

National Populist Discourse as Lack of Content: Critical Discourse Analysis on Headlines in Newspapers Regarding Political Agenda and Their Reflection on Osman’s Story in Television Dramas

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*Starting from the 1990s, a right-wing political surge or a national populist wave has been clearly perceived especially in Western democracies. Mass media entities such as television undoubtedly have an immense part in this political success. This makes media products under the shadow of political influence a strong case study when examining the political discourse, thus creating an important research field regarding media studies and political sciences. As political hegemonies are built upon discourse, every discursive field becomes a battleground for different groups that strive to create and maintain their corresponding hegemonies. National populist political figures -or populist politics in general- are the textbook example of this fact since the discourse they create is either inclusive or exclusive in nature, the former creates greater political mobilization around them, while the latter solidifies the mobilization they attained earlier at the expense of an excluded group. In this study, the narrative structures of the first episodes of two series about the founder of the Ottoman Empire, *Kuruluş “Osmançık”* (1988) and *Kuruluş Osman* (2019) are analyzed with Greimas’ actantial method in order to identify the differences and similarities pertaining to different political discourses. In addition, front pages of four newspapers in total favoring the ruling party (two for each) at their time are also examined employing van Dijk’s Critical Discourse Analysis method in order to determine the political discourse of the Özal and the Erdoğan governments and their parallels with the television series. The results have shown that the perspective from which Osman’s story is told changes shape drastically in line with the political agenda of the Özal and the Erdoğan governments respectively, meaning that their particular political discourse fills in the blank parts of the story. Thus, this study shows that political discursive influence results in a lack of meaningful content, which is deemed as the main ingredient of populist discourse.*

Keywords: *National Populism, Actantial Method, Critical Discourse Analysis, Lack of Content, Turkish Politics, Hegemonic Structure.*

Introduction

As the nationalist fever is on the rise in Western democracies (Art, 2020) and mass media is said to have a strong influence upon this right-wing political “success” (Rydgren, 2007), national populism and its long shadow cast upon any kind of mass media have become a popular yet puzzling topic for many fields of study such as political sciences or communication. As it is a cross between populism and nationalism

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(Jansen, 2011), this kind of political discourse results in messages against the economic and cultural changes brought upon people by traditional politics (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018, pp. xxi-xxiii) that are echoed by many. Those echoes eventually made national populist the third successful global populist wave (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). This popularity has resulted in numerous articles and other forms of academic work, and many more will probably be produced in the near future considering the growing political power of the national populists.

As most of the research attempt on national populist politics are conducted to understand the ongoing state of Western democracies, examples outside that domain such as Turkey should prove useful in order to understand this global political phenomenon. Turkish state and mass media products on television are intertwined with each other ever since there are televisions in the country as the first television channel of the country were created and overseen by the state even today. This makes Turkish television an apparent field for discursive struggle and examining its products should yield valuable information about the nature of media framing and mass media propaganda. Also considering the fact that Turkey was the second country in exporting television series in the world as of 2018 (Uştuk, 2019), political discourse in Turkey and its effect on media products constitute an intriguing case study to say the least.

Adding to that, there is a surge of Turkish historical television dramas in recent times. Those series seemingly generated a far-reaching cultural influence, rising demand in countries such as Uganda (Kyeyune, 2021) and Bangladesh (Kamruzzaman, 2022). Particularly, this study focuses on two series about Osman Bey -the founder of the Ottoman Empire-, which are *Kuruluş "Osmanlı"* (1988) and *Kuruluş Osman* (2019). While their similar names alone could be seen as a reason for comparison, it was theorized at the outset of this study that two renditions would reflect different perspectives of the Özal government of the 1980s and the Erdoğan government of the late 2010s. Thus, examining the two under the terms of political discourse could point towards how political messages are conveyed to the public within entertainment products, which is not an expected source of political messages at the first glance.

The first episodes of both series and the front pages of several newspapers close to the ruling side were examined and compared in order to find differences between two eras and two different rulers. Differences found in discourse for the same story and similar political structures arguably underlines the influence of national populism on how -and why- people tell stories, and understanding the nature of this influence should bring us one step closer to understand the nature of populist discourse.

This article starts with a literature review on national populism, discourse, hegemony, and the historical accounts for both 1988 and 2019. The case study is divided into three parts; *the narrative structures* where the episodes from both series are examined, *the newspaper analysis* where the articles from sample newspaper group are discursively analyzed, and *the discussions* where the findings from both examinations are compared and interpreted.

Literature Review

National Populism

Populism is a profoundly difficult concept to define in and of itself (Ionescu & Gellner, 1969, p. 1). The fact that it is a frequently used concept even though it is often generalized and misused (Brett, 2013; Canovan, 1981, pp. 3-5) adds to that conceptual blunder. The term itself comes from the Ancient Greek word *populares*, which can be translated as “*courting the people*” (Eatwell, 2017). Despite numerous remarks on how difficult it is to define this concept; there are different approaches to explain what populism is.

