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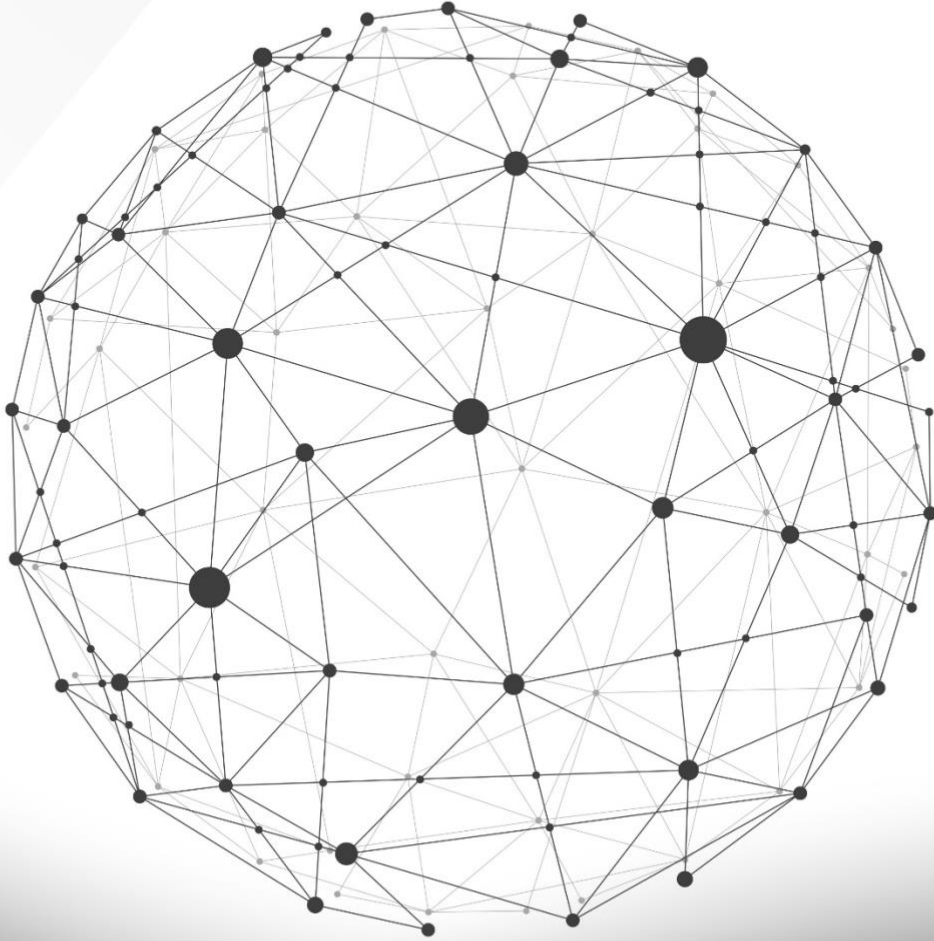
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Cilt 9, Sayı 1 | Volume 9, No 1

İÇİNDEKİLER | CONTENTS

Murat Çelik

1-13

A Sample for Understanding the Saudi Tanwir: Maraya Concert Hall on the Edge of al-Nafud
Suudi Aydınlanmasını Anlamak İçin Bir Örnek: Nufud Çölü Kıyısındaki Maraya Konser Salonu

Melek Adsız

14-22

From the State of Nature to Sovereignty: Thucydidean Foundations of Hobbesian Realism through the Melian Dialogue

Doğa Durumundan Egemenliğe: Melian Diyaloğu Üzerinden Hobbesçu Realizmin Tukididesçi Temelleri

Melike Güngör

23-37

Impacts of Religious Communities on Turkish Political Culture: The İskenderpaşa Community
Dini Cemaatlerin Türk Siyasal Kültürüne Etkileri: İskenderpaşa Cemaati

Volkan Kocabaş

38-45

Türkiye ile Yunanistan Arasındaki Güvenlik İkilemi
Security Dilemma Between Türkiye and Greece

Esra Özseven

46-59

A Discourse Analysis on Digital Transformation within the Framework of Development Plans (2001–2028)
Kalkınma Planları Çerçevesinde Dijital Dönüşüme İlişkin Bir Söylem Analizi (2001–2028)



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Murat Çelik*

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A Sample for Understanding the Saudi Tanwir: Maraya Concert Hall on the Edge of al-Nafud

Since 2017, the Saudi Vision 2030 document has declared the steps, initiatives, and transformations that Saudi Arabia will undertake. Consequently, change has begun to manifest itself in every field, from healthcare to the economy, forestry to agricultural production, music to cultural diversity, and from international relations to digital asset investments. Within this context, this study discusses Saudi Arabia's recent transformation through a cultural yet mentally transformative architectural structure-the unique and modern Maraya Concert Hall located in al-Ula. In this paper, information about Maraya is provided, along with an analysis of the concert hall's location and characteristics, as well as an interpretation of the mental codes of the Saudi administration. However, since there is no established literature on this niche subject, the study utilizes newspaper articles, analyses of Saudi Arabia, and indirectly related scientific research. Therefore, since a comprehensive literature on the subject has not yet been established, the methodology has been designed based on the evaluation of secondary and indirect sources. As a result, it is concluded that Saudi Arabia is resolute in its pursuit of change or transformation and attempts to express this resolve through physical elements such as architectural structures. This article concludes that Saudi Arabia is determined to pursue change or transformation, expressing this determination through physical elements such as architectural structures, and that as a result of these efforts, a new political and economic power has been established in the region.

Keywords: Maraya, Mirror, Desert, al-Ula, Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia.

Suudi Aydınlanmasını Anlamak İçin Bir Örnek: Nufud Çölü Kıyısındaki Maraya Konser Salonu

2017'den beri kendinden söz ettiren Suudi Arabistan Vision 2030 belgesi ile atacağı adımları ve yapacağı işleri ilan etti. Değişim Suudi Arabistan'da sağlıktan ekonomiye, ormancılıktan tarıma, müzikten kültüre, uluslararası ilişkilerden dijital dünyaya her alanda kendini göstermeye başladı. Bu çalışmada kültürel görünen ancak zihni bir dönüşüme karşılık gelen bir yapı, el-Ula'daki benzersiz ve modern Maraya Konser Salonu üzerinden Suudi Arabistan'ın son yıllardaki değişimi tartışılmaktadır. Maraya hakkında bilgiler verilmekte, konser salonunun konumu, özellikleri ile Suudi Arabistan yönetiminin zihni kodlarına yönelik bir analiz yapılmaktadır. Söz konusu bu dar konuya ilişkin bir literatür henüz oluşmadığından çalışma için haberler, Suudi Arabistan analizleri ve konuyla dolaylı ilgili olan bilimsel araştırmalardan faydalanılmıştır. Bu bakımdan çalışmanın metodolojisi ikincil kaynaklar üzerinden yapılan araştırmalar üzerine kurulmuştur. Sonuç olarak Suudi Arabistan'ın değişim ya da dönüşüm için kararlı olduğu, bu kararını mimari yapılar gibi fiziki unsurlarla ifade etmeye çalıştığını, yapılanların neticesinde bölgede yeni bir siyasi ve ekonomik gücün inşa edildiği kanaatine ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Maraya, Ayna, Çöl, el-Ula, Vizyon 2030, Suudi Arabistan.

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A Sample for Understanding the Saudi Tanwir: Maraya Concert Hall on the Edge of al-Nafud

1. Saudi Arabia as a Phenomenon

Although Saudi Arabia has always been an important country, it has particularly become a significant phenomenon both in the Middle East and globally since King Salman ascended the throne. The primary reasons behind this claim lie in Saudi Arabia's emergence as both a regional and a global power, as well as its status as one of the largest economies in the Middle East and the world. In addition to being one of the major economies, Saudi Arabia's position as the only Arab country within the G20 further draws the attention of observers. Undoubtedly, there are numerous factors supporting this notion of phenomenon and underlying the current transformation. Saudi Arabia's strategic location, the planning of new trade routes passing through the country, its still substantial oil reserves, its emerging role as a host for new technologies, and its development into a global cultural hub through sports and other means rank among the foremost sources of Saudi Arabia's phenomenon status (Montague, 2025; Visvizi et al., 2019).

Saudi Arabia's strategic location renders it important in every respect. Positioned at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and Africa, and situated where three major seas converge, the country acquires an important identity. The transformation of Saudi Aramco into a colossal enterprise under the auspices of the United States following World War II is another factor that has made Saudi Arabia a phenomenon. Indeed, while the nation's oil wealth provides substantial economic resources, it simultaneously endows Saudi Arabia with the power to influence commercial and political markets. Although the country lacks a directly assertive military force, its substantial military expenditures constitute a significant element in its emergence as a global phenomenon. Moreover, the presence of Islam's two holiest cities within its borders elevates Saudi Arabia to a position of great importance for Muslims. Such a status sometimes leads to the country being perceived as a mediator, either behind closed doors or openly, reflecting its unique diplomatic qualities.

The distinctive characteristics of Saudi Arabia lead to the formation of a different perception of the country in the minds of ordinary people. Alongside the negative aspects, all these elements that create this phenomenal effect are related today to the construction of a new Saudi Arabia.

The original architect and proponent of the "New Saudi Arabia" concept, Mohammed bin Salman, has not kept this idea secret (Khatri, 2025). In fact, the most fundamental document articulating the vision of a new Saudi Arabia is the "Vision 2030" plan (Saudi Vision 2030). This document comprehensively defines all objectives and the roadmap to be followed, detailing each aspect thoroughly and linking them to a specific timeline. Therefore, the ambitious vision of "creating a new state" has been formalized through the Vision 2030 document. This official vision statement explicitly presents the idea of a new Saudi Arabia. The three main pillars of this vision can be summarized as follows:

- The construction of high culture,
- The qualification of human capital,
- The diversification of the economy into non-oil sectors (Saudi Vision 2030).

The document, the Vision 2030, announces the transformation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from a petroleum-based structure to an information and digital production-based economy (Digital Government Strategy). Thus, the Saudi economy aims to be diversified beyond oil dependency, becoming an integrated, competitive country within the framework of a diversified economy, mindset, and future promise as expressed below. Within this framework, a society with sustainably improved quality of life is envisioned. One

of the most important resources of this society is culture, which has become a fundamental goal (Saudi Vision 2030; Alharbi, 2024). The primary objective of this goal is to pave the way for a Saudi society with a high quality of life and cultural development capable of competing globally with its counterparts. Transitioning from an oil-dependent economic base to a digital economy-based structure is one of the most significant aims of Vision 2030 (Digital Economy Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). In this context, the authors of the Vision 2030 document strongly believe that Saudi Arabia will advance with a developing digital economy (Digital Transformation in Vision 2030: Building a Global Knowledge Economy, 2025). Indeed, the general perspective is that Saudi Arabia's transformation into a country that attracts foreign investors and invests in and enables investment in various sectors beyond oil revenues marks a turning point for the country. Among the diverse economic sectors are the digital economy, new tourism, high-tech pharmaceutical and chemical production, logistics centers located on trade routes, and ecological diversity (Olaje, 2025). Undoubtedly, one of the first steps in this area was the establishment of economic zones, accompanied by plans to privatize state assets to prepare for future investments. Therefore, the system has been designed based on the idea that the most important investment should be made in human capital. Within this framework, the Vision 2030 can be seen, as expressed in the declaration of intent, as a text embodying the metaphor of the "ambitious nation" (Saudi Vision 2030; The Report: Saudi Arabia 2022; Khatri, 2025). The "ambitious nation" ideal includes increasing productivity among the population and its components, spreading transparency, institutionalizing accountability, combating corruption, involving citizens in decisions in all areas, and rooting the concept of a social state among the main goals of the vision document (Saudi Vision 2030).

Saudi Arabia's rise as a global phenomenon is deeply rooted in the philosophical foundations of its vision document, which manifests itself through colossal, extraordinary, and almost futuristic architectural projects. Consequently, analyzing contemporary Saudi Arabia through its architectural works is not only possible but also highly meaningful for understanding the country's modernization, economic transformation, and cultural vision. Within the framework of the Vision 2030 plan, the country approaches architecture not merely as construction but as a lifestyle and a vision for the future (Diwan & Fallin, 2024). In line with this objective, Saudi Arabia has undertaken world-renowned monumental architectural projects. Foremost among these is NEOM, an estimated \$500 billion project. NEOM is designed as a futuristic city stretching 170 kilometers, car-free, with zero carbon emissions, and powered entirely by renewable energy (Saudi Vision 2030; NEOM). This project aims to integrate artificial intelligence and sustainability technologies into architecture, offering a living space in harmony with nature. Another significant project is The Mukaab (the Cube-shaped Structure) in the capital Riyadh, poised to become one of the world's largest buildings with an edge length of 400 meters (New Murabba). Its exterior is adorned with geometric patterns inspired by traditional Islamic architecture, while its interior features a modern and futuristic design. Other architectural groups combine cultural heritage with modern designs, emphasizing the preservation of Arab cultural traces in their projects. For example, the Diriyah Gate project in Riyadh honors the country's historical roots while being designed as a luxury tourism and cultural center (Diriyah Gate; Diriyah Gate Development Authority).

The large-scale construction initiatives mentioned are fundamentally aimed at revitalizing Saudi culture and promoting it globally. However, such initiatives should not be perceived merely as lavish, ostentatious structures with historical backgrounds. Indeed, major engineering and contracting projects like NEOM, Trojena, Amaala, and Jeddah Tower also introduce new business solutions, planning, and management models. Ultimately, flourishing Saudi Arabia seeks to distinguish itself as a country that, through architectural works, both preserves its cultural heritage and reflects its forward-thinking vision. The massive investments made under the Vision 2030, along with innovative technologies and sustainability-focused projects, elevate Saudi architecture to a distinctive and impressive position on the world stage. These architectural achievements provide strong parameters

for understanding Saudi Arabia's economic, cultural, and technological transformation (Pavan, 2023).

When viewed from a broad perspective, the intellectual and mental objectives of the Saudi Arabian elite become clearly discernible. Therefore, it can be argued that Saudi Arabia, particularly within the framework of the Vision 2030, aims for a comprehensive and highly serious transformation in sociological, scientific, economic, and societal domains (Pavan, 2023). The sociological and societal transformation promotes increased participation of the young population in the workforce and enhances the role of women in social life, while also leading to changes in family structure, with smaller and more modest households emerging. This outcome profoundly affects social life and economic balances. Societal change is supported by nationalism and new ideological values. On the other hand, the shift in scientific and technological perspectives paves the way for the rise of a form of technocracy, where expert cadres become more effective in governance, and large projects like NEOM are expected to support technological innovation and knowledge-based development. Digital transformation and technological advancements necessitate the redirection of economic strategies toward non-oil sectors. Economic transformation aims to reduce oil dependency, achieve economic diversification, and establish a sustainable growth model, which undoubtedly supports the Saudi government's main objectives. Consequently, growth has accelerated in tourism, entertainment, and service sectors (Call of the Desert, 2024). The implementation of the tax system, increased efficiency in the public sector, and the creation of a productive Saudi workforce in the private sector constitute the cornerstones of economic reforms. Economic independence against regional geopolitical risks and strengthening international cooperation are also prioritized. Challenges and obstacles require ensuring social participation and considering compatibility with traditional values for the sustainability of reforms. Maintaining regional stability and managing geopolitical risks are critical for the transformation in Saudi Arabia. In conclusion, Saudi Arabia is undergoing a profound transformation process in economic, social, and cultural fields with the Vision 2030. This process is therefore oriented toward meeting the needs of its young and dynamic population.

The most significant impact of all these initiatives will be seen in the emergence of a Saudi consciousness shaped by the Vision 2030. This consciousness represents the concrete manifestation of the "higher idea" concerning Saudi Arabia's intellectual transformation. The intellectual transformation in Saudi Arabia is being actualized through the Vision 2030. The intellectual roots of the "New Saudi Arabia," constructed since 2020, lie deep within the Vision 2030, the initiative led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman aimed at modernizing and diversifying the kingdom's economy and society by reducing its dependence on oil (Saudi Vision 2030; Rundell, 2022). This vision is framed as an intergenerational and intercultural rupture from the traditional matrix that has dominated Saudi Arabia for decades and is being observed with astonishment by the global public. The core intellectual dimensions of this change are declared to the world through cultural and educational reforms, initiatives to reconnect with historical and national roots, Saudization-which can be described as a form of nationalism-and the decision to build a new Saudi nation. Moreover, hosting international entertainment events symbolizing a break from past conservatism suggests the promotion of cultural openness (infatah=انفتاح). At the heart of this openness lies the intrinsic issue of embracing intellectual property and innovation ownership.

2. The Essence at the Roots of Saudi Tanwir: Vision 2030

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is a comprehensive development program launched in 2016 under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The program aims to transform the kingdom's economy by reducing its heavy dependence on oil, which currently constitutes a significant portion of government revenue, and to promote social and cultural progress. The background of the Vision 2030 stems from the recognition that global oil demand is expected to peak around 2030 and then decline, posing a threat to Saudi Arabia's

economic stability if it remains reliant on oil revenues (Grand & Wolff, 2020). This situation has prompted the government to establish a strategic roadmap to transform the economy, empower its citizens, and modernize society. The Vision 2030 is built upon three main themes:

1. *A Vibrant Society*: Enhancing quality of life, preserving cultural heritage, and improving social services,
2. *A Thriving Economy*: Creating a diverse and sustainable economy that offers opportunities for all,
3. *An Ambitious Nation*: Establishing an effective, transparent, and accountable government (Saudi Vision 2030).

The Vision 2030 also encompasses phased implementations through the "Vision Realization Programs" which focus on economic reforms, social development, and government efficiency with the aim of positioning Saudi Arabia as a global investment hub and a leading power within the Arab and Islamic worlds. In its concise form, the Vision 2030 can be described as a developmental initiative born out of the necessity to prepare Saudi Arabia for a post-oil future, diversify its economy, and advance social reforms.

The three main themes of the Vision 2030, which can be classified as a Vibrant Society, a Thriving Economy, and an Ambitious Nation, should be understood as major efforts aimed at reducing oil dependency through investments in sectors such as tourism, entertainment, mining, technology, and logistics (Alfaiz, 2025). Broadly speaking, the core of these initiatives lies in increasing the private sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product from 40% to 65% and attracting significant foreign investment. Therefore, prominent mega-projects such as NEOM (the city of the future), Qiddiya (the entertainment city), and the Red Sea Project are designed to stimulate tourism, innovation, and economic dynamism. Alongside these large-scale projects, the expansion of cultural and entertainment opportunities, the enhancement of women's participation in the workforce, and improvements in health and education are among the foremost social reforms developed under the Vision 2030. Key milestones of these social revolutions include granting women the right to drive and promoting entrepreneurship among women. Furthermore, initiatives aimed at improving quality of life-such as increasing life expectancy, encouraging sports and healthy lifestyles, and enhancing urban living standard-are prioritized objectives within the Vision 2030 reforms (Saudi Vision 2030). Indeed, positioning Saudi cities among the world's top 100 cities is also placed at the forefront of the overall goals. Concurrently with these objectives, plans to increase the number of umrah visitors, double UNESCO World Heritage sites, and promote Saudi heritage and Islamic values represent tangible steps to strengthen the social dimensions of the Vision 2030. Additionally, ambitious targets related to environmental sustainability, renewable energy, afforestation, and carbon emission reduction stand out as notable elements in the Vision 2030 framework. Notably, the goal is to source 50% of energy from renewable resources by 2030 (Grand & Wolff, 2020). As Vision 2030 is implemented in phases of five years each, clear strategic goals and the Vision Realization Programs (VRPs) have been developed to ensure accountability and monitor progress. In this respect, the initial phase focused on fundamental reforms, while the current phase accelerates investment and sectoral growth. The subsequent phase aims to sustain and expand these achievements, with tangible outcomes including increased foreign investment, growth in non-oil sectors, and visible social transformations across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi Vision 2030 primarily targets the "Saudi elites" through broader objectives such as creating a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation. The Vision aims to empower all citizens, including the elites, by fostering a strong social infrastructure that respects cultural traditions and national pride while promoting modern amenities and effective social services. Furthermore, it focuses on economic diversification

and expanding opportunities for success in the private sector, education, and investment, directly benefiting elites involved in business and governance. Additionally, Vision 2030 emphasizes the importance of establishing an efficient, transparent, accountable, and high-performing government aligned with the ambitions of Saudi elites to lead and contribute to national development (Montagu, 2024). More specifically, the Vision encourages the growth of the private sector and aims to reduce dependence on oil revenues by promoting investment and entrepreneurship, areas in which elites play a significant role. The plan includes privatization efforts and the expansion of public-private partnerships that open new avenues for elite participation in the economy.

Table 1. The Probable impact of Vision 2030 on Saudi Elites

Perspective	Enlightenment Potential	Restrictive Factors
Economic Pluralism	Promotion of Innovation	Hierarchical Control
Social Liberalization	Encouragement of Openness	Suppression of Opposition
Global Integration	Diffusion of New Ideas	Resistance from Conservative Elites

Saudi Vision 2030 places the elites-namely business leaders, investors, and policymakers-at the core of its economic transformation. For these Saudi elites, the primary goals and opportunities are concentrated in the following areas:

1. *Private Sector Contribution:* It is aimed to increase the share of the private sector in GDP from 40% to 65% by the year 2030, thereby creating significant investment and leadership opportunities in sectors such as healthcare, education, transportation, and public services,

2. *Privatization Program:* Another key objective involves transferring state assets and services to private operators, achieving 40% private sector participation in critical sectors,

3. *SME Growth:* Increasing the contribution of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to GDP to 35%, alongside raising the contribution of non-oil exports to non-oil GDP to 50%, are also regarded as important parameters in the transformation envisioned by the Saudi elites (Saudi Vision 2030).

Due to the aforementioned considerations, the partial privatization of Saudi Aramco through an initial public offering, and the allocation of the proceeds towards investment, are regarded as significant contingent upon the realization of the outlined factors. Ultimately, these objectives offer the Saudi elite comprehensive roles in shaping the future of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through investment, leadership, and innovation in high-growth sectors.

