THE MEANING MAKING PROCESS OF COVID-19 IN TURKEY

An argument for a constructivist understanding of crises

-

By Mara Kloosterman – s4611764

17 August 2020

ABSTRACT

This study analyses the meaning making process of Covid-19 in Turkey. The narrative of the Turkish government in terms of Covid-19 is analysed as well as the reasons behind this narrative and the receptance of this narrative in Turkey. It shows that the meaning making process in Turkey of this worldwide pandemic is a unique one. The narrative that the Turkish government provides about the pandemic is about much more than the concerns for health and economy. It is about an existential struggle that the Turkish nation is going through. Nevertheless, because of Turkey's strong foundations and strong leadership, the nation can overcome these threats and even end up in a better position. This narrative is embedded in a certain cultural, societal, and political context. This same context also matters for the way that the society is responding to the government's narrative. These findings support the idea that crises are socially constructed and based on claims. As academic research in social sciences have mostly perceived crises as factual events instead of constructed ones based on claims, this thesis argues for a constructivist understanding of crises.

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2020 the world is facing a global pandemic. Every country is experiencing a similar threat by Covid-19. As of August 2020, there are almost 22 million known people that have been infected with this virus and almost 800.000 people who have died (Worldometers, 2020). The global economic outlook is historically bad (IMF, 2020a). The world is dealing with a crisis. Although, there seems to be a general consensus on the ways to limit the spread of the virus, every country is dealing with Covid-19 in its own way. Everywhere there is a different understanding of this pandemic: what are the causes, what is at stake, what are the future perspectives? Therefore, in every country a completely different crisis seems to take place.

In order to understand these differentiations, this thesis will have a closer look to what has been taken place in Turkey. Turkey is known to have faced many crises: from economic to political ones (Dagi, 2015). During the last 18 year the same party has been governing the country and has been in charge through several of those crises. Currently, Turkey is self-proclaiming to be one of the most successful countries in dealing with the pandemic. This thesis will try to make sense of the way that Covid-19 is understood in Turkey and through that it will try to gain a better understanding of crises in general.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Crises

Studying crisis and crisis management is gaining popularity amongst scholars. There are namely several developments that takes attention of those studying crises. First of all, the way our societies are constructed nowadays are ever more complex. Some say this complex world seems to increase the likeliness of crises (Gilpin and Murphy, 2018). On top of that, many factors can contribute to the development of a crisis. These factors are usually intertwined which makes it harder to see a crisis coming, solve it or prevent it from happening again. Due to globalization, crises also tend to take on a bigger scale and are less likely to remain between the borders of a state. (ibid.).

The influence of internet and then specifically social media takes the interest of scholars of crises as well (Eriksson 2018; Veil et al 2011). Because of the internet and social media information can spread incredibly fast and on a huge scale which gives a whole new dynamic to crises and the management of them.

Generally, there are two separable approaches in the literature to crises and crisis management (Chan, 2013). Most of the literature including the classic literature on the topic is looking at crises from a management perspective: what steps should leaders take to manage the crisis in the best way? How can

policies be well coordinated? Examples of these kind of studies are by: Ansel et al, 2014; Burton and Pearson, 2017; Comfort, 2007; Jong, 2017; Lodge and Wegrich, 2012; Rosenthal et al, 1991.

Other studies and more recent studies look at the political aspect of crisis and its management. Thus, how crises and the crisis leaders and their policies interact with the public, the media, opposition parties and organizations or society in general. Examples of these kind of studies are Chan, 2013; Dresden and Howard, 2016; Huang et al, 2015; Lord, 2014; Steinberg et al, 2015; Volpi and Gerschewski, 2020.

The way a crisis is defined therefore differs per author as well. A few examples of definitions are:

"A social system experiences an urgent threat to its basic structures or fundamental values which harbours many "unknowns" and appears to require a far-reaching response." (Boin et al, 2017, p. 5).

"An event that is often (but not always) unexpected, often determined by the perspectives of the stakeholders, and can prove disruptive (for better or for worse) to the status quo" (Burton and Pearson, 2017, p. 3).

"An abnormal situation, event or public issue that generates extreme social pressures and demands immediate response and attention by mostly, but not solely, the government" (Chan, 2013, p. 201).

Following these definitions, there are three main characteristics that are often assigned to crises, namely threatening, urgent and uncertain (Ansell et al, 2014; Boin et al, 2017).

Crises tend to be seen as negative events, but some authors also point out that crises can initiate changes for the better. Crises can help break down systems such as oppressive regimes (Volpi and Gerschewski, 2020) or institutional discrimination (Spector, 2019). Another discussion on the definition of a crisis can be placed in a bigger general discussion within social sciences: that of positivism versus post-positivism. Many authors have been working on the management of crises and have tried to come up with models on how to do this best. Because of this, certain positivist assumptions are often made in the literature on crises: crises are a real phenomenon that have to be dealt with in order to lessen their threat and negative outcomes. Another perspective on crises is entering the scene though, the constuctivist perspective. There are for example Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1993) who argue that a crisis does not have any meaning to it until a human provides it with one. Spector (2019) wrote a book about this called "Constructing Crisis". He differentiates what he calls "the crisis as event-model" and "the crisis as claim-model". He proposes the latter as a new way of looking at crises which eliminates some of the shortcomings of the crisis as event-model. He argues that naming an event as crisis can be quite trivial, it does not tell so much about the actual characteristics of an event. Although acute events are real and happening, the label "crisis" is put on by humans as part of a narrative (Spector, 2019). Other events that are not seen as crisis might be just as threatening, urgent and uncertain as those that are seen as crisis, they are just not at the top of the agenda of those in power.

No matter the perspective on crises, the role of leaders during a crisis is always seen as important. Once an event is seen as a crisis, it has consequences for its developments, questions like "what caused the crisis?", "what should be done about it and why?", "what will happen if the crisis ends?" become important. These are questions that the political elite will try to provide an answer to.

Crisis leadership

Whenever citizens are fearful of a threat – whether this is a real threat or just a perceived one – they look up to their leaders and expect protection (Furedi, 2005). The leaders are the ones expected to bring the state back to a normal situation and provide the public with information (Jong, 2017).

Crises can have both positive and negative implications for leaders and their legitimacy; they can both serve as opportunities as well as threats (Ansell et al, 2014; Boin et al, 2017; Rosenthal et al, 1991). When a crisis is seen as handled badly by a leader, the leader might have to give up his or her position. At the same time, a crisis can be a way to (re)gain trust for a leader, to be seen as a hero or even to gain more power (Boin et al, 2017).

In the influential work on crisis management by Boin et al (2017), five core tasks fulfilled by crisis leaders are described. These are: sense making, decision making and coordinating, meaning making, accounting, and learning. With sense making, the initial process of the unfolding of a crisis is detected and what the consequences could be. After that, a strategy and the first policies to tackle the crisis are decided and implemented. Meaning making is a process where a narrative is created and communicated to the citizens. With accounting it is explained why certain actions were taken during the crisis. And finally, the learning process looks back on the crisis and what actions worked well and which did not.

A moral task for crisis leaders is also emphasized (Burton and Pearson, 2017). Although there might not always be an agreement on what choices are ethical in crisis management. One thing that is considered to be a clear result of moral crisis leadership and management is that feeling of hope and perspective on the future among the citizens is sparked by it (ibid.).

To perform these tasks, some authors describe different roles that leaders might find themselves switching between during crises. Ansell et al (2014) described these roles of crisis leaders as "sovereign, facilitator and symbol". According to them leaders are balancing these three roles during a crisis. This can be a struggle as the roles sometimes contrast each other. For example, the role of sovereign requires direction and taking control while the role of facilitator requires negotiation and power sharing (Waugh and Streib, 2006).

Jong (2017) whose study looked at the role of Dutch mayors during several crises differentiated the roles of "mourner-in-chief", "orchestrator", "advocate" and "buddy". He implies that according to the situation of the crisis, a political leader will represent one of these roles and does not have to balance all of them. Which one of the roles the leader will represent is dependent on the collective impact and political responsibility of the crisis (ibid.). For example, when an event has a lot of collective impact, but the political responsibility is low, a leader would take on the role as mourner-in-chief. Whereas when the collective impact is high but the political responsibility as well, a leader would more likely take on the role of orchestrator. When the political responsibility is low the focus for the leader is more on caring for the public. With a higher political responsibility there is more need for the political leader to (re)gain trust (Jong, 2017). Political responsibility does not just mean actual legal responsibility, it is also about the perceived political responsibility by the public (ibid.).

From this, it can be understood that the role of a public crisis leader is different from that of a corporate crisis leader. Whereas the latter will have the reputation and credibility of the corporation as main objective, a public leader will be confronted with the public impact as well (Jong, 2017).

In general, a crisis leader is seen as a responder. Crises takes place and then demand leadership to respond to them and perform certain tasks to tackle the crisis. However, Spector (2019) argues for a different idea of crisis leaders. In the first instance crisis leaders are the ones creating the crisis, giving meaning to them. When a situation is not on the political leader's agenda with a certain amount of urgency, there is no crisis. Spector describes their role as claim maker. Leaders assert the urgency, advance a narrative, and make meaning of a situation in a way that serves their interests (ibid.). In this way, leaders can gain power through their ascribed meaning of a situation. To not misunderstand this perspective: even though leaders shape crises by themselves, they are of course still faced with a certain factual situation. Once it is perceived that this situation has to be dealt with with urgency, the leader is expected to manage this. The crisis tasks remain, however the meaning making task takes a different and more prominent role.

Crisis communication and meaning making

Like the different roles of leaders, crisis communication can be seen from different perspectives. Looking again from a management perspective, wanting to understand how a crisis is managed in the best way, there will be looked at the way that information is shared during a crisis. Information is shared not only towards the public but also between actors involved in managing the crisis. Challenges from this perspective are for example how to make sure all actors have access to the same information or how does specific information get to the right actor (Comfort, 2007)

Another perspective would look more at *what* message is put out there, so the narrative or the frame. The challenging factors here are about the general acceptance of this narrative and the other actors out there trying to present their way of explaining the event (Boin et al, 2017)

The latter form of crisis communication is a part of the meaning making process. This is one of the aforementioned tasks of crisis management as described by Boin and his colleagues (2017). Meaning making is defined by them as follows: "an attempt to reduce public and political uncertainty and inspire confidence in crisis leaders by formulating and imposing a convincing narrative" (Boin et al, 2017, p. 79). When we take meaning making out of the context of crisis management into a more general one, meaning making can be defined as "the process by which people interpret situations, events, objects, or discourses, in the light of their previous knowledge and experience" (Zittoun and Brinkmamm, 2012, p. 1). This definition shows that meaning is given based on identity and one's view of the world.

When giving meaning to a crisis, something of considerable value should first be perceived as under threat. For this, a connection needs to be made with a core value in the society by a powerful political (Brändström and Kuipers, 2003). Such a core value could be justice, liberty or democracy (Nelkin, 1975). Edelmann (1977) emphasizes mostly (national) security as of great importance in this matter. A good

narrative provides a clear pattern on how this core value is under threat. This is done by appealing to both the logical and emotional level of the public: providing context, symbols and images as well as defining events, causes and effects, and protagonists versus antagonists clearly (Spector 2019, p. 140).