Some scholars state that populism is an ideology built upon a two-sided struggle between good and evil (Hawkins, 2019, p. 57). Others define it as an anti-establishment political strategy of a previously unknown leader aimed to create mobilization amongst an unorganized constituent group (Barr, 2009; Weyland, 2001). Some argue that it is an attempt to “*flaunt the low*” (Ostiguy, 2017) and create a form of political identification as a result (Panizza, 2017). Finally, it is also defined as the “*discursive construction of an enemy*” (Laclau, 2005b, p. 39). Even though any of those definitions does not openly contradict one another, each of them has their shortcomings and therefore none of them can be accepted as the definition of populism, they all are a definition.

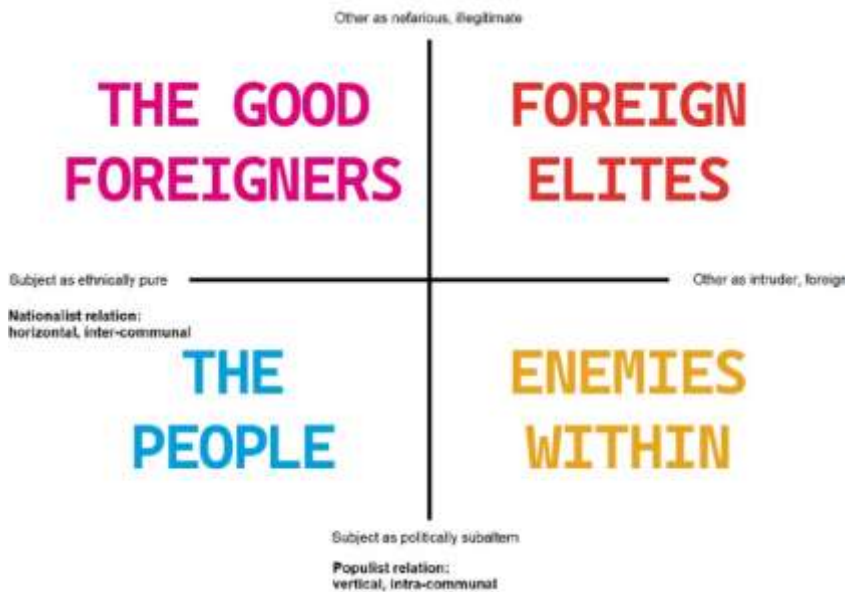
This last, *discursive approach to populism* yielded a more abstract yet extensive understanding about populism (Peruzzotti, 2019, p. 33) by also considering the social reality that allowed populist politics to flourish (Laclau, 2005a, pp. 18-19). Consequently, this approach is deemed more adequate on measuring the influence of populism on any given political situation (de Cleen et al., 2021, p. 156). Because the discursive approach is too generalizable meaning that it can be applied to almost any political situation (Mouzelis, 1985) is arguably the only reason it provides us with a definition and not the definition of populism.

There is another political concept nearly as enigmatic and frequently used as populism that should be mentioned at this point, *nationalism*. Nation is mostly regarded as a modern term that is defined as an “*imagined community*” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). Also argued to be abstract communities (James, 1996, pp. 5-8), nations are a form of community amongst strangers. In that vein, nationalism becomes “*an ideology that emphasizes loyalty, devotion, or allegiance to a nation or nation-state and holds that such obligations outweigh other individual or group interests*” (Kohn, 2020). In short, nationalism is the ideological link to a nation for anyone who links themselves to said nation.

Populism is a thin ideology, meaning that its inherent struggle must be defined by a full ideology in order to generate a lasting conflict (March, 2007; Mudde, 2004; Woods, 2014, pp. 10-11). In contemporary settings, these links are mostly perceived between populism and nationalism (Jansen, 2011), which are said to constitute the third widespread populist wave after the agrarian wave of the 19th century and the Latin American wave of the 1930s (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). A national populist is someone who “*prioritizes the culture and interests of the nation, and promises to give voice to a people who feel that they have been neglected, even held in contempt, by distant and often corrupt elites*” (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018, p. ix). As one can

easily deduce, even the definition is a cross between populism and nationalism.

Figure 1. A Spatio-dimensional Illustration of the Populist and Nationalist Discourses



Source: Venizelos, 2021 (Colored explanations are added by the author)

A cross between populism and nationalism creates two distinctions of a people (Figure 1); the vertical axis is used to distinguish people from elites while the horizontal axis is defined by national identity (de Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017; 2020). This schema allows a political figure to generate political discourse that creates enough tension to sustain a societal conflict long term.

Discourse, Hegemony, and Media Framing

In a brief sense, discourse is “a mode of organizing knowledge, ideas, or experience that is rooted in language and its concrete contexts” (Merriam-Webster, 2024). Within academic settings, discourse could refer to anything between a “textual unit larger than a sentence” and “overall social system” (Torfing, 2005, pp. 6-9). Also considering the emergence of new media as in “the shift of all culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication” (Manovich, 2001, p. 18), one can perceive that a targeted political discourse of the kind populists tend to use could impact the entire societal structure.