The Vision 2030 plan, which aims to implement profound reforms in economic, social, and cultural spheres in Saudi Arabia, can indeed be considered a form of "Saudi Enlightenment." This is because the plan seeks to reduce dependence on oil by diversifying the economy, strengthening the private sector, encouraging women's participation in the workforce, and improving education and employment opportunities for the youth. These objectives embody the essence of an enlightenment process. Moreover, through mega-city projects, investments in renewable energy, and hosting international events, the plan aims to enhance the country's global appeal. For these reasons, the Vision 2030 can be regarded as an enlightenment for the Saudi elites, as it promotes a transition from a traditional oil-based economy to a modern, technological, and knowledge-based economy. Social reforms, particularly those enhancing the roles of women and youth in society, support the adoption

of new ideas and lifestyles within the elite. Additionally, international collaborations and foreign investments broaden the elites' vision by integrating Saudi Arabia more deeply into the global economy. However, some liberal reforms that conflict with conservative values may provoke debates among the elites regarding identity and values (Hope & Scheck, 2020). Ultimately, the Vision 2030 offers the Saudi elites an opportunity for economic and social enlightenment while simultaneously generating tension between traditional values and modernization. The plan transforms the elites' mindset and lifestyle, contributing to Saudi Arabia's positioning as a global actor. It also has the potential to accelerate a kind of enlightenment by exposing elites to new global ideas, fostering innovation, and supporting more open social values. Nevertheless, the process is constrained by centralized power, limited political freedoms, and resistance from traditional segments. This may result in the emergence of a pragmatic, modernizing elite group.

3. Maraya as an Architectural Structure

One could argue that architecture constitutes one of the concrete measures aimed directly at the minds of the Saudi elite and serves as a transformative pathway within Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 plan to create a "new state" by 2030. In this regard, alongside prominent projects such as the Haramain High-Speed Railway, Mukaab, Qiddiya, and NEOM, perhaps one of the most striking examples is the Maraya concert hall in al-Ula, which, despite its relative modesty, stands out as a significant architectural landmark.

The Maraya building has been designed as part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiative to promote tourism, culture, and infrastructure development. Named "Maraya," which means "mirrors" in Arabic, the structure is a striking glass edifice that harmonizes modern architecture with the natural landscape of al-Ula an ancient city renowned for its rock formations and archaeological sites (Mansuri, 2024).

Maraya is located in Wadi Ashar, near the ancient city of al-Ula, a historic region in the northwest of the kingdom. These areas have hosted significant civilizations throughout history and are known for their rich archaeological and cultural heritage. al-Ula was the capital of the ancient Lihyanite Kingdom, founded around the 6th century BCE. It corresponds to the biblical city of Dedan. Situated on the "Incense Route," the region served as a strategic center for the trade of spices, silk, and luxury goods between Arabia, Egypt, and India (James, 2023). The Nabataeans ruled the region until the 1st century CE, establishing Hegra (Madain Salih) north of al-Ula as their second capital; Hegra is renowned for its rock-cut tombs and is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. During the Ottoman period, al-Ula maintained its importance as a key stop on pilgrimage routes and as a station on the Hejaz Railway. Archaeological findings in the area date back to the Bronze Age, confirming al-Ula's significance as a center of human settlement for millennia. Wadi Ashar, where Maraya was constructed, is a valley rich in archaeological remains reflecting the natural and cultural heritage of the region. It contains rock inscriptions, tombs, and monuments from ancient civilizations such as the Lihyanites and Nabataeans, demonstrating Wadi Ashar's historical role as an important settlement and cultural hub alongside al-Ula (Alrouf, 2024). Both al-Ula and Wadi Ashar have historically been crossroads of ancient trade routes, holding substantial economic, cultural, and religious significance. Today, they represent some of Saudi Arabia's most vital archaeological and natural treasures. The region has also become a leading example of creative desert tourism development in Saudi Arabia, featuring boutique hotel concepts that contribute to the growth of the country's tourism sector (Hope & Scheck, 2020).

It can be inferred that, supported by its historical and cultural background, Saudi authorities plan to construct Maraya in al-Ula, aiming to highlight the region's historical and cultural heritage while simultaneously revitalizing tourism and transforming it into an international center for cultural exchange. Indeed, the fact that many significant cultural events and international meetings in Saudi Arabia have already been held at Maraya clearly demonstrates this objective. For instance, Maraya's use as the main venue for the "Tantora

Festival," where artists from around the world perform concerts, serves as an example supporting this claim (Malek, 2020; Tashkandi, 2019).

The decision to construct the Maraya building in al-Ula was made by the Royal Commission for al-Ula (RCU) (Royal Commission for AlUla). The RCU is a Saudi governmental entity established by royal decree in July 2017. Its mandate is to preserve and develop al-Ula, a region in northwestern Saudi Arabia renowned for its extraordinary natural and cultural significance, including the archaeological site of Hegra, Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage site. The RCU aims to protect al-Ula's heritage while implementing a sustainable transformation plan that promotes tourism, culture, education, and the arts, in alignment with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which emphasizes economic diversification and the empowerment of local communities. Operating independently in terms of administration and budget, the institution's objectives include creating a concert and event venue that harmonizes with the valley's landscape and develops al-Ula as a cultural hub and tourist destination consistent with Vision 2030. Notably, the building's complete mirror cladding is designed to reflect and amplify the surrounding historical monuments and natural beauty, thereby highlighting the region's aesthetic and cultural value. Prince Badr bin Abdullah Al Saud, the Governor of the Royal Commission for al-Ula and Saudi Minister of Culture, has led the development and enhancement of the Maraya Concert Hall (RCU Governor Inspects Major Al-Ula Infrastructure Projects, 2019). Under his leadership, Maraya has undergone significant design processes to become a larger, permanent facility with over 500 seats, acoustics improved for opera performances, a new restaurant (Maraya Social), an art exhibition space, and a rooftop terrace. The mirrored design, reflecting the surrounding desert landscape, remains a defining feature. These efforts form part of a broader vision to position al-Ula as a global cultural and tourism destination in line with the Saudi Vision 2030.

The al-Ula Development Company (UDC) is a hospitality and real estate development firm located in the city of al-Ula, Saudi Arabia. It was established on January 30, 2023, by the Public Investment Fund (PIF) as part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiative to transform al-Ula into a global tourism destination (AlUla Development Company). UDC focuses on developing a portfolio of premier hospitality, residential, retail, commercial, and infrastructure assets in collaboration with the RCU and the private sector. The company aims to promote sustainable economic growth while preserving the cultural heritage of al-Ula.

The structural features of the Maraya Concert Hall in al-Ula can be summarized under the following five headings:

1. *Integration with Nature and Invisibility:* The building's exterior is clad with 9,740 mirror panels that reflect the surrounding desert landscape, rendering the structure nearly invisible. This design allows the building to appear as a natural part of its environment, symbolizing architecture's respect for nature,

2. *Fusion of Technology and Art:* Maraya holds the Guinness World Record as the world's largest mirrored building. The mirrors not only provide an aesthetic reflection but are also specially coated to withstand the harsh desert climate, including intense sunlight and sandstorms. This represents the union of technology and art adapting to natural conditions,

3. *Cultural and Historical Context:* Situated in the al-Ula region, which was the ancient capital of the Lihyan and Nabataean kingdoms, Maraya merges this rich historical heritage with modern architecture. It reflects the cultural identity of the area and symbolizes Saudi Arabia's ambition to become a center for culture and tourism,

4. *Silence and Simplicity:* Architect Florian Boje's design philosophy emphasizes the building being "silent and invisible." This approach aims to create a minimal structure that harmonizes with the environment without disturbing nature,

5. *Multi-functional Cultural Center*: Maraya is not only a concert hall but also serves as a versatile cultural venue hosting exhibitions, conferences, and various artistic events. It stands as a symbol of the dissemination of culture and art. These features collectively highlight Maraya as a pioneering architectural masterpiece that blends environmental sensitivity, advanced technology, cultural significance, and multifunctionality.

Maraya should be regarded as a work of art. It holds the distinction of being the world's largest mirrored building and has earned a place in the record books [Oomen, 2020]. The primary material used in the construction of the Maraya Concert Hall is the 9,740 mirrored panels that clad its exterior. These panels were locally manufactured by Guardian Glass using UltraMirror technology (The Maraya Concert Hall).

Specialized mirrors with unique coatings were used in the construction of the building, designed both to reflect the surrounding desert landscape and to withstand the challenges posed by solar radiation, sandstorms, and the harsh desert climate (Saudi's Maraya Concert Hall Breaks World Record, 2020). Consequently, the building becomes almost invisible at certain times of the day, harmonizing seamlessly with its natural environment. These mirrors constitute the fundamental architectural and aesthetic identity of the concert hall. Moreover, the design and construction of the hall were completed rapidly using advanced technology; the architecture was planned to be quiet and unobtrusive, preserving the natural integrity of the region. In summary, the primary material employed in the construction of the Maraya Concert Hall consists of specially coated mirrored panels, which form the essential visual and functional elements of the structure. Additionally, the hall's design and construction utilized cutting-edge technology to ensure swift completion, with an architectural approach that maintains the natural landscape without disruption, rendering the building silent and nearly invisible.

The building's mirrors are coated with a special layer designed to withstand sandstorms, temperature fluctuations, and the harsh climatic conditions of the desert. This coating enables the structure to reflect sunlight during the day, thereby illuminating the hall, and to reflect starlight at night, creating an enchanting atmosphere. The interior houses a 1,777-square-meter auditorium, which serves multiple purposes including concerts, theatrical performances, exhibitions, and other events. The design was realized by Saudi architects in collaboration with the Italian architectural studio Giò Forma. Maraya is regarded as a "land art" piece that harmonizes with the surrounding natural and historical heritage (Maraya Concert Hall; Maraya / Giò Forma Studio Associato S.r.l.). The architecture of the building is conceived to reflect and enhance the natural environment, thus emphasizing nature rather than competing with it, and offering visitors distinct visual experiences both during the day and at night. In summary, the Maraya building stands out as a multifunctional concert hall, adapted to the desert environment, clad in expansive mirrors, protected by advanced technology, and designed to integrate seamlessly with its surroundings.

The structural framework of the building is composed of a steel structure to ensure rapid construction and durability. This steel framework is shaped as a cube with dimensions of 100 x 100 x 26 meters. Within the interior spaces, specially designed ceramic tiles reflecting the natural colors and textures of al-Ula have been used, alongside custom-made chairs from the Poltrona Frau brand (The King Fahad Chair). Behind the stage, there is a massive retractable window, which is operated via an automated mechanical system.

4. The Idea of Maraya and Its Roots in Saudi Mind

In recent years, the primary reasons behind Saudi Arabia's emphasis on its history are to strengthen the country's legitimacy and national identity, as well as to consolidate its regional and international position. In 2022, King Salman officially declared the founding date of the country to be 1727, marking the year when his great-grandfather Muhammad bin Saud assumed leadership of the Emirate of Diriyah, instead of the previously recognized date

of 1932. This shift is indicative of the new order and clearly aims to highlight the historical depth and rootedness of the Saudi dynasty. Such historical emphasis is closely linked to Saudi Arabia's efforts to forge a reinforced identity both in domestic politics and regional competition. Particularly since 2015, under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the country has been implementing comprehensive reforms and modernization programs while simultaneously redefining its historical heritage to foster national unity and legitimacy. Moreover, historiography and the emphasis on the past serve as ideological and political tools for Saudi Arabia to maintain the regional status quo and to contend with Iran and other rivals. The strengthening of the historical narrative supports the Saudi dynasty's claims to leadership and the continuity of the state (Determann, 2014).

The Al Saud family's emphasis on the past should be regarded as a form of praise. This praise clearly manifests as a type of nationalism. Nationalism in Saudi Arabia has developed in a manner consistent with Arab nationalism in the region and the family's historical traditions. Unlike other Arab nationalist movements in the region, Saudi nationalism is primarily based on religious and local elements and has been utilized as a tool to legitimize the Saudi regime. In this context, Saudi nationalism possesses a distinctive character, emphasizing both religious and national identity (Ménoret, 2005). Recently, cultural events organized within this framework in Saudi Arabia, conducted under the umbrella of Arab nationalism, generally revolve around festivals and organizations that celebrate Arab culture, history, and traditions. Some of these events include:

1. *al-Janadriyah Festival*: Held near Riyadh, this festival celebrates the local culture of Saudi Arabia and the Arab lifestyle. The festival features folk dances, camel and horse races, local handicraft markets, and traditional cuisine. Each year, a different country is invited as the guest of honor,

2. *King Abdulaziz Falconry Festival*: This festival commemorates the traditional art of falconry through falcon competitions, handicraft exhibitions, music, and dance performances. The event highlights an important aspect of Arab cultural heritage,

3. *Souq Okaz*: Originally a major market in the pre-Islamic period, Souq Okaz is now organized annually to promote Arab culture. The festival includes activities and award ceremonies in various artistic fields such as photography, poetry, and theater,

4. *Riyadh Spring Festival*: Celebrated during the spring season, this festival honors the relationship between Arab culture and nature through flower exhibitions and agricultural displays,

5. *Diriyah Cultural Activities*: Diriyah, the historical capital of Saudi Arabia, is regarded as a symbol of Arab culture and history. At the at-Turaif district, a UNESCO World Heritage site, museums, art galleries, and traditional culinary experiences are offered. These activities support the emphasis on Arab nationalism through the unity of language, history, and culture, thereby contributing to the social and cultural perpetuation of Arab identity in Saudi Arabia.

Since 2020, the notion that Saudi cultural identity is experiencing a government-driven cultural renaissance balancing tradition and modernization has gained widespread acceptance (Khatri, 2025; Hope & Scheck, 2020). This transformation is clearly observable in social reforms, the promotion of cultural diversity, the emergence of new cultural initiatives, and the strategic utilization of culture to enhance national security and global standing. Throughout this process, a transition from a conservative, religion-centered identity to a more open, inclusive, and dynamic one aligned with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 objectives can be clearly traced. Indeed, the Maraya Concert Hall, situated in al-Ula along historic international trade routes, stands as a tangible embodiment of these ideals. When seeking philosophical rationales behind the mindset that conceived or constructed Maraya, numerous justifications readily come to mind.

In 2016, Saudi Arabia launched Vision 2030, which has served as a catalyst for a broad cultural evolution aimed at diversifying the economy and modernizing society while preserving traditional Islamic values (Abedalrhman & Alzaydi, 2024). This vision frames culture as a pillar of national identity and security, fostering a renaissance that embraces both heritage and future aspirations. The government has made substantial investments in cultural projects such as restoring historical sites, promoting the arts, and encouraging cultural dialogue; this signals a transition towards a more inclusive and multifaceted identity beyond a solely religious one. Maraya, particularly notable for its rooftop restaurant, stands as a prominent venue where these claims are vividly manifested.

The Saudi elites are increasingly engaged in a conscious effort to democratize heritage by recognizing and celebrating diverse cultural expressions across the regions of Saudi Arabia, including pre-Islamic history, Bedouin traditions, and local customs (Hope & Scheck, 2020). This inclusivity extends to marginalized art forms and minority narratives, indicating a shift from a monocultural perspective to a pluralistic identity. Visitors to Maraya today can observe these transitions firsthand. The diversity of events held at Maraya, the variety of their themes, and the quality of nearby boutique hotels provide compelling evidence of this eclectic lifestyle.

Within the framework of these transformations, it is necessary to add cultural diplomacy as a form of soft power alongside Saudi Arabia's traditional sources of power. Saudi Arabia is now positioning itself as a global cultural hub to attract tourism and investment (Kéchichian, 2019). For instance, international events such as the Andy Warhol exhibition and concerts by Andrea Bocelli, Alicia Keys, Usher, Angham, and Majid al Mohandis exemplify this cultural outreach (Abigael, 2023).

Both the al-Ula project and other initiatives aim to Saudize the labor market within the Saudization framework. The region is planned to enable new employment opportunities accordingly. Analyses indicate that investments amounting to 20 billion dollars are planned by 2035. This scale of investment clearly allows for significant leverage in providing thousands of new jobs in Saudi Arabia[Bhatia, 2019].

The increased visibility of female tour guides, the presence of women in public spaces, and the curtailment of the morality police's powers reflect a more open social environment in everyday life. These reforms indicate a shift in social norms and a relaxation of the strict conservative controls which have been traditionally defining Saudi cultural identity. Similarly, campaigns that focus on solo female travelers and challenge prevailing stereotypes actively contribute to reshaping the international image of Saudi identity. Initiatives such as the Culture Year exemplify a national dialogue about identity that balances tradition with modern global engagement. Maraya can be regarded as the pinnacle embodiment of all these developments in every respect.

From a general perspective, it can be asserted that the Maraya Concert Hall stands as a powerful symbol representing modernity and the Kingdom's ambitious vision for the future, particularly aligned with Saudi Vision 2030. The design of the structure not only creates a visually striking "mirage" effect but also occupies a central position in honoring and highlighting the natural beauty and historical significance of Al Ula, which hosts Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, Hegra. Consequently, with its state-of-the-art facilities hosting international concerts, conferences, and cultural events, it constitutes a pivotal step towards transforming the venue into a major cultural hub that promotes intercultural exchange and showcases Saudi Arabia's burgeoning arts scene.

5. Conclusion

Saudi Arabia's petroleum wealth, and the economic magnitude it has enabled, have secured the kingdom a significant position in global politics. The monarchy, which has structured all its social, economic, and international relations around the oil regime, has

recognized the necessity to reposition itself in the face of technological and economic changes at the beginning of the 21st century. This repositioning gained considerable momentum following the accession of Salman bin Abdulaziz to the throne and the appointment of his son, Mohammed bin Salman, as crown prince. Mohammed bin Salman and his team, through the development of visionary documents, have placed Saudi Arabia at the center of a profound transformation. The cultural changes have challenged the traditional social fabric, eliciting serious yet ultimately inconclusive criticism. Economic reforms have aimed to fundamentally overhaul the existing Saudi economic structure, adapting it to a digital economy framework.

Changes in both cultural and economic domains have necessitated a transformation in human capital. It appears that the Saudi ruling elites and leading tribal figures have collectively constructed a social contract to transform the kingdom. This has given rise to massive construction projects across the country, accompanied by evolving new administrative forms. These projects should not be understood merely as engineering investments; above all, they constitute new organizational models embedded within the Saudi socio-economic order. Moreover, these projects carry a rich historical and social heritage beyond their technical aspects. Saudi elites thereby achieve multiple objectives simultaneously: advancing traditional Saudi business practices, generating new organizational competencies, and, by leveraging a strong legacy from the past, conveying a forward-looking message. One such project is Maraya, a part of al-Ula mega complex, which, with its extraordinary physical structure, has become one of the most significant reflections of the new Saudi mindset. Its location at the crossroads of historic trade routes recalls the strong historical ties between Najd and the Levant. Furthermore, situated in an untouched natural environment, Maraya aspires to a perfection aimed at humanity, becoming one of the most exceptional examples in this context. In addition to exhibiting modern art and hosting significant artistic performances, Maraya serves as a venue for international conferences, rendering it a vibrant and sustainable exemplar that represents the modern Saudi vision. Thus, Maraya transforms into a symbolic monument reminiscent of the ancestors of the Saudi elites. It is recommended to view modern Saudi architectural projects through this lens.

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From the State of Nature to Sovereignty: Thucydidean Foundations of Hobbesian Realism through the Melian Dialogue

Many critics argue that the early modern political philosopher Thomas Hobbes offers his readers a “framework” that strictly governs the creation of social and political obligation and that Hobbes himself fails to provide a “consistently adhered to and well-defined” set of rules that put those obligations into practice. Hobbes' political theory is reexamined in this work, which shows that his insistence on the unrestricted transfer of infinite subjects' right to self-defense from commonwealth-free installer action by commonwealth sovereigns is either unnecessary or invalid. His published works provide a wealth of evidence supporting this interpretation. This study is going to discuss the life of Thomas Hobbes, state of nature, social contract, realism, and introduction, and emphasize the key moments and thoughts on Thomas Hobbes and his realist ideas. The study, at first, will provide a general evaluation of the life of Thomas Hobbes. Then it will discuss the concept of the state of nature, given Hobbes's idea of man and the state of nature, the formation of Leviathan and the law of nature. Afterwards, Melian Dialog will be analyzed from the realist perspective. The conclusion will summarize the intent of the study.

Keywords: Social Contract, Realism, Leviathan, Human Nature, Melian Dialogue.

Doğa Durumundan Egemenliğe: Melian Diyalogu Üzerinden Hobbesçu Realizmin Tukididesçi Temelleri

Pek çok eleştirmen, erken modern siyaset filozofu Thomas Hobbes'un okuyucularına sosyal ve siyasi yükümlülüklerin oluşturulmasını sıkı sıkıya yöneten bir “çerçeve” sunduğunu ve Hobbes'un kendisinin bu yükümlülükleri uygulamaya koyan “tutarlı bir şekilde uyulan ve iyi tanımlanmış” bir kurallar dizisi sunmakta başarısız olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Hobbes'un siyaset teorisinin yeniden incelendiği bu çalışma, onun sonsuz tebaanın kendini savunma hakkının commonwealth (toplum sözleşmesine dayalı düzenli bir siyasi otoriteye sahip devlet) egemenleri tarafından commonwealth'siz installer eylemine sınırsızca devredilmesi konusundaki ısrarının ya gereksiz ya da geçersiz olduğunu göstermektedir. Yayınlanmış eserleri bu yorumu destekleyen çok sayıda kanıt sunmaktadır. Bu çalışmada Thomas Hobbes'un hayatı, Doğa Durumu ve Toplumsal Sözleşme, Realizm, Giriş konuları ele alınacak, Thomas Hobbes ve realist fikirleri üzerine önemli anlar ve düşünceler vurgulanacaktır. Çalışmada öncelikle Thomas Hobbes'un hayatı hakkında genel bir değerlendirme yapılacaktır, ardından doğa durumu kavramı tartışılmaya çalışılacak, Hobbes'un insan ve doğa durumu düşüncesi, Leviathan'ın oluşumu ve doğa yasası ele alınacak, sonrasında Melian Diyalogu realist perspektiften analiz edilecektir. Sonuç, çalışmanın amacını özetleyecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplum Sözleşmesi, Realizm, Leviathan, İnsan Doğası, Melian Diyalogu.

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From the State of Nature to Sovereignty: Thucydidean Foundations of Hobbesian Realism through the Melian Dialogue

1. Introduction

Thomas Hobbes is one of the important philosophers who contributed to philosophy in the 17th century. He has guided us to alleviate the troubles of politics. He is ready to guide us about one of the most compelling matters of politics. To what extent should we obey the rules of the government, particularly those who are not favorable? And what revolutions should be adopted and followed, to what extent should we resist the state and the orders in search of a new world?

