

**Revolutionary Identity Before and After State Violence: Transformations
in Turkish Left Political Consciousness Following the 1980 Coup**

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Abstract

This psychosocial study, grounded in a psychoanalytically informed approach to state violence, examines how state violence during Turkey's 1980 military coup and subsequent three-year junta period impacted leftist political identities and activism. Through in-depth interviews with 23 former political prisoners who experienced torture and mistreatment, the research explores the transformation of political consciousness and social relationships following systematic state violence, while documenting their first-hand testimonies.

The findings first establish the context of revolutionary identities before the coup, examining how family environments, social experiences, and community networks contributed to political consciousness. Building on this foundation, the research then investigates how experiences of state violence transformed these established identities and relationships. While most participants maintained their core political ideologies, the study suggests that the systematic application of violence, particularly involving large group symbols and social isolation, significantly affected how they could express and sustain their political beliefs. Where revolutionary activists had once enjoyed organic connections with communities and could mobilize broad-based support, they found themselves increasingly isolated and unable to rebuild these social bonds in the post-coup period.

The research suggests that the damage of state violence reached beyond physical repression: it also dismantled the social bonds that had previously sustained political activism. The study examines how the military regime's use of large group symbols during detention and imprisonment created an alienation from symbols that once represented belonging and unity. The analysis suggests that these practices, alongside discourse strategies that positioned activists outside legitimate political boundaries, may have contributed to how these activists perceived and sustained their political engagement in the post-coup period.

These insights, enriched by survivors' perspectives contribute to the understanding of how systematic state violence can reshape political consciousness and behavior, while also bringing out the complex psychological mechanisms through which political identities persist or transform under conditions of extreme repression.

Keywords: state violence, political identity, torture, Turkey, military coup

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Dedication

To my parents, for their unwavering support and belief in me throughout this journey.

To my partner Mustafa Selek, for constantly expanding my horizons and always being there to pick up the pieces.

To the memory of my uncle.

And most importantly, to Mustafa, Fatma, and Özmen Gencay

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*Those who have mastered life's meaning shall know no pain,
The hearts that feel the truth will never die in vain.*

*Flesh is mortal, not the soul; the dead can't return.
Only the body dies, souls can never be slain.*

— Yunus Emre

Author's Declaration

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Bournemouth University, United Kingdom. I declare that this thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that this thesis has not been previously or concurrently submitted, either in whole or in part, for any other qualification at Bournemouth University or other institutions in any other country.

Begüm Elçin Ulucan

May 2025

Table of Content

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
Dedication	5
Author's Declaration	6
Table of Content	7
1.Introduction	11
1.1. Historical Context	14
1.2. The Transformation of Political Consciousness	16
1.3. Research Design and Contribution	19
1.4. Thesis Outline	23
1.5. Conclusion	24
2. Literature Review	25
2.1 Violence	26
2.1.1 Roots of Violence	26
i. Individual psychological impacts	27
ii. Societal and collective impacts	27
2.1.2. Types of violence	29
2.1.3. State violence: definition and manifestations	31
2.1.4. The relationship between violence, humiliation, and shame	35
i. Humiliation and Shame as Psychological Concepts	35
ii. Intergenerational transmission of shame and humiliation	38
2.1.5. Violence and identity formation	40
2.2 Identity	42
2.2.1. Theories of identity formation	43
i. Individual identity development	43
ii. Formation of Collective Identity: From Group Dynamics to Narrative Identity	46
2.2.2. Psychoanalytic Theories of Group Identity and Political Consciousness	48
2.2.3. Large group identity	51
i. Definition and characteristics	52
ii. Formation and maintenance	53
iii. Role in conflict and violence	55
2.2.4. Collective identity and its relation to individual identity	56
2.3 Trauma	58
2.3.1. Definitions and types of trauma	59
2.3.2. Psychoanalytic theories of trauma	60
i. Sigmund Freud's Theory of Trauma	60
ii. Melanie Klein's Theory of Trauma and Defense Mechanisms	61
iii. Donald Winnicott's Theory of Trauma	62
iv. Wilfred Bion's Theory of Trauma and Containment	64

2.3.3. Trauma and Splitting	65
i. The Transformation of Good Objects into Bad Objects in Trauma	66
2.3.4. Trauma and memory	68
2.3.5. Intergenerational trauma	70
2.3.6. Mourning and grief	72
i. Collective mourning processes	73
2.3.7. Trauma and identity	75
2.4 Historical Context	77
2.4.1. Military Interventions in Turkish Politics	77
i. 1960 Intervention and Its Aftermath	78
ii. 1971 Intervention and Political Polarization	78
iii. 12 September 1980 Military Coup	81
2.4.2 Memory, Narrative, and This Study's Contribution	85
2.5 Research Questions and Objectives	88
i. Research Questions	89
ii. Research Objectives	90
3. Methodology	92
3.1 Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Schedule	92
Table 1	93
3.2 Research Design	94
3.2.1. Qualitative approach	94
3.2.2. Psychosocial approach	95
3.3 Participants	98
3.3.1. Sample size and selection criteria	98
3.4. Primary and Secondary Data Gathering Methods	101
3.4.1. Semi-structured in-depth interviews	101
3.4.2 Archival Data	105
3.5. Data Analysis	105
3.5.1. Thematic analysis	105
3.5.2 Coding process	107
Table 2	108
3.5.3 Analysis of Archival Materials	109
3.6. Researcher's Role and Reflexivity	109
3.7. Ethical Considerations and Limitations	112
3.7.1. Informed consent	112
3.7.2. Limitations	115
4. Findings	118
4.1. Family Origins of Political Consciousness: Economic Background, Political Socialization and Revolutionary Identity	118
4.1.1. Economic Background and Early Socialization: The Seeds of Political Consciousness	119

4.1.2. Family Political Orientations and Their Role in Identity Formation	122
4.1.3. Revolutionary Politics and Family Relations: Support, Conflict and Adaptation	124
4.2. Revolutionary Identity and Social Relations in Pre-Coup Turkey: Memory, Myth and Mobilization	126
4.2.1. The Legacy of '68: Revolutionary Icons and Political Consciousness	126
4.2.2. Revolutionary Politics in Family Memory: Narratives of Resistance and Loss	130
4.2.3. The Complex Relationship Between Revolutionary Activists and the Public in 1970s Turkey	138
i. Building Trust and Rapport	139
ii. Respect and Fear: A Complex Interplay	142
iii. Challenges and Disconnects	143
4.3. Instruments of State Power: Violence, Incarceration and Social Control	144
4.3.1. Systematic Violence in Detention	145
4.3.2. Prison as an Instrument of Transformation	153
4.3.3. Beyond Prison Walls: Social Isolation as a Tool of State Control	167
4.4. The Psychological and Social Impact of State Violence on Revolutionary Identity	172
4.4.1. Individual Impacts of State Violence	173
i. Trauma, Resilience and Ideological Commitment	173
ii. Transformation of Large Group Identities Through State Violence	179
iii. State Violence and the Construction of Internal Enemies	184
4.4.2. Collective Impacts and Social Transformation	189
i. Broader Societal Transformations	194
ii. Participants' diverse political orientations after the violence experience	197
4.4.3. The Personal and Political Reflections of September 12 in Turkey	202
i. Narratives of Change in Turkish Social Landscape	203
5. Analysis of Findings	210
5.1. The Legacy of September 12: From Historical Event to Collective Trauma	210
5.2. Revolutionary Identity and Social Integration: Political Consciousness Before the Coup	216
5.2.1. Family Networks and Political Socialization	216
5.2.2. Class Consciousness and Revolutionary Mythmaking	219
5.3. State Violence as Social Engineering: Mechanisms of the September 12 Period	222
5.3.1. Systematic Violence and Identity Destruction	222
5.3.2. Weaponization of Large Group Symbols	225
5.3.3. Constructing the "Internal Enemy": State Discourse and Social Isolation	230
5.4. The Aftermath: Transformative Effects of State Violence	234
5.4.1. Resilience and Identity Maintenance Among Political Prisoners	234
5.4.2. Social Bond Disruption and Community Alienation	238
5.4.3. 12 September as a restoration process- Long-term Impact on Political Consciousness	244

6. Conclusion	249
6.1. Key Findings and Theoretical Contributions	249
6.2. Methodological Approach: Strengths, Limitations, and Insights	257
6.3. Implications and Future Directions	260
7. References	264
8. Appendices	283
8.1. English and Turkish versions of Participant information and consent form	283
8.2. Ethics checklist	296
8.3. Interview guide	302
8.4. Gatekeeper Agreement Form	304
8.5. Participants' personal informations and political organizations	306
8.6. Information on the political organisation of the participants	307
8.7. Historical Glossary	311
8.8. Interview Transcription of Participant 14	319
8.9. Coding table of thematic analysis	329
Family Structure and Influences	329
Occupation	335
Political view	337
Political Activism Process	341
Effects of 68 Movement	345
Reason for Politicisation	353
The relationship between activists and the public	359
Violence Experiences	364
Post-Coup Process	407
Ideological Transformation	423
8.10. Reflexive Notes	433
8.11. Examples from Reflexive Diaries	436

1.Introduction

In late 2024, the Turkish thriller film “Nothing Is In Its Place” (Hiçbir Şey Yerinde Değil) sparked significant controversy among viewers. While director Burak Çevik has distinguished himself among recent Turkish filmmakers through his experimental and formally innovative work, this film's engagement with political cinema proved particularly contentious (Yılmaz, 2024). Inspired by the 1978 Bahçelievler massacre, where seven (not five as depicted in the film) Turkish Workers' Party (a political party that completely rejects political violence) members were murdered by ultra-nationalist militants, the film immediately signaled its intention to treat historical events as fiction rather than documentary. As Yılmaz (2024) notes, Çevik used the massacre as a “laboratory” to examine human nature at the boundaries between dying and killing for one's beliefs.

The criticism centered primarily on the film's narrative choices (Aksel, 2024; Ildır, 2024). While the ultra-nationalist perpetrators were given voice and agency, the leftist youth remained bound and gagged, unable to respond to accusations before their deaths. Yılmaz (2024) argues that this artistic choice, though perhaps unintentionally, reinforces hegemonic narratives that falsely equate state violence with resistance to it. By attempting to depoliticize state violence and present it as symmetrical conflict between opposing factions, the film inadvertently contributes to the erasure of power asymmetries central to understanding such historical events.

As debate around the film intensified, those who hadn't yet seen it felt both curiosity and apprehension. The discussion inevitably extended to the broader context of the September 12 coup period and its torture practices. The film raises crucial questions: Can we make such films in Turkey? Can we set aside historical context and focus on the humanity of killers when some perpetrators of the Bahçelievler massacre remain uncaught and unpunished? As Yılmaz (2024) observes, the ethical-political problem lies not in acknowledging the existence of violence on multiple sides, but in divorcing paramilitary violence from its state origins and support, reducing it to a conflict between equal forces.

The anger the film provoked stems from the fact that victims remain symbolically bound and gagged, just like those in that house in 1978. Listening to killers without hearing their victims

doesn't help us understand “the darkness that transforms a child into a murderer”¹ - it only undermines our sense of justice. And it reveals our continued reluctance, even more than forty years later, to listen to the victims. We are still trying to understand what happened to us as a society. We need to know what was done to those who were bound and gagged, what they thought, what they felt. We remain curious, and until they tell their stories, we cannot fully comprehend what has happened to us today. The visceral reactions to the film's narrative choices lay bare how raw this wound remains - each new silencing of victims' voices reopens the collective wound of political violence, particularly regarding the pivotal events that reshaped Turkish society in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In this context, it would not be wrong to say that the military coup of 12 September 1980² represents a fundamental turning point in Turkish political and social history that continues to shape contemporary social consciousness. While Turkey's political landscape has been marked by multiple military interventions, including those in 1960 and 1971, the 1980 coup³ stands distinct in both its scope and its deep impact on collective memory (Bora, 2020; Narlı et al., 2014; Zurcher, 2017). The enduring significance of this particular intervention in Turkish collective consciousness is evidenced by empirical research. According to a survey of 1,902 respondents published in 2014, the September 12 military coup stands as the most significant event in Turkish history between 1900-2013, dominating collective memory more than any other historical moment in that period (Narlı et al., 2014). This prominence in collective memory is more than historical; it actively shapes how Turkish society understands and articulates contemporary political experiences, as ongoing debates about works like “Nothing Is In Its Place” make clear.

Understanding the impact of the 1980 coup on Turkish collective consciousness requires examining the dynamic political and social world it sought to transform. The scope and severity of the military intervention stand out sharply against the preceding decade, characterized by unprecedented levels of political mobilization and social transformation.

¹ In her speech at the funeral ceremony of her husband Hrant Dink an Armenian journalist, who was assassinated on 19 January 2007, Rakel Dink reminded that every human being was once an innocent baby, regardless of who the murderer was, and emphasised the importance of questioning the source of social violence with the words ‘Nothing can be done without questioning the darkness that created a murderer from a baby’ (Haber7, 2007).

Haber7 (2007) ‘Hrant ve Rakel Dink’in aşk mektubu’, Haber7, 19 Ocak. Available at: <https://www.haber7.com/yasam/haber/215030-hrant-ve-rakel-dinkin-ask-mektubu> (Accessed: 14 February 2025).

² see Appendix 8.7

³ see Appendix 8.7

Throughout the 1970s, Turkey experienced rapid urbanization and industrialization, leading to significant demographic shifts and class formation (Lüküslü, 2009). This period witnessed the emergence of a robust civil society, with various political organizations, labor unions, and student movements actively engaging in social and political struggles (Atılğan, 2023). The relative liberties guaranteed by the 1961 Constitution⁴ had created space for diverse forms of political expression, leading to a flourishing of leftist movements that gained significant traction among urban youth and working-class communities (Işıklı, 1967).

This thesis makes an original contribution by examining how systematic state violence affected political consciousness among leftist activists and their networks in post-1980 Turkey through its impact on family relationships and social bonds. While existing scholarship has documented the institutional, sociological and political impacts of the 1980 coup, this study breaks new ground by analyzing how the disruption of intimate social connections and alteration of patterns of political socialization within these activist communities contributed to long-term social transformation. To meaningfully assess this transformation, the research first establishes a detailed understanding of revolutionary identity and social relationships that existed before the coup, examining how political consciousness developed within family networks, how activists formed bonds with communities, and how revolutionary ideals were integrated into cultural narratives. This pre-coup picture provides the baseline against which the changes brought by state violence can be measured. The study then analyzes how detention practices, prison experiences, and post-release surveillance systematically severed these social bonds and reconfigured political consciousness. By examining activists' narratives of state violence, this research shows how the regime's systematic practices transformed individual political identities and patterns of political engagement among left-wing activists of this generation, offering insights that may inform understanding of broader social transformations while recognizing the study's specific focus. . Drawing on previously unexamined testimonies of political activists, this study shows how authoritarian regimes secure lasting social transformation through forms of state violence that reach individuals and collectives alike.

⁴ see Appendix 8.7.

1.1. Historical Context

In 1970s Turkey, activism ran through dense networks that reached well beyond the usual sites of political organization and into family and community relationships, networks the military regime would later set out to destroy through systematic violence. The social dynamics of this period were particularly evident in the transformation of youth political consciousness. Young people's remarkable confidence in undertaking ambitious political tasks points to a social construct that predated their birth (Lüküslü, 2009, p.15). This construct had its roots in the Ottoman period, where the state's modernization efforts positioned youth as crucial actors in social transformation. Facing decline in the late 19th century, the Ottoman palace and bureaucracy established modern schools through educational reforms, hoping that youth educated in these institutions could halt the empire's collapse. The Young Turk generation, raised during this period, internalized this state-given role and was highly political, taking on social and bureaucratic responsibilities at a young age (Mardin, 1977). This state-centered construction of youth as a political category became one of the important myths of Turkish political culture, continuing - though transformed - after the Republic's establishment. While the new regime attempted to reinforce youth's role as defenders of state ideology through various institutional mechanisms, this official positioning of youth as political actors had unintended consequences. The historical legacy of treating youth as legitimate political actors created discursive and institutional spaces that could later be appropriated for different political purposes. This helps explain why Turkish youth in the 1960s and 1970s, while rejecting the state's intended role for them, still felt entitled and even obligated to engage in political action - though often in direct opposition to state policies. The official narrative of youth as guardians of the nation's future was thus reinterpreted and repurposed by leftist movements to justify radical political engagement that challenged rather than defended existing state structures.

By the late 1970s, political activism had transcended traditional bounds of student politics, developing deeper connections with working-class communities and establishing extensive organizational networks (Şafak, 2014). These years saw unprecedented growth in labor movements, with new legislative frameworks enabling workers to organize and negotiate collectively in ways previously impossible in Turkish history (İleri, 2015). While the March 12, 1971 Military Intervention⁵ attempted to curtail these movements through various

⁵ see Appendix 8.7.

repressive measures, its effects proved remarkably temporary. The resilience of these movements became evident as Turkey experienced its most intense period of student and union activism in the latter half of the 1970s, with political organizations establishing deep roots in factories, universities, and working-class neighborhoods (Kongar, 1998). This period marked a unique moment in Turkish history where student movements and labor activism converged, creating powerful networks of solidarity that extended far beyond traditional sites of political organization

However, this period of vibrant political engagement was also marked by escalating violence between opposing political factions. By the end of the 1970s, political violence had reached unprecedented levels, with an average of 12 people losing their lives daily in political conflicts (Sayari, 2010). The state's inability to maintain public order, combined with deep economic crisis and social polarization, created conditions that the military would later use to justify its intervention (Ahmad, 1993).

The September 12, 1980 military coup is far more significant than a mere interruption of Turkish democracy. Under the leadership of General Kenan Evren⁶, the military junta implemented an unprecedented campaign of state violence and societal restructuring that would fundamentally reshape Turkish society. According to the Turkish Grand National Assembly's investigation, approximately 650,000 people were detained, 171 people died from documented torture, 299 people died in prisons, 14,000 people were stripped of citizenship, and 30,000 people were purged from their positions due to their political views (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, 2012).

The systematic nature of state violence during this period went far beyond previous military interventions. While the 1971 coup had primarily targeted leftist organizations, the 1980 regime sought to fundamentally restructure Turkish society through a comprehensive restoration process (Taşkin& Bora, 2001). This process operated through multiple channels including education, media, legal system, and systematic state violence. The military regime's intervention extended into the deepest layers of social and cultural life and transformed the relationship between state and society.

⁶ see Appendix 8.7

1.2. The Transformation of Political Consciousness

This transformation showed how the regime turned cultural symbols and social institutions into instruments of control. The military regime did not rely on overt repression alone; it developed subtler strategies that affected both individual consciousness and people's relationship to large-group identity. According to participants' narratives, the military regime's transformation of the social environment they inhabited appears to have extended beyond traditional political repression, incorporating mechanisms of social control that potentially influenced both psychological and institutional levels. Moreover, the systematic use of violence appears to have both punished and reshaped how individuals and communities perceived themselves and related to the state. This was particularly evident in the military prison system, where the regime developed elaborate methods that turned familiar cultural touchstones - from national anthems to patriotic symbols - into instruments of control and coercion. This manipulation of large group symbols seems to have created a deep rupture in how political activists related to their collective identity, with participants describing lasting consequences that they perceive as extending into their family relationships and approaches to political socialization.

The regime's public communication strategy demonstrated similar sophistication in how it framed and justified its actions. Through media appearances and public speeches, the junta leadership constructed a narrative that stigmatized political activists. This characterization - presenting them as both misguided youth in need of correction and dangerous traitors threatening national unity - served to legitimize state violence while maintaining a paternalistic facade of protection and rehabilitation. This crafted discourse helped create broader social acceptance for the regime's actions.

The impact of this strategy does not seem to be limited solely to individuals directly subjected to state violence. Participants' testimonies suggest that the regime's practices may have contributed to the weakening of activists' social bonds, fostering patterns of isolation that, according to participants, appear to have extended well beyond the period of direct repression. Even more significantly, public displays of state power, including media coverage, surveillance, and visible acts of repression, were perceived by participants as attempts to reshape how the broader society viewed and engaged with political activism. Those who witnessed these demonstrations of state violence, even from a safe distance, reportedly developed a cautious perspective on the costs of political engagement.

According to archival speeches and participants' reflections, the visible use of violence, coupled with the strategic isolation of its direct victims, seemed to influence social behaviour and political consciousness among those directly affected and, as these accounts suggest, within the communities surrounding them (Weingarten, 2003; Howie, 2012). Although these suggest a deliberate strategy in the junta's communication efforts, the specific mechanisms through which this strategy influenced political consciousness are complex and not entirely quantifiable. However, participants' reflections indicate that its impact on social perceptions and political disengagement was neither coincidental nor arbitrary.

The long-term implications of the 1980 military coup continue to reverberate through Turkish society in different ways, manifesting in political discourse and through various cultural expressions including literature, cinema, and art. The coup's enduring impact on collective consciousness is perhaps most visible in everyday political discourse, where September 12 remains a persistent reference point for measuring the severity of contemporary political pressures (Bora, 2020). This continued invocation of September 12 is more than historical memory: it is an active framework through which Turkish society processes and articulates experiences of political oppression.

Among the manifestations of this collective trauma appears to be its impact on how participants approached the political socialisation of their own children, suggesting a shift in the conditions under which political consciousness could be transmitted within these families. This change within families seems to reflect a broader shift in the place of youth in Turkish political life. As Lüküslü (2009) demonstrates, while Turkish youth had historically been constructed as dynamic political actors, the post-coup period saw a dramatic shift in how society viewed and encouraged political participation. This transformation created a peculiar paradox: while Turkish society continued to rhetorically position youth as guardians of national values, the same society actively discouraged young people from meaningful political engagement. Parents who had themselves been politically active in their youth now sought to protect their children from similar involvement. This attempt to break the cycle of activism, whether successful or not, speaks to the lasting impact on participants' relationship with political engagement. The regime's systematic deployment of violence appears to have created immediate fear and enduring patterns of political avoidance that shaped how families and communities approached political engagement.

Many participants who experienced both the politically vibrant 1970s and subsequent state violence described developing nuanced, often cautious approaches to their children's political activities. This study explores how these shifting family attitudes might connect to broader social transformations in political socialization. The apparent movement away from encouraging political engagement among youth likely stems from a constellation of influences. While the experiences of state violence described by participants offer important insights, these changes may also reflect broader historical currents affecting many societies during this period. The evolving media landscape, economic restructuring, technological changes, and shifting cultural values all potentially contribute to changing patterns of political participation. Nilgün Toker's (2020) analysis of a new civic consciousness in Turkish society, characterized by heightened awareness of potential risks associated with political involvement and a more cautious approach to public engagement, provides a valuable framework for examining these shifts. This research investigates how family relationships and community networks respond to these wide-ranging transformations, considering how experiences of state violence might interact with other social factors to influence political socialization patterns.

Despite extensive historical documentation of the September 12 regime's violations and their immediate impacts, there remains a significant gap in the understanding of how systematic state violence fundamentally altered political consciousness and social relationships in Turkey. While existing literature has thoroughly examined the institutional and political transformations of this period (Taşkın & Bora, 2001; Öztan, 2019), less attention has been paid to the psychological mechanisms through which state violence reshaped political identities and social bonds. This gap is particularly significant given the coup's enduring influence on contemporary Turkish political culture.

1.3. Research Design and Contribution

The present study addresses this gap by employing a psychosocial approach to examine how state violence affected both individual political identities and broader social relationships. This framework, developed by Clarke and Hoggett (2009), allows us to explore how psychological processes and social structures together shaped responses to state violence. By integrating insights from psychoanalytic theory, particularly Volkan's (1997) work on large

group identity, with sociological perspectives on collective memory and political violence, we can better understand how the coup's impact may have continued to influence political behaviour and social relationships in contemporary Turkey.

This research emerges at a critical moment when direct witnesses to the 1980 coup are still able to share their experiences, while Turkish society has developed sufficient historical distance to engage more openly with this period. Unlike previous decades where the coup remained a sensitive political taboo, there is now greater willingness within Turkish society to examine and discuss the events and impacts of September 12. As Turkish society continues to come to terms with the legacy of the 1980 coup, understanding the long-term psychological impacts of state violence becomes increasingly crucial. Decades of silence and suppression have left many historical traumas unprocessed and unacknowledged, creating complex layers of collective memory that continue to influence contemporary Turkish society. The persistent influence of these unresolved experiences manifests in various ways - from family dynamics to broader social relationships - suggesting that the psychological impact of state violence continues to shape how Turkish society approaches political engagement. Understanding how systematic state violence transformed political consciousness may provide insights for addressing these enduring social wounds, particularly as society begins to confront its complex relationship with this period of its history. This analysis becomes particularly relevant as new generations, unburdened by direct trauma but inheriting its legacy, begin to question inherited patterns of political behavior and seek to understand the historical roots of contemporary political dynamics in Turkey.

To capture how individual trauma and collective memory shape each other, this study employs a methodology designed to examine how personal experiences enter broader social narratives. Drawing on Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) psychosocial methodology, this study examines the narratives of 23 former political activists who experienced state violence during the junta period. Their accounts show how systematic violence reached beyond individual psyches into entire networks of social relationships. By analyzing these narratives through the lens of both individual trauma and collective memory, we can better understand how state violence remakes a society.

The sample consists of 5 female and 18 male participants, all over the age of 55 at the time of interviews. This gender distribution, while not ideal and potentially overrepresenting the male-female ratio among activists of the period, reflects to some extent the gender dynamics

of political activism in Turkey during the 1970s. While men were more numerous in activist circles of the time, the disparity was likely not as pronounced as in the participant sample. Participants were members of six different leftist organizations (DDKD, Halkın Kurtuluşu, Kasabalılar/MİSPB, Dev-Sol, Dev-Yol, TKP)⁷ and experienced periods of incarceration ranged from three months to eleven years. The diversity of organizational affiliations and experiences provides a broad perspective on how state violence affected different segments of the activist community.

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one and a half hours each, conducted between September and November 2021. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and following Braun and Clarke's (2013) recommendations for sensitive research topics, all interviews were conducted face-to-face but in outdoor settings. This arrangement allowed necessary social distancing and other pandemic safety measures to be maintained while preserving the intimate atmosphere essential for discussing traumatic experiences. The interview protocol was designed to explore participants' political backgrounds, experiences of state violence, and subsequent transformations in their relationships with society and political engagement.

The data analysis employed thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), with particular attention to both manifest and latent themes in participants' narratives. This method allows patterns to be identified in how the violence reshaped activists' political identities and the social worlds around them. The analysis was supplemented by careful consideration of the whole data, which encompassed non-verbal communications, emotional responses, and the broader context of participants' narratives (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

Given the sensitive nature of the research topic and the potential for re-traumatization, extensive ethical safeguards were implemented. These included providing participants with access to psychological support if needed, ensuring informed consent, and maintaining strict confidentiality protocols. The research received ethical approval from Bournemouth University's research ethics committee on 05/08/2021.

A key contribution of this study is showing how state violence transformed activist-community relationships in Turkey. The findings suggest that the military regime's

⁷ see Appendix 8.6

systematic violence may not have achieved its primary effects through ideological suppression alone, but rather through the disruption of activists' social bonds and the reshaping of how communities perceived political engagement. By examining survivors' narratives across decades, this research demonstrates how state violence contributed enduring patterns of political avoidance that continue to influence how certain segments of Turkish society approach activism. On this view, state violence does more than suppress political opposition; it remakes social relationships.

Methodologically, this research demonstrates the value of integrating psychological and sociological perspectives in studying political violence. The psychosocial approach allows the examination of how individual trauma intersects with collective memory and social transformation. This methodological framework proves particularly valuable for understanding contexts where, as Volkan (2001) notes, political trauma becomes woven into the fabric of large group identity.

The study contributes through its analysis and by documenting the lived experiences and testimonies of political activists whose voices have been largely absent from official historical narratives. While existing scholarship has documented the institutional and political transformations of the 1980 coup period, the first-hand accounts of those who directly experienced state violence remain underrepresented in academic literature. By centering these testimonies, this research acknowledges that participants' narratives offer valuable historical documentation that complements and sometimes challenges dominant accounts of this period. These narratives reveal how individuals perceive, interpret, and continue to make meaning of their experiences, insights that cannot be gleaned from official records or institutional analyses alone.

The methodological approach used here does two things at once: it allows a rigorous analysis of how participants understand the effects of state violence on their political identities and social relationships, and it preserves testimonies that constitute an important historical record in their own right. The value of these accounts extends beyond their function as evidence supporting analytical claims; they represent a form of counter-memory that captures dimensions of historical experience often excluded from conventional historiography. Beyond documenting these testimonies, the study examines the specific mechanisms through which state violence reshapes social relations. The participants' accounts reveal how repression

reaches beyond individual psyches to reshape entire social networks and community relationships.

This analytical dimension complements the testimonial value of the research by providing a theoretical framework for understanding how political repression may achieve enduring effects, with potential relevance to other contexts where state violence has targeted political communities. From a practical perspective, this research has implications for contemporary discussions about political reconciliation and collective memory in Turkey. As Kaptanoğlu (2009) argues, Turkish society continues to struggle with unresolved traumas from the coup period. Participants' narratives suggest that understanding how state violence may have influenced political consciousness and social relationships could offer valuable insights for addressing these historical wounds and exploring pathways toward more inclusive and democratic political cultures.

Furthermore, this study contributes to broader discussions about the relationship between state violence and civil society. As societies worldwide confront questions of political repression and democratic transition, understanding how systematic violence reshapes political consciousness becomes increasingly important. The Turkish experience offers valuable lessons about the long-term social and psychological impacts of state violence.

1.4. Thesis Outline

This dissertation proceeds in five further chapters. Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework, examining theories of violence, identity, and trauma, places the study in its historical context, and concludes by setting out the research questions and objectives. Chapter 3 details the research design and its implementation, with particular attention to the ethical considerations raised by the sensitivity of the topic. Chapter 4 presents the empirical findings, tracing participants' accounts of their pre-coup activism, their experiences of state violence, and the subsequent transformations in their political identities and social relationships. Chapter 5 brings these findings into dialogue with the theoretical framework, analyzing how September 12 settled into Turkish society as a collective trauma and how state violence operated as a form of social engineering. Finally, Chapter 6 draws out the study's key findings and theoretical contributions, reflects on the methodology's strengths and limitations, and considers the implications for future research.

1.5. Conclusion

This study examines how state violence transformed political consciousness and social relationships in post-1980 Turkey, and in doing so it shows how authoritarian regimes achieve their transformative effects on society. Using a psychosocial approach to analyze the narratives of activists who experienced systematic state violence, it traces both the immediate impacts of repression and its long-term effects on individual consciousness and collective memory. The findings suggest how the military regime's systematic deployment of violence - operating through multiple channels including torture, surveillance, and social isolation - appears to have fundamentally altered how the left-wing activists in this study understood and engaged with political activism. By examining the intersection of psychological trauma and social transformation, this study offers valuable insights into the ways in which state violence may reshape social dynamics, suggesting implications that might be relevant for other societies confronting enduring legacies of political repression. The research thus speaks both to scholarly debates about state violence and political identity and to practical efforts to address unresolved collective traumas and build more democratic political cultures. The insights gained from this study may prove particularly valuable as societies worldwide continue to struggle with questions of political reconciliation and the long-term impacts of state violence on democratic development.

2. Literature Review

This study's literature review consists of two main sections: a theoretical framework examining key concepts essential for understanding political violence and identity transformation, and a historical analysis of Turkey's 1980 military coup. The theoretical framework is organized around three interconnected themes - violence, identity, and trauma - each crucial for understanding how systematic state violence transforms both individual consciousness and collective political identity.

Beginning with foundational conceptualizations of violence, the discussion moves through several interconnected themes: the various manifestations of violence from physical to structural forms, the specific characteristics and mechanisms of state violence, and the psychological impacts of systematic violence on both individuals and communities. A particular focus is placed on how violence is used to transform and control society, especially under military regimes. The framework then explores theories of identity formation and large group psychology, before examining how trauma operates at both individual and collective levels to reshape political consciousness across generations.

Following this theoretical foundation, the review turns to a detailed historical analysis of Turkey's 1980 military coup, examining how the theories of violence, identity, and trauma help explain this pivotal moment in Turkish political history. Examining these dimensions of violence alongside their manifestation in the Turkish context shows how state violence does more than impose immediate control: it reshapes social consciousness and political behaviour across generations.

2.1 Violence

Violence, one of the central themes in this study, is a complex phenomenon that demands an interdisciplinary approach, spanning sociology, psychology, anthropology, politics, and economics. It can be broadly defined as any action, direct or indirect, intended to harm or destroy individuals or their extensions, such as property (Nieburg, 1962). This definition encompasses physical aggression as well as psychological harm and structural oppression. The simplest and narrowest definition of violence relates to its physical dimension, described as the use of force by one person to harm another against their will.

However, this individual-level conceptualization expands into social violence when it becomes widespread in society, potentially perpetrated by both individuals and those in positions of power and authority. The cultural and societal context influences what is considered violent behavior, as societal norms and values shape these definitions (Secord & Backman, 1974). Throughout history, the manifestation and organization of violence have undergone significant transformations alongside broader societal changes. While violence in traditional societies was often integrated into social practices and customs, the emergence of modern nation-states marked a shift toward more institutionalized forms of control, as Foucault (1977) analyzes in 'Discipline and Punish.' In contemporary societies, while direct physical violence may have declined in many contexts (Pinker, 2011), structural forms of violence have become increasingly sophisticated, operating through complex social, economic, and political mechanisms (Bozalp & Koyuncu, 2023). This study will focus on the psychological and social aspects of violence, examining it through various lenses, including a psychoanalytic perspective.

2.1.1 Roots of Violence

Political and institutional violence resists single-discipline explanation. While individual violence may be understood simply as actions intended to harm others, institutional violence operates through more elaborate mechanisms. As Nieburg (1962) observes, violence manifests in two crucial aspects: direct application through repression, torture, and intimidation, and the potential threat of violence that shapes behavior through fear.

The cultural embeddedness of violence, as Riches (1986) argues, means that what constitutes violence varies across societies and cultural contexts. The interpretation and perception of violence are shaped by prevailing social values and cultural frameworks. This cultural dimension becomes particularly significant when examining how societies respond to and understand political violence. The relationship between violence and social order is complex. As Wilson (1975) notes, violence itself is not inherently dysfunctional but rather context-sensitive, with its use varying based on specific circumstances and conditions. In modern states, this context-sensitivity manifests in the complex relationship between institutional power and the use of force. These social and institutional dimensions of violence provide context for examining how violence operates within political systems. As Elchereth and Reicher (2017) argue, experiences of violence become integrated into both individual and collective identities, shaping how groups respond to and understand political conflict.

i. Individual psychological impacts

The psychological impact of violence operates across multiple dimensions, affecting individuals' cognitive, emotional, and social functioning. Traumatic experiences can alter how individuals process and store memories, often leading to fragmentation in temporal perception and narrative coherence (Mezzalana, 2023). This disruption extends beyond immediate trauma responses to influence long-term patterns of behavior and social interaction. Common psychological responses to violence include various emotional and cognitive effects, from anxiety and depression to changes in worldview and social relationships (Needham, 2006). While individual responses vary significantly, exposure to violence often challenges fundamental assumptions about safety and social order (Ozer & Weiss, 2004). These individual psychological impacts become particularly significant when examining violence in broader social and political contexts, where personal trauma interacts with collective experience.

ii. Societal and collective impacts

The social effects of violence are observed across a wide spectrum, from the individual level to societal structures. Perhaps the most fundamental social impact of violence is its devastating effect on social cohesion and trust. Collins' (2008) micro-sociological analysis examines in detail how violence disrupts social interactions. According to Collins (2008), violent events interrupt the flow of emotional energy between people, causing a weakening of social bonds. This situation can create an atmosphere of general distrust and fear, especially in societies where recurring violent events occur.

The atmosphere of distrust created by violence transforms social institutions over time. Hartmann (2015) examines this transformation through the concept of symbolic boundaries. According to Hartmann, violent events reshape the social structure by creating new divisions and identities between groups. For example, new social categories formed as a result of ethnic conflicts can form the basis of institutional discrimination. This institutional transformation also affects state structures. Walby (2013) focuses on the effects of violence on state institutions. According to Walby, widespread violent events can cause states to tighten their security policies and increase authoritarian tendencies. This situation can threaten the functioning of democratic institutions and lead to restrictions on civil liberties.

Thus, violence that initially affects interpersonal relationships can eventually transform the entire social and political structure.

Another important dimension of the social effects of violence is in the economic sphere. Hartmann (2015) states that violent environments reduce investments, disrupt economic activities, and lead to inefficient use of resources. As a result of this situation, poverty may increase and economic inequalities may deepen. Sousa (2013) emphasizes that these economic effects are more devastating on disadvantaged groups. In violent environments, already limited economic opportunities may further decrease, or social inequalities may be used as a form of violence against certain groups.

However, the social effects of violence are not always unidirectional. In some cases, violence can paradoxically be a catalyst for social change. Hartmann (2015) notes that some violent events can trigger social movements and strengthen demands for reform. For example, the British violent response to Gandhi's Salt March in 1930 generated unprecedented support for India's independence movement, with images of peaceful protesters being brutally beaten galvanizing both domestic and international opinion. Similarly, the Palestinian Intifadas emerged as responses to Israeli state violence, creating greater global awareness of the Palestinian cause despite the tremendous suffering involved. In a more recent Turkish context, the harsh police crackdown on the initially small-scale Gezi Park environmental protests in 2013 transformed a localized demonstration into a nationwide movement addressing broader issues of civil liberties and democratic participation. However, Hartmann also emphasizes that for such changes to be permanent, the cycle of violence must be broken, requiring sustained efforts toward reconciliation and structural reform.

State violence, though usually examined through its immediate manifestations, drives far-reaching societal transformation, reordering both the visible social institutions and the invisible patterns of human interaction. These transformations operate at multiple levels - from the disruption of interpersonal trust to the reshaping of institutions and the normalization of new social practices. Understanding how violence transforms a society becomes especially important when examining periods of systematic state intervention in civil society. Seeing violence as a process that reshapes collective consciousness and behaviour, rather than a series of isolated acts, helps explain how intense social upheaval leaves lasting imprints on political culture and civic engagement across generations.

2.1.2. Types of violence

Violence takes distinct forms, though these categories often overlap and interact. One of the most visible forms of violence is physical violence. Bonamigo et al. (2022) define physical violence as the intentional use of physical force by one person to harm another. This type of violence includes actions such as slapping, punching, kicking, pushing, attempting to strangle, burning, and threatening with a knife or gun. Similarly, Rutherford et al. (2007) describe physical violence and note that it often leads to injury, death, or psychological harm. The primary aim of physical violence is the intent to cause harm, which distinguishes it from other types of violence. For instance, the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes separately categorize acts of physical violence such as assault, sexual assault, neglect, abandonment, and maltreatment (Rutherford et al., 2007).

While physical violence leaves visible marks, it often coexists with and can lead to another form of violence: psychological violence. In contrast to physical violence, psychological violence often causes invisible wounds. Bonamigo et al. (2022) define psychological violence as intentional behaviors that cause emotional harm to a person. This type of violence includes actions such as insulting, threatening, verbal harassment, emotional abuse, humiliation, intimidation, belittling, controlling behaviors, and social isolation.

Rutherford et al. (2007) emphasize that although psychological violence is less visible than physical violence, it can be just as harmful in terms of its long-term effects. It should be noted that physical and psychological violence often occur together, with one form reinforcing the other.

Moving beyond individual-level violence, a broader, more systemic form of violence is encountered as it permeates societal structures. Structural violence, a concept introduced by Johan Galtung (1969), refers to the potential of social structures and institutions to harm individuals, as well as the systematic oppression and inequalities implemented through conscious state policies. This concept has been used to understand more subtle and institutional forms of state-inflicted violence over time.

State-implemented structural violence, while often not involving direct physical violence, encompasses policies and practices designed to negatively affect individuals' quality of life and potential through social, economic, and political structures. While recognizing ongoing debates about the concept itself, structural violence can manifest through power inequalities

in areas such as politics, economics, education, culture, and law. Critics argue that not all power differentials constitute violence, as hierarchies can serve functional purposes in social organization. However, when dominant minorities systematically suppress and control majorities through these institutional mechanisms, it often results in measurable harm to disadvantaged groups (Güngörsen & Şahin, 2023). The concept remains debated (Hirschfeld, 2017), but provides one framework for analyzing how institutional arrangements can produce harmful outcomes even without direct physical force.

Structural violence implemented consciously by the state can take various forms, including discriminatory policies, inequality in resource distribution, unequal access to education and health services, economic policies that disadvantage certain groups, and legal regulations that restrict the rights of some groups. As Farmer (2004) points out, these practices are embedded in social structures and are often perceived as normal or inevitable.

It's crucial to understand that structural violence often creates conditions that foster both physical and psychological violence. For instance, economic inequalities resulting from structural violence may lead to increased rates of physical violence in disadvantaged communities. Similarly, discriminatory policies can inflict severe psychological harm on marginalized groups.

State-implemented structural violence often manifests itself through elements of social pressure. This type of violence is usually maintained through normalized and institutionalized practices, and is therefore often invisible or considered legitimate (Winter & Leighton, 2001). This invisibility is one of the most dangerous aspects of structural violence as it makes it difficult to combat. Structural violence can also pave the way for, legitimize, and sustain more overt forms of state violence, which makes examining it critical to understanding state violence as a whole.

It should be considered that states may sometimes employ structural violence against political groups they view as unacceptable or threatening to the established order. This application of structural violence could potentially manifest in various ways, such as limiting these groups' access to resources, restricting their ability to organize or communicate, or implementing policies that disproportionately affect their members. While the extent and nature of such practices may vary widely between different contexts and political systems, it's an aspect of

structural violence that merits careful examination and consideration in any analysis of state-implemented violence.

2.1.3. State violence: definition and manifestations

State violence is a fundamental aspect of state power, serving multiple functions in maintaining social order and control. While state violence is often viewed primarily as a response to disorder, historical and theoretical perspectives suggest a more complex relationship between state power and violence. In authoritarian regimes especially, violence can actively shape society and enforce power structures, working alongside other mechanisms of state control such as ideological and bureaucratic apparatus (Greitens, 2016). However, the nature and extent of state violence varies across different political systems and historical contexts, reflecting the heterogeneous nature of state institutions and the diverse ways power is exercised in different societies. One of the primary functions of state violence is the fabrication of social order.

As Neocleous (2000) argues, violence is not merely reactive but constructive, used by the state to actively shape civil society according to its interests. This perspective challenges the notion that state violence is solely a response to threats, instead framing it as a continuous process of societal organization.

The concept of the "gardening state" proposed by Bauman provides a useful metaphor for understanding how modern states employ violence and control to shape their populations. Just as a gardener cultivates a garden by nurturing desired plants and removing unwanted weeds, the state seeks to cultivate its ideal society by promoting certain behaviors, ideologies, and groups while suppressing or eliminating others it deems undesirable (Kamete, 2018).

In this metaphorical garden of society, the state acts as the master gardener, using various tools of political violence to shape the social landscape. These tools extend beyond direct physical force to include bureaucratic mechanisms, spatial controls, and ideological manipulation. The state's gardening efforts aim to create a social order that aligns with its vision, often framed in terms of progress, security, or national identity.

One crucial aspect of this state gardening is the identification and removal of social weeds - elements that the state considers detrimental to its ideal social order. These might include political dissidents, marginalized communities, or practices that deviate from state-sanctioned

norms. Through various forms of violence - from overt repression to more subtle forms of exclusion and discrimination - the state attempts to uproot these undesired elements from the social fabric.

The pursuit of security often serves as a justification for this violent reshaping of society. By framing certain groups or behaviors as threats to social order or national security, the state legitimizes its use of force and expands its power to intervene in and control social life. This security function allows the state to normalize violence and integrate it into everyday governance, creating a pervasive system of control.

Importantly, while the gardening state metaphor might suggest a purely rational, technocratic approach to social engineering, the reality is often more complex. Political factors, power dynamics, and ideological agendas frequently override ostensibly neutral planning or governance logics in the application of state violence. Far from a matter of administrative efficiency, the state's gardening efforts are deeply political, shaping society according to particular visions and interests.

While the gardening state metaphor provides a macro-level understanding of state violence, it is equally important to examine its effects on the human psyche at the individual and collective levels. This micro-level analysis enables an understanding of how the state's "gardening" efforts impact society, shaping the minds and psyches of its citizens. To this end, psychoanalysis and social violence can be turned to as points of analysis.

Puget (1988), describes how extreme social violence can lead to an interruption in the capacity to think, dazedness and delusions. The mind's defense mechanisms, such as denial, negation and splitting, are activated in response. At the level of identity, destructive models associated with survival situations are adopted. Social violence "destroys the points of reference that constitute the subject's social identity" (Puget, 1988, p.100), leaving individuals in a state of confusion, prolonged suffering, and helplessness. This psychological disruption can be seen as a direct consequence of the state's violent gardening efforts, uprooting individuals from their familiar social and psychological landscapes.

Building on this, Gampel introduces the concept of radioactive transmission to describe how social/state violence penetrates the psychic apparatus in ways that individuals cannot control (Gampel, 2000, p.59). Like radioactivity, the effects of violence appear as bodily illness, as emotional turbulence, like an unleashed drive. This radioactive identification circulates

unpredictably, modifying relationships between individuals and states without following linear paths of cause and effect.

Gampel highlights how violence can exceed the mind's capacity for representation and refers to trauma as constituting a fracture, a gap in the testimony, not only as a historiographical problem but as a human limitation (Gampel, 2000, p.60). This echoes Puget's observation that perceptions aroused by violence often cannot be put into words, pointing to a "zone of the unthinkable in the psychic apparatus" (Puget, 1988, p.121).

The impact of pervasive violence creates a background of the uncanny, a psychological state where the familiar becomes strangely threatening and alien (Gampel, 2000). This term derived from Freud's concept of *das Unheimliche* (Freud, 1919). This uncanny dimension coexists with normal life, forcing survivors to inhabit a split world where everyday environments simultaneously feel both ordinary and menacing. For survivors of social violence, this sense of the uncanny persists even after returning to routine, as familiar settings remain subtly infused with a sense of potential threat.

This psychological splitting mirrors the gardening state's paradoxical efforts, revealing how attempts to create an orderly society instead produce a fractured psychological landscape. To illustrate these concepts in a concrete historical context, Hollander's (1992) examination of how state violence in Argentina during the "Dirty War" impacted both individuals and society at large can be referenced. This study provides an example of the gardening state in action, showing how the military junta's campaign of terror acted as a violent form of social engineering, attempting to root out perceived threats to their vision of an ideal society.

Hollander (1992) describes how the junta's tactics, which included disappearances, torture, and murder, created a pervasive atmosphere of fear and uncertainty that affected the psyche of Argentine citizens. The policy of disappearing people was particularly traumatic, as it left families in a state of terrifying uncertainty, with no possibility of psychological closure (Puget, 1992). This prevented the normal mourning process, trapping individuals in a painful uncertainty between hope and despair.

Hollander also highlights how the constant threat of violence led to widespread paranoia, self-censorship, and social isolation, as people struggled to navigate an unpredictable and dangerous reality (Hollander, 1992). Like Argentina's experience, similar patterns of social atomization emerged in Turkey, where state surveillance and systematic violence fragmented

existing social networks and reshaped daily interactions. This distortion of everyday social behavior, where even basic acts of recognition between former comrades became dangerous, was itself a form of social control that reached well beyond immediate physical violence.

State violence works at once on the societal and the psychological level. It imposes immediate control, but it also reshapes society over the long term. The theoretical frameworks examined above reveal how states can deploy violence strategically to reshape both collective consciousness and individual subjectivity. Understanding these dual dimensions - the macro-level mechanisms of social control and the micro-level impacts on psychological experience - provides analytical tools for examining how systematic state violence achieves lasting societal transformation. This interplay between collective and individual effects suggests that state violence is more than discrete acts of force; it forms part of broader processes that fundamentally alter the relationship between citizens and political authority.

2.1.4. The relationship between violence, humiliation, and shame

Violence, in its various forms and manifestations, invariably leaves an impact on its targets, whether individuals or groups. Among the most enduring effects of violence are the experiences of humiliation and shame. These powerful emotional responses help shape the psychological aftermath of violent encounters. This chapter examines the complex relationship between violence, humiliation and shame and explores how these interconnected phenomena affect both individuals and collectives.. By examining these dynamics, it aims to shed light on the deeper psychological consequences of violence and their far-reaching implications for human behavior and social interactions.

i. Humiliation and Shame as Psychological Concepts

Humiliation and shame are powerful emotional experiences that play crucial roles in political behavior and state-level interactions, particularly in the context of political violence and state-sponsored aggression. These concepts are far from abstract academic constructs; they are of critical importance for understanding and addressing destructive behaviors that can escalate to severe consequences on a national and international scale. Lotto (2017) emphasizes that the subjective experience of humiliation is a major force mediating retaliation, which can manifest in various forms of political violence. The devastating power of humiliation at a collective level can impact national identities and intergroup relations,

potentially leading to long-lasting conflicts and cycles of violence. This phenomenon is particularly relevant in understanding the dynamics of international relations, where perceived national humiliation can drive aggressive foreign policies and justify retaliatory actions.

At its core, humiliation involves a perceived lowering of one's status or worth in the eyes of others (Lindner, 2006). This threat to self-esteem is psychologically destabilizing and often involves a loss of control or agency, leaving the victim feeling powerless (Torres & Bergner, 2010). Similarly, shame is defined by Lewis et al. (1992) as an intensely painful feeling associated with a sense of worthlessness, inadequacy, and powerlessness. Both humiliation and shame involve a global negative evaluation of the self, distinguishing them from guilt, which focuses on specific behaviors (Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

The psychological dynamics that give rise to humiliation and shame are complex and deeply rooted in both individual psychology and social contexts. Humiliating situations frequently involve some form of social rejection or exclusion, tapping into the fundamental human need for belonging (McCauley, 2017). This experience challenges core aspects of a person's identity, forcing a painful re-evaluation of the self (Lindner, 2006). As Richards (2022) points out, drawing from psychoanalytic perspectives, humiliation can be seen as the inevitable response to the narcissistic wound suffered in early encounters with reality. These encounters drive the developmental dismantling of infantile illusions of omnipotence and self-sufficiency, creating a profound threat to the integrity of the self.

The identity disruption caused by humiliation creates cognitive dissonance, a gap between how one views oneself and how one is treated in a humiliating situation, leading to psychological tension (Festinger, 1957). This tension exacerbates the struggle between narcissistic and non-narcissistic parts of the self (Richards, 2022). The narcissistic self is unable to accept the loss of illusions of omnipotence and is unwilling to adapt to life in the real world of frustrations, disappointments, and limitations. Consequently, humiliation burns inside the person as a source of despair, narcissistic rage, or denial of reality.

Understanding the psychological impacts of humiliation and shame, both on individuals and groups, is crucial for addressing conflicts and promoting reconciliation efforts. When shame and humiliation are experienced as narcissistic injuries, they produce more shame, leading to shame-rage spirals and shame-guilt spirals (Levine, 2005). The injured individual wants to

hide, feels helpless and enraged, and is preoccupied with sadomasochistic fantasies. This can result in destructive behavior or violence, and guilt over these impulses. Moreover, cycles of humiliation and fixation on one's own injury tend to restrict the capacity for symbol formation or 'mentalization' and can contribute to destructive acting out (Levine, 2005).

The developmental origins of shame have been linked to early childhood experiences. Erikson (1950) associated shame with the stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt, while attachment theorists like Bowlby (1969) suggested that insecure attachment patterns can predispose individuals to shame-proneness. Cognitive theories emphasize the role of attributional styles in shame, where individuals tend to make internal, stable, and global attributions for negative events (Tracy & Robins, 2004).

Both humiliation and shame are inherently social, shaped by cultural standards and interpersonal experiences (Leeming & Boyle, 2004). This perspective aligns with Gilligan's (2022) view of shame and humiliation as social and psychological phenomena. The pervasiveness of these emotions in human experience is evident in the multitude of terms used to describe them across languages, reflecting their centrality in human psychology.

The psychological consequences of humiliation and shame on individuals can be severe and long-lasting. They are associated with intense negative emotions including anger and anxiety (Hartling & Luchetta, 1999). Repeated or severe experiences can contribute to depressive symptoms and chronically low self-esteem (Walker & Knauer, 2011). Gilligan (2022) describes the impact of severe shame as a "death of the self," a profound disruption of identity closely tied to these experiences (p.22).

When experienced collectively, humiliation and shame can have powerful effects on group identities and intergroup relations. Shared experiences can become part of a group's collective memory and identity (Volkan, 2004). External humiliation may strengthen in-group bonds as members unite against a common threat (Staub, 1989). However, this increased group cohesion often comes at the cost of increased intergroup hostility, with humiliated groups directing anger and aggression towards out-groups perceived as responsible (Lickel, 2012).