Hegemony was first defined as “the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12). Mumby (1997) offers a more detailed definition, stating that hegemony is created by the power relations between certain groups at the top, namely the governmental body, the mediators, and different interest groups. Those interest groups are in a discursive struggle between each other, and that struggle yields political power to the winner. This also influences a conflict within the establishment and therefore the society, rendering the greater group an uncivil society (Ruzza, 2009). In short; the discursive political conflict

expands on every level of society, which results in a surge of political power for certain individuals who produce and reproduce said discourse.

In other words, mass consent that would generate a hegemonic power is created within the realm of discourse. Persuasion takes place in symbolic fields such as mass media products, which are produced with the help of “*metaphors, catchphrases, and other condescending symbols that frame the issue in a particular fashion*” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). A frame is a particular image of an issue which is created by selecting and highlighting certain parts in order to influence a certain way of thinking and related attitude (Chong & Druckman, 2007). These frames are generated by attaining greater relevance to certain values on any subject discussed within the reach of the public (Nelson et al., 1997). For example, a refugee crisis can be framed as a humanitarian aid or a security risk under different perspectives and both of those frames would influence certain responses from audience groups in the form of a political attitude.

Not even an educated mind is exempt from the effects of exposure to media framing, rather it is known to have similar effects on less educated and highly educated people alike (Bartels, 2003, pp. 63-64). Entman’s (2004, pp. 9-13) cascade model illustrates that frames generated by the state shape the frames used by other elites, media, news frames, and public in that specific order suggesting the fact that echoes of the frames are created within the hegemonic structure. These echoes then become the main influence for any certain discourse at the time created by any figure of the hegemonic structure.

Looking at another angle, media framing is known to be an “*integral part of propaganda since it is communication itself*” (Karapanagiotis, 2024). As hegemony is the result of a discursive struggle and media framing generates more spaces for the same struggle to take place, logically those frames are the means to create and maintain said hegemony. Frames have that much of an effect because they are made to persuade people towards a singular opinion, which is essentially what propaganda is (Walton, 1997). In short, media framing, hegemony and propaganda are terms referring to the process of manipulating people with the means of mass media.

Political Discourse in the Özal and the Erdoğan Eras

Before turning to the case studies, the historical background that led to both renditions of Osman’s story on television shall be briefly examined. Namely Özal’s government in 1988 and Erdoğan’s government in 2019 and how they came to be holds importance in order to understand why and how their media framing efforts are created.

Özal’s reign in the 1980s is regarded as a turning point for economic globalization (Das, 2004, p. 63). The military coup of 1980 changed the entire political structure (Kepenek, 2011, p. 71; Sarfati, 2017). Özal’s Motherland Party (MP) won the elections held in 1983 by a landslide; as prominent political figures of the past were banned from politics at the time and immediately generated liberal economic policies that prioritized an outward-oriented market (Hiç, 2008, pp. 113-119; Pamuk, 2008, pp. 298-300). This economic momentum faded away after the first few years of MP rule (Keyder, 2006) meaning that Özal’s political reign without any rivals and holding

onto liberalization nearing its end at 1988.

Having first come to power with the 2002 elections (Jung, 2008, p. 118), Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (JDP) started completely restructuring the economy (Temiz & Gökmen, 2009) and erased the signs of recent economic downfall in a short amount of time (Eğilmez, 2018, pp. 151-152). Yet the economic performance took a down turn in 2009 and has not shown any long-term improvement ever since (Aktas, 2017). Much like the the Özal era and the Menderes era before that, JDP have accelerated economic growth mostly by privatization and leveraging, yet they have failed to take the necessary steps to sustain that growth rate (Eğilmez, 2018, pp. 163-164). Major events such as the Gezi Park protests (Batuman, 2013; Bayhan, 2014) and constitutional amendment in 2017 (Yazıcıoğlu, 2018) have arguably shown authoritarian tendencies of the ruling party, and also the extent of their control over mass media entities.

To sum up, Özal and Erdoğan were both dealt similar cards in the terms of economics, yet their approaches to governance during the selected periods were completely different. This difference is reflected in their discourses; as Özal strived to create alliances while forging global links to Turkish economy, whereas Erdoğan frequently invokes foreign and domestic enemies that relentlessly strive to hinder their progress. Therefore, Özal integrates different groups with political discourse while Erdoğan excludes certain groups in order to solidify political mobilization.

For both discursive construction attempts to work as intended, mass media devices as ideological apparatuses (Althusser, 2014, pp. 86) should reflect said discourses to a degree. This explains why both Özal and Erdoğan benefited from mass media work and also gives merit to the starting hypothesis of this study.