With the recognition of a core value that is under threat, comes the questions: what were the causes, who is responsible and who is there to be blamed? (Ansell et al, 2014; Brändström and Kuipers, 2003). Here lies a difficult task for the political leaders in framing this in a way that enforces trust in the government, that shows the public the government is in control of the situation and will protect the core value that is at stake (Boin et al, 2017).

There are two main difficulties described that make the task of meaning making particularly difficult. First of all, many times there is little known about the situation that is given meaning to. Framing the crisis can therefore take a form of guessing (Ansell et al, 2014). On the other hand, there will also be other actors with their own interests who will try to make their narrative the dominant one (Ansell et al, 2014; Boin et al, 2017; Brändström and Kuiper, 2003). Were these other actors to succeed then the government comes into a difficult position regarding their legitimacy, decisions, and enforcement of their policies during the crisis (Ansell et al, 2014). Once a certain narrative becomes the dominant one it will control all discussions and responses to the crisis (Spector, 2019).

Several factors are influencing to what extent the claims of certain narratives are believed. The process of believing claims is rather complex and messy (Spector, 2019, p. 107). It does not necessarily depend on the legitimacy of a claim. Truth is one of the things humans seek, errors are tried to be avoided. However, cognitive comfort is also of importance. A claim should match the persons way of seeing the world. People also evaluate if they find the claim maker credible. And lastly, people take importance to what the people around them think. Being a member of a social group is important to us, it influences both the formation of our beliefs as well as the persistence of them (Spector, 2019, p. 125).

When it comes to effective communication of a narrative, the media play their part during the meaning making process. The role of mainstream media matter for the course of the meaning making process. Are they acting as junkyard, watch- or lapdogs? It makes a difference for how easily and successfully the narrative of the government comes across to the public (Boin et al, 2017). Additionally, there are social media in these times. As mentioned before, the existence of social media gives new dynamics to crises and crisis management. The easy spread of information that social media make possible are of course of high influence on the meaning making process. Social media are a way for political leaders to communicate directly but at the same time messages from competitors can spread just as easily. Social media can also be used for spreading propaganda or even disinformation (Boin et al, 2017, p. 84).

Crises in different political systems

Not only the media system matters, there are other contextual factors that are argued to influence the developments of crises. One of them is the political system. According to Steinberg et al (2015) the political system of a country can have an effect on the likeliness of a crisis to happen. They specifically

studied currency crises. They noticed that currency crises happen all over the world despite economic development and income levels of countries. Nevertheless, there are huge differences between countries on how many times they experience a currency crisis. Even if countries are in the same region and have a more or less similar income level (Steinberg et al, 2015). To understand why some countries experience more currency crises and others less, they look at the political regime type of the countries. They differentiate the following regime types: democracy, civilian dictatorship, military dictatorship, and monarchy. There are different theories on the influence of political regime type on the probability of a currency crisis. On the one hand democracies are favoured over authoritarian regimes; because of the transparency of political leaders' actions investors are unlikely to speculate against a currency (Steinberg et al, 2015). On the other hand, authoritarian regimes – specifically monarchies – are favoured over democracies; because they are less influenced by domestic pressure groups and the same leaders are in power over a longer period (Steinberg et al 2015). The study of Steinberg et al (2015) confirms the latter to be true. They find it surprising though that there is not a significant difference between democracies and civilian and military dictatorship. However, monarchies stand out in their ability to prevent crises which seems to be caused by their outstanding preventive policies (ibid.).

There are also several arguments how crises affect a political system. The perception of threat, uncertainty and urgency change the position of the government towards other actors in the society such as the people and the media (Ansell et al, 2014). The state of crisis provides a need for the government to have strong and perhaps exceptional executive power to manage the crisis. However, this can be problematic for the democratic status of the government as such power can be abused (Friedrich, 1963).

A discussion on how the bureaucratic politics in extraordinary political situation can be combined with liberal democratic values can be found in the article by Rosenthal, 't Hart and Kouzmin (1991). They argue that centralization of power might seem logical in times of crisis but the involvement of different actors in crisis management might be better. The tensions that the latter causes can actually create positive effects such as providing necessary critiques, encouraging openness and democratic control (ibid.).

Chan (2013) describes how specifically in an authoritarian context which has quite a closed system, a crisis can provide the conditions to break this system open. He differentiates crisis-strengthening and -weakening forces. Crisis-strengthening forces are: a government managing the crisis ineffectively, manipulation from the opposition parties or organisations, the crisis itself becoming more serious and lastly, the mass media covering the crisis in a negative way (Chan, 2013, p. 205). Crisis-weakening forces are: a government managing the crisis effectively, the crisis being under control and finally, support for the government parties and organizations included of positive mass media coverage (ibid.). When the crisis strengthening forces are more present than the crisis weakening forces, it can evolve into a governance crisis. When public dissatisfaction based on grievances and failure of the government then reaches a certain level, this can be a catalytic effect that leads to government change (Chan, 2013). Chan names this as a possible effect that a crisis can have particularly for countries with an authoritarian regime.

Most studies on crisis and crisis management assume a liberal democratic context. Examples of crises to underline the ideas and theories of scholars usually are situated in the United States (Burton and Pearson, 2017; Edelmann, 1977; Eriksson, 2018; Lord, 2014; Spector, 2019) or Western Europe (Brändström and Kuipers, 2003; Jong, 2017; Lodge and Wegrich, 2012; Rosenthal et al, 1991). There are way less studies focusing on authoritarian regimes (Chan, 2013). The studies that do look at authoritarian regimes and crises usually look at China (Chan, 2013; Huang et al, 2015). Nevertheless, scholars that look at crises in an authoritarian context come to some interesting conclusions. There are two main absences in authoritarian regimes compared to liberal democratic ones that can change the crisis process, namely the lack of an effective opposition and the lack of independent mass media (Chan, 2013). An authoritarian government does therefore not feel the same responsibility towards its citizens as liberal democratic governments do (ibid.). The lack of the role of the public makes most theories and models about crisis management inapplicable to authoritarian regimes. On top of that comes that citizens in authoritarian regimes might not have access to vital information in times of crisis. This makes a crisis situation in an authoritarian regime very different (Chan, 2013).

Crisis management done by authoritarian government can generally show less consideration of human rights to eliminate the crisis as soon as possible. It also happens commonly that the truth is withheld or that false information is spread by the government on purpose (Chan, 2013). This might go as far as fully denying a crisis event (Boin et al, 2017). In a pluralistic democracy this would be impossible; authorities and the media cannot mislead the public for a long time without facing consequences for this (Boin et al, 2017, p. 85). Misleading in this way includes the spread of false information, withholding information but also promises of an overly optimistic scenario (Boin et al, 2017). Leaders of liberal democracies do not have the possibility of controlling the public understanding as much as authoritarian leaders do. To support and also extend these conclusions on the relation between crisis communication and political system Huang, et al found that the more closed the political system of a state is, the more use of unethical practices are made. The crisis communication will also be more control-oriented, however less transparent and symmetric (Huang et al, 2015).

Crises in different cultures

Culture also matters for the course of the crises. Doubts about the applicability of crisis management studies to the global world are raised more and more in recent literature. An example is Mats Eriksson who pointed out in his study on social media use as crisis communication that his conclusions on best practice and also other's conclusions on this are limited to a certain context. His study is based on social media use in the United States. He underlines the geographical bias in the research done on the topic of social media in crisis communication (Eriksson, 2018). The use of social media – what particular platforms people use the most, for what purposes they use social media and how active they are on social media – differs among countries.

Another example is Huang et al who find that crisis communicative strategies are mostly based on Western cultural assumptions (Huang et al, 2015). According to them communication practices in a

country or area are also representing the media system and political, economic and cultural aspects. In their own research they compare crisis communication practices from the Mainland of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. They conclude that several cultural factors can explain certain communication strategies chosen by the government during crisis situations. The importance of the Golden Mean in China can for example explain the avoidance of extreme communication strategies. Chinese nationalism and collectivism might explain the emphasize on national security and the community interests being prioritized over individual interests (Huang et al, 2015).

RESEARCH QUESTION

From the literature review, it has become clear that many authors have struggled with questions regarding crises. They have been building theories on how to effectively manage a crisis, what roles a public leader should take during a crisis, in what way a crisis communication strategy can be successful. However, new perspectives on crises are gaining attention. Constructivist ideas - that narratives shape crises, not the other way around, that political leaders are not just the ones to deal with the crises but are active formulators of the situation – are encouraging a new kind of research on crises. There have been multiple authors theorizing the constructivist perspective on crises, yet there are not many studies supporting the perspective empirically.

The meaning making process of a crisis is important for this. As could be understood from the definition of meaning making, one's world view matters. This world view is shaped by one's context and background concerning culture and society. Previous studies have shown the importance of culture and society structure for the course of a crisis. Yet, there have not been many studies that have taking into account these traits and specifically looked how they shaped a meaning making process of a crisis. Many studies have based themselves on examples from Western countries and tried to generalize their practices during crises into a crisis management model. The few studies that have looked at the importance of culture, society and politics into account seems to mainly focus on China and not any other country or part of the world.

For this reason, this thesis will focus on a different country, namely Turkey. Turkey is a country with many unique features. Although Turkey is officially in the accession process for the European Union, the country is not really seen as a part of Europe, neither as a part of the Middle East. It is not a schoolbook example of an authoritarian regime, yet Turkey is also not really democratic; it is better described as a hybrid regime. The country has long been an example of a secular state and later a success story of combining the Muslim religion with democracy. Nevertheless, it has been argued over the past years that Turkey is backsliding into an authoritarian regime. Developments like the Gezi Park protests in 2013, the failed coup attempt in 2016 and the economic crisis in 2018 have taken the attention of scholars (Dagi, 2015). These have sparked an interest in analysing Turkey from different political and societal perspectives. However,

communication is one of the least researched topics about Turkey from a political science perspective (Cansun and Arik, 2018). Which is a pity because it means little is known about it.

The Covid-19 pandemic is also an interesting case to look at, not just because it is actual but also because it has spread all over the world. It is a phenomenon of a scale that none of the people alive right now have seen before. It has influenced every-day life enormously and every country is dealing with it differently. Some leaders of countries took far-reaching measures right away while others have even questioned the realness of the virus. It thus provides an ideal case to analyse how a certain country is making meaning of Covid-19 in its own way.

The research question with the belonging sub questions of this thesis are formulated as follows:

What is the meaning making process of Covid-19 in Turkey under the government of the AKP?

- What meaning does the Turkish government give to the Covid-19 pandemic?
- Why does the government give meaning to the Covid-19 pandemic in this way?
- What has been the receptance in Turkey of the government's meaning of the Covid-19 pandemic?

This thesis focuses on March, April, May and June 2020 which includes the first case of Covid-19 being announced in Turkey, the first peak of the virus and the initiation of the normalisation process after the first wave.

The aim of this thesis is to defend a constructivist approach towards crises and their meaning making process by analysing the unique features of this process in Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic. It will do so by taking into account Turkeys culture, society and political system. It should be noted though that this thesis does not aim to unravel the exact roles of these variables to the meaning making process, a different kind of research should be done for that. For this research, the features serve as contextual factors that contribute to the analysis.