In the context of victimization, particularly in cases of violence, the dynamics of shame become even more complex. Herman (2015) notes that violence represents a severe breach of one's physical and psychological integrity, leading to feelings of defilement and unworthiness, core components of shame. Victimization often involves a loss of control over

one's circumstances, which can challenge one's sense of agency and competence, further intensifying feelings of shame (Gilligan, 2003). Furthermore, victims may internalize the violence, believing they somehow deserved or invited the attack, a hallmark of shame reactions (Janoff-Bulman, 1979).

Theoretical perspectives on humiliation and shame provide essential insights into how experiences of violence can fundamentally reshape group identities and fracture social bonds. The recognition of these emotional responses as central mechanisms in the perpetuation of political violence and the formation of collective trauma points to deeper patterns in how groups process and transmit experiences of subjugation. Treated as collective experiences, humiliation and shame show how emotional wounds become woven into group narratives, influencing political behavior long after the original violent events.

ii. Intergenerational transmission of shame and humiliation

Shame and humiliation, when experienced collectively, can have long-lasting effects on individuals, groups and their identities. In this section, the transmission of these painful emotions across generations and their embedding in the collective consciousness of groups that have experienced political violence or oppression will be explored. The concept of witnessing is central to understanding how shame and humiliation spread through populations and become collective phenomena. As Weingarten (2003, 2004) argues, being a witness to violence, even without directly experiencing it, can have transformative effects on individuals and communities. The act of witnessing creates a secondary traumatization that reverberates through social networks and across generations (Figley, 1995).

When large segments of a population witness the humiliation of their group members through political violence, forced displacement, or other forms of oppression, it generates a shared emotional experience that shapes group identity. Volkan (2001) describes this as a "chosen trauma" - a shared mental representation of a past traumatic event during which the large group suffered loss and humiliation in conflict with another group (p.87). This becomes a key marker of group identity that is passed down to future generations.

Intergenerational transmission occurs through various mechanisms. Parents who have experienced collective humiliation may consciously or unconsciously communicate their emotional wounds to their children through their behaviors, narratives, and silences (Danieli, 1998). Children absorb the unresolved trauma of previous generations, internalizing feelings

of shame and humiliation that they did not directly experience. This creates a transgenerational phantom, the unnamed and unspoken experiences that haunt subsequent generations (Abraham&Torok, 1994).

The collective nature of shame and humiliation is reinforced through shared narratives, commemoration practices, and cultural productions that keep the memory of past traumas alive. Literature, art, and oral histories serve as vehicles for transmitting the emotional legacy across generations (LaCapra, 2001). Public memorials and rituals of remembrance also help maintain collective shame and humiliation as core aspects of group identity long after the original events. Importantly, the intergenerational transmission of shame and humiliation can fuel cycles of violence. Groups may seek to restore dignity and reverse humiliation through retaliation against perceived oppressors, creating new traumas that perpetuate the cycle (Lindner, 2006). Breaking this cycle requires addressing the deep-seated shame and humiliation at both individual and collective levels.

Through the intergenerational transmission of shame and humiliation, collective experiences of political violence continue to shape group identities across time. The processes of witnessing and collective memory do more than preserve past traumas. They actively shape how subsequent generations understand their political and social positioning.

2.1.5. Violence and identity formation

The relationship between violence and identity has long been a subject of scholarly interest, particularly in the context of large group dynamics. Violence, as a pervasive social phenomenon, has the power to shape, reinforce, and transform individual and collective identities. Conversely, identities can serve as catalysts for violent actions, creating an interplay that demands careful examination.

At its core, identity refers to an individual's or group's sense of self, encompassing beliefs, values, and characteristics that distinguish them from others. This construct strongly shapes human behavior and social interactions. The intersection of violence with these identity constructs can have far-reaching consequences. It has been argued that violence can become intrinsically linked to identity formation and maintenance, particularly in contexts of political or social upheaval (Fearon, 1999). Even the impact of witnessing violence extends beyond direct participants, profoundly shaping the identities of observers and broader communities. Witnesses to violence, whether terrorism or state-sanctioned acts, become entangled in

complex webs of psychological and social responses (Weingarten, 2003). As Howie (2012) argues, terrorism depends on both near and distant witnesses for its success as a tactic of message sending and manipulation of target audiences. This principle may apply equally to state violence, where the spectacle of force serves to coerce and intimidate populations.

The role of the media in disseminating violent imagery amplifies these effects. Modern communication technologies enable rapid and widespread distribution of violent scenes, potentially magnifying their psychological impact on witnesses. This expanded reach of violent spectacles contributes to the formation of imagined communities (Anderson, 1983), where individuals who have never met can develop a shared identity based on common experiences of witnessing violence.

State actors, like non-state groups, can employ violence and terror as tools for shaping public perception and behavior. Foucault's (1977) concept of the spectacle of the scaffold can illustrate how state-sanctioned violence historically served to instill fear and compliance in witnesses, thereby shaping collective behavior and identity. In contemporary contexts, witnessing state violence or being victimized by it, whether directly or through media, can lead to a range of responses. Some may experience a heightened sense of vulnerability and loss of trust in institutions, while others might develop a stronger identification with resistance movements or counter-narratives (Howie, 2012).

The consequences of witnessing violence can be far-reaching and long-lasting. As Howie (2012) notes, those who die in acts of violence are often a means to an end – the real targets are the audiences of witnesses throughout the world. The responses of these witnesses, as subjects of representations of violence in the media, ultimately determine the success or failure of violent political acts, whether perpetrated by state or non-state actors.

Moreover, direct exposure to violence can alter the trajectory of identity development. Trauma resulting from violent experiences can disrupt an individual's sense of self and their connection to their larger group identity. Herman (2015) posits that traumatic events can shatter fundamental assumptions about the self and the world, necessitating a complex process of identity reconstruction. The ramifications of this entanglement of violence and identity extend far beyond the immediate conflict. Intergenerational transmission of trauma and identity-based narratives can perpetuate cycles of violence across generations (Danieli, 1998). Conversely, shared experiences of violence can also give rise to new forms of identity,

such as collective victimhood or survivor identities, which can have significant implications for post-conflict reconciliation efforts (Bar-Tal et al., 2009).

Violence can be a means of asserting or defending one's identity. In times of uncertainty or threat, individuals and groups may resort to violence as a way of securitizing their identity (Lüders et al., 2016). On the other hand, exposure to violence can fundamentally alter how individuals and groups perceive themselves and others, leading to shifts in identity formation and maintenance. The role of elites and state actors in shaping group identities through violence is another critical aspect of the relationship between violence and identity. Political elites may strategically provoke or manipulate violent conflicts to construct more antagonistic identities, which in turn can favor further violence. This process often involves the exploitation of existing cultural narratives or the creation of new ones to justify violent actions and mobilize group members. State-sanctioned violence, in particular, can itself construct identity, since it carries the weight of institutional authority. This strategic use of violence by elites and state actors can lead to the hardening of group boundaries, the intensification of in-group/out-group distinctions, and the emergence of new collective identities centered around experiences of victimization or resistance. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending how violence can be instrumentalized to shape and reshape group identities in conflict situations (Fearon & Laitin, 2000).

The examination of violence and identity reveals multiple intersecting dimensions: violence's role in identity assertion and defense, its function in delineating group boundaries, and its power to fundamentally reshape both individual and collective self-perceptions. When systematically deployed by state actors, these dynamics can be strategically harnessed to transform immediate political behavior and deeper patterns of group identification and social consciousness. This framework of violence and identity formation prepares the ground for examining how systematic state violence reshapes people psychologically and socially, beyond the use of physical force.

2.2 Identity

The second concept to be addressed within the scope of the literature review is identity. The concept of identity forms the most fundamental and important component of social systems. Identity has a scope that symbolizes a multidimensional lifestyle such as beliefs, attitudes,

and value judgments that correspond to individuals' cultural and social positions and statuses in their environment. In short, identity can be defined as the answers individuals give to the questions "Who are you, which group do you belong to?" (Güvenç, 1993). Identity can also be understood as a social category; it refers to a group of people defined by membership rules and assumed characteristics or expected behaviors (Fearon, 1999). The answers given to questions about an individual's identity take shape in social relationships and interactions with others. Identity can also be understood as socially distinguishing features that a person takes special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (Fearon, 1999). In this context, identity refers to aspects that form the basis of an individual's self-esteem or dignity and is often associated with membership in social categories.

2.2.1. Theories of identity formation

The formation of identity is one of the most important journeys of human experience - a phenomenon that encompasses the processes by which individuals and groups define, position and express themselves. Starting from Freud's childhood identifications, Erikson's lifespan development perspective, Kohut's psychology of the self and Lacan's theory of the mirror phase, identity formation has been addressed in a wide range of studies. In addition to individual identity development, the formation of collective identity is also an important field of study. Concepts such as group dynamics, cultural memory and narrative identity bring out the social and cultural dimensions of identity. In this chapter, the multi-layered structure of identity formation will be explored, encompassing individual psychological processes, social interactions, familial relations, and cultural norms.

i. Individual identity development

Identity development has been a fundamental topic in psychoanalysis, initiated by Freud's works and enriched over time with contributions from various psychoanalytic approaches. Freud explained identity development through identifications experienced during childhood. According to him, a child initially identifies with their mother and father, and later, during the Oedipal phase, with the parent of the same sex. These identifications form the foundation of a person's identity (Freud, 1961). Freud's perspectives have served as a crucial starting point for subsequent theorists.

Erikson expanded on Freud's ideas by considering identity development as a lifelong process. Unlike Freud, who focused on childhood, Erikson identified adolescence as the critical period

for identity formation. He believed that during this time, the adolescent reviews childhood identifications and strives to establish their own unique identity (Erikson, 1968). Erikson's approach is significant for its broader perspective on identity development.

Self psychology theorists introduced a new dimension to identity development. Thinkers like Kohut shifted the focus from the concept of identification, emphasized by Freud and Erikson, to the concept of the self. According to this approach, healthy self-development requires parents to provide selfobject functions such as mirroring and idealization to the child. Through this process, the child forms their unique identity (Kohut, 1977). Self psychology stands out for its emphasis on the quality of the parent-child relationship in identity development.

Object relations theorists also stressed the importance of early relationships but focused on internalized object relations, unlike self psychology. For example, Winnicott noted the critical role of a mother adapting to the needs of the baby and being a good enough mother for healthy identity development (Winnicott, 1960). This approach is valuable for its focus on the role of early experiences in identity development.

More contemporary psychoanalytic approaches have transcended the individual focus of previous theories, considering identity development as a relational process. From this perspective, identity is shaped within and through interactions with others. Identity is not static but a dynamic structure that develops throughout life (Mitchell, 1988). This approach distinguishes itself from earlier theories by attempting to understand identity development within a broader social and cultural context. Individual identity development is intrinsically linked to social interactions and cultural contexts. As Vatandas (2020) argues, Identity carries the traces of the society, nation, region, tribe, community and family to which the individual belongs. This perspective emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between individual identity and the broader social environment.

The story of Bogac Han, one of the twelve heroic narratives in the Dede Korkut Book - a seminal work of Oghuz Turkic literature dating from the 14th-15th centuries - provides a compelling illustration of how identity formation is tied to social recognition. In this narrative, Dirse Khan's son, born after his father's prayers for a child, remains nameless in accordance with Turkic tradition until he proves his worth. The young man's defining moment comes when he defeats a fierce bull that was terrorizing the community during a

festival, saving many lives. For this act of bravery, he is given the name "Bogac" meaning "little bull". Though his story takes a tragic turn when his father, deceived by malicious courtiers, attempts to kill him, Bogac survives through his mother's intervention and eventually reconciles with his father, proving both his physical prowess and moral character (Ergin, 1997). This narrative, which reflects the nomadic culture and warrior ethos of medieval Turkic societies, exemplifies a common practice in Turkic naming traditions where names were earned through significant achievements. This custom is part of a broader pattern of naming practices across cultures that link individual identity to social recognition and belonging. From Iceland's patronymic system where children's surnames derive from their father's first name, to medieval European surnames emerging from trades and professions (Smith, Miller, Fisher), naming practices historically serve as mechanisms of social integration and markers of one's place within the community (Mateos, & Mateos, 2014 ; Willson, 2023).

The naming of Bogac Han - meaning "little bull" (Nisanyan Adlar, 2022) - after his victory over a bull during a festival can be understood through Lacan's concept of the mirror stage. The mirror stage describes how infants between 6 and 18 months recognize their mirror image, a key moment in ego development (Muller, 1985). But this process involves more than self-recognition: it requires the presence and validation of others. The mirror stage is thus a social moment, in which identity emerges through recognition by others. Muller (1985) notes that the mirror stage often involves other people acting as mirrors for the child. Similarly, for Bogac Han, the community serves as a mirror, reflecting back to him his new identity as a warrior. This social mirroring is crucial for the formation of his ego and his place within the community.

This social dimension of identity formation is illustrated in Bogac Han's story. His identity emerges through his individual achievement and crucially through its recognition and validation by the community in the formal act of naming. The parallel with the mirror stage lies in how both processes involve the transformation of an individual experience into a socially validated identity through the mediating presence of authority figures and cultural symbols. This intersection of individual achievement and social recognition, mediated through cultural practices like naming, reveals the deeply intersubjective nature of identity formation.

To sum up, Lacan shows how being someone, constructing a self, is also related to becoming a social object. Social bonds, which are of great importance in the development of the self, are effective in the formation of community identities involving crowds.

ii. Formation of Collective Identity: From Group Dynamics to Narrative Identity

The exploration of individual identity development provides a foundation for understanding the human psyche. However, identities are not solely shaped by internal processes; they are influenced by social environments and group affiliations. This relationship between the individual and the collective leads to the next discussion: the formation of collective identity. As the focus shifts from the personal to the communal, the process by which individual identities converge to create shared group identities is unraveled, revealing how these collective constructs, in turn, shape the individuals within them. This shows that identity formation is dynamic, depending on social, cultural, and psychological factors that reach well beyond the individual.

Group identity, a crucial concept in understanding group dynamics and social movements, emerges through complex interactions within groups rather than being an inherent quality (Melucci, 1989). This process involves ongoing negotiations and agreements among group members, leading individuals to categorize themselves as part of a larger social unit (Brewer, 1991). The formation of collective identities is heavily influenced by strong social ties within the group, which allow members to highlight common features and see themselves as part of a cohesive whole (Taylor & Whittier, 1992).

The formation of identity, both individual and collective, is a complex process that involves personal reflection, social interaction, and cultural influences. At its core, identity development is shaped by an individual's reflexive thinking about who they are, who they aspire to be, and how they are perceived by others (Hogg & Vaughan, 2013). This self-concept and identity, in turn, influence how individuals interact with their environment, while simultaneously being shaped by these interactions. As such, identity is more than a biological or psychological construct, it is also a manifestation of group belonging.

The cultural context, particularly family dynamics, shapes identity formation (Kroger, 2003). This is evident in the importance of early parent-child reminiscing in the development of narrative identity, as emphasized by Fivush and Graci (2017). Through these interactions, children learn to create coherent narratives about their experiences, which form the

foundation of their personal and collective identities. This process is deeply embedded in cultural and social contexts, highlighting the interaction between individual, family, and broader societal influences on identity formation.

Consequently, identity reflects not only personal attributes but also the broader societal, cultural, and community influences to which an individual belongs (Featherstone, 2000). This multidimensional nature of identity, encompassing individual, cultural, and social characteristics, provides a foundation for exploring various theories of group identity and their implications for social behavior and intergroup relations.

A key aspect of collective identity is the emphasis on similarity among group members, which inherently defines those who are different or outside the group. As Connolly (1995) notes, identity requires difference to exist, often transforming that difference into otherness to reinforce its own certainty. This process of distinguishing between in-group and out-group is fundamental to an individual's identification with their collective identity and fellow group members (Korostelina, 2007).

Furthermore, the concept of cultural memory, as defined by Assmann and Czaplicka (1995), is vital to the preservation and transmission of collective identity across generations. Cultural memory encompasses shared texts, images, rituals and practices that stabilize and transmit a society's self-image. It helps to define the group's values, norms and sense of continuity, providing a framework for understanding the past and present. In the context of political groups, collective identity takes on additional significance. When group members perceive their social position as unfair or illegitimate compared to other groups, their collective identity can become politicized (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). This transformation allows the group to recognize itself as a political entity capable of exerting influence and effecting change.

Fivush and Graci (2017) further elaborate on the concept of narrative identity, arguing that it is a critical component of the self. Identity is defined by the narratives created about oneself, providing a sense of emotional coherence and continuity across time. This narrative self is constructed through everyday social interactions, beginning in early childhood and evolving throughout life. It is emphasized by the authors that individual narrative identity is a socially constructed process, shaped by the stories shared with others and the ways in which these stories are validated, contested, or negotiated.

The development of narrative identity is closely linked to the attachment relationship between parent and child. Securely attached parent-child dyads tend to engage in more open and expressive communication, especially about distressing events (Fivush & Graci, 2017). This early reminiscing helps children internalize narrative tools and cultural values, which they use to understand and evaluate new experiences throughout their lives.

The formation of collective identity emerges as a complex phenomenon shaped through the continuous interaction of individual narratives, familial relationships, cultural memory, and broader social contexts. The interweaving of these elements creates shared frameworks through which group members understand themselves in relation to others and interpret their social and political reality. This layered understanding of collective identity formation raises important questions about how groups maintain cohesion and process shared experiences. Such questions can be particularly clarified through psychoanalytic perspectives, which offer deeper insights into the unconscious dynamics that bind groups together and shape their collective responses to social and political challenges.

2.2.2. Psychoanalytic Theories of Group Identity and Political Consciousness

Psychoanalytic theories provide insights into how political groups form, maintain, and express their collective identities. Freud's "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1922) established foundational concepts for understanding the psychological mechanisms of group formation and cohesion. Central to his theory is the role of identification in creating and maintaining group bonds. These bonds operate on two levels: vertical ties between members and leadership, and horizontal ties among group members themselves. This dual structure of identification helps explain how political groups maintain cohesion even under challenging circumstances.

The emotional dimension of group identity, as Freud (1922) argues, operates largely through unconscious processes that shape collective behavior. He describes how group membership can produce a group mind that influences individual judgment and behavior. This concept is particularly relevant for understanding how political consciousness develops within activist groups, where individual political identities become interwoven with collective ideologies and shared purposes.

Bion's (1952) work on group dynamics extends these insights by identifying distinct modes of group functioning. His concept of the Work Group represents the rational, task-oriented

aspect of collective activity - the conscious pursuit of political goals and organizational objectives. In contrast, his theory of Basic Assumption Groups captures the emotional and unconscious aspects of group life that influence political movements. Bion's concept of valency - the instantaneous, involuntary sharing of emotional states within groups - helps explain how political groups maintain emotional cohesion and shared purpose.

Heinz Kohut's self psychology provides an understanding of group dynamics and large group identities, particularly through his concept of the group self. Kohut (1978) extended his theory of individual self development to the collective level, suggesting that groups, like individuals, strive for cohesion and a sense of wholeness. The group self, as conceptualized by Kohut, refers to "a structure that dips into the deepest reaches of the psyche" in the context of group membership (Kohut, 1978, p.837). The concept suggests a deep interconnection between individual and group identities.

The group self, like the individual self, requires certain selfobject experiences to maintain its cohesion and vitality (Stone, 2005). These experiences include:

1. Mirroring: The need for admiration and recognition within the group context.
2. Idealizing: The need to look up to and merge with an idealized other, often manifested in group leaders or shared ideals.
3. Twinship: The need to feel a sense of likeness with others in the group (Banai et al. 2005).

In large groups, these selfobject needs are often fulfilled through shared symbols, idealized leaders, and a sense of common destiny. Group members can also use these symbols to recognise who belongs to the group and who is an outsider. This aligns closely with Volkan's (1988) concept of large group identity, highlighting the psychological processes that bind individuals to their ethnic, national, ideological or religious groups.

The group self is not a static entity but rather a dynamic, ongoing process. Karterud and Stone (2003) describe it as a project in which individuals identify with the ideals and goals of the group. This process undergoes developmental changes analogous to group development and the evolution of group cohesion (Kieffer, 2001). Kohut's theory also shows the potential for collective narcissism in groups. When the group self is threatened or injured, it may lead to group narcissism, characterized by an exaggerated sense of the group's importance and a devaluation of out-groups (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). This dynamic can contribute to the

escalation of conflicts between large groups. The concept of the group self has significant implications for understanding and managing intergroup conflicts. Threats to the group self can lead to collective narcissistic injury, potentially resulting in aggressive or defensive reactions.

These theoretical frameworks point to a critical dimension of how states might potentially influence group cohesion through the manipulation of collective symbols. As Kohut's self psychology suggests, groups require certain experiences and symbols to maintain their cohesion and vitality. This raises important questions about what might happen when symbols intended to foster recognition, idealization, and group belonging are repurposed in contexts of state control. The potential disruption to group identity when large group symbols are used in contexts of state violence represents a significant gap in the current literature. This study will explore how the psychological mechanisms that allow political groups to maintain their connection to broader society might be affected when large group symbols are deployed in contexts of political repression.

The dynamic nature of group identity formation, as described by Karterud and Stone (2003), helps explain why such attacks on group symbols can have lasting effects. When group members lose their emotional connection to collective symbols through traumatic experiences, it can lead to a disruption in group cohesion. This disruption extends beyond immediate psychological harm to affect how these individuals can engage with and be perceived by the broader society.

Psychoanalytic theories of group identity reveal psychological mechanisms through which social bonds are maintained, transformed, or deliberately disrupted. Such insights into the psychological dimensions of collective identity point toward deeper questions about how large groups sustain themselves across time and how their cohesion might be systematically undermined through the corruption of their identifying symbols and narratives.

2.2.3. Large group identity

Following the focus of psychoanalytic perspectives on individual and group dynamics, the concept of large group identity represents an important step in the attempt to understand collective psychological processes on a broader scale. This transition marks a critical stage in the evolution of psychoanalytic thought, bridging the gap from individual psychology to social phenomena.

The theory of large group identity draws on a variety of psychoanalytic concepts, ranging from Freud's work on libidinal bonds and group psychology to Bion's understanding of group dynamics and Kohut's psychology of the self. However, this theory extends these ideas by applying them to collective identities that encompass millions of people. This approach examines how the psychological mechanisms of individuals and groups manifest and evolve at the level of entire nations, political and ethnic groups or religious communities.

In this chapter, the formation, maintenance, and effects of large group identities will be examined. The ways in which historical narratives, cultural symbols, and shared experiences shape these collective identities, along with their implications for individual psychological development and broader social dynamics, will be explored. The concept of large group identity is utilized to provide insight into complex phenomena such as social cohesion, intergroup conflict, and the enduring power of a sense of collective belonging in human psychology.

i. Definition and characteristics

Large group identity is a fundamental concept in understanding collective psychological processes. Vamik Volkan (2009) defines large group identity as "the subjective experience of millions of people who are linked by a persistent sense of sameness while also sharing numerous characteristics with others in foreign groups" (p. 6). This definition encapsulates the essence of large group identity as a shared psychological experience that unites vast numbers of individuals.

The concept of large group identity extends beyond mere demographic categorizations. It represents a deep psychological bond that can be based on various foundations such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, or ideology. Volkan (2013) emphasizes that large group identity is not simply an aggregation of individual identities, but a distinct psychological entity that shapes collective behavior and thinking.

In psychoanalytic literature, large group identity occupies a unique position, bridging individual psychology and societal dynamics. It builds upon earlier psychoanalytic concepts such as Freud's (1922) work on group psychology, which explored the libidinal ties between group members and leaders. However, Volkan's concept of large group identity goes further, examining how these group dynamics persist across generations and shape collective behavior on a massive scale.

The psychoanalytic understanding of large group identity also draws from object relations theory. Volkan (2015) suggests that large groups, like individuals, develop internal representations of self and other. These internalized images strongly influence how the group perceives itself and interacts with other groups. A key characteristic of large group identity is its persistence over time. Unlike temporary group formations, large group identities endure across generations, shaping the collective psyche of millions of people who may never meet each other in person. This transgenerational aspect of large group identity sets it apart from other forms of group identification in psychoanalytic literature (Volkan, 2019).

ii. Formation and maintenance

The formation and maintenance of large group identities involve different psychological processes that begin in childhood and continue throughout adulthood. Volkan's (2013) framework of how large group identities develop through early identification processes is particularly relevant for understanding how state violence can disrupt or transform both political consciousness and individuals' emotional bonds with their large groups across generations.. His concept of 'psychological DNA' - where cultural symbols and historical narratives are deposited into children's minds by adults - provides analytical tools for examining how the trauma of the 1980 coup affected the transmission of political values in Turkish society. Of special significance for the research is Volkan's theory of 'chosen traumas' and 'chosen glories' (2013), which helps understand how the collective experience of state violence can become woven into group identity and transmitted across generations.

Large group identities are maintained and protected through various psychological mechanisms. Volkan (2013) particularly emphasizes two principles: maintenance of non-sameness and protection of psychological borders. The maintenance of non-sameness principle dictates that a large group must not resemble other groups around it to declare its independent existence. This principle helps the group maintain its unique identity and define itself as a distinct entity from other groups. For example, when large groups feel threatened, they may find any sign of similarity between groups unconsciously unacceptable, leading to an accentuation of even minor differences (Volkan, 2013).

The protection of psychological borders principle explains the tendency of large groups to keep their boundaries distinct. These borders are more psychological than physical and serve to differentiate the group's identity from other groups. For groups that feel under threat,

having a psychological border with the group they are in conflict with is often even more important than physical boundaries (Volkan, 2013). When groups regress, they accentuate differences in their own large group identity reservoir in their relationship with the enemy group, providing psychological boundaries.

Volkan (2013) defines a chosen trauma as the mental representation of an event that has caused a large group to face drastic losses, feel helpless and victimized by another group, and share a humiliating injury. The term "chosen" doesn't imply a conscious choice to be victimized, but rather reflects a group's unconscious choice to mythologize and psychologically perpetuate a particular historical event. The process of chosen trauma involves several key steps. It begins with transgenerational transmission, where the mental representations of the shared traumatic event are deposited into the developing self-representation of children in subsequent generations. As the chosen trauma passes through generations, its function changes; its historical accuracy becomes less important than its role in linking group members together (Volkan, 2013). The chosen trauma then becomes a group marker, an inseparable part of the group's identity, serving as a psychological gene that distinguishes the group from others (Volkan, 2009). Chosen glories, conversely, are shared images of ancestral achievements that enhance collective self-esteem. While both chosen traumas and chosen glories contribute to group identity, chosen traumas tend to have a more profound and lasting impact on group psychology (Volkan, 2009).

The maintenance of large group identity is facilitated by what Bion (1985) described as the container-contained relationship in group dynamics. Volkan (2001) extends this concept with his tent analogy, where the large group identity acts as a canvas covering and containing group members (pp.82-83). This containment function helps manage collective anxiety and reinforces a sense of belonging, thus maintaining the cohesion of the group identity. The formation and maintenance of large group identities serve several critical psychological functions for individuals. They provide a sense of continuity, belonging, and shared meaning (Volkan, 2001). The group identity acts as an extension of personal identity, allowing individuals to feel connected to a larger, enduring entity. This connection helps manage individual anxiety and provides psychological containment (Bion, 1985; Volkan, 2001).

The maintenance of large group identity is an ongoing process that involves various mechanisms. Cultural practices and rituals reinforce shared values and beliefs. Formal and informal educational processes transmit group narratives and values. Symbols such as flags

and monuments serve as tangible representations of group identity. The shared remembrance of historical events, both traumatic and glorious, reinforces group cohesion.

iii. Role in conflict and violence

Large group identities figure centrally in conflict and violence, often serving as both a catalyst and a sustaining force in intergroup hostilities. As Volkan (2013) observes, the maintenance of large group identity becomes particularly salient during times of societal stress or conflict. When a group perceives external threats, its members tend to cling more tightly to their shared identity, reinforcing the psychological borders between "us" and "them." (Volkan 1988, 2001).

During times of stress or perceived danger, groups often emphasize intra-group similarities as a way to alleviate anxiety about their security. This process involves a heightened focus on shared symbols, common history, and collective narratives that reinforce the group's cohesion and distinctiveness (Volkan, 2004). The use of group symbols and references to the group's shared history tends to increase during conflict situations, serving as powerful tools for mobilizing group members and strengthening their sense of collective identity.

One of the key mechanisms through which large group identity influences conflict is the reactivation of chosen traumas. During times of stress, these chosen traumas can be reactivated, leading to a time collapse (Volkan, 2004). In this phenomenon, emotions, ideas, and defenses related to past traumas resurface and become intertwined with current conflicts, often magnifying their intensity and significance.

Leaders can use this psychological process to mobilize group members and reinforce group cohesion. By invoking chosen traumas and shared symbols, they can tap into deep-seated emotions and shared narratives, creating a powerful rallying point for the group (Volkan, 2001). This process strengthens internal group bonds while sharpening the distinction between the in-group and out-group, potentially escalating intergroup tensions. The reactivation of chosen traumas and emphasis on group symbols increase group cohesion can have powerful effects on group behavior and decision-making. As Volkan (2006) notes, it can lead to seemingly irrational actions, as the group's response to current situations becomes colored by past traumas and heightened group consciousness. This can result in disproportionate reactions to perceived threats, making conflict resolution more challenging.

Furthermore, large group regression often accompanies these processes. Volkan (2004) describes various signs of such regression, including the emergence of shared primitive mental mechanisms like splitting, projection, and denial. These psychological processes can contribute to the dehumanization of the out-group and justify aggressive or violent actions against them.

Large group identities are more than simple categories of belonging; they are sites where state power and collective consciousness intersect. Through shared symbols, collective narratives, and group regression, these identities produce the meanings and recognitions that define the boundaries between self and other, insider and outsider. Because these identities can both strengthen and dissolve under sustained pressure, they show how state violence can drive social transformation by manipulating collective symbols and shared narratives. This vulnerability raises questions about the relationship between individual and collective identity formation, particularly where the usual sources of group cohesion become targets of state action.

2.2.4. Collective identity and its relation to individual identity

Collective identity and its relation to individual identity have been subjects of considerable interest in social psychology and related fields. This relationship can be understood through various theoretical frameworks that highlight different aspects of the interactions between personal and group identities.

Brewer and Gardner (1995) propose a foundational conceptual framework that distinguishes between three levels of self-representation: the personal, relational, and collective selves. They argue that these different levels of identity are associated with distinct bases for self-evaluation and social motivation. While the personal self is evaluated through interpersonal comparisons, the collective self derives its worth from intergroup comparisons. This distinction highlights how collective identities can shape individuals' self-concepts and behaviors in ways that differ from purely personal identities. Building on this multi-level view of identity, Eisenstadt and Giesen (1995) further explore the dynamic interaction between individual and collective identities. They argue that collective identities are not simply aggregates of individual identities but are socially constructed through complex processes. Their perspective underscores the bidirectional influence between individual and

collective levels of identity, suggesting that collective identities provide frameworks within which individual identities are formed and negotiated.

Complementing these ideas, Turner et al. (1994) propose self-categorization theory, which explains how individuals can flexibly shift between personal and social identities depending on contextual factors. This theory suggests that when collective identities become salient, individuals are more likely to define themselves in terms of shared group characteristics rather than unique personal attributes. This process of depersonalization can lead to changes in self-perception and behavior that align with group norms and values, illustrating how collective identities can temporarily overshadow individual identities in certain situations.

Taking the relationship between personal and collective identities to an extreme, Swann et al. (2009) introduce the concept of identity fusion. This occurs when individuals experience a visceral sense of oneness with a group, such that the boundaries between personal and social identities become blurred. Identity fusion can be seen as an intensification of the processes described in self-categorization theory, potentially leading to extreme pro-group behavior as individuals come to view threats to the group as threats to the self.

The influence of collective identities on individual-level cognitive processes is further demonstrated by research on self-stereotyping. Smith and Henry (1996) found that when a particular social identity is made salient, individuals are more likely to attribute characteristics associated with that group to themselves. This effect shows how the activation of collective identities can shape personal self-concepts, reinforcing the interconnectedness of individual and group identities.

While these theories largely focus on the alignment between individual and collective identities, it's important to note that this relationship is not always harmonious. Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that individuals have a fundamental need to belong, which drives them to seek inclusion in social groups. However, as Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness theory points out, this need for belonging can sometimes conflict with desires for individual distinctiveness. This tension reflects the ongoing negotiation between personal and collective aspects of identity, demonstrating that individuals must balance their unique attributes with their group affiliations.

The examination of collective and individual identities reveals identity formation and development as fundamentally social processes. Identity emerges not in isolation but through

constant interaction with others within broader social groups and categories. The formation of both personal and collective identities can be understood as a reciprocal process, where individual consciousness and group identification continuously shape and reshape each other through shared experiences and narratives. This mutual shaping of personal and social identity matters especially during periods of systematic state intervention in civil society. The mechanisms through which collective identities are maintained - shared symbols, cultural narratives, and patterns of group recognition - can become strategic targets for fundamental social transformation. When these foundational elements of identity formation are manipulated or disrupted, both individual political consciousness and collective patterns of resistance may face challenges. This theoretical understanding of identity's social constitution, examined across both individual and collective dimensions, completes the conceptual framework needed to analyze how systematic state violence can achieve lasting social transformation through the strategic targeting of identity-sustaining mechanisms.

2.3 Trauma

The third main subject to be addressed in the literature review of the study will be trauma. Trauma, as a psychological concept, has been studied from both individual and group perspectives. In the context of large group identities, understanding the nature and impact of trauma is crucial for comprehending the effects of violence on collective psyches. This section will explore the conceptualization of trauma at both individual and group levels, providing a foundation for subsequent discussions on psychoanalytic theories of trauma.

2.3.1. Definitions and types of trauma

At the individual level, trauma is often characterized by an overwhelming experience that disrupts normal psychological functioning. Young and Gibb describe trauma as an event that floods the individual with "unmanageable quantities of raw unprocessable 'stuff'" (Young & Gibb, 2018, p. 1). This influx of unprocessable material leads to a disarray in mental functioning, temporarily incapacitating the individual. Trauma often involves a sense of helplessness, which Freud (1926) regarded as central to the traumatic experience (Young & Gibb, 2018).

The individual's response to trauma often includes intense anger about the event, coupled with a need to defend against this anger. Young and Gibb note that some individuals may employ defense mechanisms such as denial and projection to cope with overwhelming anxiety related to the traumatic event (Young & Gibb, 2018). This process can lead to a distorted perception of the world as hostile and threatening, potentially resulting in chronic anxiety and phobic symptoms.

When considering trauma from a group perspective, Garland (2018) proposes that a traumatized group can be conceptualized in a manner similar to a traumatized individual. In the case a "Given Group" - a pre-existing group with a shared purpose or task - trauma can lead to a sudden loss of the group's primary task, replaced by the immediate task of survival (Garland, 2018, p.184). This shift parallels the individual's loss of normal functioning in the face of trauma. Garland argues that a traumatized group, like a traumatized individual, becomes fragmented and overwhelmed by unmanageable stimuli from both external and internal sources. Internal communication within the group is disrupted, and the previously harmonious, differentiated functioning gives way to chaos (Garland, 2018).

This disintegration of normal group functioning mirrors the disarray in individual mental functioning. Both individual and group trauma involve a struggle to process and integrate the traumatic experience. For individuals, this may involve putting the experience into words and communicating it to others (Young & Gibb, 2018). For groups, it may involve collectively reconstructing the event and its meaning, as well as reestablishing the group's capacity to carry out its primary task (Garland, 2018). With these parallels in mind, the similarities and differences between individual and group trauma help to understand the multi-layered nature of trauma. At both levels, trauma disrupts normal functioning, challenges coping mechanisms and can leave long-term psychological effects. However, despite these similarities, group trauma has its own unique dynamics and effects. This distinction becomes particularly salient when examining political groups subjected to systematic state violence, where the trauma response must be understood simultaneously at individual and collective levels. The ways political prisoners process their experiences - both individually through personal narratives and collectively through shared meaning-making - offer unique insights into how trauma operates across these different psychological registers.

2.3.2. Psychoanalytic theories of trauma

In order to gain a deeper understanding of this complex phenomenon, it is necessary to consult the literature of psychoanalytic thought on trauma. In this chapter, "psychoanalytic theories of trauma" will be examined, and their contributions to understanding trauma at both the individual and group levels will be explored. These theories are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the psychological effects of trauma, defense mechanisms, and the processing of traumatic experiences. This conceptual framework will facilitate a clearer grasp of the connection between the individual and collective dimensions of trauma and will serve as a solid foundation for comprehending large-scale social phenomena. Consequently, a more comprehensive analysis of how large groups respond to traumatic experiences and how these experiences shape collective identities will be made possible.

i. Sigmund Freud's Theory of Trauma

Freud's early work on trauma, as outlined in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920), focused on the idea of penetration of the stimulus barrier. He introduced the concept that trauma occurs when external excitations are powerful enough to breach the protective shield of the psyche, overwhelming the mental apparatus with large amounts of stimuli that cannot be mastered or bound. This conception of trauma emphasizes the internal psychological processes rather than the external event itself. A key aspect of Freud's theory is that trauma is not defined solely by the intensity or quality of the external stimulus, but rather by the psyche's ability to respond effectively. The permeability of the barrier and the ego's capacity to manage the influx of stimuli are crucial factors in determining whether an event becomes traumatic (Freud, 1920).

Freud also introduced the concept of 'psychic helplessness' as a central feature of traumatic experiences. In "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety" (1926), he linked this idea to developmental stages, suggesting that the danger of psychical helplessness is particularly significant during periods when the ego is immature. This perspective implies that certain experiences may be more likely to be traumatic at particular points in an individual's life. Furthermore, Freud proposed in "Moses and Monotheism" (1939/1964) that traumatic experiences in early childhood, particularly those occurring within the first five years of life, could be forgotten but would become connected to sexual and aggressive content. This concept laid the groundwork for understanding the long-term impacts of childhood trauma

and its potential role in adult psychopathology. Freud's theory of trauma also encompassed the idea of 'traumatic neurosis', where unprocessed traumatic experiences could lead to psychological disturbances later in life. This concept has been influential in understanding post-traumatic stress and other trauma-related disorders.

Lastly, Freud's theories on trauma, like many of his ideas, have been subject to critique and revision over time. However, his emphasis on the internal psychological processes involved in trauma, the concept of psychic helplessness, and the potential for early experiences to have long-lasting impacts remain influential in contemporary understandings of trauma.

ii. Melanie Klein's Theory of Trauma and Defense Mechanisms

Building upon Freud's work on trauma, Melanie Klein developed a more detailed understanding of trauma within the context of early childhood development. Like Freud, Klein recognized the significance of early experiences in shaping adult psychopathology. However, she expanded this concept by integrating it into a comprehensive theory of psychic development. Klein posited that from birth, infants are subject to intense anxieties and fears, including an innate fear of annihilation (Klein, 2018b). This idea extends Freud's concept of psychic helplessness, suggesting that the potential for trauma exists from the very beginning of life. Klein's understanding of trauma is deeply related with her concepts of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. These are not merely developmental stages, as in Freud's psychosexual theory, but modes of experiencing that persist throughout life. Klein suggests that even birth itself can be traumatic, viewing the pain, discomfort, and loss of the intra-uterine state as perceived by the infant as hostile attacks (Klein, 2018a).

This perspective aligns with Freud's idea of birth trauma but places it within a broader developmental context. While Freud emphasized the role of repression in dealing with trauma, Klein's theory focuses on more primitive defense mechanisms. Splitting and projection, characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position, are seen as early attempts to manage overwhelming anxieties. These defenses, while protective, can also contribute to the internalization of terrifying objects that become relegated to the deeper layers of the unconscious (Klein, 1958).

In Klein's framework, the experience of trauma is not solely determined by external events but by the interplay between external reality and internal phantasy. This perspective is exemplified in her approach to play therapy, where she interpreted children's play as symbolic

representations of their internal conflicts and potential traumatic experiences (Klein, 1980). The Kleinian approach to trauma emphasizes the cyclical nature of development and sees trauma as an interference or interruption in this process. Even actual threats to life are viewed analytically as evoking or complicating the individual's pre-existing relationship to the idea of death. This perspective on trauma has influenced subsequent psychoanalytic thinking, particularly in understanding how early relational experiences shape an individual's capacity to manage stress and anxiety throughout life.

iii. Donald Winnicott's Theory of Trauma

Donald Winnicott's perspective on trauma, while grounded in psychoanalytic tradition, offers unique insights into the role of the early environment in psychic development. His theory emphasizes the importance of the mother-infant relationship and the quality of early care in shaping the individual's psyche and potential for experiencing trauma.

A key element of Winnicott's theoretical framework is his concept of transitional objects, which he describes as the infant's first "not-me" possession. These objects - such as a blanket, teddy bear, or soft toy - serve as a psychological bridge between the infant's early experience of complete merger with the mother and their gradual recognition of external reality (Winnicott, 1953).

These transitional phenomena evolve in adulthood into vital objects - particularly cultural and religious symbols that serve multiple essential functions (LaMothe, 1998). These vital objects provide adults with a sense of identity, continuity, and cohesion at both individual and communal levels. They also offer opportunities for spontaneity and creativity while providing comfort and security during periods of anxiety. The loss or threat of loss of these objects can trigger significant psychological distress, potentially leading to a sense of discontinuity and fragmentation. LaMothe demonstrates this through his analysis of Holocaust survivors' experiences, where the systematic deprivation of religious objects and practices by the Nazis represented not just a physical loss, but an assault on the psychological and spiritual vitality of Jewish identity and continuity. This understanding enriches the perspective on trauma, suggesting that the disruption of vital objects in adulthood can create a unique form of psychological injury that goes beyond individual trauma to affect collective identity and meaning-making processes (LaMothe, 1998).

This broader understanding of trauma in relation to transitional and vital objects complements Winnicott's foundational insights about early developmental trauma and the mother-infant relationship. Winnicott's concept of trauma is intrinsically linked to the vicissitudes of the early parent-infant relationship. He posits that early trauma is caused by psychic transmissions emanating from the mother's affective states towards her fetus-becoming-an-infant and her infant-becoming-a-child (Winnicott, 2018). The earlier the psychic trauma occurs in the nascent psyche, the more severe the outcome for the individual's mental health.

Central to Winnicott's theory is the concept of the good enough mother and the importance of the holding environment in the development of the self. Trauma, in this context, arises from failures in the caregiving environment (Winnicott, 1960). Winnicott argues that if environmental provision is not good enough at the beginning, it actually causes mental illness (Winnicott, 1962). Winnicott introduces the concept of fear of breakdown, which he sees as a symptom occurring after considerable progress in analysis. He proposes that the patient's fear of breaking down in the future is based on a breakdown that has already occurred but was not experienced because the ego was too immature at the time (Winnicott, 2017).

In his later work, Winnicott develops the concept of "the use of an object," which relates to the infant's ability to use the object (mother) creatively (p.308). Trauma in this context can occur when the object fails to survive the infant's destructive impulses, leading to the internalization of a "non-surviving object" (Abram, 2012, p. 304). For adults, Winnicott suggests that trauma can occur when there is a breakdown in the individual's sense of continuity of being. This can happen due to various life events such as loss, illness, or significant changes in life circumstances. He emphasizes that the impact of such events depends on the individual's early experiences and the strength of their ego (Winnicott, 2018).

iv. Wilfred Bion's Theory of Trauma and Containment

Wilfred Bion, developed a unique perspective on trauma that centered on how traumatic experiences interfere with the capacity to know and process our own experiences. While Freud and Klein focused on love and hate as central to psychic life, Bion added knowledge - specifically the ability to understand and integrate our emotional experiences - as a fundamental aspect (Bion, 1967).

Bion's theory of containment is intrinsically linked to his understanding of trauma. He posits that when individuals cannot process overwhelming emotional experiences, it stems from not having had someone in early life who could serve as a psychological container - someone capable of holding and helping make sense of unbearable feelings. These overwhelming emotional experiences, too intense to be put into words or consciously understood, need to be held and processed by another mind before they can be integrated into conscious thought (Bion, 1962).

Central to Bion's theory is the concept of attacks on linking. Uncontained emotional experiences lead both to an inability to know these experiences and to attempts to destroy the connections between associations. This creates isolated islands of knowledge that cannot be connected in thoughts or sentences (Bion, 2018). Bion introduces the concept of "O," which represents the absolute, often associated with traumatic experiences. Encountering O means encountering reality in as unmediated a fashion as possible for humans, beyond words and symbols (Bion, 1970).

In the context of trauma, Bion's theory suggests that traumatic experiences can rupture the container, leading to a loss of the ability to link or associate experiences. This explains many symptoms of trauma, including flashbacks, loss of sense of time, and difficulty in putting words to traumatic experiences (Bion, 1962; 1967). Bion's approach to treating trauma involves allowing the patient to use the analyst as a container, someone who might hold together the fragments of another mind until it can take them back in the form of associations and links. This process enables the patient to regain the ability to think and put thoughts together (Bion, 1962).

2.3.3. Trauma and Splitting

Beyond containment theories, psychoanalytic understanding of trauma extends to examining how overwhelming experiences fundamentally alter the organization of one's internal psychological world through defensive mechanisms like splitting—a process that impacts how traumatized individuals relate to themselves and others. The concept of splitting has evolved within psychoanalytic theory, originating in Freud's early observations before being systematically elaborated by later theorists. While Freud (1915) alluded to splitting-like processes, describing how the ego could hold contradictory attitudes toward the same object,

Melanie Klein (1946) first thoroughly articulated splitting as a distinct defense mechanism in her seminal paper "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms."

She identified splitting as a foundational psychological process occurring during the paranoid-schizoid position of early infancy. In this developmental stage, the infant defensively separates good and bad experiences to protect the emerging positive representations from contamination by frustrating experiences. This splitting serves as a primitive organizing function for the developing psyche, allowing the infant to maintain an idealized good object as a psychological anchor amid overwhelming and confusing early experiences. Importantly, in Klein's framework, splitting is not merely pathological but represents a necessary developmental achievement that precedes the capacity for integration, creating the distinct categories that will eventually be integrated during the developmental achievement she termed the depressive position.

The relationship between trauma and splitting is bidirectional and complex. Trauma activates splitting as a defensive response, while splitting simultaneously influences how traumatic experiences are processed and integrated. When individuals encounter trauma, especially interpersonal trauma, they face contradictions: attachment figures who should protect may harm, safe environments suddenly become dangerous, or trusted institutions perpetrate violence. As Herman (2015) observes these contradictions create unbearable cognitive dissonance that becomes difficult to integrate into a coherent psychological narrative.

i. The Transformation of Good Objects into Bad Objects in Trauma

Large group symbols represent a notable exception to adult psychological integration. Unlike most objects that mature adults perceive with both positive and negative qualities, cultural and national symbols often function overwhelmingly as idealized 'good objects.' As Volkan (2004) explains, these symbols serve as 'suitable reservoirs' permanently containing the externalized positive self-representations of group members. These include trusted institutions (such as government, legal systems, or religious organizations), ideological frameworks that provide meaning and purpose, professional identities, cultural symbols, and social communities (Volkan, 2001). This collective idealization creates powerful psychological anchors connecting individual and group identity without requiring the developmental regression typically associated with splitting. They provide adults with a sense

of coherence, meaning, and belonging, and form the foundation for basic trust in the world's reliability.

When adults experience severe trauma, particularly trauma inflicted by these previously trusted entities, these good objects may transform into bad objects, sources of danger, betrayal, and harm rather than security and meaning. This transformation is particularly deep in cases of socio-political trauma, such as state violence, institutional betrayal, or cultural persecution. As Lifton (1979) observed of survivors of man-made disasters, such experiences can shatter symbolic immortality, the sense of connection to enduring human enterprises that transcend individual mortality.

The process through which good objects transform into bad objects involves several distinct mechanisms. First, as Garland (1998) notes, severe trauma breaks previously integrated psychological structures. When institutions, ideologies, or communities that once provided structure and meaning become sources of harm, the psychological binding that connected the individual to these entities ruptures, creating a sense of disorientation and betrayal.

Additionally, people who experience trauma involving previously trusted institutions often encounter institutional betrayal/harm perpetrated within contexts where trust and protection were expected (Smith and Freyd, 2014). This betrayal is particularly damaging because it undermines entire systems of meaning, not merely specific relationships. For example, when state institutions that are supposed to protect citizens instead inflict violence upon them, this represents an inversion of their expected function, transforming them from good objects to bad objects in survivors' internal worlds.

This transformation can impact an individual's psychological functioning. When adults begin to question previously trusted institutions, ideologies, or communities, they may experience a disruption in their fundamental beliefs. Janoff-Bulman (1992) conceptualizes this as the disruption of basic assumptions about the world's benevolence, life's meaningfulness, and personal self-worth. Such disruptions can contribute to feelings of alienation as individuals find themselves disconnected from previously supportive psychological structures. In more severe cases, individuals might experience psychic numbing, wherein emotional responses to previously meaningful activities and relationships become diminished or flattened (Lifton, 1988).

Splitting offers a temporary solution to this dissonance by allowing traumatized individuals to maintain separate representational worlds. Davies and Frawley (1994) note that this separation helps manage overwhelming anxiety by keeping contradictory experiences apart, preventing the good representations from being contaminated by traumatic experiences. For instance, survivors of childhood abuse often maintain idealized images of their caregivers while simultaneously holding separate, unintegrated memories of abuse, a classic manifestation of splitting that protects the needed attachment relationship despite its harmful aspects (Herman, 2015).

Despite its protective function, this defensive separation has notable limitations for psychological integration. Van der Kolk (2014) argues that splitting prevents traumatic experiences from being processed and integrated into a coherent narrative, potentially contributing to the fragmentation characteristic of posttraumatic states. This fragmentation manifests both in how individuals perceive themselves and others and in how traumatic memories are stored and processed. Importantly, while splitting provides immediate psychological protection, it often hinders long-term recovery from trauma. Bromberg (2011) argues that healing from trauma requires the gradual integration of dissociated self-states, including those containing painful traumatic experiences. As long as splitting remains the primary defense, this integration cannot occur, leaving traumatic material unprocessed and continuing to exert influence over the individual's functioning.

2.3.4. Trauma and memory

The relationship between trauma and memory has long occupied the minds of researchers and clinicians alike. Like a pebble dropped into a still pond, traumatic experiences ripple through the psyche, leaving traces in the memory. This interplay between traumatic events and their recollection shapes individual experiences and, in turn, influences group identities and narratives.

Bohleber (2007) explores the unique nature of traumatic memories, distinguishing them from their non-traumatic counterparts. Unlike ordinary memories, which can be shaped and reinterpreted over time, traumatic memories often resist such transformation. They persist in a "foreign body" within the psychic-relational network, stubbornly retaining their original form and emotional charge (Bohleber, 2007). However, it's crucial to understand that these traumatic memories are not perfect replicas of the events themselves. Instead, they undergo

specific remodellings within an encapsulated realm of the psyche. Bohleber (2007) outlines several psychic processes that occur within this domain, including regression to omnipotent thinking, temporal standstill, and self-object fusion. These processes show the nature of traumatic memories and the challenges they pose to both individual healing and collective processing.

As the impact of trauma on memory is considered, its far-reaching implications should be recognized. The ways in which traumatic events are remembered by individuals and groups can shape their sense of identity and their understanding of the world around them. This connection between trauma, memory, and identity becomes particularly prominent when large-scale traumatic events that affect entire communities are examined. Eyerman, Madigan, and Ring (2017) explore this relationship in the context of collective memory, suggesting that the way societies remember traumatic events shapes group identities. They define collective memory as a "selective and cumulative process" through which groups make sense of their past (Eyerman et al., 2017, p. 146). This process is an active construction that reflects current needs and aspirations rather than a passive recollection of events.

In the aftermath of large-scale traumatic events, such as wars or natural disasters, this process of collective remembering becomes particularly complex. Elbert and Schauer (2002) provide insights into the physiological basis of traumatic memories, proposing a distinction between 'hot' and 'cold' memories. Cold memories encompass factual knowledge about events, while hot memories comprise emotional and sensory experiences. In cases of severe trauma, these two types of memories can become disconnected, leading to the flashbacks and nightmares characteristic of post-traumatic stress disorder. This concept of disconnected memories at the individual level offers a parallel to the challenges faced by societies in integrating traumatic events into their collective narratives. Just as individuals may struggle to reconcile their emotional experiences with factual recollections, groups often struggle with how to incorporate painful or divisive events into their shared history.

Eyerman et al. (2017) illustrate this struggle through their examination of how different societies commemorate wars and conflicts. They note that while victorious nations typically build monuments to celebrate their triumphs, the process becomes far more complicated in the case of conflicts with ambiguous outcomes or those that have deeply divided the population. In such cases, the construction of collective memory involves a delicate balance

between acknowledging suffering and projecting resilience, between remembering and strategically forgetting.