Methodology/Materials and Methods

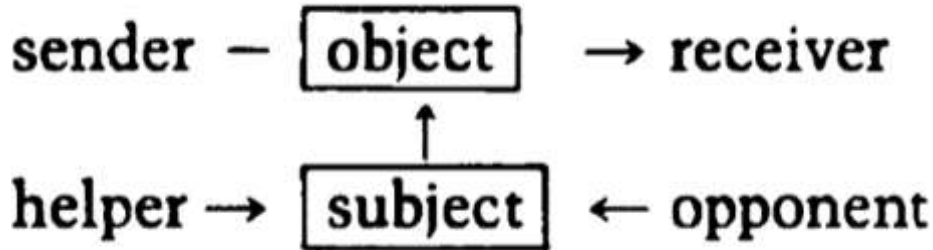
The main examination under this chapter is conducted on the first episodes of the television series *Kuruluş Osman* (2019) and *Kuruluş "Osmanlı"* (1988) television series. The two series are about the founder of the Ottoman Empire, so the similarities between the two are not just in their name. Osman is seen as a successful leader by Turkish people considering his accomplishments, therefore how Osman is depicted should point to who a successful leader is for Turkish people in both eras.

Since populism is "*a particular mode of articulation*" at its core (Laclau, 2005b, p. 34), the political discourse of each time could have an influence on people's conception of a great leader. This theorized influence would be a prime example of cascading model of media framing theory (Entman, 2004) in action because it will show how political discourse shapes people's perception even upon distant historical events. Therefore, the results of the comparisons within this work should yield an understanding about the nature of hegemonic structure and political communication.

Two series have drastic differences in metrics such as length and episode numbers, so Greimas' actantial mythical model (Greimas, 1983, p. 207) was used to examine them. As this method highlights the logic of the relationship between the actants and therefore allows researchers to analyze the details of discourse under different circumstances. These categories were named as actants -and not actors or actresses-

since they should not be limited to traditional characters, they can be groups, objects, animals, thoughts, or any other concept that the story would require (Hébert, 2020, p. 83). The actants are given (Figure 2) in relation to each other and overall narrative;

Figure 2. Actantial Mythical Model Structure



Source: Greimas, 1983

At the second phase of the study, the newspapers close to the ruling party were analyzed in order to understand the historical context of each period. *Kuruluş Osman* (2019) episode was first aired on November 20, 2019; hence newspapers were selected from the third week of November 2019. *Kuruluş “Osmancık”* (1988) episode was first aired on January 10, 1988; hence newspapers were selected from the first week of January 1988. Only the week days were included since the tone of the news changes on weekends.

Following the distinction given in the previous studies (Üçer & Şolpan, 2019), *Akşam* and *Yeni Şafak* newspapers were selected for the 2019 series. This distinction was a little harder to make for the 1988 series. Ever since the Özal government had raised the paper prices for the newspaper, print press were pressured economically by the government (Öngen, 2017). This made old newspapers oppose the Özal government to an extent, but big corporations took an interest in the media work at the same time. Capital holders started to buy or create new newspapers (Kadıoğlu, 2018) and these favored Özal more as his neo-liberal policies essentially were what made that new business endeavors possible. Out of those new newspapers, *Tercüman* and *Türkiye* were selected for the 1988 series.

The front pages on those newspapers were analyzed under the terms of van Dijk’s (1988, pp. 140-148) argument about news comprehension. The area each article covers and the article titles were examined as they are found to be influential on all six levels of comprehension. The articles linked to the ruling party’s discourse were divided into four different titles considering the overall discursive structure they created, which are *ruling party’s actions*, *terrorist organizations*, *foreign forces*, and *political opposition*.

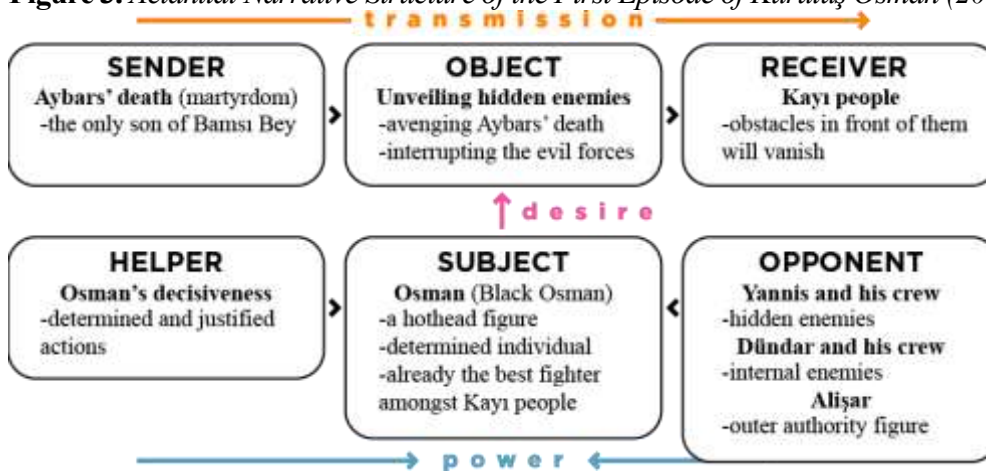
The third and last category serves as a comparison between those data groups and relevant discussion. The gathered data carries meaning only in comparison, since by examining both timelines and series, the changes between the two renditions and their respective periods can be pointed out. Comparisons with these data should reveal political influence over these two renditions of the same historical figure. By examining both timelines in the given samples and comparing two sets, this study aims to identify the effects of political influence on mass media entertainment products and their implications.