The development of Thomas Hobbes's political philosophy is inextricably linked to a defining historical event that occurred later in his life. At the age of 64, Hobbes witnessed the outbreak of the English Civil War a conflict that would profoundly shape his intellectual trajectory. Although he lived until the age of 91, much of his significant theoretical output emerged after the age of 60. Importantly, widespread recognition and scholarly engagement with his ideas largely took place posthumously. The English Civil War, which unfolded over nearly a decade, was a brutal and divisive conflict that devastated the country, setting the monarchy against Parliament and resulting in the deaths of approximately 200,000 individuals on both sides (Sorell, 2025). The violence and instability of this period had a lasting impact on Hobbes's conception of authority and political order.

This historical backdrop serves as a foundation for Hobbes's most influential work, *Leviathan*, in which he articulates a vision of sovereignty designed to prevent the descent into anarchy. Central to this vision is the role of the sovereign in preserving peace and ensuring collective security—conditions Hobbes viewed as essential for civil society. He contends that the primary causes of conflict lie in the struggle for power, reputation, and safety, all of which are intensified by mutual fear among individuals. To escape this condition, people enter into a social contract, relinquishing their individual autonomy to a central authority in exchange for protection and stability (Mikelman, 2016).

The theoretical concepts Hobbes introduce including his interpretation of human nature, the principle of psychological egoism, the notion of natural rights in the state of nature, and the justification for absolute sovereign power continue to be foundational in the study of political theory and the organization of human coexistence. Hobbes specifies that all human beings are equal. Also, there are no constraints for the state of nature by law. Because of human nature, the anarchic state of nature causes enmity and war. Because human nature is egoist, bad, materialistic, and hungry for power. Human nature goes after their craving, and if there is no authority then they will dispute each other. Hobbes specifies that instead of this enmity, everyone would negotiate with each other and meet up and transfer their rights to a third party. It would be more efficient and this third party is *Leviathan* as a ruler. The theory of state was known as "social contract". There is no permanent peace in international relations and between states. The states are supposed to behave in a balance of sensitive power due to survival concerns result from anarchy.

In this article, I will summarize the experiences and intellectual milieu that shaped Thomas Hobbes's thought and then turn to his basic accounts of the state of nature and the social contract. I will then examine Hobbes's contribution to political realism, in particular his treatment of power, sovereignty and authority. In addition, by adding and arguing that classical *realpolitik* prefigured key elements of *Leviathan*, I argue that there are traces of the reception of Thucydidean principles in Hobbesian theory. A close and comparative textual analysis of Thucydides' Melian Dialogue and Hobbes' *Leviathan* is a focused work of analysis that reveals how ancient examples inform early modern conceptions of statecraft. However, This topic is significant because Hobbes's political theory plays a foundational role in shaping modern conceptions of sovereignty, authority, and power. Exploring his engagement with classical sources offers valuable insight into the

historical development and continuity of these core political ideas. Throughout the study, I employ systematic discourse analysis alongside a review of secondary literature to provide a solid methodological foundation. This structure guides the reader from biographical context to theoretical synthesis and concrete examples, setting the stage for final reflections on Hobbes's ongoing engagement with contemporary debates on sovereignty.

2. Life of Thomas Hobbes

Hobbes was one of the most important philosophers that come to mind 17th century and continue to have a big influence today. Thomas Hobbes was born in 1588 at Westport, now part of the Malmesbury in Wiltshire England. His father, also named Thomas, was the vicar of Charlton and Westport. Hobbes had a dark childhood. "His father was a vicar. (Chavura) Hobbes's father engaged in a physical altercation with a fellow clergyman at his parish, after which he fled from London. The father Thomas Hobbes left the three siblings to be taken care of by his brother.

Thomas Hobbes was a very good student. When he was 14 went to Oxford and his uncle sponsored Hobbes' education at Oxford University. After graduation, he worked as a private teacher for Mr. Cavendish (Smith, 2017) Mr. Cavendish's family was an aristocrat. Hobbes traveled to Europe with his student, Mr. Cavendish. During these Europe trips, Hobbes met Descartes and Galileo. In 1629, Hobbes finished his first book, and it was a translation of 'the History of the Peloponnesian War' of Thucydides (Hobbes, 2022).

The English Civil War, which began around 1640, was a significant and turbulent conflict in England's history. During this period, King Charles I was executed, yet his death did not bring an immediate end to the hostilities. The war persisted, marked by intense clashes between the royalist forces loyal to the king and the parliamentary faction, ultimately resulting in approximately 200,000 casualties over nearly a decade. The widespread violence and political instability deeply influenced Thomas Hobbes, compelling him to leave England and seek refuge in France alongside members of the English aristocracy and royal court. This prolonged conflict profoundly shaped Hobbes's intellectual development, prompting him to critically examine the root causes of civil unrest and political disorder.

His reflections culminated in the publication of his early work, *De Cive* (1642), which can be understood as a preliminary exploration of the themes he would later develop more fully in his seminal work, *Leviathan*. Notably, *Leviathan*, which Hobbes began composing in his later years around the age of sixty, stands as his most influential contribution to political philosophy, offering a comprehensive theory of social contract and sovereign authority grounded in the experience of civil war and chaos.

During the rest of his life, he studied scientific and political issues. For example, he wrote a book about the history of the English War. The book's name is *Behemoth*. This book remains a classic on the analysis of the causes of social conflicts. He also translated all of Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*'s end of his life.

3. The State of Nature and Social Contract

The concept of the "state of nature" is fundamental in Hobbesian political philosophy, as Hobbes argues that although all individuals are born equal and free, this very freedom inevitably leads to instability and continuous conflict. Hobbes claims that in this circumstance, man is a "wolf" for man (Hobbes, 1651). He states that everybody's life is "solitary, poor, evil, brutish and short" while discussing the state of nature.

In Thomas Hobbes's political philosophy, human beings first and foremost possess a fundamental desire to survive. To explain the conditions that existed prior to the formation of the state, Hobbes employs the notion of the state of nature in his *Social Contract*. Within this concept, every individual is considered equal and capable of claiming the rights they desire. Consequently, he asserts that within the state of nature, the absence of enforceable laws grants individuals unrestricted freedom to act, resulting inevitably in a state of conflict.

The state of nature, the privileges of individuals, the right to personal property, morality, and justice can not be mentioned. So if anyone wants to, they can go and get what the other person uses. It states that everyone has the right to nature, so that can not be mentioned justice. This condition may place individuals in opposition to one another, potentially leading to conflict and social disorder. That is why it can begin to confuse people for the sake of protecting their existence, providing security, and achieving goals. Hobbes emphasized the emphasis on fear in his thoughts. He talks about the only feeling that can be trusted and that is fear.

According to Hobbes's idea people, have secured all their security such as domestic problems, and outside of the country the danger. The aim of the state is individual security. The aim of the restriction of people who enjoy freedom and dominance over others to protect themselves and thus to live a happier life. It is necessary to have a good state to do them. The end of their unlimited freedom by a contract is to give up their rights in favor of a third party.

When we analyse Hobbes' concept of Leviathan, it refers to the biblical sea monster and symbolises an artificial sovereign created by the social contract to bring order to the state of nature. Hobbes calls that mortal god (Leviathan) and he thinks the birth of that mortal god, whom we owe our peace and defense. For Hobbes, the sovereign power of the sovereign, in which he uses the analogy of Leviathan for him, the people's constant death threat in their natural state and the social contract to destroy fear, is infinite. The power of sovereignty is that these individual administrations are partners. Hobbes emphasized the impotence and indispensability of the state; he mentions that the collapse of the state will lead to the abolition of authoritarian order.

According to Thomas Hobbes, if there is no order, no one can feel safe. For the continuation of this order, people need to do what they do. He argued that the basic duty of the state was to provide morality and justice, and he stated that the power in providing them was unlimited.

"Where there is no common power, no law; where no law, no justice." (Hobbes, 1651)

Thomas Hobbes said that the state of nature (natural lifetime before the emergence of the state) is not peaceful but instead it is very wild full of violence. He emphasizes how the necessity of having power is important. Because who has power, centralized the political authority. Human beings lived in a condition of war 'everyone against everyone'. He tried to show to escape from this condition, he suggested placing all power to a sovereign state or Leviathan (a state authority or supreme ruler) that would maintain command and end the anarchy. There is no economic development, art or knowledge without order.

The eventuation of personal security and domestic security through the creation of a state leads to international insecurity that is ingrained in the anarchy of the state system which is a security dilemma. If we look at it from a state point of view, there is no way to run away from the security dilemma as there is no probability of the emergence of a world government. He claims that there is no higher authority over all states to insist on order. The international system is anarchy (Lechner, 2022). States assert to be sovereign with a right to be independent and autonomous concerning each other. Without a leviathan, insecurity, conflict, and war are inescapable. There is no constant peace between states. Due to the survival concerns in anarchy, states are expected to act in a balance of power sense. Due to the anarchy's supposal, there is no fixed idea of good and evil. For realism, might is right. Law or morality does not perform beyond the nation's confines. Hobbes propounds that without an outstanding authority to make lawful codes of conduct, no morality or justice can obtain.

4. Hobbes and Realism

Both theory and evidence in international politics may be subdivided into three models of inquiry: realism, which emphasizes power and political forces as the central aspect and considers international institutions to be epiphenomenal and relatively unimportant in the analysis; neorealism, a more recent offshoot on the realist tradition, which focuses attention more on structure and the constraints on states interacting; and, liberal institutionalism, which proposes a broader role for diplomacy and international governmental institutions, linking them to

important effects on state behavior.. Before examining this relationship, it is incumbent upon this writer to provide an individual examination of realism, neorealism, and liberal institutionalism, since such an examination should offer insight and analysis first as to its usefulness in understanding the process as it has evolved over time.

Thomas Hobbes once wrote that people need the extraordinary to prepare them for otherwise unlikely events. Recent times have, for better or worse, abounded in such persons and their acts. Some say the sensible possibility of failing states and state violence has set off an electoral backlash by those worn thin by too much extraordinariness. Or worse, in their view, by those who deceitfully exploit it (Mikelman, 2016).

Realism has been inspired by great philosophers since its birth. John Mearsheimer, the most renowned scholar of the theory today, based his research on the great master Thomas Hobbes. Mearsheimer's world system of self-interested unitary states in anarchy should be attributed to what Hobbes described as the "natural state of mankind". Each state is assumed to be sovereignty-seeking, self-interested, power-hungry and rational.

Mearsheimer's realist assumptions can be seen as an extension of Hobbesian logic applied to the international system. Like Morgenthau and Waltz, Morgenthau, the father of traditional realism, wrote that political understanding is derived from interpretations of human nature, the nature of society and power. Similarly, Waltz, the founder of structural realism, is best known for his book *Man, the State and War*. This book is essentially a rewriting of Hobbesian tragedy in an international society. In conclusion, Hobbes should be considered as the beginning, the peak and the end of realism.

Hobbes is one of the forefathers of political realists. This writing assesses his place in the realist custom by focusing on the key themes like the priority of legitimacy over justice, the relation between ethics and politics.

Realism perhaps the most significant development in the history of political thought is deeply rooted in the work of Thomas Hobbes (Greeson, 2017). The father of realism, Hobbes offers a stern view on man and the state. As an empirically-minded, historical, and skeptical student of politics, Hobbes holds the view that man is good and evil at the same time. Under the natural prevailing atmosphere of egotism and aggression, Hobbes envisages the state of nature as a realm of *bellum omium contra omnes*. Therein, man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short-lived. In this context, man is in constant danger and aware of an impending tragedy he feels helpless to escape from.

The state of nature necessitates a government, given that men are to renounce their self-interest in the name of one ultimate common interest survival. The government, established by a binding social contract, would be vested with the sovereignty over the lives of its subjects and their civil liberties, promising in return protection and order. Hobbes depicts this leviathan as an artificial construction of many men united physically in one body politic and mystically with the figure of a monarch. The leviathan possesses both the sword and the staff; it mutes questions and gives subjects peace.

Over time, this theory about the role of the sovereign in the crisis lasting almost three decades would serve as fodder for later generations of political realists. On the other hand, Hobbes argues profusely that the state and its machinery must be kept secret from the people. Disseminating otherwise would incite rebellious lust and challenge the authority of the government (Williams).

Thucydides was a Greek historian who lived in the 5th century BCE. He is often seen as one of the most important early thinkers on the idea of the balance of power and the security dilemma. Thomas Hobbes, drawing on similar ideas, is considered a foundational realist thinker. Realism, as a paradigm in international relations, develops its distinctive perspective based on assumptions about human nature and the absence of a supreme authority in the international system. Realist scholars argue that human nature has remained essentially unchanged since its

inception and continues to influence state behavior today.

Realist thinkers have different ideas but mainly they have the same idea about human existence is selfish, which is the core of the character and theory of the realism paradigm. According to realist thinkers, the important duty of state administrators is to keep this basic characteristic of human character under their control and political needs come from the chaos of the international environment. States have a hierarchical political authority and rules, and everyone has to obey them, but there is a chaotic environment in the international arena, and there is no specific authority, so there are no rules and bad emotions in humans are come to exist.

Thomas Hobbes's political views were influenced by the English civil war. Chapter 13 of the Leviathan book is very important for our subject. As Hobbes states in this chapter: who has enough power to destroy who has weaker power. In doing this, you can either do some secret work or collaborate with others.

Another Hobbes's idea is: If one has greater power than the others, it is a situation that can undermine the social order. When we read about Hobbes's idea we can see that is important for Hobbes, three impulses are mobilized: competition, feeling of insecurity, and a desire for glory. People compete and they always want to pass each other and be better than each other in anarchy (Themes & Key).

People have to protect themselves in the environment of anarchy because of the feeling of insecurity from the lack of authority. When people feel insecure, they can be aggressive, which can undermine the existing order. People are indissolubly in conflict with others to get to the top level for glory. They can do anything to achieve that goal because human beings have been greedy since creation and it is possible to balance the impulses that are inherent in this human being with a superpower but not in the international environment. Therefore, war is inevitable.

5. Sovereignty and Authority in Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes is widely held to be one of the first and most important proponents of the realist school of political thought, and his conception of nature is often seen as a precursor to realist theory. Hobbes first deconstructs notions of right and wrong and good and evil and attributes the genesis of moral rules to the creation of the contract. Hobbes contrasts his account of the state of nature with other accounts to draw attention to his own contractarian solution. He then provides an explanation of how the contract is established by outlining the nature and form respective to the location and reasonableness of persons in the state of nature.

Nevertheless, Hobbes's defense of corruption is closely linked to his understanding of political authority and the nature of sovereign (Curran, 2019).

At the heart of Thomas Hobbes's political theory is the desire to reassert the authority of the state; to emphasize and affirm the absolutism of the ruler. Hobbes is keen to reject the view that the metaphysical and political foundations of states and sovereigns can be challenged through appeals to theology, as was common in the royalist defence of crown against parliament at the time of the English civil war. Leviathan gives an account of the state and its sovereign that is intended to be understood in philosophical framework. In Leviathan Hobbes argues that after the establishment of civil government "there can happen no novation in the generation of any sovereign without civil war, and consequent danger of private men." In this way "all lawful government is instituted by the consent of the multitude." This is revolution as adherence to the just cause and differing loyalty from one's natural sovereign, and this passage and other requirements for social peace in Leviathan have led many scholars to view Hobbes as a proto-contractualist or proto-liberal thinker (Mikelman, 2016).

6. Thucydides as a Precursor to Hobbesian Thought

Thucydides, an Athenian general from one of the wealthiest families, wrote an account of the first ten years of the Peloponnesian War, which took place between 431 and 404 BCE (A. Furia

& Kohen, 2005). This is the first known account of an event's history that was written solely to portend to fact. Thucydides has also been called the founder of the discipline of international relations, as he structured his account as a struggle among nations, not among gods. Thucydides explains that at the onset of the war, it was generally judged that the strength of the Peloponnesian alliance stood godless with the Athenians.

The first Greek historian, Hecataeus of Miletus, wrote of the coming wars between Persia and Greece as one between continents. Thucydides's history is essentially a social scientific work with respect to his aims, methods, explanations, and audience. His stated aim was to provide an accurate enough account of what happened in the war so that future generations could learn from it if similar circumstances should arise. When explaining the events of the war, Thucydides eschewed supernatural and mythical explanations, focusing instead on human reason, necessity, and the effects of human nature under stress. The punishment of the revolt was harsh because of fear of the common aspiration of all held within the empire and the opponents' knowledge of the Athenian mercantile way of life, and fear of their non-mutual profits if Athens and allies expanded into the constantly contested level of the whole inhabited world.

About 2300 years after that text's creation, Thomas Hobbes publicized his surviving work *Leviathan* in 1651, presenting the world in a similar Hobbesian motif of nation versus nation rather than godly actors. Furthermore, Hobbes's presentation also ignores supernatural or divine explanations and structures a social scientific account of world politics based on human reason and human nature. A telling illustration of why an understanding of the one is useful in interpreting the other can be seen in the multitude of scholars who have investigated the relationship between Thucydidean notions of fear (especially the fear of rising powers) and Hobbesian world politics (Hobbes, 2013). This is also how Hobbes' own intellectual milieu engaged with Thucydides in the early stages of the text's becoming part of the classical canon. The textual treatment in *Leviathan* was not about the "To make sure that the reader can fully engage with the Hobbesian narrative without being distracted or confused, it is important to present the Thucydidean narrative in a clear and logical way." (Delemestre, 2014).

7. Case Study: The Melian Dialogue

The common point among realist scholars is that they focus on national security, state survival. Thucydides is one of the most important realist thinkers and he was analyzing the reason for war in the Peloponnesian War. He tried to understand that are the underlying causes of war in realist thought?

He emphasized that; there is nothing a leader can do, to prevent a war. The war is impossible to prevent. Because it is the nature of the international system. He asked a simple question; why Athens and Sparta had a war? The answer is; fear about a shift in the balance of power. Due to the fact that Athens and Sparta were concerned about survival fear of being powerful.

His idea about the 'State of Nature' incorporates some of the main realist principles, such as the state of anarchy Thomas Hobbes addresses similar concepts in the *Leviathan* and his idea about 'State of Nature' contains some of the main realist principles like the state of anarchy. But, here again, the inhibitions he makes to each of these hypothesis have to be conscientiously considered and taken into calculation when comparing and opposed his views on political realism with those of Thucydides

As briefly said that earlier, these political thinkers added knowledge to the realist view of the international system as a value- moral-free place of anarchy, where states stable fear of attack or infidelity by others and thus are facing a security dilemma. Thucydides agrees on the matter of anarchy within the international system through the realist perspective, stating that in a system where is no binding authority, the one way to maintain order is through some shape of balance of power, which in the eyes of Thucydides takes the shape of strong use their power over the powerless. Hobbes, in contrast, takes a different view. When we look at his theory about 'State of

Nature' he approves that without a world government, the system is an issue to a state of anarchy.

"Such a war as is of every man against every man." (Karpowicz, 2010).

However, he resists the view that under such circumstances it is powerful who determine the order of the international system. Hobbes's theory says that in the 'State of Nature', everyone is equal and thus the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination or by confederacy with others that are in the same danger as himself (Brown & Nardin, 2002).

Hobbes stated that the 'general rule of reason' is about 'every man ought to endeavor peace' (Hobbes, 1651) everyone is equal in power and desires, there is the precision that this teaching will be followed as long as own safety is not endangered. This causes the realist to assert a moral and value-free international system. Political realism stated that the essential and simply self-interested efficient actor, there can be no all-purpose set of manners or values. Both thinkers do not be solid for that point. Hobbes pointed out that there are, general rules of reason which call everyone in the international system and thus create a certain shape of moral standard which to depend on Thucydides is a little more skeptical of this.

However as a matter of fact he does not fully refuse the existence of some morals and values when talking about the Spartans' opinion of the system in the History of the Peloponnesian War. Consequently, both thinkers' assumptions have been shown, their ideas different from each other from political realism on issues like all-purpose moral order and values in the international system. It helps to understand assumptions that political realism. Both thinkers perform about the individual and state and their actions in international relations.

This dialogue indicates that the his idea about the 'State of Nature' incorporates some of the main realist principles, such as the state of anarchy Thomas Hobbes address similar concepts in the Leviathan, and his idea about 'State of Nature' contain war between Sparta and Athens.

This text symbolizes the significance of power in international relations and serves as a strong example of Hobbes's realist perspective. According to Hobbes, there is no place for justice or morality in international relations; instead, power determines what is considered right or wrong.

The strong to what they can and the weak accept what they must (Molloy, 2013).

This dialogue conveys the idea that one should not trust the Spartans, nor should security be delegated to any external actor. It suggests that not even divine entities are reliable, emphasizing that states operate in a self-help system where they must rely solely on themselves.

This dialog is a dialog between a powerful against Athens and a very weak Melos. Athens was the greatest power at that time. Athens wants to take the Melos. But capturing to conquer the island, Athens decided to send its representatives who came from Athens asked the people of Melos to surrender. They said; we decided to conquer this island. We will take you like a colony. Today we are here to give you a chance to surrender. Because if you are surrender, we will not kill you. But if you do not, we will have no chance of destroying your island.

As a response, the representatives of the island said that we want to remain as an independent state. Please respect us. Please do not take our island as a colony and let us remain independent. Please show mercy and justice. The answer to Athens is, justice requires equality of power. You can not talk about justice because we are not equal. We are powerful and you are weak. So we can not talk about justice.

Today if we show mercy to you, this would be evacuated as a weakness of Athens. If we do not conquer you, our other colonies will think that we are not powerful anymore and maybe they rebel against us. Being hated is more are tied than being loved. By conquering you. We will increase our security.

As a result; they know that they wouldn't win the war. Despite this, they wanted to die with honor. They did not surrender to Athens. And Athens destroyed Melos and killed islanders.

8. Conclusion

This article is about Thomas Hobbes' political philosophy and seeks to answer some questions like what is a political community? Is there any space for morality or ethics in the world described by both Thucydides and Hobbes? In *Leviathan*, Hobbes outlines a definition of political community based on a mechanistic philosophy of human nature. According to Hobbes, a political community is a community formed by a covenant of self-preservation. The parties to the contract agree to surrender all or most of their natural liberties and powers to a central authority that possesses the same absolute and indivisible power over its own body that each party possesses over his own. The mechanisms that bind this authoritarian power create peace and security, from which civil peace can be realized under law. The broader implications of this political philosophy are then discussed to set the stage for four ways in which these arguments are developed and expanded in contemporary Hobbesian studies.