The process of collective remembering, particularly in the aftermath of traumatic events, is fraught with challenges and complexities. Bohleber (2007) emphasizes that the integration of traumatic experiences into societal narratives is a many-sided effort. It requires individual psychological processing as well as a broader, collective engagement with historical truths. At the individual level, trauma survivors must contend with their personal memories and experiences, often working through intense emotions and psychological distress. However, Bohleber (2007) argues that this individual work, while crucial, is insufficient for true societal healing. There must also be a wider social discourse that acknowledges and examines the traumatic events in question.

This social discourse serves several important functions. It provides a platform for survivors to share their experiences and be heard, potentially alleviating some of the isolation often associated with trauma. It also allows society as a whole to confront difficult truths about its past, which is essential for developing a more honest collective narrative (Bohleber, 2007). However, Bohleber (2007) notes that societies frequently demonstrate a reluctance to engage in this process. There can be a collective aversion to confronting past atrocities, particularly if they challenge cherished national myths or implicate respected institutions or figures. This reluctance can manifest as collective avoidance or outright denial of historical events.

Such avoidance and denial can have serious consequences. At the individual level, it can invalidate the experiences of trauma survivors, potentially exacerbating their psychological distress. At a societal level, it can lead to a distorted collective memory that fails to acknowledge past wrongs or learn from historical mistakes. Moreover, this avoidance can create a cyclical pattern of unresolved trauma. When traumatic events are not adequately addressed and integrated into the collective narrative, their impact can persist across generations. This intergenerational transmission of trauma can manifest in various ways, from persistent societal tensions to recurring patterns of conflict.

2.3.5. Intergenerational trauma

Intergenerational trauma refers to the transmission of traumatic experiences and their psychological effects from one generation to the next, even when the younger generation has not directly experienced the original trauma (Weingarten, 2004). This phenomenon is crucial

for understanding how collective experiences of violence can impact group identities and narratives over time.

Weingarten (2004) provides a framework for understanding how trauma experienced by one generation can pass to another. Weingarten emphasizes that children can become witnesses to the effects of violence suffered by their elders, even without direct exposure. This witnessing process is a key mechanism through which trauma is transmitted intergenerationally. Salberg (2019) emphasizes the role of attachment in this process, suggesting that trauma can disrupt the fabric of attachment between parent and child. Salberg argues that when a parent has experienced trauma, some part of their mind may become inaccessible, creating a rupture in the attachment relationship with their child. This rupture can lead to a texture of traumatic attachment, where the child must navigate both the search for a safe base of attachment and the demands placed on their mind by the parent's trauma (Salberg, 2019). This disruption in attachment doesn't just affect individual families, but can extend to entire communities, shaping collective memory and identity across generations. This is where concepts like cultural trauma (Alexander et al., 2004) and chosen trauma (Volkan, 2001) become relevant to the discussion of intergenerational trauma transmission.

Cultural trauma, as explained by Alexander et al. (2004), arises when a community perceives itself as having endured a catastrophic event that deeply imprints upon its collective memory, permanently shaping its identity and fundamentally altering its sense of the past and future. This concept helps explain how traumatic events can be incorporated into a group's collective narrative and passed down through generations. Similarly, Volkan's (2001) concept of chosen trauma provides insight into how specific traumatic events can become central to a group's identity and be transmitted across generations. While this concept has been explored in detail earlier, its relevance to the intergenerational transmission of trauma should be noted, as it helps explain why certain traumatic events persist in a group's collective memory and continue to affect subsequent generations.

Mohatt et al. (2014) further elaborate on the concept of historical trauma, describing it as a collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation. This trauma is experienced over generations and across the life span, resulting in a constellation of features related to multiple traumatic events. The authors emphasize how historical trauma narratives can become embedded in cultural memory and passed on through family stories, cultural and political events, and shared collective experiences. The

transmission of trauma through these collective processes can have significant implications for group identity and individual psychological functioning. Brave Heart & DeBruyn (1998) discuss how historical trauma can lead to the breakdown of cultural values and identity, resulting in "historical unresolved grief" (p.60) This unresolved grief can manifest in subsequent generations as depression, self-destructive behavior, substance abuse, and identification with ancestral pain and suffering.

However, it's important to note that the intergenerational transmission of trauma doesn't always result in negative outcomes. Felsen (2017) points out that many children of trauma survivors demonstrate resilience and adaptive functioning. Nonetheless, they may exhibit a specific psychological profile characterized by increased vulnerability to stress and anxiety, as well as particular relational patterns and concerns that reflect their group's traumatic history.

The intergenerational transmission of trauma carries the enduring impact of collective experiences on group identities and narratives. Operating through various psychological, relational, and cultural mechanisms, this process allows the past to keep shaping the present in different ways. Because traumatic memories and their effects persist across generations, state violence can extend its influence beyond its immediate victims, creating patterns of social behavior that reshape entire communities over time. These patterns of transmission become particularly significant when examining how political violence transforms individual psyches and the very mechanisms through which political consciousness and resistance are passed between generations.

2.3.6. Mourning and grief

The concepts of mourning and grief have been central to psychoanalytic theory since Freud's seminal work "Mourning and Melancholia" in 1917. While Freud initially focused on distinguishing normal mourning from pathological melancholia, subsequent theorists have expanded the understanding of these processes.

Grief is defined as the emotional response to loss, particularly the loss of a significant person or object. Averill (1968) describes grief as "a stereotyped set of psychological and physiological reactions" that typically follows such a loss (p.727). This reaction pattern includes psychological symptoms such as withdrawal, fatigue, and loss of appetite, as well as physiological changes.

Mourning, on the other hand, is conceptualized as the process of adapting to loss. Averill (1968) distinguishes mourning from grief, defining it as "conventional behavior as determined by the mores and customs of society" (p. 727). This distinction highlights the cultural and social aspects of mourning, while grief is seen as a more universal, biologically-rooted response.

The psychodynamic processes underlying grief and mourning have been extensively studied. Freud proposed that the work of mourning involves gradually withdrawing emotional investment from the lost object. This process is often painful and can involve a temporary loss of interest in the outside world (Freud, 1917). Klein (1940) expanded on Freud's ideas, suggesting that normal mourning involves not only the introjection of the good external object but also the reinstatement of the good internal object. She argued that mourning reactivates the depressive position, a developmental stage characterized by the integration of good and bad aspects of the self and others.

Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory provided further insights into grief reactions. He described stages of protest, despair, and detachment in response to separation, which parallel the grief process. Bowlby's work highlighted the biological basis of grief reactions, linking them to early attachment experiences. These theoretical perspectives on mourning and grief have implications for understanding and addressing the psychological impact of loss in various contexts. In particular, they offer valuable insights into the dynamics of large-group identities affected by violence. By applying these concepts, a deeper understanding of both individual and collective responses to traumatic losses can be achieved. The process of mourning, whether individual or collective, involves working through the pain of loss and gradually adapting to a new reality. In the context of large-group identities, this process may be complicated by shared traumas and the need to maintain group cohesion.

i. Collective mourning processes

While mourning and grief are often conceptualized as individual processes, they also have significant collective dimensions, especially in the context of public losses or tragedies. As the focus shifts from individual experiences of grief to the collective realm, it becomes evident that mourning processes can acquire a social character, binding communities together in shared expressions of loss and remembrance.

Collective mourning processes emerge when a loss resonates with a large group or community, transforming individual grief into a shared experience. As Wagoner and Brescó de Luna (2022) note, "grief as a collective phenomenon [is] something experienced and socially expressed in the first-person plural as a result of a loss that resonates with the whole group" (p. 198). This shift from "I grieve" to "We grieve" is particularly evident in the aftermath of public tragedies, national losses, or the deaths of significant public figures.

Robben (2016) also provides further insight into the complexities of collective mourning, particularly in the context of traumatic events and political violence. He introduces the concept of a "violence-trauma-violence dynamic" that can emerge in societies experiencing prolonged conflict or oppression (p. 92). This dynamic suggests that collective trauma can lead to further violence, creating a cycle that complicates the mourning process. Robben argues that this dynamic operates at different levels of social complexity, including public, political, domestic, and personal domains, illustrating the far-reaching impact of collective trauma on a society's ability to mourn. One of the primary mechanisms through which collective mourning manifests is through public rituals and commemorations. These rituals serve multiple functions in the collective grieving process. Wagoner and Brescó de Luna (2022) highlight how such rituals can strengthen group unity, create a shared emotional experience, and reinforce collective identities. For instance, after the deaths of important public figures, people often feel compelled to gather in public spaces, creating spontaneous memorials with flowers, candles, and personal tributes.

However, it's important to note that collective mourning processes are not always unified or conflict-free. As Wagoner and Brescó de Luna (2022) point out, public grief can also become a site of contestation and political struggle. Different groups may compete to define the meaning of a loss or to control the narrative surrounding a tragic event. This politicization of grief can be seen in how certain deaths become rallying points for social movements or catalysts for political change.

Additionally, Robben (2016) contributes significantly to the understanding of collective mourning by introducing the concept of social trauma. This concept goes beyond the traditional view of trauma as an individual experience and posits it as a complex societal phenomenon. According to Robben, social trauma is not merely an aggregation of individual traumatic experiences, but rather a distinctive process that develops and accumulates over time, impacting the entire social fabric. This multi-layered nature means that the effects of

social trauma can be observed in various aspects of society, from public discourse and political decisions to family dynamics and individual psychological states. The interconnected nature of these domains is crucial. Robben argues that trauma in one domain inevitably affects the others, creating a complex web of traumatic effects throughout society. For instance, individual psychological trauma might lead to changes in family relationships, which could in turn influence political attitudes and ultimately shape public discourse (Robben, 2016, p.92).

In conclusion, collective mourning processes make clear the relation between individual grief and societal responses to loss. These processes, shaped by public rituals, political forces, and shared traumas, offer insights into how communities navigate and interpret significant losses. This nature of social trauma and its far-reaching impacts across various domains of society highlight the influence that collective experiences can have on group dynamics. Understanding these relationships is crucial for comprehending how societies cope with tragedy and recognizing the subtle ways in which shared experiences of loss and remembrance can shape and reshape group identities and social cohesion over time.

2.3.7. Trauma and identity

The effects of traumatic experiences on both individual and collective identities have been explored in various theoretical frameworks. Trauma, particularly collective trauma, may alter the course of identity development and potentially destabilize existing identity commitments (Berman et al., 2020). At the individual level, trauma may shatter a person's assumptive worldviews about themselves and their position in the world (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). This potential disruption of personal identity might necessitate a process of meaning-making and identity reconstruction in the aftermath of trauma. As Park (2013) suggests, establishing meaning could be particularly important when individuals encounter traumatic life experiences, as trauma might expose them to the darker sides of human nature and challenge their fundamental beliefs about the world.

Theoretical frameworks regarding collective identity suggest significant potential impacts of trauma. Alexander et al. (2004) propose that collective trauma might transform the way survivors perceive the world and understand the relationship between their group and other groups, even those unrelated to the initial victimization. According to Alexander et al. (2004), this transformation process might involve a reconstruction of collective identity that is not

merely an individual endeavor but a shared social experience. In a separate but related line of research, Bar-Tal and Antebi (1992) describe how collective trauma can lead to siege mentality - a collective state of mind where group members potentially develop a central belief that the rest of the world has negative intentions toward them. This psychological orientation may emerge as groups process traumatic experiences and reconstruct their sense of identity in relation to others.

The reconstruction of identity following trauma might involve collective meaning-making processes. As Hirschberger (2018) suggests, collective trauma could function not merely as a destructive event but also as a potential ingredient in the construction of collective meaning. For victim groups, the memory of trauma might serve as a basis for group cohesion and a sense of shared destiny, while for perpetrator groups, it could potentially prompt the creation of a new group narrative that acknowledges past transgressions while emphasizing current positive actions. This transformative process might incorporate trauma into the group's evolving self-conception, potentially reshaping cultural symbols and narratives that reflect both historical pain and continued existence.

These theoretical perspectives raise important questions about how systematic state violence might affect both individual and collective identity in specific historical contexts. While these frameworks provide valuable conceptual tools, much remains unknown about how these processes might manifest in the particular case of post-1980 coup Turkey. This study aims to explore whether and how these theoretical mechanisms operated in this unique historical context offering new insights into the relationship between trauma and identity transformation. By examining the experiences of political activists who endured state violence, this research seeks to contribute to our understanding of how such experiences might influence relationships with large group symbols and ideologies, a key focus of this investigation.

2.4 Historical Context

The theoretical frameworks explored above - particularly regarding collective trauma, identity formation, and social memory - provide analytical tools for understanding transformative historical events and their long-term societal impacts. An examination of the

1980 military coup in Turkey through these concepts reveals how state violence can fundamentally reshape both individual and collective identities.

The Turkish case offers insights into the multilayered nature of collective trauma, extending from individual experiences to broader societal transformations. The period's distinctive combination of state practices and their impact on large group symbols and collective memory illustrates the potential role of trauma in processes of social transformation.

A comprehensive understanding of these dynamics requires first examining the historical context that preceded the coup and the complex relationship between military intervention and Turkish political culture. The following sections trace this historical development from the Ottoman era through successive military interventions, culminating in a detailed examination of the 1980 coup and its enduring impact on Turkish political consciousness.

2.4.1. Military Interventions in Turkish Politics

The military's central role in Turkish politics stems from a distinct historical trajectory, beginning with the Ottoman Empire's modernization efforts in the early 19th century. Unlike European nations where democratic transitions were led by civilian bourgeois movements, Turkey's military emerged as the primary agent of westernization and modernization (Mardin, 1999, p.140; Küçükömer, 1994, p.185). This distinctive path was further reinforced during the early republican period, as the military positioned itself as the guardian of both modernization and state ideology (Mazici, 2001). The military coup of 1913 marked a turning point, establishing the army as the self-proclaimed sole agent of Ottoman modernization (Safi, 2019; Sakallioğlu, 1997). This self-appointed guardianship role would continue to shape Turkish political life well into the republican period, creating a paradoxical relationship where the military simultaneously supported and constrained democratic institutions (Ahmad, 1993).

i. 1960 Intervention and Its Aftermath

This historical legacy found its most dramatic expression in the 1960 military intervention, which established new patterns for military involvement in Turkish politics. The coup leaders introduced the 1961 Constitution, which paradoxically combined unprecedented democratic freedoms with mechanisms for military oversight (Bilgin, 1996). Under this new constitutional framework, Turkey experienced a remarkable expansion of political expression

and organization. This constitutional environment fostered the emergence of the '68 movement, which would deeply shape Turkey's political landscape. While sharing global anti-imperialist themes, the Turkish student movement developed its own distinct character under the leadership of charismatic figures such as Deniz Gezmiş, Mahir Çayan, and İbrahim Kaypakkaya⁸. Their influence extended far beyond university campuses to resonate with broader segments of Turkish society (Lüküslü, 2009). The movement gained additional momentum from Turkey's unique political culture, where youth activism had been encouraged through various state discourses about young people's role in protecting the republic's principles (Lüküslü, 2009). Higher education youth was even included in the Constituent Assembly that drafted the 1961 Constitution with a representative, and various youth organisations actively participated in the constitutional referendum process (Şimşek, 2020; Emekder, 2020).

However, this unprecedented flowering of political expression came with escalating tensions. The constitutional framework that enabled diverse political voices also created conditions for deepening polarization between left and right-wing groups. This became tragically evident during the 1969 'Bloody Sunday' ⁹demonstrations, where peaceful protests devolved into violent confrontations. The state's increasingly harsh responses to student activism created a vicious cycle of repression and radicalization (Kalsin, 2024). By the early 1970s, this spiral of violence and counter-violence had created conditions that would lead to another military intervention.

ii. 1971 Intervention and Political Polarization

The military intervention of March 12, 1971, differed markedly from the 1960 coup in both its methods and consequences. Rather than directly seizing power, the Armed Forces issued a memorandum demanding the formation of a new government that would implement their prescribed reforms. According to Ahmad (1993), the military's selective targeting of political movements - particularly harsh toward leftist organizations while relatively lenient with religious conservative groups - revealed how state power could be wielded to reshape the boundaries of acceptable political expression.

The aftermath of the 1971 intervention marked a critical turning point in Turkish political life, particularly after the People's Liberation Party Front of Turkey's (THKP-C) kidnapping

⁸ see Appendix 8.7

⁹ see Appendix 8.7

and subsequent killing of Israeli Consul General Efraim Elrom in May 1971¹⁰ (Özcan, 2017). This event triggered an intense crackdown on leftist movements, resulting in widespread detentions and interrogations (Ertem, 2006; Dursun, 2008). The executions of young revolutionary leaders Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, and Hüseyin İnan in 1972¹¹ became a watershed moment, dramatically illustrating the junta's determination to suppress leftist activism (Erbil, 2022).

However, contrary to the military's expectations, these repressive measures intensified rather than quelled political conflicts. When political activities resumed after 1974, leftist movements emerged more radicalized and more deeply connected to international socialist currents (Aydinoğlu, 2008, p.180). This period witnessed unprecedented working-class mobilization, with major labor actions and demonstrations becoming common features of Turkish political life (Yurtsever, 2016). The transformation of mainstream politics became evident when the Republican People's Party (CHP), under Bulent Ecevit's¹² leadership, adopted left-of-center positions and won the 1973 and 1977 elections (Ayata, 1995).

The escalating political violence reached its peak between 1976 and 1980, fueled less by ideological clashes than by systematic struggles over urban space and authority. During this period, assassinations of public officials, union leaders, academics, and journalists became commonplace. Events like the 1977 Taksim Square massacre¹³, where 34 people lost their lives during May Day celebrations, exemplified how political violence had become embedded within daily urban life ¹⁴(Göktaş, 2018). Yet the nature of this violence varied from spectacular massacres to sophisticated forms of territorial control. In Istanbul's shantytowns, rival organizations established a dual authority - parallel governance structures that collected contributions from local businesses, enforced political closures to commemorate martyrs or strikes, and maintained armed checkpoints controlling entry to entire districts. Neighborhoods themselves became politically coded territories (Houston, 2020). The 1978 Kahramanmaraş and 1979-1980 Çorum massacres, which together resulted in over 200 Alevi deaths¹⁵, revealed how ethnic and religious dimensions intersected with political polarization, targeting specific communities through organized violence that implicated state security forces alongside militant groups (Orhon, 2015).

¹⁰ see Appendix 8.7

¹¹ see Appendix 8.7

¹² see Appendix 8.7

¹³ see Appendix 8.7

¹⁴ see Appendix 8.7

¹⁵ see Appendix 8.7

According to Ahmad (1993), this period culminated in a crisis of state authority, where citizens increasingly looked to political organizations rather than state institutions for protection and support. This characterization of the period as mere 'crisis' or 'chaos' obscures the organized nature of political mobilization during these years. The fragmentation of state authority created space for systematic community organization, particularly in squatter settlements where leftist factions mobilized residents through concrete services and protection networks as much as through ideological appeals. Organizations perceived working class neighborhoods as sites of revolutionary potential, inscribing revolutionary messages through banners and graffiti, establishing sonic presence through songs and speeches, and creating alternative social infrastructures that challenged state monopolies on public services (Houston, 2020).

This fragmentation of social authority and the emergence of alternative power structures fundamentally altered the relationship between citizens, political organizations, and state institutions, creating conditions that the military would later cite as justification for intervention. Importantly, this political landscape was asymmetrically structured. While leftist organizations faced systematic state repression, the Ülkücü¹⁶ movement operated as the only pro-state paramilitary organization, maintaining organic ties to the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) which controlled key ministries including those overseeing intelligence services between 1975-1978. This structural position enabled rightist militants to act with relative impunity, fundamentally shaping the asymmetric nature of political violence (Ugur-Cinar & Şensönmez, 2022). The complexity of this political ecosystem, involving multiple actors whose relationships to state power varied dramatically, would later be reduced in official narratives to simple binary oppositions between order and chaos.

iii. 12 September 1980 Military Coup

The military intervention of September 12, 1980, marked the third major disruption of Turkey's democratic process, following the 1960 coup and 1971 memorandum (Cemal, 2004). The Armed Forces, citing the necessity to restore order amid growing political violence, implemented a program of state control that would fundamentally reshape Turkish society and its institutions. This intervention differed significantly from previous military

¹⁶ Ülkücü refers to a member of the nationalist–Turkist movement that emerged in Turkey in the late 1960s, organized primarily around the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). The movement emphasized Turkish nationalism, conservatism, and anti-communism, later developing into an ideology often described as the “Turkish–Islamic synthesis.”

actions in both its scope and systematic implementation (Cemal, 2004). The immediate implementation of martial law¹⁷ facilitated an unprecedented expansion of state authority and control mechanisms. The military administration's initial actions included the suspension of political activities, mass arrests of political activists, and the establishment of an extensive detention system.

The abrupt cessation of political violence immediately following the intervention raised questions about the nature and origins of pre-coup instability. Former Prime Ministers Bulent Ecevit and Suleyman Demirel¹⁸ later suggested that elements within the Armed Forces may have anticipated or even facilitated an escalation of violence to justify military intervention (Akcura, 2006; Demirel, 2001). These allegations of orchestrated destabilization have been subject to ongoing scholarly and journalistic investigation over subsequent decades (Akyol, 1990; Yalcin, Akcakaya, 2024). The sudden pacification of street violence following the coup lent particular credence to theories questioning the spontaneous nature of pre-coup disorder. The military administration's response to this alleged disorder was comprehensive and systematic. Beyond mass arrests and the suspension of political activities, the junta deployed both repressive and ideological state apparatuses to achieve fundamental societal transformation. This included not merely physical detention but also systematic cultural control: authorities banned 937 films, established direct military oversight of broadcasting requiring General Staff approval for any content related to armed forces, and restructured higher education through the newly created YÖK (Council of Higher Education) which purged universities of perceived dissidents (Karacan, 2016). The transformation of Turkey's prison system exemplified this dual strategy. Military prisons were not mere detention facilities but laboratories for ideological transformation, where authorities explicitly conceived incarceration as a process of "curing the ideological malady". Systematic programs combined physical torture, psychological pressure, and forced recantations designed to destroy political identities (Şensönmez, 2022).

Official data from the General Staff reveals the extensive scope of the military administration's legal actions. During a six-month period between December 1981 and May 1982, approximately 18,000 individuals were subject to legal proceedings, with 14,000 classified as leftists, 3,000 as separatists, and 347 as rightists (Gursel, 1998, p.812). However, documentation from the Human Rights Association suggests significantly higher figures:

¹⁷ see Appendix 8.7

¹⁸ see Appendix 8.7

650,000 detentions, 210,000 prosecutions, 230,000 trials, and 1,683,000 individuals placed under surveillance through various blacklists (Gursel, 1998, p.812).

The intervention's impact extended beyond the judicial system to affect broader social and institutional structures. Administrative measures included the revocation of 14,000 citizenships and the dismissal of 30,000 public employees. The press faced particular scrutiny, with 400 journalists facing criminal charges resulting in collective sentences of 3,315 years imprisonment (Ozdemir, 2022). Beyond formal legal proceedings, the regime implemented comprehensive controls on information dissemination: enforcing a 300-day press silence and confiscating approximately 39 tons of printed materials. Additionally, 31 journalists were formally imprisoned, while 300 faced extra-judicial persecution, including three fatalities (Dundar, 2016).

The military administration's use of lethal force and capital punishment represented a significant intensification of state violence. Statistical data indicates sixteen fatalities resulting from non-compliance with military checkpoints, while 7,000 individuals faced capital charges. Of these, 517 received death sentences, with fifty executions carried out: eighteen left-wing activists, eight right-wing supporters, twenty-three criminal convictions, and one ASALA¹⁹ militant. Documentation from the Turkish Grand National Assembly reveals 299 deaths in custody, including 171 attributed to torture. Official records classified 43 deaths as suicides and 73 as natural causes, though these classifications have been subject to subsequent contestation (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, 2012).

The intervention precipitated institutional restructuring across civil society. Political organizations underwent systematic dismantling through a combination of legal mechanisms and direct state intervention. The military administration implemented rapid legislative changes, including an extension of the martial law detention period from fifteen days to three months (Demirel, 2001). These measures facilitated the dissolution of existing political structures and their replacement with institutions aligned with the military administration's objectives. The suspension of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the abolition of the 1961 Constitution marked the formal dismantling of the previous constitutional order.

¹⁹ ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) was an Armenian militant organization active between 1975 and the early 1990s.

By 1981, the military administration had implemented restrictions on political activity and civil society organizations. This transformation extended beyond mere institutional reorganization to encompass broader societal restructuring. The military leadership employed systematic mechanisms of control to establish new ideological parameters for social and political activity (Cubukci, 2001). The administration's legitimizing discourse centered on themes of social order and security, while implementing extensive restrictions on organizations perceived as potential sources of ideological opposition (Taskin, Bora, 2001).

The impact of state violence during this period extended far beyond its immediate manifestations in detention centers and prisons. As Dinçer (2011) notes, viewing the period's violence solely as interrogation and information gathering fails to capture its broader societal implications. As Taskin and Bora (2001, p. 541) argue, the junta aimed to fundamentally reconstruct state-society relations through a program of institutional reform.

The scope of this reconstruction was remarkably comprehensive, affecting not only opposition groups but also institutions traditionally aligned with Republican principles. Kenan Evren's declaration demonstrated that even organizations that had embraced the core ideology of the Turkish Republic and the 1961 constitution found themselves subject to reorganization. Taşkın (2001) sees this broad-scale intervention as part of a deliberate strategy to reconstruct Turkish society along nationalist-conservative lines, marking a departure from earlier military interventions that had focused primarily on immediate political control.

The 1982 Constitution²⁰ and subsequent Political Parties Law established significant restrictions on political participation. These legislative measures implemented comprehensive constraints on political organization, including prohibitions on student party membership, youth and women's branches, trade union affiliations, and rural political organization. Zürcher (2017) argues that these restrictions effectively precluded meaningful public participation in formal political processes, representing a fundamental transformation in state-society relations.

Unlike the 1971 intervention, which primarily targeted specific political organizations, the 1980 coup pursued a comprehensive transformation of Turkish society. Moran (1994) argues that this transformation was achieved through the systematic dismantling of civil society

²⁰ see Appendix 8.7.

institutions - from political parties to universities and media organizations. This interpretation aligns with Taskin's (2001, p.558) analysis, which characterizes the period as an intervention against Turkey's post-1950 social development, particularly targeting emergent patterns of autonomous modernization. The 1982 Constitution would later institutionalize these changes, fundamentally altering state-society relations and constraining previously existing modes of political and social organization.

The 1980 coup remains a defining moment in Turkish political development. For Turkish society, which has experienced numerous traumas and disasters like many others, September 12 remains a benchmark even today. Bora (2020, p.9) notes that people still use phrases like "like September 12", "worse than September 12", or "even on September 12 they didn't do this much" to describe the destructiveness of current calamities. This persistent reference to September 12 in contemporary political discourse reflects its enduring role in understanding state-society relations in Turkey. The coup's lasting influence as a point of comparison demonstrates how deeply the intervention shaped the foundational parameters of modern Turkish political and social organization.

2.4.2 Memory, Narrative, and This Study's Contribution

Four decades after the 1980 military intervention, scholarship on the coup has evolved beyond its initial focus on immediate political and economic consequences to examine how this transformative moment continues to shape Turkish society through memory, narrative, and collective identity. This scholarly shift reflects a broader recognition that authoritarian interventions work less through visible repression than through a sustained transformation of how societies remember, narrate, and transmit political consciousness over time.

Contemporary research maps the coup's enduring effects along several lines: the construction and contestation of collective narratives, the spatial and embodied dimensions of political activism, and the institutional mechanisms through which state violence achieved lasting social transformation.

Ethnographic examination of pre-coup political life has recovered the organizational sophistication of 1970s activism, challenging conventional depictions of the period as mere chaos. Detailed analysis documents how leftist organizations created alternative authority structures through systematic territorial control, establishing parallel governance in urban neighborhoods that challenged state monopolies on public services and security (Houston,

2020). This spatial dimension indicates that political violence emerged not from anarchic impulses but from organized struggles over urban authority and ethical relationships between militants and working-class communities (Houston, 2017). Leftist municipal victories in late 1970s Black Sea towns exemplified this organizational capacity through “new municipal movement” initiatives: councils established people's parliaments, health committees, cultural festivals, and infrastructure projects amounting to state-like governing abilities. The military's systematic targeting of these municipalities before and after the coup, including mass detentions and torture, confirms how alternative governance structures posed fundamental threats to state authority (Houston, 2023). Meanwhile, investigation of collective memory construction has traced how different groups situate personal experiences within broader social frameworks, bringing out the relationship between individual remembering and collective meaning-making shaped by both the pre-coup mobilization period and post-coup institutional transformation (Orhon, 2015, 2023; Karacan, 2016).

Understanding how different groups reconstructed meaning from traumatic incarceration has exposed the processes through which political identities persist despite systematic repression. Rather than uniformly destroying political consciousness, the prison system catalyzed divergent meaning-making processes. For radical leftists, detention became reframed through revolutionary narratives of resistance; for women activists, forced gender segregation facilitated autonomous feminist consciousness; while for right wing militants, state betrayal prompted ideological transformation toward Islamic identity (Şensönmez, 2023a; Ugur-Cinar & Şensönmez, 2022). These studies show how systematic violence generated varied strategies of resistance and identity reconstruction, shaped by pre-existing ideological frameworks, organizational structures, and the dynamics of carceral institutions designed as laboratories for ideological transformation (Karacan, 2016; Şensönmez, 2023a).

Comparative analysis of testimonial literature across political movements has further traced how confronting the past works differently within leftist, Kurdish, and right-wing communities, with each group displaying distinct capacities for selfcritique, empathy toward former adversaries, and willingness to question organizational practices (Toker, 2023). While leftist memoirs frequently engage in extensive internal criticism of organizational structures and tactical decisions, right-wing accounts demonstrate more limited capacity for questioning leadership or acknowledging equivalence with political opponents. This differing capacity to confront the past (acknowledgment, respect, empathy, understanding) shapes how

communities, not individuals alone, position themselves in relation to collective trauma and the possibilities for democratic change.

Yet within leftist communities themselves, the very memory practices employed may generate constraints on this confrontation with the past. D'Orsi (2023), through ethnographic research with former Istanbul revolutionaries, demonstrates how nostalgia for "the glorious 70s" and perpetuation of mourning function as "moral moods", emotionally imbued dispositions that shape former militants' subjectivity and strengthen generational bonds. While participants frame these practices as resistance against state repression, D'Orsi argues they simultaneously create an "ossified social poetics" that forecloses questioning of reified memory forms. The revolutionary rhetorics, though generating community cohesion, contributes to the leftist community's moral isolation by making empathy possible only among those already sharing revolutionary symbols and values. This critical perspective shows counter-memory practices as dialectical, simultaneously enabling solidarity through shared loss while potentially limiting possibilities for broader social connection and acting in new ways on history (D'Orsi, 2023). Prisoner and former-activist narratives show how memory work is more than retrospective sensemaking; it is an ongoing negotiation with both collective historical consciousness and the institutional mechanisms through which the coup sought to reshape Turkish political culture.

Building on this work on narrative construction, spatial politics, and collective memory, this study adds a further angle: the ongoing psychological dimensions of the coup's legacy. While existing scholarship has shown what narratives former activists constructed and how organizational structures shaped pre-coup mobilization, the psychosocial approach used here examines how state violence persists as a psychological process more than four decades later. The temporal focus of current research, emphasizing either pre-coup activism or retrospective narrative analysis of memoirs, has productively mapped the field of memory work. This study extends that understanding by investigating psychological processes that persist beyond articulated narratives, examining how trauma keeps shaping political consciousness as unconscious work in the present, beyond any completed memory.

The coup's explicit design as a project of lasting social transformation, with prisons conceived as laboratories for ideological reshaping rather than mere detention facilities (Karacan, 2016; Şensönmez, 2023b), invites examination of whether and how such systematic violence achieved its transformative aims at psychological levels. This requires

moving beyond analysis of what individuals narrated years after events to explore how trauma continues shaping relationships with political engagement in the present. The question becomes not only what narratives former prisoners constructed, but how psychological processes, both conscious and unconscious, continue influencing their political attitudes, civic participation, and sense of political possibility decades after release.

This study addresses these dimensions through a psychosocial approach that examines how individual psychological processes and collective social transformation shape each other. While literature employing psychosocial approaches to understanding revolutionary identity remains limited, foundational work by Slote (1996) examining political activists in contexts of social upheaval and Martín-Baró's (1994) liberation psychology framework demonstrate the value of integrating unconscious dynamics with conscious political narratives. This study builds upon and extends this scholarly tradition. The psychosocial methodology, pioneered by these researchers and systematically developed for contemporary social research (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009), uniquely incorporates unconscious communications and defense mechanisms alongside conscious political narratives. This approach has proven particularly valuable for understanding disparities between overt political behavior and intrapsychic processes, bringing into view psychological dynamics that remain invisible through behavioral observation or textual analysis alone (Slote, 1996).

By integrating insights from existing scholarship on narrative construction, spatial politics, and collective memory while extending analysis to ongoing psychological processes, this research contributes to understanding how authoritarian interventions achieve lasting social change. The psychosocial approach finds that the coup's enduring influence runs deeper than institutional legacies and constructed narratives: it works through psychological mechanisms embedded in unconscious responses to political engagement. Where previous research has mapped counter-narratives (Şensönmez, 2023a), spatial activism (Houston, 2017, 2020), collective memory frameworks (Orhon, 2015, 2023; Karacan, 2016), and comparative confrontation capacities across political movements (Toker, 2023), this study extends that understanding by tracing the psychological processes through which systematic state violence reshapes individual consciousness and broader patterns of political participation. This perspective speaks to how societies continue to reckon with state violence long after formal transitions to civilian rule, with implications extending beyond the Turkish case to broader

understanding of authoritarian transformation's lasting effects on democratic development and civil society.

2.5 Research Questions and Objectives

The theoretical frameworks examined, spanning violence, identity formation, and collective trauma, provide analytical tools for understanding transformative historical moments and their long-term societal impacts. The Turkish case offers a distinctive intersection of these theoretical dimensions, where state practices, collective identity, and psychological trauma converge in complex patterns of social transformation.

The literature reveals several important gaps in understanding of how state violence affects political consciousness. While existing theories on violence help explain the immediate impacts of repression, they say less about how individual experiences collectively reshape political communities. Similarly, although Volkan's (2001) work on large group identity offers a framework for understanding collective trauma, questions remain about how state violence specifically targets and transforms these identities through large group symbols.

Furthermore, although the institutional and political transformations of Turkey's post-1980 period are well documented (Taşkın & Bora, 2001), the psychological processes by which state violence remade political identities and social bonds remain comparatively unexamined. This gap carries particular weight given the extent to which the coup continues to shape the terms of political discourse and cultural memory in Turkey.

Finally, while Bar-Tal et al. (2009) and Elcheroth & Reicher (2017) have examined how societies process collective violence, the specific mechanisms through which systematic state violence contributes to social transformation remain underexplored, particularly regarding how it influences relationships between political activists and their communities.

These gaps in the literature lead to the following research questions and objectives:

i. Research Questions

Based on the literature review and identified gaps, this research aims to examine four fundamental questions about the relationship between state violence and political identity in the context of post-1980 Turkey:

First, how did revolutionary identities develop and operate within social networks before the 1980 military coup, and how were these political identities integrated into family relationships, community structures, and cultural narratives? This question establishes the necessary foundation for understanding what was transformed by state violence, examining how political consciousness was transmitted, legitimized, and embedded in social relationships prior to the systematic disruption caused by the coup.

Second, how did participants portray the changes in Turkish society and political landscape following the 1980 military coup, and how did these changes affect their personal lives and political activism? This question explores the immediate impacts of state violence and its long-term effects on both individual and collective political consciousness.

Third, how did participants' relationships with large group symbols and ideologies transform through their experiences in prisons and detention centers following the 1980 military coup? This question examines the complex psychological processes through which traumatic experiences can fundamentally alter an individual's connection to collective symbols and shared cultural meanings. Of particular interest is how state violence deployed through cultural and nationalistic symbols may create lasting ruptures in how individuals relate to and identify with these foundational elements of collective identity.

Fourth, how did the participants' perceptions of their revolutionary identities change over time, from their initial involvement in activism through their experiences of state violence and into the post-coup era? This question examines the resilience and adaptation of political identity under conditions of systematic state violence.

ii. Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To examine how political activists' relationships with their communities and social networks were transformed by systematic state violence in the post-coup period.
2. To analyze the effects of the junta government between 1980-1983 on political groups in the country, particularly focusing on the psychological mechanisms through which state violence operated.
3. To understand the influence of modern states on large group identities, using Turkey's post-1980 experience as a case study.
4. To gain a psycho-social understanding of the creation and construction of large group identities, particularly in contexts of political violence.

These research objectives are addressed through the four research questions outlined above. RO1 is explored through RQ1 and RQ2, which examine pre-coup identity formation and post-coup transformations in social relationships. RO2 is investigated via RQ2 and RQ4, focusing on the junta's impacts and the evolution of revolutionary identities. RO3 is directly addressed by RQ3, which examines state influence on large group symbols. Finally, RO4 is pursued through RQ1, RQ3, and RQ4, which collectively open up the psycho-social dynamics of identity construction in contexts of political violence.

These research questions and objectives contribute to ongoing theoretical discussions about the relationship between state violence and political identity. By examining the specific mechanisms through which state violence transforms both individual consciousness and social relationships in the Turkish context, this study aims to extend and deepen the understanding of how systematic state violence achieves lasting social transformation.

The following chapter outlines the methodological approach used to investigate these dynamics through the experiences of political activists who lived through this transformative period.

3. Methodology

Because state violence is experienced both individually, as trauma, and collectively, through identity, this study employed a qualitative research design grounded in the psychosocial tradition. The methodology was developed to capture both the personal narratives of individuals who experienced state violence and the broader social transformations that occurred through these experiences. This chapter details the research approach, data collection methods, analytical procedures, and ethical considerations that guided the study. Beginning with the alignment between the interview schedule and key research themes, the chapter then explains the methodological framework and documents the research process from participant recruitment through data analysis.

3.1 Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Schedule

The following table 1 demonstrates how the study's research questions were operationalized through specific interview questions:

Table 1		
Research Question	Related Interview Questions	Connection to Core Theoretical Concepts
How did revolutionary identities develop and operate within social networks before the 1980 military coup, and how were these political identities integrated into family relationships, community structures, and cultural narratives?	• When did your first political ideas begin to form? • Which organizations did you take part in? • What were your family's political attitudes? • How would you describe your relationship with the public before the coup? • How did people from your neighborhood/town view revolutionary activities?	Identity: Explores large group identity formation; collective identity development through social networks; political socialization through family relationships. Trauma: Establishes baseline before trauma to measure impact; examines pre-trauma identity structures.
How did participants describe the changes in Turkish society and political landscape following the 1980 military coup?	• What were your political attitudes before your arrest? • Do you think the military coup has changed anything in Turkey? • What did you go through outside in prison after all of this?	Violence: Examines structural and political violence; state violence as social engineering. Trauma: Addresses collective trauma and its social impact; trauma's effect on political consciousness.
In what ways did participants' relationships with large group symbols and ideologies evolve?	• Have you encountered practices like uniform dressing, citizenship and Kemalism lessons during your time in prison? • How would you describe your political identity at the moment?	Identity: Explores changes in large group identity; transformation of large group symbols. Violence: Examines weaponization of large group symbols as a form of state violence. Trauma: Investigates effects of traumatic experiences on relationship with cultural and large group symbols.
How did participants' perceptions of their revolutionary identities change over time?	• When did your first political ideas begin to form? • Which organizations did you take part in? • Are you currently interested in politics?	Identity: Addresses resilience and transformation of political identity under pressure. Violence: Examines how state violence shapes political consciousness over time. Trauma: Explores how trauma is integrated into identity; resilience and adaptation in response to political trauma.

As demonstrated in the table above, the interview questions were designed to systematically explore participants' experiences across multiple timeframes - before, during, and after their encounters with state violence. This approach enabled the collection of narrative data about both individual experiences and broader social transformations. The following sections detail the methodological framework and research processes through which these questions were investigated.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1. Qualitative approach

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, understood here as an approach that draws on data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and document analysis to explore perceptions and social phenomena within their natural settings in a holistic manner (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008, p.39). This approach is particularly suited to this study on the impact of state violence on political activists in Turkey, as it allows for an interdisciplinary, holistic perspective on complex social phenomena.

The choice of a qualitative approach for this research is rooted in its ability to examine facts and events in their own context, interpreting them in terms of the meanings that people attribute to them (Altunışık et al., 2010). As Merriam and Grenier (2019) argue, human beings are entities with complex physiological systems and psychological processes, integrated with sociological interactions. Attempting to understand such a complex structure with purely quantitative and empirical findings would be problematic. This research seeks to explore the emotional and social impacts of state violence, which require a holistic approach considering the ever-changing mental structures and dynamic relationships in the social field.

Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research focuses on the diverse nature of human individual characteristics. As Baltacı (2019) argues, the depth and originality of knowledge are more important than generalisations in qualitative research. This approach allows me to document and elevate the voices of political activists whose experiences have been largely absent from official narratives, creating a valuable historical record while gathering deep insights into the personal and collective dimensions of state violence.

Phenomena that cannot be measured by numbers alone are enabled to be explored through the use of qualitative methods. As Özdemir (2010) notes, qualitative research methods are used to describe complex social phenomena and to deeply understand the social structures created by people and society. Furthermore, as Creswell (2002) suggests, employing multiple perspectives through qualitative research allows for sharper measurements and a deeper understanding of the subject. This multi-faceted approach is particularly valuable for the study, as it allows for the examination of the various dimensions of state violence and its impacts on political activists.

Qualitative methods allow for the analysis of the issues addressed in an uncomplicated manner while still accounting for the complexity of social phenomena (Neuman, 2012). This approach enables a thorough understanding of how political activists in Turkey have been affected by and have responded to state violence, providing valuable insights that can inform both academic discourse and practical interventions in this field.

3.2.2. Psychosocial approach

This study adopts the psychosocial approach, which has gained importance across psychology, sociology, anthropology and political science. The psychosocial framework draws together insights from psychology, critical psychology, sociology, social policy, and political studies (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). It suits this study of state violence against political activists in Turkey because it allows individual experiences to be examined within their wider social context.

At the heart of the psychosocial approach lies its consideration of unconscious communications, dynamics, and defences within the research setting (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). This is valuable for the study because it helps reveal the unconscious processes that shape political activism and responses to state violence. As Watts (2009) notes, applying psychoanalytic concepts to social research brings into view connections between individual psyches and social forces that more traditional methodologies often miss. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) emphasise the importance of considering both inner and outer worlds to fully comprehend any phenomenon. This perspective guides the research through participants' personal narratives and collective experiences. Drawing on psychoanalytic hermeneutics, the psychosocial approach provides tools to interpret these layered experiences

and traces the connections between individual trauma and broader sociopolitical processes (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009).

The psychosocial approach's recognition of the interdependence of psychological, sociological, and cultural concepts (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009) aligns with the research objectives. This perspective reveals how individual emotions and relationships are distributed across the spectrum of political actions and social structures. By focusing on the role of unconscious processes in social phenomena, the approach looks past overt political behavior to the sources of motivation and resilience that sustain activists in the face of state violence.

Intersubjectivity, a key consideration in the psychosocial method, was actively employed throughout the research process. In practice, this meant acknowledging how the interaction between myself as researcher and the participants shaped the data gathered. For instance, during interviews, participants often gauged my reactions to their stories of torture and adjusted the level of detail they shared accordingly. My visible emotional responses sometimes led to deeper revelations, while in other cases, participants became more guarded. This dynamic was particularly evident when interviewing female participants, where shared gender experiences created a different quality of dialogue around topics of sexual violence.

Reflexivity, another element of psychosocial research, was central to this study and is discussed fully in Section 3.6. Throughout the research process, I maintained detailed reflexive diaries documenting my emotional responses to interviews, noting how my own political views and experiences influenced my interpretation of participants' narratives. This self-reflexive stance proved particularly valuable when participants shared experiences that challenged my preconceptions about political violence and resistance.

This stance extended to the interviews themselves: participants were encouraged to reflect on how their understanding of their experiences had evolved over time, and how those experiences continued to shape their current political identities. This approach resulted in rich, layered narratives that went beyond mere factual accounts to include participants' own analysis of how state violence had transformed their relationships with society and large group identities.

Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) argument for embracing researcher subjectivity resonates strongly with this research approach. Rather than striving for an impossible objectivity, I recognize that my own experiences and emotional responses can serve as valuable

interpretive tools. This perspective allows me to engage more deeply with the narratives of political activists, using my own emotional reactions as a bridge to understanding their experiences. Furthermore, while I maintain primary responsibility for the research design and analysis, the view that both researcher and participant influence the data produced during interviews (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009) helped create an environment where participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences and insights

The psychosocial approach's ability to expose the interplay between unconscious processes and social structures makes it particularly suited to this research. It is used here to explore both the visible marks left by oppression and the less visible psychological effects that shape resistance and resilience. It traces how state violence extends from individual psyches to collective identities, how personal trauma can feed into social movements, and how social structures in turn shape individual responses to violence.

The psychosocial approach provides a framework for examining the relationship between individual experiences of state violence and broader sociopolitical dynamics. By integrating psychological and sociological perspectives, it analyses political activism at both the personal and the collective level. It recognizes that political activism reflects ideology and strategy while also being shaped by unconscious processes, emotional experiences, and social contexts. This makes it possible to understand the impact of state violence on individuals and communities, as well as the resilience and creativity that emerge in response to repression.

3.3 Participants

3.3.1. Sample size and selection criteria

In qualitative research, the design of sampling patterns is tied to the research objectives, often favouring smaller sample sizes compared to other methodological approaches. This preference for smaller samples allows for a more in-depth exploration of individual experiences and perspectives, which is crucial for this study on the impact of state violence on political activists. As Patton (2002) astutely observes, there is no rigid rule dictating the ideal sample size in qualitative studies. This flexibility allows researchers to adapt their sample size to the specific needs and constraints of their study.

Despite the absence of strict guidelines, there is a general consensus among qualitative researchers that a participant range of 15 to 39 is often sufficient to achieve theoretical

saturation and identify meaningful patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 131). This range is not arbitrary but is based on the collective experience of researchers who have found that this sample size typically provides enough depth and breadth to address complex research questions while remaining manageable in terms of data collection and analysis.

The determination of an appropriate sample size for the study was a nuanced process, taking into account multiple factors. These include the quality and richness of the data collected from each participant, the scope and objectives of the research, the sensitivity of the subject matter (state violence and political activism), and the amount of useful information obtained from individual interviews. Additionally, practical considerations such as the duration of interviews and the resources available for data collection and analysis informed the decision-making process (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 132).

In light of these considerations, the sample size was carefully calibrated to ensure that sufficient data could be gathered to comprehensively answer the research questions while respecting the time and emotional investment required from the participants. This balance was deemed important given the sensitive nature of the research topic and the potential for interviews to evoke challenging memories or emotions for the participants.

To create the research sample, purposive sampling was employed, a widely-used approach in qualitative research. Purposive sampling is particularly well-suited to studies of this nature, where the goal is to gain deep insights into complex social phenomena (Campbell, et al., 2020). This sampling method aims to maximise the efficiency of limited resources by strategically selecting participants who are likely to be rich sources of information relevant to the research questions (Patton, 2002).

The value of purposive sampling lies in its ability to contribute to the creation of 'insight and in-depth understanding' about the researched subject, as noted by Patton (2002). This approach is founded on the premise that selecting information-rich samples is essential for developing a comprehensive view of the phenomenon under study (Shaheen et al., 2016). In the context of the research, this meant seeking out individuals who had direct experience with political activism and state violence in Turkey, and who were willing and able to articulate their experiences and reflections on these events.

Within the broader framework of purposive sampling, the Snowball or Chain Sampling method was specifically utilized to identify and recruit participants.. This method is widely

recognized as an effective approach for locating information-rich sources, particularly when researching sensitive topics or hard-to-reach populations (Shaheen & Pradhan, 2019).

Snowball sampling leverages the social networks of both the researcher and initial participants to expand the sample in an organic, trust-based manner. In practice, this method involved asking each participant if others who might be interested in participating in the study were known to them. This approach proved invaluable for the research, as existing networks of trust within the community of political activists were accessed. The most common form of snowballing, as described by Patton (2002), involves participants being directly asked by the researcher for recommendations of potential new participants.

The snowball sampling process created a cascading effect, with each new participant potentially leading to several more. This method of accumulating new information-rich cases increased the participant numbers while enhancing the diversity and depth of the sample. In some instances, names and contact details of potential new participants were provided directly by existing participants. In other cases, participants acted as intermediaries, extending the invitation to participate on behalf of the researcher.

This approach offered several significant advantages for the study. Firstly, individuals who might otherwise have been extremely difficult to identify or contact, given the subject matter, were reached. Secondly, the study was conducted more efficiently in terms of time and resources. Perhaps most importantly, the referral-based nature of snowball sampling helped build trust with new participants, as they were approached through the endorsement of someone they knew and trusted.

The final research sample consisted of 23 participants in total, comprising 5 females and 18 males. This gender imbalance, while not ideal, reflects to some extent the demographics of political activism in Turkey during the period under study. All participants were over the age of 55 at the time of the interviews, providing a valuable long-term perspective on the events and experiences being investigated.

The primary criterion for inclusion in the study was that participants must have been members of legal or illegal left-wing organizations and must have faced ill-treatment or torture during the three-year junta period following the 1980 coup in Turkey. This specific focus enabled the exploration of the direct impacts of state violence on political activists during a particularly turbulent period in Turkish history.

The sample included a diverse range of educational backgrounds, reflecting the broad appeal of leftist political movements during this era. Twelve participants were studying at undergraduate or graduate level, five were high school students, two were teachers, and one was a civil servant at the time they encountered ill-treatment or torture. This diversity provided a range of perspectives on how state violence intersected with different life stages and social positions.

All participants in the study were members of six different leftist organisations (DDKD, Halkın Kurtuluşu, Kasabalılar/MİSPB, Dev-Sol, Dev-Yol, TKP; see Appendix 8.6 for detailed descriptions), a limitation imposed by the realities of accessing this sensitive population. While these organizations shared a broad commitment to leftist ideology, they represented different approaches to political activism - ranging from Dev-Sol's armed struggle approach to TKP's more traditional communist party structure, and from DDKD's focus on Kurdish identity to Kasabalılar's unique local grassroots movement. While a broader range of organisational affiliations would have been beneficial, the access was facilitated by gatekeepers from these specific groups.

The duration of incarceration among the participants ranged from three months to eleven years, providing a wide spectrum of experiences with the state's punitive system. Each interview lasted approximately one and a half hours, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and reflections.

In conclusion, while the sampling method and resulting sample have certain limitations, particularly in terms of organizational diversity, the purposive and snowball sampling approaches employed allowed for the collection of rich, detailed data from individuals with direct, personal experience of the phenomena under investigation. The combination of this interview data with archival research provides a robust foundation for analyzing the impacts of state violence on political activists in Turkey.

3.4. Primary and Secondary Data Gathering Methods

3.4.1. Semi-structured in-depth interviews

The interview method, as one of the cornerstones of qualitative research, enables researchers to collect data directly from participants in a sincere and informative way. As Briggs (1986) notes, interviewing is one of the most prevalent data collection methods across social and health sciences, offering a unique window into the lived experiences of research subjects. The primary purpose of employing interviews in research is to uncover the varied views, experiences, values, and various other aspects of the population under study, providing a wealth of qualitative data that can inform the understanding of complex social phenomena.

Kvale (2007) aptly describes the interview as a 'professional conversation,' a characterization that captures both the structured nature of research interviews and their potential for deep, meaningful exchange. This professional conversation aims to grasp the participant's point of view on a particular issue in its entirety, allowing for a holistic understanding of their perspective. The language and concepts employed by participants during interviews serve as vital clues to their worldview and cognitive frameworks, offering researchers invaluable insights into how individuals construct meaning from their experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

One of the distinctive advantages of in-depth interviews lies in their ability to capture non-verbal communication cues, which can enrich the data collected from participants (Jupp, 2006). These subtle, often unconscious signals – a hesitation, a change in posture, a fleeting expression – can provide context and depth to verbal responses, allowing researchers to develop a closer understanding of participants' experiences and emotions. This aspect proved particularly valuable in the study, given the sensitive nature of discussing experiences of state violence and political activism.

The in-depth nature of these interviews makes them particularly well-suited to qualitative research methods, where the goal is often to explore complex, subjective experiences rather than to quantify or generalise. As Burgess (1984) suggests, in-depth interviewing can be conceptualised as a form of conversation, albeit one with a specific purpose and structure.

This conversational approach allows for a level of exploration and discovery that is difficult to achieve with more rigid data collection methods.