Results

The following are the case studies consisting of two parts; *narrative structures* and *newspaper analysis*. As discussed under the methodology title, the narrative structures title is focused on sampled episodes of television series employing the actantial mythical method, and the newspaper analysis title contains critical discourse analysis on the newspaper sample group. Both analyses were done in order to reflect how political discourse conveyed to the consumers through different media products and therefore to illuminate the inner mechanics of the national populist discourse, namely the nature of the specific hegemonic structures and resulting political discourse.

Narrative Structures

Figure 3. Actantial Narrative Structure of the First Episode of *Kuruluş Osman* (2019)

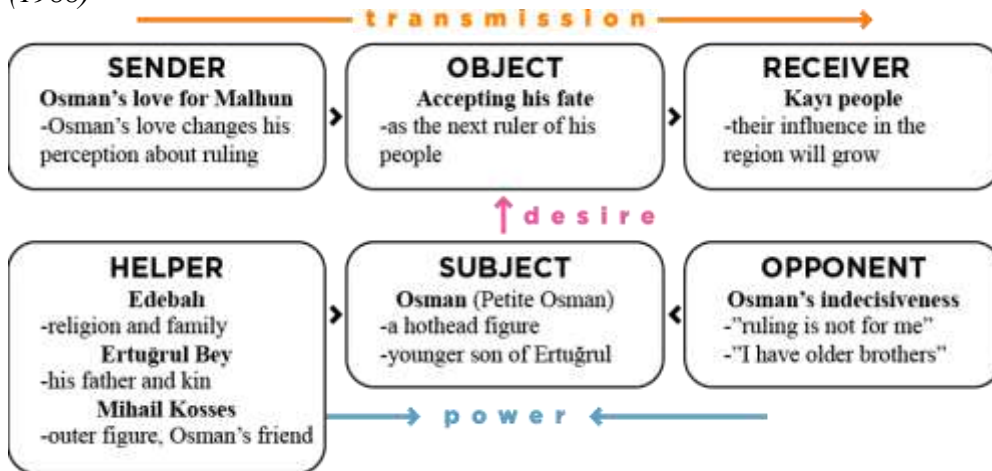


The first episode of *Kuruluş Osman* (2019) series was aired on 20th November 2019 and it was on a Wednesday. The episode's duration is 142 minutes and was aired in prime time at 20:00. The following is the narrative structure of the episode;

- *Axis of desire:* Osman's destiny is to unveil the hidden forces working against his people. As the third son of chieftain Ertuğrul and the best fighter of his village, he seems to be the clear-cut candidate for the task.
- *Axis of transmission:* Unveiling and eventually stopping said enemies will avenge the vile acts committed against his people, and the Kayı people will benefit greatly as they will not be hindered by any outside figure.
- *Axis of power:* Osman has many enemies both abroad and within his ranks that try to divert him from his destiny for a variety of reasons. Only his decisiveness works against those forces.

The first episode of this series was aired on 10th January 1988 and it was on a Sunday. The episode's duration is 71 minutes and was aired in prime time at 21:00. The following is the narrative structure of the episode;

Figure 4. Actantial Narrative Structure of the First Episode of *Kuruluş "Osmancık"* (1988)

