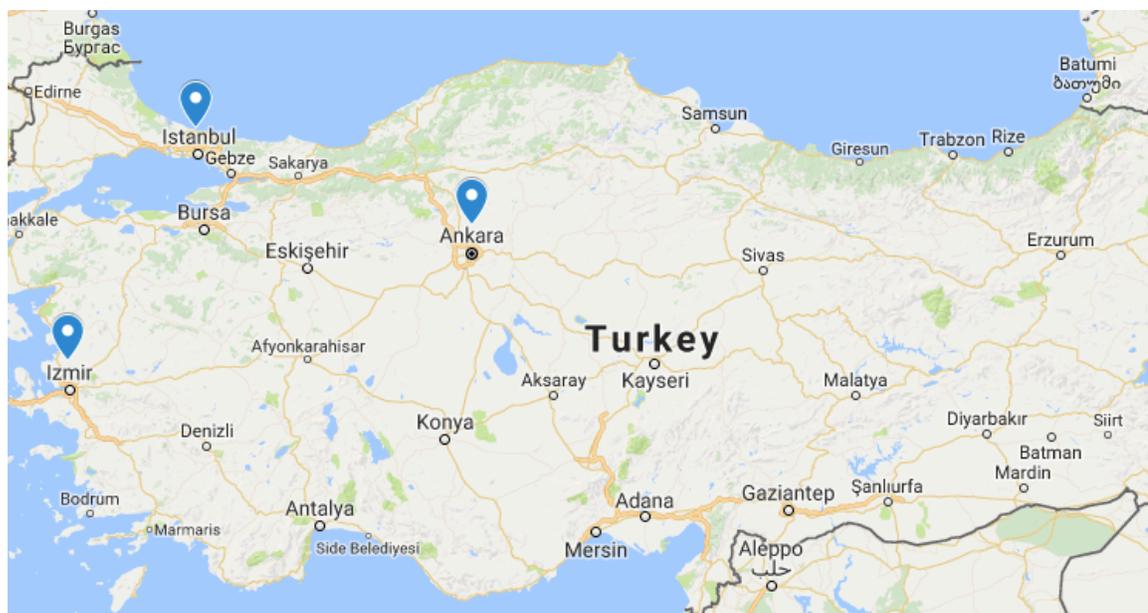
'see' like or as the state." In this sense, unlike cases of neoliberal vigilante violence in which citizens start taking justice into their own hands because of a failing state, the Turkish case presents us with a new kind of state and citizenship making. In his op-ed on the April 16 referendum, academic Tezcan Gumus (2017) had stated that "Turkey is about to use democracy to end its democracy." He was correct in his observation. This is the kind of state that uses democracy to animate its own antidemocratic purposes, and makes use of its citizens to embrace the rhetoric of democracy for antidemocratic means. Erdogan's enthusiastically embraced new founding myth challenges the idea that state narratives in the contemporary moment are not sufficient enough for citizens' sense of self and belonging in a globalized world. Erdogan is the figure that keeps the nation intact, and as this dissertation tried to demonstrate, legality, especially trials, are his means to the end.

Appendix A

Maps of Turkey



Map of Turkey
Source: Google Maps



Map of Turkey with trial locations
Source: Google Maps

Appendix B

Timeline

- 1923: The founding of modern Turkey
- 1960: May 27 military coup
- 1971: March 12 military coup
- 1980: September 12 military coup
- 1997: February 28 military memorandum
- 2007: Turkish military issues e-memorandum against presidential elections
- 2008: Ergenekon trial begins
- 2010: Sledgehammer trial begins
- 2011: Istanbul military espionage trial begins
- 2012: Izmir military espionage trial begins
- 2015: Sledgehammer verdict overruled

Appendix C

Glossary

AKP: Justice and Development Party

Asker: Soldier/Conscript

Askeri Vesayet: Military tutelage

Astsubay: Non-commissioned officer

Gazi: Wounded veteran

Özel Yetkili Mahkeme: Specially authorized court

PKK: Kurdistan Workers' Party

Subay: Officer

Şehit: Martyr

TSK: Turkish Armed Forces

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