This thesis will also make a contribution to the understanding of political communication in Turkey and the meaning making processes of health crises. The outbreak of the SARS virus in 2003 has shown that the meaning making process of a health crisis directly affects people's behaviour towards the crisis. The latter makes a big difference in the number of people that will end up getting ill or even lose their life (Powers and Xiao, 2008). Getting a better understanding of this process thus holds a societal relevance as well.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before analysing how there is given meaning to a situation, it is important to know what has generally been going on during the situation. This is the only way to properly grasp the meaning that is given. For that reason, this chapter will provide the necessary background information.

The Covid-19 Pandemic

Covid-19 is a virus that was first found in the city of Wuhan in China at the end of the year 2019. Before this time, this virus was unknown. The virus is related to the SARS virus which caused hundreds of deaths in 2003. Covid-19 is believed to have passed from animals to humans but how exactly remains unknown. From the first cases in China, the virus spread fast, first within China but soon the virus had spread all over the world. In March 2020 there was officially spoken of a pandemic. After six months the virus has infected at least ten million people worldwide and took half a million lives (Callaway et al, 2020). It is already the worst health crisis we have seen in a century.

The World Health Organization is the UN body concerned with health issues. During this pandemic we saw a special role for the WHO. It is the organization which helped member states prepare for such pandemics. During this pandemic the WHO also helped countries by giving advice on how to respond, provide accurate information, monitoring the spread of supplies, training health workers and help the search for a vaccine (UN News, 2020). There has also been much distrust and critique towards the WHO. There were several weeks between the first found case of Covid-19 and the announcement by the WHO that the virus can easily spread and is therefore of international concern (Deccan Herald, 2020). The virus could therefore go its way uninterrupted in those first weeks without any special measures taken. China is suspected of holding back information in this crucial period. The critique on the WHO is that it has been too supportive of China and was therefore late to alarm the world about the virus (The Economic Times, 2020).

The most common symptoms of the virus are fever, a dry cough and dyspnoea. Tiredness, stomach problems and loss of smell and taste can also be symptoms. Many people who contracted the virus show mild symptoms or even no symptoms at all. However, especially for people who already have health problems or those of older age, the virus can be very dangerous. When people have a weaker immune system, the virus can cause pneumonia and eventually cause death.

The virus spreads through the air, for example when an infected person coughs and another person breathes this air in. The virus can also spread when someone gets the virus on their hands and then touches their mouth, nose, or eyes. The general advice to limit the spread is therefore to keep distance from other people, avoid crowded places and to wash hands often.

The responses to Covid-19 differ a lot per country. Some countries are obviously more hit by the virus than others. There are countries that have no reported cases until now such as Turkmenistan, Tonga and Tuvalu (IMF, 2020b). Countries like Italy, Iran and the United States however turned into epicentres of the virus over the past months. New Zealand, Iceland and South Korea have been praised for their low number of cases. It has been said that their quick and strong response has helped a lot to keep their numbers low (Bremmer, 2020). At the same time, it has been an advantage for these countries to be an island. Being an island is not everything though, the United Kingdom for example had much more cases compared to other countries. Among the United States and Brazil, the United Kingdom is named as a country with a failed response to the virus (Business Insider US, 2020; Urban and Saad-Diniz, 2020; Yamey and Wenham, 2020). This is interesting considering the fact that the United States was first and the United Kingdom second on a list of best prepared countries according to the Global Health Security Index (GHSIndex, 2019). Even while prepared, the political leaders of these countries took no urgent action to prevent the spread of the virus.

Actions that are generally taken against the Covid-19 pandemic include travel bans, temporary closings of non-essential businesses, lockdowns, obligatory wearing of medical masks and increasing hospital capacity. But apart from the concern for health, there is the concern for the economy. By closing businesses and limiting transportation countries saw decreases in their economic rates. Most countries therefore initiated fiscal and monetary support and started a normalization processes as soon as the number of Covid-19 cases within their borders dropped (IMF, 2020b).

Globally, the economy is seeing its worst recession in decades (Worldbank, 2020a). Most countries are also expected to face recession in 2020. Less developed economies are especially taking damage by the health crisis. Global inequality is likely to increase again. The lack of demand is mainly a problem, for example the demand of fuels and tourism (Duffin, 2020). Unemployment rates grew (Jones et al, 2020). It is expected that on the long term, damage can still be observed due to the loss of work and schooling, decreasing investment and segmentation of the global market (Worldbank, 2020a).

Covid-19 in Turkey

NUMBERS OF COVID-19 INFECTIONS IN TURKEY

As far as known, it was on 10 March that Covid-19 reached Turkey. After this first case of a Covid-19 infection in Turkey was announced one day later on 11 March, the spread of the virus went fast. At the end of March, the daily new cases reached more than 2000 and the total cases already passed 10.000 with more than 200 people who died from the virus. In the month of April, the spread was at its peak. The highest number of confirmed cases was on 12 April with more than 5100 people testing positive that day (World Health Organization, 2020). At the end of April, the new infections started to drop to just half of the number compared to the peaking days. This trend continued in May. Since then, the number of daily new infections stayed around 1000 with some slight increases in June nearing 1500 new cases. This leaves the total number of infections at the end of June at almost 200.000. The total number of deaths is known to be around 5100 at the end of June. The number of deaths compared to the number of infections in Turkey is low. Possible explanations for this are the relatively large number of youths among the Turkish citizens and the big number of available IC beds in Turkish hospitals. Another explanation might be that the numbers are wrong, people who died of Covid-19 might have been wrongly assigned another cause of death. Turkey has been ranked among the top ten countries with the highest number of infections (Roser et al, 2020).

POLICIES CONCERNING HEALTH AND THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS

It was in January that the Turkish government started to take the first visible precautions against the Coronavirus. First, the Ministry of Health set up a scientific advisory board for the Coronavirus. On 24 January the first precautious measures were taken on airports. Not much later, all flights from China were

cancelled. At the end of February, the flights to and from Iran, Iraq, Italy and South Korea were also cancelled.

It was not until 11 March that the first case of Covid-19 was confirmed in Turkey. In the days after, several impactful measurements to limit the spread of the virus were announced. All schools including universities would close from 16 March onwards. On 23 March education would resume online. Nightlife venues were closed as well. A ban was put on gatherings in mosques for praying. Flights to and from many European countries and later all international flights were cancelled. Citizens who returned from Umrah were put into quarantine, mostly in student dormitories. Traveling between Turkish cities became only possible with permission from the government. And for people above the age of 65 a total curfew was put into place.

On 31 March multiple Turkish labour unions started a signature campaign to enforce seven measures, including the stop of almost all non-essential labour and more compensation for small businesses. A day later, cases of the coronavirus were confirmed in all provinces of Turkey. Therefore, on 3 April new policies were announced. It became mandatory to wear masks in public spaces, the total curfew for elderly now also applied to those younger than 20 years and an entrance ban to the 30 biggest municipalities and the province of Zonguldak was introduced. The government forbid the selling of masks and started distributing them for free.

On 10 April the first temporary curfew was announced. For the weekend of 11 and 12 April all people in the 30 biggest municipalities and Zonguldak were not allowed to go out of the house. Just a few exceptions were made for example for those working in a bakery or water providing service. These curfews continued to be every weekend and on Turkish holidays like the Youth and Sports day.

Giving an extra impactful dimension to the limitations of these times was the fact that Ramadan took place in April and May. Just before the start of the fasting month, on 22 April, the Ministry of Interior announced all the events for iftar and sahur were cancelled. Also, at the end of Ramadan, which is celebrated with Ramazan Bayramı, a curfew was put on the whole country. These measurements were taken to try to prevent people to come together and visit each other, which usually happens a lot among Muslim Communities during and after Ramadan.

At the beginning of May president Erdoğan announced the plans of a normalization process. The normalization should take place gradually during the months of May, June and July. There would be possibilities for the elderly and the young to go out again. Shopping malls, offices and other workplaces would reopen if it could be according to hygiene and distance rules. Possibilities to travel between cities and eventually internationally would be there again. The army would resume their work as normal. And finally, the High School Entrance Exam and the Higher Education Institutions Exam were announced to take place at the end of June.

So as planned, the shopping malls reopened on 11 May. On 1 June other public places like restaurants and parks reopened, recreation activities such as sports and picnics became possible again and civil servants started working their usual hours. Domestic flights resumed, although the temperature of passengers is always measured, as well as that wearing a mask and obtaining a so-called HES-code became mandatory for travelling. A day later, the Turkish Parliament also started resuming its activities like normal. On 8 June

it was allowed for health workers to quit their job again and on 9 June the curfews for elder and young people were mostly lifted. International flights started going again on 18 June. On 20, 27 and 28 there were the last partial curfews due to the entrance exams.

Internationally, Turkey has provided aid and medical equipment to multiple countries.

POLICIES CONCERNING THE ECONOMY

Already before Covid-19 hit Turkey, the economy was in a vulnerable and uncertain state (Worldbank, 2020b). Not too long ago – in 2018 and 2019 – Turkey saw an economic crisis from which the country was not fully recovered. Covid-19 is therefore expected to have severe negative consequences for the Turkish economy (ibid.).

To minimize those negative effects the government adopted certain policies and shield packages. To ensure business continuity the government has taken measures for providing loan and credit support which are mainly aimed at small and medium-sized entrepreneurs. To support employment the government adopted short-term working allowances. The possibilities for employers to fire their staff were also minimized. For those employees who were however forced to take unpaid leave, salary support has been provided. It was also made possible by the government to postpone bills such as rents for workplaces and water bills. This, in order to prevent the termination of lease agreements. Bankruptcy proceedings have also been suspended. To stimulate the economy several liquidity measures were introduced.

At the same time, Erdoğan launched a "National Solidarity Campaign" based on donations of Turkish citizens. The president himself started off the campaign with donating a part of his salary. The campaign is said to have collected more than 2 billion Turkish liras (Gocumlu, 2020).

SUBQUESTION 1

What meaning does the Turkish government give to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Methodology

To understand the meaning the government gives to Covid-19, a discourse analysis will be done. A discourse analysis is the ideal method for questions dealing with meaning. There are of course different ways to understand the concept of meaning and the processes that produce meaning. As this thesis is concerned with the meaning that is given to an event by the government and is expressed through crisis communication, the focus will be on narrative. A narrative creates a frame based on our identities that gives meaning to events in our lives; what to pay attention to and how to respond (Smith, 2016, p. 204).

Identity can be understood as individual or socio-cultural. In the case of this thesis, identity is understood as socio-cultural because the unit of analysis is a country. Our culture and our social relations decide which narratives became available to us and thus how we understand events and how to act on them. Narratives tells us what is "good" and what is "bad" and at the same time they give us a place in society, tells us to whom we belong and to whom we do not (Frank, 2010).

Narrative analyses produce a way to generalise reasoning, acting, viewpoints and meaning concerning a certain phenomenon. It reveals the socio-cultural backgrounds to these and how narratives serve people. The method therefore creates an opportunity to produce complex theoretical knowledge (Smith, 2016).

The downside of this methodology is that it leaves a lot open to the interpretation of the one conducting the narrative analysis. It is something the researcher should be conscious about. If the researcher keeps this in mind while doing the narrative analysis, it does not have to be problematic. After all, this thesis is defending a constructivist view which means there is no objective truth in social sciences. It is therefore inevitable that interpretation is a part of social science. Nevertheless, the aim of this thesis is to reflect on the meaning given by the Turkish government on the Covid-19 pandemic. To understand the way this meaning is expressed as well as possible certain questions that can point out a narrative have been kept in mind during the coding process:

- where does the crisis come from?
- what is Turkey's position during this crisis?
- what helps Turkey to overcome the crisis?
- what is threatening Turkey to overcome the crisis?
- what will be the perspective after the crisis?