One of the most significant benefits of the in-depth interview method is its capacity to elicit more detailed and deeper information than other data collection techniques such as surveys. Unlike broader, more superficial data collection methods, in-depth interviews involve intensive, one-on-one interactions with a relatively small number of participants. This focused approach is particularly suitable for research involving questions of experience, understanding, and perception (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.81), making it an ideal choice for the study on the impacts of state violence on political activists.

The format of an interview is determined by its specific purposes and research objectives. Broadly speaking, interviews can be categorised into three types: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Semi-structured interviews were employed for the research, a method that strikes a balance between structure and flexibility. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher prepares an interview guide beforehand but maintains a flexible attitude regarding the exact wording and order of questions (Fylan, 2005). This approach allows the interviewer to adapt to the flow of conversation, following up on interesting points raised by participants while ensuring that all key topics are covered.

The open-ended questions characteristic of semi-structured interviews contribute an organic and flexible nature to the research, allowing the project to evolve with the input of participants. As Rossman and Rallis (2003, p. 181) note, this interview style encourages researchers to develop categories and topics for exploration while remaining open to following issues raised by participants. This approach creates a space for participants to express themselves on their own terms and at their own pace, often leading to richer, more authentic data.

In this study, the choice of in-depth, semi-structured interviews was driven by the focus on the experiences and perceptions of participants who had lived through periods of state violence and political activism. The question set consisted primarily of open-ended questions, designed to draw interviewees toward the points they deemed most significant and allowing them to concentrate on issues of personal importance. This approach provided a unique opportunity to observe how individual perspectives on shared historical experiences diverge and converge, offering insights into both personal narratives and collective memory.

The questions in the semi-structured interview guide were crafted to contribute to theoretical knowledge about participants' political identities before the military coup, their relationships with society after experiencing violence, and their perceptions of the coup's effects on Turkish society. These questions were grounded in the meanings participants attributed to their life experiences, allowing for a rich, contextual understanding of historical events.

The interview process began with participants receiving general information about the study, (see Appendix 8.1 for information sheet and consent forms), followed by a two-part interview. The first part consisted of warm-up questions designed to establish rapport and create a comfortable atmosphere. The second part included 19 questions (see Appendix 8.3 for full interview schedule) focused on the core research questions, exploring themes such as family ties, childhood and adolescence, early political activism, relationships with friends, the political atmosphere of 1970s Turkey, experiences of political struggle and imprisonment, social isolation, and evolving political identities.

The data collection process spanned three months, from September to November 2021, with all 23 interviews conducted face-to-face in outdoor settings to comply with social distancing requirements. The decision to conduct face-to-face interviews followed from the subject matter and the participant profile. As Braun and Clarke (2013) argue, face-to-face communication between researcher and participant is the ideal way to collect data, particularly for sensitive topics where establishing trust is crucial.

Before each interview, participants were informed of their right to end the interview at any time or leave any questions unanswered, ensuring ethical compliance and participant comfort. Additionally, participants were provided with contact information of clinical psychologist Mahmut Can Hasates who has experience working with trauma, should they feel the need for support following the interviews. We had an agreement with Hasates to provide initial intervention for any participants who might experience distress due to the interviews.

Throughout the interviews, a flexible and harmonious structure was maintained, allowing participants to express their experiences and thoughts in the most comfortable way possible. This approach aligns with Legard, Keegan, and Ward's (2003) assertion that in-depth interviews should combine structure with flexibility, recognizing the interactive nature of the data production process.

The choice of semi-structured in-depth interviews proved particularly appropriate for the study for several reasons. Firstly, it allowed the complex interplay between individual experiences of state violence and broader societal dynamics to be explored. The findings revealed that the impacts of state violence extended far beyond individual trauma, shaping collective identities and social relationships. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed participants to articulate these multi-layered experiences in their own words. Secondly, the flexibility of the semi-structured format allowed for the exploration of unexpected themes that emerged during the interviews. This approach facilitated an in-depth examination of emerging themes while still ensuring that core research questions were addressed. Finally, the face-to-face nature of the interviews, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2013), was important for establishing trust and relation with participants, many of whom were sharing deeply personal and potentially traumatic experiences. This trust was evident in the depth and honesty of the accounts I received, with many participants sharing insights they had never before articulated.

In conclusion, the choice of semi-structured, in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method allowed for a deep exploration of the complex, personal narratives of political activists who experienced state violence in Turkey. This approach provided rich, contextual data that opens a window onto both individual experiences and the broader social and historical processes behind them, with an eye to the long-term impacts of political repression and the resilience of activist communities (see Appendix 8.5 for participant details).

3.4.2 Archival Data

While interviews served as the primary data collection method, this study also incorporated archival research as a complementary data collection strategy. Following Prior (2003), who emphasizes that documents are active agents in understanding social and historical contexts, I examined various published materials including newspapers, autobiographies, and political magazines from the period. This supplementary data collection approach was particularly valuable for understanding the broader social and political context within which participants' experiences were situated.

The archival materials consulted included newspaper coverage of key events like the Kahramanmaraş incidents and the execution of revolutionary leaders, autobiographical accounts from the period, and public speeches by military junta leader Kenan Evren. These sources were particularly important for understanding how the regime's actions and rhetoric shaped public perception of political activists and how state violence was legitimized in public discourse. The autobiographical materials and period publications also provided valuable insights into how different segments of society experienced and interpreted the coup period.

The combination of interview data with archival sources helped strengthen the research findings. As Welch (2000) argues, archival sources can compensate for some limitations inherent in interview data, particularly regarding historical accuracy and broader contextual understanding. In this study, archival materials helped situate participants' personal narratives within the larger social and political transformations occurring in Turkey during and after the 1980 coup, while the interview data remained central to understanding the psychological impact of state violence on individual political activists.

3.5. Data Analysis

3.5.1. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a systematic method used to identify recurring patterns and meaningful themes across a dataset, allowing researchers to organize and make sense of complex qualitative data. Through careful examination of interview transcripts and other qualitative materials, this method enables researchers to break down large amounts of data into manageable analytical units and develop detailed interpretations of the patterns they discover (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach allows for detailed illustration of data and addresses various issues through interpretations (Boyatzis, 1998). Its versatility in accommodating diverse data formats, including interview transcripts, field notes, political documents, literary and press publishing made it particularly suitable for the study on the long-term impacts of state violence on political identity and activism in Turkey.

One of the key strengths of thematic analysis lies in its ability to compare and correlate the frequency of a theme with the overall research content. This feature enhances the accuracy of

the research and contributes to its further development. Qualitative research demands understanding various aspects of the subject and collecting data accordingly. In this context, thematic analysis allows for a broader understanding of any problem's potential (Marks & Yardley, 2004), making it a viable method to address research questions with strong psychological and social components, such as those in the study.

The method enables researchers to pinpoint relationships between concepts and compare them with reproduced data. This process can be particularly exciting, as noted by Rubin and Rubin (2011), when researchers explore themes and concepts encountered after their interviews. Thematic analysis involves the researcher deeply in the process, making them an integral part of the research. Braun and Clark define the subjective, conscious, and interrogative researcher as reflexive, emphasising that reflexivity is a fundamental characteristic of thematic analysis. This thoughtfulness involves critically considering one's role as a researcher and the research practice and process (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.71).

The flexibility of thematic analysis, which offers various analytical options, means that the limit of what can be said about the data set is quite wide. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), this flexibility allows thematic analysis to be used to answer almost any research question and analyse almost any kind of data (p.178). In applying thematic analysis, researchers typically follow six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2012, p.75): developing familiarity with the data set, coding data, identifying themes, developing and reviewing themes, refining and naming themes, and writing up. However, it's important to note that these phases are not rigid steps but rather a flexible guide for the analytical process.

The compatibility of thematic analysis with the psychosocial approach is noteworthy. It allows researchers to understand and explain the complexity, variability, and contradictions of social phenomena within the scope of their research (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 77). This aspect was particularly valuable for the study, where diverse narratives of trauma and political engagement were encountered.

Thematic analysis presupposes that the subjectivity of both participants and researchers determines their perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This recognition of subjectivity aligns well with research approaches that deal with sensitive and personal topics, such as the exploration of state violence and its long-term impacts. For instance, as Terry et al. (2017) demonstrate in their research on trauma narratives, researchers' own emotional responses to

participants' stories of violence can provide valuable analytical insights when properly acknowledged and examined. Similarly, Rivas (2012) notes how participants' subjective interpretations of their experiences often reveal deeper meanings than would be possible through more detached analytical approaches. This method provided a robust framework for exploring the interaction between state violence, political identity, and activism in this study, allowing for the discovery of unexpected connections and contradictions in participants' narratives.

3.5.2 Coding process

Thematic analysis was chosen to examine the data gathered from the semi-structured indepth interviews. The coding process was thorough and iterative, drawing on both deductive and inductive approaches (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The process began with a careful reading of all interview transcripts, with important sections relevant to the research questions being marked. During this initial read, predetermined themes such as 'family structure' and 'first political ideas' were kept in mind, while remaining open to new themes that might emerge from the data. Open coding was employed as the technique, involving a line-by-line examination of the transcripts and coding significant concepts, themes, and patterns throughout the process (Rivas, 2012). Codes such as Family-occupation, Family-political view, First Political Ideas, 'Effects of 68 Movement, Duration of Detention, Prison Process, and On Torture were developed.

Throughout the coding process, codes were regularly revisited and reorganized to ensure consistency. For instance, codes such as Ideology-PAST and Ideology-CURRENT were added to capture the evolving ideological perspectives of participants over time. As the process transitioned from coding to theming, relationships between codes were explored, leading to the identification of broader themes (Terry et al., 2017). This process resulted in themes such as political activism process, prison experiences, and post-coup life.

Table 2 presents the main codes that emerged from this analysis, organized under five major themes.

Table 2				
Family Structure and Influences	Political Activism Process	Violence Experiences	Post-Coup Process	Ideological Transformation
Occupation : Parents' jobs and family's socioeconomic status	First Political Ideas: Initial exposure to and development of political consciousness	Duration of Detention : Length of time spent in prison and detention centers	After Prison: Immediate experiences following release	Ideology-PAST: Political beliefs and commitments before imprisonment
Political view :Family members' political orientations and involvement in activism	Effects of 68 Movement: Impact of previous generation's activism on participants	Offence and Penalty: Official charges and accusations against participants	Social Support: Access to family and community support networks	Ideology-CURRENT: Current political views and how they've evolved
Structure: Family composition and dynamics	Reason for Politicisation :Key events or influences that led to political engagement	Prison Process : Daily life and conditions in prison	Current Political Environment in Turkey: Views on contemporary political situation	
	The relationship between activists and the public: Revolutionaries' interaction with society and their efforts to build a popular base	On Torture: Experiences of physical and psychological violence		
		Physical\psychological effects of violence: Long-term effects of state violence on participants		

This coding process allowed for a systematic unpacking of participants' experiences and perceptions, providing deep insights into the research questions. The focus remained on participants' journeys of political activism, their time in prison, and their lives following the coup.

3.5.3 Analysis of Archival Materials

Lastly, the archival materials were analyzed through a qualitative document analysis approach, focusing on how these texts represented and framed key events and actors during the period under study. Following Prior's (2008; 824) understanding that documents are active agents in episodes of interaction and schemes of social organization, newspaper articles, autobiographies, and public speeches were examined for their content and their role in shaping public discourse about political activism and state violence. These materials were analyzed alongside the interview data during the thematic analysis process, helping to contextualize participants' personal narratives within broader social and political developments of the period.

3.6. Researcher's Role and Reflexivity

Traditional research approaches often claim objectivity in their results or aim to achieve objective outcomes. The conventional wisdom suggests that scientific findings should be as detached as possible from the knowledge producer. However, this perspective overlooks a crucial reality: even observations made in the pursuit of scientific knowledge inherently involve the active participation of the observer. Consequently, it would be a mistake to claim that the resulting knowledge is completely isolated from the human perspective. While classical research paradigms attempt to minimise researcher influence through standardised methods, qualitative research frequently employs more flexible procedures (Breuer et al., 2002). This flexibility inevitably amplifies the researcher's impact, making it far more pronounced than in quantitative counterparts.

One innovative approach to addressing this inherent subjectivity is to consciously integrate the researcher's subjectivity as an integral component of the research process. This integration, rather than being viewed as a limitation, is considered a valuable asset in the psycho-social approach. Braun and Clarke (2013) posit that subjectivity is as positively valued in the qualitative paradigm as objectivity is in the quantitative paradigm. This perspective reconceptualized research as a fundamentally subjective process, encouraging researchers to explicitly incorporate their personal backgrounds, values, assumptions, perspectives, and even political leanings into their work.

The very choice of research topic, the framing of research questions, and the methodological approaches selected are all intrinsically linked to the researcher's identity and worldview. Consequently, the information produced will inevitably reflect, to varying degrees, the researcher's own perspective. It's equally important to recognize that participants also bring their unique experiences and perspectives to the research, creating a dynamic interplay of subjectivities within the research context. Jacqueline Mosselson (2010) argues that acknowledging subjectivity and treating the researcher's perspective as part of the research does two things at once. It strengthens the ethical integrity of the research and improves both the research process and the later analysis and interpretation of the data. This approach fosters a more transparent and honest research environment, where the researcher's influence is openly acknowledged and critically examined.

However, for subjectivity to function as an asset rather than a source of bias that negatively impacts the research, the researcher must develop the skill to harness their own subjectivity for the benefit of the study. One powerful method to achieve this is through the practice of reflexivity. The psychosocial approach not only accepts the researcher's subjectivity and intersubjectivity but requires that they be examined reflexively (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009, p.79). Through this process, the researcher's subjectivity becomes a resource that strengthens the research rather than a source of bias.

In this context, reflexivity can be defined as the researcher's critical reflection on the knowledge they have produced and their role in producing this knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.97). It involves a continuous process of self-examination and self-awareness throughout the research journey. Reflexivity in research means that the researcher is both involved in the research and visible as a part of the research process. It is the practice of consciously using the researcher's influence in data collection and analysis to enhance the quality and depth of the research findings. The practice of reflexivity requires an evaluation of the researcher's physical, psychological, and political existence throughout the entire research process (Braun & Clarke, 2013, pp.36-37). It demands that researchers critically examine how their personal experiences, cultural background, and ideological perspectives might shape their interpretation of data and influence their interactions with participants. Braun and Clarke (2012) further elaborate that reflexive research is a form of inquiry in which the researcher accepts and reflects on their role as a subject within the psychosocial approach. This reflection process involves thoughtful consideration of how the researcher's

viewpoint and choices will affect various aspects of the research and the nature of that impact (Wilkinson, 1988).

The fact that the psychosocial approach includes psychoanalytic methods underlines the great importance of reflexivity in this research paradigm (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009, pp.8-43).

Consequently, psychoanalytic concepts such as reflection, transference, and countertransference are carefully considered throughout the research process. These concepts provide valuable tools for understanding the complex dynamics between researcher and participants, as well as the researcher's own emotional responses to the research material.

Hunt (1989) offers insights into areas where unconscious forces can impact research. He notes that one such area is the choice of research topic, which often reflects the researcher's internal dynamics. This choice may set the stage for transference and countertransference between researcher and participants, emotional and psychological interactions that must be carefully recognized and worked through.

While the benefits of reflexivity are numerous, Braun and Clarke (2013) caution against the risk of the researcher's reflection becoming the primary focus of the research (p.303). They emphasise that reflexivity should serve to locate the researcher within the research context, rather than becoming an exercise in self-absorption. True reflexivity involves a delicate balance – being aware of one's own philosophical and theoretical prejudices while recognizing that personal history, culture, class habits, and values are active forces shaping the research process.

Reflexivity thus demands continuous self examination and critical reflection. It requires researchers to interrogate their own assumptions, biases, and emotional responses throughout the research. In doing so, they can hold their own subjectivity and the research process in view together, producing work that is more self-aware and more ethically sound. This both strengthens the credibility of qualitative research and gives a fuller, more honest understanding of the phenomena under study.

3.7. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

3.7.1. Informed consent

Ethical standards in social sciences have evolved over many years, shaped by numerous challenging experiences, and their adherence is of great importance in research. Ethics is not merely a set of guidelines to be followed during the research process; rather, it encompasses a perspective that should permeate every aspect of a researcher's approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 145). From the relationship between participants and researchers to the choices made during literature reviews, ethical considerations bear on every stage of the research.

In psychosocial research, ethics occupies an even more central position (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009, p. 21). This centrality stems from the highly personal and often sensitive nature of psycho-social research, which often explores the innermost thoughts, feelings and experiences of participants. Consequently, researchers using psycho-social methodologies must adhere to several fundamental ethical principles and practices, including informed consent, confidentiality, the right to withdraw, prevention of harm, and careful management of power dynamics between researcher and participant (Karnieli-Miller, et.al, 2009). Additionally, researchers must maintain transparency about the research process, establish clear boundaries in participant relationships, and ensure proper handling of sensitive personal data. These guidelines serve to protect participants and to maintain the integrity of the research process itself (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012).

However, it is essential to recognize that ethical challenges are not confined to a specific phase or type of research. As Clarke and Hoggett (2009) astutely observe, ethical dilemmas can emerge at any point during the research process, regardless of the methodology employed. This ubiquity of ethical concerns means researchers must remain vigilant and responsive to potential ethical issues throughout their studies. Moreover, researchers must acknowledge and embrace their responsibility for any consequences that may arise during or after the research, ensuring that they are prepared to address and mitigate any unforeseen ethical challenges.

The primary ethical imperative in psychosocial research is an unwavering focus on the well-being of the participant (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009, p. 20). This concern for participant welfare guided every step of the research process, particularly given the sensitive nature of the study, which involved participants recounting past traumas. A series of measures was

implemented to ensure that both the participants and the researcher were protected from potential harm during and after the interviews.

The commitment to ethical practice began with the initial contact with prospective participants. Comprehensive information about the study was provided, ensuring that potential participants fully understood the nature and implications of their involvement. This thorough briefing process was particularly crucial given the traumatic subject matter of torture and mistreatment discussed during the interviews. Some prospective participants, after being fully informed, expressed willingness in principle but felt unable to muster the emotional strength required to discuss their experiences. In such cases, their decision was respected without any attempt at persuasion, recognizing the importance of voluntary participation in sensitive research.

For those who agreed to participate, additional safeguards were implemented. Prior to the commencement of interviews, participants were explicitly informed of their right to halt the interview or withdraw from the study at any point if they felt uncomfortable or distressed. This assurance was a critical component of the ethical framework, ensuring that participants maintained control over their involvement throughout the research process.

While the emotional intensity of the interviews occasionally posed challenges for both the participants and the researcher, it is noteworthy that none of the participants chose to leave any questions unanswered or prematurely end their interview. This outcome aligns with the perspective offered by Hollway and Jefferson (2000), who argue that while discussing painful and distressing experiences in research can be unsettling, it is not inherently harmful. They emphasise the importance of distinguishing between temporary discomfort and lasting harm (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 99). Nevertheless, vigilance was maintained throughout the interview process, allowing participants to dictate the pace and depth of their disclosures when recounting unpleasant memories.

As a researcher, I recognized my ethical obligation to safeguard the well-being of participants and prevent any potential harm. To this end, as mentioned in the data collection section, professional psychological support was made available to all participants if needed.

This proactive measure ensured that participants had access to professional psychological assistance should they experience any distress following the interviews. It is worth noting that, as of the time of writing, none of the participants have reported needing to contact the psychologist.

Another important ethical consideration in the study was to protect the anonymity of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 148). To ensure this, the names of all participants were omitted, and the names of places and people in their narratives were carefully censored. In applying these anonymity measures, a balance was sought between protecting participants' identities and preserving the authenticity of their personalities within the research. Approval for the study was obtained from Bournemouth University's research ethics committee on 05/08/2021. This approval process ensured that the research design met the rigorous ethical standards required for studies involving sensitive topics and vulnerable populations.

To further safeguard participants' rights and interests, each potential participant was provided with an information sheet detailing the research project, its purpose, and participant requirements. Additionally, a copy of Bournemouth University's Research Participant Privacy Statement was supplied, outlining how graduate researchers at the university operate and how Bournemouth University fulfils its responsibilities as a data controller with regard to participants' individual rights under data protection legislation.

The informed consent process was thorough and multi-faceted. Before the interviews took place, participants were required to sign and date two consent forms, one in Turkish and one in English. This bilingual approach ensured that participants fully understood the terms of their involvement, regardless of their language preference. However, one participant did not want to sign the English version of the form on the grounds that he did not know what was written on it. Moreover, at the outset of each interview, the obligations, statements, and responsibilities regarding consent and data protection were verbally communicated. Participants were asked to verbally confirm their understanding and acceptance of these terms, providing an additional layer of assurance that their participation was truly informed and voluntary.

None of the 23 participants subsequently withdrew their consent. This outcome suggests that the approach to informed consent and participant protection was successful in creating a

research environment where participants felt comfortable, respected, and empowered throughout their involvement in the study.

In conclusion, the research was underpinned by a robust ethical framework that prioritised participant well-being, informed consent, and data protection. By implementing these ethical measures, I sought to conduct research that yielded useful insights while respecting and protecting the dignity and rights of the participants throughout the research process.

3.7.2. Limitations

As with any research methodology, qualitative approaches come with inherent limitations that must be carefully considered. One primary limitation is the absence of mathematical and statistical methods for analysis and generalisation of research results. This absence poses challenges in extending findings to broader populations, potentially limiting the study's generalizability (Maxwell, 2013). In the study, which involved 23 participants sharing their experiences of trauma and political activism, the lack of standardised measurement tools means that a different sample group might yield varying results. The uniqueness of individual emotions, experiences, and histories makes replication in qualitative studies difficult, potentially leading to divergent outcomes in similar investigations.

However, it's crucial to recognize that qualitative research, as Maxwell (2013) argues, operates within a universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values, and attitudes. These elements correspond to a deeper field of relationships, processes, and phenomena that cannot be reduced to the functionalization of variables. In the study, this complexity was evident in the narratives of participants who experienced state violence and its long-term impacts on their lives and political identities. The depth and richness of these accounts provided valuable insights that might not have been captured through quantitative methods alone.

The in-depth examination of cases in qualitative research can be time-consuming and relatively costly (Queirós et al., 2017). This limitation was apparent in the study, where extensive interviews and careful analysis of complex narratives required significant time and resources. However, this investment allowed for a detailed understanding of the participants' experiences that would be difficult to achieve through more rapid, large-scale methods.

The interpretive nature of qualitative research introduces an element of subjectivity. As a researcher, I am tasked with interpreting what I hear, see, and am affected by during the research process. This interpretive dimension is an inevitable limitation of qualitative studies (Mwita, 2022). In the research, this subjectivity was particularly salient when analysing participants' accounts of their traumatic experiences and subsequent political activism. While objectivity is the aim, interpretations are inevitably influenced by the perspectives and experiences of the researcher.

The small sample size in qualitative studies is often cited as a limitation, potentially affecting the generalizability of findings (Vasileiou et al., 2018). A study with 23 participants cannot claim to represent the experiences of all individuals who faced state violence during the 1980 coup in Turkey. Moreover, as a self-selecting group, participants were those who felt sufficiently resilient to revisit their traumatic experiences in a research setting, and may therefore not represent the full range of responses among left-wing activists of this generation. While in-depth interviews are one of the most frequently used methods in qualitative research, they typically involve few participants due to the extensive and lengthy nature of the interviews. This trade-off between depth and breadth is a common challenge in qualitative research.

The purpose of qualitative methodology is to understand the various dimensions of the analysed problem and to produce in-depth and explanatory information (Queirós et al., 2017). For this reason, the number of participants in studies using qualitative research methods is not as inclusive and representative as quantitative research using surveys and similar methods in most cases. To address potential representation issues, in-depth interviews were supplemented with secondary methods to create a more representative dataset. This approach balanced the depth of individual narratives with a broader perspective on the phenomena under study. Researchers' direct contact with participants during data collection can consciously or unconsciously influence the collected data. A researcher's interactions with participants may affect their perception of events, or in some cases, researchers may tend to overstate or understate the real situation in the field. The researcher's relationship with the participants may also affect how they report the findings (Mwita, 2022). In this context, my prior acquaintance with some participants may have affected my perspective as a researcher. This familiarity could have introduced bias in data collection and interpretation, despite efforts to maintain objectivity.

On the other hand, during my communication with various political parties and associations to expand the participant pool, I was often rejected by groups and individuals who did not know me beforehand. For instance, the chair of an NGO I approached through a referral declined to meet with me, citing previous negative experiences with assisting unknown researchers whose intentions were unclear. This example illustrates the broader challenge of accessing and persuading unfamiliar political and traumatised groups to participate in such studies, where trust is paramount but difficult to establish without prior connections. While efforts were made to keep the sample of participants diverse, I rarely succeeded in penetrating groups with which I had no prior familiarity, and it required substantial effort. This difficulty in accessing certain groups may have impacted the representativeness of the sample.

Moreover, given that the study generally related to participants' possible traumatic past and current political attitudes, telephone meetings were conducted with the participants before the interview to establish a relationship of mutual trust. This approach aimed to encourage more sincere responses during the interviews. However, the emotional nature of the subject matter and the possibility of triggering psychological discomfort in the participants may have caused both the researcher and the participants to act cautiously. Despite the trust relationship established, participants may have consciously or unconsciously avoided sharing some details.

In conclusion, by connecting personal trauma to collective identity, the psychosocial approach proved well suited to understanding the long-term impacts of state violence on political activism. The in-depth narratives gathered through this methodology uncovered psychological and social dynamics that quantitative or more detached approaches might have missed. The approach has clear limitations, including a small sample, but it was the most appropriate choice for the research questions and objectives. Its detailed, first-hand data offer insight into how political activists process and integrate experiences of state violence over time. Future research could extend these findings through mixed methods or larger samples; what this methodology contributes is depth, a close account of how state violence is lived and remembered.

4. Findings

This chapter presents the study's key findings, organized into four interrelated sections that trace how political consciousness and social relationships were transformed through state violence following Turkey's 1980 military coup. These sections systematically address the four research questions outlined in Section 2.5. The first section examines family backgrounds and early political socialization (addressing RQ1), revealing how revolutionary identities formed within supportive social networks before the coup. The second section explores revolutionary politics in pre-coup Turkey (continuing RQ1 and beginning RQ2), showing how political activists built connections with communities through shared cultural narratives and direct action. The third section investigates the systematic state violence of the post-coup period (addressing RQ2 and RQ3), analysing how detention, prison, and surveillance reshaped society while fundamentally altering participants' relationships with large group symbols. Finally, the fourth section examines the lasting psychological and social impacts of this violence (addressing RQ4), showing how it transformed both individual revolutionary identities and participants' patterns of political engagement, and how these transformations intersected with broader changes in the post-coup social landscape. Through these themes, the chapter shows how state violence reshaped both individual consciousness and collective political relationships.

4.1. Family Origins of Political Consciousness: Economic Background, Political Socialization and Revolutionary Identity

This section addresses RQ1 by examining how revolutionary identities developed within family structures and social networks before the 1980 coup. The analysis of participant narratives revealed that family environments strongly shaped political consciousness and activist identities in 1970s Turkey. While each participant's path to political activism was unique, their accounts consistently highlighted how family dynamics - particularly socioeconomic circumstances, political orientations, and responses to activism - created the foundational context for their later political engagement.

Participants' narratives often began with detailed accounts of family life, suggesting that these early experiences provided an essential framework through which they first encountered and interpreted political realities. Whether through direct political socialization in politically engaged households or through witnessing economic hardship and social inequalities in their family environments, these early experiences proved foundational to their later political consciousness.

This chapter examines these family influences through three main themes that emerged from the analysis: the impact of family socioeconomic status on political consciousness, the role of family political views in shaping activist identities, and the dynamic relationship between participants' political activism and family relationships. Through these themes, insight is gained into how family environments both enabled and constrained political activism during this pivotal period in Turkish history.

4.1.1. Economic Background and Early Socialization: The Seeds of Political Consciousness

The rationale for researching family backgrounds in this study is threefold. First, families often act as the primary mediators of political socialization (Easton & Hess, 1962; Andolina et al., 2003). Understanding the political climate within the family, including discussions and shared political experiences, provides insights into participants' early political leanings and beliefs. This exploration helps trace the formation of political views and establishes a baseline against which the impact of later experiences of political violence and torture can be measured.

Secondly, the political opinions held within families reflect larger societal trends. By examining these familial political landscapes, broader patterns of political thought and behavior can be identified. In contexts where political violence and torture are prevalent, these patterns offer clues to the societal underpinnings of these traumatic experiences and their broader political implications.

Thirdly, understanding participants' family backgrounds reveals how they first became acquainted with politics and political symbols (Allen, 1989). By examining family political preferences and affiliations, insights are gained into initial encounters with political concepts, ideologies, and symbols. This aspect is vital for comprehending how individuals relate to politics both cognitively and emotionally (Roche, 1992), shaping their understanding and

interpretation of political events, including experiences of violence and torture. Overall, this focus on family backgrounds aims to uncover how political opinions are formed and transformed under the shadow of political violence, within both personal and societal contexts.

Lukuslu(2009) states that by the 1970s, with rapid urbanization and rural-urban migration, Turkey's population had reached 35.6 million. The urban population increased sixfold between 1965 and 1970, with Istanbul's population reaching almost four million. This rapid population growth in cities is directly related to industrialisation. During this period, rural-urban migration increased, leading to unbalanced growth in the big cities and widening social gaps. Poverty increased while the working class grew stronger. In Turkey, the 1970s saw the emergence of visible class inequalities in urban areas.

Many of the participants spent their early youth in an environment marked by economic hardship, working-class struggles, and observations related to farming. Consequently, it is possible to say that most participants came from similar social environments and underwent comparable socialization processes. These experiences left impressions on those from middle and lower-middle socioeconomic classes. The visible poverty in cities during the 1970s influenced the worldviews of the participants, shaping their identities and motivating them to become activists, even if they did not grow up in poverty themselves.

The impact of direct economic hardship on political consciousness was particularly evident in the case of Participant 4, who grew up in a family where her father worked as a municipal garbage collector and her mother was an illiterate agricultural laborer. Early exposure to economic hardship and witnessing parental conflicts over financial issues contributed to her understanding of social inequalities. Her direct experience with poverty appears to have informed her later political activism and commitment to addressing social injustices. Her narrative illustrates how economic struggles can act as a catalyst for political activism, highlighting the desire to address and rectify social injustices experienced firsthand.

Contrasting with the experience of economic hardship, some participants encountered politics through more intellectually nurturing environments. A notable example was Participant 7, who grew up in a household that encouraged free thinking under the guidance of an educated, democratic father. *"My father was a teacher and my mother was a housewife. My father always liked reading and books,"* she recalls. As a child of middle-class civil servants, her

experience reflected a broader pattern among university students in the mid-1970s, who often came from families of civil servants, soldiers, and bureaucrats (Lukuslu, 2009, p.61). Her father, being the first university graduate in the family, significantly influenced her political orientation - a pattern that emerged repeatedly in the narratives of participants from educated, middle-class backgrounds.

The progressive influence of political ideas extended beyond urban, educated families into rural communities as well. An example emerged in Participant 8's narrative of his farming family, who maintained 'enlightened' democratic and antiracist values despite limited formal education. This case illustrated how leftist and progressive ideals penetrated diverse segments of Turkish society during the 1970s. The period witnessed leftist politics gaining unprecedented legitimacy through various organizational practices, leading to its mass popularization. The growing acceptance and influence of leftist ideologies manifested in increasing participation in leftist movements and activities across different social classes. As Atilgan (2023) notes, this era saw leftist movements becoming mainstream and integrated into everyday life, contributing to a more vibrant and diverse political landscape.

In contrast to general, some participants like Participant 3, 17 and 22 grew up in financially comfortable environments. Participant 3's family, involved in construction contracting, provided a stable financial background. Despite this, Participant 3 was motivated by the injustices he witnessed, suggesting that economic comfort does not necessarily inhibit engagement in activism but can shape it differently. Like Participant 3 and 22, Participant 17's narrative offers insight into how even those from privileged backgrounds became sensitized to social inequalities. Coming from a wealthy family, he reflects on his early recognition of class differences:

Participant 17: "We grew up comfortably because my father came from a wealthy family. So yes, we were comfortable. So we didn't have many worries economically. In other words, we did not have a compromise relationship with the establishment. We were guessing that if we did something, we would be rewarded financially. So I didn't have to work extra to support the household. I didn't have to shine shoes. But some friends were like that. In other words, we did not have a childhood that could realize that labor-capital contradiction."

One of the distinguishing features of this period is the rapid political awakening among young people from diverse backgrounds. This widespread engagement may have emerged from multiple factors: the relatively free environment fostered by the 1960 coup and 1961

Constitution, which enabled socialist organizations to operate more openly, and rapid urbanization that made class inequalities increasingly visible in daily life.

4.1.2. Family Political Orientations and Their Role in Identity Formation

Easton and Hess (1962) describe the ages 3-13 as the years when children begin to integrate into political systems, with their political orientations becoming more pronounced. Even as young children, they start to think about and respond to the political world. Through the influence of adult role models at home, a child transforms into a political being (Allen, 1989). Therefore, it is reasonable to say that "family" is one of the significant factors in the political socialization process for children (Andolina et al., 2003). Roche (1992) refers to the family as an 'incubator' for the political world, as children depend on their parents for physical, emotional, and moral support. Hence, it is not difficult to estimate the significant influence of participants' families' political views on their political activist identities.

For many participants, it can be said that the political ideologies of their families significantly influenced their early political tendencies and beliefs. Participant 7, for example, shared memories of her father who was a socialist, recalling how he often talked about the values of socialism and the Soviet Union, even taking her to the border to view the neighboring country when she was very young. These early exposures to political ideologies formed lasting impressions.

During this socialization phase, the political and social values, ethical norms, immediate environment, and cultural products surrounding participants shaped their worldview. Participant 23 further underlines the influence of religious and cultural identity on political preferences. Coming from an Alevi²¹ background, he associated his family's support for the CHP with their religious and cultural values, highlighting the historical and cultural factors that shape political affiliations. Similarly, Participant 9 noted that Alevi villages generally supported the CHP.

The relationship between Alevism and support for the Republican People's Party (CHP) in Turkey can be attributed to a variety of historical, political, and cultural factors. Alevis are a heterodox Islamic religious and cultural community, whose practices incorporate elements of Shia Islam, Sufism, and pre-Islamic Anatolian and Central Asian traditions (Shankland, 2003). Historically, the Alevi community has faced discrimination from Sunni theocratic

²¹ see Appendix 8.7

governments. Consequently, Alevis generally favor the CHP, the social democratic and founding party of the Turkish Republic, due to its commitment to secularism. The secularism clause in the constitution is often seen by Alevis as a guarantee of security, providing protection against discrimination and ensuring their religious and cultural freedoms. These examples show that religious and cultural identities can shape political consciousness and preferences, often acting as a protective mechanism against perceived threats and discrimination.

On the other hand, participants from right-wing family backgrounds (4 in 23), such as Participant 2 and Participant 20, offered a glimpse into the diverse impacts of such political alignments on family dynamics. Participant 2 described a household where his father's conservative, religious views coexisted with emerging leftist ideologies among the siblings, leading to conflicts and a divergence from parental views. *"There were many conflicts within the house. My mum was very disturbed about this,"* he recalled. This shows that differences in political views within the family can be destructive. Because if political opinions can be accepted as part of the family's internal culture, building a political identity separate from the father can be perceived as a direct rebellion, especially in societies like Turkey where individuality is less respected.

However, Participant 20's family displayed a more playful engagement with political differences. His mother supported the CHP while his father was a staunch Justice Party²² supporter, leading to light-hearted debates rather than serious disputes. This dynamic suggests a tolerant approach to political diversity within the household, reflecting broader societal trends and individual responses to political differences.

4.1.3. Revolutionary Politics and Family Relations: Support, Conflict and Adaptation

The participants' involvement in political activism often had profound effects on their family dynamics, revealing a spectrum of responses from support to conflict. Participant 1, for instance, described a supportive family environment where his father's efforts even included petitioning for his involvement in political activities despite his young age. Similarly, Participant 11's family exhibited a positive perception of leftist activism, with his father's active involvement in politics and the family's participation in activities such as sewing

²² see Appendix 8.7

Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP)²³ flags. This collective effort and family support may have contributed importantly to the formation of political participation, as Participant 11 states that from an early age, many adults she trusted, especially her family, were involved in political activism and left-wing politics.

However, not all family dynamics were supportive. Participant 4's story also reveals an even more extreme reaction, with her mother.

Participant 4: "My mother did not forgive me. She didn't forgive me because of my revolutionary thoughts, because of my thoughts, and my mother ignored me for twenty-one years. She was sick of me. She never forgave me. I lived and continued my life as the child of a family that did not forgive me."

In this example, both the social support gap created by having different political views with the family and the weight of being a revolutionary woman during the military coup are felt. Rejecting the political legacy inherited from the family and choosing an individual path was the beginning of deep familial issues for Participants 2 and 4. However, as a female activist, Participant 4 faced much harsher reactions, leading to a more severe and fundamental break from her family.

Not all families responded with hostility to their children's political activism. In stark contrast to the severe family ruptures experienced by Participants 2 and 4, some activists found understanding and support at home. Participant 17's experience exemplifies this more tolerant approach, as he describes growing up in a liberal family environment that maintained their support even during his most challenging periods of political activity:

Participant 17: "My family was a liberal family. During the times when I was wanted by the police, my father would never get angry with me when we sometimes met. When we met with my father, I had no fear of him. Or, when I left the city for a while, my father never complained to me in his letters, even though he was harassed by the police. During the period when I experienced the consequences of being politically active and inflicted them on my family, I did not receive the slightest pressure from my family."

Despite being harassed by the police, Participant 17's father never expressed discomfort with the situation, indicating that he either agreed with or at least respected Participant 17's ideas and struggle. In the liberal home environment described by Participant 17, the absence of any

²³ see Appendix 8.7

negative attitudes towards taking political risks shows that political activism was an approved endeavor.

It is essential to note that many participants were introduced to political concepts and a collectivist worldview during their early teenage years, and for some, even during childhood. This initial exposure occurred on an emotional level through political symbols they encountered within their families - such as socialist flags sewn by parents, CHP's Six Arrows²⁴ symbol prominently displayed in homes, and images of the Soviet Union - before they consciously understood these concepts. These experiences shaped their internalized values. Participants, often from families or communities identified as social democrats and sensitive to social issues, were frequently exposed to leftist ideas within their immediate surroundings, such as neighborhoods and family gatherings. The sympathy their families held for socialist and social democratic values significantly influenced the development of their political identities. Furthermore, the economic and social hardships faced by these participants acted as catalysts for their political engagement. Some participants expressed that these difficulties fostered a deep sense of empathy and a drive for social change. Their ideological inclinations often seemed inevitable due to the prevailing rise of the left in the country. On the other hand, their involvement in political activism had varied impacts on family dynamics, ranging from supportive encouragement to deep conflicts.

4.2. Revolutionary Identity and Social Relations in Pre-Coup Turkey: Memory, Myth and Mobilization

This section continues addressing RQ1 by exploring the revolutionary culture and political life that existed before the coup. Before experiencing state violence during and after the 1980 military coup, the participants belonged to a thriving political world in which revolutionary activism was deeply embedded in Turkish society. Their accounts of this period reveal complex relationships between revolutionary organizations and communities, tracing how political consciousness was transmitted and transformed across different social contexts. This section examines participants' reflections on revolutionary identity and activism in pre-coup

²⁴ CHP's Six Arrows refers to the six founding principles of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) and the ideological core of Kemalism: republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism, and reformism. Adopted as the party's emblem in the 1930s, the Six Arrows symbolize the foundational values guiding the early Turkish Republic's political and social transformation.

Turkey, focusing particularly on two interconnected themes that emerged strongly from the interviews: the enduring influence of the '68 generation ²⁵revolutionaries on participants' political development, and the nuanced dynamics between revolutionary organizations and the broader public. These narratives show how revolutionary politics operated at both symbolic and practical levels in 1970s Turkey, providing context for the rupture that the 1980 coup would create.

4.2.1. The Legacy of '68: Revolutionary Icons and Political Consciousness

The 1960s marked a pivotal moment in Turkey's history of activism, mirroring global trends. This era saw significant milestones, such as the entry of the Workers' Party of Turkey into parliament with 15 deputies, a first for a socialist party in Turkey. Additionally, student leaders emerged as prominent national figures for the first time. Central to this transformative period were the '68 generation revolutionaries. Figures like Deniz Gezmiş, İbrahim Kaypakkaya, Mahir Çayan, Hüseyin Cevahir, and Ulaş Bardakçı²⁶, all university students played crucial roles. Although their lives ended in the late 1960s and early 1970s, their impact on political activism was enduring. The organizations they founded continued to operate into the 1970s, and these individuals, after their involvement in various armed conflicts or their executions, remained as spiritual beacons for these groups.

The legacy of the '68 generation powerfully shaped political consciousness among young activists in Turkey throughout the 1970s. For many participants, these revolutionary figures provided both inspiration and practical guidance for their own political development. Participant 1 stressed the importance of not forgetting the key figures of the '68 generation and their impact on the political activism of future generations. He recalled that in the 1970s he began to align with the political understanding of THKP-C²⁷, a leftist organization founded by Mahir Çayan. He added that his political activism was heavily influenced by the likes of Mahir Çayan, Hüseyin Cevahir, and Ulaş Bardakçı, and they have continued in the same vein since then.

²⁵ see Appendix 8.7

²⁶ see Appendix 8.7 more information for these figures

²⁷ THKP-C/ People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey was a leftist, revolutionary and armed organization active in Turkey in the early 1970s. The THKP-C was born out of the socialist and communist movements in Turkey in the late 1960s. The main goal of the THKP-C was the establishment of socialism in Turkey and the liberation of the working class. To this end, the THKP-C waged armed struggle against the state forces, the owners of big capital and the imperialist powers

Participant 3 also shared a similar sentiment, mentioning the killing of Mahir Çayan in Kızıldere²⁸ and the execution of Deniz Gezmiş as events that sparked his interest in the left.

Participant 3: “The killing of Mahir Çayan and the execution of Deniz Gezmiş and his friends drew us to the left, despite lacking a theoretical background. Our interest grew through environmental relationships, pushing us to read books and understand what was happening.”

Participant 3's research and inclinations pushed him to read books, investigate the reasons behind the actions of the '68 generation, and ultimately form the basis of his political identity. In parallel with participants 1 and 3, Participant 8 discussed how society saw the possibility of a different world through the uprisings led by the 68's revolutionaries, such as Deniz Gezmiş, Mahir Çayan, and İbrahim Kaypakkaya. These young people experienced a process in which they paid the price with their lives and initiated a process of equality, justice, and freedom. According to Participant 8, society inevitably embraced these people and their conscience, and these revolutionaries had a significant impact on shaping social perceptions and aspirations.

It is worth noting at this point that many participants interpreted the events of their childhood and youth in relation to their own causes. For almost all of the participants, the events of the recent past strongly inform the construction of their political identity. This leads them to see themselves as the heirs of the previous generation. In other words, these events of the past, which are important for them, are embedded in their memories like personal experiences and they shape their political consciousness in the light of these experiences. These memories seem to have a direct impact on the participants' definition of their own identities and political stances.

For some participants, the influence of these revolutionary figures extended beyond mere inspiration to shape concrete life choices and professional trajectories. Participant 10, while describing her journey of becoming politicized, reflected on the concept of being a "professional revolutionary", which she felt had a significant impact on the participants at the

²⁸ The Kızıldere Incident was an incident that took place on 30 March 1972 in the village of Kızıldere in the Niksar district of Tokat province in Turkey, which resulted in the killing of the leaders of the People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (THKP-C) in a clash with security forces. The incident started when the leader of the THKP-C, Mahir Çayan and his friends demanded that the death sentences of Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Arslan and Hüseyin İnan be overturned in return for the release of three British technicians and an American officer who had been kidnapped in 1971. As a result of the government's rejection of these demands, a clash broke out between Mahir Çayan and other members of the THKP-C and security forces on 26 March 1972 and as a result of the clash, everyone except Ertuğrul Kurucu, who is now an ex-MP, lost their lives.

time. Deniz Gezmiş had emphasized this idea in his defense in court before his execution and Participant 10 expressed that she had internalized the idea of dedicating her life to the revolutionary cause. However, she also noted the mistake of students at the time who viewed continuing their education as a petty bourgeois movement. She shared how this perception led some to abandon their studies in pursuit of serving the revolution, a sign of the power these ideal revolutionary images held over the choices and priorities of the younger generation.

This sentiment of reverence and commitment to the cause connects with Participant 11's recollections. Participant 11 recalled the sensitivity in society against the execution of Deniz Gezmiş. And also, how people would discuss where they would hide him if he came to their house.

Participant 11: "Deniz Gezmiş... Of course, I know him very well. He was captured and executed, and there was a sensitivity against this in society. At that time, it was so important that everyone, for example, talked about where we would hide Deniz Gezmiş if he came to our house. That's how we looked at the events back then."

This feeling is important because it shows the deep bond that the participants and the adults around them felt with these revolutionaries and to what extent the events of that period shaped their perspectives and feelings. The shared empathy and sense of responsibility towards the revolutionaries may indicate the impact these figures had on the political consciousness of the participants. The events learned by the participants, either as witnesses or by listening to them, support the formation of identity. At this point, it should not be overlooked that the memory of the events of '68 is still very vivid.

In their responses to questions about their initial politicization process, participants frequently expressed their observations about the impact of the revolutionaries of the '68 generation on themselves and on society in general. Their actions seem to have served to challenge existing social norms and structures and inspired others to envision and work towards a more egalitarian and just world. The influence of revolutionaries sometimes seems to extend beyond the immediate circle of political activists, encouraging a more widespread sense of participation and activism among the wider population.

The "revolutionary" image of the '68 generation reflected in the participants' narratives may have been critical to their politicization. Figures such as Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Arslan and

Hüseyin İnan, revered for their courage and sacrifice, emerged as powerful symbols of resistance and change. This admiration, combined with emotional responses to the events of the period within families and communities, profoundly influenced participants' political consciousness. The concept of “professional revolutionary” adopted by some participants underlines the influence of these revolutionaries in shaping participants’ political views and, with them, their life choices and identities. In essence, the legacy of the ‘68 generation went beyond inspiring political activism and became the catalyst for a transformative journey, leading many to a dedicated and passionate commitment to social and political causes.

4.2.2. Revolutionary Politics in Family Memory: Narratives of Resistance and Loss

The interviews revealed the enduring influence of key figures from the ‘68 movement, particularly Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Arslan, and Hüseyin İnan, on the participants' political consciousness and worldview. This realization led me to look more closely at one of the most significant events of that era: the execution of these three prominent figures. I asked participants, particularly about their childhood memories of this event and the reactions it elicited from their family members and other adults they knew. This question was integrated into the study to explore the role that such landmark events, and the individuals involved, play in social memory and historical understanding. This approach aligns with Halbwachs (1992), who highlights the importance of significant events in forming the centers of memory within societies, thus aiding in comprehending historical processes.

The decision to focus on these executions stems from their apparent importance in collective memory and history, as they frequently occur as symbolic and meaningful events that shape collective consciousness. Analyzing political executions offers deep insights into the social values, norms, and power dynamics of societies. The selection of this particular historical event is further justified by its prominence in collective memory – the execution of Deniz Gezmiş ranks as the 10th most remembered event in Turkish history between 1900 and 2013 (Narli et al, 2014).

All this underlines the importance of these events in social memory and demonstrates their impact on the social and political fabric of Turkey. In this context, it would not be incorrect to read September 12 as a chosen trauma for people with a leftist identity in Turkey. The emotional reactions to these executions across different segments of society suggest a form of collective trauma that may shape group identity. This aligns with Volkan's (2013) theoretical

framework of large group trauma. Volkan (2018) defines large groups as "thousands or millions of individuals who share certain sensitivities combined with specific emotional connections" (p.2). A large group trauma occurs when such a group experiences a collective wound that affects their shared identity - whether inflicted by external enemies or internal state violence. The victim group suffers due to significant losses, shame, humiliation, a sense of helplessness, and an inability to express themselves. Volkan (2018) particularly notes that when the members of a massively traumatized group cannot successfully navigate the mourning process resulting from their losses or reverse the feelings of shame, humiliation, and helplessness, this event can acquire the characteristic of a chosen trauma by the group. These chosen traumas become significant markers for the identity of large groups (Volkan, 2018).

In most cases, the emotional resonance of these executions extended far beyond politically active circles, touching families across different social and political backgrounds. Participant 6, recalls the reactions of his parents to the executions of 3 young revolutionaries Deniz Gezmis, Yusuf Aslan and Huseyin Inan. He recounts how his mother, who was illiterate, tried to understand the situation from newspaper pictures and prayed for the executed revolutionaries. His father, a social democrat CHP supporter, was upset upon learning about the executions. This may demonstrate the impact of the executions on individuals with varying political affiliations and how the event was perceived as a grave injustice.

Participant 6: "My family was deeply affected. My mother said to my father, 'Oh, they did wrong to these children, didn't they?' My father replied, 'Don't even ask.' He believed the value of Deniz Gezmis, Yusuf Aslan, and Huseyin Inan would be understood later and that they did nothing wrong. He told me to keep the newspaper covering their story, calling it a historical document. That left an impression on me."

Participant 6 shows the significance of the event in his life and how it left a mark on his political consciousness. It suggests that the emotional reactions of his family, particularly his father, influenced his understanding and perception of the executions and the leftist movement in general. Here, the family is shown to be one of the social frameworks of memory, with the participant's parents central to its transmission.

The father's comment that "*the value of these children will be realized later*" and that "*they have done nothing wrong*" is particularly notable. This indicates a prescient understanding of the historical significance of these figures and their actions. This perspective contrasts with

the official narrative of the time and points to a more nuanced public perception. The father's advice to preserve the newspaper as a historical document points up the significance attributed to this period and its actors. This act emphasizes the importance of collective trauma and the psychological tasks that future generations are expected to resolve (Volkan, 2018). The father, either consciously or unconsciously, passes on a sense of responsibility to his child, reflecting a shared emotional burden tied to the traumatic events.

Examining the newspaper reports from the day Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, and Hüseyin İnan were executed reveals a predominantly negative tone. For instance, *Hergün Newspaper* reported the event with the headline “Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, Hüseyin İnan Executed” and emphasized their rejection of religious counseling. It noted that Deniz Gezmiş, appearing exhausted, was assisted to the gallows and executed by the hangman kicking away the stool. Yusuf Aslan, described as pale and weak, was brought to the gallows second and had the rope placed around his neck by two hangmen. Finally, Hüseyin İnan, perceived as more fearful compared to the others, attempted but failed to kick away the stool due to his trembling legs. The report mentioned that their bodies were taken to the morgue and would be handed over to their families upon request (Hergün, 1972).

Recurring themes in the period's newspapers included the revolutionaries' rejection of religious counseling, detailed descriptions of the accusations and execution process, and emphasis on their “anarchic” actions against the state. Additionally, these reports focused on the slogans, last words and demeanor of Gezmiş, Aslan, and İnan during their executions. On the day of the executions, May 6, 1972, 20 newspapers highlighted their final slogans, such as "Long live Marxism, long live Communism," and "Down with imperialism." (Cumhuriyet, 2022)

The language used in these reports reflects the political and social atmosphere of the time and appears intended to evoke strong emotional reactions from readers. While some newspapers criticized the rejection of religious counseling, others concentrated on the details of the executions and the crimes committed, aiming to convince the public of the dangerous and radical nature of these revolutionaries. However, these official media narratives often contrasted sharply with participants' sentiment. Participant 20 highlights the widespread interest and sympathy towards the leftist movement and its leaders, even among ordinary people in a rural village. The sadness and disappointment felt when Deniz Gezmiş was

caught by the police may demonstrate the extent to which the '68 generation resonated with people from various backgrounds.

Participant 20: “Of course, I remember that period, especially the day of the execution. I'll never forget it. I think they hanged Deniz and his friends at around 4:30 in the morning. Around 5:30 or 6, I woke up when my mother kicked me. I got out of bed and asked her what was going on. She said they hanged Deniz and his friends, and you are still sleeping. My mother was an ordinary housewife, without any sharp political opinions. She was a CHP voter. The movement had such an impact that it even evoked sympathy in her. My mother's reaction was actually a reflection of the ordinary people in society. They saw a reflection of their own rebellions and a symbol of their own oppression in these events. This created sympathy. Of course, it had a significant effect on the development of the youth at that time. The 68 leaders had a significant impact on the shift of the youth movement toward the left and the spread of leftist thought, which we also see in the elections of the 78 generation²⁹.”

According to Participant 20's perception, his mother's reaction to the executions shows the reaction of ordinary people. Even people who are not politically engaged in the current political conflicts were deeply affected by the event, and this reaction was shared by others in the community. The statement by Participant 20's mother, immediately aligns Participant 20 with the executed revolutionaries. This interaction demonstrates the transmission of collective memory within family units, where significant historical events are not merely passed down as information but become embedded in intimate family dynamics and everyday interactions (Halbwachs, 1992). The mother's wake-up call transforms a political event into a personal moral lesson, illustrating how family relationships serve as crucial conduits for political consciousness. This also shows that the revolutionary actions and ideas were considered legitimate at least at a certain level by the adults surrounding the participant since they already sympathize with them.