As a result, even today, Thomas Hobbes is one of the most important realist philosopher. *Leviathan* is an important work that Hobbes presents his ideas about humanity and politics. Hobbes wrote this famous book during his exile times in France. We can find the information's about the state of nature and behaviors of human nature in chapter 13 of *Leviathan*, "Of the Natural Condition of Mankind and Concerning their Felicity and Misery"

Thomas Hobbes believes that human nature is materialistic. Human nature goes after their desires, and if there is no authority then they will argue with each other. According to Thomas Hobbes, in the absence of state or government, people would be in constant preventive aggression against each other. Because nobody could be sure that another would not hurt themselves. For this reason, the best defense is a good offense. Thomas Hobbes stated that instead of this hostility, all individuals would negotiate with each other and come together and transfer their rights to a third party. It would be more rational. And this third party is *Leviathan* as a ruler. This was known as "the social contract" theory of government. He emphasizes the necessity of having a powerful, centralized political authority. Human beings lived in a condition of war 'everyone against everyone'. He tried to show to escape from this situation, he suggested placing all power to a sovereign state or *Leviathan* (a state authority or supreme ruler) that would maintain order and end the anarchy.

When we analyze Melian's dialog from the realist perspective through the *Leviathan*, then we can see the concept of human nature, anarchy, security, self-help situation, survival, and cooperation among people. Also, there is no place for justice and morality in international relations because if you have more power than the others in the same environment you decide what will happen.

In addition, there is no room for justice and morality in international relations. The reason for this is that if you have more power than others in your environment, you decide what will happen. In other words, the powerful can do whatever they want. Hobbes' political philosophy, especially as expressed in *Leviathan*, has been shown to construct a realist framework that focuses on security, power and the inherently confrontational nature of human nature. In this context, in this study, Hobbesian thought explains an anarchic international system and state behaviour. It continues to provide a fundamental perspective in international relations theory, especially when talking about realism.

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Impacts of Religious Communities on Turkish Political Culture: The *İskenderpaşa* Community

This article employs a cultural analysis to explore the role of religious communities in Türkiye's political culture, focusing specifically on the *İskenderpaşa* community. The study investigates both the political and cultural networks the community has developed, arguing that, as a traditional religious collective, the *İskenderpaşa* community's influence extends beyond its theological commitments to embrace significant political and economic relationships that shape political power. Through this lens, the article poses the following questions: What roles have been attributed to religious communities- specifically the *İskenderpaşa* community-within the political sphere, and what core political visions do they articulate and promote.

Keywords: Religious Communities, Political Culture, Islamism.

Dini Cemaatlerin Türk Siyasal Kültürüne Etkileri: *İskenderpaşa* Cemaati

Bu makale, Türkiye'nin kültürel siyasetinde dini cemaatlerin rolünü kültürel analiz yöntemiyle ele almakta ve özel olarak *İskenderpaşa* Cemaati'ne odaklanmaktadır. Cemaatin geliştirdiği politik ve kültürel ağları inceleyen makale, *İskenderpaşa* Cemaati'nin geleneksel bir dini kolektif olarak etkisinin yalnızca teolojik bağlılıklarla sınırlı kalmayıp, siyasal gücü şekillendiren önemli siyasi ve ekonomik ilişkileri de kapsadığını ileri sürmektedir. Bu çerçevede makale şu soruları sormaktadır: Dini cemaatlere — özelde *İskenderpaşa* Cemaati'ne — siyasal alanda nasıl roller atfedilmektedir ve bu cemaatler ne tür temel siyasal görüşleri dile getirmekte ve yaymaktadır?

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dini Cemaatler, Siyasal Kültür, İslamcılık.

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Impacts of Religious Communities on Turkish Political Culture: The *Iskenderpaşa* Community

1. Introduction

This study aims to examine how religious groups and communities both shape and are shaped by the cultural and political structures of contemporary Türkiye. By approaching these groups as integral components of Türkiye's political culture, the central research questions emerge: What roles are attributed to these religious communities within the political sphere, and what are the core political visions they promote? In this context, the study seeks to analyze the politico-religious discourses adopted by these groups, while also exploring the socio-cultural conditions that influence their religious, social and political activities.

After the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye, secularism, as a part of successive reforms, has become the main doctrine leading the relationship between the state and religion. Even though religious communities have played a significant role in social fabric these were not welcomed by the new understanding of Islam built by the Republic. With the claim that these communities are operating as a threat to the existence of the secular state, their organizations were banned. It was the secular effort in eliminating Islam from the political arena with the resistance to its social power (Torun, 2020: 84). In spite of this resistance, these social entities still maintained their existence and significance on behalf of increasing social networks.

Considered the secular restrictions including ban and imprisonments of members their permanent social strength required to be analyzed. It is considerable to understand organic and traditional commitments of these religious communities throughout the absence of powerful civil society. As Mardin puts in his reputable thesis of center-periphery, in the face of center and its cultural symbols the provinces have been the place of religious heterodoxy sustained by sects and cults (Mardin, 1973:171).

Traditional relations undergirded these communities inherited from the Ottoman Empire didn't dissolve in the establishment of Republic. Against the rationalization of Islam in the religious discourse of the Republic personal affiliations based on neighborhood and hometown have been preserved as the main roots of social fabric. In addition to social bindings depending to hometown and affinity, Islam has always played an important role in organic relationships and conservation of traditions. Indeed, while for Republican sense of religion religious communities posed a risk, the new regime was considered as threat against people's existing values and beliefs. Considering this sense of anxiety, traditional familial and social relations have gradually become the symbols of the concern about conservation. On the other hand, against this conservative position the new regime cannot be engaged with the starting over in the modern way. The establishment of Turkish Republic did not basically reject the traditional values of the society but sought to reshape, reengineer and reinvent them by several political mechanisms. In the field of religion, Islam was never completely abandoned but it was reformulated in a new discourse attached to modern references. As a part of Kemalism, modernist Islamic theology depended upon the intellectual idea of individualization of Islam against the traditional intellectual authority assigned by the conservative Islamic understanding. The establishment of the Presidency of Religious Affairs and the first Turkish divinity faculty at Ankara University are considered with the goal of this intellectual promotion (Dorroll, 2014: 1037). With these developments and the writings of intellectuals associated with these institutions it was aimed to construct a Republican way of religious discourse. Nevertheless, this new discourse ultimately fails to transform pre-existing patterns of social belonging. In the context of a weakly institutionalized civil society and a delayed experience of modernity, traditional social relations may have lost their legitimacy in the eyes of the new regime; however, a coherent and widely accepted alternative framework of social relations has not emerged to replace them. In this context, religious groups—including those organized

around *tariqas* and broader religious communities—maintained their social legitimacy both as a form of conservative reaction to the new regime and as a means of adapting to it. However, this legitimacy persisted despite the loss of formal legal recognition.

With the emergence of multi-party regime and its partial liberating impact over religious activities, Islamic groups gained opportunity to express their political and social demands in civil society organizations and political parties. In Türkiye, the 1980s were marked by intense debates over secularism and Islamism, as Islamist political movements began to gain increasing influence. In the 1990s, Islamist politics gained significant prominence in Türkiye, with their discourses attracting attention from individuals across a wide range of political orientations. During this period, *tariqas* and religious communities also expanded their influence through political alliances with parties and economic engagement via their own initiatives. Religious communities such as *İskenderpaşa* have come to occupy a crucial position within Türkiye's social fabric, making them essential subjects of study for understanding the country's evolving social and political dynamics. The *İskenderpaşa* Community emerged as one of key actors in shaping social relations through its journals, business activities, foundations, and associations, reaching a broad segment of society. This paper, therefore, aims to examine the social relations, religious vision, and political affiliations of the *İskenderpaşa* community in light of Türkiye's transforming societal structure.

1. Religious Communities as Social Movements

Islamist movements have been paid striking attention in the world since the 9/11 attack in the USA. The literature developed throughout this era generally explain motivation of Islamist groups as the religious desire to create an Islamic order with the name of fundamentalism. This point of view reduces Islamism to the radical groups characterized with violence and Western hostility. Apart from that kind of opposition to the Western expansionism attached to globalization, there are also several Islamist groups which embrace liberal economic market and allegedly Western democratic political regulations. In Muslim countries underwent modernization process, like Türkiye, the way that religious communities operate religious and social authorities politically may bring insight of political culture. It seems necessary to examine the extent to which these communities adopt these values and how they reconcile them with religious reservations.

Since the 1960s, the growing scholarly interest in religious movements has contributed to the emergence of a robust body of literature, particularly within the fields of social movement theory and the sociology of religion (Kniss & Burns, 2004: 695). This literature basically analyzes how these groups are mobilized through collective purpose and how internal relations are shaped within their organizational constructions. By this way, as well as their discourses Islamic impetus attached to religious motivation and the desire to gather might be figured out throughout the sociology of religion. For some, this perspective adopts an essentialist stance by reifying concepts and social groups as fixed and homogeneous categories that makes it incapable of inquiring the social changes that these groups undergone in relation with economic and political transformations (Tuğal, 2014: 34).

Another influential approach to religious movements, rooted in Weberian sociology, conceptualizes sectarian movements as potential agents of social change and religious innovation (Kniss & Burns, 2004: 695). Indeed, it is also need for belonging and safe social shelters of people against the changes created in the modern world amid the global chaos of social relations (Bozkurt, 2018: 443). Contrary to the conventional dichotomy that aligns modernity with progress and religion with tradition and conservatism, this perspective suggests that religious movements can, under certain conditions, function as progressive forces opposing the dominant social order. In line with this reinterpretation, some scholars argue that pan-Islamism should be understood not as a purely traditionalist reaction but as a political project that incorporates elements of modernist thought and practice.

According to this perspective, pan-Islamism is understood as a form of resistance articulated by those marginalized or excluded from the political system. In this context, their Islamist discourse and political stance may be interpreted not as a rejection of modernity, but rather as an alternative mode of advancing modernization (Tuğal, 2014: 35). In contrast to the orientalist perspective aligning religious groups with anti-modernism, for this aspect it is figured as a religious opposition against modernity but also through modernity. Therefore, Islamists' concern does not target the modern regime itself but draw towards its cultural field eliminated from Islamic elements. It becomes a hegemonic struggle which political culture becomes the main arena that different cultural groups struggle for controlling the cultural symbols. Gramsci defines hegemony as something exercised by the dominant group through society. In his theory, the term of civil society appears as the place by which hegemony is exercised. According to this classification, political society or the State exercises the direct domination or command (Gramsci, 1999: 506). In this framework, it is not considered that the State has power and oppression over civil society. But, rather, civil society is a field of political struggles including domination and subordination, which points to hegemony. Therefore, in the cultural level, religious is also used as tool of domination for hegemony. To do so, religion has influenced social groups "by constructing and maintaining identities, providing definitions of social problems, and supplying symbolic repertoires that justify collective action and make it meaningful" (Kniss&Burns, 2004: 696). Similarly, Bourdieu claims that daily practices internalized by people and relations among people and institutions reflect in symbols, habits, beliefs and thought associated with the people's gestures, bodies and appearances (Bourdieu, 1995: 123). Thus, symbols, discourses, traditions are not only shaped by the political power but also reshaped by the relations of agents with each other and the political authority. Moreover, these cultural notions are not homogeneous and monolithic constructions, rather they are in social, economic, political circulation with the impact of these overlapped fields.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the sociology of religion, religious groups have importance due to their social functions, their type of organizations and membership. According to Durkheim, society needs to be evaluated as an organic entity in which every part of society functions with its own purpose (Vergin, 2004: 228). In this sense, social harmony can be achieved when social groups carry out their roles and responsibilities in an organized and consistent way. However, such an order does not necessarily imply the absence of conflict; on the contrary, it may inherently involve tensions and struggles. Nevertheless, social conflicts are integral to social harmony and must be managed in accordance with the specific rules and functions of each group (Vergin, 2004: 228). In examining how moral behavior and religious rules influence economic decision-making, Weber engages organizational relations with political allegiance and structures of domination. In his well-known study *'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism'* he puts forward a social and economic system-capitalist mode of production- whose ideals and discourse aligned with the tenets of Protestantism (Aron, 1971: 217). The pursuit of profit and the rationalization of work overlapped with Protestant values of moral purity, including the avoidance of excessive consumption and an emphasis on saving. In this sense, Weber explains Western capitalism by referring to individual behaviors shaped by the Protestant ethic.

2. Religious Communities and Political Islam in Türkiye

Under the secular establishment of Turkish Republic, while a contemporary religion was anticipated to remove the traditional religious discourse economic and political networks of religious communities were overlooked. While the existence of religious communities such as tariqas, cults, and sheikhdoms rooted in the Ottoman period is analyzed within the context of center-periphery relations, their presence in modern times also deserves investigation. As a social phenomenon, these communities are regarded in sociological research as protective forms of social belonging against urbanization factors such as increasing chaos, cultural differentiation, and moral uncertainty in the modern era (Ayдын, 2005: 309).

In Türkiye, modernization process developed within secularism and Westernization

which led to dramatic changes in social lives of people. In this sense, although Islamism didn't appear as opposed to the Turkish modernization, emerged with resistance against secular reforms. In the Ottoman Empire, since Islam was the main notion that people defined their beings and lifestyles, Republican reforms was considered as threat to traditional and religious values. Indeed, Mardin claims that Islam was a central political link in the society which functions as proto-nationalism in the Ottoman Empire (Mardin, 1991: 56). Nevertheless, it means that modernization reforms made up in the late times of the Ottoman considered Islam as a cement which gather community. And this community was Islamic not the nation-based unity (Bora, 2012: 115). In this direction, Bora claims that before pan-Islamism modernized, although had included nationalist references these are Islam-based nationalism which points to the concept of *ummah* (Bora, 2012: 115). With the modern Republic, religious-political references and values were not totally thrown away from political arena, rather these were interfused through modern rationality and Western values.

The dissolution of traditional lifestyles in the Ottoman Empire began in the 19th century and triggered dramatic social transformations. However, the modern era was not built entirely without traditions and illusions in the political arena. Rather, it marked a period of their transformation, reflecting the distinction between the new and the old regimes. In social life, this distinction created a deep social divide, as traditional ways of living became increasingly obsolete while modern social factors emerged slowly, forcing people to take sides within this social split (Öğün, 2004: 35). The political nexus created by the Republic was one-sided and based on the idea of Western progression. Since religion was considered as the reason of social backwardness, the hegemonic discourse was transformed through secularization and modernization with historical references to the old-Turkish communities, legal regulations about family. It was the establishment of the new regime which based on national bindings of Turkish identity. But at the same time, we couldn't claim that the new Republic couldn't completely exclude religion from the identity politics. At the same time, however, the founding elite sought to reinvent Islamic discourse, believing that if Islam were purified from superstitions, it could serve as a social guide for moral order (Bora, 2012: 118). In this complicated relation of the new regime with Islam, Islamism became modernized and created new organizational forms. But, since Islam was placed as a part of Republican quest for investment of traditions, Islamism emerged through the relationship with conservatism (Bora, 2012: 105). Indeed, it was the way of re-invention of the traditions. The ideal of the nation-state was embraced by both Islamists and the Turkish Republic. For Islamists, Muslim identity was the primary basis of national belonging, whereas for the Turkish Republic, Islam contributed to the reinvention of tradition within the framework of a new national identity. Therefore, Islamism responded to the Republican reinvention of traditional values by drawing on Islamic practices which explains its close alignment with conservatism.

In the literature about Turkish modernization process, there is an advance discussion about the absence of civil society inherited as a part of Ottoman social legacy. In doing so, Öğün addresses the structural elements which singles out Turkish modernization from the Western model. In Western modernization, the mode of production was transformed through the actions of local rural authorities, who eventually became a bourgeois class with significant economic power. In contrast, in the Ottoman Empire, the relationship between the *ayan* (local notables) and the Sultan was redefined during the centralization process. Although this process aimed to reinforce central authority, the *ayan* actually strengthened their local power and pursued their own economic interests (Öğün, 2004: 15). Such changes driven by rural dynamics in the West played a constitutive role in the modernization process because changes in the mode of production and the increasing economic power of local authorities were mutually constitutive processes, which together led to their transformation into civil authorities. The new political forms and economic interests enable them to push the central authorities which addresses civilization against the central power. Yet, the Ottoman Empire witnessed more oppressive and more centralized version of the modernization. Already dominant political sphere intensified by the all-pervading central power with the modernization process instead

of contribution to the civilization and the transformation of economic power. In addition to this centralization, the social engineering that shapes the character of development was set on a single nexus: progression. In this context, social engineering was used as a tool to identify social facts and how organizations relate to the ideal of progress (Öğün, 2004:17). From this perspective, the coexistence of multiple civil spheres within the political domain appears untenable. Within the formal framework that seeks to absorb diverse identity groups, Islamists contend that their vision of Islam—predicated on a just social order—finds no legitimate space, given the perceived incompatibility between the principles of Kemalist modernization and Islamic values (Kasaba, 1998: 23). It is thus noteworthy that Islamic ideals themselves undergo politicization, shaped by Islamists' experiences of political marginalization and disapproval.

1950s marks the turning point for Islamist politics not only in Türkiye but also in the world. In Türkiye, the process of industrialization during this period significantly accelerated rural-to-urban migration by generating expanded employment opportunities in urban centers. One of the direct results of such migration on social texture derived from the families dwelling in periphery of urban areas who pursued given traditional networks in these neighborhood (Bulaç, 2005: 66). These groups constitute a significant social base whose social needs related to metropolitan area are aligned with and addressed by the ideological framework and political goals of Islamism.

In 1970, Milli Nizam Partisi (The National Order Party) was founded as the first Islamist political party which was mainly consisted of small business owners, merchants, businessmen, peasants and rural artisans (Tuğal, 2014: 57). Islamists' political parties were closed several times and refounded within different names: *Milli Selamet Partisi* (The National Salvation Party), *Refah Partisi* (The Welfare Party), *Fazilet Partisi* (The Virtue Party) and *Saadet Partisi* (The Felicity Party). The National Salvation Party advocated the economic development based on heavy industries with the private initiatives under the state supervision (Tuğal, 2014: 57). Therefore, their economic vision was to integrate into the liberal economy and industrialization. A similar commitment to economic developmentalism can be observed in the political program of the Welfare Party. In this regard, the economic visions and policies of Islamic parties were largely aligned with the dominant global economic trends of the period.

After the 1980 military coup, Islamists took a new turn with the Welfare Party under the leading of Necmettin Erbakan. The concept of social fair played a central role in this new age of Islamism in which the political discourse was built upon the political anxiety about social degeneration (Mert, 2005: 417). Against the closing of Islamists parties for several times, the emphasis on democratic politics began to legitimize their political activities with reference to human rights. The pronounced emphasis on democratic principles also functions to justify and normalize the involvement of tariqas and religious communities in the political sphere (Çiğdem, 2005: 30). As the ongoing suppression of Islamist political parties—including legal bans and dissolutions—was increasingly criticized as anti-democratic, this critique was further legitimized by the growing support of religious communities, their leaders, and affiliated intellectuals.

The transformation of the political and economic landscape—driven by integration into the global economy, the diversification of political movements, and the promotion of civil society in the 1990s—marked a significant political turning point. In this era, religious communities and tariqas gained significant power as the key actors in providing organic solidarity in society with powerful network (Mardin, 1991: 109). Tariqas, religious publications such as journals and newspapers, along with religious leaders and intellectuals from self-contained communities, emerged as central figures and influential agents of Islamism due to their strong social authority (Çiğdem, 2005: 31).

The Welfare Party's moderate political position couldn't entirely meet the expectations of tariqas and ulama. However, the party insistence on religious demands about headscarf, *Imam Hatip* high schools and its close relationship with religious communities still remarked a

threat to the state on the eye of secular establishment (Tuğal, 2014: 59-60). This concern reached its peak with the military intervention on February 28, 1997, which resulted in the closure of the party and a political ban on Erbakan. In 1998, the Virtue Party was founded with a less confrontational discourse toward the secular system (Tuğal, 2014: 61). Following its closure on the grounds that some of its MPs wore headscarves, Islamist politics fell into silence at the level of parliamentary representation.

With the establishment of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) in 2002, Islamist actors re-emerged through a synthesis of liberalism and conservatism, drawing upon religious values. During this period, the party maintained close ties with various religious communities and tariqas. Several of these tariqas institutionalized themselves as civil society organizations and began participating in the business sector as corporations.

The JDP's close relationship with these groups sparked debates over whether Islamism had become part of a broader state project. In this regard, Çakır (2012) argues that the JDP governments utilized the social power of Islamist communities to strengthen international alliances and to mobilize electoral support.

Thus, tariqas and religious communities, once central to oppositional Islamist discourse in the 1990s, became integrated into the political establishment through their organizational strength and social networks. This marked a significant transformation in political Islam, shifting it away from its earlier oppositional stance against the secular regime.

3. The Turkish Religious Community: *İskenderpaşa Cemaati*

The religious roots of the *İskenderpaşa* community are based on the Naqshbandi Tariqa, which traces its origins back to Central Asia under the spiritual leadership of its founder, Yusuf Hamedani. The tenants of Naqshbandi were flourished by Bahattin Nakşibendi and has gained a significant place in the Sufism (Yaşar, 2005: 324). As one of the most significant and influential branches of the Naqshbandi Tariqa, the *Gümüşhanevi Dergah* was closed in 1925, along with other religious orders, following the enactment of the Law on the Closure of Dervish Lodges and Shrines (Tekke ve Zaviyelerin İlgası Hakkındaki Kanun). Despite the legal ban, informal relations sustained under the leadership of Mustafa Feyzi Efendi, Hasip Efendi and Abdülaziz Bekine Efendi. In 1952, after the death of Abdülaziz Bekine Efendi, Mehmed Zahid Kotku became the sheikh of the convent. The social network of the convent—comprising academicians, intellectuals, and university students and inherited from Bekine Efendi—further developed on the societal level under Kotku's leadership (Yaşar, 2005: 327). By 1970s, *Gümüşhanevi Dergahı* began to be called as *İskenderpaşa*, a name derived from the mosque where Kotku was once serving as imam (Yaşar, 2005: 327). The period under Kotku's leadership marks a milestone for the community, as traditional relations were transformed through expanding social networks and the diversifying status of its followers. Indeed, by the 1950s and 60s, Kotku's leadership was widely spread through university students (Balancar, 2019: 20). From this aspect, such a change in the community's target audience has indirectly reflected its hegemonic challenge to the secular formal education of the Turkish Republic (Acar, 2019: 32). In addition to such social changes, its religious and political discourse also addressed a remarking evolution. Developing skills in reconciling modern and traditional references also diversified the discursive resources of the community.