Anything in the government communication that answers these questions is marked. While doing so, special attention will be paid to reoccurring themes and mentioning. From this, a narrative can be reconstructed. Apart from this, it is important to ask the "why-question"; why is this meaning given and why does it matter to the storyteller? This is what is referred to by Frank (2010) as appreciation which sets the terms for the story to give answers to the analyst. The next chapter of this thesis will deal with this why-question.

The sources used to analyse the government narrative will be speeches by Erdoğan. There are many differences between spoken and written word, for instance the use of vocabulary, facial expression and hand gestures. However, for narrative analysis these differences do not matter so much as these elements will not be analysed. The reason that these speeches are chosen to be analysed is the fact that it has been one of the main ways that the government communicated with the Turkish people about Covid-19. These speeches have been broadcast on TV; TV is a major communication channel in Turkey and therefore often used by the government. Turkish people spent a lot of time watching television, on average more than three and a half hours every day. TRT – the state broadcaster - is among the most watched channels and news is the main type of tv programme that is watched as a research done by the Supreme Board of Radio and Television shows (Hürriyet Daily News, 2018). During the pandemic 88 percent of the Turkish people says to watch television in order to follow the news on Covid-19 (Ipsos, 2020a).

During the Covid-19 pandemic several speeches on the topic by government figures were broadcast in Turkey. Apart from the president, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Interior took an important position regarding the outbreak of the virus. Nevertheless, it has been chosen to analyse the speeches of the president as he is the national symbol and the face of the government. He is the main figure to provide the Turkish citizens with a meaning to the Covid-19 pandemic. Fahrettin Koca - the Turkish Minister of Health - and Süleyman Soylu - the Turkish Minister of Interior – on the other hand are responsible to explain practicalities and measures related to their field. The speeches by president Erdoğan are therefore seen as the best suitable for the narrative analysis. These speeches were held every week after the Presidential Cabinet Meeting. To analyse them, they have been transcribed and then coded. One issue that should be noted here is that the speeches were of course held in Turkish. As the author of this thesis is not fluent in Turkish, the speeches have been transcribed in English. To do this, the translations that were broadcast on the TV channel TRT World have been utilized. These translations were made live by professional translators hired by the state. A translation is of course an interpretation, so one must be careful with doing a discourse analysis of a translation. Yet, as these translations are done by people whose job it is to transfer the message of the president in English as precise as possible, the disadvantages are minimalized. These translations are broadcast on a state channel and are published on the youtube channel of the AK party. It can thus be assumed that the narrative is not lost in these translations.

In terms of time span, speeches in the months March, April, May and June 2020 are used. This covers the time span which is researched for this thesis. The speeches therefore include the announcement of initial measures as well as the considerations of the normalization process.

Results

From the coding it becomes clear that the Turkish government in not so occupied with the causes of the pandemic. At least, it is not so much a part of the narrative. Whereas other countries have been occupied how this pandemic could have been prevented and put blame on for example China or the WHO, this has not been of concern to the Turkish government so far. The pandemic is presented like a given. What is emphasized though is the scale and the impact of the spread of the virus: "…the pandemic has reached a global scale, a gigantic scale which we have rarely seen all throughout history." (Erdoğan, 2020i).

Turkeys position during this health crisis is seen as strong. The main reasons for this would be the solid foundations Turkey has in terms of health care and economy. Multiple comparisons are made with other countries throughout the speeches of Erdoğan and every time it is mentioned again that Turkey is performing better. Interestingly enough, Erdoğan mainly mentions European countries and the United States as they are seen as the developed countries of the world. The struggles of these countries are emphasized, and Turkey is then put in contrast to them. "Many people in Europe and in the USA are in a severe situation because the capacity of the hospitals is full or people who cannot afford health care are abandoned. But thankfully in Turkey no patient has been left unattended, has been neglected or been abandoned." (Erdoğan, 2020d).

Throughout the course the good handling of this health crisis by Turkey is mentioned: the amount of tests done, the health products that have been produced and supplied, the little negative economic impact on Turkey. On all scales Turkey is doing better than other countries. As soon as the number of Covid-19 cases a certain victory for Turkey is proclaimed; Turkey has contained the health crisis successfully. Even as one of the most successful countries in the world. On top of that, the fatality ratio in Turkey is relatively low which is thanks to the health care system according to the government. Turkey is therefore a role model for the rest of the world. This is even underscored by several international organizations as Erdoğan mentions (Erdoğan, 2020i).

Turkey is not only an example for other countries but has actually helped other countries. Multiple times it is mentioned in the speeches that Turkey has provided medical supplies like face masks and disinfectants to 127 countries. Most importantly, these are countries from many different regions, ethnicities, and religions. There has been no discrimination when Turkey sent supplies which also shows its solidarity. Apart from that, it has shown that Turkey did not only have enough supplies to provide its own citizens but even to help other countries.

Additionally, many historical references are made by Erdoğan. He mentions the independence war, the past coup attempts in Turkey and Turkeys experience with terrorists. He would like to demonstrate Turkeys success for overcoming threats and therefore Turkey will also overcome this one. "As we accomplished so far with our independence, we will overcome this pandemic threat" (Erdoğan, 2020f). Apart from showing the strength of Turkey, it also implies some hope. "As our ancestors said the dark and troubled times will not last forever" (Erdoğan, 2020b).

The main threat the pandemic puts on the world and therefore also on Turkey is in terms of health and welfare. Special attention is brought to the government caring about the health and welfare of the citizens and the efforts in this respect. Many measures are taken during the pandemic to support the health of the citizens and the Turkish economy. In terms of health, emphasis is put on three preventions: wear a mask, keep social distance and be hygienic. Impactful measures were also made early which prevented the health crisis to escalate in Turkey. Supplies of medical equipment such as medicine, facial masks, disinfectants and ventilators are supplied and distributed in Turkey. The promotion of social distancing has been supported by the closing of non-essential public places, remote education, travel bans, curfews for certain age groups and partial curfews for a number of Turkish provinces. All policies are based on advices of the established Scientific Advisory Board. It is also repeated often that new hospitals with a high bed and intensive care unit capacity are under construction and opening soon. The work of health care professionals is at the same time getting a lot of praise. All Turkish citizens are thanked as well for obeying the policies despite the difficulties that they may encountered to keep social distance.

Economically, many support packages are implemented. Special arrangements are made for loans so that they can be postponed. For those in the agricultural business, it has been made possible that they could continue their work as well as possible, even in times of curfews. A special campaign has been started by the government to collect money for the distribution of financial support to those in need. An example of the social support is that many low-income families are distributed an extra 1000 Turkish liras. The government is implementing these measures with the help of public banks and social support groups. By

naming these measures, emphasize is also put on number: the number of Turkish liras distributed, the number of businesses getting help, the number of families which are supported.

Not only currently but there is also referred to what the AK party in its 18 years of existence has achieved for Turkey. "18 years ago, when we got on this journey, we said we would help Turkey prosper on four pillars: education, health care, justice and security. That was our commitment, that was our promise. These are four important pillars and we established these pillars but on top of this we also build more like transportation, agriculture and energy as well as foreign policy. So, thanks to these all-encompassing efforts Turkey has made great strides and Turkey is getting stronger and stronger by the day" (Erdoğan, 2020i). All these investments are now helping to tackle the pandemic. Investments into the modernization of hospitals and into the hiring of more health care professionals have prevented that Turkey would be in a really bad situation right now. The political system as is in place now is also in the advantage of Turkey; strong leadership and the executive presidential system make it possible to deal effectively with a crisis. Moreover, the investments by the AKP have also made it possible that Turkey is self-sufficient. Turkey is now reaping the benefits from this as it can supply itself with the necessary medical equipment and food. Such a crisis shows the importance of self-sufficiency and independence. Turkey can be proud of its many products that are locally produced.

What is also helpful to Turkey is its culture, its mentality, its values. Three terms are repeatedly mentioned in this context: solidarity, unity and brotherhood. All 83 million citizens of Turkey are one in such a crisis and doing their best to overcome it. At the same time, they look out for each other and help each other. In this way, no threat can hurt the Turkish nation. This Turkish culture also shows in the help of citizens residing abroad to repatriate, the support that Turkey sent to other countries and the big amount of money that has been raised for the financial campaign.

Another element of the Turkish culture is religion. Several times during the speeches God is praised, Gods help is appreciated, or Gods help is asked for. God can help Turkey to overcome the pandemic.

Of course, there are also disturbances in Turkey's struggle against the pandemic. To deal with this health crisis the government finds order and stability really important. Everything that brings chaos is thus a disturbance for the fight against the pandemic. Blame is put repeatedly on opposition parties and then mainly the biggest opposition party the CHP. Municipality under their rules have not applied the policies of the government but instead used the opportunity to showcase their own party. At the same time, the CHP has spread lies about the government. For instance, blaming the government for establishing a "fake hospital" in the city of Adana. Erdoğan (2020c) says the following about the opposition parties "I am sad that our nation is been kept busy with such dirty tricks. If they do not receive the necessary responds their lies will get worse. It is as important to get rid of the virus as to get rid of such a mentality of the opposition. And we hope that the understanding of the political opposition in our country comes to a desirable level as well." The criticisms by certain media on the implemented curfews are also rejected "Unfortunately, rather than contributing to our fight against corona virus, certain media members are vomiting their hatred against us which is more dangerous than the corona virus." (Erdoğan, 2020b). Detailed defences are mentioned and even shown in a video during the speeches, demonstrating the lies of the media and opposition parties. The chaos created by these lies are even compared to the work of
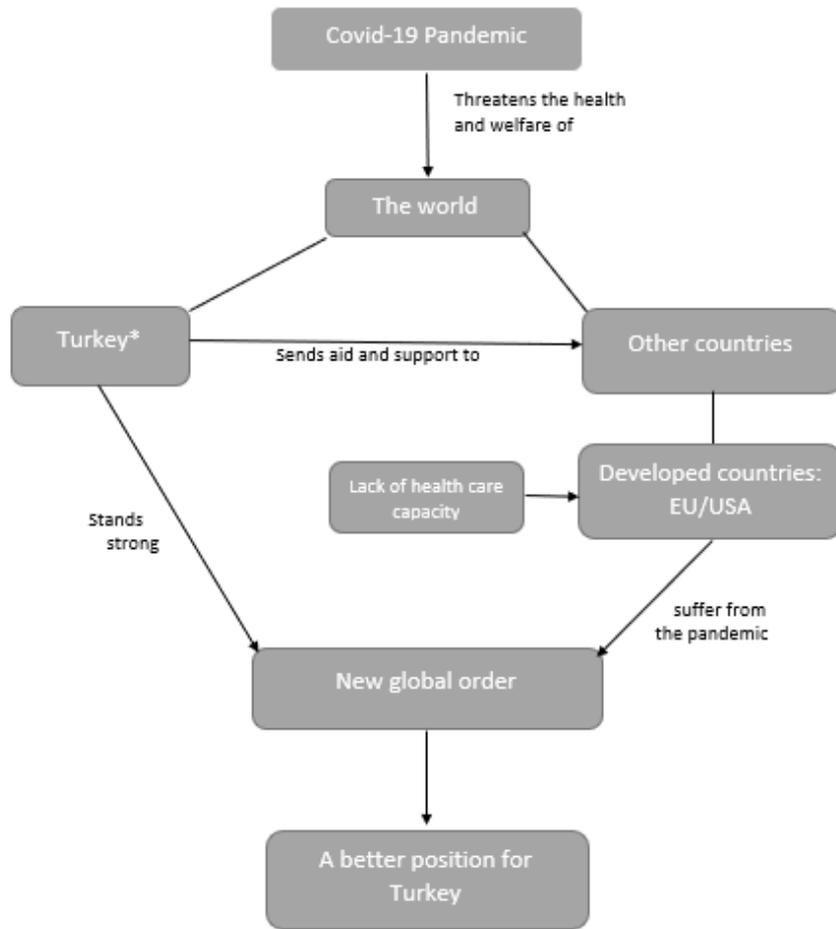
terrorist parties and labelled as very dangerous. Speaking of terrorists, it is ensured that the fight against terrorism goes on: within Turkey and also in countries like Syria and Libya.