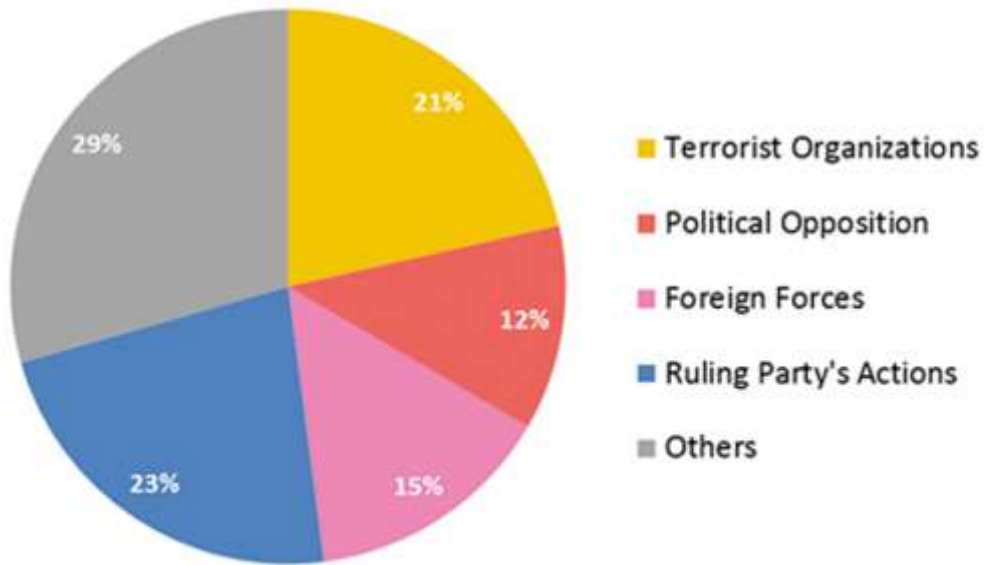


- *Axis of desire:* Osman's destiny is to become the leader that his people need. He just needs to accept his fate and start to walk towards that future. As he is a hothead figure and the youngest son of the chieftain, he is not particularly determined to do so.
- *Axis of transmission:* Osman's perspective starts to change when he saw Malhun for the first time. Malhun's love is the last push he needs towards his destiny. So, he accepts the leadership task and starts to work towards that end.
- *Axis of power:* The only tangible obstacle between Osman and the leadership is his own indecisiveness. Several people help him towards that end, namely Edebah, Ertugrul, and Mihail Kosses. In their own way, every single one of them strives to push Osman to a better path, whether by friendship, concern of a father, or the tough love of a mentor.

Newspaper Analysis

The 2019 newspaper (Figure 5) group shows a strong Turkish leadership and their mostly insignificant enemies by underlining;

Figure 5. Front pages of *Akşam* (top), *Yeni Şafak* (middle) Newspapers between 18th and 22nd of November, 2019 with distinguished Areas for Political News Categories and overall Area Percentages

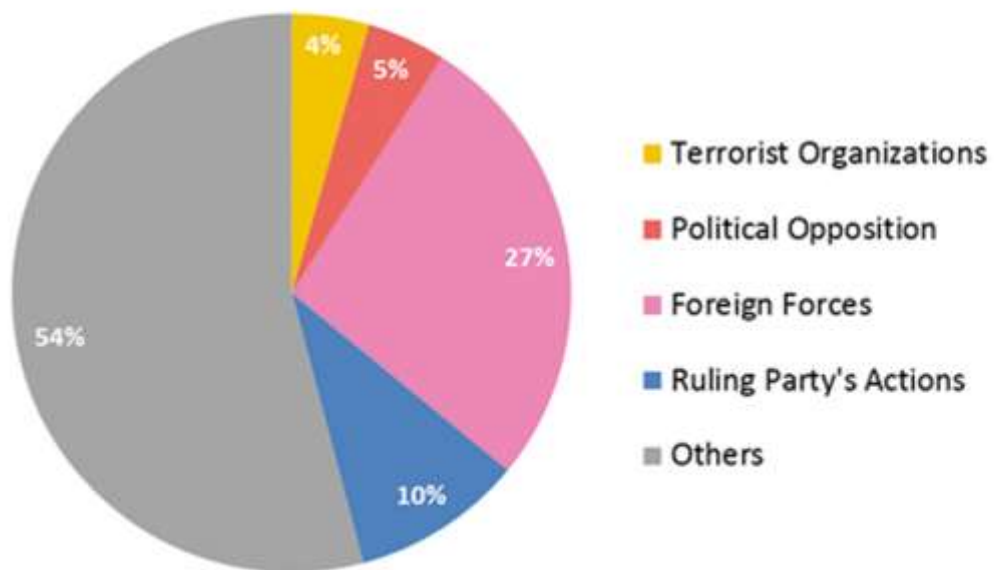


Source: The online archives from GZT.com, 2020.

Figure 6. Front Pages of *Tercüman* (top), *Türkiye* (middle) Newspapers between 4th and 8th of January, 1988 with distinguished Areas for Political News Categories and overall Area Percentages



Terrorist Organizations
 Foreign Forces
 Political Opposition
 Ruling Party's Actions



Source: Newspapers photographed by the author in governmental archives.

- *Ruling party's actions* such as the Peace Spring military offensive or innovations in other fields are frequently mentioned since they are painted as triumphs of the Erdoğan government. This group covers 23% of all coverage area.
- *Terrorist organizations* group underlines the vile actions of the terrorist organizations PKK and Islamist Gulen movement, and more importantly how said actions are stopped by the Turkish government. This group covers 21% of all coverage area.
- *Foreign forces* group covers the questionable actions of foreign powers such as warmongering efforts or violence towards certain groups of people. This group covers 15% of all coverage area.
- *Political opposition* is also mentioned through their mistakes in the forms of comparison to past mistakes and related criticism. This group covers 12% of all coverage area.