The extent and manner in which the participants were influenced by their families' and communities' attitudes towards the leftist movement and the revolutionaries can be seen in various ways. The emotional reactions and conversations about the 1972 executions left lasting impressions on the participants, shaping their political views and activism.

Opposition to executions of political figures extends ideological boundaries in some families, demonstrating a more universal humanitarian response to state executions. Participant 22's father expressed opposition to both the execution of Adnan Menderes³⁰ (the prime minister of

²⁹ see Appendix 8.7

³⁰ see Appendix 8.7

the Democrat Party, a center-right political party, who was executed after the 1960 military coup.) as a supporter of the CHP (Republican People's Party), which traditionally aligned with center-left ideologies in 1970's.

Participant 22: "My father was both upset about Menderes' execution as a CHP supporter, finding it wrong, and I witnessed him crying while listening to the radio during the execution of Deniz and his friends."

This widespread emotional impact was documented beyond the participants' immediate circles. In Turkish actress Füsün Erbulak's autobiographical work, it is observed a widespread state of mourning that permeated various layers of society following the executions. Erbulak notes that the executions affected even her friends who were the least interested in politics, creating a general atmosphere of silence in society. She adds:

"...The next day, when I entered the backstage area, I found a few pictures of Deniz Gezmiş in his fur-lined parka tucked around the mirrors on the dressing tables. Everyone had gathered these photos from various sources, cutting them out of old newspapers and decorating the edges of the mirrors and the glass surfaces with pictures of the three young men. Outside the back exit, little boys played "Deniz Gezmiş" for hours, days, and weeks. They might still be playing even now." (Erbulak, 1990, p.257)

There is a broad-based empathy that underscores the social impact of the '68 generation. The deep sense of injustice felt over the execution of young revolutionaries resonated strongly with participants, their families, and various social circles. Participants grew up among adults who mourned the deaths of these young revolutionaries, cried for them, or planned to hide them in their homes to save them from certain death. They must have easily identified with the socially accepted, beloved, and respected revolutionary identity. This emotional connection to past events reveals a collective feeling that goes beyond individual experiences.

As these discussions developed, another interesting element directly linked to this sense of empathy emerged: "the revolutionary" images and narratives shared by the participants. Particularly notable were the accounts of participants who lived in rural areas or had significant experiences in these areas. These narratives went beyond a purely historical telling and began to take on an almost surreal, mythical quality. The transformation of political stories into the legend underlines the fascinating fusion of political history with regional folklore. This suggests that the influence of the '68 generation shaped political ideologies and was also embedded in cultural narratives and local myths, further shaping participants'

political identities and activism. This blend of historical events and legendary storytelling captures the profound and lasting impact of this period on individual and collective consciousness. The blending of mythic narratives with the narratives of revolutionaries in the 1970s signaled the way in which the public masses valued political activists and perhaps a unique form of politicization. Rooted in the cultural traditions of their regions, participants' stories show how political events and cultural influences worked together. The interviews bring together individual experiences and collective memories, showing how historical events are absorbed and reshaped by regional narratives.

The transformation of revolutionary figures into folk heroes was particularly evident in rural settings. Participant 9's account of the admiration for the 68 generation leaders, such as Deniz Gezmiş and Mahir Cayan, in their village demonstrates the power of storytelling in creating a sense of identification with these figures, even in the absence of direct contact or personal interaction.

Participant 9: "Let me give an example. Deniz and his friends had never been to our region, but there was a legendary story told about them, like a fairy tale, saying that they had come to our village, our villagers had given them food and water, sheep were slaughtered in their honor, and so on. They exaggerated and told the story as if they had protected them. Deniz and his friends were talked about as heroes, like folk heroes. I remember this from my childhood."

This phenomenon reveals how revolutionary figures became embedded in local memory and folklore through narratives that paralleled traditional tales of folk heroes challenging injustice.

These stories served as powerful cultural mechanisms that helped rural communities interpret and participate in the broader political movements of their time (Tanasoiu, 2005). The identification with revolutionary figures often took on deeply personal and cultural dimensions, particularly within minority communities. Participant 9's narrative may indicate a strong identification between the adults around him and the revolutionaries:

Participant 9: "They thought that Deniz and his friends were fighting for us. They were struggling for justice, for us. My mother even used to say that all the revolutionaries were Alevi. So, she would say that the revolutionaries were Alevi, they were one of us, and that's why the state was killing them."

Participant 9 observed that there was a strong sense of identification and solidarity between the adults around him and the revolutionaries, and at the same time, it is similar to the words of the woman in Erbulak's book, who is an apartment caretaker, after her son suffers a work accident (Erbulak, 1990, p.257). As Erbulak states, the woman believes that the revolutionaries are fighting for her son to be able to study and not to be condemned to a poor life. This indicates that the propaganda that revolutionaries were against class injustice was understood by at least a certain section of the population.

This identification mentioned by Participant 9 goes as far as saying that revolutionaries are subjected to violence because they are Alevis. Therefore, the words of Participant 9's mother also reflect a sense of victimization, suggesting that the state's actions against revolutionaries are reminiscent of the oppression of their community. This narrative shares similarities with the experience reported by Participant 12:

Participant 12: "We went to a village in Kütahya, it was an Alevi village. We were going to hold a rally. When we first went to that village, they told us that Deniz Gezmiş had come here. We were astonished and wondered how he could have come. Because at that time, we were in contact with Deniz's friends due to organizational matters, and we were talking to them. They said they had never been to those regions, but it had become a legend."

His experience in an Alevi village in Kütahya underlines this idea. The fact that villagers believe that Deniz Gezmiş visited their village, despite the fact that it is not based on reality, shows how revolutionary figures have gained a mythic status within some communities. This mythologisation might be an indication of the deep respect and admiration for the revolutionaries, elevating them to almost heroic status in local folklore.

It also shows how the legacy of these revolutionaries transcends their physical presence and actions and is woven into the cultural and social narratives of the regions. This incorporation of revolutionaries into traditional heroic narratives reflected deeper cultural patterns in Turkish society. Participant 15 underscores the importance of heroism in his community and the role it plays in shaping political activism. And he adds, the stories of Deniz Gezmiş, other revolutionaries and old traditional folk stories serve as a counterpoint to the dissatisfaction with the state, providing an alternative narrative of resistance and rebellion that resonates with the people.

Participant 15: “My parents used to tell the story of Koçero (An old folk tale has at its center a hero who takes up arms and goes to the mountains against the state authority), I vaguely remember it. For example, they would say that Koçero came to our house. The same people and the people in that region would also say that Deniz Gezmiş had been there as well.”

Tanasoiu argues that such political myths are not new creations, but rather adaptations of old narratives that have become embedded in the public consciousness (Tanasoiu, 2005.). As can be seen in the junction of the Kocero story with the story of Deniz Gezmiş and other revolutionaries, this new layer of stories in the context of heroism and rebellion provides a continuity of history between revolutionaries and former rebels, while at the same time giving them a cultural legitimacy.

Participant 15: “For example, they say that Deniz Gezmiş and Ömer Ayna from Diyarbakır came and talked with the local people there. They say they came from Diyarbakır to Batman and had conversations. In fact, Ömer Ayna's name is mentioned more often in those regions, and he is actually a Kurd from Diyarbakır. They say that Ömer Ayna came and talked with the Kurdish patriots, the elderly people there, had discussions, and collected theories.”

Interviewer: “So, is it known where this actually happened, or not?”

Participant 15: “No, I haven't seen or heard anything about it. As far as I know, there is no such information.”

Here, the traveling of Ömer Ayna and Deniz Gezmiş in Anatolia and their rapprochement with the people itself emerges as a myth. According to Tanasoiu, myth assumes that a fundamental truth is being told and therefore carries a deep symbolic meaning (2005). The stories of the members of the '68 generation are interwoven with local stories and reach remote villages by various routes. In them, villagers sometimes welcome these figures and sometimes protect them from law enforcement officers. Taken together, these narratives present a certain model of ethical behavior and draw on the basic values of the society (Tanasoiu, 2005).

The enduring impact of these revolutionary myths continued to shape social relationships even after the physical deaths of the '68 generation leaders. Participant 21's provides an important perspective on the role of the '68 generation in shaping social dynamics in Turkey, in 70's after they died.

Participant 21: “When people saw us back then(as a revolutionary), they would share their memories with the leaders of the 68 generation. This would bring us closer to the people.”

The prestige the '68 generation built around "revolutionism" helped socialize this participant as a revolutionary ten years later. As these interviews show, storytelling did much to create and sustain a shared identity and purpose. The legends and narratives surrounding the revolutionaries of the '68 generation, which are embedded in the cultural and social fabric of the communities, have done much to shape the political identities of the participants. Since being part of a political identity can also mean being part of a tradition, previous political figures that participants witnessed their families and adults around them endorsing drive the politicization process.

More than historical record, these stories became a form of cultural expression carrying the community's aspirations, struggles and resilience. For participants they served both as a reminder of the past and as a guide for future activism, encouraging them to continue their quest for justice and change.

4.2.3. The Complex Relationship Between Revolutionary Activists and the Public in 1970s Turkey

The 1970s in Turkey were marked by a vibrant yet turbulent period of revolutionary activism. This era saw a shifting relationship between activists and the broader public, characterized by both positive and negative interactions. According to Atilgan (2023), in the 1970s, the defining feature of the socialist left in Turkey was its widespread reach among the populace. Unlike the 1960s, when socialism began to spread among both urban centers and rural workers, the movement gained momentum and depth in the 1970s. This period saw socialist ideas and organizations penetrating rural towns and urban areas.

Children of the working class began to envision a new world through socialism, learning its ways, language, and culture. Atilgan (2023) also noted that, during this time, socialism embraced broader masses, its language, style, and modes of action became more accessible to the common people. In this section, this political environment, which appears quite different from today, will be analyzed through the perspectives of the participants. Insights into how these activists engaged with society and how they were received are gained through interviews with those who were part of these mass movements.

i. Building Trust and Rapport

Many participants emphasized the importance of establishing close relationships with the working class. Participant 5 explained her decision to move from her university dormitory to a poor neighborhood to connect better with the working class:

“Being the child of a working-class family, it was easier to communicate with them. Teaching their children and helping them brought me closer to these people.”

She recounted. This direct involvement fostered trust and respect, demonstrating a key aspect of revolutionary engagement: immersing oneself in the communities they aimed to support.

Participant 5: “They built shanty houses, and I supported them against demolitions. At 18-19 years old, I was amazed at how much these people trusted us and followed our lead.”

The trust placed in young activists like Participant 5 reflects a broader societal context open to change and responsive to revolutionaries. This trust was likely influenced by the activists' relatable backgrounds and their tangible contributions to the community. Participant 9 also emphasized the necessity of practical actions and direct involvement over mere ideological discourse. He stressed that addressing the everyday concerns of the people and establishing trust were crucial for developing unity between activists and the community. Participant 16, on the other hand, explained this style of activism with an example.

He illustrated the role of grassroots activism in gaining public trust. By intervening in local disputes and protecting community interests, revolutionaries became trusted problem solvers.

Participant 16: “After confronting the forester about people's problems, we told him to leave the villagers alone. Word spread that we solved their problems, and we became a trusted group,”

This direct engagement enhanced the activists' credibility and fostered a sense of solidarity between them and the public. In participant 18's view, revolutionary youth leaders served as moral exemplars whose actions and values shaped younger people's ethical development. For him, their commitment to sharing resources and opposing oppression demonstrated principles that influenced both students and teachers.

Participant 18: “In my school, youth leaders greatly influenced both students and teachers to support revolutionary ideas. Their actions, like distribution, sharing, and opposing oppression, left a lasting impact,”

This influence extended beyond ideological indoctrination to shaping perceptions and attitudes towards social justice and activism through exhibited values and behaviors. The relationship between revolutionaries and communities was forged through deep integration into working-class life, not merely through political organizing. For many activists, this meant completely reorienting their lives around revolutionary practice. This commitment was evident in Participant 7's experience of spending her summers working alongside community members to construct houses in working-class neighborhoods. While her own family was away on vacation, she and other student activists had devoted themselves to a housing construction project that would ultimately build 300 homes for families struggling with housing insecurity. During one particularly memorable night, she was offered a bed by a family who had nothing but bread to eat. Despite finding the bed infested with fleas, she chose to sit up all night pretending to read rather than embarrass her hosts by rejecting their hospitality. This practice of embedding oneself in working-class communities was widespread among revolutionaries of the period. As Participant 5 noted her attempt of leaving university dormitories to live in squatter settlements, and as Participant 10 noted many students choosing factory work over completing their studies, there was a broader movement of revolutionaries committed to transforming their entire way of life.

The hardships encountered in these situations - from flea-infested beds to homes without basic amenities - were not viewed as sacrifices to be pitied but as necessary steps in revolutionary practice and class consciousness. This conscious alignment of revolutionary ethics with the lived reality of working-class residents reached even into the smallest details of daily bodily life. Houston (2020) documents how techniques of the body, from movement and clothing to smoking habits, helped activists build intersubjective relations with residents. To avoid setting themselves apart from the people they hoped to organize, revolutionaries deliberately changed their everyday habits. Smoking Marlboro cigarettes, for example, was seen as elitist, so the activists smoked Birinci instead, a domestic, unfiltered brand. Some went further still, stripping the filters from other cigarettes, which they regarded as a luxury. Female activists likewise adapted their dress to the sexual ethics of both the residents and their own militant groups. They wore long skirts and parkas, and avoided makeup or any clothing that exposed the shoulders or cleavage. Activists treated these everyday practices as essential to getting their organization's message across, a way of showing solidarity through what they did rather than what they merely said. Taken together, these adjustments expressed a wider determination to act as moral exemplars within their communities (Houston, 2020).

This concern with moral example echoes Participant 18's observation that revolutionary influence reached beyond the purely ideological into the moral and ethical fabric of everyday life. Activists tried to embody the values they preached in their daily interactions with community members. By living among the working class and sharing in their struggles, revolutionaries like Participant 7 hoped to build emotional bonds while modeling the possibility of a different society. Their ideology rested on a defined set of values: equality, freedom, solidarity, emancipation, the cultivation of a strong and independent personality, and a commitment to help bring such a society into being. Presented as the shared goals of humanity, these values also carried a sense of moral superiority, letting those who embraced the revolutionary identity imagine themselves as the new people who would build a new world and future.

These efforts appeared to resonate with these communities. As Participant 7 notes, the activists' sacrifices and solidarity were often met with love and acceptance from local residents. Their willingness to share in people's hardships built credibility and trust, and won their political message a more receptive hearing.

ii. Respect and Fear: A Complex Interplay

However, the relationship that all participants established with the masses was not solely based on mutual trust and love. In the 1970s, the left, which was also involved in the prevailing political violence in Turkey as right-wing groups, also faced reactions of fear and apprehension from the public in response to their actions. Participants reveal a delicate balance between respect and fear in the public's perception of activists.

This tension between fear and respect manifested in daily interactions between revolutionaries and local communities. Some participants' observations captured this balance. Participant 10's observations emphasized this complex relationship in everyday community interactions. While activists were generally well-received and respected, there was an undercurrent of fear due to the potential for conflict, especially in politically tense areas.

Participant 10: "Everyone accepts revolutionaries into their homes... but at the same time they were naturally afraid because of the clashes between leftists and fascists,"

This coexistence of respect and apprehension captures the complex dynamic of the period, where the presence of revolutionaries brought both hope and potential danger.

Houston (2020) argued how this fear was not merely a passive sentiment but often rooted in concrete practices of territorial control. When groups established dominance in particular neighborhoods, they collected money, framed as “taxes” or “donations”, from local shopkeepers and small businesses, and could even conduct identity checks on strangers entering the area. Organizations would announce that shops must close for commemorations or strikes, forcing merchants to pull down their steel guards. These practices of intimidation, alongside solidarity work, created the ambivalent relationship participants describe, one where revolutionaries were simultaneously protectors and sources of anxiety.

This dynamic was not limited to community interactions, but extended even into prison environments. Participant 6 elaborated on this further, noting that even in prison, a place with its own strict hierarchies and norms, revolutionaries were addressed with respect:

“I was 21 years old when I went to prison, but people who were 40 years old and in prison for stabbing a man were calling me ‘Abi’³¹.”

This respect, intertwined with fear, suggests that the revolutionary identity carried a significant degree of prestige, possibly due to perceived courage and ideological determination, though the element of fear also points to a more uneasy form of deference, in which revolutionaries were regarded as figures to be wary of as much as admired.

iii. Challenges and Disconnects

Despite these positive interactions, some participants noted challenges in their engagement with the public. Participant 23 reflected on the limitations of their communication with the public, noting that while there was a level of trust, their ideological messages often lacked practical grounding.

Participant 23: “We used to go and tell the people the aims of our parties and associations. These words were never grounded.”

In this context, it would be correct to say that participant 23 saw the relationship between revolutionaries and the people as emotionally based and thought that a real ideological partnership could not be achieved due to lack of communication.

The challenge of connecting with broader segments of society manifested in the composition of revolutionary protests. Participant 17 points to another dimension of this disconnection,

³¹ meaning “older brother” as a term of respect

describing rallies that were predominantly attended by students with a noticeable absence of older generations. "*We used to hold rallies... there were no gray-haired men,*" he said. This lack of diversity among protesters spoke to the challenge of broadening their appeal and impact. The protest march for the unionization of bakers makes the same point: most attendees were university students rather than the workers themselves.

Participant 17: "When we organized that rally in Izmir, we were around 500 people in total. 50 of them were bakery workers and 450 of them were university students"

Lastly, the relationship between the revolutionaries and the groups they sought to politically mobilize was quite complex, characterized by emotional connections but in some cases lacking deeper ideological partnership. The period's pervasive left-right political violence further complicated these interactions, creating societal ambivalence towards the revolutionaries. However, despite these challenges, participants generally perceived their relationship with the public as positive, highlighting a hopeful and resilient engagement.

4.3. Instruments of State Power: Violence, Incarceration and Social Control

This section addresses RQ2 and RO2 by examining participants' accounts of how Turkish society and political landscape were transformed through systematic state violence following the coup. State violence emerged as a central theme across participants' narratives.

This section examines how systematic state violence repressed people immediately while also restructuring their social relationships. Through participants' detailed accounts of detention, imprisonment, and subsequent isolation, it becomes apparent that violence was employed by the military regime as a means of disciplining individual activists while also serving to reshape the relationship between political activism and Turkish society. The analysis traces how state violence worked through several interlocking channels - from physical torture in detention centers, to psychological manipulation in prisons, to the systematic severance of social bonds. These practices reshaped individual activists and, with them, the very fabric of Turkish society.

While revolutionary movements of the 1970s had established deep connections within Turkish society, the military coup of September 12, 1980, would brutally sever these bonds through unprecedented state violence. In the period that followed, approximately 650,000 individuals were detained, fundamentally altering the social structure that had previously nurtured political activism. Under martial law regulations, detention could extend up to 90 days, creating confusion over the timing and reasons for detentions. Detainees lacked any legal safeguards, with many subjected to torture, and some disappearing without a trace (Beris, 2022, p.225). This widespread violence was not limited to activists or participants; it was a terror shared across the country, transforming the very communities that had once embraced revolutionary movements. While some experienced this trauma first-hand, others learned about it through hearsay or witnessed the violence inflicted on others. The repression, torture, and isolation practices after the coup d'état deserve comprehensive examination, this analysis focuses specifically on how state violence reshaped the relationship between political activists and the broader society.

4.3.1. Systematic Violence in Detention

The systematic nature of state violence following the 1980 coup first manifested in the detention process - a system of torture and mistreatment that ensnared anyone who drew the authorities' attention. Whether caught in security sweeps, named during others' interrogations, or targeted for their political activities, detainees entered a world deliberately designed to break both body and spirit. Through survivors' testimonies, a clear pattern emerges of how the junta transformed police stations and detention centers into laboratories of violence, where physical and psychological torture served as instruments of state power.

The systematic nature of this violence is illustrated through the experience of Participant 1, who endured torture for two months. Participant 1, a political activist who spent 11 years in prison after his arrest three months after the coup, describes his experiences in detail. And he states that he was tortured for more than two months before his captors even became aware of who actually he is. The torturers operated under the presumption that he was a critical operative in a regional committee of a revolutionary organization, a supposition which served as their justification for the brutal treatment. According to Participant 1, the state was able to effectively dodge accountability, especially in cases leading to death under torture by maintaining ignorance of their captive's identity and delaying the recording of the statement. By not recording statements or correctly identifying detainees, the state creates a buffer against possible legal consequences, creating a cycle of violence that is protected from

scrutiny. This method facilitates ongoing torture and fosters a culture of fear that suppresses dissent. When Participant 1 was asked about one of his most vivid memories of the violence he experienced, he continued as follows;

Participant 1: "We were able to hear the screams of our comrades during their torture. My friend, for instance, yelled 'water' thrice before his life ended."

The most notable element of Participant 1's remarks is the impact of witnessing not only personal suffering but also the suffering of others, exemplified by his vivid memory of hearing his friend's last cries for water - a sharp reminder of the deep psychological scars left by such experiences of violence.

Building on the psychological trauma of witnessing violence described by Participant 1 reveal how detention centers implemented systematic physical and in some cases sexual violence. Participant 5's experience illuminates the reality of these practices. During her detention, she endured a range of physical tortures including electric shocks, hangings, and severe beatings. The violence extended beyond physical abuse - she and other detainees faced regular sexual harassment, molestation, and verbal abuse. Although she herself was not sexually assaulted, the threat of sexual violence was great at the detention facility, where two inmates were killed during torture sessions within a month.

The systematic violence described by Participant 5 worked on multiple levels - physical brutality was combined with psychological torment and sexual intimidation to create an atmosphere of complete domination. Participant 5 highlights the different methods that directly focus on detained activists psychology.

Participant 5: "The torturers even controlled our sleeping patterns. They would deliberately wake us up to torture or interrogate us. Their methods were designed to harm our mental health. When sleep was most needed, they would take us away immediately for torture. In the midst of all this, we would sometimes wonder with our fellow detainees, "How many days have we been here?" Once, upon the complaint of the relatives of a friend of ours who was killed during torture, a commission from Europe was to come to investigate. When we saw each other in this state, we couldn't help asking ourselves, "How much time has really passed?""

Participant 5 reveals the complex bureaucracy of hiding their atrocities from the world. The section on the expected visit of the European Commission paints a picture of a superficial show to cover up the atrocities taking place within the prison walls.

The European Council mentioned by Participant 5 is also referred to in Hamit Erhan Beris' (2022) work; according to Beris', the committee that came to inspect the prison was warned by a French-speaking prisoner about the 1-2-3 wards, which were notorious for their conditions. As a result, the Committee went directly to see these wards and immediately ordered their closure. (Beris, 2022, p.238).

But in Participant 5's account, more than bureaucratic struggles can be observed. Psychological torture through sleep deprivation, as stated by Participant 5, is a well-known form of torture frequently inflicted on prisoners (Reyes, 2007).

Cakal (2019) states that prolonged sleep deprivation is a recognized torture method in cases where it is combined with other methods such as threats. This technique may have been used to destabilize victims mental health, as evidenced by accounts of being forcibly awakened at unpredictable intervals for interrogation and torture. These tactics of interruption and disorientation are effective psychological tools used to break detainees' resistance and demoralize them.

The calculated patterns of psychological torture through sensory deprivation found another expression in Participant 4's ninety-day detention experience. From the moment of her arrest, she was subjected to a program of disorientation and brutality. The police immediately blindfolded her - a condition that would persist for the entire duration of her detention - before taking her to the sixth floor, which she later learned was designated specifically for torture. The physical abuse began immediately, combining severe beatings with bastinado torture that left her feet so swollen she could barely walk. After the initial phase of torture, she was moved to the fifth floor where other female detainees were held. The physical and psychological toll of this treatment was so intense that when she began missing her periods, she attributed it to stress, unaware that she was actually pregnant at the time.

The fact that Participant 4 was ultimately found not guilty and acquitted makes her ninety-day ordeal particularly revealing of how detention practices were designed not to extract information but to break individuals psychologically. As Leach (2016) argues, prolonged sensory deprivation through techniques like extended blindfolding serves to disorient victims and create a state of enforced helplessness. By depriving detainees of their primary means of understanding and navigating their environment, the practice creates a profound sense of vulnerability and dependency. This psychological torment worked in

concert with physical abuse, creating a comprehensive assault on both body and mind that left detainees in a perpetual state of uncertainty and fear.

While Participant 4 was answering questions about herself, she, like Participant 1, shifted to discussing scenes of violence committed against others and expressing her deep emotions about the suffering she witnessed.

Participant 4: "I tried to empathize with everyone's experiences. But there was this girl whose story was particularly distressing. She was barely 14 or 15 years old, an age I can never forget. Upon seeing her, I asked, 'You're so young, dear, why did they bring you here?'. Her response was simply, 'I don't know'. The first day, she was taken for interrogation and then again the following day. When she returned from the third day of interrogation, her face was beet red. I asked her, 'Did they beat you excessively?', she started crying. She had been violated. A girl of around 14 or 15 years old. A very beautiful girl, who was violated. She then cried and clung to me. An hour after she confided in me, they released her. There was no legal grounds for her detainment. I often wonder about the trauma that has been inflicted upon her, how did it shape her future life? We have many friends who have been sexually violated by the police. We were constantly threatened, including myself. In fact, they subjected everyone to this."

The abuse in detention centers served to inflict pain and also as symbolic acts of domination designed to demonstrate absolute power over detainees. This dynamic is illustrated in Participant 4's experience of torture. After refusing to give the statement demanded by police, she was subjected to a particularly cruel form of punishment - she was hung by handcuffs from a door in front of other detainees, forced to balance on her tiptoes for hours while the tight cuffs cut off her circulation. To add to this torture, she was denied food and water. During this ordeal, something unexpected occurred. A police officer secretly approached and slipped a biscuit into her mouth, telling her to eat it without letting anyone see.

The hanging of Participant 4 in front of the ward door also functions symbolically by reducing the victim to an object of punishment. This action further reinforces existing power dynamics by reminding all detainees of the consequences of defiance. On the other hand, a police officer giving a biscuit to Participant 4 attracts a lot of attention. While this may indicate that there are people close to leftist political ideas within the law enforcement forces, it may simply mean that some police officers do not find practices such as torture legitimate, or it may be interpreted as an advanced manipulation aiming to create confusion and dependency. This brief moment of perceived kindness stands in stark contrast to the relentless

violence of the detention center, creating a tense ambiguity for Participant 4, especially as her partner was being held in the same facility.

This underlying unease soon gives way to a deeper horror when she is confronted with the full extent of his suffering. Just before her release she see her partner severely weakened after his brutal torture revealed to Participant 4 the full extent of the violence inflicted on him, inciting in her a new emotions that she never felt before.

Participant 4: "I saw my partner when he was dragged out from the torture chamber, his condition was dire. He was the most brutally tortured individual at the Izmir Police Department. Seeing him in that state was deeply distressing. Although they kept me informed, seeing him was a whole different level of awful. His bones were protruding, veins bulging. His face was devoid of any blood. He looked so drained that I thought he wouldn't survive. He must have lost at least 20 kilograms. Two policemen were dragging him. A range of emotions I had never experienced before swept over me - hatred, a thirst for revenge."

Participant 4's narrative shifts from one of survival to a quest for justice. Her partners visible physical deterioration and extreme weight loss serve as evidence of the torture's severity. Witnessing his pain solidifies her resolve, turning her feelings of despair into anger and a thirst for revenge. While most participants describe their own or those of those around them's experiences and personal reflections of torture, Participant 4 reveals an additional layer of trauma: what it means to see a loved one dehumanized and hurt. This visual validation of her partner's suffering deepens her emotional distress and transforms her from a survivor of her own ordeal to a witness of extreme violence inflicted on someone she cares deeply about.

The feelings of hatred and revenge conveyed by Participant 4 highlight a darker and natural side of humanity in response to injustice and oppression. These intense and consuming emotions are often a psychological defense mechanism and provide a form of agency in situations where individuals feel overwhelmingly powerless. The desire for revenge can be seen as an attempt to regain some sense of control and balance over perceived wrongs suffered (Frijda, 1994).

The psychological impact of detention extended beyond individual experiences of violence to affect relationships between prisoners and their loved ones, as illustrated by Participant 14's experience of being detained alongside his partner.

Participant 14: “Just as with many others, we too suffered through unimaginable torture, which are familiar stories to many. The intensity of these tortures was extreme, especially so because my wife and I were detained together. This situation heightened the severity because they would continuously threaten, 'We're going to violate her in front of you.' Their aim was to extract information. This form of psychological torment was even worse than the physical torture inflicted upon us.”

His statement underlines the complex nature of torture, in which physical brutality is interwoven with psychological trauma. The threat of violating his wife in his presence was an attempt to breach his psychological defenses, a form of torture that went beyond the physical. This manipulation of personal relationships and weaponization of fear suggests a purpose larger than interrogation alone, one directed at the prisoner's deeper subjugation.

This weaponization of family bonds as a torture technique took on various forms across different detention facilities, often combining direct threats to loved ones with forced witnessing of violence against others. Participant 7 was held in Mamak Military Prison for two years alongside her father, a teacher, during the early years of her university education. Her testimony shows the impact of physical torture and the devastating psychological effects of witnessing violence to others. While threats against loved ones serve as a form of psychological torment, being compelled to observe the brutalization of fellow detainees inflicted similar, if not greater, suffering. Among the most harrowing moments she recalls is the violent death of İlhan Erdost, a well-known leftist publisher and fellow prisoner. Her account of his killing underscores how the terror within the prison extended beyond personal pain, creating an existential fear that shaped the experiences of all detainees.

Participant 7: “İlhan Erdost fell to the ground, and everyone was hitting him. All the soldiers... They were hitting him so hard that they got tired and pulled back. Another group of soldiers came and continued the beating. Meanwhile, our procedures were completed. They took us out of the cage and brought us to the dormitory. The next day, we read in the newspapers that İlhan Erdost had died. The newspaper said İlhan Erdost died of a heart attack. However, I wrote about this elsewhere and testified in court that I saw İlhan Erdost being beaten to death. But they said it was a heart attack. Today, we know the truth.”

For Participant 7, witnessing İlhan Erdost's murder was particularly impactful. İlhan Erdost, a renowned socialist of the period, provided both emotional and material support to Participant 7 during her torture. As a young woman in her early twenties, seeing trusted authority figures like her father and İlhan Erdost humiliated and overthrown by the Junta must have been deeply traumatic for her.

Beyond witnessing violence against others, prisoners faced relentless psychological pressure designed to break their resistance, as revealed in Participant 9's account of the systematic efforts to force detainees into submission. Participant 9 described the police's constant efforts to manipulate them. According to Participant 9, they were persistently urged to accept defeat and give in to the power of the "state". The police delivered incessant messages implying the futility of resistance. The 90-day torture period was intended to break their spirits and enforce acceptance of the authorities' supremacy. Such tactics, Participant 9 added, "*sadly succeeded in shattering many individuals' psyches*". Participant 9's statement almost reflects the picture of psychological warfare to demoralize the detained activists. This coercive persuasion, in which victims are encouraged to accept the superiority of the state, is perceived by Participant 9 as a calculated attack on their mental courage.

The systematic nature of this psychological warfare became particularly evident in specialized facilities designed specifically for breaking political prisoners' resistance. Participant 11's experience unfolds in the corridors of the "Derinlemesine Araştırma Laboratuvarı"(DAL) (Deep Research Laboratory), a space where conventional concepts of time cease to exist.

Participant 11: "You may have heard of DAL. The Ankara Security Directorate had a separate department called DAL. After 12 September, when I was arrested, I was first taken there. DAL stands for Deep Research Laboratory. And it was opened during the 12 September period. There were no lights there either. There were only lights in the corridors, but really, the concept of time, the concept of the day, etc. ends. You can't perceive it anymore. I mean, I couldn't perceive time at all. I can't remember how long I was in the Palestinian hangar, how long the bastinado lasted, how long the electric torture lasted. It's not possible to remember these things. Was it day or night? I don't know whether another day has passed or not."

In 2010, during the Parliament's Coup Investigation Commission hearings, some victims of the September 12 coup recounted their experiences of torture and mistreatment to the members of parliament. Former Dev-Genç³² Chairman Bülent Forta described this infamous "research laboratory" as follows:

"During the 180 days I spent at DAL, the torture chamber beneath the Ankara Police Headquarters, nearly six people died while I was being interrogated. All of these deaths were due to torture." (Beris, 2022, p. 228)

³² see Appendix 8.7.

It is sure that very severe and systematic torture was carried out in DAL, one of the most notorious torture centers. Her disoriented recall of events, of not being able to discern day from night, the duration of tortures, epitomizes the dislocation and dehumanization victims were subjected to. This points to the psychological ramifications of such experiences, inducing a sense of unreality and disconnection from the self.

This systematic disorientation and psychological torture was replicated across multiple detention facilities during the junta period. Participant 22, later charged with membership of an illegal organization and spent 5 years in Diyarbakir military prison, where some of the most brutal practices in Turkey were carried out, shifts the focus to another famous torture center, Diyarbakir Prison. These prisons also operate as centers where people who have not been convicted are kept, interrogated and tortured.

Participant 22: "They arrested me in Diyarbakır without bringing me to court. Within six months I was subjected to all kinds of torture that I can't imagine in my life. I mean, I'm very sorry. I was subjected to all kinds of torture you can think of, from electrocution, to stabs in the anus and mouth, to Palestinian hangers. And we didn't know whether we were underground or not, we didn't know what day it was or when it was. I had already set my mind on death. A soldier came at three in the night. My head was heavy. I looked up and saw that the boy was crying. He told me to resist for a day or two more. He said, "Look, I'm a Revolutionary Fighter, I'm from Trabzon. Resist for one or two more days and you will be saved, of course, this word gave me strength. Indeed, two days later they released me."

The catalog of tortures he endured shows the extreme physical harm that state violence can inflict. However, it's his mental state – an acceptance of imminent death – that truly underlines the deep psychological impact of such experiences. His story also opens a window into the experiences of a revolutionary who was performing his mandatory military service during the military coup. This revolutionary from Trabzon witnessed the intense torture endured by people who shared his beliefs and tried to support Participant 22 as much as he could.

A commonality across participants' accounts is the pervasive uncertainty and disorientation the victims experienced. This tactic, intentional or otherwise, served to gradually erode their sense of agency and exacerbate their vulnerability. From the imposed sleep deprivation recounted by Participant 5 to the manipulative psychological tactics described by Participant 9, the methods employed in detention centers disrupted detainees' perception of time and space, suggesting a systematic effort to diminish their capacity to resist.

4.3.2. Prison as an Instrument of Transformation

The period following the military coup on September 12, 1980, marked a new era for Turkish prisons. The systematic nature of prison violence is evidenced by the official records from this period. According to Beriş (2022, p.225), there were 366 suspicious deaths in custody, including 299 fatalities in prisons and 43 documented suicides. Testimonies from detainees, later included in the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's 2012/2 indictment, revealed the systematic use of identical torture methods across all detention centers and military prisons. These included standardized torture techniques, consistent patterns of official behavior, and methods like "mix-and-reconcile" to eliminate hostility between right and left-wing detainees (Ankara Cumhuriyet Başsavcılığı, 2012). This uniformity of practices across facilities indicates that torture was deliberately and systematically applied during this period. Those imprisoned in the 1980s endured these systematic practices, bearing lifelong physical and psychological scars. Yılmaz (2013) describes prisons as power laboratories, suggesting that through prisons, the state could influence all areas of life. Prisons, through their isolation practices, immobilize "dangerous" individuals in society. Moreover, the absolute authority of prisons over inmates aims to reshape them (Yılmaz, 2013 p.16-24).

The experiences of prisoners in these facilities varied based on timing and location, revealing how the penal system evolved over the coup period. Participant 3, who had already been incarcerated before the September 12 coup, provides insight into these shifts. He notes that while there was a certain level of discipline in prisons before the coup, the level of repression was relatively lower compared to what followed. Unlike the extreme conditions in military prisons such as Mamak, Metris, Diyarbakır, and Antep, he recalls that severe torture was not a defining feature of his prison experience. However, he acknowledges that the coup brought changes to the prison system, although he and other inmates actively resisted some of these oppressive measures.

Participant 3 provides a comparative perspective between the different prisons, such as Mamak, Metris, Diyarbakır,³³ and Antep. Since those prisons were all military prisons, the prison staff was composed of soldiers. Although they were initially opened only for the rehabilitation of military criminals, after the military memorandum of March 12, 1971, they began to accept civilian prisoners as well. Military prisons ceased to exist in the late 1980s

³³ see Appendix 8.7

when they were handed over to the Ministry of Justice and today there are no longer any such prisons. However, during the period following the military coup d'état of September 12, 1980, the prisons where the most systematic and brutal tortures were carried out are known to be the prisons where the soldiers were in charge. Although torture was the norm in every police station and prison in the 1980s, as participants emphasized, the violence practiced in military prisons still holds a special place in the memory of Turkish society today.

Kukul (1998) explains that the 12 September fascism implemented its policies of depoliticizing and subjugating revolutionary prisoners mainly through the experiences gained in Metris, Diyarbakır, and Mamak prisons. The lessons learned and results achieved in these prisons were subsequently applied to other prisons across the country.

It can be said that almost all participants felt that the state was waging a psychological war against activists in prison. Rather than a retrospective epiphany, this is something that the participants understood and tried to counter while in prison. In the interviews of the participants, one can see that most prisons are the site of a relentless struggle between prisoners and the prison administration. Participant 1 says, "*In prisons, once you bow your head, you can't raise it again. We tried not to bow our heads.*" These words are an indication of the oppressive environment in prisons, but he also contains a metaphor for submission and resistance. In this context, the act of keeping one's head up represents the preservation of dignity and selfhood even under extreme pressure. It points to a form of psychological resistance. According to Participant 1, the price of submitting to the prison administration is that one will never walk around with one's head held high again. This statement implies being broken by state violence, a new psychological position of passivity and submissiveness. It is something that many participants felt and tried to resist in order not to surrender. This resistance to psychological submission emerged as a widespread survival strategy across different facilities. Participant 9 who held in Buca Prison for 7 years, also underlines a similar situation;

Participant 9: "The more they tried to silence us, the louder we shouted. They failed to silence us. In the prisons I was in, when the soldiers failed to silence us, they introduced uniforms. In other prisons they were successful in getting the prisoners to accept the uniform. But because we were organized, we came together and decided not to wear uniforms. In other words, we decided to fight back if there was an attack."

Participant 9 speaks to the suppression of voice and identity, but also to the resilience of the prisoners. This statement refers both to the repressive conditions and to the determined resistance of the prisoners. Violence in prison seems to be perceived as being directed against the psychological makeup of prisoners rather than their physical integrity. For this reason, the primary concern of many participants is to preserve their psychological - mental - state rather than their physical health. The enforced uniform clothing policy can be seen as a strategy to erase individual identities and impose conformity. Yet, the prisoners' organized refusal to comply signifies their refusal to be dehumanized.

The psychological stakes of this resistance became particularly apparent in how prisoners interpreted their choices to comply or resist. This is where Participant 18's words take on a deeper meaning.

Participant 18: "But the one who doesn't resist is actually more oppressed because it's not enough just to make concessions to the soldier. You have to give him your identity completely. You have to say I surrender completely. Surrender is not enough either. They almost drive people to suicide. Those who don't resist become depressed people. But people who resist experience brotherhood, friendship, and sharing. They continue to stand upright in front of their family. Of course, his family sees him, respects him, comes and joins the resistance. For example, I know this for Metris. I was an inmate representative in Metris for many years, so I have witnessed many families doing this."

Participant 18 reveals the deep psychological cost of submission to authority, suggesting that such submission can lead to extreme despair and even suicidal tendencies. He emphasizes the necessity of resistance, not only as a political act, but as a survival strategy. The solidarity and sense of community described here - brotherhood, friendship, sharing - are important aspects of resilience in the face of violence and humiliation and it shows the healing power of social support. It is worth noting at this point that prisoners who resist are appreciated by their political groups, by their families and often even by society at large.

Hülya Göğərçin Toker (2023) also emphasized and expanded on this and stated that those who resist in prison or during interrogation gain respect of their own political groups and also of groups with opposing views. While resistance could foster resilience through solidarity, the regime developed particularly refined methods of psychological control in military prisons. Participant 5, who was held in Mamak military prison for nearly two years sharing the details of the systematic physical and psychological torture inflicted on the prisoners. Upon

entry, she describes a scene where the male prisoners were forced to stand upright and chant military marches.

Participant 5: “Upon arrival, we were confronted with a horrifying scene. For instance, the Tenth Year Anthem and other military marches were being played. Male prisoners, their hands at their sides in readiness. They all stood upright with their heads up - it was forbidden to look down. They were marching in military formation. They were made to chant these military marches. We women resisted the prison administration. But of course, the cost was heavy... In the middle of the night, these marches would be played loudly over the loudspeakers. Because of this, some of our friends went into shock. Especially those who were lying close to the loudspeaker.”

Participant 5's account of Mamak Military Prison exemplifies the systematic physical and psychological torture inflicted on prisoners. She highlights how compulsory military rituals, such as singing hymns and marching, were used as tools of psychological domination to instill a regime of fear and obedience among inmates. While the oppressive regime within the prison persisted, it is evident that resistance could only produce positive outcomes if prisoners pushed their mental and physical limits and paid significant costs.

Moreover, the description of military marches being played loudly in the middle of the night points to the use of sensory manipulation, a form of psychological torture designed to disrupt sleep and create a persistent state of stress and disorientation (Leach, 2016). The impact of this tactic is damaging, as Participant 5 notes in mentioning fellow prisoners going into shock, especially those in close proximity to the loudspeakers. This points to the direct physiological impact of such exposure and, beyond that, to the pervasive environment of terror within the prison. Participant 5 continues, giving a description of the standing "coffin"³⁴ cells where prisoners were held after participating in hunger strikes.

Participant 5: “After our hunger strikes in prison, we were kept in cells we referred to as "coffins" that were one meter by one meter wide. There's a small hole up high in the coffin and a door. They give us a bucket for our bathroom needs, and they would usually cram too many people in there, not just one. There were three of us inside. If one person was resting by sitting, then only that person sat, rested. Two people were standing. In our cell, we had a friend. She was quite large. And I'm not petite either. Apart from her, there was a friend of ours who had tuberculosis. We wanted to let that friend rest more. It was indeed difficult. We were barely able to use

³⁴ Coffin cells (tabutluk in Turkish) refers to extremely small, narrow isolation cells used in Turkish prisons after the 1980 military coup to punish or psychologically break political detainees. Often devoid of light and ventilation, these cells became symbols of torture and state repression during the military regime of the early 1980s.

the toilet, we were doing it into the bucket, it was spilling and flowing everywhere. And we were eating our food there.”

Although the term "coffin" is used specifically to emphasize the small size of the cells, it also represents the threat of death that these conditions carry. With poor sanitation and over-crowdedness, the prisoners lived in poor conditions that epitomize inhumane treatment. Participant 5 also wanted to emphasize that many people with right-wing views in Mamak prison were subjected to significant torture like left-wing prisoners. Toker (2023) noted how activists with different views can easily empathize with each other when they are subjected to similar mistreatment. This shared experience of pain and oppression transcends ideological divides and creates a bond of empathy between activists from otherwise disparate views. In environments where systemic abuse and psychological torture are common, such as prisons, individuals often find common ground through collective adversity.

This atmosphere of brutality and shared suffering set the stage for the deeply dehumanizing practices that defined daily life in Mamak, as Participant 7 describes.

Participant 7: “Upon admission to Mamak Prison, as I have previously expounded, they wholly divest you of your human essence. Their intention is to alienate you from your existence as a human and transmogrify you into an object. You are now an entity, no longer your previous self. This sensation pervades you initially in the entrance cages. These enclosures, even prior to being quartered in the dorms, ostensibly serve this purpose. At the initial ingress to the prison, there were two vastly large cages, and the convicts were sequestered within these. In actuality, the habitats for beasts within a zoo are demonstrably more humane. Consequently, you are comparable to a captive creature. Those lurking around you, assaulting and slandering you, the soldiers, induce a sensation that you have entirely ceased to be a human entity.”

As Participant 7 pointed out from the moment of entry, prisoners are subjected to objectification, which is an attempt to extinguish their humanity and render them non-human. The reference to the “entrance cages” points to a practice not found in other prisons but Mamak Military Prison. This dehumanization has been likened to the treatment of animals in a zoo, but to Participant 7 even this comparison falls short, as the prisoners' conditions are worse. This image of the prison as a space where human dignity is consciously denied offers a poignant critique of the state's use of prisons as a tool for political repression.

The psychological consequences of such an experience can be serious. When people are stripped of their identities and treated as nonhuman, they may begin to lose their unique sense

of self-worth and autonomy. The environment deliberately induces a situation where the prisoners' self-perception is aligned with the inhumane perspective imposed by their captors. Participant 7 later describes the soldiers in the counting squad who tortured them as "psychopathic types," and thinks that they were deliberately selected. This statement shows that participant 7 feels herself in some kind of sadistic mise-en-scène.

According to Participant 7 and Participant 12, conditions in Mamak military prison are strictly controlled to ensure a high level of isolation among prisoners. Prison rules explicitly prohibit inmates from communicating verbally or even nonverbal interactions such as eye contact with each other. This strict policy is vigilantly enforced by a large network of military personnel who monitor the prisoners' activities around the clock. These guards number in the hundreds and are stationed to monitor every movement and ensure that the rules are followed without exception. Any prisoner found violating these strict regulations faces immediate and harsh repercussions, often including severe physical beatings. This regime of strict surveillance and punitive measures ensures that, despite the potentially large number of prisoners, each individual remains isolated from the others, effectively preventing the possibility of forming supportive social bonds or cooperative groups. This enforced solitude serves to maintain a pervasive sense of vulnerability and helplessness among the prison population, reinforcing the complete control exercised by the prison authorities.

Participant 7 further details an ontological crisis caused by the oppressive conditions in prison. The claustrophobic environment and constant threat of violence caused her to feel a disconnect from her past life.

Participant 7: "Within the claustrophobic confines of the prison, your prior existence strays to such a distant place that it becomes impossible to convince yourself that you were that cherished individual on the outside. It is not you. You are not an individual. Your previous life is already far detached. As if you are ensnared within a dream. And we were devoid of identities. We were anonymous."

It is possible to get the impression that the violence used here is not the result of unprovoked anger or to "rehabilitate the inmates", but is in fact intended to have precisely this effect on them. What almost all participants are trying to avoid is actually distancing themselves from their former selves. Distancing "trouble-making" activists from who they used to be, turning their former active and powerful presence into a memory that is difficult for them to recall, seems to have been the main purpose of junta-era prisons and their practices.

Scarry's analysis highlights that torture is a tool of domination that goes beyond direct physical and psychological damage to encompass broader social impacts that reshape identities, cultures, and social structures (Scarry, 1985). As Participant 7 indicated, the prison conditions compel participants to reevaluate their past lives, worldviews, and their place in the world. Yet what Participant 7 describes did not end with the individual. Survivors' accounts point beyond the prisoner to the wider society, a dimension Participant 20 brings out in his reflection on Mamak Military Prison:

"Mamak Prison is not a prison built for serving your sentence. It is a place aiming to intimidate the audience you address in your presence, to crush, suppress, annihilate."

His narrative underlines that the prison acts not only as a place for punishment but also as a symbolic institution designed to silence society. Here, participant 20 defines violence not between the perpetrator and the subjected to the violence, but between the subject and the witness. David Riches (1988) states that violence is a cultural phenomenon and that it also carries the power to transform the cultural and social structure. As Participant 20 stated, state violence goes beyond political activists and rebuilds social habits and norms. Everyone should know that there are high costs for being interested in politics in this new society. Participant 20 concludes by pointing out the intended outcome of this oppressive system: *"They are trying to make you unable to oppose anything anymore in there."*

This statement actually reveals the effects of the military coup of September 12, 1980. The words of Participant 20 give clues about how exposure to violence or watching a group in society being exposed to violence can deeply affect the way an entire society thinks and behaves. The implementation of this social control strategy became evident in the daily prison routines, where large group symbols and military practices were systematically deployed as instruments of torture. Participant 7's account describes how these practices were structured into the daily life of prisoners. Guards would regularly approach inmates and command them to recite specific stanzas from the National Anthem or Atatürk's Address to Youth³⁵.

³⁵ Atatürk's Address to Youth (Gençliğe Hitabe) is a speech written by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1927 and included in his Nutuk (The Great Speech). It calls upon Turkish youth to safeguard the Republic and its founding principles against both external and internal threats, symbolizing the transmission of national responsibility to future generations.

These weren't simple recitations but rather intensive examinations that could last up to forty minutes. Each dormitory was allocated a book containing these national texts, and prisoners were held accountable for memorizing its contents. According to Participant 7, the book became visibly worn from constant use as prisoners were forced to study and repeatedly recite its contents in front of soldiers on duty. This compulsory engagement with large group symbols dominated their daily existence.

The ill-treatment related to large group symbols can be said to be systematic as it is practiced similarly in many prisons, even though it is not officially recognised as serving a specific purpose. Although prisoners have different personal relationships with these symbols, these practices all have the potential to leave a mark. Firstly, prisoners who have formed positive relationships with these symbols may find that their feelings of belonging are exploited and turned into sources of stress and potential punishment. On the other hand, it is also plausible to suggest that prisoners who are neutral or distant towards these symbols may position their identities even further away from them after experiencing this humiliation.

While the impact of forced engagement with large group symbols varied among prisoners, the junta also employed other ideological tools, as seen in Participant 15's experience. Participant 15, who is held in Elazığ Prison, explains that he is forced to attend religion classes every Friday instead of traditional Kemalism classes. This shift in the courses to which participants are required highlights the various ideological enforcement strategies used in different prisons across the country.

According to Ozdemir, the "Religious Culture and Ethics" course, along with other cultural subjects like Citizenship, was conducted for all detainees and convicts in prisons between 1981 and 1991. These general culture courses were removed from the curriculum in 1991, leaving only the "Religious Culture and Ethics" course, which continued as an optional subject from 1991 to the present (Ozdemir, 2006). However, aside from Participant 15, who was held in Elazığ Prison, and Participant 23, who was in Diyarbakir Prison, other participants did not mention the existence of these courses. While structured prison education programs varied across facilities, the use of large group symbols and patriotic rituals as tools of coercion remained consistent, as shown in Participant 20's experience in Mamak Prison. Participant 20, who had been incarcerated for 11 years, including 7 years in Mamak Military Prison, gives an account of his experiences.

Participant 20: “I mean, you had to memorize certain things. Whether you want to or not, it gets imprinted in your brain. You keep listening and listening, and even if you don't want to, you end up knowing it by heart. Eventually, it got to a point where we had memorized all 10 stanzas of the National Anthem. Even if you don't want to, you just memorize it.”

The practice of forced memorization of ideological content in prisons appears to have potentially influenced individuals with established political identities, seemingly challenging their beliefs and possibly affecting their self-perception. These experiences suggest that such practices could have implications for psychological wellbeing and political engagement both during incarceration and after release. Drawing parallels to these experiences, the overarching pattern seems to involve a systemic attempt to manipulate prisoners' identities. The instances of physical torture serve to discipline, instill fear, creating an environment of absolute power and domination. Meanwhile, the attempts to impose ideological conformity seem aimed to reshape prisoners' (political) identities.

The treatment of high-ranking officials in prison, as described by some participants, provides another dimension to understanding the prison experience during this period. Participant 22 describes the horrific scene of his brutal entry into the penal institution. In the process, he describes the shocking mistreatment of Mustafa Kılıç, a former Minister of State of Kurdish origin, who was forced to crawl on all fours, underlining the military junta's ruthless dominance and its ability to subjugate anyone, regardless of their former status. In the narratives of Participant 22, it is seen that, like many other participants, large group symbols are used as an instrument of violence.

Participant 22: “The walls had the words of the National Anthem written on them, or there were chauvinistic writings. There was an old man from Hakkari, around 70 years old, we called him Kalu, which means grandfather in Kurdish. They brought the man in by beating him. He was almost 2 meters tall. He didn't know Turkish. They called me to teach Kalu the National Anthem. They said he didn't know Turkish and couldn't memorize it. We told him it would be enough to memorize just one verse. We studied with this man for two days non-stop, and he kept cursing Mehmet Akif Ersoy [the author of the National Anthem]. He wished that Ersoy had written it shorter. They beat him so badly that I don't know if he survived.”