In this context the government is implementing its policies. With 83 million citizens small things might go wrong sometimes, this is inevitable, but all will eventually be solved. Simultaneously, not everything is in the hands of Turkey and the Turkish government, it also depends on the handling of foreign countries. As the pandemic is worldwide, the virus needs to be under control worldwide. Turkey contained the virus but will keep facing it as long as other countries do not succeed to contain it. Economically, Turkey is also not fully in control. A sector like tourism is also depended on the policies of other countries. There are even those that use economic weapons against Turkey.

Nevertheless, Turkey stands strong according to the government. These threats cannot bring Turkey down: they are mainly attempts. As Erdoğan (2020f) puts it: "We will never satisfy the expectations of those who are waiting for the Turkish economy to collapse, diplomacy to stumble and the pandemic to rise".
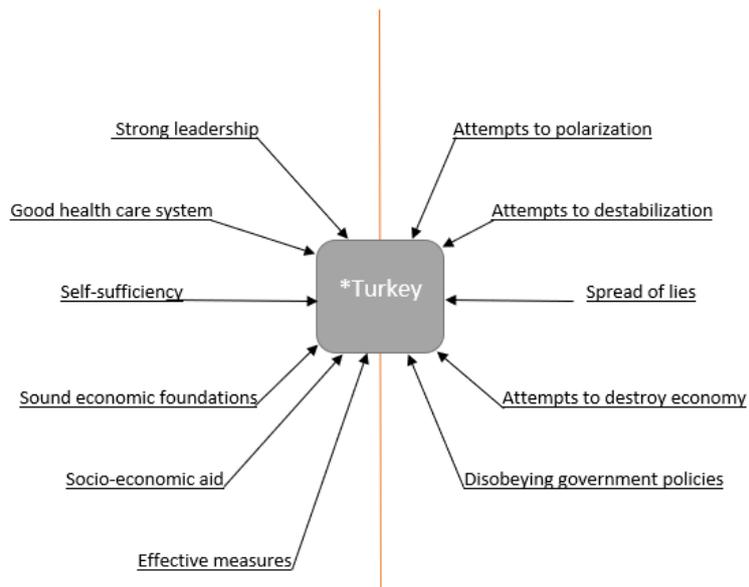
Prospects for Turkey are very good according to the government. Early in the pandemic there was spoken of a normalization process. It was speculated that this process might be able to start with the celebration at the end of Ramadan, turning this into a double celebration. Turkey showed successful in containing the pandemic and therefore showed a good image of itself. Before the pandemic, the Turkish economy was growing. As the negative effects of the pandemic are minimized by the government, this grow is expected to continue. A good outcome of the pandemic will appear for Turkey. The pandemic is expected to cause a new global order. With Turkish successful acting during the pandemic, Turkey will be able to take in a better position in this global order and become the leader of the region. Attempts to bring Turkey down will keep being eliminated until they are non-existent. In the meantime, the government will keep doing its best to achieve the future goals for Turkey. Turkey has taken big steps over the years and will now enter a period in which it will strive. "Our citizens know that no sacrifice will be in vain. We have indeed maybe lost some of our belongings in the past 2.5 months but we will reclaim all of them in the coming period. We will further strengthen our unison, our brotherhood, our togetherness. And as long as we do so, God will open new gates for us. Now that the global system is being reshaped, Turkey will be claiming a much better position and we have started receiving the signals of that. In industry, energy, agriculture, transportation, health, education, sports and defence and in every field of life, Turkey will be coming to the foreground as a rising star" (Erdoğan, 2020h).

The narrative is broadly summarized in the following tables:

Covid-19 Pandemic

Threatens the health and welfare of

The world

Turkey*

Sends aid and support to

Other countries

Lack of health care capacity

Developed countries: EU/USA

Stands strong

suffer from the pandemic

New global order

A better position for Turkey

Protagonists

The government/AKP

Turkish citizens

Health care professionals/ others in vital occupations

Social support groups

Scientific Advisory Board

Strong leadership

Good health care system

Self-sufficiency

Sound economic foundations

Socio-economic aid

Effective measures

*Turkey

Attempts to polarization

Attempts to destabilization

Spread of lies

Attempts to destroy economy

Disobeying government policies

Antagonists

Opposition parties/CHP

Terrorists

Certain media

Certain foreign countries

People opposes the rules

Conclusion

Overall, a positive picture is presented: Turkey is stable and stands strong against any threat. The presence of a solid health care system and sound economic system are of big importance in this. These are points that should provide hope and confidence to the Turkish citizens. The future perspective according to the government is also a very optimistic one. Turkey is compared to other countries and then mainly European countries and the United States as they are seen as the developed countries. The conclusion is that Turkey is more successful in dealing with this crisis than them. The idea is that this will have a positive effect on Turkey's international position.

It is reiterated that these are results of the government's efforts and also of the investments that specifically the AK party put into the Turkish nation. Strong words are used against those opposing or criticizing the government. Media and opposition parties are blamed for creating chaos and therefore undermining the government's efforts to deal with the crisis. Criticism is not accepted while strong leadership is praised.

References to Turkey's struggles in the past are made which also gives confidence in Turkey's competence to deal with this health crisis. Nationalistic phrases are used. The idea of standing strong together as a nation is important for the Turkish government. Solidarity, unity and brotherhood are praised, and the Turkish nation knows the value of these. However, the government poses warnings to actors who continue their attempts to undermine the Turkish nation, especially terrorists.

A broader threat than just that of health and economy is thus described. Threats are seen in those opposing the government for destabilizing the Turkish nation. The government is the only one capable of dealing with this crisis. In this way, the government claims more power to itself. At the same, a broader crisis is constructed: political elements are added to the health crisis. It is not just the wellbeing of the citizens that is at stake but the future and unity of the Turkish nation.

SUBQUESTION 2

Why does the government give meaning to the Covid-19 pandemic in this way?

Methodology

The why-question is actually the next step of the narrative analysis. One can only say something about the way meaning is given when the reasons behind it are understood. Theory about meaning making and narratives show that the social, political and cultural background of the one who gives meaning is important. Therefore, it expected that the social, political and cultural context in which the Turkish

government operates needs to be understood to be able to answer this chapter's subquestion. For this, additional literature research is done. This literature research delves into the history, political culture, political ideologies, party system, societal issues, and the recent political agenda in Turkey. All of which are related to the understanding of the government's meaning making of the pandemic.

This literature study is supported by insights from experts. These insights are retrieved from expert interviews. These expert interviews are done with Nevfel Boz and Cemal Baş. Nevfel Boz is professor at the Social Sciences University of Ankara in the department of Media and Communication. He has been working on research about Covid-19, for example about the public's trust in the government during such a health crisis. Cemal Baş is a politician for the AK party and Head of the Project and Financing Department of the Union of Municipalities of Turkey. It has been consciously chosen to find experts who could give different perspectives for the interviews. Whereas Nevfel Boz could give insights from an academic perspective, Cemal Baş could give insights from a political perspective. The interviews were done semi-structured with prepared questions but leaving open the possibility to react and ask further on the answers given during the interview. The political perspective from Cemal Baş provided insights in Turkish politics and the values and worldview of AK politicians. The academic perspective from Nevfel Boz provided more objective answers based on research findings.

Results

Turkey derived from the Ottoman Empire. After the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire Turkey had to fight for its sovereignty as with the Treaty of Sèvres the country initially would have been split up to the benefit of the allied powers. Turkey is ever since then living with what some call the "Sèvres Syndrome" of "Sèvres paranoia" which shows among nationalists and conservatives whenever the territorial integrity seems at stake. For instance, when a Turkish minority is demanding rights or whenever Western states demand reforms in Turkey (Akgönül and Oran, 2019; Schmid, 2014; Yesil, 2016).

The newly established Turkish state however searched for an identity: what defines the Turkish nation and what does it mean to be Turkish. Nationalism is therefore a main characteristic of Turkish politics (Akgönül and Oran, 2019). However, Turkey has a very hybrid character when it comes to nationalism (Canefe, 2002). The question about the Turkish identity therefore is still an ongoing discussion in Turkish politics. The biggest division in this is the role of religion: on the one hand there is Islamic nationalism and on the other is the secular nationalism. Other divisions that are struggled with in Turkish politics are the one between Sunni and Alevi Muslims, Turkish and Kurdish citizen rights, whether Turkey should be a part of the West or the East. Turkish nationalism is therefore not so much a part of culture but an ideology (Boz, personal communication, 2020).

The ruling ideology in Turkey depends on the party in power. Over time, different ideologies ruled Turkey. Since 2002 this is the AK party. The AK party is an Islamist right, nationalist, and conservative party (Akgönül and Oran, 2019). In terms of nationalism it defends religious politics, Sunni Muslims and is opposed to minority nationalism in Turkey. The main opposition party is the CHP, which is a left-wing, social democratic party. The CHP defends a secular form of Turkish nationalism (Aytac, 2018). Because of

the social divisions, the party affiliation is strong. There is only a small amount of swing voters in Turkey (Boz, personal communication, 2020).

Division in Turkey goes deep; there is a strong "us versus them-culture". This leads to social intolerance and distrust towards other people as well as government institutions (Kalaycoglu, 2012). This political culture can easily contribute to clientelism and undermine the relations of political parties, institutions, and non-governmental organization (Kalaycoglu, 2012). It thus has some non-democratic tendencies. We see these tendencies manifesting in Turkey after the 2010 referendum and the Gezi protests in 2013 (Kalaycoglu, 2019; Gürhanli, 2020). The Turkish political system has become more centralised and more authoritarian policies and discourse are enacted by the government. The political party system can now be described as a hegemonic one-party system which means that the opposition parties have no realistic outlook on winning an election in Turkey. Opposition parties as well as media, civil society organisations and interest group are being suppressed (Kalaycoglu, 2019).

This political culture and this political system show why the government's narrative on Covid-19 portrays opposition parties and certain media as antagonists during this crisis. The harsh words used are deriving from intolerance towards opposition (Boz, personal communication, 2020). The same reasons are behind the praising of the strong leadership of government and the AK party itself in this narrative. Ever since the Gezi protests the Turkish government provided a nationalistic and authoritarian narrative during crises and the Covid-19 health crisis does not form an exception to this (Gürhanli, 2020).