After the death of Kotku, the leadership of community was taken over by his son-in-law Prof. Mahmud Esad Coşan, a scholar at Ankara University Faculty of Theology (Çakır, 2014: 26). His social status and profession marked a departure from the earlier leaders of *İskenderpaşa*. Since the social position of the leader has always influenced the discourse and organization of the community; his leadership marked a new phase in terms of religious vision. Under Coşan's leadership, the community began publishing a religious journal titled '*İslam*', which included social and political commentary written by prominent followers. Moreover, since the 1990s, *İskenderpaşa* has also become active in the business sector through Server Holding operating

in areas such as education, communication and health.

After Mahmud Esan Coşan passed away in 2001 his son Muharrem Nureddin Coşan who graduated from Ankara İmam Hatip High school and studied Management in the USA has undertaken the leadership of the community. Regarding his modern appearance and training, many expected the community to transform into a contemporary, firm-like organization in connection with an intensive political and economic networks.

İskenderpaşa plays a significant role in Turkish social life, as its religious roots trace back to the teachings of esteemed scholars of Sufism, granting it well-deserved religious authority. Although Kotku rejected politics due to its perceived immoral nature, under his leadership the community developed close ties with the Welfare Party (Yaşar, 2005: 330), which makes their political position ambiguous. Moreover, since this connection sustained even after the community's political network has persisted in various forms. Given these significant characteristics, *İskenderpaşa* must be analyzed as both a political and religious actor in the context of Turkish political culture. To this end, in the following sections, *İskenderpaşa's* place in political culture will be examined as a social and religious community through two following factors: Sufism and religious discourse, and political relations.

3.1. Sufism and Religious Discourse

İskenderpaşa community depends upon the tradition of mysticism which has a significant impact upon Turkish theology. According to the community mysticism is defined as follows:

“On the one hand mysticism is considered as a way of recognizing and comprehending the God as our creator. And on the other hand, it involves with self-discipline of ones to reach moral and inner goodness” (İnan, 1981).

Given this dual definition, the community dedicates itself to guiding both its followers and society at large toward God's moral principles, while also encouraging individual self-awareness. From this perspective, religious communities assume the responsibility of contributing to the moral development of society. Although the Turkish Republic banned religious lodges and zawiyahs, Sufism has retained its significance as a respected religious tradition within the collective memory (Sevinç, 2012: 128). Given this social influence, it is essential to consider religious activities and discourse in relation to collective symbols.

After the ban on religious communities, the *İskenderpaşa* community diverged into two underwent a structural transformation. While the traditional foundations of religious knowledge declined, the community began to attract new adherents including students, scholars and technocrats (Yaşar, 2005: 328). Following the 1950s, the transition to multi-party politics coupled with the growing migration from rural to urban areas, significantly reshaped religious influence and visibility of these communities. Indeed, these later adherents were migrants to the suburbs of the metropolitan cities, for whom religious belonging became a key aspect of their identity, serving as a safeguard against the perceived moral decline in their new environment. As a response to this social anxiety, Kotku could achieve to adapt religious knowledge to modern requirements and life conditions as well as strengthening the revelation with Sufism against the negative impact of liberalism and Marxism (Çakır, 2014: 20-21). According to its doctrine, adherents are never recommended to avoid from modern world and its daily order, contrary faithful believers are capable of living in modern world coupled with material pleasures (Kotku, 2010: 45). Indeed, Kotku sought to reconcile tenets of Naqshbandi with the socio-cultural changes (İnce, 2017: 155). His perspective standing against radicalism in Islamic interpretation tries to balance divine and material world. Therefore, he does not recommend people ignoring the earthly values, but also questioning the material fields as economy, politics and civil society. From this aspect, it is not suggested to form everyday life according to Islam but to involve with these fields by means of civil society (Özyağlı, 2024: 17).

Within this framework, true believers who are committed to revelation and communitarian principles are able to safeguard their beliefs against moral corruption. Similarly, Ersin Gündoğan, an adherent of *İskenderpaşa* clarify such values in the biography of Kotku:

“In and through crowds, people have increasingly lost their emotions as if they were herds. While the richness of inner values bestowed by the God is inestimable compared to earthly wealth, which is pursued to satisfy unending desires, humankind often fails to recognize these inner riches and values unless they join in communities seeking for inner peace” (Çakır, 2014: 22). As his statements shows, communities and moral values developed through them are ones which guide people through their inner peace. Therefore, being an adherent of a religious community is made compulsory for being a true believer against the earthly desires.

Kotku’s teachings emphasized individual morality and the improvement of personal conduct. Accordingly, religious discussions and sermons were organized in the courtyard of the *İskenderpaşa* Mosque (Sevinç, 2012: 130). Given these sermons, Kotku’s manner of speaking remarkable characteristics which differs his discourse in synthesizing a wide variety of issues. In addition to his poetic style, his discourse was able to address to both modern and traditional followers (Öztekin, 2022: 62, Özyağlı, 2024: 17).

These conversations were sustained under the leadership of Mahmud Esas Coşan. As mentioned above, Coşan’s distinct academic background, which set him apart from the community’s traditional leadership, led to noticeable changes in the community’s discourse. His high emphasis on education is evident in his writings published in the journal *İslam*:

“Thank God, we are Muslim; our purpose is derived from our faith. In our opinion, education of Muslims is a major concern. We have observed that several of our activities in this field including courses, sermons, conversations, conferences, and seminars have not fully met the needs and demands. We have not able to reach everyone and everywhere as we intended. That is why we have decided to publish this journal” (Çakır, 2014: 27).

With this statement, Coşan puts education as the main objective of the community in order to improve their journey. Indeed, for many, education has always had a great importance for the community (Şentürk, 2015; Silverstein, 2011; Özyağlı, 2024). From this aspect, it is such an apparently intellectually advanced community with a large number of university graduate followers. But still, Coşan’s era points to an apparent transformation in the community’s discourse and religious approach because of rapid changes in cultural life of Türkiye following 1980s as well as Coşan’s academic career in the modern educational life. In fact, whereas it was a Sufist book called *el-İbriz* that Kotku suggested Coşan supported to publish an academic journal called *İlim ve Sanat* which shows the difference in their epistemological approach (Sözer, 2018: 87).

By the 1990s, the community have made connections with the foreign organizations and activities. In the late 1990s, following the February 28th process and increasing political oppression, Coşan moved to Australia as the community had gained significant popularity through its powerful social networks. After Coşan passed away in a traffic accident in 2001, Muharrem Nureddin Coşan took over the leadership of *İskenderpaşa*. Compared to previous periods, M. Nureddin Coşan has made fewer vocal and written declarations regarding their religious values and tenants. Indeed, it is said that Nureddin Coşan frequently responds that his grandfather’s and father’s sermons and books are adequate enough (Sözer, 2018: 119). Such modesty is generally highlighted as the evidence of his humbleness in addition to his remarking desire to use social media effectively. In this regard, his methods and approaches separated from the ones embraced by his antecedents. Yet, Nureddin Coşan does not sustain traditional routine preaches instead he prefers to give his messages through the website of the radio station called Akra Fm which the community owns (Yılmaz Hava, 2017: 144). It is worth noting that his statements have mostly focused on the community’s political relations, while he continues to maintain the community’s civil society organization- based structure inherited

from his father. Moreover, under his leadership the political party called 'Sağduyu' (Common Sense) was founded in 2002, which was defeated as the need for legality by most of the followers (Sözer, 2018: 120). Even though the party has never attended any elections, still exists. On the website, the party defines their goal to establish common sense, justice, goodness, virtuous character and inner peace (Sağduyu, 2025). Apart from emphasizing virtuous character in terms of morality, party's website does not refer to any kind of religious or Sufist principles but instead proposes a stance that is equally open to all political values, ideological stances and religious tendencies. Given these main issues, rather than functioning a political party having a political project or a religious community spreading a tenet, it appears to be a civil society organization having partial political visions.

3.2. Political Relations

In Türkiye, the political views and attitudes of many religious communities toward political relations and politics itself remain quite ambiguous. As a protective response to state-imposed bans and pressures, most religious groups have maintained their activities secretly and kept themselves closed off to outsiders. However, with the increasing participation of Islamism in parliamentary politics, supporting these political actors became almost inevitable for these 'enclosed' religious groups. Considering social changes, religious communities have burdened several functions in public, political and economic fields in addition to the religious training (Torun, 2020: 84). Beyond mere political participation, they also began to support these parties' parliamentary success through their economic and social resources. These inevitable relationships have played a notable role in the empowerment of *İskenderpaşa Cemaati*.

With the age of multi-party regime in the ruling of *Demokrat Parti* (Democratic Party), most of religious people tend to support *Demokrat Parti* as it was considered as the representative of traditional values against the secular oppressive state authority (Yaşar, 2005: 330). In the age of *Demokrat Parti*, the secular oppression against religious groups partially declined with a relatively liberated public sphere. Although the ban on these religious groups was valid, political parties and leaders generally ignored their existence due to their potential support in elections (Aybudak, 2014: 90). There was an obscure connection between *İskenderpaşa Cemaati* and center-right parties.

There is a widespread belief that Naqshbandi Tariqas' religious roots have traditionally been incompatible with political engagement and state power. This stems from the perception that the state and political authority are prone to moral decline, which stands in opposition to the spiritual ideals of Sufism (Sevinç, 2012: 132). Similar perspective is evident in Kotku's discourse, where he identified sexuality, money and power as primary sources of evil (Yaşar, 2005: 329). Consequently, some scholars suggest that Kotku may have disapproved of the establishment of political parties by Islamists.

Following the foundation of the Islamist National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi) in 1970, there is scholarly debate regarding Kotku's stance: while Yaşar claims that Kotku was reluctant to support the party (Yaşar, 2005: 331), Şentürk asserts that *İskenderpaşa* provided significant backing, effectively making the party the community's political extension (Şentürk, 2011: 343).

With reference to Tevfik Paksu, who is one the founder of Islamist Salvation Party, it is said that Mehmed Zahid Kotku hardly gave permission to the foundation of the party. While convincing him, the fact that the national need for a savior party instead of masons or communists is submitted (Aybudak, 2014: 88).

Notably, Necmettin Erbakan, the party's leader, was a follower of *İskenderpaşa*, and many political actors within the party had close ties to the community. During this period, the National Salvation Party joined a coalition government and was tasked with managing the State

Planning Organisation. Kotku encouraged his followers to seek positions within the bureaucracy and indeed many community members were appointed to the State Planning Organisation, reflecting the close relationship between the party and the community (Çakır, 2014: 24).

In his study researching social ties between Naqshbandis and Milli Görüş Movement, İnce puts that the growing alliance between them mainly resulted from their social base who are mostly university graduate coming from upper class but felt excluded from the politics because of their values (2017: 153). From this aspect, discursive foundation of Milli Görüş is responded by the educated pious youth living in urban.

After Kotku's death, leadership passed to Esad Coşan who shifted the community's focus away from direct political involvement towards social and civil society activities. This shift was prompted by the closure of the National Salvation Party political bans imposed on its leaders (Yaşar, 2005: 332). Coşan concentrated on expanding civil society organizations affiliated with the community and promoting its journal, *İslam*. Today, nearly one hundred *İskenderpaşa*-affiliated civil society organizations operate nationwide (Aybudak, 2014: 101). Moreover, increasing activities in media and press for children, women and youth demonstrate the community's adaptability to technological development and tools (Aybudak, 2022: 197).

During Coşan's tenure, the community's political alliance with the National Salvation Party dissolved. Following the party's closure by the military in the coup of 12 September 1980, *İskenderpaşa Cemaati* redirected its political support to the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi) (Çakır, 2014: 40), with many political figures in this party maintaining ties to the community. However, when the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) was founded in 1983 *İskenderpaşa* renewed its support for these Islamist cadres. The Motherland Party's efforts to join the European Communities (EC) contributed to the withdrawal of *İskenderpaşa*'s support, as the community strongly opposed Türkiye's integration into European countries. Coşan explicitly expressed concerns about the potential threats to religion, culture and beliefs posed by EC membership (Çakır, 2014: 37). Consequently, the EC was perceived as a principal political threat, motivating the community to support the Welfare Party in the 1987 elections, although the party failed to surpass the 10% national threshold. Until Kotku's death, the community gave unconditional support to parties led by Erbakan (Balancar, 2019: 21).

A significant rupture occurred in 1990 when Coşan publicly urged his followers to distance themselves from the Welfare Party, condemning its members as an "unreliable cadre dependent on exploitation and deception" (Çakır, 2014: 39). This political break was also fueled by a personal rivalry between Coşan and Erbakan. Coşan had expected greater recognition of his influence in political decisions, and this tension culminated in an open conflict and subsequent political separation in 1990 (Yaşar, 2005: 338). According to Balancar, this conflict between two leaders is also revealed from their competition. While Erbakan was always loyal to his sheikh Kotku, he did not show same recognition and support to the authority of Coşan, who was of a similar age (2019: 229). Indeed, this conflict peaked with the Erbakan's urge to obey his authority. By reminding the sufistic tradition of the community, Coşan reminds followers to owe allegiance only to ulama (Sözer, 2018: 94). Therefore, this conflict reflects the tense debate between ulama and political leaders in terms of justification of their authority. The political orientations of the *İskenderpaşa* community provide a valuable lens through which to assess its broader impact on Turkish political culture. Fundamentally, the community's social cohesion has been structured around a strong spiritual and emotional attachment to its leader—the sheikh—whose authority is both religious and charismatic in nature. This leader-centric structure fosters a kind of traditional hierarchy, deeply rooted in Sufi conceptions of loyalty and submission, which has implications for the community's political engagements. The personal rivalry and eventual rupture between Necmettin Erbakan and Esad Coşan can be interpreted as a manifestation of the tensions that arise when spiritual authority intersects with political ambition. In this case, political rivalry overpowered religious frugality and the values of humility and detachment that Naqshbandi teachings typically

advocate.

During the 1990s, the *İskenderpaşa* community began to consolidate its influence within the economic sphere through the establishment of companies and the expansion of business-related activities. While the community had never explicitly discouraged individual economic initiatives among its followers, this period marked the first time that economic ventures were undertaken explicitly in the name of the community itself, signaling a more institutionalized approach to economic engagement (Yaşar, 2005: 338). A key component of the community's economic philosophy was its opposition to Western capital and forms of economic imperialism. In the fight against the enemy, Kotku highlights the significance of establish companies and factories in cooperation in order to become economically self-sufficient (İnce, 2017: 156). This resistance to foreign economic domination appears in Kotku's strong support for the National Salvation Party's efforts to initiate heavy industrialization based on domestic resources and national capital (Çakır, 2014: 25). In this regard, one could argue that a form of economic statism was central to the community's vision of self-reliant development. However, the *İskenderpaşa* community did not adopt an isolationist stance; rather, it pragmatically engaged in trade relations and operated within the broader structures of the liberal market economy. Indeed, several initiatives reportedly associated with the community such as the Hakyol Foundation, Asfa Educational Institutions and Server Holding has been carrying out their activities with increasing strength since 2002 (Balancar, 2019: 23).

Under the leadership of Coşan, the support for entrepreneurship sustained in similar lines but nationalist references were strictly underlined. Coşan frequently recommends not to exploit foreign capital and to consume Muslims' productions (Sözer, 2018: 112). Therefore, in community's point of view although business and economic investments have been encouraged, these are always determined through the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Indeed, although the Naqshbandi Sufi tradition generally advise withdrawal from overt political ambition and discourages the pursuit of state power, the *İskenderpaşa* community has at times deviated from these prescriptions. This is especially visible in its evolving relationship with the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Indeed, after the first election that the JDP came to power in 2002, Erdoğan went to the Mehmet Zahit Kotku Mosque in Ankara which shows his commitment to the community (Balancar, 2019: 23). Despite the tradition's emphasis on spiritual modesty and restraint, the community has issued strong declarations of support for the AKP, particularly through public statements made by Muharrem Nureddin Coşan, Esad Coşan's successor. Such declarations reflect a continuation of the community's pragmatic engagement with political actors perceived as sympathetic to their religious and moral worldview.

Even though in 2002 the Common Sense Party was established, the party does not have any official member and has always avoid participating in elections (Özyağlı, 2024: 78). For some the establishment of the party was reasoned by the purpose of being legality, it is also seen as Nureddin Kotku's achievement of his father's incomplete attempt (Sözer, 2018: 94). Manifesting their political initiative as a political party, Muharrem Nureddin Coşan justifies their attempt within the purpose of "revealing and defeating the justice for the sake of all people" (Sözer, 2018: 119). Yet, it is noteworthy that the community firstly resisted to the JDP's government in 2003 about the Iraq resolution. Their memorandum expressing their opposition to the use of US Turkish military base in the war against Saddam in Iraq is only significant political attempt of the party (Özyağlı, 2024: 78). As the party did not participate in elections, in 2004 local elections their support was given to the JDP. Even though the community's apparent support sustained since 2011 with the leader's declarations, in 2011 they turned their direction. Unexpectedly, in 2011 Nurettin Coşan released their support to the National Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi). While appealing for support to help the Nationalist Movement Party surpass the electoral threshold, Coşan addresses the disappointment caused by the government's failure to act for the benefit of humanity (Pala,

2016: 46). Nevertheless, the community sustained their supportive declarations to the JDP in 2011, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2019 elections and 2017 referendum. In these supportive releases, Coşan frequently appraised freedom, peacefulness among various ethnic identities, justice and state of law achieved in Türkiye (Işık, 2023: 65-68).

In the government's fight against FETÖ, İskenderpaşa community took side of the JDP. Balancer asserts that by siding of the government the community might have expect financial and social benefit (2019: 23).

While *İskenderpaşa* has never adopted an overtly ethnic form of Turkish nationalism in its rhetoric, its emphasis on the unity of the Muslim ummah has consistently pointed toward a form of religious nationalism. The community's publications, most notably its periodical *İslam*, frequently frame global affairs through a binary lens that distinguishes between the faithful (mümin) and the unbelievers (kâfir) (Çakır, 2014: 32). This theological worldview is often coupled with an anti-imperialist discourse that identifies entities such as the Vatican, Zionist organizations, and Masonic networks as existential threats to Muslim unity. When this ideological framing is considered alongside the community's perception of itself as a religious family bound by shared moral and spiritual values, it becomes evident that *İskenderpaşa's* conception of the nation is based less on territorial or ethnic definitions than on religious solidarity.

In this framework, Islam serves not merely as a belief system, but as the central organizing principle that binds individuals into a cohesive moral and social order. This is why Şerif Mardin (1991: 56) characterizes this orientation of Islamism as a form of "primary nationalism" or "proto-nationalism." It is rooted in the notion that only through the maintenance of traditional communal ties, reinforced by religious values and spiritual leadership, can society resist the moral disintegration associated with modernity and secularism. Accordingly, the community encourages its followers to participate in modern life but simultaneously warns them against the deceptive allure of modern values. This dual stance reflects a broader ideological position that prioritizes cultural continuity and religious morality over uncritical adaptation to secular norms.

Thus, *İskenderpaşa's* vision of Islamism cannot be understood in isolation from its conservative and nationalist dimensions. Rather than advocating a purely theological or scriptural form of political Islam, the community integrates religious principles with a broader conservative worldview that emphasizes moral order, traditional authority, and social cohesion. In fact, this hybrid ideological posture is characteristic of many religious communities in Türkiye. The political trajectory of these groups has been significantly shaped by the historical legacy of the secular Republic, particularly the legal prohibitions placed on *tariqas* and *zawiyahs* during the early Republican era. These prohibitions forced religious communities to operate covertly and spurred them to develop alternative strategies for maintaining and legitimizing their presence in the public sphere.

One of the most significant strategies adopted by these groups was the prioritization of religious education through Quran courses and informal religious gatherings. These activities served both as a form of resistance and as a means of community preservation. Consequently, when Islamist political actors began to participate in electoral politics in the latter half of the 20th century, religious groups such as *İskenderpaşa* viewed political support for these actors as a form of retributive justice and an opportunity to reverse decades of marginalization and state-led oppression. Although their doctrinal commitments urged detachment from political power, they interpreted participation in political opposition to secularism as both necessary and legitimate.

Moreover, beyond resistance to secular repression, the enduring mystique of the state has remained a central feature of Turkish Islamism. While in some cases this mystique takes the form of a vision for an Islamic state, more often it corresponds to a broader aspiration for

sacralized political authority. This symbolic valorization of the state, and the concomitant desire for leadership and control, has impeded Islamists from developing robust critiques of domination, hierarchy, and authoritarianism. Instead, the internalization of statist and hierarchical ideals has led to the reproduction of power structures within religious communities themselves. As such, despite their oppositional rhetoric, many Islamist movements, including those influenced by İskenderpaşa, have struggled to maintain a genuine distance from state power and economic interests. This fusion of moral authority with political ambition has, in turn, limited their capacity to function as transformative or genuinely oppositional forces within the broader political order.

4. Conclusion

İskenderpaşa Cemaati has been one of the significant Islamic communities in Türkiye which could achieve to create a broad social network not only among Turkish religious people but also in several foreign countries. This network has been empowered by means of economic and political power which have gradually increased in terms of Islamists' political power. As Durkheim puts by asserting that the organic solidarity could be maintained by collective bindings and traditional values, these factors have also made changes on the community's structure. As long as religious communities have attained political power, political relations and economic interests have predominated over the religious adherences which give meaning to traditional communities.

On the other hand, since Coşan's leadership *İskenderpaşa* community has concentrated on civil society organizations including charitable organizations, scholarship for children's education, foundation of dormitories for students. At the same time, associations and foundations related with the community have worked as business actors in the market. Therefore, their civil society activities have played a major role in enhancing their networks and economic performances. In this regard, the religious stance of the community has increasingly become shaped by expanding networks and the pursuit of material profit. With the development of civil society and the consolidation of political power by Islamist actors, the foundational values and interpersonal bonds that once unified the followers have undergone significant transformation. The community gradually lost its critical distance from political authority, especially concerning issues such as the headscarf controversy and Türkiye's integration into the European Communities. Rather than maintaining a position of moral autonomy, the community began aligning its discourse and positions with the interests of the ruling government. In this process, their oppositional potential did not erode entirely but was transformed through engagement with modernized political and institutional mechanisms.

Consequently, like the *İskenderpaşa* community, most religious communities in Türkiye have failed to channel their religious discourses and civil society opportunities through into emancipatory or oppositional frameworks. Instead, they became confined within structures that merely mimicked traditional community forms while, in reality, pursuing modernized relations and competitive/interest-driven engagements.