The 1988 newspaper samples (Figure 6) are vastly different in total coverage area for the related groups. They are also different on how they perceive the Turkish government at the time;

- *Foreign forces* group takes the lead in this group because of the Bulgarian crisis at the time. There was an oppressed Turkish population in Bulgaria at the time and newspapers covered this crisis on all fronts, ranging from the overall exposes to first hand testimonies from the victims. This group covers 27% of all coverage area.
- *Ruling party's actions* group are about the economic struggles of the Özal government and how Özal and his people are facing these challenging times. There were also articles about a possibility for a presidential election and therefore ceasing the military rule. This group covers 10% of all coverage area.
- *Political opposition* is mentioned briefly in the articles about the presidential election. This group covers 5% of all coverage area.
- *Terrorist organizations* group has a couple of articles about PKK's actions in Germany, as the organization assassinated a German diplomat. This group covers 4% of all coverage area.

Discussion

Comparisons between two data sets presented in the results section can be found under this title. There are certain similarities and differences between two stories, and both show striking parallels with the political discourse generated by the state at their time. The main objective for the case studies was this comparison as they would point towards a change in national populist influence -or lack thereof- between two different eras. The comparisons are divided into two titles similar to the results section.

Narrative Structures

At this point, each actant of two structures presented (See Figure 3 and Figure 4) is compared between in order to identify the differences and similarities between them.

Table 1. Side by Side Comparison for Two Actantial Narrative Structures

	Kuruluş “Osmancık” (1988)	Kuruluş Osman (2019)
Sender	Osman’s love for Malhun	Aybars’ death
Object	Accepting his fate	Unveiling enemies
Receiver	Kayı people	Kayı people
Helper	Edebalı Ertuğrul Mihail Kosses	Osman’s decisiveness
Opponent	Osman’s indecisiveness	Yannis Dündan Alişar
Subject	(<i>Petite</i>) Osman	(<i>Black</i>) Osman

- *Subject* in both instances is Osman, a warrior of the Kayı people and the youngest son of Ertuğrul.
- *Objects* of these two characters are vastly different however. In the 1988 series, Osman’s main objective is to accept his faith as the ruler of his people. In the 2019 series, Osman’s objective is to unveil his people’s enemies. The former influences a journey inward, while the latter requires a journey outward to accomplish.
- *Sender* for those two objects is different as well. The 1988 series start the journey with Osman’s love for Malhun, whereas the 2019 series start the journey with Aybars’ martyrdom. One starts with love therefore life, but the other starts with death.
- *Receiver* for both series is the Kayı people, as in both instances, Osman’s actions will benefit his people in the future.
- *Helper* group shows differences as well. In the 1988 series, there are many who help Osman accept his fate (*Edebalı, Ertuğrul, and Mihail Kosses*). In the 2019 series, Osman’s decisiveness is the only help he gets towards his goals.
- *Opponent* group shows differences parallel with the helper group. In the 1988 series, Osman’s only obstacle towards accepting his faith is his own indecisiveness. However, there are many enemies that would hinder Osman’s progress that are divided into three distinct groups (*Yannis, Dündar, Alişar and the people link to those three*) in the 2019 series.
- *Subject* is Osman in both series but they are slightly different than each other in line with other differences mentioned. Osman in the 1988 series is called *Petite* Osman, underlining that he is still seen as a child in some ways and he has room to grow. Osman in the 2019 series is called *Black* Osman as a testament to his fierce, decisive character.

In short; Osman in the 1988 series struggles within himself for the most part by denying his destiny which was to become the leader that his people need. There are several people trying to steer him to the right direction. Conversely, Osman in the 2019 series is determined to get his people to new heights by doing what others could not. There are those who try to steer him from that path for several reasons. There is no clear reason for that change whatsoever besides the change between Özal's inclusionary and Erdoğan's exclusionary political discourse.

Thus, political discourse fills in the blank pages of history or lack of content in Osman's story in this situation. 1988 series present an exceptional leader who does not have any desire for ruling or power that comes with it, which is a classic discursive approach for a liberal leader such as Özal. Whereas 2019 series present a leader with power and merit that is sent for a nation within a dire situation, which is essentially what the discursive construction about Erdoğan is constructed at the time.

Newspaper Analysis

The front pages of the newspapers were examined in order to identify politically influenced news articles divided under four certain categories; *ruling party's actions*, *foreign forces*, *political opposition*, and *terrorist organizations*.