The most salient issues in Turkey according to its citizens over the past years are the following five: economy, terrorism, crime, education and lastly, health care and social security (Turper, 2018). These issues are largely in line with the AK party's legislative agenda. Economy is by far the most salient issue among Turkish citizens (Aytac, 2018). Turkey is generally struggling with unemployment and inequality. Not long before this pandemic period did Turkey go through a currency and debt crisis in 2018. This pandemic makes people fear for their income, for yet another economic crisis to arise in Turkey (Baş, personal communication, 2020). We should see the detailed mentioning of government measures to protect the economy and employment from this perspective. At the same time, the fact that Erdoğan continues to address the concern over terrorism, even in the face of a pandemic, is related to the dominant position it takes among the general societal concerns.

SMEs took a hit from this pandemic; they are faced with an uncertain future and are dependent on government support. Yet, the government also sees chances as Turkey has been providing certain equipment to for example Europe. The production levels in Europe have decreased due to the pandemic. This gives opportunities to Turkey to produce much more and take in a more important role in the global order (Baş, personal communication, 2020). This is the foundation of the government's optimism for Turkey regarding its future.

Another pillar for the AK party since it came to power has been the investments into health care. Before the ruling of the AK party ,the health care system in Turkey was not performing well. When the AK party came into power the leadership and political will could be combined to invest in improvements of the health care system in Turkey (Baris, 2019). The investments payed off as within a short time the health care system successfully improved a lot. Internationally, the Turkish health cares system gained prestige

and has even been named as an example (Baris, 2019). Domesticly, the satisfaction with health care services in Turkey have been growing over the years (Turper, 2018). Everyone has access to health care in Turkey, this access is not based on money. As Cemal Baş (personal communication, 2020) points out, the health care system has been an important investment and achievement of the AK party. The government takes pride in this and this pandemic shows precisely why a good health care system is needed. It is for this reason, that the government is emphasizing the good health care system in Turkey and comparing it to the failures in other countries.

Conclusion

As shows in the results, understanding the dynamics of the Turkish history, politics and society provide a way to understand the way that the government gives meaning to Covid-19. Turkey is characterized by division as it shows which go all the way back to the question for the identity of the Turkish state. Nationalism is strongly present in Turkey but takes different ideological forms. The grievances based on this division that has been present in Turkey for about a century remain highly relevant. The political agenda of the Turkish government is not only focusing on dealing with this pandemic, it is using this crisis situation to consolidate their ideological views. The narrative is an instrument for broader political objectives of the government. Another opportunity provided by this is the further consolidation of the power of the government. The AK party is presented as the only actor who can deal with this crisis and provide a good future for the Turkish nation.

SUBQUESTION 3

What has been the receptance in Turkey of the government's meaning of the Covid-19 pandemic?

Methodology

Apart from the meaning that is given, the meaning making process is also about the receptance of the narrative. This receptance is dependent on the extent to which the public can associate to the government's discourse and the perception of trust. The strength of competitive narratives matter as well and so does the media. Answers to this chapter's sub question are found in further literature research. This literature research will focus on the way the media system in Turkey functions during the ruling of the AK party. According to theory we would expect a meaning making by the government to pass easier to citizens if the media system is closed. An open system on the other hand would give more chances to conflicting narratives on Covid-19 to reach the public. Therefore, it is important to understand what the function of the media in Turkey are and how this relates to the government. Again, this literature research will be supported by the expert interviews done with Nevfel Boz and Cemal Baş.

For understanding the receptance of the provided meaning of Covid-19 by the government, results from polls during this thesis' timeframe are examined as far as they are available. The sources for these polls are Ipsos Turkey and Metropoll Arastirma. Ipsos is a worldwide research company which does not cast

doubt on political biases in Turkey. Metropoll Arastirma is one of the Turkish opinion poll companies. Turkish opinion poll companies are quite problematic as they are known for their political affiliation and manipulation of results. Among the Turkish opinion poll companies Metropoll Arastirma is one of the more well-known companies and in contrast to others, has no clear bond with a political party. There has been some dispute if it would have an affiliation with the AK party (Diken, 2014). Nevertheless, this bias never showed again, and the opinion poll company is quoted in other (international) academic research and news articles (Gürhanli, 2020; Ahval, 2020). The results from Metropoll should thus be quoted with some carefulness but can generally be trusted.

Results

Ever since the AKP is in power, the party has proactively managed information and centralised the media in Turkey. It is therefore very effective in public relations management (Öncü, 2012). It gives the government control over the information that is shared in the media as well as that it protects the government officials from sensational journalism (ibid.).

The relations between the companies owning the media and the political elite are strong and close; it is another reflection of clientelism in Turkey. It is however not the case that all media are owned by the government. As Baş (2020) describes it: "When I am watching television, I have a choice to many channels. Only one is state-owned. If I want, I can watch a channel that criticizing the government 24/7." There are many media criticizing the government.

Nevertheless, the polarized society is reflected in the media system in the sense that even the media have strong party affiliations. Everything presented by these different media is according to the ideology and frames of their partisanship (Panayirci et al, 2016). Critical views on the government will therefore rarely be presented by pro-government media, while a positive presentation of the government will rarely be given on media with an affiliation to opposition parties (Panayirci et al, 2016; Yavcan and Ongur, 2018). On top of that, Turkish media do seldom have an agenda-setting role besides on the topics of domestic politics and ideology (Yavcan and Ongur, 2018).

Yet, during the pandemic there is even a stronger control of the media by the government. We have seen this control by the government in previous crises in Turkey as well (Bayhan, 2020). The government has almost been completely in control of the information about the pandemic that has been shared. In terms of communicating a narrative, the government has almost had a monopoly (Gürhanli, 2020). More than 500 people have been detained due to sharing a critical view to the government's dealing with the pandemic. The reasons for their detention are creating panic and fear, encouraging people to disobey the law, or encouraging people to hatred and hostility (Bayhan, 2020). These people are journalists as well as people who shared their criticism on social media (ibid.). The share of fake news on social media is a real problem, also in Turkey (Boz, personal communication, 2020). However, a line between sharing fake news or mere critical expressions can be thin. And whereas some Turkish citizens desire this kind of strong leadership in Turkey especially during a crisis (Ahval, 2020; Baş, personal communication, 2020; Boz, personal communication 2020), others are concerned about the authoritarian tendencies (Erbey, 2020).

At the beginning of the epidemic in Turkey 30.7 percent of the Turkish people did not trust the elected officials (Metropoll, 2020a). The strengthening of authoritarian tendencies during a crisis are also the main criticism that is heard from opposition actors as well as the lack of transparency. There are severe doubts about the government's report of number of corona virus cases, deaths and when the first case in Turkey was observed (Gürhanli, 2020; Erbey, 2020; Boz, personal communication, 2020). As of July 2020, 77.2 percent of the people regard the Turkish media as biased and untrustworthy (Metropoll, 2020c). Already a trend was going on in which those voting opposition parties have been changing their primarily news sources from television to online news outlets and social media (CAP, 2018).

Looking at March, it can be observed that most citizens have shared a form of optimism for Turkey with the government. 45 percent of the Turkish citizens did not expect the Covid-19 virus to be a serious danger to Turkey while only 22 percent thought the Covid-19 virus would not be a serious danger to the rest of the world (Ipsos, 2020a). In terms of economy, 30 percent of the Turkish citizens expected there to be no serious consequences from the pandemic on Turkey while only 18 percent thought there would not be serious consequences in the rest of the world as well (ibid.). 45 percent of the Turkish people thought that Covid-19 would be in control in a couple of months (ibid.). All measures that the government took to prevent the spread of the virus were supported by the majority of the people, many measures could even count on a support from more than 90 percent of the people (ibid.) The approval rating of president Erdoğan in March 2020 grew by 14.7 percent compared to one month earlier leading to a approval by 55.8 percent (Metropoll, 2020a). Nevertheless, it should be noted that Istanbul's mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and Ankara's mayor Mansur Yavaş, who are both from the CHP, scored similar high approval rates (ibid.). At the end of March, the Turkish public started to worry more: 84 percent of the Turkish people considered the Covid-19 virus to be the biggest problem (earlier in 2020 economy was seen as the biggest problem), 69 percent thought Covid-19 would be a serious danger for Turkey (a rise of almost 35 percent) and the number of people thinking the virus would be in control within a couple of months declined by almost 10 percent (Ipsos, 2020b).

The worries among the Turkish citizens continue as in April 70 percent was worried about the effects on their personal financial situation (Ipsos, 2020c). In May, some relief in fear of the virus and the social distancing lifestyle was observed among the Turkish citizens (Ipsos, 2020d). But the worries about the economy did remain: 90 percent of the people fear for the effects on their personal financial situation (ibid.). The outlook of the economy in the coming year is a worsening situation according to 44.3 percent and only 25.9 percent expected the economy to improve (Metropoll, 2020b). Interestingly enough though, 44.9 percent of the AKP voters expected the economy to improve while only 23.0 percent of them expected it to worsen (ibid.). The vast majority of the opposition party voters expected the economy to worsen (ibid.). The perspective on the duration had also changed: only 23 percent thought that the virus would be under control in a couple of months while 58 percent thought it will take longer than 6 months (Ipsos, 2020e).

Observing the beliefs of Turkish citizens about the Covid-19 virus, it shows that 90 percent regards the virus and its spread through mouth, nose, and eyes as truth (Ipsos, 2020f). 68 percent thought that the measures taken are not exaggerated (Ipsos, 2020e). But fake news spread through social media also

caught on. For instance, the untrue claim that someone is not infected by the coronavirus if the person can hold their breath comfortably, was believed by almost 20 percent (Ipsos, 2020f).

In June, we see that the number of people who consider the Covid-19 epidemic as the biggest problem to be decreased to 39 percent. Economy was seen as the biggest problem again by 43 percent (Ipsos, 2020g). 98 percent saw a threat for the Turkish economy and 86 percent for their personal financial situation (ibid.). 57 percent was expecting negative effects on their job, only 6 percent was seeing opportunities for their job (ibid.).

Nevertheless, when looking at the perception of the successfulness of the fight against the virus per country, Turkey scores well. Among 9 countries, Turkey scores highest on the citizen's perception of success in the fight against the virus (Ipsos, 2020h). 39 percent of the citizens thought that Turkey did well, only 9 percent thought that Turkey did bad (ibid.).

Observing voting intention polls as of June 2020 a decline in support of the AK party shows: from a 33.9 percent vote share in February, the party shrank to 30.3 percent (Metropoll, 2020c). The main opposition party CHP grew from 20.7 percent to 24.0 percent (ibid.). The approval of Erdoğan also shrank by more than 5 percent to 50.6 percent which is however still a majority (Metropoll, 2020d).

Conclusion

In terms of the media system, Turkey knows many media that serve as "lapdogs" which are not critical but serve the interests of political elites. Not every media is a lapdog to the government though, some of them are serving the opposition parties and provide news only from their frame and ideology. Despite having a varied range of media in terms of ideologies, the tolerance to the opposition media is quite low, especially in times of crisis in Turkey. The media system therefore is a quite closed one; it is not easy for different narratives to be represented. The government narrative can easily take the dominant position in society. Were it not though that due to the strong partisanship of the media and lack of objective and critical reporting, the level of trust the Turkish people have in the media is quite low. Almost one third of the society does not trust the elected officials. The main political leader though is approved by a slight majority.