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Türkiye ile Yunanistan Arasındaki Güvenlik İkilemi

Türkiye ve Yunanistan arasında Ege Denizi, Kıbrıs meselesi, azınlık hakları ve Patrikhane gibi konular temelinde uzun süredir devam eden anlaşmazlıklar, iki ülkenin dış politika önceliklerinde belirleyici olmuştur. Bu çalışma, söz konusu anlaşmazlıkların doğurduğu güvenlik ikilemini, oyun teorisi ve politika analizi bağlamında değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada, Stockholm Uluslararası Barış Araştırmaları Enstitüsü (SIPRI) verilerinden yararlanılarak iki ülkenin savunma harcamalarındaki eğilimler incelenmiş; elde edilen veriler oyun teorisi ile yorumlanmıştır. Araştırmanın teorik çerçevesi güvenlik ikilemi, rasyonel davranış modeli ve politika analizi gibi kavramlar üzerine inşa edilmiştir. Bulgular, her iki ülkenin de güvenlik arayışı nedeniyle silahlanmayı tercih ettiğini, ancak bu tercihin karşılıklı güvensizliği derinleştirdiğini göstermektedir. Dolayısıyla güvenlik ikileminin yalnızca askeri harcamalarla değil, aynı zamanda taraflar arası politik etkileşimle birlikte ele alınması gerektiği ortaya konmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güvenlik İkilemi, Oyun Teorisi, Politika Analizi.

Security Dilemma Between Türkiye and Greece

Disputes between Türkiye and Greece over issues such as the Aegean Sea, the Cyprus question, minority rights, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate have long shaped the foreign policy priorities of both countries. This study aims to examine the resulting security dilemma within the framework of game theory and policy analysis. Drawing on data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the study analyzes trends in the defense expenditures of both countries and interprets the findings using game theory. The theoretical framework of the research is built upon key concepts such as the security dilemma, rational actor model, and policy analysis. The findings reveal that both countries tend to pursue militarization as a means of ensuring their security; however, this choice deepens mutual mistrust. Therefore, the study argues that the security dilemma should not be addressed solely through military spending but must also be considered in the context of political interaction between the parties.

Keywords: Security Dilemma, Game Theory, Policy Analysis.

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Türkiye ile Yunanistan Arasındaki Güvenlik İkilemi

1. Giriş

Türkiye ile Yunanistan arasında Ege Denizi, Kıbrıs, azınlık hakları ve Patrikhane gibi çeşitli konular etrafında şekillenen diplomatik ve stratejik sorunlar, tarihsel arka planı olan kronik bir gerginliğin sürekliliğini sağlamaktadır. 21. yüzyılın ilk çeyreğine gelindiğinde bu sorunlar beş ana başlık altında toplanabilir: deniz yetki alanları (karasuları ve kıta sahanlığı), adaların silahsızlandırılması, coğrafi oluşumların statüsü, Uçuş Bilgi Bölgesi (FIR) ve Arama Kurtarma (SAR) yetkileri. Bu yapısal sorunların dış politika karar alma süreçlerine nüfuz etmesi, güvenlik kaygılarını derinleştirmiş ve tarafların birbirini tehdit olarak algılamasına neden olmuştur.

Bu bağlamda çalışmanın temel araştırma sorusu şudur: Türkiye ve Yunanistan arasındaki güvenlik ikilemi, rasyonel karar alma süreçleri bağlamında nasıl açıklanabilir? Bu soru çerçevesinde, güvenlik ikilemi kavramının yalnızca askeri harcamalarla değil; tarafların stratejik algıları, tarihsel deneyimleri ve rasyonel davranış biçimleriyle birlikte analiz edilmesi gerektiği ileri sürülmektedir. Oyun teorisi, bu bağlamda, iki ülkenin karşılıklı davranışlarını analiz etmek için işlevsel bir model sunmaktadır. Buna ek olarak, politika analizi, dış politika kararlarının arka planındaki siyasal, ekonomik ve kurumsal dinamikleri anlamaya katkı sağlamaktadır.

Bu kapsamda makalenin ikinci bölümünde, çalışmanın teorik çerçevesini oluşturan oyun teorisi, güvenlik ikilemi, politika analizi ve rasyonel davranış modeli hakkında teorik bilgi açıklanmaktadır. Üçüncü bölümde, iki ülkenin savunma yatırım ve harcamaları incelenmektedir. Dördüncü bölümde ise iki ülkenin savunma harcamaları oyun teorisine uygulanmaktadır. Çalışmanın son bölümünde ise iki ülkenin politikaları değerlendirilmektedir.

2. Kavramsal Çerçeve

2.1. Oyun Teorisi

Oyun teorisi, ekonomik faaliyetlere ilişkin en iyi kararın verilmesi için geliştirilmiş matematiksel bir yaklaşım olarak ifade edilebilir. Bu faaliyetlerde birden fazla karar verici, kendi kazançlarını en iyi duruma getirecek biçimde karar vermek zorundadırlar. Oyun teorisi, gruptaki oyuncuların yapabileceklerinin stratejik bir analizine dayanarak, rasyonel seçimler yapan bir grup oyuncu arasındaki var olan karşılıklı etkileşimi analiz eder (Mehmet Ahlatcıoğlu, 1998).

Ekonomik rekabetin, savaşların, seçimlerin ve çoğu zaman oyun olarak düşünmediğimiz daha pek çok etkileşimin, bir oyun gibi ele alınıp analiz edilebileceği fikriyle bilimsel bir metafor üzerine kurulu olan oyun teorisi; rasyonel ajanları etkileşime sokarak veya başka bir deyişle etkileşimli karar teorisini kullanarak strateji seçiminin incelenmesidir (McCain, 2014). Oyunun özelliklerine bakacak olursak:

- Bir oyun en az iki kişiden oluşur.
- Oyuncular birden fazla alternatif arasından seçim yaparak hareket ederler.
- Sonuçlar ve hareketler oyunun yapısına bağlı olarak değişebilir. Örneğin sıralı ve tam bilgili bir oyunda birinci oyuncu ikinci oyuncunun neyi seçeceğini bilir ve buna göre hareket ederek önce hareket etmenin avantajını kullanır ve sonucu daha ikinci oyuncu hareket etmeden belirler.

Oyun teorisi birçok alanda karar vericiler tarafından uygulanan bir yöntemdir. Oldukça karmaşık olan durumlarda çıkış yolu bulmada yardımcı olur. Oyuna dâhil edilen her bir veri, kararları ve sonuçları doğrudan etkileyebilir. Bu yönüyle bir yöntemden çok meşaleye benzetilebilir. Meşale ne kadar büyütülürse yol o kadar net görülebilir. Çünkü oyun teorisi, teoriyi uygulamaktan çok uygulayana hizmet etmektedir.

2.2. Güvenlik İkilemi

Uluslararası güvenlik literatürünün önemli konularından birisi de güvenlik ikilemidir. Herz güvenlik ikilemini şöyle tanımlamaktadır: “Bir toplumda yaşayan birey ya da gruplar diğer gruplar tarafından saldırıya uğrama, egemenlik altına alınma ve yok edilme gibi kaygılara sahiptir. Saldırıya maruz kalmamak için kendini emniyete alma çabası, onları bu tehlikelerden kaçınmak için daha da güçlü olmaya yönelik tedbirler almaya yöneltir. Bu düşünce diğerlerini en kötüsüne hazırlık yapmaya zorlar. Adeta yarış içinde olunan böylesine bir ortamda iki taraf da kendini güvende hissetmediğinden daha güçlü olmak amacı ile mücadele bu şekilde devam eder.” (Herz, 1950).

Graham Allison’un Tukidides Tuzağı olarak adlandırdığı fikir, Thukidides’in “Peloponnesos Savaşları” adlı eserinde Atina ile Sparta arasındaki 30 yıl süren ve MÖ 404 yılında sona eren ünlü Peloponez Savaşı’nı tasvir ederken kullandığı “Atina’nın yükselişi ve bunun Sparta’ya aşıldığı korku, savaşı kaçınılmaz hâle getirdi” cümlesinden günümüzde bile Realizm’in Uluslararası İlişkiler yaklaşımındaki en önemli kavramı olan “güvenlik ikilemi” olgusunu en yalın haliyle açıklamaktadır. Güvenlik ikileminin devletleri savaşa ittiğini açıklayan spiral modele göre devletler diğer tarafın silahlanmasını adeta kendisinin silahsızlanması olarak algılar. Karşılıklı korkular önleyici savaş güdüsünü teşvik ederek bu döngünün savaşa çıkarma sonuçlanmasına neden olabilmektedir.

2.3. Politika Analizi

Ulusal güvenlik politikaları nadiren sadece rasyonel hesaplamalarla açıklanabilir; bir ülkenin jeopolitik ortamı, kaynakları ve iç politikası dahil olmak üzere birçok başka faktör denkleme girer. Yine de bu çerçevede, ülkeler normalde kendilerine açık olan politika alternatiflerini rasyonel bir şekilde tartmaya ve ulusal çıkarları ve hedefleri en iyi şekilde ilerletecek seçenekleri seçmeye çalışırlar. Politika analizleri, alternatif seçeneklerin amaçları ve beklentileri hakkında sorgulamaya tabi tutularak geliştirilebilen karar verme sürecinde etkili roller oynayabilir ve sıklıkla oynar (Kugler, 2006).

Politika analizi, politik süreçleri ve kararları inceleyen ve değerlendiren bir araştırma yöntemidir. Politika analizi, politika yapıcılarının mevcut politikaların etkisini değerlendirmelerine, politika seçeneklerini karşılaştırmalarına ve gelecekteki politika tercihlerini belirlemelerine yardımcı olabilir. Analiz yöntemleri, stratejik değerlendirme, sistem analizi, operasyonel değerlendirme gibi nitel ve nicel teknikleri içerebilir.

2.4. Rasyonel Davranış Modeli

Uluslararası ilişkilerde rasyonel davranış modeli, aktörlerin uluslararası politika ve dış politika kararlarında rasyonel düşünce ve çıkarlarına dayalı olarak hareket ettiği bir teorik yaklaşımdır. Bu model, aktörlerin çıkarlarını maksimize etmeye çalıştığını ve kararlarını hesaplamaya dayalı bir şekilde aldığını öngörür. Rasyonel davranış modeli, aşağıdaki temel varsayımları içerir:

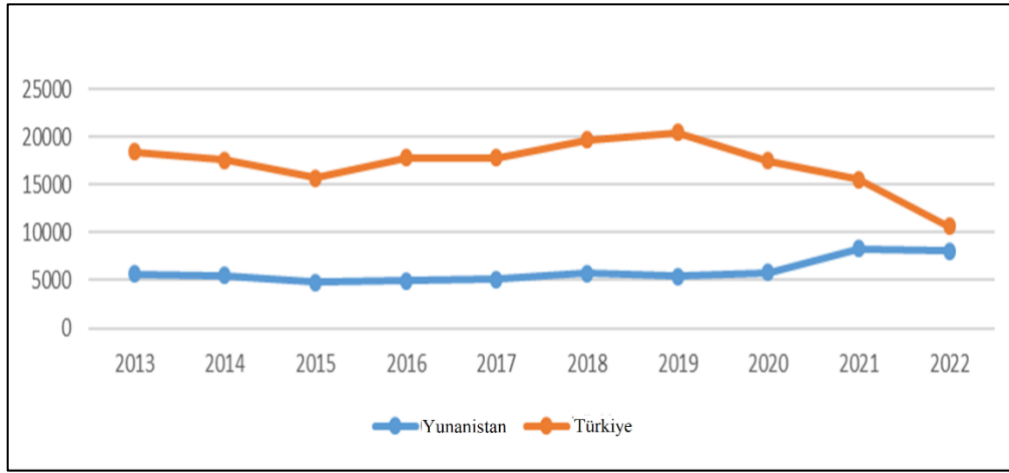
- a) Rasyonellik: Model, aktörlerin rasyonel olduğunu ve kendi çıkarlarını bilinçli bir şekilde değerlendirdiklerini varsayar. Aktörler, bilgi sahibi olma yeteneklerini kullanarak, kararlarını en iyi şekilde değerlendirirler.
- b) Hedefler ve Çıkarlar: Aktörlerin net ve belirli hedeflere sahip olduğu ve bu hedeflere ulaşmak için çaba gösterdiği varsayılır. Aktörler, politika tercihlerini yaparken kendi çıkarlarını koruma ve maksimize etme amacı güder.
- c) Bilgi: Rasyonel davranış modeli, aktörlerin kararlarını verirken mevcut bilgileri kullanma yeteneklerine sahip olduklarını varsayar. Aktörler, geçmiş deneyimlerden, istihbarattan, analizlerden ve diğer kaynaklardan edindikleri bilgileri kullanarak kararlarını verirler.

- d) Seçenekler ve Sonuçlar: Aktörler, farklı politika seçeneklerini değerlendirir ve bu seçeneklerin sonuçlarını hesaplarlar. Kararlarını, en iyi sonucu elde etmelerini sağlayacak şekilde verirler. Bu model, aktörlerin çıkarlarını ve hedeflerini en iyi şekilde gerçekleştirecek seçenekleri tercih edeceğini öngörür.

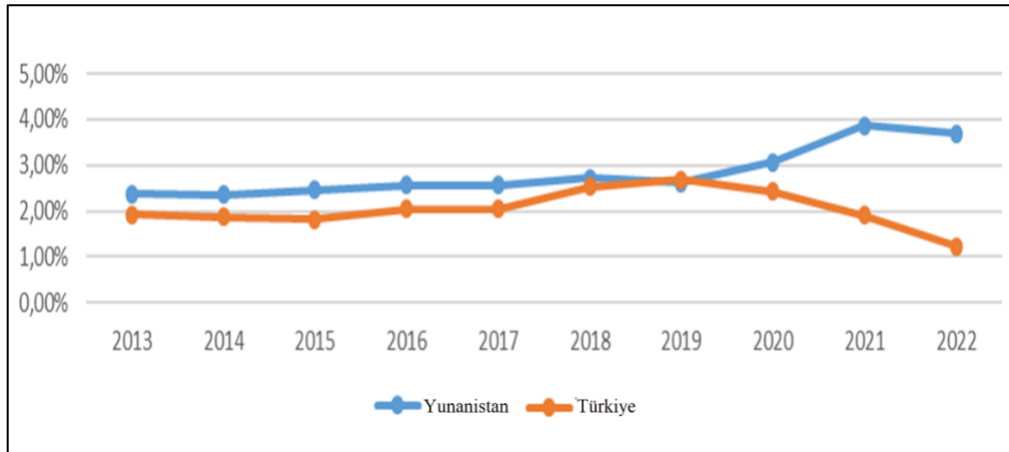
Rasyonel davranış modeli, uluslararası ilişkilerdeki aktörlerin karar alma süreçlerini ve politika tercihlerini açıklamaya çalışır. Ancak, bu model bazen aktörlerin tam anlamıyla rasyonel davranmadığı durumları açıklayamaz ve insan faktörünün duygusal veya sosyal dinamikleri gibi diğer faktörleri dikkate almaz. Bu nedenle, rasyonel davranış modeli, uluslararası ilişkilerdeki tüm karar alma süreçlerini kapsayacak şekilde tek başına yeterli bir açıklama sunamaz.

3. Veri Analizi

Sayısal veriler, analizi yapmada önemlidir. Kanıta dayalı kararlar almak, etkiyi değerlendirmek, karşılaştırmalar yapmak, öncelik belirlemek ve politika değerlendirmesi yapmak için sayısal veriler kullanılır. Bu bölümde iki ülkenin güvenlik ikilemi kapsamında hareket edip etmedikleri test edilmeden önce iki ülkeye ait savunma harcamaları verileri incelenecektir.



Grafik 1. Türkiye ve Yunanistana ait savunma harcamaları (Milyon \$)



Grafik 2. Türkiye ve Yunanistanın savunma harcamalarının GSYİH'ye oranı

Kaynak: SIPRI, 2023

Grafikte yer alan verilere göre, Yunanistan ve Türkiye'nin savunma harcamaları 2013-2022 döneminde nasıl değiştiğini analiz edilebilir.

Yunanistan'ın savunma harcamaları 2013 yılında 5,65 milyar dolar seviyesindedir ve

2015 yılına kadar azalma göstermiştir. 2015 yılından itibaren artış eğilimi göstermiş, ancak 2019 yılında en düşük noktasına ulaşmıştır. 2020 ve 2021 yıllarında ciddi bir artış yaşamış ve 2021 yılında en yüksek seviyeye ulaşmıştır. 2022 yılında bir miktar düşüş göstererek 8,10 milyar dolar olarak kaydedilmiştir.

Türkiye'nin savunma harcamaları 2013 yılında 18,42 milyar dolar seviyesindedir ve 2015 yılına kadar düşüş yaşamıştır. 2015 yılından itibaren artış trendi göstermiş ve 2018 yılında en yüksek noktasına ulaşmıştır. 2019 ve 2020 yıllarında bir miktar düşüş yaşanmış, ancak 2021 yılında tekrar artış kaydedilmiştir. 2022 yılında ise belirgin bir düşüş göstererek 10,64 milyar dolar olarak kaydedilmiştir.

Yunanistan'ın savunma harcamaları oranı 2013-2015 döneminde dalgalanmalar göstermiştir. 2016 yılından itibaren artış trendi göstermiş ve 2021 yılında en yüksek oranına ulaşmıştır. 2022 yılında bir miktar düşüş göstererek %3.69 olarak kaydedilmiştir.

Türkiye'nin savunma harcamaları oranı 2013-2015 döneminde düşüş göstermiştir. 2015 yılından itibaren artış trendi göstermiş ve 2018 yılında en yüksek oranına ulaşmıştır. 2019-2022 döneminde dalgalanmalar göstermiştir, ancak genel olarak düşüş eğilimi göstermektedir. 2022 yılında %1,23 olarak kaydedilmiştir. Bu verilere dayanarak, Yunanistan'ın savunma harcamalarının genel olarak artış eğiliminde olduğu, Türkiye'nin ise savunma harcamalarında dalgalanmalar yaşadığı ve son yıllarda bir düşüş trendi gösterdiği söylenebilir.

3.1. Oyun Teorisi ile Değerlendirme

Güvenlik çalışmaları bağlamında oyun teorisi, devletlerin belirsizlik ve tehdit ortamında nasıl kararlar aldığını anlamak için kullanılmaktadır. Özellikle caydırıcılık, karşılıklı silahlanma ve stratejik denge durumlarının analizi, bu teori ile modellenenebilir (Zagare, 2019). Türkiye ile Yunanistan arasındaki güvenlik ikilemi, bir "tutsak ikilemi" yapısına benzemektedir; çünkü her iki taraf da iş birliği yapsa daha yüksek fayda elde edecek olmasına rağmen, karşı tarafın niyetinden emin olamama nedeniyle silahlanmayı rasyonel bir tercih olarak görmektedir. Bu durum, güvenliğin daha fazla güvenlikle değil, daha fazla güvensizlikle sonuçlanmasına neden olmaktadır.

Bu nedenle oyun teorisinin güvenlik çalışmaları içerisindeki önemi sadece teorik değil, aynı zamanda uygulamalıdır. Kriz yönetimi, askeri denge, caydırıcılık ve silahsızlanma gibi alanlarda stratejik karar alma süreçlerinin modellenmesi yoluyla karar vericilere analiz imkânı sunar.

Bir önceki bölümde yer alan verilerden hareketle Türkiye'nin savunma harcamalarında azalma eğilimi görülürken Yunanistan'ın savunma harcamalarının bir artış gösterdiği, yine de iki ülke arasında önemli farklar olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Bu senaryonun devam ettiği eşanlı bir oyun inşa edelim:

Tablo 1. Türkiye ve Yunanistan'ın Silahlanma/Silahlanmama Eylemlerine Göre Getiri Matrisi

		Yunanistan	
		Silahlanmamak	Silahlanmak
Türkiye	Silahlanmamak	(5,5)	(1,4)
	Silahlanmak	(4,1)	(3,3)

Türkiye ve Yunanistan silah stoklarını artırarak maliyetli olan yolu seçebilir. Birinin silah üstünlüğüne sahip olması, ona daha yüksek getiri sağlar, ancak diğerine en kötü getiriyi sağlar. Silahlanmamak her ikisi için de en iyisidir.

Her iki ülkenin de en yüksek faydayı elde etmek için "Silahlanmak" stratejisini tercih ettiği görülmektedir. Bu strateji sonucunda her iki ülke de 3 birimlik fayda elde etmektedir (3,3). Ancak, eğer her iki oyuncu da "Silahlanmamak" stratejisini tercih ederse, her ikisi de daha yüksek fayda elde edebilirler (5,5). Bu durumda, oyuncuların bir açmazda olduğu söylenebilir, çünkü her iki oyuncu da kendi çıkarlarını düşünerek "Silahlanmak" stratejisini tercih ediyor, ancak aslında toplam faydayı artıracabilecekleri "Silahlanmamak" stratejisini uygulamıyorlar. Bu tür bir durumda, oyuncuların birlikte çalışarak daha iyi sonuçlar elde edebilecekleri bir işbirliği veya koordinasyon gündeme gelebilir.

Saf strateji Nash dengesi, her oyuncunun tek bir stratejiyi saf bir şekilde seçtiği bir durumu ifade eder. Bu durumda, oyuncuların kararları değiştirmeyecek ve başka bir stratejiye geçmeyecekleri bir denge noktası bulunmaktadır.

Verilen tablodaki değerlere göre saf strateji Nash dengesini bulmak için her oyuncunun en iyi sonucu veren saf stratejisini belirlememiz gerekiyor. Yunanistan için en yüksek sonucu veren saf strateji "Silahlanmamak"tır. Türkiye için ise en yüksek sonucu veren saf strateji "Silahlanmak"tır. Bu durumda, saf strateji Nash dengesi "Silahlanmamak" ve "Silahlanmak" stratejileridir. Her iki ülke de en iyi sonucu elde etmek için bu stratejileri saf bir şekilde uygulamalıdır.