Like Participant 22, Participant 23 who stayed 13 months in the Diyarbakir Military prison, also discussed the plight of individuals who struggled with the Turkish language and were unfamiliar with national anthems. As he stated, “... *mostly Kurdish inmates or those of non-Turkish origin, faced an even more challenging predicament*”. Their lack of linguistic

fluency presumably made them more vulnerable to severe punishments. In that sense, the torture that 70-year-old Kalu, as participant 22 noted, endured can be seen as a striking example of the forced assimilation tactics implemented by prison authorities. However, imposing the recitation of the National Anthem on an elderly Kurd who already does not know the language points to more than just an effort to assimilate the Kurds in prison by teaching them Turkish. It may demonstrate how the Turkish language was weaponized in the prison setting. Forcing Kurdish prisoners, who already don't know Turkish, to say words in a language they don't understand could potentially increase their alienation and hostility towards the unfamiliar language. This instance may provide hints about how the state, in its attempt to erase the Kurdish identity in prison, might inadvertently have reinforced it (Every, 2013) . Beriş argued that it is a fact accepted by many people even today that the tortures experienced in Diyarbakır Prison after September 12 were the reason why the PKK gained ground in the region (Beris, 2022, p.234; Parlak, 2023, p.279).

Beyond language-based oppression, prison guards deployed diverse physical torments, as survivors' accounts reveal. Participant 22's account of torture in prison also illustrates the creativity used by the guards. He recalls being forced to lie naked on the icy ground in the prison yard and, when he resisted, being dragged and repeatedly shoved into a cesspool. Despite these severe tortures, participants from Diyarbakır Prison (22,23) particularly emphasize an infamous humiliation ritual involving the prison administrator Esat Oktay Yıldırım's dog Joe.

According to Participant 23, this dog became a powerful symbol of the prison's dehumanizing regime. During daily roll calls, prisoners were forced to participate in a degrading ceremony where they had to stand at attention and salute the dog as if it were a superior officer. Each prisoner was required to formally introduce themselves to the animal and address it as "sir." The ritual was designed for maximum humiliation - prisoners who failed to maintain perfect composure or show adequate respect to the dog were severely beaten.

This incident emerged repeatedly during Participant 23's interview, clearly marking it as one of his most psychologically scarring experiences from his imprisonment. The fact that prisoners were forced to demonstrate subservience not just to their human captors but to an animal represents a particularly calculated form of degradation. This practice stands out even among the many brutalities of Diyarbakır Prison as an example of how the regime worked to

systematically strip prisoners of their dignity and sense of human worth. And Participant 23 conveys the effect of this cruel insult on him as follows;

Participant 23: “I mean, I'm not someone who believes deeply in God, but that day, I laid down and swore in the presence of God. They made me salute a dog. Look, I'm a Marxist-Leninist man. I value reason and logic. If they had presented sensible and logical reasons and I was wrong, I would see and accept it. But by forcing me to salute a dog, these people demonstrated that they were beneath a dog. If I am (he is telling his name), if I don't continue this struggle, then damn me a thousand times. I told myself this.”

For Participant 23, this enforced degradation turned feelings of humiliation and anger into renewed political fervor and a firmer sense of identity. Humiliation of this kind can harden political identities, turning personal anguish into a sharper, more defined sense of purpose. Frijda defines revenge as a very effective method for victims to regain the control they have lost and to convince themselves that they will no longer have to submit to the power of others (Frijda, 1994). In that context, Participant 23's internal response, to curse himself if he does not continue his fight, tells how deeply the humiliation affected him, fortifying his resolve rather than crushing his spirit.

One of the significant revelations during the interviews was the collaboration between mental health professionals and the junta. Participant 8 states that professionals such as psychiatrists Ayhan Songar and Turan İtil used their expertise within the prison walls. That they offered their services to state actors is a claim that is widely discussed in Turkey, especially among socialist circles. Their actions were also reflected in the media. According to Parlak (2023), Prof. Mehmet Bekaroğlu, who worked as a psychiatrist in prisons after the 12 September coup stated in an interview with *Gazete Duvar* that the military regime viewed political prisoners as misguided individuals who needed correction. He mentioned that hypnosis was even suggested as a method to treat communism (Parlak, 2023; p.273). The rehabilitation committee included not only psychiatrists but also teachers, psychologists, sociologists, and theologians (Güleç, 2017). It is claimed that their work included applying chemical drugs on other activists, and conducting various experiments (T24, 2011; Gökdemir, 2019). Nevzat Tarhan, one of the named psychologists, has denied all the allegations against him (Tahincioğlu, 2024). However, psychiatrist Turan İtil did not deny the work he had done in prison, and gave statements to newspapers about it (Nokta Dergisi, 1985).

The survivors' testimonies record how prison authorities conducted psychological experiments on detainees without their consent, marking another dimension of the systematic violations in Mamak prison. Participant 11's account provides detailed insight into these practices. She describes how prisoners were collectively subjected to a psychological survey that no one felt able to refuse. The survey included numerous intrusive questions about sexual orientation, alongside various cognitive tests including a complex geometric drawing task.

The prisoners, recognizing these tests as potentially dangerous tools for psychological profiling, developed collective resistance strategies. Participant 11 describes how they would discuss the tests among themselves and deliberately provide false answers, particularly to questions about sexual orientation. However, when it came to the geometric drawing task, her response revealed a different calculation. As a science graduate with strong geometry skills, she chose to complete this section correctly, concerned that poor performance would reinforce negative stereotypes about leftist activists' intellectual capabilities.

The nature of these experiments becomes particularly significant when considering that the test subjects were not randomly selected - the authorities specifically targeted prisoners who had held leadership positions in political organizations. While Participant 11, speaking forty years after the events, cannot recall all specific questions, the emphasis on sexual orientation in the questioning and the inclusion of cognitive testing suggests these experiments were designed to develop psychological profiles of political activists.

The last anecdote from Participant 11 is very important for understanding the perspective of Raci Tetik, the Director of Mamak Military Prison. Participant 11, who was unable to retrieve her identity card from the prison administration upon leaving Mamak Prison, had to live without an identity for many years, as she didn't want to return to the place where she underwent horrific tortures. When her identity card wasn't delivered to her husband and family members, despite her great anxiety and discomfort, she had to return to Mamak Military Prison to retrieve it.

Participant 11: "I went to the office of the inner security chief and I explained my situation. He was new there, he didn't know about the past period, the period when identities were collected, so I had to explain. He couldn't understand why my ID was still in the prison and he asked his colleagues who might know about it. I said 'Ismail, the guard would know'. He called a couple of officers, but they also said, 'We don't know'. Then, when Ismail the Guard came, he confirmed that IDs were collected at one point. After that, they asked me, 'Do you want to speak to Raci Tetik?'. I said,

'Sure, if it's going to solve the problem'. You might have heard of Raci Tetik, he was the Prison Director, quite a notorious guy. Then, the inner security chief took me to him. It was a peculiar moment. The guy... I mean, as soon as I walked through the door, he got up from his desk. This was the man who tortured us, and he stood up from his desk, walked to the middle of the room, met me there, and shook my hand, can you believe it? And we started talking. I started explaining my problem, that I didn't have my ID, that our IDs had been taken, and that I wanted my ID back. After he listened to me, he rang the bell. A lieutenant came to the door. He told him to write a note saying, 'XXXs ID has been taken by the prison, but it cannot be found. Please take the necessary action'. Meanwhile, he was trying to chat with me. I didn't even listen to him to avoid responding, his talks were going in one ear and out the other. Then he said something; 'When I came to this prison, the eyes of my officers looked like dead fish. Because there was a dominance of revolutionaries in this prison, they could make many things happen, they were organized, the relationships between the wards were strong. Therefore, it could be easy to organize. It could also be easy to take a stance together. But now', he said, 'the revolutionaries look with the eyes of the dead fish.'

The first thing Participant 11 noticed years later at Mamak Prison was the stark contrast between her past experiences and the current reality during her encounter with Prison Director Raci Tetik. Tetik's polite demeanor towards those who were not his torture victims suggests that he knew how to separate his duties from his personal life, indicating he was a "true professional." This dynamic is thought-provoking. Tetik greeted Participant 11 with the courteous manner of a gentleman officer, meeting her halfway to shake her hand respectfully. He then shared the secret of his success, as if he and Participant 11 could have had a civilized conversation under different circumstances. Tetik's behavior makes it appear that he wants to emphasize that he has no personal problems with prisoners outside his official duties.

This psychological splitting between the role of torturer and civil servant exposes how perpetrators of state violence can maintain seemingly ordinary social identities by rigidly separating their "professional duties" from their moral responsibility (Klein, 1958). This defense mechanism enables otherwise ordinary people to participate in systematic human rights abuses while preserving their self-image as proper civil servants.

And the metaphor of 'dead fish' is notable, it implies a lifeless, subdued state, suggesting that the continuous violence has drained the revolutionaries of their spirit, making them appear defeated and submissive. This change may be attributed to the relentless physical and psychological violence which may have shattered their resistance over time, diminishing their influence within the prison, and subsequently eroding the solidarity and collective power they once held. Raci Tetik's words almost lay out the state's plans regarding politicized youth. The

aim was to transform these initially lively, active, and self-confident young people into lifeless and powerless beings after the practices in prisons. At least, this seems to be Raci Tetik's objective, as understood from his own statements.

Participant 11's account, coupled with Tetik's reflection, underlines the long-lasting impact of state violence on political activists. Despite their initial resistance and sense of solidarity, the constant physical and psychological torture appears to have led to a gradual erosion of political activists and maybe all Turkish society's will and spirit. This may suggest that state violence, or at least Raci Tetik, aims to suppress political activism and, beyond that, to break the spirit of the activists, quelling any form of organized resistance.

Before ending this section of analysis, it should be noted that, during the period following the September 12 coup, the judiciary acknowledged the widespread use of torture. The indictment prepared for the prosecution of the coup leaders detailed various torture methods, including bastinado, dog attacks, chains, suspension by the feet, confinement in towers, under-bunk confinement, "caravan" treatment, insertion of batons, submersion in sewage, forced singing of marches, forced consumption of filth, rape, and beatings. Diyarbakır Military Prison and Mamak Military Prison were highlighted as centers where systematic torture was most prevalent. Additionally, significant torture incidents were reported at the DAL (Deep Research Laboratory) in the Ankara Police Department, Pirin Palas Prison in Adıyaman, and the Gayrettepe Police Department in Istanbul (Beris, 2022, p.236). In a 2006 television interview, junta leader Kenan Evren admitted:

"Yes, I confess. We could not prevent torture in prisons. Many people were crippled and died because of this. When they have the opportunity, what could the guards do? They tortured." (Beris, 2022, p.225).

4.3.3. Beyond Prison Walls: Social Isolation as a Tool of State Control

While the physical confines of prisons were the most visible sites of state violence following the 1980 coup, its effects extended beyond prison walls through more subtle yet equally disruptive mechanisms. Political activists were subjected to repression that operated at once on physical, psychological, social, and economic levels. Through various state institutions - from police surveillance to bureaucratic restrictions - a system of control emerged that isolated former political prisoners from their communities. This section examines a different aspect of state violence: the systematic severing of social bonds that left activists isolated

within their own society. Through participants' accounts, it is observed how indirect forms of violence - less visible than prison torture but perhaps more enduring in their effects - transformed social relationships and reshaped community dynamics. These mechanisms of isolation show how state violence extended past direct repression into the careful reconstruction of social relationships, producing what participants describe as a society remade by fear.

The transformation of social relationships began almost immediately upon activists' release from detention or prison, as communities rapidly internalized the implicit threat carried by any association with political prisoners. The social consequences of state violence quickly became apparent in communities across Turkey:

Participant 8: "...After appearing on TV, I was ostracized from my village, school, and place of residence. People didn't want to be seen with me. There was such a climate of fear that people wouldn't even greet me. Really, they were terrified. And it's not right to blame them. This was a strategy applied by the state. After physical and psychological torture, they also isolate us. They push us out of society."

Participant 8's experience of systematic surveillance demonstrates the state's intention to monitor activists and, beyond that, to actively disrupt the social fabric of their lives, severing ties with the community and fostering an environment of fear. The participant's resilience is evident, but the impact of such intimidation goes beyond personal discomfort, discouraging community members from engaging with them and effectively isolating them socially.

The narrative of Participant 8, who was not even brought to court after his detention and was not charged with any crime, may be indicative of how the media is instrumentalism to spread the atmosphere of fear that the state seeks to create. Gezgin (2013), who examined the effects of the September 12 military coup in the media, also stated that the media in general responded positively to the coup and took a cooperative stance. He attributes this attitude to the desire to end the chaos in the country, along with increasing pressures and restrictions on the media. During this period, with no private television channels available and only the state broadcaster TRT in operation, all broadcasts were under the junta's control. Indeed, throughout this process, the media in all its forms acted in alignment with the junta; failure to do so resulted in severe penalties and closures. With a standardized media, it was clear who was friend and who was foe, and who should be feared. In Participant 8's case, the accuracy

of the news about you didn't even matter; simply being touched by the torturers was enough to signal inevitable social consequences.

But social stigmatization extended beyond media portrayals into direct community interactions. Participant 17's experience shows that stigmatization works through more than the media, and it brings to light the psychological toll of being marked as a 'dangerous' individual within one's own community.

Participant 17: “After I got out, aside from being followed, I experienced other things.... One day, when I arrived home—my wife and I were newlyweds, we had neighbors, I got along well with them. We were young, they didn't know our pasts, we were likable people. My wife had also been in prison and had been released. I came home one day, and my wife said, the police came today and talked to each of the neighbors.' They had asked about their relationship with me, and then they warned my neighbors about me. They told them I am a very dangerous person. They talked about the harm I could potentially do to the neighbors. So yes, they followed me quite a bit.”

The police's interactions with the participant's neighbors contribute to an atmosphere of fear and distrust within the community, which in turn reinforces the individual's social marginalization. Participant 9 also provides an example of the long-term impact of being followed.

Participant 9: “I was followed for 3-4 years. Sometimes, when I was going to work in the morning, leaving the house, they would stop me. They'd ask 'How are you?' ' as if to say we're watching you.”

And then, he explains how years of police surveillance affected him socially:

Participant 9: “They're afraid. People I used to greet now ignore me. Even some who were involved in revolutionary activities now pretend not to see me, they change their paths. Everyone was afraid the police might be following us, thinking we were dangerous. But none of this was unexpected.”

The fear induced by such persistent surveillance results in a silent society where previous acquaintances and even fellow activists distance themselves, a clear indication of the effect on social and political engagement. This enforced solitude serves as a barrier to reactivating political networks and hinders collective action. As Toker (2020) observes, the military regime's surveillance tactics effectively dismantled existing social bonds overnight, transforming once-familiar relationships into potential sources of danger. The very foundations of social life - friendship, neighborhood ties, citizenship - became fraught with

suspicion. Even the simple act of acknowledging a friend on the street could mark someone as politically suspect, leading many to avoid basic social interactions out of self-preservation.

As fear spread through society, longstanding relationships and shared understandings began to dissolve. Previously close social connections weakened or disappeared entirely, leaving individuals increasingly isolated. Many participants sought to fill this void by turning to family relationships, only to find that even these foundational bonds had been compromised by the atmosphere of suspicion. The anecdotes of this period reveals pervasive fear extending into familial relationships. At this point, Participant 10's account is very important in revealing such an atmosphere immediately after the military coup.

Participant 10: "My mother took me to my uncle's house, in case the police came back to our house to take me again. That happened a lot back then. I went to my uncle's, and I could feel he was scared. My uncle didn't want me to stay, he didn't allow it. 1 million people went to prison and when 1 million people came out, they were not the same people. But it didn't end there; after getting out, the isolation, the difficulty of finding a job began. Because we need social support to heal from these traumas. They completely isolated us by creating fear."

These patterns of familial rejection manifested across different social classes and family structures. Participant 4 states that she had a similar experience with her family: "*My own relatives did not help me. It seemed as if our family ties were forgotten.*" The family's decision to distance themselves despite being aware of her suffering, seemingly out of fear, highlights the role of fear in reinforcing the isolation of political activists from society and suggests that the effects of torture extend beyond physical harm to include social exclusion. This echoes the Argentine junta, as described by Robben (2005a), where family ties were deliberately targeted to transform social structures and enforce ideological conformity. In both cases, the disruption of family units as a result of state violence contributes to the isolation and weakening of individuals, fostering a sense of fragility and dependency that appears to align with broader patterns of control and societal transformation.

Some former activists did more than endure others' avoidance; they began to withdraw from others of their own accord. The gravity of Participant 15's isolation is further highlighted by his interaction with a friend in need of shelter.

Participant 15: "I didn't want anyone to come near me [after I was released from the prison]. I rented a single-room apartment, I didn't want anyone to come over, or even to know where I lived. Not because I had done anything, but because if people

came, they would get into trouble because of me. In the end, a painter friend from Ankara, a fellow townsman, needed a place to stay; he had no other place. He wanted to stay with me, but I warned him, 'I am in big trouble. Trouble could come upon you because of me.' I didn't want to take that responsibility. 'Please go somewhere else,' I told him. It didn't matter to me, but something could have happened to him."

Participant 15 provides an example of self-social isolation. The possibility of harm to one's surroundings has in many cases forced activists to isolate themselves from society for many years, inactive, waiting for an indefinite period of time to pass. This isolates the individual and also creates an epidemic of fear that discourages social support and solidarity. His reluctance to involve others effectively silenced any collective action or support, emphasizing the effect of state surveillance on political dissent and community cohesion. Participant 15 states that he still cannot forget the detention with his of the painter he later agreed to be roommates with, and the painter's terrified screams, and continues to feel great regret for agreeing to be roommates.

Isolation was only one of the ways state violence spread outward. Its psychological weight also fell on people who had merely heard the survivors' accounts. Participant 11 turns from the experience of the victim to that of the listener, and to what hearing of such violence does to those who were not there:

Participant 11: "Three female acquaintances from my partner's workplace, who I was also familiar with, visited to express their condolences. My partner was absent. As the four of us sat together, I felt a pressing duty to enlighten them. Surely they needed to know the atrocities committed, right? However, when I started to recount the horrifying tale, their reaction resembled that of a petrified creature caught in the glare of imminent danger. Their terror made me pause, question my intent. Witnessing their fear, I arrived at a crucial decision. I would refrain from sharing these narratives with anyone who I perceived as incapable of bearing its weight, or with anyone who I believed chose ignorance over enlightenment. This was the conclusion I reached."

Participant 11 continued:

"...we felt it was a natural obligation to be the voice of those who were still trapped within these walls. However, we could not foresee how ignorant people outside would want to remain."

This willful ignorance served multiple functions in Turkish society - allowing people to maintain their daily routines while torture chambers operated nearby, and absolving them of the moral responsibility to respond. When confronted with survivors' testimonies, many

reacted with what Participant 11 describes as the terror of 'a petrified creature caught in the glare of imminent danger.

This visceral fear response led to a widespread pattern of denial that transformed into social apathy. As Belge (2014, p.115) observes, “During the period that began on the day of September 12, a sense of indifference and apathy towards general issues emerged among many people.” This apathy manifested as tacit complicity with the regime's actions. Belge (1989) argues that the silent majority became accomplices to the military regime by embracing the superficial stability it created - expressing satisfaction that “the fighting is over,” that they could “send children to school without worry,” and “walk the streets at night.” Through these mundane expressions of approval, society tacitly endorsed the state's systematic violence. The politics of fear had produced not individualization but rather what Belge terms “individualization-as-selfishness” - a retreat into private concerns that enabled the broader society to disavow its moral responsibility while benefiting from the facade of stability achieved through state violence.

Lastly, the experiences of the participants expose the many forms of state violence, going beyond physical and psychological torture to include social exclusion and family disintegration. This environment of fear and isolation suppressed political dissent and disrupted the social fabric, leaving lasting trauma and insecurity, a measure of the coup's deep and pervasive impact on individuals and society.

4.4. The Psychological and Social Impact of State Violence on Revolutionary Identity

This section addresses RQ3 and RQ4, analyzing how state violence transformed participants' relationships with large group symbols (RQ3) and how their revolutionary identities evolved over time (RQ4). It also contributes to RO3 and RO4 by examining the psychosocial mechanisms of identity transformation.

This section of the findings chapter examines how experiences of state violence transformed both individual and collective identities among political activists in Turkey. Complex patterns were revealed in the processing of torture and imprisonment experiences, the restructuring of relationships with large group symbols and large group identities, and the navigation of

shifting social dynamics in the aftermath of the 1980 coup. Their accounts show that state violence cut deeper than individual trauma, recasting political consciousness and the social relationships between activists and their wider communities.

The accounts demonstrate how systematic violence served to alienate activists from broader social groups while fundamentally altering the manner in which political activism was viewed and engaged with. The transformation of individual and collective identities emerged as a theme across interviews, a reminder of the deep psychological and social impacts of state violence that extended far beyond immediate physical harm.

4.4.1. Individual Impacts of State Violence

i. Trauma, Resilience and Ideological Commitment

The analysis of survivors' narratives showed how deeply political violence and torture had reshaped their daily lives. This transformation, present throughout participants' accounts, takes many forms- from quiet moments of solitude to relationships strained by unspoken trauma. In alignment with the research objective of examining how state violence affected political identities, the following section presents participants' experiences of navigating their transformed inner and outer realities. Their accounts illustrate both the difficult process of recovery and the remarkable resilience that emerges in response to systematic state violence, offering insights into how political trauma shapes individual and collective identities over time.

The psychological impact of state violence on political activists manifests in complex and often contradictory ways, particularly in how individuals process and integrate their experiences of torture. While some activists demonstrate resilience and ideological fortitude, others reveal more nuanced responses that blur the lines between personal and collective trauma. This complexity is evident in how survivors interpret the purpose and meaning of their torture experiences.

For instance, despite acknowledging ongoing physical effects from torture, Participant 1 consciously minimize these impacts through a process of ideological reframing. *"I still have remnants from the physical torture. I never saw this as a problem."* He mentions physical remnants of torture but dismisses them as non-problematic. In the words and body language of Participant 1, there was a minimization towards the experience of violence. His perception

of the motive behind the state violence is intriguing. He considered it to be an attempt to "mould revolutionaries," "depersonalize" them, and distance them from their ideological standpoint.

This may show that Participant 1 perceives the violence as an existential threat to his and other political activists' political identity, designed to suppress revolutionary potential and ideological dissent, rather than merely a personal attack. It is the state's opposition to his thought, rather than his individual self, that underpins the state violence. Participant 1 describes his resistance during torture as motivated by concern for his fellow activists, stating:

“I never thought about my future after entering the revolutionary struggle, I did not think during the torture either. I had only one goal, to prevent my friends from being caught and not to break down. I didn't want anything else”

His account suggests that solidarity with fellow activists provided a source of personal strength during interrogation, though his primary focus remained on protecting others from arrest rather than his own wellbeing.

Participant 1's personal resilience in the face of such violence is apparent in his disregard for his future during his struggle and torture. There is a deprioritization of self, where the individual's wellbeing is sacrificed for the larger cause of protecting fellow activists and sustaining the movement. This raises questions about the psychological effects of merging individual identity with the grand ideals of an ideology. Punamaki (1996) suggests that ideological commitments protect individuals from the impact of trauma. Such commitments help individuals make sense of their traumatic experiences, preventing the feeling of losing control. This is because individuals understand that their suffering is a result of their own decisions and that they are enduring pain for a greater purpose. According to Punamaki (1996), this sense of meaning is crucial for maintaining inner integrity and mitigating the effects of the traumatic event. In the case of Participant 1, strong ideological commitment appears to have provided protection, if not from the physical, then from the psychological effects of violence.

While Participant 1 highlights the protective role of ideological commitment, the experiences of some participants point to a more complex picture of trauma's long-term psychological

effects. Participant 5, for example, reflects on how her encounters with violence left lasting emotional scars, shows the diverse ways individuals process and respond to such experiences.

Participant 5: “We were really beaten a lot because we didn't sing those marches. You're showing a lot of reaction as a result. Now, when I hear those marches outside, I still react. I remember them, I relive those moments. Even if they make you listen to your favorite music by force, you would hate it. This was already a military junta you disapprove of. I really hated it the moment I heard those marches.”

Her recurring reactions show the psychological imprint of state violence, manifesting as triggers that provoke negative responses. These triggers draw out how experiences of violence can shape individual identity and influence personal reactions to specific stimuli over time. Contrastingly, Participant 5's account exhibits a less resilient perspective, indicating clear signs of trauma triggering, “*Now, when I hear those marches outside, I still react,*” she says. Unlike Participant 1, who appears to have accepted his physical remnants, Participant 5 demonstrates a strong aversive response to stimuli associated with her traumatic experiences. This points to a sharp difference between the two, as the first participant accepts his past as part of his present identity, whereas the second is constantly pushed back to her past by certain triggers. It should be noted, however, that the Mamak Military Prison, where participant 5 was held, was one of the harshest prisons during the junta. While it is certain that both participants were subjected to very brutal treatment, it is not difficult to imagine that the violence suffered by participant 5 was more systematic.

The account of Participant 7 reveals yet another trajectory of coping. Her reflections on the long-term aftermath of her experience shed light on the evolving relationship with trauma over time. And her experiences post-release differ significantly from both Participant 1 and Participant 5.

Participant 7: “I'm not affected anymore (her voice trembling here). The first impact of this incident lasted about 10 years after I was released. My body would shake every time I told the story. But I overcame it later. How many years has it been? For about 15-20 years, as you may notice, I can talk very calmly. I tell the story without any tremor. But after the initial shock passes, there's this thing, you feel the need to tell it.”

She stated that she was no longer affected. Here we see a journey of healing or habituation that moves from impact to eventual recovery. The tremble in her voice, however, contradicts her claim of being unaffected, suggesting that her trauma still lingers, albeit in a more

controlled manner. And the need to share her story shows the significance of narrative in processing traumatic experiences and reconstructing one's identity.

Trauma manifests in many different ways, with each individual's experience offering a distinct window onto its psychological and cognitive aftermath. Participant 10's account is particularly striking, as it shifts the focus from emotional struggles to the cognitive impact of trauma. Her experience of amnesia, which she vividly describes, illustrates how deeply violence can alter the emotional well-being and fundamental mental processes, shaping her daily life and interactions long after the events.

Participant 10: "But one of the biggest impacts of the prison on me here is that I lost my memory. My memory is gone. This started in the police station and continued in the prison. How should I say... Strangely, something different developed in my brain. For instance, when I sit and talk with friends from the prison, they tell me things and I don't remember any of them. This started during that period and continued after I was released, up to today. Of course, it's still ongoing. For example, this was my loss in this process."

This amnesia may have been due to posttraumatic stress disorder (Layton & Wardi-Zonna, 1995). In contrast to the other participants, the cognitive impairment here may indicate a potential neurobiological effect of the trauma. This cognitive effect, however, differs from the more emotionally centered experiences of the other participants. After mentioning this particular case, she adds the following:

Participant 10: "Let me put it this way. There's a psychiatrist named Doğan Şahin. He used a sentence. He said that after a person enters the police station and experiences torture -it doesn't matter how much-, it's impossible for that person to be the same person when they come out. I can feel very well what this means. We were not the same people. They took a million people in. Those million people were not the same people when they came out. And everyone faced different problems in their own realities."

Participant 10's quote from psychiatrist Doğan Şahin is also important in terms of emphasising the transformative nature of torture. Participant 10 offers an insightful reflection on the transformation she has undergone due to her experiences. This external validation reinforces the powerful impact of state violence, a sentiment shared by the participants, and captures the essence of the transformation caused by state violence that resonates with all participants despite specific differences in their individual experiences.

Participant 10's reflections point to the lasting transformations brought about by torture, showing how state violence reshapes personal identities and collective experiences. Her account emphasizes the internal shifts and broader implications of such trauma on societal perceptions of power and authority. The transformative effects she describes resonate on an individual level but also across an entire generation, as she notes the widespread and systematic nature of the violence endured.

The deep psychological and societal impact of torture, as described by Participant 10, is further reflected in Participant 22's account, which details how systemic harassment and humiliation operated on an individual level, reinforcing the patterns of alienation and oppression she highlights. He traces how such practices broke down personal boundaries and altered interpersonal relations, contributing to the societal alienation and hostility that Participant 10 refers to. Together, their accounts show how personal experiences and their broader social consequences are connected.

Participant 22: "However, it seemed like the things we lived through gradually lost their meaning - including sexual harassment. For example, the fact that a female friend and I were standing naked side by side meant nothing to me. Or that there were cases of harassment and rape among the girls. We had become strange. It meant nothing. But all these things created a hostility against the state in us. I wasn't an enemy of the state, but now I am. No matter what, this state has subjected me to severe torture. I'm not talking about individuals. This is state policy."

This emotional deadening can be understood as an instance of psychic numbing (Lifton, 1988), wherein individuals under prolonged extreme trauma become desensitized to experiences that would normally elicit intense emotional responses, such as exposure to violence, humiliation, or sexual assault.

In addition to this emotional desensitization, Scarry (1985) describes how a tortured person attempts to escape from the source of pain, their own body, as if it were an external enemy. Feelings such as self-hatred, alienation from oneself, or a sense of betrayal by one's own body emerge when the individual begins to perceive the physical pain they experience as originating from within. Thus, as Scarry suggests, a process of self-estrangement takes place. This analysis provides a framework for understanding how the body, as the immediate source of pain, comes to be perceived as an external enemy. Participant 22's sense of estrangement from his own experiences and his description of becoming 'strange' echo this internal disconnection. The nature of violence transforms an individual's relationship with their body

and sense of self, fostering hostility toward both those directly responsible and the broader state apparatus that enforces such dehumanizing policies. In the accounts of Participant 10 and Participant 22, the operation of alienation at personal, interpersonal, and collective levels is revealed, highlighting the far-reaching consequences of torture.

Participant 22 shares that after being released, he struggled with mood disorders, primarily bipolar disorder. Although the direct connection between his experience of violence and his condition is beyond the scope of this study, Participant 22 mentions that for many years, he was unable to speak or write about his experiences due to this disorder. This indicates a desire to share what happened to him, possibly to inform the public or seek support, but unfortunately, he has been unable to do so.

Building on this theme of psychological aftereffects, Participant 20 shows another pervasive consequence of state violence: the enduring sense of surveillance among victims and their communities. His reflections show how state control leaves a lasting imprint, fostering anxiety.

Participant 20: “This psychology still exists in many of our friends. They still think the police are watching them, following them. They're living with this feeling, you can't live like this. The funny thing is, even the ones who haven't done anything are feeling this anxiety. The person is a regular, ordinary citizen but they're afraid. They're afraid of the police following them. What if they were being watched?”

Participant 3 reinforces Participant 20's sentiment, noting that despite being in their sixties and dealing with age-related health issues such as sciatica and diabetes, the sense of being under surveillance persists. He remarks that the state 'still listens to our phones,' and while he claims not to be afraid, even adding, 'Let them listen,' his acknowledgment of continued monitoring underscores how the specter of surveillance looms over their lives, decades after the events. Together, their accounts illustrate how state violence perpetuates a lasting psychological environment of suspicion and fear, altering the very fabric of trust and security within communities.

More than a private memory, the fear these participants describe shaped how ordinary people learned to behave in public, long after the junta had gone. Professor Nilgun Toker, drawing from her experiences as a 1970s activist, observed in 2020 that the junta period transformed civilians into passive subjects: *"An informant, someone who believes that criticizing the actions of the state, asserting one's own rights and differences, and defending social tensions*

are all bad things." (Bianet, 2020) Her analysis illuminates how the persistent fear of surveillance, described by Participants 3 and 20, serves as a mechanism for maintaining political passivity and self-censorship in Turkish society.

This pervasive atmosphere of surveillance fostered a deep-seated fear of state authority. Even if they did not directly commit a crime, there was a constant fear that their attitudes or words might indirectly be associated with any subversive ideas, making them feel constantly watched. This sense of being followed often reflected a reality for many activists. It can be said that the experiences of activists who were monitored by the police for years contributed to a widespread social fear that paralyzed large segments of society.

ii. Transformation of Large Group Identities Through State Violence

After the September 12, 1980, military coup in Turkey, it became known that state officials used large group symbols while torturing political prisoners. This knowledge inevitably led to changes in the perceptions of the tortured individuals towards the state and its symbols. Considering even the most basic psychological effects, torture can be seen as a betrayal of trust and an abuse of power. When these symbols are used in this context, they can become associated with pain, betrayal, and trauma.

Typically, large group symbols (national symbols in this context) represent unity, pride, and shared values within a country and are constructed to apply these qualities to a specific group (Kolsto, 2006). However, when these symbols are used in acts of torture, they can become corrupt in the eyes of the victim, transforming into representations of oppression and abuse. The psychological impact of torture can lead to a reevaluation of previously held beliefs about the state and its symbols, potentially resulting in feelings of alienation, anger, or resentment. Symbols that once evoked patriotism or solidarity may now trigger traumatic memories, altering an individual's sense of identity and belonging.

This effect extends beyond personal attitudes, influencing individual political views, actions, and relationships with society while fundamentally reshaping perceptions of large group identity. Participants' accounts show how these experiences reshaped their individual political consciousness as well as their sense of belonging to and identification with larger social groups, both in the immediate aftermath and in their current perspectives.

Analyzing the interviews surfaces a web of reactions and feelings toward the large group symbols among participants who have experienced state violence. Participant 12, while expressing no personal resentment towards these symbols, acknowledges the impact of forced practices during the September 12th junta on some people's attitudes.

Participant 12: "The National Anthem was forced upon us, they would also broadcast it through speakers. They would turn up the volume to the maximum, they thought they were accomplishing something by playing *Ölürüm Türkiye* and the National Anthem. Those who created reactions against the symbols and values of this country are the September 12th junta. Even though the revolutionaries had no problems with the flag or the National Anthem before, an incredible antipathy was created because of the practices during September 12th. Do I have any? No. I speak for myself. But I know there were people affected. We can't blame them."

This anecdote might stem from a broader understanding that state violence can manipulate individual relationships with large group symbols. His statement illustrates how socio-political contexts and personal experiences can forge collective identities, even when these symbols previously held no negative connotation for the individuals. In this context, Participant 12 offers an illustration of this complex dynamic, where national anthems are weaponized as tools of oppression.

Expanding on this theme, Participant 7 brings a multifaceted perspective to national symbols, revealing how different political identities interact with these symbols. The important anecdote shared by Participant 7 reveals how even members of ultra-nationalist groups with strong ties to these symbols were affected by the practices in Mamak military prison.

Participant 7: "We heard from the nationalist prisoners in our male friends' ward that they told our revolutionary friends, 'You were right all along, we've come to hate the flag, the nation, and everything else'. There are many stories like this. Also, there's this. We all saw ourselves as revolutionaries, our goal was to make a revolution, we had ideals like socialism. But we weren't against Atatürk either. We might have criticized the Republic or Atatürk from many aspects, but that was for the Republic to be more democratic. Maybe to complete the half-done revolutions based on class foundations. We were discussing these politically- true. But never, never was there an opposition to Atatürk, or enmity towards Atatürk. There was no such political ground."

The anecdote about the nationalist prisoners, who once stood for the nation, now disdaining its symbols, highlights the influence of violence on one's identity and beliefs. Participant 7 describes a marked shift in nationalist prisoners' emotional ties to these large group symbols, brought on by the shared trauma of state-inflicted torture.

The same disillusionment surfaced across the political spectrum, even among those who had once defended these symbols most fiercely, a shift unthinkable before prison. On the other hand, the participant's critiques of the Republic or Atatürk, while still identifying with them, embody a nuanced engagement with national symbols. MHP (Grey Wolves)³⁶ member Mahir Damar, who testified at the Commission to Investigate the Coups and was subjected to torture in Mamak Prison, makes similar statements:

“We loved the state, the state was like our father. We would say, 'Let us die, so the state can live.' Then we started saying, 'The state should exist to keep us alive.' We thought, 'Let the state discipline its children, but the state - forgive the expression - cannot act treacherously.' My thoughts about the state changed there, my understanding of the state changed there.” (Beris, 2022, p. 230)

The violent transformation of symbols that are seen as positive from an early age has the power to change perspectives, especially for those who are more or less connected to these symbols. This dissonance disrupts internal object relations, leading to psychological conflict as symbols shift from representing pride and unity to betrayal and trauma. For nationalists, whose identities are often intertwined with these symbols, this effect can be particularly severe, causing feelings of alienation and confusion while forcing painful personal changes. The symbolic destruction of these positive objects requires a painful reconstruction of inner meanings, a process laden with emotional and psychological consequences.

The participants' own accounts show how forced engagement with these symbols, under violence, bred a deep and lasting aversion to them. Participant 8 recalls how repeated coercion, being made to sing anthems under the threat of physical punishment, led to deep-seated resentment. He explains:

“They keep making us sing anthems by force, they beat us... When things are enforced by force and violence, people inevitably develop an antipathy towards it,”

This statement conveys the emotional toll of such practices. These experiences, he suggests, may have caused lasting changes in many of his peers, illustrating how the violent imposition of symbols can alienate individuals from them and reshape their sense of self and relationship to collective identity..

³⁶ The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) is a Turkish far-right political party founded in 1969 under the leadership of Alparslan Türkeş, promoting Turkish nationalism and conservatism. Its youth organization, commonly known as the Grey Wolves (Bozkurtlar), became known for its militant activism and involvement in political violence during the 1970s.

Participant 10 shows this effect further. She describes a deep hatred for the National and Tenth Year Anthem, which for her have become tied to her experiences of coercion and torture in prison. Anthems evoke memories of oppression, transforming these symbols into triggers of trauma rather than pride. Most notably, she mentions, "*At that time, Atatürk was a torture tool for us,*" highlighting the disconnect between the intended patriotic sentiment of these symbols and their manipulative use as tools of state violence. Her words capture how state coercion turned Atatürk from a national hero into an instrument of torture. This redefinition fosters antipathy and, with it, a psychological need to distance oneself from these now-tainted symbols.

Participant 20: "It's come to a point where, for example, one day a soldier told me to recite the National Anthem. I said I wouldn't recite it. He asked, "Aren't you Turkish?" I replied, "No, I am not."

In environments where physical resistance is impossible, rejecting the meaning or authority of symbols used as tools of oppression becomes a powerful form of psychological counteraction. As these narratives illustrate, when Atatürk and other large group symbols are transformed into the façade of violence, individuals subjected to this environment have little choice but to create distance from these symbols as a means of preserving their inner integrity. Participant 20 presents a situation in which even refusing to recite the National Anthem becomes a form of resistance and identity assertion. And participant 20 chooses to step outside from the large group identity in order to protect his dignity. The state's expectation to show patriotism under duress is met with a challenge that reveals the deep wounds of state violence that transform national pride into an act of coercion rather than voluntary respect.

Participant 20 describes how his relationship with the National Anthem evolved over time, shaped by the indoctrination practices he endured in prison. Reflecting on his past, he notes:

"I have recited the National Anthem throughout my life. I recited it in high school, in middle school, even in elementary school, but I had never been displeased while reciting it."

This contrast between his earlier feelings and his current perspective captures the transformative impact of his experiences with state violence. His rhetorical question, "*So, now, will I become Turkish if I recite it?*" underscores the disillusionment and critical reassessment that have emerged as a result of the coercion he faced.

The contrast between his past and present feelings towards the Anthem implies that the Participant 20's attitudes have evolved over time, likely influenced by his experiences with state violence. This shift may suggest that exposure to state violence can cause individuals to critically reassess his relationship with large group symbols and, by extension, his large group identity.

Participant 20: "Then what kind of rehabilitation is this? If I recite the National Anthem a hundred times a day, will my love for it increase or my reaction to it? Of course our love decreases, inevitably. You react involuntarily. Then you say you are doing this in the name of Atatürk. You say you are doing it to protect the homeland. So people hate it too. But as someone who knows the inside of the business, I know that the real purpose is different. If you don't know the truth, if you don't know that all these things are done to arouse hatred in you, you will hate."

According to Participant 20, the supposed reasons for these displays, such as protecting the homeland and honoring Atatürk, are mere facades hiding the true intent of instigating hatred. This sentiment implies that the participant perceives these enforced displays as manipulative strategies used by the state to control the activists. Participant 20's acceptance of the National Anthem in the past, his rejection of it in prison, and his current retrospective evaluation of the state's planned attempt to distance activists from these symbols shows the change in their identification with large group symbols and thus with his large group identity. He perceives these compulsory patriotic displays as oppressive state tactics designed to manipulate public sentiment. The state's systematic use of large group symbols in torture represents more than simple coercion - it disrupts the vital psychological space where personal and collective identities intersect. These symbols act as transitional objects that provide psychological security and self-worth (Winnicott, 1953).

And when these symbols are shared by millions of people, they help individuals maintain emotional connections with their large groups. Through shared attachment to these transitional phenomena, people recognize their group membership and experience a sense of belonging. However, when these symbols, which normally foster group cohesion and provide psychological containment, are transformed into instruments of torture, they can no longer perform their essential function of mediating between individual identity and collective consciousness.

Participant 20's reflections suggest that the state's coercive use of large group symbols may foster alienation and may transform formerly embraced communal symbols into sources of

resentment and rejection. This shift in identification with large group symbols underscores the long-term psychological impact of state violence and manipulation. Building on this idea, Participant 21 highlights how such experiences can lead to enduring emotional disengagement from large group symbols.

Reflecting on the increased use of the National Anthem in contexts like football matches, Participant 21 notes how these displays, once unremarkable, now evoke detachment. While he continues to stand during the anthem, he no longer feels any desire to participate, attributing this loss of connection to the coercive practices that reshaped his relationship with these symbols. This disengagement, he suggests, is not a choice but a consequence of state violence, which deprived him of the ability to align with others around these shared symbols.

In sum, these narratives show how state violence can alter individuals' relationships with large group symbols, fostering a range of responses from transformation to resistance and, in extreme cases, complete rejection. Personal experiences emerge as central in shaping attitudes toward these symbols, pointing to the impact of state violence on individual and collective identities. These accounts also carry traces of resilience, negotiation, and engagement with these symbols, marking an ongoing process of identity construction and renegotiation in response to state violence. The variety of responses shows how much context and personal experience shape these identities, and how varied the effects of state violence on personal and large group identities can be.

iii. State Violence and the Construction of Internal Enemies

While the previous section examined how state violence fundamentally altered activists' relationship with large group symbols, transforming them from sources of unity into triggers of trauma, equally significant was how the military junta systematically manipulated these same symbols to legitimize their authority. The regime's deployment of large group symbols operated on two parallel tracks - weaponizing them against political prisoners while simultaneously using them to construct a new political narrative for the broader public. This dual strategy exposes the psychological calculation behind the junta's approach: as activists in prisons were being tortured with forced recitations of the national anthem and other patriotic displays, the military leadership were positioning themselves as the authentic inheritors and protectors of these same symbols. Understanding this simultaneous process of destruction and

appropriation is crucial for grasping how the regime reshaped Turkish political consciousness in the post-coup period.

The military junta's legitimization of state violence operated through discursive strategies that became evident in General Kenan Evren's extensive public speeches during his Anatolia tours, which began in Van on October 2, 1980 (Türe, 2019). His speeches reveal a construction of narrative that positioned activists as "foreign elements" while presenting the military as the natural protector of Turkish identity and values.

Evren presented three scenarios that would have unfolded without military intervention: civil war with leftist groups likely prevailing, a coup by lower-ranking officers, or their own "intervention" which he deemed the only viable solution (Türe, 2019). Evren's narratives positioned revolutionary activists not as legitimate political actors but as direct "traitors" to the homeland (Atilgan, 2023). His speeches constructed activists as internal enemies collaborating with foreign powers to destroy national unity:

"...traitors have emerged in every corner of our homeland; forming treasonous gangs and organizations tied to foreign ideologies, they have resorted to every inhumane method to divide this beautiful homeland and fragment the great Turkish nation with the help of external enemies [...] Their goal is to use you as pawns, and if they achieve their goals, they will push you aside and establish a dictatorship. Know this - they provoke you in the name of republic and freedom." (Atilgan, 2023, p. 430)

This framing of activists as "traitors" served multiple psychological functions. First, it positioned them outside the boundaries of legitimate large group identity, making them "foreign" to the large group.

Second, by characterizing their actions as deliberately destructive rather than politically motivated, it delegitimize their grievances and demands. The psychological sophistication of this othering process is also evident in Evren's characterization of politically active workers. When discussing labor activism, he distinguished between "pure" workers and those who had been "corrupted" by political ideologies:

"These anarchists and terrorists... Wherever our hardworking patriotic workers gathered - in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana - they targeted those places. They tried to spread terror and communism by provoking those pure citizens. They used our clean citizens as pawns"(Atilgan, 2023, p. 431).

This theme of worker manipulation was further elaborated:

"Hardworking, innocent Turkish workers who think of nothing but earning their living through labor and sweat, working day and night to support their families and secure their future, were treacherously used by certain "aghas" who put red flags in their hands and pictures of foreigners to destroy democracy and demand another regime."(Atilgan, 2023, p.431)

By positioning politically active workers as manipulated by "aghas,"³⁷ he delegitimize labor activism while preserving the image of the "pure" Turkish worker, creating a model of acceptable versus unacceptable forms of worker identity.

Particularly significant was Evren's positioning of the military intervention within Turkey's national narrative. He drew explicit parallels between September 12 and Turkey's War of Independence³⁸, claiming both represented moments when "*the nation's determination saved the homeland from internal and external attacks*" (Evren, 1985, p.317-319). This narrative was immediately amplified by mainstream media - prominent columnists from many newspapers endorsed the intervention as an expected and justified response, with nearly all newspapers publishing articles that equated the coup leaders with Atatürk (Arslan, 2020). This narrative transformation served to reframe state violence from an act of repression into a necessary struggle for national survival against foreign-influenced internal enemies.

This appropriation of founding narratives provided a psychologically resonant framework through which the public could understand and accept state violence. This legitimization strategy reached its peak in Evren's self-positioning as a contemporary Atatürk figure (Türe, 2019). He explicitly drew parallels between their historical roles, suggesting that just as the Battle of Gallipoli³⁹ and War of Independence had brought Atatürk to prominence, the September 12 coup had similarly elevated him to leadership ("Evren: Şimdi inadına parti kurduruyorlar", 1983). This self-identification with Atatürk represented a distinctive feature of the 1980 coup - while previous military interventions had invoked Atatürk's legacy, none had attempted such direct personal identification (Arslan, 2020).

³⁷ Lord, Master

³⁸ War of Independence, the armed struggle (1919–1923) led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and nationalist forces against Allied occupation following World War I, culminating in the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

³⁹ The Battle of Gallipoli (1915–1916) was a major World War I campaign in which Ottoman forces, under commanders including Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk), repelled an Allied invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The victory became a foundational moment in Turkish national memory and in the rise of Atatürk's leadership.

Evren went as far as presenting himself as a second founder, weaving together themes of national survival, foreign threat, and the military's guardian role (Öztañ, 2018, p.193). This strategic positioning exemplifies the manipulation of large group narratives (Volkan, 2004). While drawing on chosen glories like the War of Independence, Evren also simultaneously activated collective anxieties about national survival. This activation - of both pride and fear - allowed the junta to present activists as an existential threat to the group's identity, positioning them as modern-day incarnations of historical enemies. The psychological potency of this strategy lay in how it effectively exiled from the large group those activists who had defined themselves through sacrifice for the people. By framing resistance as betrayal, the regime created a powerful psychological mechanism that helped legitimize violence against members of its own society. This demonstrates an example of political leaders' capacity to mobilize groups by weaving together chosen glories and chosen traumas into compelling narratives that reshape group boundaries.

The regime's manipulation of Atatürk's image extended beyond rhetoric into physical space. The junta systematically distributed mass-produced Atatürk statues and busts throughout the country, particularly in front of government buildings (Arslan, 2020). The power of this symbol is illustrated by Participant 6's account. After experiencing torture, while waiting to flee abroad to avoid further imprisonment, he found refuge in a small Atatürk bust manufacturing facility. During this period, he helped his friend who had sheltered him by carrying Atatürk busts to school gardens. On one particularly tense day, when they were transporting a bust to a university campus, Participant 6 became anxious upon seeing police conducting identity checks at the campus entrance. His friend reassured him, confidently stating that the police would never ask for identification from people carrying an Atatürk bust. In this seemingly minor incident lies a deeper truth about the episode from the early 1980s captures a particular historical moment in Turkish political culture- the paradoxical power of Atatürk's image to both shield and constrain, explaining why diverse political movements have long fought to claim this symbol as their own.

According to Arslan (2020) this period represented a significant shift from earlier periods when Atatürk monuments had occupied central public squares and carried deeper social meaning. As Arslan (2020) notes, this transformation of Atatürk statues into standardized government inventory items effectively stripped them of their organic connection with society, turning them instead into symbols of state authority and mechanisms of legitimacy.

What set the 1980 coup apart was the scale on which this manipulation operated: while activists in prisons were being tortured through the weaponization of large group symbols, the junta was simultaneously injecting itself into those same symbols, altering their meaning. Evren's declaration about state institutions is telling:

"We will reorganize the Republican institutions corrupted by those who have falsified and destroyed in the name of Kemalism, one of the cornerstones of the Republic. If necessary, we will carry out this arrangement by closing and reopening that institution" (Taskin, 2009).

This reorganization represented an effort to redefine large group symbols within the “Turkish-Islamic” synthesis framework of the period, embedding it in public consciousness through new discourses, statues, and even school names (Arslan, 2020). By consistently portraying revolutionary politics as inherently foreign while positioning military intervention as an expression of authentic Turkish identity, the regime created new boundaries of large group identity where certain forms of political expression became permanently coded as un-Turkish.

This strategy of redefining the boundaries of acceptable political expression continued throughout the 1980s. In 1987, when Turkish Communist Party and Turkish Workers' Party general secretaries Haydar Kutlu and Nihat Sargın returned from political exile to Turkey, Evren's response demonstrated the effort to reshape political discourse. He stated:

“These are the groups that, only when they become capable of issuing their own directives in Turkey—when they reach a state where they no longer take orders from outside, as exemplified by the European communists labeled ‘Europa communism’—might such parties eventually be established in Turkey. [Now] They are the forces that seek to undermine Turkey’s stability. Yet Turkey will not, and should not, fall for this scheme.” (“Evren: Direktif almışlar”, 1987)

This statement offers insight into how the junta envisioned reshaping Turkish political life — perhaps less through complete suppression of leftist politics than through encouraging more contained forms of leftist expression. Evren's reference to “Eurocommunism” as a model suggests an attempt to delineate acceptable boundaries for left-wing politics in Turkey. This vision of controlled political pluralism would find echoes in subsequent decades, as class-based politics gradually lost prominence in Turkey's political arena. Evren's rhetoric foreshadowed significant shifts in how left-wing politics would be expressed and constrained in post-coup Turkey. The emphasis on 'acceptable' forms of leftist activity aligned with

broader trends that would see Turkish politics increasingly organized around identity rather than class in the following decades.

4.4.2. Collective Impacts and Social Transformation

This section examines the permanent scars left by state violence on the collective psyche of political activists and the effects on their social bonds. The accounts collected here paint a vivid picture of the once vibrant revolutionary spirit now clouded by a deep sense of alienation. Activists who have been subjected to state violence because of their political stances now face a reality in which they feel alienated from the very community they aim to uplift and reform. This pervasive sense of disconnection and disillusionment seeps into their stories and points to a deep crisis of identity and purpose. As they reckon with these changes, the narratives convey the profound difficulties of rekindling ties with a society that seems to have moved on without them, and point to the complex relationship between political activism and social integration in the aftermath of violence.

The depth of this social transformation becomes particularly evident in accounts describing how fear has become embedded in everyday life. One particular testimony illustrates how thoroughly the military coup reshaped social behavior and political expression. Participant 3 portrays an image of a society steeped in fear, a byproduct of the military coup. The suppression is so pervasive, they recount, that not only actions of defiance but even verbal criticism are stifled.

Participant 3: "...and also, as we discussed earlier, societal fear has permeated people to their core and you can't criticize anything. Forget changing things, you can't even criticize. I mean, you're afraid to do so."

This climate of fear reflects the coup's effect, inhibiting the free exchange of ideas and creating a society living in the shadow of oppression. This censorship manifests as a social control mechanism, engendering self-censorship and precluding any potential growth of opposition. Participant 3, depicts the disillusionment pervading the populace in the post-coup environment. He recalls a drastic shift in societal mindsets, with many who identified as political activists abandoning their zeal for safeguarding their freedoms and rights:

Participant 3: "I've witnessed the post-coup processes lead to a serious disillusionment in people. People lost their claims. We were political prisoners. We thought we could protect our own freedoms, our rights there, but after the coup, very few people remained with this mindset. A vast majority fell into disillusionment."

In her novel "Hayir," (No) Adalet Ağaoğlu describes the changing social mood after the coup:

“(…) Wars have become more widespread, phones now have screens, food is more dangerous, tomatoes have completely lost their taste, lives are under stricter control, Intelsats are whirling above, yet people still seek new flavors and freedoms in day-to-day life. Who knows, maybe people even dream less for themselves, and resignation has become more common (Ağaoğlu, 1987, p.116).”