In terms of the receptance of the government's meaning of the Covid-19 crisis we do see some things that are generally accepted among the Turkish society. The measures to stop the spread of the virus taken by the government are approved of by a large number of the society. The idea that Turkey is successfully dealing with this crisis is also shared by a major part of the Turkish society.

Economically on the other hand, the AKP's optimism is not shared with the public. It has become a big concern for the Turkish society and the bright future for Turkey is not so easily imagined by everyone. Not so surprisingly, it is the AKP's followers that are largely observing the Covid-19 crisis through the narrative as provided by the government. The CHP followers seem to be most critical of the meaning that is given by the government. Through online and social media Turkish people still find a way to inform themselves with different understandings of Covid-19.

Although a substantial part of the Turkish citizens does appreciate strong leadership during a crisis which is also a part of the narrative by the government, they find this strong leadership also in others such as big city mayors from the CHP. And although the approval of the government looked favourable in March, the meaning making of this crisis does not seem to have consolidated the opportunity for the AKP to broaden their power position. The lack of swinger votes but also the current state of the economy and the inability of the AKP to improve this and provide hope to their citizens, seem to be the causes of this. But as the Covid-19 crisis is ongoing, the future should tell.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This analysis of the meaning making process has demonstrated the importance of the political system, political cultural, societal structure, and media system in Turkey to the course of the meaning making process of Covid-19. It has shown the unique features of this process in Turkey during a worldwide pandemic. As well as that it demonstrates the way in which a crisis is constructed by the Turkish government. What has been interesting about the narrative of the Turkish government is that the pandemic is incorporated in an existential struggle of the Turkish nation. The conditions of this struggle provide the need for strong leadership. Here we can also observe a reflection of the idea that change in political system and crises are in relation to each other. For now, the Turkish government seems to have consolidated a more powerful position for itself in times of this crisis. But as the crisis is still ongoing and AKP support is declining, there are future possibilities of this crisis providing a regime change.

We also see that the future perspective according to the government is a very optimistic one. At the same time, we can observe some doubts about this among the Turkish society. As was described by Boin and his colleagues (2017) in a liberal democratic context, a government faces consequences if an overly optimistic scenario is sketched. We would thus expect political leaders in a liberal democratic state to withhold from being overly optimistic. On the other hand, an authoritarian leader is easily tempted to be very optimistic and even spread fake information (Chan, 2013). Here we might see the representation of Turkish hybrid regime. Whereas the AKP can quite easily provide rosy scenarios and perhaps fake information to its followers, this is not true for the general society. Through this, the argument of group membership influences beliefs of people is also supported. In Turkey we might observe this extra clearly because of the strong party affiliations. The state of the economy however, can make the narrative of the Turkish government so unbelievable, that even strong core of the AKP will cast doubts upon the narrative in the future.

Overall, he Covid-19 pandemic is something that the whole world is facing. However, it has been demonstrated that the crisis that accompanies this virus is a different one in Turkey than for instance, the one in the Netherlands or Brazil or New Zealand. A pandemic is a phenomenon that can be researched according to exact science. Those studying medicine can grasp a factual understanding of the virus and can provide a clear generalisable description of how to deal with it. Crises have been understood as similar phenomena: they occur, can be analysed according to their factual features and this can provide a generalisable way to deal with them. Nevertheless, what this thesis has shown is that crises are not such

phenomena. Leaders are not just confronted with a situation and then have to deal with it. Instead, leaders shape the situation: what is at threat and what should be done about it. In the case of Turkey, it has been observed that the Covid-19 crisis has been about more than just health and economy. What is at stake has become the whole future existence of the Turkish nation. Political parties and media in Turkey have become part of the threat in this crisis. This way of seeing the crisis is based on ideology and political agendas. This shows that a crisis is socially constructed. How a crisis takes shape depends on the political, social, and cultural context of it.

This thesis therefore serves as an argument to approach crises in social science research from a constructivist perspective. A crisis is then not an event but part of a narrative. Leaders are then not managers but shapers of the crisis. Crisis communication's main purpose is not to effectively deal with the crisis but provide a narrative that fits an ideology and a broader political agenda.

It should be noted that the pandemic is ongoing. This thesis analysed the meaning making process during the first part of the pandemic. The meaning making process for this pandemic is still ongoing in Turkey. It will be interesting to see what developments will take place in Turkey especially regarding political situation as a result of the meaning making process. Future research will be able to retrieve data of the impact of this crisis on Turkey.

Along with the trends of current crisis research, future research could look into the effects of globalization and the rise of social media on crisis narratives. For example, it could focus on the role of international actors in the shaping of a crisis narrative. In the case of Turkey, it seemed as if international actors were presented as authorities whenever the information, they provided fit the government's narrative but whenever they did not, the international bodies were framed as corrupted. In terms of social media, the possible influences on the meaning making process of crises are obvious. For example, the spread of fake news has become a problem. The ease of fake news spread differs per country. In Turkey there is a proactive policy to arrest those who spread information on social media that causes chaos. Which people use social media and what exact platforms are used, differ per country as well. Future research could make a cross-country comparison analysing the differences in social media and their effect on meaning making processes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Akgönül, S. and Oran, B. (2019). Turkish politics. In: The Routledge Handbook of Turkish Politics. Edited by: Özerdem, A. and Whiting, M. Abingdon: Routledge.

Ansell, C., Boin, A. and 't Hart, P. (2014). Political Leadership in Times of Crisis. In: The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership. Edited by: Rhodes, R. and 't Hart, P. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aytac, S. (2018). Political parties and public policy. In: Policy Analysis in Turkey. Edited by: Bakir, C. and Ertan, G. Bristol: Policy Press.

Bayhan, B. (2020, 28 July). Explained: How Turkey President Erdoğan is Using COVID-19 to Stifle Dissent. The Wire. Retrieved on 10 August 2020 from https://thewire.in/world/explained-how-turkey-president-erdogan-is-using-covid-19-to-stifle-dissent

Boin, A., 't Hart, P., Stern, E. and Sundelius, B. (2017). The Politics of Crisis Management. Public Leadership under Pressure. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boin, A., 't Hart, P., and Van Esch, F. (2012). Political Leadership in Times of Crisis: Comparing Leader Responses to Financial Turbulence. In: Comparative Political Leadership. Edited by: Helms, L., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Brändström, A. and Kuipers, S. (2003). From "Normal Incidents" to Political Crises: Understanding the Selective Politicization of Policy Failures. Government and Opposition, 38, p. 279–305.

Bremmer, I. (2020, 12 June). The Best Global Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic. Time. Retrieved on 10 July 2020 from https://time.com/5851633/best-global-responses-covid-19/

Burton, J. and Pearson, Y. (2017). Fundamentals of Crisis Management and Ethics. In: Crisis Communication and Crisis Management: An Ethical Approach. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Business Insider US. (2020). The US's failed coronavirus response continues to snowball — even as federal officials insist they're 'winning the fight'. Retrieved on 20 July 2020 from https://www.businessinsider.nl/us-failed-coronavirus-response-reopening-exacerbated-first-wave-2020-6?international=true&r=US

Callaway, E., Ledford, H. and Mallapaty, S. (2020, 3 July). Six months of coronavirus: the mysteries scientists are still racing to solve. Nature. Retrieved on 15 July from https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01989-z

Canefe, N. (2002). Turkish Nationalism and Ethno-Symbolic Analysis: The Rules of Exception. Nations and Nationalism 8(2), p. 133–155.

Cansun, S. and Arik, E. (2018). Political Science Publication about Turkey. Sciencometrics 115, p. 169-188.

CAP. (2018, June). Figure 3. Retrieved on 22 July from https://twitter.com/MaxHoffmanDC/status/1270703327236567043/photo/1

Chan, H. (2013). Crisis Politics in Authoritarian Regimes: How Crises Catalyse Changes under the State–Society Interactive Framework. Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 21(4), p. 200-210.

Comfort, L. (2007). Crisis Management in Hindsight: Cognition, Communication, Coordination and Control. Public Administration Review, p. 189-197.

Dagi, I. (2015). What Went Wrong in Turkey? From Muslim Democracy to Illiberal Democracy. Ankara: Phoenix Yayinevi-Ünal Sevindik.

Deccan Herald. (2020, 18 May). A peek into WHO's role in the coronavirus pandemic. Retrieved on 30 June 2002 from https://www.deccanherald.com/international/a-peek-into-whos-role-in-the-coronavirus-pandemic-838908.html

Diken. (2014, 12 August). Metropoll araştırma şirketinin sahibi: Anketlerdeki fark, algı operasyonudur. Retrieved on 22 July from http://www.diken.com.tr/metropoll-arastirma-sirketinin-sahibi-anketlerdeki-fark-algi-operasyonudur/

Dresden, J. and Howard, M. (2016). Authoritarian backsliding and the concentration of political power. Democratization, 23(7), p. 1122-1143.

Duffin, E. (2020, 26 June). Impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the global economy - Statistics & Facts. Statista. Retrieved on 3 August from https://www.statista.com/topics/6139/covid-19-impact-on-the-global-economy/

Edelman, M. (1977). Political Language: Words that Succeed and Policies that Fail. New York: Academic Press.

Erbey, M. (2020). Opinion: Turkey's dithering and disinformation in coronavirus outbreak. Deutsche Welle. Retrieved on 20 July 2020 from https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-coronavirus-in-turkey/a-53039740

Erdoğan, T. Cumhurbaşkanı (2020a, 17 March). President Erdoğan announced new measures in the fight against coronavirus. Retrieved on 5 July 2020 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjhIW_OM_jQ&list=PLIoZEdpULeHmTUr3G_Zy7LyfUk1qkKw08&index=63

Erdoğan, T. Cumhurbaşkanı (2020b, 13 April). President Erdoğan addresses the nation on coronavirus pandemic. Retrieved on 5 July 2020 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CygUJUXLOog&list=PLIoZEdpULeHmTUr3G_Zy7LyfUk1qkKw08&index=57

Erdoğan, T. Cumhurbaşkanı (2020c, 20 April). President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addresses the nation on coronavirus pandemic. Retrieved on 5 July 2020 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9AB_97O0Pw&list=PLIoZEdpULeHmTUr3G_Zy7LyfUk1qkKw08&index=55

Erdoğan, T. Cumhurbaşkanı (2020d, 28 April). President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addresses the nation on coronavirus pandemic. Retrieved on 5 July 2020 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BffXq7frSOU&list=PLIoZEdpULeHmTUr3G_Zy7LyfUk1qkKw08&index=53

Erdoğan, T. Cumhurbaşkanı (2020e, 5 May). President Erdoğan delivered remarks following the meeting of the Presidential Cabinet. Retrieved on 5 July 2020 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0UGPKWifq8&list=PLIoZEdpULeHmTUr3G_Zy7LyfUk1qkKw08&index=50

Erdoğan, T. Cumhurbaşkanı (2020f, 11 May). President Erdoğan addressed the nation following the Presidential Cabinet. Retrieved on 5 July 2020 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7Oje3duxE0&list=PLIoZEdpULeHmTUr3G_Zy7LyfUk1qkKw08&index=47

Erdoğan, T. Cumhurbaşkanı (2020g, 20 May). President Erdoğan delivered remarks following the meeting of the Presidential Cabinet. Retrieved on 5 July 2020 from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5NpWIyyDhU&list=PLIoZEdpULeHmTUr3G_Zy7LyfUk1qkKw08&index=42

Erdoğan, T. Cumhurbaşkanı (2020h, 29 May). President Erdoğan announces coronavirus measures following a cabinet meeting. Retrieved on 5 July 2020 from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFq7W0sCzx0&list=PLIoZEdpULeHmTUr3G_Zy7LyfUk1qkKw08&index=39

Erdoğan, T. Cumhurbaşkanı (2020i, 10 June). President Erdoğan speaks in Ankara following the cabinet meeting. Retrieved on 5 July 2020 from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=At1D_IBNC3Q&list=PLIoZEdpULeHmTUr3G_Zy7LyfUk1qkKw08&index=30

Eriksson, M. (2018). Lessons for Crisis Communication on Social Media: A Systematic Review of What Research Tells the Practice. International Journal of Strategic Communication, 12(5), p. 526-551

Erisen, C. (2018). Political Behavior and the Emotional Citizen. Participation and Reaction in Turkey. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Frank, A. (2010). In defence of narrative exceptionalism. Sociology of Health and Illness, Journal compilation, p. 665-667.