Tablo 2. Karma Stratejiye Olasılık Dağılımına Göre Getiri Matrisi

		<div>q</div> <div>1-q</div>	
		Yunanistan	
		Silahlanmamak	Silahlanmak
Türkiye	<div>p</div> Silahlanmamak	(5,5)	(1,4)
	<div>1-p</div> Silahlanmak	(4,1)	(3,3)

Karma strateji birden çok stratejinin olduğu durumlarda karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bazı oyunlarda birden fazla denge söz konusu olabilir. Bu durumda karma stratejiler, oyuncular için en iyi karar strateji demeti sunar. Böylece oyuncular, rakiplerine karşı hamlelerinin bir kısmında bir strateji, diğer kısmında ise farklı bir strateji ya da stratejiler uygulama fırsatı bulurlar (Rasmusen, 2006). Örneğimiz için Karma Strateji Nash dengesi bulmak istersek:

Türkiye'nin "silahlanmamak" stratejisini tercih etmesi olasılığını "p" ile silahlanmak olasılığını ise "1-p" olarak tanımlayalım. Bu durumda:

- 1- Türkiye'nin "silahlanmamak" stratejisinden beklenen getirisi $5q + 1(1-q) = 4q+1$
- 2- Türkiye'nin "silahlanmak" stratejisinden beklenen getirisi $4q+3(1-q) = q+3$
- 3- Türkiye iki strateji arasında kayıtsız olmalı, bunun sonucunda

$$BD1(\text{Silahlanmamak}) = BD2(\text{Silahlanmak})$$

$$4q+1=q+3 \Rightarrow q=2/3$$

Yunanistan'ın "silahlanmamak" stratejisini tercih etmesi olasılığını "q" ile silahlanmak olasılığını ise "1-q" olarak tanımlayalım. Bu durumda:

- 1- Yunanistan'ın "silahlanmamak" stratejisinden beklenen getirisi $5p + 1(1-p)$
 $= 4p+1$
- 2- Yunanistan'ın "silahlanmak" stratejisinden beklenen getirisi $4p+3(1-p)$
 $= p+3$
- 3- Yunanistan iki strateji arasında kayıtsız olmalı, bunun sonucunda

$$BD1(\text{Silahlanmamak}) = BD2(\text{Silahlanmak})$$

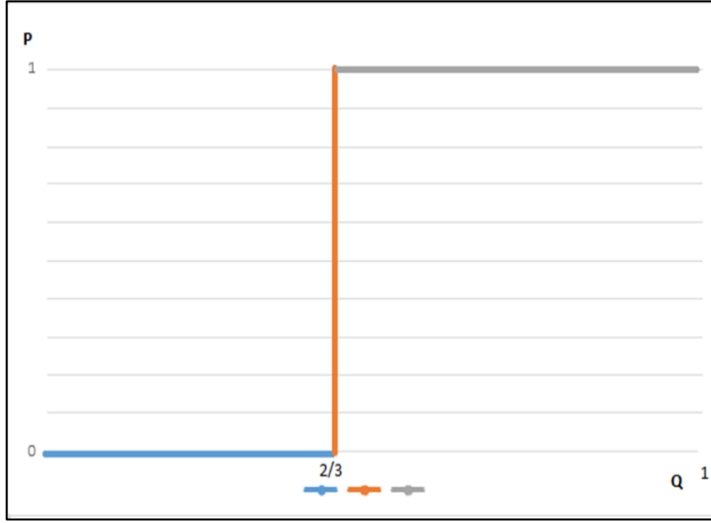
$$4p+1=p+3 \Rightarrow p=2/3$$

Karma strateji nash dengesi

$$= [(2/3 \text{ silahlanmamak}, 1/3 \text{ silahlanmak}), (2/3 \text{ silahlanmamak}, 1/3 \text{ silahlanmak})]$$

Türkiye, silahlanmamak stratejisini 2/3 olasılıkla ve silahlanmak stratejisini 1/3 olasılıkla uygular. Yunanistan ise silahlanmamak stratejisini 2/3 olasılıkla ve silahlanmak stratejisini 1/3 olasılıkla uygular.

Bu denge noktasında, her iki oyuncunun da stratejilerini değiştirmeye teşvik edecek bir avantajları yoktur. Eğer bir oyuncu stratejisini tek taraflı olarak değiştirirse, kendine zarar vermiş olur. Bu durumda, oyuncuların stratejilerini sabit tutarak en iyi sonucu elde etmeleri için teşvik edilirler. Her bir ülkenin en iyi tepki fonksiyonunu grafiklerle gösterelim.

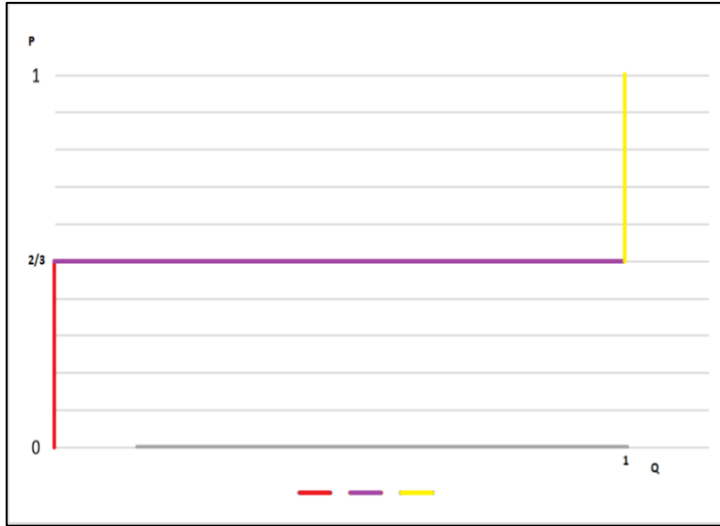


Grafik 3. Türkiye'nin en iyi tepkisi grafiği

Silahlanma (yani $p = 1$) eğer $4q+1 > q+3$, yani $q > 2/3$ olduğunda rasyoneldir.

Silahlan veya Silahlanma (yani $0 \leq p \leq 1$) eğer $4q+1 = q+3$, yani $q = 2/3$ olduğunda mümkündür.

Silahlan (yani $p = 0$) eğer $q+3 > 4q+1$, yani $q < 2/3$ ise olasıdır.

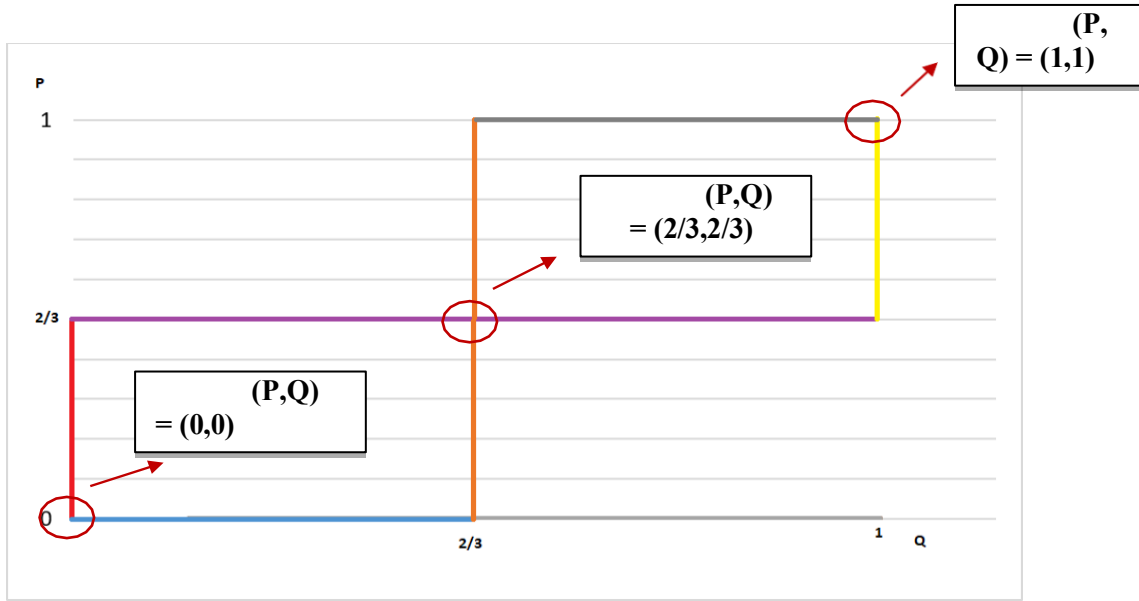


Grafik 4. Yunanistan'ın en iyi tepkisi grafiği

Silahlanma (yani $q = 1$) eğer $4p+1 > p+3$, yani $p > 2/3$ olduğunda rasyoneldir.

Silahlan veya Silahlanma (yani $0 \leq q \leq 1$) eğer $4p+1 = p+3$, yani $p = 2/3$ olduğunda mümkündür.

Silahlan (yani $q = 0$) eğer $p+3 > 4p+1$, yani $p < 2/3$ ise olasıdır.



Grafik 5. Türkiye ve Yunanistan'ın en iyi tepkisi grafiği

4. Sonuç

Türkiye ve Yunanistan arasındaki güvenlik ikilemi, her iki ülkenin savunma harcamalarını artırmasına yol açmaktadır. Oyun teorisi ve politika analizi kullanılarak yapılan değerlendirmeler, her iki ülkenin de güvenliklerine ve savunma yatırımlarına neden bu denli önem verdiğini kavramak açısından anlamlıdır. Sayısal veriler aracılığıyla, Türkiye ve Yunanistan'ın savunma harcamalarındaki yıllara dayalı değişim analiz edilmiştir. Bu değişim, iki ülkenin karşılıklı güvensizlikten beslenen bir güvenlik açmazı içinde hareket ettiğini ve tehdit algılarının, politika tercihlerine doğrudan yansıdığını göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda, taraflar birbirlerinin savunma kapasitelerini tehdit olarak algıladıkça, caydırıcılığı artırma amacıyla kendi askeri kapasitelerini geliştirme eğilimi göstermektedir. Ancak, yalnızca bu veriler güvenlik ikileminin varlığını kesin olarak ortaya koymak için yeterli değildir. Güvenlik ikilemi kavramını tam olarak ortaya koymak için ülkelerin yalnız savunma harcamalarına değil; aynı zamanda politikalarına, stratejik hedeflerine, jeopolitik durumlarına ve tarihsel ilişkilerini de incelemek gereklidir.

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A Discourse Analysis on Digital Transformation within the Framework of Development Plans (2001–2028)

National development plans aim to guide the government over five-year periods by outlining the current situation, ongoing practices, goals, and adaptation to the global order. This article examines the evolution of the discourse on digital transformation through five national development plans covering the period from 2001 to 2028. Concepts such as digital transformation, e-government, digital state, R&D, and technology are analyzed. Supported by academic sources and official documents, the findings reveal a shift from infrastructure-based approaches to citizen-centered digital governance, while emphasizing the growing importance of a sustainable global order for future policy directions.

Keywords: Public Administration, Development Plans, Digital Transformation.

Kalkınma Planları Çerçevesinde Dijital Dönüşüme İlişkin Bir Söylem Analizi (2001–2028)

Kalkınma planları, mevcut durumu, devam eden uygulamaları, hedefleri ve küresel düzene uyumu ana hatlarıyla belirleyerek hükümete beş yıllık dönemler için rehberlik etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu makale, 2001–2028 dönemini kapsayan beş kalkınma planı üzerinden dijital dönüşüm söyleminin evrimini incelemektedir. Dijital dönüşüm, e-devlet, dijital devlet, AR-GE ve teknoloji gibi kavramlar analiz edilmiştir. Akademik kaynaklar ve resmî belgelerle desteklenen çalışma, altyapı temelli yaklaşımlardan vatandaş odaklı dijital yönetime geçişi ortaya koymakta; sürdürülebilir bir küresel düzenin gelecek politika yönelimleri açısından artan önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kamu Yönetimi, Kalkınma Planları, Dijital Dönüşüm.

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A Discourse Analysis on Digital Transformation within the Framework of Development Plans (2001–2028)*

1. Introduction

Today, the understanding and functioning of public administration are increasingly changing due to advancing technology and ongoing digital transformation efforts. One of the most defining elements of this process is digital transformation itself. This transformation, which fundamentally reshapes how public services are planned and delivered, is clearly reflected in Türkiye's national development plans issued between 2001 and those covering the period up to 2028. These strategic documents not only outline economic and social goals but also highlight the growing role of digital tools in governance.

The first concrete strategies related to digitalization in development plans emerged with the 8th Development Plan. While earlier plans did not include direct policy objectives on this issue, they did contain indirect references to information technologies. Therefore, this article focuses primarily on the period starting with the 8th Development Plan. The process from the 8th to the 12th Plan reveals a clear shift from a technology infrastructure-oriented approach to a citizen-centered model integrated with sustainability and digital governance.

At first, the plans concentrated on problems such as infrastructure deficiencies, inadequate R&D investments, and limited digital literacy. In this period, digitalization was mostly seen as a secondary tool supporting economic and industrial development. However, over time, the conceptual framework and strategic direction of these documents changed significantly. This shift culminated in the emphasis on "digital government" and "green transformation" in the 12th Development Plan. This rhetorical and strategic transformation reflects not only technological progress but also a shift in the mindset of public administration: digitalization is no longer an optional modernization effort, but a structural necessity for aligning with the global model of sustainable governance.

This article examines Türkiye's digital transformation process through five national development plans. It analyzes how frequently and in what context key terms such as "R&D," "technology," "digital transformation," "e-Government," and "digital government" are used. As a result, the study highlights that this transformation extends beyond technical infrastructure and underlines how the evolving understanding of governance and sustainability will play a critical role in shaping the future.

2. Defining Public Administration: Key Concepts and Perspectives

Management refers to the process of planning, decision-making, and effective implementation of actions necessary to achieve a specific goal. This process involves the appropriate allocation and use of resources, the determination of strategies required to reach objectives, and the monitoring of these strategies. The fundamental basis of the concept of management lies in the fact that all these activities are carried out with a certain group of people. Two crucial elements of management are the specific group of individuals and the common activity or objective they pursue.

Another fundamental pillar of public administration, aside from management, is

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undoubtedly the concept of the “public.” According to the Turkish Language Association, the term *kamu* refers to all state organs serving the public (Turkish Language Association, 2024). Public administration is often defined as “government in action—the management of public affairs or the implementation of public policies” (Shafritz & Russell, 2017: 6). The activities carried out within the scope of public administration should encompass not just a part of the country, but the entire nation. Holzer and Schwester define public administration as the creation, implementation, and execution of public policies (Holzer & Schwester, 2011: 32). Basu (2004: 2) further explains that public administration operates public affairs at all levels—national, state, and regional.

Individuals form groups, groups form societies, and societies constitute states. According to Aktan, wherever human communities exist, management and managers have always been present. “Government is a necessary organization for a civilized social life. The most important issue is to understand, agree on, and implement the rules and institutions essential for designing an ideal government and establishing good governance” (Aktan, 2015: 51). The state represents an organizational framework that actively safeguards the rights and interests of its citizens, fulfilling its legitimate mandate by providing optimal public services. To execute this mandate, the state employs various organizational and functional mechanisms at the national level. Among these mechanisms, public administration stands out as a critical structure, representing the state’s interface with society (Parlak, Doğan; 2022 :1).

Public administration has been shaped by Weber’s bureaucracy model, which is based on hierarchy, rational-legal authority, and rule-bound conduct (Weber, 1946). However, this model has been criticized for limiting flexibility and individual initiative. In the 1970s and 1980s, New Public Management (NPM) emerged, adopting private sector management techniques in the public sector by emphasizing decentralization, competition, and performance orientation (Hood, 1991). In NPM, citizens were viewed as customers, a perspective that generated dissatisfaction among the public (Denek, 2019).

In the 2000s, the Digital-Era Governance (DEG) paradigm developed, highlighting integration, user-centered service design, and real-time decision-making processes through digital technologies (Dunleavy et al., 2006). Digital transformation encompasses not only technological advancements but also structural and cultural reforms, emphasizing transparency, flexibility, and citizen collaboration (Mergel, Edelman & Haug, 2019).

3. An Overview of Development Plans in Türkiye

Following the May 27, 1960 coup, the Constituent Assembly in Türkiye adopted development plans as a tool aimed at raising the country’s economic level to that of developed nations. The period that began in 1960 is referred to in the literature as the era of planned development, during which the State Planning Organization (Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı-DPT) was established and the process of planned development officially commenced. The 1961 Constitution made the preparation and implementation of development plans a constitutional obligation, laying the foundations for a planned period aimed at guiding the country’s economic growth and development. The 1961 Constitution envisaged shaping the economic and social order based on justice, full employment, and living conditions befitting human dignity. Within this framework, the state was explicitly tasked with increasing national savings, directing investments according to societal benefit priorities, and preparing development plans. The principle of conducting development in a planned manner was introduced, and the establishment and duties of the State Planning Organization (DPT), which would manage this process, were regulated by a special law (Turkish Constitution, 1961, Articles 41, 129). Thus, development and industrialization began to be conducted through plans and overseen by the DPT during this new constitutional period (Tepecik, 2017). Furthermore, the establishment of the DPT was supported by a broad coalition including the military, the Republican People’s Party (CHP), bureaucracy, and intellectuals, while the leading international organization of the time, the OECD, also supported the process. Development experts such as Jan Tinbergen provided consultancy to the DPT, laying the groundwork for planning (Pamuk, 2012: 235-236).

However, following the adoption of neoliberal economic approaches after the 1980s, significant changes occurred in the understanding of planning, and the functions of the DPT gradually weakened. In the 1990s, the acceleration of Türkiye's full membership process with the European Union brought about the adoption of more localized and participatory models in planning. In line with the EU's regionalization policies, Development Agencies were established at the local level in Türkiye to benefit from financial support, and these agencies were designed as key instruments of regional development (Fedai, 2016:417-418). Accordingly, the State Planning Organization (DPT) was transformed into the Ministry of Development with Decree Law No. 641 issued in 2011. With this change, a more strategic and coordination-focused model was adopted in development planning. However, this structure was replaced by the Presidency of Strategy and Budget following the transition to the Presidential Government System in 2018. The Presidency was officially established with Presidential Decree No. 1, published in the same year, and its duties and authority were further detailed with Decree No. 13, reorganizing the institutional structure of the organization (Bedir, 2022). In line with the institutional transformations brought by the Presidential Government System, the Presidency of Strategy and Budget, established in 2018, has taken a central role in development planning, budget preparation, and coordination of public investments in Türkiye. The Presidency collaborates with relevant public institutions, primarily the Ministry of Treasury and Finance, throughout the entire process from preparing development plans, medium-term programs, financial plans, and annual programs to their implementation (Presidential Decree No. 13, 2018).

Development can be defined as the progress of a country in economic, social, cultural, and in line with the needs required by the era. The concept of development does not only encompass economic concerns but also includes many goals aimed at improving and enhancing the quality of life of people (Gönel, 2010). Especially for developing countries, development means not only increasing production capacity but also raising the welfare level of society and achieving structural transformations. Therefore, development should be evaluated within a broader framework that includes both quantitative and qualitative changes (Erdinç, 2018:17). A development plan is a document prepared with the aim of achieving these goals. In Türkiye, development plans are generally prepared in five-year periods and determine the roadmap to be followed for reaching the country's development objectives.

4. Understanding Digital Transformation in the Public Sector

The term "digital" generally carries a broader meaning than just electronic devices; it primarily refers to the process of processing and displaying data in a digital environment. In this context, digitalization can be defined as the process of converting data into meaningful information (Bozkurt, Hamutoğlu, Liman Kaban, Taşçı & Aykul, 2021). Digital transformation is a comprehensive process that reshapes business processes, organizational structures, social interactions, and the functioning of public administration through the use of digital technologies and innovative information systems. Digital transformation is not merely a technological innovation but also aims to create fundamental changes in how institutions operate. This process seeks to transform the digital infrastructure of the state to provide public services more quickly, effectively, and transparently. Digital transformation involves the use of innovative technologies to increase efficiency and social welfare. In this regard, governments and various organizations are developing long-term strategies (Ebert & Duarte, 2018).

Digital transformation in public administration involves the integration of technologies such as e-government applications, digital citizen services, data analytics, artificial intelligence, and automation. This transformation enables public services to become more efficient and accessible. Digital transformation can also be defined as the determination of digital maturity levels, the implementation of business and process-based transformation, and the identification of appropriate software requirements for this process, aiming for public institutions to achieve an efficient, effective, and transparent service structure (Tübitak Bilgem, n.d.).

Today, technological advancements have significantly changed the nature and delivery methods of public services. Particularly, the widespread use of the internet and information technologies has enabled public services to be delivered more effectively, rapidly, and at lower costs (Yavuz & Çarıkçı, 2009). Additionally, digital transformation allows public administration to reduce bureaucratic obstacles, accelerate processes, and utilize resources more efficiently. This process enables both public employees to perform their tasks more efficiently and citizens to access services more easily. Digital technologies have encouraged reforms in public administration and accelerated the search for reliable data and evidence. These technologies increase the speed, accessibility, and quality of services while allowing big data sources to be analyzed more quickly and in greater detail. This development has provided public managers and policymakers with the opportunity to make decisions better aligned with citizens' demands (Gül, 2017).

5. Research Design

5.1. Aim and Scope of the Study

This study aims to examine how digital transformation has been conceptualized and discursively constructed in five Turkish national development plans covering the period between 2001 and 2028. The primary focus of the research is to explore how digitalization is defined through planning documents, what kinds of meanings are attributed to it, and how this discourse has evolved over time. In this context, the study seeks to uncover insights into how public administration has redefined its priorities in the digital age by analyzing the transformation of the discourse surrounding digital transformation. Through an in-depth examination of the narratives related to digitalization in the development plans, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of how public policy in Türkiye has undergone change, the conceptual frameworks within which this transformation has taken place, and how the understanding of public service delivery has been restructured in this process.

5.2. Methodology

This study employs a dual-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a robust understanding of the discourse around digital transformation:

1. **Discourse-Historical Analysis (DHA):** The first stage of the research utilizes Discourse-Historical Analysis, a branch of critical discourse analysis, to explore how key digital transformation-related concepts—such as *Science and Technology*, *Information and Communication*, *Research and Development*, *e-Government*, *Digital Government*, and *Digital Transformation*—are ideologically and contextually framed within policy documents. This method is particularly suitable for tracing the evolution of institutional language and political priorities over extended periods. By situating discourse within its historical and sociopolitical context, DHA allows for the identification of implicit assumptions, shifts in meaning, and discursive strategies adopted by state actors in defining digital transformation.
2. **Quantitative Content Analysis:** To complement the qualitative insights from DHA, the second stage employs a quantitative content analysis, using a manual word count technique to track the frequency and visibility of selected key terms across the five development plans. This step serves a dual purpose: (i) to validate the patterns observed in the qualitative analysis, and (ii) to visualize the increasing emphasis on digitalization in state discourse over time. The integration of both methods enhances the reliability and depth of findings, allowing for triangulation between semantic content and discursive frequency.