As Participant 3 notes, the public's disillusionment has led to the widespread perception that politics is both dangerous and futile. Adalet Ağaoğlu observes that this shift has caused people to focus on non-political subjects. These new interests and social habits are quite distant from revolutionary ideals. Once-vocal revolutionaries are reduced to silent spectators, their activist spirits quelled by an oppressive regime. Participant 10 complements this grim picture of a society stripped of its critical faculties:

Participant 10: “I can't believe it, I can't believe this. How did they turn people into such mechanical creatures? How could they destroy people's ability to think? We've turned into strange people who can't analyze, who can't figure out their place, identity, feelings.”

She laments the transformation of the populace into passive conformists, suggesting an orchestrated assault on the societal ability to challenge the status quo.

In Ayşegül Devecioğlu's novel "Kuş Diline Öykünen," the protagonist Gülay, like Participant 10, faces psychological distress as socialist symbols and concepts lose their visibility in real life following the 1980 coup. As a young woman, she actively participated in a leftist organization by handling communications. After being arrested and tortured during the coup, she withdrew from organizational activities and focused on her personal life. Despite only maintaining her ideological ties theoretically, she feels disheartened by society's indifference to these values. This is evident when she calls out to her sister's child, Devrim (which means revolution), in the park and people show no reaction. Gülay is shocked at how society has become completely alienated from revolutionary images, as if they had never mattered before:

“(…) Devrim! she called out. Suddenly, for the first time, she realized she had said the child's name so loudly. The name had burst out of her mouth like an escaped prisoner. She looked around involuntarily. Then, feeling as if she were doing something unusual and unsure if she should say it again, she called out once more. No

one paid attention. No one was looking at them. They hadn't even heard it." (Devecioğlu, 2013: 220).

From the late 1980s onwards, leftist groups that engaged in political organization encountered a significantly transformed social structure. The majority of leftists observed these societal changes from afar, either from prisons or abroad. The society they faced had undergone changes largely without their involvement (Fırat, 2020). Due to their roles as militant members of revolutionary organizations before the coup, these people were active in social life. However, after the coup, they became introverted, and some engaged in self-criticism of the organic structures to which they felt a sense of belonging. During this period, some former activists also sought new ways to reconnect with life. Participant 11 details this process of withdrawal and frustration. And she offers her observations on the new preferences of both the former "revolutionaries" and the people.

Participant 11: "Some withdrew completely or pursued hedonism, saying "I should just live my life." The non-revolutionaries faced tough living conditions; they couldn't bear much anymore. Then, they cleared us from the shantytowns, and political Islamists filled the void, setting the stage for today's jihadist movements since the military coup on September 12, 1980."

This self-preserving attitude can be seen as a coping mechanism for the brutal realities of their experiences. Importantly, Participant 11 identifies a power vacuum left in the wake of this withdrawal, filled by political Islamists, marking a significant shift in the socio-political landscape post-military coup. Participant 11 also captures the evolution of revolutionary activists' mindsets following their experiences with state violence.

Participant 11: "A mentality quickly took hold, like "We've lived through it, let our children not live through it. We suffered a lot, let our children not suffer." Especially the revolutionaries of that generation who tried to keep their children further away. They often refrained from being involved in organized activities themselves. There are many people who call themselves revolutionaries but do not take part in any political organization."

Participant 11's observation points to a psychological transformation in activists' relationship with political engagement. More than an ideological shift, this protective stance shows how state violence altered risk assessments and emotional associations with activism. The perception that political involvement is inherently dangerous and should therefore be avoided extends to broader societal attitudes. As Bar-Tal and Antebi (1992) describe, systematic

violence can create a collective mindset where perceived threats lead to defensive withdrawal from political life.

The public spectacle of violence against activists appears to have served as a form of social conditioning that, in participants' accounts, left even committed activists discouraging their own children from political involvement (Herman, 2015). The transformation in political engagement becomes evident when activists reflect on the differences between past and present forms of mobilization. Their accounts reveal changes in tactics and fundamental shifts in the relationship between revolutionary movements and the broader public.

According to Participant 12's perception, there has been a significant shift in the public's receptiveness to revolutionary ideals in the aftermath of state violence and the military coup. He describes a stark contrast between past and present, noting how easily activists could once enter homes and influence public sentiment compared to their current struggles. In his view, this change reflects a transformation in public trust and engagement with revolutionary activities. Participant 12 particularly emphasizes what they see as a critical loss of public support, which they perceive as a major challenge for contemporary activism.

Like participant 12, participants 18 and 19 emphasize the growing gap between revolutionaries and the public. Participant 18 uses the following sentence to express the disconnect between the people and the revolutionaries:

Participant 18: "There was a time when everyone was queuing up to become revolutionaries. Now the process is reversed. At that time everyone was begging to be a revolutionary. Nowadays we beg people to become revolutionaries".

Witnessing how difficult a task it is to build bridges with the people, participants contrasted the past sensitivity to revolutionary ideas with the current apathy. Collectively, they paint a picture of a society cut off from its revolutionary qualities, as a direct consequence of state violence that has disrupted established channels of communication. After the military coup, socialist activists faced various personal challenges in adapting to society, but the main difficulty emerged in engaging in political activities. Firat (2020) notes that due to various societal changes, leftist organizations lost their political platforms and subjects. In a "corrupted" political environment, it became a significant challenge to mobilize atomized individuals into the struggle for equality and freedom.

Further narratives from Participants 14, 15, and 20 echo these challenges, focusing on the struggles to establish meaningful connections with the youth and the wider public. They underscore the debilitating impact of the coup on the left's organizational structure, inducing a prolonged period of inactivity. They emphasize the alienation of the public from revolutionary activities and the significant damage inflicted upon their self-confidence and trust in political activism. The systematic dismantling of revolutionary movements appears, in the eyes of many participants, to have been a deliberate strategy rather than merely a byproduct of restoring order. Like many activists, Participant 8, came to understand the coup not as a protective response to chaos, but as a meticulously organized campaign to isolate revolutionary groups from their social base and destroy them both psychologically and physically.

Finally, it should be noted that although the leftist political movements and parties of the 1970s lost their public visibility and organizational connections, sometimes completely disappearing after the coup, they continued to use political channels. During this period, these political organizations consistently demonstrated a will to unite and form a common front in an effort to regain at least some of the power they had lost. However, Durmaz (2019) notes that such demands were largely expressed by the upper echelons of political formations. Durmaz adds that activists, who had become mass movements reaching different segments of society throughout the 70s, largely experienced this process alone and were often distant from these discussions (Durmaz, 2019, p.241).

i. Broader Societal Transformations

The analysis of participants' narratives revealed a recurring pattern: although state-sanctioned political violence directly targeted specific individuals and groups, its effects radiated throughout society, serving as a stark warning about the consequences of dissent. Participants' accounts indicate that the effects of state violence during the September 12, 1980 military coup were not limited solely to those directly targeted. Instead, the regime's actions appear to have fostered a pervasive climate of fear that continues to reinforce its control and discourage dissent throughout society. This dynamic is particularly evident in Participant 20's compelling account of how personal suffering becomes transformed into a powerful message aimed at shaping societal behavior:

Participant 20: "So, the damage done to me personally is not the important part. But they use the damage they have inflicted on me to shape the society. They say, "Look, if you don't behave correctly, this could happen to you too." They wanted to spread this fear, and they succeeded. So, it has settled in society. There's nothing to be done. But this must be broken. Nothing is gained by fear or submission. Everything is getting worse."

Personal damage inflicted by the state, as Participant 20 asserts, is not an isolated incident or a reflection of personal punishment. Instead of that, it is transformed into a public spectacle, a symbol, a cautionary tale. His words encapsulates the use of fear as a mechanism that reinforces compliance and deters dissent. This is an example of a form of state communication that essentially uses the individual's pain as a vehicle for a broader socio-political message. This message implies possible consequences for misbehavior and signals the certainty of a punishment that is both severe and indiscriminate.

The words of the participants generally include this observation that the violence inflicted on them affects the whole society that witnesses it. In that sense, Participant 9's account echoes the climate of intimidation and fear outlined by the previous participants.

Participant 9: "Okay, we've been tortured, we've faced oppression and violence, but similar things were done to the society outside as well. There was such suppression and subjugation in society. Some people had surrendered even before they were arrested."

His statement is particularly significant. This suggests that the state's reputation for brutality precedes it, creating an atmosphere in which individuals give up their will to resist or speak out even without being subjected to direct violence. This dynamic aligns with Foucault's (1977) analysis of how state violence operates as a spectacle of power, shaping behavior through anticipated consequences rather than direct force. This prior submission fundamentally changes the political behavior of society as a whole. The mere knowledge or testimony of state violence against a minority can lead to broader social changes - people begin to self-censor, avoid political participation, and in extreme cases adopt a subservient stance in hope of evading state sanctions. As Howie (2012) points out, the systematic exposure of state violence created a widespread culture of fear in society, as the main target audience of the acts of violence was the public watching the events from a distance. This led individuals to restrain themselves and start behaving in accordance with the expectations of the state even before facing any direct intervention. This withdrawal presents a picture of previously active and engaged citizens retreating from political participation due to fear,

trauma, or intimidation. This retreat is not solely the result of personal experiences of violence or repression.

As participants have noted, even those who were not directly exposed to the horrors were aware of the surrounding violence through stories, news, or the experiences of others, creating a pervasive atmosphere of fear and deterrence. Yet, fear and suppression do not always manifest as withdrawal; in some cases, they drive unintended social and political transformations, as seen in Participant 22's account. Reflecting on his time in Diyarbakır Prison, Participant 22 stated the majority of the 5,000 inmates (around 4,000) were labeled as PKK members, often without substantial evidence. He recalls how even shepherds, young teenagers, and elderly individuals from rural areas were accused of aiding the PKK and subsequently incarcerated. This indiscriminate targeting effectively broadened the scope of repression, turning ordinary civilians into victims of state violence and, in many cases, associating them with political movements they had no prior connection to. This is important for understanding why state-imposed political violence can change the political behavior of the entire society. When the threshold for persecution is so low that almost anyone can become involved in crime, a pervasive climate of fear is created. The broad classification of a large portion of the population as “in-organization” based solely on nominal or superficial affiliations effectively criminalizes an entire community.

It also potentially radicalizes individuals who were previously not politically active but now find themselves victims of state repression. In his analysis of the present, Participant 22 describes the changing political arena and recalls the major socialist parties and organizations that failed to adapt and subsequently disappeared.

Participant 22: “Since 1980, global and national military conflicts have depleted the resources and organizational strength of leftists, socialists, and Kurds in Turkey. Key movements and parties like Revolutionary Path, Dev-Sol, Liberation Movement, and TKP no longer exist, leading to their dispersion. However, Kurdish movements like the PKK adapt and persist, likely to evolve under different names in the future.”

He pinpoints the strategic repressive measures unleashed on the political left, causing its organizational fragmentation and dispersion. His observation reveals how state violence transformed Turkey's political landscape through the gradual erosion of organizational networks and collective action capacities. The distinctive position of Kurdish movements amid this broader dissolution of leftist organizations suggests complex dynamics in how

different political formations respond to sustained pressure - a phenomenon that merits deeper investigation.

To sum up, the psychological impact of witnessing or learning about state violence can have diverse effects on society. Weingarten (2004) makes a similar observation: violence need not be directly experienced to leave lasting effects, since even witnessing it can alter both individuals and their communities. In the context of state violence, the public display of force serves not just to punish individuals but to coerce and intimidate populations into compliance. The findings from the participants' accounts align with these theoretical perspectives, demonstrating how witnessing state violence weakens trust in institutions that aim to protect citizens' rights and freedoms, leading to the breakdown of the social contract. Over time, this erosion of trust and the accompanying sense of betrayal transforms the political landscape, with people turning away from political processes or seeking alternative methods to express dissent.

ii. Participants' diverse political orientations after the violence experience

The experiences of violence rooted in the participants' political identities and activism raise a question about the impact of this trauma on their political perspectives and behaviors. While their political identities often subjected them to state violence, these same identities appear to have provided them with the resilience to endure torture. Examples illustrate that ideals and the interpersonal relationships developed around these ideals enhanced their ability to withstand violence. Activism, transcending mere political positioning, became a fundamental part of their identities from a young age.

"Revolutionism" often became intertwined with inherited family beliefs, socialization among friends, and specific religious or ethnic affiliations. The journey of this identity, acquired through social relationships and images, is examined following intense and systematic experiences of violence. Therefore, in the interviews, questions were also posed about how their political engagement evolved after imprisonment and torture. The state violence inflicted upon the participants left significant marks, leading to both the transformation and reinforcement of their beliefs, ultimately shaping diverse pathways of political participation.

Participant 2 asserts an unchanged commitment to his ideology even today. However, his words mirror a path of political disengagement. His experiences have led to disillusionment

with mainstream politics, which he characterizes as an arena too compromised by insincerity and murky dealings to accommodate revolutionary principles. This sentiment of disillusionment is shared among some participants, stemming from their encounters with corruption and the perceived futility of conventional political engagement. Such disengagement might also be interpreted as a form of self-preservation. However, unlike Participant 2, Participant 3 and Participant 4 demonstrate a stalwart commitment to politics, seemingly unaffected by their traumatic experiences.

These divergent responses may be explained by several factors emerging from their narratives. Participant 4's continued engagement appears rooted in her strong sense of innocence and justice - as she asserts, "I haven't done anything wrong," suggesting that her experience of state violence reinforced rather than undermined her political convictions. For Participant 3, his ability to recognize the evolution of the socio-political environment while maintaining his core political beliefs indicates a more adaptive approach to political engagement. In contrast, Participant 2's disengagement seems linked to his specific experiences with institutional politics - his attempts to work within the CHP and other mainstream political channels left him disillusioned with what he perceived as systemic insincerity. These differences suggest that the impact of state violence on political engagement may be mediated by factors such as individual meaning-making processes, adaptation strategies, and subsequent experiences with political institutions. Participant 3 states that he recognizes the evolution of the socio-political environment. Participant 4, on the other hand, refutes any suggestion of surrendering her revolutionary ideals.

Participant4: "This was asked of me. Everyone has given up being revolutionary you too will probably mind your own business now. There have been people who said you must have given up by now. This is a question asked years later. I said, I haven't done anything wrong."

The resilience participant 4 displays her deep-seated ideological commitment, advocating for the same cause and upholding the same political identity serves nearly as evidence of her rejection of the crimes that the state attempts to attribute to her. Participant 9, like Participant 4, continues to identify himself as a communist today and is still an activist as the chairman of the provincial disciplinary board of EMEP (Labour Party). However, his unwavering commitment to his political views is not static; it's dynamic, acknowledging the necessity of adaptation and growth within the framework of his political organization. This evolution is not a departure from his foundational beliefs but a strategic refinement, aiming to avoid past

pitfalls and enhance effectiveness. This process of renewal within his party, encompassing organization, work style, and struggle, highlights a developed understanding of political engagement.

The aftermath of September 12th took participants in different directions, shaped by their experiences and the changing political climate. Participant 7 describes an ideological evolution, reflecting on her departure from the People's Liberation group, which later became the Labor Party. While she remains on good terms with her former comrades, she attributes her divergence to a shift in perspective over time. The homogenization of socialist parties and organizations following the coup, described by her as a 'flattening,' illustrates the broader impact of state repression, which she believes eroded ideological diversity and forced political movements into indistinct forms. Her journey suggests a move towards a more reflective understanding of politics, shaped by both personal reflection and historical circumstances. This sense of disillusionment with traditional political structures resonates in the accounts of Participant 10 and Participant 22, who have shifted their focus toward grassroots activism.

Participant 10's involvement in human rights and women's organizations, alongside Participant 22's work with the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)⁴⁰, reflects their shared commitment to creating change through community-based efforts. These actions signify a move away from formal political institutions, perhaps driven by frustration with the inefficacy or constraints of mainstream politics, and towards tangible, localized approaches to social justice.

On the other hand, Participant 11 articulates a vision of revolution, interpreting it as an enduring struggle within the democratic system rather than an abrupt, monumental event.

Participant 11: "The ideal of revolution persists, not as an immediate action but as a continuous struggle within democracy. Even before the 1980 Coup, my activism focused on advocating for teachers' rights and democratic demands. I never engaged in violent actions; my approach has always been through peaceful means. So, from my perspective, nothing has fundamentally changed. I continue to fight for human rights just as I did back then."

⁴⁰ The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) (Halkların Demokratik Partisi) is a pro-Kurdish and left-wing political party in Turkey, founded in 2012. It advocates for minority rights, gender equality, democracy, and decentralization. The party has faced significant state repression, including arrests of its leaders and attempts at closure, particularly since the mid-2010s.

Her narrative shows an adaptation of her political ideology to current socio-political realities, exhibiting ideological continuity alongside pragmatic adaptation. Yet, Participants 7 and 11 present an interesting blend of ideological consistency and adaptation. While both participants maintain their core beliefs, they acknowledge the evolution of their political perspective. The 'flattening' metaphor used by Participant 7 could suggest a perceived loss of unique ideological identities among socialist parties due to the current political atmosphere. Participant 11 shows a broadened conception of 'revolution,' seeing it as a struggle embedded in the democratic process rather than an abrupt upheaval.

This pattern of adaptation takes an even more pronounced form among those who chose to work within mainstream political institutions. Participants 13, 18, and 19 express a determination for political participation despite experiences of violence and repression. Participant 13, who serves on the executive board of the Republican People's Party (CHP) in a major city, emphasizes his steadfast commitment to socialist views since the mid-1970s. He perceives his participation not as a shift in ideological stance but as a platform to re-engage with activism, reflecting a form of ideological resilience, indicating that his political identity remains stable and unaffected by the changing tides of his external environment. Similarly, Participant 18 also mirrors this sense of ideological steadfastness, implying a profound belief in his chosen path despite past adversities.

According to Örmeci (2021), leftist politics in Turkey, post-2002, has primarily advanced through two main channels: the CHP, which has emerged as a defender of Kemalist, social democratic, and secular lifestyles, and the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), representing the Kurdish political movement. More radical left-wing parties have garnered only limited support.

Thus, Participant 13's, Participant 22's and Participant 18's stories not only highlight individual ideological resilience but also align with broader trends in Turkish leftist politics, as described by Örmeci (2021). This duality reflects the influence of the CHP and HDP in the Turkish political landscape, with more radical elements remaining on the periphery. But on the other hand, it also indicates that in-system solutions are being sought.

Participant 19, from a slightly different perspective, stresses the necessity of reigniting the democratic struggle in Turkey and describes his political line as social democracy. His call for the revival of social democracy and the importance of organizational efforts in various

platforms (political parties, unions or factories) suggests a strategic adaptation to the socio-political climate. Participant 19's advocacy of democratic participation through traditional and peaceful channels, despite his history of activism involving radical armed political groups, indicates a pragmatic shift towards using established democratic structures to advance social change. The difference in approach among participants foregrounds a common thread in enduring commitment to political activism, but also reveals individual differences in how they choose to direct their ideological expression within the constraints of a contemporary political landscape deemed hostile to more radical left-wing movements.

Yet, it is difficult to say that all participants are of the same opinion. Participant 17 and Participant 21 depict disillusionment and distrust towards political organizations. Participant 17 expresses disbelief in his previous political commitments:

Participant 17: “When I got out, I didn't believe anymore, mainly because I was aware of my own class (participant's family was not in the lower income group). I didn't think about it because I felt like I'd stepped into a position I shouldn't have, and I didn't want to do it again.”

Participant 17 belonged to one of the political groups that disintegrated most tragically and swiftly after the military coup. A source of his disillusionment and anger could be attributed to being abandoned by his group, with an expectation for all members to fend for themselves. Participant 17 also indicated that the deterioration of his relationship with the political group began prior to the September 12, 1980, military coup. He cites the reasons for his disengagement and contemplation of departure as the irrational and irresponsible decisions of the group's senior leaders. Already experiencing a discord with the group before the coup, Participant 17, after enduring torture, conveyed both a loss of interest in politics and a diminished faith in society as a whole.

The transformation of political organizations in the post-coup period produced varying responses from activists, ranging from complete withdrawal to strategic adaptation. Some witnessed their organizations undergo troubling changes as they attempted to reconstitute themselves. As Participant 21 noted, the return of older leadership from prison often led to internal power struggles, marginalization of new voices, and in some cases, suspected compromise of organizational autonomy through intelligence infiltration. These developments forced many activists to reconsider their relationship with formal political structures while maintaining informal connections to their political communities.

The evolution of Kurdish political consciousness during this period offers a particularly important example of how state violence affects political aspirations. As Participant 22 observed, the experience of prolonged conflict contributed to a significant shift in perspective - from demands for complete independence toward advocacy for democratic autonomy within Turkey. This transformation reflects a broader pattern of adapting revolutionary goals to changed political realities while maintaining core leftist principles. The emphasis on peace-building, cross-cultural solidarity, and rejection of othering suggests that trauma, paradoxically, may have fostered more inclusive political visions among some activists.

The data reveals a complex pattern in participants' responses to state violence: almost all maintained their left-wing political identities, while their forms of political expression and engagement varied. Participant 10 and Participant 22 redirected their activism toward grassroots organizing and human rights advocacy; Participant 13 chose to work within mainstream political institutions; and Participant 2, while still identifying as a leftist, became disillusioned with formal political participation, which he viewed as too compromised to accommodate his principles. Participant 17 was the sole exception, citing his class background and questioning his earlier political choices, he withdrew from politics altogether. This resilience of political identity appears to have provided a framework for processing trauma: rather than transforming their ideology, participants adapted their strategies and tactics. Their continuity of conviction across changing parties and styles of activism underlines how deeply their political identities were rooted in a lifetime of activism and conflict.

4.4.3. The Personal and Political Reflections of September 12 in Turkey

An examination of the individual impacts of state violence on political activists' identities and engagement has been conducted. Attention is now directed toward the broader societal transformations that emerged in the wake of the 1980 coup. While the previous section revealed how participants processed and adapted to their experiences of state violence, this section explores how these individual experiences were situated within, and contributed to, wider social changes in Turkish society. The participants' unique position as both victims of state violence and observers of societal transformation offers valuable insights into how the coup's impact was experienced and perceived across their social environments, altering social relationships, political consciousness, and civic engagement patterns in ways they describe as

far-reaching and enduring. Their narratives document personal trauma and bear witness to what they perceive as shifts in Turkish social and political life following September 12, 1980.

i. Narratives of Change in Turkish Social Landscape

After this period of upheaval and violence, survivors' reflections show how activism and social values changed. These accounts from the aftermath of the September 12 coup record participants' views on shifts in political engagement, social norms, and personal conviction, together building a fuller picture of how the country changed. The participants' experiences shed light on the aftermath of political violence and activism, particularly how it shapes their perspectives on society. This intersection between the political and the personal reveals how the aftermath of the coup restructured political landscapes, influenced social dynamics, particularly gender roles and the rise of religious conservatism. Participant 4 described how this transformation particularly affected women in rural areas:

Participant 4: "Women were severely impacted as societal norms shifted to religious dictates. This led to women being confined at home and subjected to increased male dominance and violence, contributing to broader societal ignorance and pressure on children."

This observation about increasing religious conservatism was echoed by Participant 14, who emphasized how the coup facilitated the rise of political Islam by systematically weakening opposition to religious conservatism. While the reflections of Participants 4 and 14 focus on the societal shifts towards religious conservatism and its impact on gender roles, Participant 8 takes a dual perspective, acknowledging the transformations of September 12 while also linking these changes to the consolidation of capitalism. As he states, *"We have a soulless society in Turkey, a soulless society was created, to put it in the vernacular"*. He believes that the coup enabled both economic and ideological transformations and created a more homogenous society under the Turkish-Islamic synthesis. While Participant 8 highlights the economic and ideological consolidation of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, many participants, including Participant 17, observe how the vacuum left by the suppression of leftist activism after the coup was strategically filled by various right-wing ideologies, particularly political Islam, which gained traction with state support.

Participant 17: "Under the name of the green belt policy, as an organization against the Soviets, that's a known thing. As you know, Kenan Evren was like Tayyip Erdoğan today, but the real first person who walked around with the Quran was that junta leader Kenan Evren. He started it, he provided financial support for reactionary

movements. It started there. If the AKP government today is the completed building, if a building is completed today, those who laid its foundation are definitely September 12. This is not something debatable. And those seeds, let's say those seeds, have sprouted..."

Participant 17's identification of Chief of General Staff Kenan Evren as the origin point of political Islam is significant. Kenan Evren, while attempting to justify his actions and the coup, frequently cited hadiths in his speeches, using religious narratives to legitimize the September 12th coup and ostensibly restore peace. It is evident that Evren and his team aimed to counter political forces with a more potent symbol: Islam. Evren himself stated:

"A nation cannot exist without religion; just look at what happened to the Soviet Union... I recited hadiths to convince them." (Birand, et al 2006, s.169)

The changes observed in all areas of social life under the September 12 regime brought about a new understanding in the dominant paradigms of Turkish politics. Conservative politics in Turkey emerged prominently after 1980. With all right and left political parties and organizations active in the political arena before the coup being shut down, an authority vacuum emerged in the country. At this point, Turgut Özal, who founded the conservative Anavatan (Motherland) Party and won the 1983 elections, filled this void with religion and came to power. Conservatism in Turkey was perceived as an alternative to be used against the "left" and as a tool for its elimination (Demirer, 2017:290). From this point onward, conservatism began to rise.

In line with literature above, Participant 15 directly associates the social changes observed today with the coup d'état of 12 September, emphasizing that the transformation was gradual and facilitated by the decrease in leftist influence and the increase in social corruption. Pointing out that the coup could not reshape society all at once due to the strong leftist opposition at the time, he argues that the changes took place as the ideological stance of the society changed. It is not surprising that participants who observed firsthand the strong government and societal authority efforts targeted by the September 12 Military Administration and the 1982 Constitution felt the societal shift towards conservatism.

The military regime's desires for a disciplined society, hierarchy, and obedience to order are evident. Additionally, the mandatory implementation of religious education in primary and

secondary schools can be seen as an example of the conservative policies and efforts to transform society during this period (Kongar, 1998, p. 252). According to Akdoğan (1999), the compulsory religious education introduced after the 1980 coup indicates the state's intention to see Islamists in bureaucratic positions. This period can be described as a turning point where the state decisively chose to use Islamism against the perceived threat of communism.

This foundation of authoritarianism and discipline evolved in subsequent decades, as technological advancements in state surveillance further curtailed political activism, reshaping the dynamics of dissent and public mobilization. The intensification of state surveillance through technological advances has fundamentally altered the landscape of political activism in Turkey. While pre-coup era activism relied heavily on mass mobilization and street presence, contemporary activists face unprecedented challenges from ubiquitous digital monitoring. The extent of this transformation is captured by a participant who continues organizing today: '...even the smallest action can be crushed,' Participant 12 observes, describing how police surveillance cameras now enable immediate intervention in even modest commemorative gatherings. This technological web of surveillance, combined with lingering anxieties from the 1980 coup period, has severely constrained activists' ability to organize public demonstrations and maintain mass support.

Participant 17 extends this perspective beyond activism, reflecting on the cultural and artistic degradation that accompanied the shift towards a more authoritarian and controlled society.

Participant 17: "Before September 12, Turkey seemed to be a place with more freedoms, where artistic and cultural activities were more intense. Especially human relationships were different. I felt the intensity of the degradation after September 12."

He paints a picture of a pre-coup Turkey imbued with a sense of freedom and vibrant artistic and cultural activities, highlighting a significant shift in the socio-political environment post-coup. The bans, penalties, and dismissals imposed on the press, cinema, and opera not only broke the working spirit of those active in these fields but also negatively impacted the development of these sectors (Ural & Ercisil, 2018). In their study examining the press and art life in Turkey between 1980 and 1983, Ural and Ercisil highlight that the goal of the September 12 Junta was to create an "apolitical" human type (2018).

This period saw the proliferation of consumer culture, with figures representing and feeding this culture being promoted through the press (Ural & Ercisil, 2018). The intense rural-to-urban migration during the same years deeply affected the cultural and artistic life in cities. In an environment where political artists could not work or produce, themes such as hopelessness, fatalism, and the acceptance of pain became prevalent, leading to the widespread popularity of the Arabesque music genre (Eken-Küçükaksoy, 2023 p.1068). Participant 17 noticed this superficiality in art, stemming from the subjects of art becoming more individualistic and passive, focusing on the acceptance of pain and injustice. The loss of collective artistic expression paralleled a broader erosion of revolutionary innocence and conviction. As Participant 20 said:

Participant 20: “We were innocent children. We were resistant, we were believers, we were genuinely pure and innocent. Now I look and wonder if we lost them. It seems to me like we've lost our innocence, our purity, and our faith.”

Participant 20's words carry deep traces of nostalgia, particularly in the reference to 'innocent children,' which evokes the idealism and unwavering faith that once guided their political activism. Reflecting on societal changes, he associates this perceived loss of innocence with a broader transformation in values. According to Boym (2001), nostalgia refers to a longing for an imagined or idealized state of being (p. 7). Participant 20's words suggest a personal sense of mourning for what he sees as the decline of hope and idealism, replaced by skepticism and cynicism in his view of the changing social landscape.

The participants' reflections make clear that the coup's transformations spread across social, economic, and cultural domains and also reshaped the political sphere, altering both the focus of activism and the issues at the center of political discourse. Participant 1's reflections capture a gradual shift in Turkish politics from a focus on class to the emergence of identity politics; environmentalism, animal rights, and feminism.

Participant 1: “It's clear that, after September 12 or in the last 10 to 15 years, many environmental struggles and the like have developed, such as animal rights, feminism, and other things. When you look at the participation rates, they are very low. Now, for instance, May 1st events, which are a massive occurrence, have been banned. And there's no healthy effort to overcome these bans. There's only activism that can be sustained to the extent that the system allows.”

The socio-economic policies implemented after the military coup and their resulting impacts also transformed politics and political practices. Participants generally observed that the traditional political landscape began to erode and lose credibility after 1980. Angılı (2004)

states that in the post-coup period, the socially acceptable form of politics shifted towards parties capable of uncompromisingly implementing neoliberal policies in the economy, prioritizing political marketing strategies, media use, and image creation, effectively 'corporatizing' their approach. The state's control over the broader social sphere led to societal reactions against this control, facilitating the rise of liberal thought and the society's shift towards liberal preferences. This period saw these dynamics permeating all areas of society and affecting political organizations (İnsel, 1990). The classic dichotomies of the previous era, such as left-right, progressive-reactionary, and socialist-fascist, were replaced by a new dichotomy of state-society in line with the new context. In this new political struggle, one side was composed of statist, while the other comprised civil society advocates (Öğün, 2004).

Responding to questions on the main topics of past and present political debates, participant 7 offers a critique of the current political landscape in Turkey, seeing it as a product of the events surrounding 12 September. She sees the ruling party AKP as a direct result of the political rupture that occurred during this period. As she quoted:

Participant 7: “The AKP, in my opinion, is a product of September 12. In the end, they privatized all public spaces, and all of these were done step by step. The best way to build a Turkey as they desired was possible by silencing the society on September 12, and today we feel its results every day.”

This perception implies an inherently transformative conception of political power that can reshape the physical and cultural environment of a society. For her, the erosion of public spaces and the degradation of the environment serve as powerful symbols of this neoliberal transformation. According to Gülp (2003), the competition between old and new politics in the political arena revolved around national identities on the international stage and class identities on the local stage. The socio-economic impacts of globalization have effectively removed class identities from being a focal point of political competition as social identity categories.

This shift from class to identity reshaped the very ground on which the revolutionaries had once stood. For the first time, they came to see the movement from the outside, as observers of a world they no longer shaped. The organizations themselves changed in step. As Participant 11 recalls, groups once devoted to revolutionary action gave way, after the coup, to ones turned toward healing wounds and identity:

Participant 11: “Before September 12, we were in illegal organizations. We didn't have any legal organizations, but within TÖB-DER we had a legal appearance as a revolutionary group. While there were organizations displaying revolutionary acts before the coup, after the coup, organizations that seemed to heal wounds or rather identity movements began.”

She underlines the interplay between sociopolitical conditions and political activism and also states that there has been a shift in the nature of resistance movements. In this period, when the new context of politics began to be determined by the phenomenon of culture and identity, masses that did not carry the primary and dominant identities perceived by the state began to turn towards communal structures in the context of religion and ethnicity. Within these structures, they defined new allegiances that began to take precedence over class identities (Kahraman, 1995).

The participants' reactions to Turkey's socio-political transformation are their own, yet they converge on certain points. Most, for instance, see the coup as the decisive break in their political lives, the event that reshaped the very nature of activism. The coup's reach, though, was broader than activism alone. The rise of neoliberal discourse in Turkey, and the steps that led to it, lie outside this study, but Turkey plainly followed the global trends of the 1980s. What made its experience distinctive was the way the military regime actively reshaped public discourse and social categories. As Gürbilek (1992) observes, the post-coup period saw an unprecedented intervention into previously private domains of life, with new systems of classification and categorization emerging across society. This taxonomic impulse extended beyond sexual and generational categories to fundamentally alter how political identities were understood and expressed in public life.

The military regime's strategic use of violence suppressed immediate political opposition and transformed the social relationships, creating enduring patterns of fear and suspicion that reshaped how society viewed and engaged with political activism. The experiences of the participants reveal this process from both sides - as former revolutionaries who once enjoyed broad social support, they witnessed how state violence severed organic connections between political movements and communities, fundamentally altering the landscape of political possibility in Turkey.

Finally this chapter has systematically addressed the four research questions guiding this study. RQ1, which explored how revolutionary identities developed and operated within

social networks before the coup, was examined through Section 4.1's analysis of family political socialization and Section 4.2's exploration of the vibrant pre-coup revolutionary landscape and community relationships. RQ2, concerning participants' descriptions of societal changes following the coup, was addressed primarily through Section 4.3's documentation of systematic state violence in detention, imprisonment, and social control mechanisms. RQ3, examining the evolution of participants' relationships with large group symbols, was analyzed in Section 4.4.1.ii, which demonstrated how state violence fundamentally altered connections to national identity and cultural symbols. Finally, RQ4, tracing changes in revolutionary identities over time, was addressed throughout Section 4.4, particularly through participants' reflections on identity transformation from initial activism through experiences of violence and into the post-coup era. Together, these findings show how state violence reshaped participants' individual political consciousness and their social relationships.

5. Analysis of Findings

The previous chapters have outlined the historical context of the 1980 military coup in Turkey, examined the methodological approach of this study, and presented detailed findings from interviews with political activists who experienced state violence during this period. This discussion chapter aims to synthesize these elements, analyzing how systematic state violence transformed both individual revolutionaries and broader societal relationships with political activism. Drawing upon participants' firsthand accounts, which provide unique insights into lived experiences of repression, this analysis contextualizes historical events and also foregrounds the voices of those directly impacted. Building on the theoretical frameworks introduced earlier, particularly regarding large group identity, collective trauma, and state violence, this chapter examines four key themes that emerged from the findings. First, it analyzes how September 12 evolved from a historical event into a collective trauma that continues to shape Turkish political consciousness. Second, it examines the vibrant political landscape that preceded the coup, providing context for understanding what was lost or transformed. Third, it examines how state violence forced social change, reshaping social and political relations through several channels at once. Finally, it explores the perceived lasting impact of these transformations on activists. Through this analysis, the chapter suggests that the military regime's systematic deployment of violence may have contributed to significant shifts in Turkish political culture that appear to persist to this day.

5.1. The Legacy of September 12: From Historical Event to Collective Trauma

This section contributes to all research objectives by establishing the theoretical foundation for understanding how state violence becomes collective trauma, addressing RO2, RO3, and RO4 regarding the junta's effects, large group identity transformation, and the psychosocial mechanisms of collective trauma.

September 12, 1980 was more than a coup. In the decades since, it has settled into Turkish political memory, its rupture of state-society relations still felt long after the event itself (Narli et al., 2014). The scope of the coup's impact was unprecedented in Turkish history, representing a systematic intervention into virtually every aspect of social life. In a population of 45 million, approximately 650,000 people were subjected to legal proceedings - a scale of judicial action that transformed the very fabric of Turkish society. When excluding

the population under age 15, this suggests that nearly every household in Turkey was directly affected by the state's judicial actions (Candansayar, 2010). This widespread reach meant that the coup's impact extended far beyond those directly targeted by state violence, creating ripple effects that touched every corner of society. The systematic nature of state violence during this period contributed to what participants described as a pervasive culture of fear that, according to their narratives, seemed to affect individuals across different political orientations. Participants' testimonies suggest that this climate of fear may have influenced shifts in social relationships and behavioral patterns. The junta's approach was to treat all citizens as potential traitors until they could prove their patriotism, fundamentally altering the relationship between state and society and establishing a new paradigm of state-citizen relations based on suspicion and surveillance. The widespread violence turned what might have been an isolated political event into a collective experience that took several distinct but related forms. First, it functions as a chosen trauma - a shared mental representation of a historical event that becomes woven into the fabric of group identity, particularly for leftist groups in Turkey (Volkan, 2001).

The enduring impact on these groups is evident in participant narratives - Participant 7's trembling voice and Participant 4's vivid recollections suggest these memories maintain their emotional intensity despite time's passage. Beyond its function as a chosen trauma for specific groups, participants' narratives suggest that the 1980 coup contributed to what can be described as a cultural trauma, a disruption in the social fabric that, according to participants, left indelible marks upon group consciousness (Alexander, 2004). Though drawn from a particular group, these accounts point to a rupture with a collective dimension, one that may have shaped how the wider society came to relate to political engagement.

The processing and transmission of these traumatic experiences then takes multiple forms. The recurring presence of September 12 in Turkish cinema, literature, and other cultural expressions reflects the broader society's attempt to make sense of the period's legacy. Through art and oral history, both direct experiences and their trauma pass across generations, so that even those who did not live through the events inherit part of the psychological burden through cultural narratives and representations (LaCapra, 2001). Orhon (2024) elaborates on this through her concept of cultural productions as memory carriers (*bellek taşıyıcıları*), showing how artistic expression works as a communicative memory that bridges different people, and even generations. For her, this intergenerational transmission

runs through the cultural repertoire September 12 left behind, one that younger leftists reach less through direct testimony than through the silences, absences, and artistic reconstructions that speak to the unspeakable dimensions of trauma.

Alongside this work of transmission, cultural production has also been a space for publicly contesting the meaning of the coup. As Açıkyol (2021) observes, the artistic works of these years capture a society caught between expression and suppression, between the need to testify and the impossibility of full articulation. Over time, that testimony pushed against the official record. Başçı's (2017) analysis of cinema and television in the early 2000s shows how state narratives had first framed the coup as a restoration of stability and order, while the films and serials of that decade offered subversive accounts that laid bare its authoritarianism and social trauma. These productions turned September 12 "from a cinematic taboo to a film cliché about authoritarianism" (Başçı, 2017, p. 15), a shift that shows how popular culture came to work as a counter-memory, refusing the closure imposed by official history.

These cultural works do more than record the period. They echo what the participants themselves describe. The alienation and melancholy that Moran (1994) finds in the characters of the period's fiction reappear in participants' accounts of social isolation and emotional burden. The psychological fragmentation that Özer (2011) traces in these novels appears as well in Participant 10's inability to recall parts of her imprisonment and in Participant 7's difficulty recognizing herself in the mirror; the broken form of these works, with their non-linear narratives and shifting perspectives, mirrors that same fractured memory (Gümüş, 1990). The tension between speech and silence runs through both: what Gürbilek (1992) describes in cultural production as a simultaneous explosion of speech and suppression of voice is exactly what Participant 11 encountered when she tried to speak and was silenced by others' terror. Taken together, these parallels suggest that the effects of state violence were felt well beyond its direct victims, supporting the reading of September 12 as a collective trauma.

In formal politics, the memory of September 12 followed a far more uneven course. The fact that even partial constitutional amendments addressing the legacy of the coup took 27 years with the 2010 referendum indicates that this collective trauma was ignored for a long time. The strategic choice of 12 September as the date for the 2010 referendum and the fact that the "yes" campaign for the constitutional amendment was stressed on the military coup of 12 September (Yolcu, 2011), and that this successfully mobilised the society, even some leftist groups, reveals the psychological mechanisms through which historical traumas retain their

power. As Volkan (2001) notes, such collective memories become powerful political tools precisely because they address unresolved social wounds and shared emotional experiences that transcend individual memories.

Erdogan's strategy of building a 'yes' campaign around changing the September 12 constitution while paradoxically pushing for less democratic reforms worked effectively because it activated a state of 'time collapse' (Volkan, 2001), where in past anxieties, fears, and hopes merge with present concerns. This psychological mechanism allows political actors to harness the emotional energy of past traumas, transforming historical pain into present political action. The success of this approach in mobilizing public support demonstrates how unresolved collective traumas continue to shape political behavior long after the original events.

This dynamic shows the paradox at the heart of collective trauma: while it can powerfully mobilise people, that very mobilisation often prevents genuine processing of the historical wound. Rather than leading to true reconciliation with the past, the emotional potency of the trauma becomes a tool for perpetuating new forms of political authority, demonstrating how unresolved societal wounds can be continuously reactivated to serve present political aims.

Taşkın and Bora (2001) read the coup as a deliberate project of societal reconfiguration, one that worked through many institutions at once: reshaping school curricula (Erdal, 2013; Oztan, 2019), controlling media narratives (Durna & İnal, 2010), restructuring the legal system, and installing new forms of surveillance and discipline (Tanör, 1994). Its aim, on this reading, reached past political institutions into the textures of everyday social and cultural life.

Participants' narratives bear this out, suggesting that state violence served to repress and, beyond that, to reshape social and political life more broadly. Three patterns recur across their accounts. First, torture was standardized across military prisons such as Mamak, Metris, and Diyarbakır, which points to a systematic rather than an arbitrary approach. Second, large-group symbols were deliberately weaponized in torture, in what appears to be a calculated effort to sever activists' ties to collective identity. Third, surveillance and intimidation were deployed steadily in neighborhoods and workplaces, carrying the violence out of detention centers and into everyday social interaction. Taken together, these patterns reached into the core of social and political relationships: participants link them to lasting

difficulty in rebuilding social networks, even decades later, and to a changed relationship with political engagement.

More than a single historical event, September 12 endures as a chosen trauma, especially for the left, and as a rupture whose effects participants trace well beyond their own generation. The sections that follow examine how that trauma may have shaped political consciousness, social relationships, and political engagement, from its impact on family ties to its part in reworking youth identity.

5.2. Revolutionary Identity and Social Integration: Political Consciousness Before the Coup

This section synthesizes findings related to RQ1, providing theoretical analysis of how revolutionary identities operated within family and community networks before state violence. The findings indicate that before the 1980 military coup, revolutionary identity and political consciousness were shaped through intertwined social, cultural, and familial processes that went beyond individual conviction. Participants' accounts show that activism emerged from deep forms of social integration, intergenerational influence, and collective meaning-making. This section examines how these findings both support and extend existing frameworks on political socialization and collective identity formation in pre-coup Turkey. It first explores the role of family networks and early political socialization (5.2.1), tracing how class background, education, and family narratives fostered political engagement. It then analyzes class consciousness and revolutionary mythmaking (5.2.2), drawing out how collective imagination and cultural archetypes embedded revolutionary figures within traditional social frameworks. Taken together, these findings reveal the psychosocial foundations of pre-coup activism and provide a critical basis for understanding the ruptures in identity and social cohesion that followed the coup's systematic violence.

5.2.1. Family Networks and Political Socialization

As the findings demonstrated, understanding participants' pre-coup political engagement is crucial for analyzing how state violence transformed both individual activists and broader political participation patterns. While the evolution of political activism and revolutionary identity in 1970s Turkey was examined in detail in previous chapters, participants' narratives

offer valuable new insights into how this vibrant political landscape operated at the grassroots level.

The answers to what enabled strong civil society participation and political engagement during this period can be found in the immediate social environments where activists were raised and in deeper historical patterns that legitimized and encouraged youth political participation. As outlined in Chapter 1, Lüküslü (2009, p.15) traces this confidence to a construct older than the activists themselves: the late Ottoman state's investment in educated youth as the empire's rescuers, a role the Young Turks⁴¹ internalized and the Republic inherited the "youth myth." What participants' narratives add is a close view of how this inherited role was taken up within particular families and neighborhoods.

Within this historical context, the findings reveal significant patterns in how political consciousness was transmitted through family relationships in pre-coup Turkey. Many participants grew up in households with social democratic values, where political discussion was not only permitted but often encouraged. This aligns with Easton and Hess's (1962) observation that political orientations become pronounced during childhood through parent-child interactions, with families acting as primary mediators of political socialization.

The data suggests that some participants' families were directly involved in political activism. For instance, Participant 11's experience of participating in Workers' Party activities with her family demonstrates how political engagement could become a shared family experience. This pattern supports Andolina et al.'s (2003) findings about the crucial role of family political engagement in youth civic development. However, there is a more complex dynamic than simple political inheritance. While most participants' families held social democratic views, they weren't necessarily as radical as their children would become. Yet, most families supported their children's political choices even in challenging circumstances. Participant 17's account is particularly telling - despite being wanted by the police, his father maintained supportive communication and never complained about police harassment.

As Ulus (2016) indicates, the fight against imperialism was one of the important reasons for youth's interest in activism in the 1960s and 1970s. However, she argues that the

⁴¹ The Young Turk generation refers to members of the late 19th- and early 20th-century Ottoman reformist movement who sought to modernize and constitutionalize the empire. Emerging from military and bureaucratic elites, they eventually organized the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, which restored the Ottoman constitution and paved the way for the rise of Turkish nationalism.

effectiveness of anti-imperialist discourse in politicizing youth in a country where imperialism's influence wasn't particularly visible stemmed from the internalization of the duty to "protect the homeland against internal and external enemies" during the education process (p.378). This state emphasis on youth as protectors of the nation was further reinforced by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Address to Youth - a text that would later be ironically used as a torture instrument in September 12 prisons.

The class position of participants significantly influenced their political awakening. Many came from working-class or lower-middle-class backgrounds, experiencing firsthand the economic hardships and social inequalities of 1970s Turkey. As Participant 4 noted, growing up with a father who worked as a municipal garbage collector and an illiterate mother who was an agricultural laborer shaped her understanding of social inequality. However, even participants from more privileged backgrounds, like Participant 17, developed strong leftist convictions through observing class differences. This suggests that class consciousness emerged through both direct experience and observation, supporting Lüküslü's (2009) analysis of how rapid urbanization and growing social gaps in 1970s Turkey created conditions for political mobilization across class lines.

The politicization of the 1970s transcended university campuses for the first time and succeeded in reaching factories, squatter settlements, and the broader working class (Safak, 2014). As Participant 10 observed, *"everyone accepts revolutionaries into their homes... but at the same time they were naturally afraid."* This ambivalence stemmed not from any rejection of revolutionary politics, but from the reality that revolutionary practice often involved armed struggle. The participants' accounts show how they maintained generally positive relationships with communities despite - or sometimes because of - their capacity for violence.

Participant 16's account is particularly telling. He describes how after confronting a forester about local people's problems, word spread that revolutionaries could solve community issues, leading to increased trust and respect. This suggests that revolutionary organizations' ability to exercise power - through their large organizational networks and potential for armed action - made them an alternative source of problem-solving and justice for communities who couldn't rely on state institutions. As Participant 9 notes, their effectiveness in addressing local disputes and protecting community interests earned them genuine support, even as their association with political violence generated some fear.

The activism of the 1970s marked a significant evolution from previous periods, particularly in how it transcended traditional bounds of student politics. While the participants were influenced by the '68 generation, they developed a distinctly different approach, organizing more extensively along class lines and establishing deeper connections with working-class communities. This is evident in participants' accounts of choosing to leave university dormitories and forgoing family vacations to engage in organizational activities in squatter settlements. The vibrant political landscape was supported by the institutional framework established by the 1961 Constitution (Işıklı, 1967, p.87) . As İler (2015) notes, laws 274 and 275 enabled unprecedented labor organization and collective bargaining rights. The March 12, 1971 intervention sought to suppress this activism, yet its impact proved short-lived. In fact, Turkey experienced its most intense period of student and union movements in the latter half of the 1970s, when the participants were active.

5.2.2. Class Consciousness and Revolutionary Mythmaking

A particularly rich vein in the findings concerns how the '68 generation revolutionaries become mythologized figures, especially in rural areas. This mythologization process reveals the collective unconscious at work – where archetypal patterns and shared cultural narratives shape how communities process and integrate new experiences (Jung, 1959). As illustrated by Participants 9 and 12's accounts of villages claiming visits from Deniz Gezmiş that never occurred, this was not mere misremembering but rather an active process of collective fantasy formation serving important psychological and social functions.

Examining these rural narratives reveals an intriguing interaction with existing cultural archetypes. Revolutionary figures like Deniz Gezmiş were assimilated into pre-existing folkloric frameworks of heroic figures who visit villages, help the oppressed, and challenge authority. As Romero et al. (1985) note, when groups engage in collective fantasy they recognize and respond to universal symbols and archetypes that resonate with their cultural consciousness. This alignment between modern revolutionary figures and traditional folk hero archetypes suggests a powerful cultural continuity whereby contemporary political resistance is understood and legitimized through established narrative patterns. The fact that multiple villages independently developed similar stories of harboring and protecting revolutionaries indicates that such narratives met a deep psychological need within these communities.

This transformation of political activists into folk heroes reflects the adaptation of old narratives to serve new political purposes (Tanasoïu, 2005). Beyond mere political utility, these narratives provided rural communities with a framework to process and participate in the broader social transformations occurring in Turkey. By weaving revolutionaries into local folklore, villages maintained their traditional narrative structures while incorporating new political realities and aspirations, rendering the revolutionary a modern incarnation of the folk hero challenging injustice, much like traditional figures such as K ro lu⁴² or Pir Sultan Abdal.⁴³

Moreover, the phenomenon of villages claiming to have hidden and protected revolutionaries is particularly significant. Whether or not these events occurred, the prevalence of such narratives shows a collective desire to be seen as part of the revolutionary movement, even if direct participation was not possible. In doing so, these stories allowed communities to view themselves as active participants in the struggle for social justice rather than passive observers of distant political events.

The convergence of revolutionary narratives with traditional storytelling patterns is further evident in the familiar folkloric structures employed. Just as traditional folk heroes were depicted as being sheltered by villagers when fleeing from authorities, revolutionary figures were portrayed as protected by the community. This narrative pattern emerges clearly in the participants' accounts. For example, Participant 9 stated:

"Deniz and his friends had never been to our region, but there was a legendary story told about them, like a fairy tale, saying that they had come to our village, our villagers had given them food and water, sheep were slaughtered in their honor."

Similarly, Participant 15 recounted stories of revolutionary leaders engaging in deep discussions with village elders, echoing traditional tales where wandering folk heroes or religious figures visit communities. Rather than accepting revolutionary ideas solely in abstract terms, rural communities integrated these new political actors into their established cultural narratives and social memory.

⁴² The K ro lu epic is a narrative in which the pursuit of individual justice transforms into an ideal of collective freedom. In the K ro lu epic, justice signifies not only revenge but also resistance against oppression and the protection of the people's rights. K ro lu's struggle with Ottoman authorities transcends personal rebellion and becomes a form of collective resistance, thereby offering a philosophical foundation for the idea of social freedom (Erdem, 2011).

⁴³ Pir Sultan Abdal was a folk poet who lived during the 16th century, a period marked by growing tensions between the Ottoman state and the Alevi community. Through his verses, which carried both mystical and political themes, he became a significant figure in the Alevi-Bektashi tradition (A a, 2018).

Moreover, these mythologized narratives often incorporated elements of the hero archetype (Jung, 1959), portraying revolutionaries as challengers of unjust authority and defenders of the oppressed. The emphasis on their interactions with common people, sharing meals, engaging in discussions, and respecting local customs, suggests an unconscious effort to humanize politics and integrate it into the fabric of rural life.

All of this would change dramatically with the military coup. The web of family support networks, class consciousness, and cultural integration of revolutionary ideals described above provides the necessary context for understanding what was lost or altered through the coup's systematic intervention. In particular, the widespread legitimacy that revolutionary movements enjoyed across social classes and geographic regions offers a stark contrast to the isolation and alienation that would characterize post-coup experiences, as explored in subsequent chapters.

5.3. State Violence as Social Engineering: Mechanisms of the September 12 Period

This section addresses RQ2, RQ3, RO2, and RO3, analyzing how participants experienced systematic state violence and how it transformed their relationships with large group symbols. The findings indicate that during the military junta period, state violence was executed through elaborate strategies that transcended simple physical harm. This section relates these findings to existing theoretical frameworks on state violence, particularly regarding its systematic nature and long-term psychological effects. The analysis of participants' experiences from a psychosocial perspective suggests that the junta's deployment of violence may have contributed to shifts at both the individual and collective levels, aligning with existing literature on trauma, state violence, and collective identity.