Those four categories are parts of a discursive struggle that points towards heroes and enemies; thus, assigning good and evil traits to them at certain points. This discursive strategy is used extensively by Özal, Erdoğan, and many others for that matter because they are suitable tools for a national populist discourse specifically for Turkey. The differences between two sets of newspapers (See Figure 5 and Figure 6) are summarized as follows;

- *The coverage amounts* are the first and most apparent difference between the two timelines. Difference in total percentages of political content between two periods (46% for 1988 and 71% for 2019) suggests that the press media has seemingly been politicized more within these 31 years. It should be noted that there was a major refugee crisis in 1988 raising the percentages a great deal, the difference would be greater without the extensive coverage of this major event.
- *The portrayal of the ruling party* is vastly different between two periods despite the fact that both Özal and Erdoğan governments have faced rather similar economic challenges at the time. The 1988 newspapers represent Özal as a leader in a dire situation, trying his best to steer the country on the right course, whereas the 2019 newspapers are mostly in denial about any economic struggle at the time, repeatedly praising their leadership. Minor instances of negative economic examples are blamed on the "enemies" such as foreign forces and the factors they have created.
- *The portrayal of others* is the last difference to be pointed out. The 1988 newspaper articles suggest that despite the lingering and layered problems, foreign *allies* and political opposition are needed in order to solve the problems that the Özal government was facing. Özal actively negotiates with foreign figures or what is left from the opposition from time to time, while terrorist organizations are rarely mentioned and they conduct their terror abroad. The

2019 newspaper articles however paint all three groups as absolute enemies of the state.

Similar to the narrative structures given with the television series, the narrative structure given with the newspapers are vastly different from each other. Not only are they different, but the differences mentioned have parallels within their respective eras, suggesting that the source of these differences are the same. 1988 newspapers are showing a leader with a hard task of maintaining and improving a country which has been through much and still experiences economic struggles, and 2019 newspapers shows a capable leader of a strong country with many enemies. Both perspectives are mirrored in both overall historical context and narrative structures of the television series.

Therefore, political discourse made its way into news media as well, filling in the blanks in this instance too. Lack of meaningful content generated a space for populist political discourse to exist, and this space seemingly grew over time between Özal and Erdoğan eras. As both newspapers and television series fill the lack of content in the same manner, it could be argued that the influence behind that trend is the same, which is national populist political discourse. In each instance, the reality within these media products is shaped by the political discourse generated by the ruling group, which is the defining feature of a media framing scheme.

Conclusion

As evaluated in the literature review in detail; Özal's MP government in 1988 and Erdoğan's JDP government in 2019 faced similar economic problems. They both once had made liberal, free-market policy changes which resulted in tangible economic growth, but that growth spurt was tested and shaped by fundamental political problems around the years picked for the study. This similarity is not reflected on how newspapers present the reality in each period. Newspapers from two different eras paint fundamentally different pictures of reality despite Özal and Erdoğan's similar economic struggles at the time.

The reality presented in newspapers and the narrative structures of both series therefore shows significant parallels, suggesting that political discourse influences the entertainment of common people in their leisure time to the point that mass media entertainment has become another front for political discursive struggle. The fact that there is a change between two renditions of Osman's story alone strongly points towards a strong outside influence since there were no meaningful, groundbreaking findings on Osman's life and accomplishments within the 31 years between the two. Parallels between newspaper articles and overall narratives can be shown as proofs to the fact that said outside influence was political.

Since they work as limbs of a state ideology, mass media devices are undoubtedly an important tool for both of those discursive constructions (Althusser, 2014, pp. 85-87). Also considering the media framing perspective, the state discourse can be expected to reflect on different media products to a degree. As the example given in this study clearly shows, state propaganda generated by a national populist agenda is infiltrated and therefore can infiltrate entertainment products that is regularly

consumed by the masses, to the point that they are not much different than the leader himself talking to the people in a campaign event.

By comparing two renditions of the same story along with the political and historical settings at the time, this study revealed much about that process and therefore the nature of political discourse in general and national populist mobilization which has become the dominant political movement of our time. In line with Entman's (2004) cascading model, findings of this study have shown that political discourse has a vast field of influence in order to generate and maintain a hegemonic structure in the form of status quo. Political articles on a newspaper and prime time entertainment media products can show discursive parallels mainly because of said influence. In other words, the overlaps perceived are not circumstantial, rather they are made with intention.

From that perspective, national populist discourse or populist political discourse in general can be said to parallel Laclau's (1977, pp. 145-146) definition, in which he states that populist discourse is an empty shell lacking any content. This emptiness is the precise target for political actors, in this case the ruling party. Since populism is lack of meaningful content as this definition suggests, it is hard to conceptualize what it is; and this is also why there are many kinds of populism, as it takes the shape of its environment like a clear liquid.

The methodology used within this study was a practical implication for many academic studies to come, meaning that this exact method or versions of it can be used to examine different discursive structures from any time of background. The discussion about populism being *a targeted lack of meaningful content* can also be expected to have academic implications by furthering Laclau's (1977, pp. 145-146) definition on the subject.

This study is limited to two episodes from two series and four newspapers from the week the episodes aired. While those are extreme limits and the study cannot be generalized just with these sets of data in any way, shape or form; the study still underlines the change in mass media production and growing influence of the politics in Turkey. In other words, the examination that can be found within this study shows a change in perspective within the same story that cannot be explained just by creative choices, so it points out the political influence within despite its limited set of data. Future studies could focus on different data with different scales in order to test the arguments made within this study and further our understanding on political discourse, populist politics, and mass media production.

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