The data corpus consists of five national development plans covering the years 2001 to 2028. In total, 1,015 pages were reviewed. The procedure followed these steps:

- **Step 1:** Selection of key concepts including 'e-Government', 'Digital Transformation', 'Digital State', 'Technology', and 'R&D'.

- **Step 2:** Manual extraction and detailed analysis of all sentences containing these terms.
- **Step 3:** Mapping of semantic shifts using Discourse-Historical Analysis.
- **Step 4:** Tabulation of word frequency data to observe longitudinal patterns.

The suitability of Discourse-Historical Analysis (DHA) in this context lies in its ability to uncover institutional narratives, policy frameworks, and historical layers embedded in official discourse. By moving beyond surface-level meanings, this method facilitates the identification of deeper ideological constructions and semantic shifts within state planning texts.

5.3. Limitations

The main limitation of this study is its exclusive reliance on document analysis, without incorporating qualitative data collection methods such as surveys, interviews, or stakeholder consultations. However, this limitation is largely mitigated by the use of comprehensive, publicly accessible primary sources that reflect Türkiye's official policy discourse. Furthermore, as the study does not involve personal data or fieldwork, ethical approval was not required.

6. Discourse and Quantitative Content Analysis of Concepts Related to Technology and Digitalization in Development Plans

In this section of the article, how the concepts of digitalization, R&D, and some related terms have changed discursively in development plans, how they have been strategically addressed, and how many times these concepts appear in each development plan are compared.

In the simple quantitative content analysis part, the numerical changes of certain concepts were observed and compared based on the current texts of the 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th development plans. This comparison will analyze both how the language of the development plans has changed and how much the importance of the digitalization process has evolved within the framework of development plans. No software was used in the quantitative content analysis part; only a simple counting method was applied to analyze how many times the relevant concept was used in the existing documents.

6.1. Discourse Analysis

A comparative analysis of the tables of contents in the development plans reveals a progressive evolution in the conceptual focus over time. The Eighth Development Plan is characterized by an exclusive emphasis on technological innovation. In the Ninth Development Plan, research and development (R&D) and innovation began to be addressed as distinct elements within the broader development strategy, and the concept of e-government was introduced for the first time. Although the Tenth Development Plan did not allocate a separate heading to R&D, it maintained the emphasis on technology and e-government. The Eleventh Development Plan went a step further by incorporating the concept of digital transformation, in addition to the previously mentioned themes. In the Twelfth Development Plan, a noticeable shift in the conceptual framework can be observed. The inclusion of the heading "Competitive Production through Green and Digital Transformation" highlights an integrated approach to sustainability and digitalization across all sectors. Notably, the term e-government no longer appears as a standalone heading; instead, it is replaced by the broader concept of digital government.

From this perspective, the Ninth Development Plan is a critical turning point regarding the concept of e-government; during the Tenth Development Plan period, the existing system was maintained; with the Eleventh Development Plan, the concept of digital transformation began to be addressed; and with the Twelfth Development Plan, this process evolved into the concept of digital government. It can be stated that the e-Türkiye Initiative gradually transformed into the e-government concept, which in turn evolved into the understanding of digital government.

6.1.1. Science and Technology

The title Science and Technology is addressed commonly in the 8th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Development Plans. However, this title does not appear as a separate heading in the 9th Development Plan. When comparing the development plans within the framework of the concept of science and technology, it is observed that in the 8th Development Plan, this title is included under the main heading “Development Goals and Policies Related to Social and Economic Sectors”; in the 10th Development Plan under “Innovative Production, Stable High Growth”; in the 11th Development Plan under “Competitive Production and Productivity”; and in the 12th Development Plan under “Competitive Production with Green and Digital Transformation.”

The change in these main headings alone shows that the purpose of science and technology has shifted from socio-economic development to innovative and competitive production, and from there, with the prominence of the sustainability concept in today’s world, towards the goal of green and digital transformation.

In the 8th Development Plan, under this subject heading, it was stated that sufficient resources were not allocated for R&D expenditures and that the number of researchers was inadequate; at this point, it was expressed that science and technology centers would be established. Additionally, the necessity of creating the legal infrastructure required for technoparks and technology development zones was emphasized, and it was stated that the National Aerospace Organization would be established.

In the 10th Development Plan, it was noted that important steps had been taken during the period of the 9th Development Plan, but R&D investments had not reached the targeted level. Within this framework, not only an increase in resources but also the efficient use of resources was emphasized. The commercialization of produced technologies and the use of public procurement as an incentive in this process were expressed as necessary. Additionally, increasing the country’s technology capacity, strengthening domestic technologies, and gaining competitive power in the international market were among the fundamental goals.

In the 11th Development Plan, the primary goal in the field of science, technology, and innovation remained the same as in previous plans: offering high value-added products and services. Accordingly, it was emphasized that cooperation with universities is necessary, and it was stated that certain resources would be allocated to universities to support R&D and innovation activities. Publicly supported R&D projects, increasing the number of scholarship holders, and improving doctoral scholarship programs were among the targeted implementations. Within this scope, the expansion of Deneyap Technology Workshops aimed at the technological development of thousands of students was planned. Furthermore, preparations for establishing a base in Antarctica to strengthen Türkiye’s international position within the scope of polar research were mentioned, alongside the preparation of the National Space Program and the enhancement of the capacity of the Turkish Space Agency.

Similarly, the 12th Development Plan envisaged the development of high value-added products and services, increasing the number of qualified researchers, and the continuation of state support in these fields. However, unlike previous plans, the development of technologies compatible with green and digital transformation was identified as a fundamental objective. In this context, increasing the effectiveness of technology transfer offices and supporting licensing and commercialization activities were emphasized. Additionally, it was stated that original solutions were developed in areas such as space, semiconductor technologies, and polar sciences; alongside this, qualified human resources and project supports were provided for future technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, hydrogen energy, and renewable energy.

A common goal across all development plans is observed to be the development of high value-added products and services, increasing the number of qualified researchers, and the state providing economic support in this area. The 8th Development Plan mentioned the establishment of the National Aviation and Space Organization; in the 11th Development Plan, it was stated that a base would be established in Antarctica to strengthen Türkiye's international position and that the capacity of the Turkish Space Agency would be enhanced.

From this perspective, it is observed that each development plan is connected to one another and that each plan, in terms of core issues, serves as a continuation of the previous one. In the current 12th Development Plan, the main aim is sustainable development and digital transformation; it has been emphasized that the country should progress not only in technologies such as artificial intelligence and space sciences but also in sustainable technology.

When a general analysis is made, it can be said that sustainability will occupy a much more important place in development plans for future periods.

6.1.2. Information and Communication

The heading of information and communication has been addressed in all development plans. In the 8th Development Plan, it was stated that rapid progress was made in software, hardware, and content areas along with developing technologies; accordingly, new applications emerged in the fields of telecommunications and broadcasting. During the plan period, the aim was to increase competitive power and to raise economic and social welfare in the relevant sectors. The need for progress in mobile communication and internet access was emphasized; it was also pointed out that developments in information and communication technologies carry the risk of violating personal rights, and therefore necessary legal measures should be taken.

In the 9th Development Plan, the goal was to increase competition in the electronic communications sector, and to provide fast, secure, and cost-effective access to information through advanced infrastructure services. It was stated that individuals' access to the internet should be increased during the transition to the information society, and various actions would be implemented in line with the Information Society Strategy. Furthermore, it was emphasized that the software sector had started to play an effective role in the information technologies field, necessary strategies would be applied in this area, and Türkiye's international position would be strengthened.

In the 10th Development Plan, it was noted that Türkiye had taken a step towards the information society process with the e-Transformation Türkiye Project in 2003, and that significant progress had been made in recent years regarding broadband internet access. However, it was emphasized that effective and conscious use was not at a sufficient level, infrastructure was neither high quality nor cost-effective, and there was also a shortage of qualified human resources. This plan also stated that important steps had been taken in the field of cybersecurity, the Cybersecurity Board was established within the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, and legal regulations were needed regarding the protection of personal data. It was expressed that digital transformation in broadcasting, increasing efficiency in electronic communications, the widespread implementation of projects such as the FATİH Project, smart city applications, and technological developments beneficial to the public should be encouraged.

In the 11th Development Plan, the main objective was to increase economic efficiency and competitive power. Accordingly, it was stated that critical elements such as increasing broadband access, fiber optic infrastructure, base stations, and right of way needed to be regulated. Frequency resources and the existing electronic communication infrastructure were planned to be adapted to 5G and post-5G mobile communication technologies, and it was emphasized that international standards would be followed throughout this process. It was highlighted that the public sector would support private sector investments, and that the Türksat 5A and 5B satellites, as well as the domestically developed Türksat 6A satellite, would be put into service. Additionally,

the establishment of the Türkiye Open Source Platform was announced, and it was stated that domestic software would be developed through public-private partnerships. A roadmap would be prepared to popularize artificial intelligence technologies in production processes, and to prevent issues such as gender inequalities that might arise during this process, training and seminars for women entrepreneurs would be organized.

In the 12th Development Plan, in addition to the above goals, it was stated that internet exchange points would be established in accordance with current needs, and that telecommunication infrastructure would be ensured to provide fast and uninterrupted service during disasters. The 5G technology foundations laid in the 11th Plan would continue in this plan period with 6G studies, and it was emphasized that developments in the field of cybersecurity needed to be sustained. Moreover, the spread of digital literacy, cooperation between the public sector, private sector, and universities in the field of artificial intelligence, strengthening international connections, and aligning the legal infrastructure with these technologies were also targeted.

Information and communication technologies have been addressed in development plans with an increasingly strategic and holistic approach; while infrastructure development and digital access were prioritized initially, recent plans have focused on advanced digital transformation areas such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and domestic software production. In each new plan, shortcomings of previous periods have been attempted to be remedied, and the goal has been to transform technological advancements into societal benefits.

6.1.3. Research and Development

Although the discourse of R&D (Research and Development) is present in all development plans, this concept has not been addressed under an independent heading in each plan. Therefore, the approach of the development plans to R&D should be comparatively evaluated based on how the R&D concept is used throughout the plan texts.

In the 8th Development Plan, it was emphasized that the resources allocated to R&D activities in past years were insufficient, and this situation could hinder the implement ability of the plan. In line with Türkiye's 2023 targets, it was stated that R&D expenditures needed to be increased to enhance the competitiveness of the Turkish industry. Within this scope, it was targeted to raise the share of R&D expenditures in GDP to 1.5%.

During the period of the 9th Development Plan, it was indicated that as of 2002, the share of R&D expenditures in GDP was 0.67%, and this ratio was highlighted as quite low compared to developed countries. It was stated that financial support mechanisms such as tax exemptions would be introduced to encourage R&D activities. Accordingly, the target was to increase the share of R&D expenditures in GDP to 2% by 2013.

In the 10th Development Plan, it was expressed that as of 2011, the share of R&D expenditures in GDP had risen to 0.86%. However, despite this increase, it was emphasized that this level was still considerably behind the European Union averages. It was stated that R&D activities needed to be improved both quantitatively and qualitatively, and necessary supports should be provided to compete internationally in this field. At the end of the plan, it was projected that the share of R&D expenditures in GDP would be 1.80% by 2018.

During the period of the 11th Development Plan, it was observed that R&D expenditures increased as of 2017, but they never reached the targeted level. In this period, the goals included increasing the number of R&D personnel, strengthening cooperation between universities, public institutions, and the private sector, and diversifying R&D activities. It was planned that the share of R&D expenditures in GDP would reach 1.8% by 2023.

In the 12th Development Plan, it was noted that as of 2021, R&D expenditures had reached the level of 1.40%. For this period, the new target was set at 2.05% for the year 2028. With this plan, it can be seen that R&D activities are approached from a multidimensional perspective, not only in terms of economic competition but also linked to green transformation, digitalization, and sustainable development goals.

A common observation across the development plans is that the targeted R&D expenditure ratios have never been fully achieved in any plan period. In every plan, the importance of R&D activities has been emphasized and the need to allocate more resources to this area has been stated. However, in practice, either public and private sector investments have been insufficient, or these investments have not been at a scale to sufficiently incentivize activities. Furthermore, it can be said that the R&D production capacity of universities and research institutions has remained limited compared to developed countries.

In conclusion, although Türkiye's development plans on R&D have continuously set new targets, it is understood that fundamental factors such as structural capacity strengthening, resource efficiency, improvement in human capital quality, and policy continuity have been lacking to realize these goals.

6.1.4. e-Government and Digital Government

Although the e-government discourse has not been explicitly included as a direct heading in all development plans, from the 9th Development Plan onward, policies in this area have been systematically addressed. In the 9th Development Plan, under the heading of "widespread adoption and activation of e-government applications," it was stated that one of the main objectives was to provide public services more efficiently, transparently, and accessibly. Within this scope, restructuring of public administration was targeted; it was emphasized that many public institutions, including local governments, should be integrated into the existing system, and that the e-government system should be restructured in compliance with international standards.

In the Tenth Development Plan, it was stated that during the previous plan period, the time and cost burdens for citizens and businesses arising from public services were reduced, approximately six hundred services were launched, and by 2012, the number of e-government users had reached 14 million. In this period, elements such as personal data protection and information security were prioritized in the delivery of e-government services.

The Eleventh Development Plan emphasized the necessity of delivering public services with a citizen-centric approach; it aimed to increase the number and quality of services and strengthen accessibility to public services through mobile applications. Furthermore, to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency in services, it was indicated that next-generation digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, big data, the Internet of Things, and blockchain would be utilized. Projects facilitating data sharing among public institutions and strengthening data flow between central and local administrations were planned during this period.

With the Twelfth Development Plan, the term "e-government" was replaced by "digital government". In this new era, the primary goal was defined as delivering digital public services in a user-focused and efficient manner. Within this framework, the quality and number of public IT personnel were planned to be increased, and the establishment of a Digital Government Academy was proposed to provide training for this personnel. Additionally, supporting public IT companies, enhancing data management and advanced data analytics capacity to facilitate inter-institutional data sharing, and completing national and institutional data dictionaries were targeted. Strengthening the legal infrastructure for artificial intelligence and analytics projects and thereby developing reliable digital public services were also among the important goals of this period.

From the Ninth Development Plan onward, e-government has been systematically addressed to increase efficiency, transparency, and accessibility in public services; subsequent plans have highlighted the number of services, data security, and mobile access. With the Twelfth Plan, this approach evolved into the concept of “digital government,” aiming to provide user-focused and integrated public services through technologies such as artificial intelligence and advanced data analytics.

6.1.5. Digital Transformation

The discourse on digital transformation in Türkiye began to appear in development plans both as a separate chapter and as a policy concept especially starting from the 11th Development Plan. During this period, digital transformation was addressed with the aim of increasing productivity and competitiveness in priority sectors. In particular, emphasis was placed on digital transformation in the manufacturing industry. Within the scope of the plan, it was envisaged to establish a Digital Transformation Platform in Industry; under this platform, permanent committees would be created for digital education, data communication, and technological developments. Additionally, the preparation of a Digital Transformation Terminology Dictionary was planned in order to adopt international digital standards in Türkiye and to develop a common digital understanding. Alongside these developments, it was emphasized that the knowledge levels of both public institutions and private sector enterprises regarding digitalization needed to be increased.

The 12th Development Plan, on the other hand, offers a multidimensional approach by addressing the concept of digital transformation not only in the context of economic competitiveness but also through the lens of environmental sustainability. The plan is structured around five main themes, one of which is directly defined as digitalization and environmentally focused production. This approach highlights that technological advancements at the global level, rapid progress in information and communication technologies, and dynamics such as climate change necessitate holistic policies that integrate digitalization with environmental compatibility.

The Development Plan also states that Türkiye must strengthen its digital infrastructure to adapt to this transformation process, and it is equally essential to make this infrastructure compatible with sustainable development goals. In this context, the widespread adoption of sustainable development and digital-environmentally compatible technologies by 2053 is among the country’s long-term objectives.

A comparative analysis of these two development plans is important in demonstrating the discursive evolution of the digital transformation concept. While the 11th Development Plan defined digital transformation primarily as an industry and technology-based modernization process, the 12th Development Plan integrates this process within the context of climate change and sustainable development, treating digital transformation not only as an economic but also as an environmental and social transformation. Thus, the concept of digital transformation has been redefined within a broader framework that includes not only technological advancement but also a development understanding compatible with green transformation.

6.2. Quantitative Analysis

Complementing the discourse analysis, this section presents a quantitative evaluation of the frequency of selected digital transformation-related terms in Türkiye’s national development plans from 2001 to 2028. Rather than using automated text analysis tools, a manual word count was performed to ensure contextual sensitivity. The terms “R&D,” “Technology,” “Digital,” “Digital Transformation,” “e-Government,” and “Digital Government” were selected based on their relevance to digital governance and transformation literature.

Table 1: Word frequency of selected digital governance terms in Türkiye’s national development plans (2001–2028).

Development Plans Concepts	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
R&D	48	50	84	106	106
Technology	229	110	240	298	405
Digital	1	0	3	86	267
Digital Transformation	0	0	0	39	81
e-Government	0	10	36	23	20
Digital Government	0	0	0	0	12
Number of Pages	252	101	212	198	253

This quantitative analysis of the usage of digital transformation-related concepts in Türkiye's national development plans covering the period from 2001 to 2028 clearly demonstrates the increasing strategic importance of digitalization. Firstly, the frequent presence of the terms "R&D" and "Technology" throughout all development plans indicates that Türkiye consistently and sustainably maintains a science- and technology-based development approach. Particularly from the 11th development plan onward, there is a noticeable increase in the usage of the term "Technology." This rise is a concrete indicator of Türkiye's growing emphasis on R&D investments and technology development to support economic and social development. Therefore, the focus on R&D and technology reflects not only a textual increase but also a shift in policy and implementation priorities.

The visibility of the concept of digitalization in the texts shows an even more dramatic increase. While the term "digital" appeared only once in the 8th development plan and did not appear at all in the 9th plan, its usage began to increase rapidly from the 10th plan onward. In the 11th and 12th development plans, the term appears 86 and 267 times respectively. This rise indicates that digitalization has become a central and prioritized issue within Türkiye's development strategies. The growing adoption of digital technologies in economic, social, and administrative fields has significantly amplified the importance of this concept. The sharp increase in the use of the term "digital" also signals a strategic transformation in public policies aimed at developing digital infrastructure, enhancing digital skills, and expanding digital services.

The term "Digital Transformation" first appeared meaningfully in the 11th development plan, and its usage nearly doubled in the 12th plan. This indicates that digitalization has evolved beyond being merely a technological innovation to become the foundation of comprehensive structural changes and strategic objectives. The rise of the concept of digital transformation reflects Türkiye's effort to radically renew the ways of working in both public and private sectors, service delivery, and management models. In this context, digital transformation is not only a technical term but also a fundamental paradigm shift in planning and implementation processes.

The term "e-Government" held an important place in the 9th and 10th development plans, peaking in usage during the 10th plan. However, a decline in its frequency is observed in

subsequent plans. This decline suggests that digitalization strategies have evolved toward more inclusive and transformation-oriented concepts. Accordingly, the term “Digital Government” appeared for the first time in the 12th development plan, representing a broader vision beyond e-Government. It encompasses the integration of digital technologies into public administration and the migration of governance processes to digital platforms. This conceptual shift shows that Türkiye aims for much more than e-Government applications, embracing digital governance and comprehensive digital transformation of public services as strategic priorities.

Although the data have not been normalized by the total number of pages in the plans, the magnitude of the increase in the usage of these concepts in the 11th and 12th development plans suggests that digitalization and digital transformation have gained significant relative as well as absolute prominence in the texts. The rapid rise in terms carrying the “digital” prefix clearly demonstrates that technology-based structural transformations occupy a central role in Türkiye’s development strategies. This indicates that digitalization is embraced not only as a means of improving technological infrastructure but also as a driving force behind profound changes in economic growth, public administration, education, healthcare, and other social sectors. In conclusion, the growing visibility of digital transformation concepts in Türkiye’s development plans concretely reflects the country’s process of adapting to the digital age and taking strategic steps in this field.

7. Conclusion

This study examined how digital transformation has been conceptualized and articulated in Türkiye’s national development plans spanning from 2001 to 2028. Through a dual-method approach combining Discourse-Historical Analysis and manual quantitative content analysis, the research aimed to trace the semantic evolution and policy framing of key digital concepts such as “R&D,” “technology,” “e-government,” “digital transformation,” and “digital state.” The findings highlight a significant discursive shift in the development plans—particularly from the 10th Plan onward—where digital transformation emerged not only as a technological priority but as a strategic axis for public governance and sustainability.

The integration of digital transformation with broader policy goals such as the green transformation and sustainability, especially in the 12th Development Plan, indicates a paradigm shift. The concept of digitalization has evolved beyond administrative efficiency to encompass ecological responsibility. This multidimensional framing aligns Türkiye’s public policy discourse with international frameworks such as the European Green Deal and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, positioning digital technologies as enablers of environmentally conscious governance.

Discourse analysis further reveals the transition from general and aspirational language in earlier plans to more technically grounded expressions in later ones—referring explicitly to “data security,” “artificial intelligence,” and “cloud computing.” However, the gap between discourse and implementation remains a critical issue. Despite the ambitious objectives outlined in development plans, challenges such as inter-institutional coordination, legal infrastructure gaps, and limited technical capacity have, at times, hindered effective policy realization.

In light of these findings, Türkiye’s digital transformation journey—while gaining strategic prominence—requires stronger mechanisms to ensure policy continuity and implementation fidelity. The transformation is no longer confined to technological upgrades but represents a structural redefinition of public administration. To advance this agenda meaningfully, several strategic imperatives emerge:

- **Policy coherence and institutional alignment:** Development plans should be designed as cumulative and complementary rather than fragmented, with clearly defined roadmaps for inter-agency coordination.
- **Capacity building and talent development:** Investing in digital literacy and cultivating a

highly skilled public sector workforce are critical for driving innovation in service delivery.

- **Robust data governance frameworks:** Ensuring secure, transparent, and ethically responsible data management is foundational to a trustworthy digital state.
- **Inclusive digital participation:** Strengthening societal digital literacy and access can help bridge the digital divide and foster citizen engagement in public services.

Ultimately, this study provides a longitudinal and discourse-based perspective on the evolution of Türkiye's digital policy landscape. The analysis not only offers insights into how digital transformation has been framed over time but also proposes actionable directions for policymakers. In doing so, it contributes to the broader scholarship on digital governance and serves as a resource for aligning future strategies with both national objectives and global digital development trends.

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