Friedrich, C. J. (1963). Man and His Government: An Empirical Theory of Politics. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Furedi, F. (2005). Politics of Fear. London: Continuum.

Gilpin, D. and Murphy, P. (2008). Crisis management in a complex world. New York: Oxford University Press.

Global Health Security Index. (2019). Country Ranking View of Index Results. Retrieved on 20 July 2020 from https://www.ghsindex.org/

Gocumlu, B. (2020, 23 May). Nearly $300M raised for Turkey's COVID-19 fight. Anadolu Agency Retrieved on 3 July from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/nearly-300m-raised-for-turkey-s-covid-19-fight/1851482

Gürhanli, H. (2020). Turkey. In: Populism and the Pandemic: A Collaborative Report. Edited by: Katsambekis, B. and Stavrakakis, Y. POPULISMUS Interventions 7(special edition).

Huang, Y., Wu, F. and Cheng, Y. (2015). Crisis communication in context: Cultural and political influences underpinning Chinese public relations practice. Public Relations Review 42, p. 201-213.

Hürriyet Daily News. (2018, 14 December). Turks watch TV for more than 3 hours a day: Report. Retrieved on 3 August 2020 from https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turks-watch-tv-for-more-than-3-hours-a-day-report-139716#:~:text=ANKARA,Radio%20and%20Television%20(RT%C3%9CK).&text=The%20data%20also%20shows%20that,to%20watch%20news%20on%20TV.

International Monetary Fund (2020a). A Crisis Like No Other, An Uncertain Recovery. Retrieved on 16 August 2020 from https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020

International Monetary Fund (2020b). Policy Responses to Covid-19. Retrieved on 1 July 2020 from https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19

Ipsos. (2020a, 23 March). Koronavirüs, Türkiye Toplumunda Nasıl Bir Etki Yarattı? Retrieved on 22 July from https://www.ipsos.com/tr-tr/koronavirus-turkiye-toplumunda-nasil-bir-etki-yaratti

Ipsos. (2020b, 7 April). Halkın endişe düzeyi %79'dan 15 puan artış ile %94'e çıktı... Retrieved on 22 July from https://www.ipsos.com/tr-tr/halkin-endise-duzeyi-79dan-15-puan-artis-ile-94e-cikti

Ipsos. (2020c, 20 April). Koronavirüs Sürecinde Kamuoyunun Nabzı: Sosyalleşmek En Özlenen Durum. Retrieved on 22 July from https://www.ipsos.com/tr-tr/koronavirus-surecinde-kamuoyunun-nabzi-sosyallesmek-en-ozlenen-durum

Ipsos. (2020d, 5 May). Covid-19 nedeni ile yaşadıklarımıza farklı gözle bakmaya başladık. Retrieved on 22 July from https://www.ipsos.com/tr-tr/covid-19-nedeni-ile-yasadiklarimiza-farkli-gozle-bakmaya-basladik

Ipsos. (2020e, 20 May). Salgında Yeni Dalga Beklentisi Yüksek ve Akıllardaki Soru «Ya Sonra Ne Olacak?» Retrieved on 22 July from https://www.ipsos.com/tr-tr/salginda-yeni-dalga-beklentisi-yuksek-ve-akillardaki-soru-ya-sonra-ne-olacak

Ipsos. (2020f, 6 July). Virüsten Bu Kadar Endişe Ediyoruz, Peki Aşı Bulunsa Yaptırır mıyız? Retrieved on 22 July from https://www.ipsos.com/tr-tr/virusten-bu-kadar-endise-ediyoruz-peki-asi-bulunsa-yaptirir-miyiz

Ipsos. (2020g, 15 June). Kontrollü Sosyalleşme Sürecinde Ülkemizin En Önemli Sorunu Nedir? Retrieved on 22 July from https://www.ipsos.com/tr-tr/kontrollu-sosyallesme-surecinde-ulkemizin-en-onemli-sorunu-nedir

Ipsos. (2020h, 13 July). Koronavirüs Salgınıyla Mücadelede En Başarılı Ülke Türkiye. Retrieved on 22 July from https://www.ipsos.com/tr-tr/koronavirus-salginiyla-mucadelede-en-basarili-ulke-turkiye

Jones, L., Palumbo, D. and Brown, D. (2020, 30 June). Coronavirus: A visual guide to the economic impact. BBC News. Retrieved on 30 July from https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51706225

Jong, W. (2017). Meaning making by public leaders in times of crisis: An assessment. Public Relations Review.

Kalayoglu, E. (2019). Elections, parties, and the party system. In: The Routledge Handbook of Turkish Politics. Edited by: Özerdem, A. and Whining, M. Abingdon: Routledge.

Lodge, M. and Wegrich, K. (2012). Executive Politics in Times of Crisis. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lord, C. (2003). On Crisis Management. In: The Modern Prince. What Leaders need to know now. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Metropoll. (2020a). Türkiye'nin Nabzı - Mart 2020. Retrieved on 22 July from http://www.metropoll.com.tr/arastirmalar/turkiyenin-nabzi-17/1846

Metropoll. (2020b). Türkiye'nin Nabzı - Mayis 2020. Retrieved on 22 July from
http://www.metropoll.com.tr/arastirmalar/turkiyenin-nabzi-17/1853

Metropoll. (2020c). Türkiye'nin Nabzı - Haziran 2020. Retrieved on 22 July from
http://www.metropoll.com.tr/arastirmalar/turkiyenin-nabzi-17/1855

Metropoll. (2020d). Türkiye'nin Nabzı - Temmuz 2020. Retrieved on 22 July from
http://www.metropoll.com.tr/arastirmalar/turkiyenin-nabzi-17/1858

Nelkin, D. (1975). The Political Impact of Technical Expertise. Social Studies of Science, 5, p. 35–54.

Öncü, A. (2012). Television and Media. In: The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey. Edited by: Heper, M. and Sayar, S. Abindon: Routledge.

Panayirci, U., Iseri, E. and Sekercioglu, E. (2016). Political agency of news outlets in a polarized media system: Framing the corruption probe in Turkey. European Journal of Communication 31(5), p. 551–567.

Powers, J., and Xiao, X. (2008). The Social Construction of SARS: Studies of a Health Communication Crisis. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Rosenthal, U., 't Hart, P., and Kouzmin, A. (1991). The Bureau-politics of Crisis Management. Public Administration, 69(2), p. 211–233.

Rosenthal, U. and Kouzmin, A. (1993). Globaling an Agenda for Contingencies and Crisis Management: An Editorial Statement. Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 1(1), p. 1–12.

Roser, M. et al (2020). Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19). Retrieved on 27 June from
https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus

Schmid, D. (2014). Turquie: le syndrome de Sèvres, ou la guerre qui n'en finit pas. Politique étrangère 1, p. 199–213.

Slater, D. and Fenner, S. (2011). State Power and Staying Power: Infrastructural Mechanisms and Authoritarian Durability. Journal of International Affairs, 65(1), p. 15-29

Smith, B. (2016). Narrative Analysis. In: Analysing qualitative data in psychology. Edited by: Lyons, E. and Coyle, A. London: Sage.

Spector, B. (2019). Constructing Crisis. Leaders, Crises and Claims of Urgency. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Steinberg, D., Koesel, K. and Thompson, N. (2015). Political Regimes and Currency Crises. Economics and Politics, 27(3), p. 337-361.

The Economic Times. (2020, 18 May). Timeline of WHO's role in the coronavirus pandemic. Retrieved on 20 June from https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/timeline-of-whos-role-in-the-coronavirus-pandemic/handling-covid-19-pandemic/slideshow/75801772.cms

Turper, S. (2018). Public opinion and public policy in Turkey. In: Policy Analysis in Turkey. Edited by: Bakir, C. and Ertan, G. Bristol: Policy Press.

UN News. (2020, 9 April). 5 reasons the world needs WHO, to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Retrieved on 22 June 2020 from https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061412

Urban, M. and Saad-Diniz, E. (2020, 22 June). Why Brazil's COVID-19 Response is Failing. The Regulatory Review. Retrieved on 20 July 2020 from https://www.theregreview.org/2020/06/22/urban-saad-diniz-brazil-covid-19-response-failing/

Veil, S., Buehner, T. and Palenchar, M. (2011). A Work-In-Process Literature Review: Incorporating Social Media in Risk and Crisis Communication. Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 19(2), p. 110-122

Volpi, F. and Gerschewski, J. (2020). Crises and Critical Junctures in Authoritarian Regimes: addressing uprisings' temporalities and discontinuities. Third World Quaterly.

Waugh, W. and Streib, G. (2006). Collaboration and Leadership for Effective Emergency Management. Public Administration Review, 66(2), p. 131–140.

Worldbank (2020a). The Global Economic Outlook During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Changed World. Retrieved on 1 August 2020 from https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/06/08/the-global-economic-outlook-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-a-changed-world

Worldbank (2020b). The Worldbank in Turkey. Overview. Retrieved on 3 July 2020 from https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkey/overview

World Health Organization (2020). Global, Turkey. Retrieved on 2 July 2020 from https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/tr

Worldometer. (2020). Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic. Retrieved on 17 August 2020 from https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/

Yamey, G. and Wenham, C. (2020, 1 July). The U.S. and U.K. Were the Two Best Prepared Nations to Tackle a Pandemic—What Went Wrong? Time. Retrieved on 20 July 2020 from https://time.com/5861697/us-uk-failed-coronavirus-response/

Yavcan, B. and Ongur, H. (2018). Public Policy and Media in Turkey. In: Policy Analysis in Turkey. Edited by: Bakir, C. and Ertan, G. Bristol: Policy Press.

Yesil, B. (2016). Politics and Culture in Turkey. In: Media in new Turkey. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

Zittoun, T. and Brinkmann, S. (2012). Learning as meaning making. In: Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning. Edited by Seel, N., Berlin: Springer Science+Business Media.