5.3.1. Systematic Violence and Identity Destruction

The physical violence experienced by participants during detention and imprisonment was systematic and severe in nature. As documented in the findings, participants endured various forms of torture including electric shocks, beatings, Palestinian hanging, and sexual violence - methods that specifically targeted bodily integrity and autonomy. The systematic focus on violating the body's boundaries and turning it into a source of pain aligns with Scarry's (1985) analysis that torture aims to destroy the victim's sense of self by transforming their own body

into a site of betrayal. In other words, the severe, systematic abuse forces individuals to internalize a dual loss; physical and existential. The body, repeatedly used as an instrument of pain, comes to be experienced as an entity that betrays its owner, and the victim can no longer trust the bodily self that once provided solace and identity.

The systematic nature of this violence fundamentally disrupts one's existence in the world. This fragmentation process can be understood through Freud's (1920) theory of trauma as a "penetration of the stimulus barrier," where overwhelming external stimuli breach the psyche's protective shield. When this protective barrier is overwhelmed, the individual experiences a fundamental disruption in psychological organization - the flood of unmanageable stimuli cannot be processed or integrated into existing mental structures. As Participant 10 notes, a person who undergoes torture can never be the same again. This transformation occurs because torture shatters the basic assumptions that allow us to feel secure in our daily lives - the belief that we live in a civilized world protected by law enforcement, where we have legal rights and can feel safe among family and friends. The torture experience destroys this illusion completely. This is why Participant 7 became alienated from her pre-prison life in Mamak prison. Torture fragments everything the person knows about their former world.

When the victim's bodily integrity and dignity are so completely in the hands of the torturer, their sense of selfhood fundamentally changes. It explains why Participant 7 couldn't recognize her own reflection in the mirror immediately after torture. The systematic practices in prisons weren't primarily aimed at gathering information, but rather at creating an alternative reality where prisoners couldn't be certain of their own power, individuality, or even the time of day. Across participants' narratives, systematic torture leaves long-term psychological effects whose forms differ from one account to the next. Direct causation cannot be established, but the accounts point to a recurring connection between torture and enduring mental health difficulties. Participant 10's memory gaps around the torture itself are one such trace: a defense mechanism that shows how deeply trauma can alter basic cognitive processes.

This connects to a wider body of research on the lasting psychological toll of torture. What participants describe, though, is concrete and consistent: standardized methods and the regulated use of violence in detention centers such as DAL and Mamak Prison. That consistency across different participants' accounts is itself telling: it points to a calculated

system, not random brutality, designed to break individuals both physically and psychologically.

The junta's violence fell on people who had shown considerable agency in their political activism: people who had consciously taken serious risks, organized communities, and challenged authority. Those capacities made them particular targets for the regime's violence. Torture, in their accounts, did not stop at punishment; it set out to invert these capacities, to turn autonomous political actors into dependent and isolated individuals. As the examples above show, such violence reaches directly into the sense of self and its tie to political identity. Where participants had once drawn strength and meaning from their political convictions, torture targeted precisely those sources of resilience, working to sever personal identity from political consciousness. This assault took many forms. One of the most striking was the deliberate manipulation of large group symbols during torture, the practice the next section turns to, where state violence worked on individual psyches and collective bonds at once.

5.3.2. Weaponization of Large Group Symbols

For these participants, the regime's violence seems to have been aimed at belonging as much as at the body: it turned the symbols that normally bind people to their large group into instruments of torture. While previous studies have examined how states use violence to suppress opposition (Foucault, 1977; Neocleous, 2000; Robben, 2005a), participants' accounts demonstrate how the military regime specifically targeted activists' connections to large group identity through the manipulation of national symbols. This analysis shows how the regime's practices created a double delegitimization, simultaneously traumatizing individuals while severing their ability to engage with shared cultural resources necessary for political mobilization.

Volkan suggests that large groups use their common symbols as a kind of tent canvas (Volkan, 1997). This tent consists of shared symbols that hold group members together and provide them psychological shelter (Volkan, 2004; Russell, 2006). These symbols function as concrete indicators of the emotional bonds individuals form with group identity. Individuals in society both define their own identities and connect with other group members through these symbols.

In the Turkish context, the symbolic 'tent' that provided psychological shelter for large groups was notably shaped by funding republican ideology. In Turkey, particularly after the 1960 military coup, Kemalism was positioned uniquely within this symbolic structure. According to Bozarslan (2020), from this point forward, Kemalism gained an almost messianic meaning and was seen as the authentic doctrine of the "Turkish revolution" during and after the May 1960 coup. The social changes of the 1960s disrupted urban elites' traditional dominance and created conditions for radical movements to emerge on both the left and right. These movements simultaneously contested and embraced Atatürk's ideological legacy, challenging aspects of his teachings while claiming their own legitimacy through Kemalist principles (Pekesen, 2020). This complex relationship with funding republican ideology and its symbols became particularly evident in how political movements interpreted Atatürk's directives to youth.

As Bozarslan argued (2020), In his 1927 Great Speech (Nutuk)⁴⁴, Atatürk tasked youth with protecting the nation and republic against future leaders' potential "negligence, deviation and even treachery". And this mandate was also reinforced in the 1933 Bursa Speech⁴⁵, where youth was designated as the primary protector of "revolutions and the republic." According to Harun Karadeniz (a prominent leftist figure from the 68 generation), this discourse granted youth an explicit "right of resistance" (Karadeniz, 1975, p. 44). Mardin (1977) observed that various political groups, especially on the left, interpreted these directives as granting them legitimate authority to resist what they perceived as threats to Atatürk's vision. Thus, Kemalism became both a source of legitimacy and a framework for resistance, with different political movements claiming the right to define and defend its principles against perceived internal and external enemies. However, by the mid-1970s, the nature of the relationship between socialist movements and Kemalist ideology and its symbols began to change. By the late 1970s, many leftist groups had begun to question Kemalist ideology, its symbols, and their own relationship with them (Pekesen, 2019). Despite this evolving critical stance toward Kemalist ideology among leftist organizations by the late 1970s, it's important to recognize that many individual activists maintained personal positive associations with national symbols from their upbringing. The participants in this study frequently described formative

⁴⁴ The Great Speech (Nutuk), delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk over six days in October 1927, is a comprehensive account of the Turkish War of Independence and the founding of the Republic. It served both as a historical narrative and as a political manifesto establishing the legitimacy of the new regime and Atatürk's leadership.

⁴⁵ The 1933 Bursa Speech refers to remarks made by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk during a visit to Bursa, in which he reaffirmed the secular principles of the Republic following an incident of religious protest against mixed-gender student performances. The speech emphasized that the Turkish nation would continue to progress along the path of secularism and modern civilization.

experiences where these symbols were presented positively within family contexts and early education.

For this very reason, among the various forms of systematic violence employed in prisons, the use of large group symbols as instruments of torture represented a particularly significant dimension. Since large group symbols represent legitimacy and governing power at the societal level, the effort to access and control these symbols has been an important strategy for almost all political actors. However, during the military junta period, the use of these symbols appears to have contributed to the weakening of prisoners' connections with broader social groups and may have fostered their isolation from society.

Building on this, one may ask: How can individuals traumatized by these symbols relate to crowds, and how can a society that fails to acknowledge its traumatic past interpret the psychological distancing from these symbols?

Traumatized individuals may associate large group symbols with the very mechanisms of control and repression they suffered. When these symbols evoke memories of torture and betrayal, engaging with crowds, where such symbols are celebrated or even omnipresent, can trigger intense emotional distress. The act of participating in collective gatherings may be experienced as a re-exposure to their trauma, reinforcing feelings of vulnerability and isolation (Kindt & Engelhard, 2005). This is observed in some participants. Even those participants who do not report this situation note that there are people (ex-activist) around them who have similar reactions.

The systematic use of these symbols in torture, forcing prisoners to recite the National Anthem or sing military marches under threat of violence, appears to have created a transformation in how activists related to these objects in their phantasy. This process can be understood through the theoretical framework of splitting (Klein, 1946) where the ego separates positive and negative qualities of objects to protect itself from overwhelming anxiety. Under extreme trauma, this primitive defense mechanism can lead to a rigid division where previously positive objects become entirely negative in the individual's internal world. When subjected to systematic torture using large group symbols, individuals may experience a splitting where these formerly integrative cultural objects can no longer maintain their positive qualities alongside the newly associated traumatic experiences, resulting in their transformation from "good objects" into "bad objects." Participant 10's account, in which

Atatürk had become an instrument of torture, shows this conversion at its starkest. As Klein (1946) theorized, this disruption occurs because the ego is incapable of splitting objects without a corresponding splitting taking place within itself, so when cultural symbols become instruments of torture, the phantasied violence against these internalized objects fragments both the objects and the parts of the ego constructed through identification with them.

This situation had deep implications for activists' political legitimacy in the public sphere. As Participant 20 reflects:

"Then what kind of rehabilitation is this? If I recite the National Anthem a hundred times a day, will my love for it increase or my reaction to it? Of course our love decreases, inevitably."

This alienation from large group symbols effectively positioned activists outside the boundaries of common political discourse. By forcing a disconnect between activists and these powerful symbols of large group identity, the regime undermined activists' ability to present themselves as legitimate actors in politics. The long-term effectiveness of this strategy is evident in how it created a double delegitimization. First, activists experienced a sense of alienation from large group symbols. As Garland (1998) notes, severe trauma creates a breaking of previously integrated psychological structures. When symbols that once provided meaning become sources of harm, the psychological binding that connected individuals to these entities ruptures as captured by Participant 21:

"I don't do anything, I just stand there. Everyone stands up, I stand up too, but I don't recite it. Because there's no desire within me to recite it, they have taken that out of me."

Second, this visible disconnection from large group symbols served to reinforce the regime's portrayal of activists as "foreign" elements within Turkish society. The regime's actions which may have resulted in positioning activists outside of large group created a form of psychological exile - where activists found themselves alienated from the very symbols they would need to legitimize their political claims.

This proved particularly effective because it operated at both psychological and social levels: while traumatizing individuals, it simultaneously undermined their ability to present themselves as legitimate representatives of large groups' interests. This disruption is particularly severe because, as Volkan explains in his concept of the tent, large group identity is maintained through shared symbols that provide psychological shelter (2001). When these

symbols are weaponized in torture, it creates what might be called a collapse of the protective tent, for activists leaving them psychologically exposed in a particularly vulnerable way.

The fracture between activists and large group symbols has broader implications that are not limited to individual psychological harm. The significance of this becomes clear when considering how social movements typically appropriate and transform large group symbols to expand their meaning. The regime's practices closed off precisely this possibility, limiting activists' ability to connect with broader segments of society emotionally invested in these symbols. This phenomenon is illustrated by the observation that earlier generations of socialist activists appeared to derive legitimacy from these symbols. Moreover, the fact that participants did not initially express aversion toward these symbols suggests that, prior to their exposure to violence, activists engaged with them in a positive or critical yet constructive manner, seeking to broaden their ideological horizons.

However, systematic use of these symbols in torture created an alienation, leaving activists unable to engage with these symbols even strategically. This estrangement has significant implications for political mobilization. The loss of ability to connect through shared cultural and historic backgrounds effectively limited activists' capacity to build broad-based movements. Without access to common cultural reference points that could resonate with wider segments of society, former activists became increasingly isolated from the communities they had once sought to mobilize. This isolation may have contributed to the regime's broader efforts to hinder the reemergence of effective political opposition.

This limitation is particularly significant given the emotional resonance these symbols continue to hold for large segments of Turkish society. The traumatic alienation from them has created a strategic vacuum - where activists find themselves unable to engage with or transform powerful cultural resources that could potentially serve their ends. Instead, these symbols remain largely monopolized by state actors and conservative forces who can deploy them within officially sanctioned boundaries.

The long-term impact of this strategy extends to contemporary political dynamics. While leftist movements might naturally maintain some critical distance from nationalist symbols, the traumatic nature of this alienation in Turkey has created a unique form of political constraint. Activists often find themselves trapped between traumatic aversion and political necessity. This dynamic reveals an aspect of the regime's restoration of Turkey's political

arena: it traumatized activists individually and, at the same time, systematically undermined their ability to engage with the cultural resources needed for effective political mobilization. By creating this traumatic break, the regime effectively ensured that large group symbols would remain largely within state-defined parameters, limiting their potential for transformation or democratic reimagining.

5.3.3. Constructing the "Internal Enemy": State Discourse and Social Isolation

General Kenan Evren, as the leader of the coup, employed crafted rhetoric that served to legitimize both the coup and subsequent state violence while fundamentally altering how society viewed political activists. This strategy resonates with discussions on the discursive construction of otherness. For example, Van Dijk's (2015) work makes clear how language can create and reinforce divisions, suggesting that state violence may contribute to excluding dissenting voices from the political mainstream. Similarly, while Neocleous (2000) underscores the role of state violence in redefining civil society boundaries, perspectives from Foucault (1977) and Laclau and Mouffe (2014) help elucidate the in-group/out-group dynamics at play, which are evident in Evren's public discourse. As participant accounts, especially those of Participant 8 and Participant 9, indicate, this discursive strategy effectively isolated activists from their communities by labeling them as "traitors," "brainwashed youth," or mere "pawns of foreign powers," thereby reinforcing a paternalistic narrative that justified state repression. The psychological sophistication of this "othering" process is further evident in how Evren positioned revolutionary youth relative to the Turkish large group. By portraying them as victims of foreign manipulation who had been "brainwashed," he denied their agency and went further, casting them as threats to national security, a framing that appears to have rendered state violence against young people more psychologically acceptable to a broader audience.

The binary opposition Evren created between "pure" Turkish citizens and "manipulated" revolutionaries served to activate deep-seated psychological mechanisms of collective identity. When he claimed that "anarchists and terrorists" were using "pure citizens" as pawns, he effectively created a "moral boundary" that placed revolutionary activists outside the legitimate national community. This psychological positioning had devastating effects on social relationships, as evidenced by Participant 8's account:

"People didn't want to be seen with me. There was such a climate of fear that people wouldn't even greet me."

The lasting psychological impact of this externalization process against leftist activists is captured in Participant 9's observation of long-term behavioral changes:

"Even some who were involved in revolutionary activities now pretend not to see me, they change their paths. Everyone was afraid the police might be following us, thinking we were dangerous."

This may indicate how the regime's discourse and violent exhibition altered social behavior and relationships, creating patterns of avoidance and fear that persisted long after the immediate period of state violence. Framing revolutionaries as 'foreign elements' did more than marginalize them; it appears to have reconfigured the core of Turkish political culture in ways that outlasted the immediate aftermath of the coup. It transformed revolutionaries - who until then had been considered part of society and had even been the subjects of various folk tales and mythical narratives - into untrustworthy outsiders. As Laçiner (2005) argues that this transformation also had an effect on how Turkish society processed the coup period. Once revolutionaries were successfully positioned as outsiders, society began to view the violent period of September 12 not as violence inflicted upon itself but as violence against "others." With this psychological distancing, the confrontation with the coup period became something that concerned only "them" - the revolutionaries - rather than society as a whole, effectively absolving the broader public from the responsibility of confronting this period of state violence.

Building upon the psychological distancing achieved by portraying revolutionaries as "foreign elements," the state framed its intervention within Turkey's sacred national narrative. Drawing explicit parallels between the coup and the War of Independence, and positioning himself as a contemporary Atatürk figure, Evren tapped into deeply embedded collective memories of national survival and liberation. This framing recast state violence as a legitimate act of national preservation, turning political repression into patriotic duty and making resistance to it equivalent to betraying the national liberation struggle.

The transformation of social bonds through this externalization process was particularly evident in urban neighborhoods, which had previously served as bases of revolutionary organizing. Participant 17's account reveals how the regime actively worked to destroy these community ties:

"We were young, they didn't know our pasts, we were likable people... but the police came today and talked to each of the neighbors."

This pervasive surveillance meant that, following the coup, even sharing an apartment with revolutionary activists became a source of fear and a potential threat. The mere proximity to those labeled as politically dangerous transformed ordinary living spaces into zones of risk, further isolating activists and embedding a climate of suspicion within everyday social interactions.

The long-term implications of this externalization strategy become clear in the radiating effects of fear and suspicion. Participant 20 notes:

"This psychology still exists in many of our friends. They still think the police are watching them, following them. They're living with this feeling, you can't live like this. The funny thing is, even the ones who haven't done anything are feeling this anxiety."

This observation aligns with radioactive identification, where the effects of state violence continue to shape social behavior across generations (Gampel, 2000). The horror of the violence inflicted on activists continues to live on in the memory of politically non-active people to this day, in the sense that they can be followed or their phones tapped.

The regime's externalization strategy also worked to fundamentally alter the relationship between political activism and Turkish identity. Once revolutionary politics had been cast as foreign, a new political norm took hold in which whole registers of political expression were permanently stripped of their claim to Turkishness. This redefinition of political legitimacy continues to influence Turkish political culture, as evidenced by the persistent stigmatization of leftist politics.

Most significantly, this externalization strategy may have served to create a double consciousness among revolutionary activists - forced to navigate between their political identities and their large group bonds, while constantly being positioned as foreign to both. This psychological burden created lasting effects on both individual psyches and collective political imagination in Turkey.

The deepest mark of this strategy lies less in its suppression of revolutionary politics than in how it narrowed what counted as acceptable political expression within Turkish large-group identity. Turkish political culture had historically held together both conservative and radical currents, from the Young Turks to the leftist movements, allowing national symbols to be reinterpreted and shared across the spectrum; participants from social-democratic families

who supported the Republican People's Party (CHP) describe moving fluidly between mainstream republican values and more radical positions through these shared symbolic resources. By tying political dissent to betrayal of the large group, the regime disrupted this pattern and produced what Participant 20 called a "shattered" society, in which certain forms of political expression became coded as inherently un-Turkish. This redefinition of the boundaries of Turkish political identity, achieved through the state's monopolization of founding symbols, stands as one of the most significant legacies of the coup's restoration project, reshaping not only how individuals engaged politically but the very frameworks that made political expression possible.

5.4. The Aftermath: Transformative Effects of State Violence

This section addresses RQ4 and RO1, examining how participants' revolutionary identities transformed over time and how they perceived changes in social relationships following state violence. The findings reveal a complex relationship between trauma and political identity among activists who experienced state violence during the 1980 military coup. While severe torture and imprisonment impacted participants' ability to engage in traditional forms of activism, their core political convictions remained resilient. This resilience appears rooted in the protective function of political ideology (Punamaki, 1996; Başoğlu et al. 1994), which provided a framework for processing trauma and maintaining psychological coherence even as the regime systematically worked to isolate activists from their social networks.

5.4.1. Resilience and Identity Maintenance Among Political Prisoners

The persistence of political identities despite severe state violence can be understood through several interconnected psychological mechanisms. First, as Muldoon and Wilson (2001) demonstrate, strong ideological commitment serves as a protective factor under direct political violence. This ideological resilience provides a framework for meaning-making that helps process traumatic experiences (Punamaki, 1996). This is evident in how participants like Participant 4 maintained their revolutionary identity, emphatically stating "*I haven't done anything wrong.*"

Indeed, Lüders et al. (2016) suggest that experiences of violence can paradoxically strengthen ideological identities among victims, while simultaneously creating fear and avoidance

among witnesses (Weingarten, 2003). This dynamic helps explain why participants maintained strong political identities even as the broader society retreated from political engagement. This ideological resilience appears to have significant protective effects against trauma, a finding supported by extensive clinical research conducted with political prisoners in Turkey during the early 1990s. These studies provide empirical validation for theoretical frameworks about the protective role of political identity under conditions of state violence. In a groundbreaking comparative study, Başoğlu et al. (1994) examined three groups: tortured political activists, non-tortured political activists, and non-political individuals who had not experienced torture. Despite experiencing severe forms of torture, political activists showed remarkably lower rates of PTSD (33%) compared to non-political torture survivors who had endured less severe torture.

These counter-intuitive findings, that individuals who experienced more severe torture could demonstrate greater psychological resilience, attest to the protective role of political identity and ideological preparation. Parker et al.'s (1992) research with 208 tortured prisoners revealed that while physical disability correlated with higher PTSD rates (71%), political preparation significantly moderated psychological trauma outcomes. In a similar vein, Kaptanoğlu's (1991) follow-up studies showed that although overall psychological symptoms fluctuated over time, anger-hostility symptoms persisted, suggesting that political ideology could transform traumatic experiences into sustained political commitment rather than leading to psychological breakdown.

Building upon these empirical insights, the ideological resilience observed in the participants' narratives finds robust support in broader clinical research on political prisoners in Turkey. For instance, Başoğlu's (1994) longitudinal analysis demonstrated that a strong political worldview served as a protective buffer, enabling activists to anticipate and contextualize torture within an ideological framework even years after their ordeal. This capacity to integrate traumatic experiences into a larger political struggle bolstered individual resilience and reinforced collective political identity. Such findings strongly support theoretical arguments, such as those proposed by Punamaki (1996) and others, that a robust ideological commitment does more than provide a meaning-making framework; it fundamentally alters how trauma is processed and integrated into psychological structures.

The transformation of activism manifested in two distinct but interrelated dimensions. First, participants adopted less confrontational forms of political engagement as a protective

strategy. However, this adaptation should be understood in light of how state violence appears to have worked: less to transform activists' ideological orientations than to prevent their functional integration into society. Under these conditions of systematic social isolation, the transformation of activism became necessary for basic survival rather than representing ideological compromise.

The second dimension involves adaptation to changing social and political conditions. However, these "conditions" were not neutral societal changes but actively engineered through the state's systematic disruption of social bonds. As Participant 10 explains:

"After getting out, the isolation, the difficulty of finding a job began. Because we need social support to heal from these traumas. They completely isolated us by creating fear."

Strategic use of surveillance and social disruption created an environment where traditional forms of revolutionary activism became increasingly difficult to sustain. For instance, Participant 13's involvement in the CHP while maintaining his socialist beliefs exemplifies a pragmatic adaptation strategy. He explained that he saw working within a mainstream party as a practical way to continue political engagement while reducing vulnerability to state violence. However, this attempt to reconcile his core political beliefs with mainstream party politics proved unsustainable - he noted that he could only work within the CHP structure for a brief period due to the fundamental ideological tensions.

The transformation of activism did not simply lead to its abandonment; it spurred a diversification of political engagement. For instance, many participants, such as Participant 11 and Participant 22, redirected their efforts toward grassroots organizing and human rights advocacy, while others like Participant 13 and Participant 19 chose to work within mainstream political institutions. Although the regime employed humiliation with the intention of breaking political identities, the findings reveal that this tactic often produced paradoxical effects. Rather than merely undermining resolve, these degrading experiences sometimes reinforced political commitment. For example, Participant 23's defiant reaction to being forced to salute a dog illustrates how humiliation could be reinterpreted as a catalyst for renewed resistance. This counterintuitive strengthening of political resolve suggests the activation of a psychological defense mechanism, whereby individuals are able to contextualize and derive meaning from their suffering.

The ability to understand and attribute meaning to violence through political ideology appears to have served as a protective factor for some participants. This is evident in how participants framed their resistance. As Participant 9 notes, "*The more they tried to silence us, the louder we shouted. They failed to silence us.*" Similarly, Participant 18 emphasizes how resistance fostered solidarity: "*People who resist experience brotherhood, friendship, and sharing. They continue to stand upright.*". Collectively, these reflections reveal that by turning acts of repression into a catalyst for defiant resistance, some participants strengthened their individual resolve and forged enduring bonds of solidarity that redefined their political identities.

It is significant to remind that the participants in this study have maintained their ability to function effectively in society, form healthy relationships, and engage in meaningful work despite their traumatic experiences. Their continued political commitment may have served as a crucial factor in their psychological resilience. While I cannot generalize about all torture survivors, for these participants, maintaining political identity appears to have provided a framework for processing trauma that enabled them to share their painful experiences from a position of strength rather than victimhood. This hypothesis is supported by Paker's, (2000) observation that political worldview and ideological preparation can provide a protective buffer against trauma.

The collective dimension of this shift comes through in how participants legitimized their tactical changes. Rather than read them as individual compromises, many placed them within broader narratives of revolutionary struggle. Shared in this way, experiences of state violence that might have fragmented the group instead became sources of common political meaning and solidarity. Participant 12 puts it directly:

"There's a huge, mountainous difference. The biggest difference is our being within legal politics now."

The remark registers two things at once: how large the change felt, now that activism had moved onto legal political terrain, and how collective it was, voiced in the first-person plural as something the group underwent together. These shared narratives worked as compensatory structures at once individual and collective, opening forms of political engagement that could survive in a changed society. The adaptation meant building responses to surveillance and isolation while holding onto core ideological commitments that, beyond being an act of resistance, gave participants a framework for processing trauma and a sense of psychological

coherence. Many took part in several kinds of activity at once, from formal politics to civil society organizing to cultural work, not because their convictions had changed but because expressing unchanged beliefs now required new outlets in a different society. This diversification did two things at once: it held political identity together under social isolation, and it rebuilt the social connections that state violence had eroded. Turkish society's relationship to political engagement may have shifted, then, but the participants' own ideological resilience stayed a source of stability and meaning. Here is the core of the answer to how revolutionary identities evolved after state violence: the main change appears to have come not in activists' core political beliefs but in how they engaged with an altered social landscape.

5.4.2. Social Bond Disruption and Community Alienation

One of the most notable observations derived from the analysis is the extent to which the military regime may have influenced Turkey's social landscape after 1980. While torture and imprisonment did not appear to break activists' political convictions, the regime's broader strategy of surveillance and intimidation seems to have contributed to the weakening of community ties and support networks that had previously facilitated political activism.

In Winnicott's framework, psychological health depends on internal resources and environmental conditions that provide adequate support while allowing for authentic self-expression (Winnicott, 1960). Unlike physical torture, which directly assaults the body, the regime's surveillance strategies functioned by systematically undermining the reliability of the social environment itself. When neighborhoods, workplaces, and even family homes become sites of potential betrayal and danger, the predictable holding environment necessary for psychological recovery and identity maintenance collapses. This environmental degradation explains why some participants described their social isolation as equally traumatic to physical torture - both experiences fundamentally disrupt the continuity of being essential for psychological integrity. The success of this transformation in the Turkish context is observed by how quickly and thoroughly communities that had once celebrated revolutionary identity came to view political activists with fear and suspicion.

The transformation manifested in moments of crisis, when activists sought help from their own families. In one instance, when participant 10's mother sought refuge for her daughter at her uncle's house to avoid another police raid, she encountered only fear and rejection. Her

uncle, overwhelmed by the atmosphere of terror, refused to shelter his own niece. Similarly, participant 4's family relationship deteriorated after the experience of violence. Such severing of fundamental familial bonds epitomizes how deeply state violence had penetrated the most intimate spheres of social relations.

The dismantling of social relationships exemplifies the catastrophic loss of psychological containment (Bion, 1962). Bion argued that containment operates through multiple channels - families, comrades, political organizations, and even shared ideological frameworks all function as containers that help individuals process overwhelming emotional experiences. Before the coup, activists benefited from multi-layered containment systems: families provided emotional refuge, political organizations offered interpretive frameworks for understanding repression, and comrades shared the burden of traumatic experiences. The regime seems to targeted each of these containers simultaneously - severing family bonds as seen with Participants 10 and 4, dismantling political organizations, and isolating activists from their friends.

The physical torture in detention centers was thus extended through this destruction of all available containers, creating a form of ongoing psychological violence that persisted long after direct physical abuse had ended. According to Robben (2005b), societies experiencing such traumatic events exhibit complex and multilayered responses. As demonstrated in Argentina, collective memory becomes a contested space where different groups advocate opposing approaches - while some push for forgetting and moving forward, others insist on remembrance and confrontation. This conflict can delay social healing and lead as Robben noted chronic mourning (p.330). Families fragment, mechanisms of silence and denial emerge, and trauma transmits across generations. However, as evidenced in Argentina, societies gradually develop ways to confront and make meaning of their trauma through initiatives like memorial construction, truth commissions, and efforts to keep collective memory alive. While this process is painful and prolonged, it appears necessary for societal healing. In contrast, Turkey's efforts at such reconciliation have been notably limited. We see aging generals receiving merely symbolic punishments without serving prison time, and an absence of monuments or similar recognitions that would validate victims' suffering in the public consciousness.

Transformation in social relationships has also influenced how former activists view their children's potential political engagement. As Participant 11 observes:

"A mentality quickly took hold, like 'We've lived through it, let our children not live through it. We suffered a lot, let our children not suffer.'"

This protective stance toward the next generation signals the deep psychological impact of state violence, where parents who were once encouraged toward political activism by their own families now actively try to shield their children from similar engagement. This break in the cycle of political engagement may indicate the impact of trauma on group behavior patterns. The shift from encouraging political engagement to protecting children from it suggests that the regime's use of violence not only severed existing social bonds but also altered the conditions under which political consciousness had traditionally been transmitted within these families. The permeation of trauma and political disengagement through social networks is powerfully captured in writer Ece Temelkuran's words of growing up in the post-coup period: "When we arrived, everyone was crying! [...] We coincided with humanity's 'degradation'; we couldn't see those 'beautiful' days of its rise."

Her narrative of a childhood surrounded by adults constantly speaking of a shattered "we" and "betrayals" illustrates how the coup's impact permeated daily life, affecting children's emotional and political development. The atmosphere of collective loss and disillusionment she describes helps explain why even former activists came to view political engagement as something their children needed protection from.

This created a paradoxical situation in Turkish society. As Lüküslü (2009) points out, Turkish society has traditionally placed an extraordinary burden on its youth, expecting them to remain politically "vigilant" and "dynamic" even when the rest of society falls into "complacency." Yet, while society continued to blame youth for political disengagement, the same society - through family relationships and social networks - actively discouraged young people from political participation (Lüküslü, 2009). Research from the early 2000s showed that only 10% of young people discussed politics with their friends (Lüküslü, 2009), while a 2017 study revealed that political discussions constituted less than 15% of family gathering conversations (Rasat Strateji, 2017). While these patterns align with broader global trends of political disengagement since the 1980s, the particular character of this transformation in Turkey appears significantly shaped by the aftermath of state violence. These consistently low rates of political discussion suggest general disinterest and development of a new type of citizen; one who came to view criticism of state actions and assertion of rights as potentially dangerous activities (Toker, 2020).

This contradiction, where youth were simultaneously expected to be the guardians of collective values while being protected from political engagement, reflects the complex transformation in how Turkish society understood and transmitted political values after 1980, a transformation shaped by both local experiences of state violence and broader global shifts in political participation.

As Participant 20 insightfully observes:

"The damage done to me personally is not the important part. But they use the damage they have inflicted on me to shape the society. They say, 'Look, if you don't behave correctly, this could happen to you too.' They wanted to spread this fear, and they succeeded."

This observation reflects Weingarten's (2003) view that exposure to violence, even at one remove, can reshape both those who witness it and the wider community. Howie (2012) advances a comparable claim: the people killed in violent acts are seldom the true objective, which lies instead with the watching audiences worldwide. The visibility of state violence in this context did more than punish individuals; it coerced the wider population more broadly, signaling the consequences of political dissent. The effectiveness of this strategy is evident in how quickly communities internalized the message, with former support networks dissolving in the face of witnessed consequences of political engagement.

The widespread violence led to complex societal responses, particularly evident in what became a collective pattern of denial and identification with the aggressor (Şahin 2010, p. 7). As Şahin argues (2010), this response emerged from two primary sources: the impossibility of maintaining daily life while consciously acknowledging nearby torture chambers, and the moral burden that such knowledge would impose. The proximity of violence created an impossible choice - either deny its existence or face the paralyzing responsibility of response. This dynamic is powerfully illustrated in Participant 11's account of attempting to share her experiences with friends, only to encounter their terror-stricken reactions that forced her into silence. This collective avoidance appears to stem from a deeper psychological mechanism, the inability to confront one's powerlessness in the face of authority when loved ones are at risk. Acknowledging such violence would necessitate confronting individual helplessness and raise fundamental questions about moral responsibility.

In this context, the gradual shift from initial horror to a more measured, perhaps even rationalized, response of ignorance can be understood as a psychological defense mechanism,

consistent with Freud's (1936/2018) notion of repression, which serves to mitigate the unbearable experience of witnessed powerlessness. This pattern may help explain how systematic state violence can transform the broader moral framework through which society processes such traumatic events.

This collective psychological response can be understood through as Omer Laçiner (2005) (an activist from late 60's and 70's) describes. The junta did more than restrict basic rights; it approached society like "the lovelessness and ambition of a father wanting to punish a society that had lost its self-confidence and felt guilty for failing" (p.17). This collective shame manifests, as Richards (2022) describes, as a narcissistic wound to society's self-image - a wound that deepened as citizens were forced to repeatedly prove their loyalty. The junta's approach of treating all citizens as potential traitors until proven otherwise intensified this narcissistic injury by creating a situation where people had to continuously demonstrate their innocence, further eroding collective self-esteem and reinforcing the experience of shame.

The psychological impact of this collective humiliation and fear led broad segments of society to further deepen the identification with the aggressor that Şahin describes (2010). When faced with the unbearable combination of helplessness and shame, many found it psychologically safer to accept and internalize the military regime's worldview. This creates a shame-rage spiral, where the inability to prevent or respond to humiliation leads to a deep sense of powerlessness, further reinforcing social compliance and political passivity (Levine, 2005).

Applied to Turkish society, this framework particularly advances our understanding of how unresolved collective trauma operates in Turkish society as Kaptanoğlu (2009) puts "grief prohibition by the state" (p. 212). The state has historically maintained a monopoly over which losses can be publicly mourned and which must remain unacknowledged. The result was a society traumatized by witnessing violence and, at the same time, denied the social space necessary for processing this trauma. This enforced silence has created 'isolated community memories,' leading to a fragmented social consciousness where the reality of state violence could neither be fully acknowledged nor completely forgotten (Kaptanoğlu, 2009).

The participants' accounts demonstrate how this dynamic fundamentally altered their ability to engage in political activism, not through changing their beliefs, but by transforming the social context in which those beliefs could be expressed and shared. As participants

recounted experiences of family rejection, community ostracization, and the inability to even discuss their experiences with friends, it appears that the regime may have contributed to the emergence of a social climate where political silence became a common survival strategy. This finding is particularly significant, as it suggests that the impact of state violence may not have been limited to ideological suppression or physical repression alone. Participants' accounts indicate that its effects extended to the systematic dismantling of social spaces where political consciousness might have been collectively processed and transmitted. Furthermore, the state-imposed prohibition on mourning and remembrance appears to have inhibited the rebuilding of social relationships necessary for meaningful political activism, even when political beliefs endured.

Such systematic restructuring of social relationships was part of what has been described as a broader restoration project designed to reshape Turkish society in the aftermath of the coup. As Taşkın (2009) has noted, the scope and sophistication of this project become clearer when examining how institutional reforms intersected with the shifts in everyday social dynamics.

5.4.3. 12 September as a restoration process- Long-term Impact on Political Consciousness

The 1980 military coup represented a decisive break in how Turkish society conceptualized and constructed youth identity. As demonstrated in previous chapters, there was a strong tradition in Turkey of viewing educated youth as legitimate political actors with responsibility to shape the nation's future (Lüküslü, 2009). The military regime systematically dismantled this tradition through multiple mechanisms, reshaping the institutional and social conditions under which subsequent generations would encounter political life.

This transformation was part of a broader 'restoration project' that aimed to reshape multiple aspects of Turkish society. As Öztan (2019) argues, the regime's restoration initially focused on eliminating political polarization, management crises, and structural economic problems in line with the National Security Council's ideology. The goal was to create a depoliticized public sphere that combined an 'organic society ideal' with a 'well-functioning' market order. This process involved redefining key concepts like 'national identity,' 'official ideology,' and 'national security,' creating new frameworks for state-society relations. The motto 'free market, strong state' not only created advantages for the dominant bourgeoisie but also strengthened nationalist-conservative politics (Öztan, 2019).

The regime's transformation of educational institutions exemplified their broader aim of reshaping youth consciousness. The establishment of YÖK (Higher Education Council) in 1981 marked a fundamental shift in higher education, introducing unprecedented centralization and control (Taşkın, 2009). The mandatory introduction of 'Turkish Revolution History' courses across all university departments and new requirements for compulsory religious education demonstrated how curriculum changes served the regime's broader vision of creating a more compliant youth (Öztan, 2019).

This educational restructuring was reinforced by legal changes that explicitly barred students from political participation. The 1982 Constitution and subsequent Political Parties Law struck at the heart of youth political engagement, prohibiting students from party membership and preventing parties from establishing youth branches (Öztan, 2019).

The effectiveness of this transformation is further supported by participants' accounts of the changed social landscape they encountered upon release from prison. Participant 10's observation suggests the depth of this change:

“I can't believe it, I can't believe this. How did they turn people into such mechanical creatures? How could they destroy people's ability to think?”

Similarly, Participant 20 viewed that *“12 September has shattered Turkey as a class, as a nation, as a people.”* These reactions, while personal in nature, align with broader evidence of how the regime, by combining institutional reforms and legal restrictions with an effort to redefine appropriate youth behavior, transformed the conditions under which political engagement could take place. As Lüküslü (2009) argues, where pre-1980 youth had seen themselves as agents of social change capable of challenging and transforming social structures, the post-coup generation inherited a more passive relationship with authority. This radical redefinition of youth was particularly evident in 'Atatürk and Youth', an official publication prepared by the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports in 1985 and published in 1987. The book contained articles by university administrators who were appointed during the restructuring of the Higher Education Council (YÖK) after the coup. While Professor Halil Cin, rector of Selçuk University, defined youth's role as equipping their minds with advanced knowledge and protecting the existence of the nation and state (Cin, 1987: 17), Professor Safa Erkün celebrated how the 1982 Constitution made youth protection a constitutional directive (Erkün, 1987: 49). Similarly, Professor Haluk Yavuzer characterized

youth as an inherently incomplete state requiring adult guidance and supervision (Yavuzer, 1987: 55). These definitions shared a common thread: youth were no longer seen as active agents of social change but as passive subjects to be protected, guided, and molded by state institutions.

The military regime's transformation of youth identity and political consciousness shows how state violence can move beyond direct repression to remake the broader conditions of political culture. While previous sections have examined how torture and imprisonment affected individual activists, this institutional restructuring shows how the regime simultaneously worked to prevent the emergence of new politically engaged youth. The combination of direct repression and institutional transformation proved particularly effective at disrupting the transmission of political consciousness between generations. This success is evident in the stark contrast between pre- and post-coup patterns of youth political engagement. As Participant 18's earlier observation captures, what was once a surplus of revolutionary enthusiasm has given way to a perceived need to persuade people toward political engagement (see Section 4.4.2).

This personal observation suggests a significant shift in political engagement patterns over time. According to participants' accounts, this apparent reversal seems to coincide with both the period of state repression and broader changes in how youth-politics relationships were framed in post-coup Turkey. This systematic transformation of youth identity and political consciousness directly addresses the research question about how the 1980 military coup affected Turkey's political landscape and activist communities. Based on participants' accounts the military regime operated as a gardening state (Kamete, 2018)- systematically uprooting existing social and political structures while carefully cultivating new forms of political consciousness. According to survivors' narratives, this process began with displays of state violence that demonstrated the regime's control, contributing to what participants described as a widespread climate of fear. As seen in Participant 10's personal observation of people becoming 'mechanical creatures' and Participant 18's reflection on the perceived reversal in revolutionary consciousness, participants' testimonies suggest that the combination of violence and institutional reform coincided with significant shifts in political behavior. These testimonies also point toward the possibility that the coup's longer-term significance may extend to its impact on the broader conditions under which political engagement has been experienced and understood in Turkish society.

The findings of this study suggest several promising directions for future research. While this research focused primarily on leftist activists' experiences of state violence during the 1980 coup period, future studies could examine how different political groups processed similar experiences of violence. The nationalist movement's perception of ideological victory - despite their activists experiencing similar state violence - presents an intriguing paradox that merits further investigation. This silence might be partially explained by what nationalist politician Ağâh Oktay Güner expressed during his trial: "We are in prison, but our ideas are in power" (Gazete Duvar, 2018). This perception of ideological victory, even in the face of personal defeat, may have created a unique dynamic where individual trauma was subsumed by a narrative of collective success. Yet the nationalist movement's response was not monolithic. Recent scholarship reveals that while the broader movement maintained its ideological alignment with the state, individual activists who directly experienced torture developed more complex relationships with state authority, with some adopting more critical stances (Şensönmez, 2023a; Şensönmez, 2023b; Ugur-Cinar & Şensönmez, 2022). The emergence of religious frameworks in nationalist prisoners' narratives suggests shifts in how political identity could be articulated after experiencing state violence. Moreover, the distinctive terminology applied to this cohort - such as "Taş Medreseli" (Stone Madrasa people)⁴⁶ - while framing prison as a transformative ordeal, simultaneously marked them as a separate, isolated generation within the broader movement. This dynamic potentially left right-wing victims in a particularly complex position - traumatized at an individual level but unable to process this trauma within a movement that viewed itself as ultimately triumphant. Comparative studies of right-wing activists who faced torture in places like Mamak Prison could provide valuable insights into how ideological orientation shapes trauma processing and identity maintenance. This is particularly intriguing given that while nationalist activists experienced similar forms of torture, their trauma appears less visible in the collective memory of Turkey's nationalist movement today.

One possible explanation for this divergence lies in the different mechanisms of memory transmission: unlike the leftist movement's extensive production of testimonial literature, films, and cultural works that carried traumatic experiences to wider segments of society, the

⁴⁶ Taş Medreseliler is a term used for nationalist activists, mostly affiliated with the Grey Wolves movement, who were imprisoned following the 1980 military coups in Turkey. The phrase symbolically refers to prisons as "stone madrasas," implying that incarceration served as a place of ideological education and moral endurance for nationalist militants.

nationalist movement's collective memory remained more contained, preventing the broader social circulation of prison trauma. Future research examining these dynamics could help explain how political movements' broader narratives of success or failure, combined with their cultural practices of memory transmission, influence individual trauma processing and collective memory formation.

Finally, the intergenerational transmission of political trauma in Turkey merits further investigation. Research examining how children and grandchildren of political prisoners understand and relate to this period could show how historical trauma shapes contemporary political consciousness. Such studies could help explain current patterns of political engagement and disengagement among younger generations.

This discussion chapter has addressed the study's research questions and objectives through theoretical analysis of the findings. Section 5.1 established the theoretical foundation for understanding September 12 as collective trauma (contributing to RO2, RO3, RO4). Section 5.2 synthesized findings on RQ1, analyzing how revolutionary identities operated within pre-coup social networks. Section 5.3 addressed RQ2, RQ3, RO2, and RO3 by examining how participants experienced state violence and its effects on their relationships with large group symbols. Section 5.4 addressed RQ4 and RO1, analyzing participants' accounts of identity transformation and perceived changes in social relationships over time.

6. Conclusion

This study asked how systematic state violence transformed the revolutionary identities and social relationships of the political activists who lived through Turkey's 1980 military coup. Across the preceding chapters, that question opened into four more specific ones, which the analysis pursued through participants' accounts of the years before, during, and after the repression. This chapter brings that analysis together to show how each question and objective has been answered. It begins with the study's substantive contribution to our understanding of state violence and political identity, turns to the methodological choices that made the inquiry possible, and closes with what the findings imply for future research on collective trauma and authoritarian transformation.

6.1. Key Findings and Theoretical Contributions

This section synthesizes how the study addressed all four research questions and five research objectives through its examination of state violence and political identity transformation. The findings of this study point to the many ways in which the September 12, 1980 military coup may have influenced Turkish society, particularly in terms of how systematic state violence might have shaped both individual political identities and broader social relationships. Based on in-depth interviews with former political activists who experienced detention and torture during this period, several recurring themes emerged that offer insight into how state violence can reshape society. These observations appear to support and extend existing theoretical frameworks (Alexander et al., 2004; Volkan, 2001). The interview questions were specifically formulated to elicit detailed accounts of both personal experiences and observed changes in social and political dynamics, with participants consistently providing observations of transformation in their own lives and communities. While these accounts are based on memories spanning over 40 years, their consistency across multiple interviews and alignment with historical records and contemporary scholarly analyses lends them considerable validity. The data collected from the participants was supplemented by newspapers of the period, various novels and autobiographies, and current academic studies.

This research offers a valuable contribution through its detailed examination of pre-coup revolutionary identity and social relations, providing an important baseline for understanding how state violence may have transformed these dynamics. The findings suggest a vibrant political landscape before the coup, where activism appeared deeply embedded in social networks, supported by family relationships, and legitimized through cultural narratives. The revolutionary mythmaking, community integration, and family political socialization that characterized this period contrasts sharply with the fragmented political landscape that emerged after the coup. This fragmentation is reflected in participants' accounts of social isolation (Participant 8, 9, 17), family rejection (Participant 4, 10), and deliberate self-isolation (Participant 15), as well as in broader societal patterns documented by Lüküslü (2009) and Kaptanoğlu (2009). This contrast provides critical insight into the depth and scope of the transformation potentially wrought by state violence. Understanding the organic connections between revolutionary movements and broader communities before the coup is crucial for grasping how these social foundations of political activism may have been dismantled. The research, therefore, suggests that analyzing pre-coup revolutionary identity is not tangential but fundamental to understanding the transformative impact of state violence on the political consciousness examined here.

A key finding concerns the regime's use of large group symbols as instruments of torture. Participants' accounts reveal how the military regime systematically transformed powerful symbols of large group identity into tools of psychological torture in detention centers and prisons. This weaponization of these symbols created a rupture between political activists and the symbolic resources traditionally used to express legitimate political claims within Turkish society. Drawing on object relations theory, this process can be understood through the concept of splitting (Klein, 1946), where symbols that once represented shared values and collective identity underwent a psychological transformation in survivors' internal worlds.

When large group symbols were weaponized against activists during torture, the psychological impact fundamentally altered their core identity. In Klein's (1946) object relations theory, internalized positive symbols typically serve as anchoring points maintaining psychological cohesion. These symbols, national anthems, flags, founding narratives, normally connect individuals to broader social group. The systematic use of these symbols during torture appeared to create psychological tensions that deeply conflicting and disorienting. The defense mechanism of splitting, which Klein (1946) describes as separating

positive and negative qualities, becomes inadequate when symbols that once provided security become sources of extreme suffering. Under such conditions, the integrative function of these symbols breaks down entirely: as Klein (1946) explains, when severe anxiety and frustration occur, even the good objects in the psyche become fragmented. This psychological fragmentation explains why activists could no longer maintain any positive associations with these symbols after their traumatic experiences in torture chambers. Participant narratives suggest that the transformation induced by trauma may influence both individual psychological responses and collective political consciousness. This shift appears to contribute to barriers between activists and the symbolic resources perceived as essential for legitimate political expression in Turkish society.

Perhaps most crucially, the coup's strategic manipulation of political narratives may have been intended to influence how Turkish society perceives the relationship between political activism and large group identity. Evren's speeches, which characterized activists as "traitors" carrying "foreign ideologies" (Atilgan, 2023, p. 430), pressed this same logic into the regime's official narrative and contributed to a psychological repositioning of political dissent outside the boundaries of acceptable large group identity. The research suggests that these discursive strategies may have operated through subtle yet impactful mechanisms that continue to influence contemporary political behavior.

The findings of this study indicate a complex pattern in how political identities responded to state violence. Consistent with Punamaki's (1996) theoretical framework regarding ideological commitment's protective effects, the majority of participants in this study maintained their core political beliefs despite experiencing severe torture and imprisonment. However, their modes of political engagement underwent observable transformation. The findings suggest that while systematic state humiliation in prisons and detention centers generally did not erode participants' fundamental political convictions, it appears to have influenced how these beliefs could be expressed in practice. The data collected in this study points to an environmental transformation that operated through multiple channels, affecting both direct subjects of state violence and their broader social networks. The systematic disruption of social support structures, as documented in participants' accounts, contributed to an atmosphere where individuals who had not directly experienced violence nonetheless developed cautious attitudes toward political activism. According to participants, those who witnessed the consequences of political engagement appear to have developed different

patterns of political socialization - often limiting political discussions in social settings and showing reluctance to encourage their children's political involvement - patterns that can be interpreted as protective strategies. These behavioral adaptations align with Weingarten's (2004) theoretical framework suggesting that witnessing violence can potentially transform not merely individual behavior but broader patterns of social relationship, as communities develop new norms to navigate politically sensitive environments.

The findings show a gradual erosion of the relationships between activists and their communities, leaving activists increasingly isolated from former support networks and creating patterns of alienation similar to what Robben (2005a) identified in his analysis of authoritarian regimes. Participants' accounts consistently describe a dramatic shift in how they were perceived by family members, neighbors, and former supporters following the coup. When families refused shelter to their own relatives fleeing police raids, and neighbors crossed the street to avoid being seen with former friends, we see evidence of how the regime's strategy achieved social atomization that served to isolate activists from potential support systems. These findings align with Robben's observations about how political violence restructures social relationships across multiple domains, from intimate family connections to broader community networks, creating enduring patterns of social disruption that persist long after the immediate period of state violence has ended.

The findings suggest that the regime may have utilised a complex framework of psychological state violence. While physical torture repressed activists directly, the study suggests that control was likely reinforced through more complex mechanisms, including coordinated strategies of humiliation and social isolation. These psychological mechanisms appear to have contributed to shifts in individual behavior and broader patterns of political engagement. Gampel's (2000) concept of radioactive identification provides a useful framework for understanding how this violence may have penetrated psychic structures in ways that survivors struggled to comprehend or control. The regime's widespread use of surveillance techniques, combined with its apparent dismantling of social support networks, seems to have created an environment where traditional forms of revolutionary activism were increasingly perceived as dangerous and psychologically taxing. This transformation appears to have operated through both sudden ruptures and a gradual weakening of the psychological and social foundations that had previously sustained political resistance.

While state violence created immediate trauma through torture and detention, the regime also implemented significant institutional changes aimed at restructuring political engagement. The 1982 Constitution and Political Parties Law banned youth branches of political parties and restricted student political participation, while the establishment of YÖK (Higher Education Council) in 1981 centralized control over universities. This institutional restructuring effectively curtailed student movements and diminished university autonomy, transforming campuses from spaces of political mobilization into sites of state surveillance and control.

As a result, traditional avenues for youth political engagement appear to have been weakened, potentially contributing to a decline in political activism within university settings. Research from the early 2000s and more recent studies (Lüküslü, 2009; Rasat Strateji, 2017) have documented low rates of political discussion among young people and in family settings. While these patterns are likely influenced by a range of factors, including global trends in political participation, the Turkish case suggests that institutional changes may have helped reshape how political engagement is perceived and practiced among university students.

The systematic application of state violence during this period appears to have yielded outcomes that earlier interventions did not; according to participant accounts, it may have contributed to the emergence of a distinctly altered societal landscape, one in which political engagement became increasingly associated with suspicion and fear. The effects of this shift permeated deeply into the cultural consciousness, establishing patterns of political behaviour and social organisation that, as participants' accounts and existing scholarship suggest (Bora, 2020; Kaptanoğlu, 2009), appear to have persisted well beyond the immediate period of repression.

Taken together, these insights contribute to theoretical understanding of state violence, political identity, and collective trauma in several ways. Drawing on Volkan's (2001, 2004) seminal work on large group identity, the findings indicate that systematic state violence can work along several different lines, potentially influencing both individual psyches and the broader dynamics of social relationships and political possibilities. When state violence is deployed strategically, it may shape social dynamics in ways that extend beyond its immediate effects. Participant accounts indicate that these practices could influence how political change is perceived and approached within affected communities.

A notable contribution of this research lies in its exploration of how large group symbols might be repurposed as instruments of political repression. The military regime's systematic incorporation of these symbols into torture practices may have contributed to a lasting disconnect between political activists and the cultural resources traditionally relied upon for legitimate political expression. In doing so, this work refines that understanding by showing that state violence can act through cultural means as well as physical ones.

These insights point to additional dimensions of political repression that traditional theoretical approaches may not fully capture. By exploring the interplay between immediate physical violence and longer-term systematic restructuring, this research offers alternative analytical perspectives on the ways authoritarian regimes influence societal change. Systematic violence appears to work in two ways: suppressing immediate opposition and reshaping the social and institutional conditions within which political engagement is subsequently experienced and understood.

The study's psychosocial approach opens a way to explore the dynamics of state violence and its potential influence on both individual psyches and collective consciousness. This dual focus allows for a deeper understanding of the ways psychological trauma and social atomization might intertwine, highlighting aspects of political violence that may remain underexplored in conventional historical accounts.

What appears to set the 1980 coup apart from previous military interventions is its breadth and, above all, the degree to which it seemed oriented toward a structural reconfiguration of Turkish society. While earlier coups often aimed to restore a perceived political equilibrium or contain specific threats, the 1980 intervention appears to have operated with a more expansive, preemptive logic. This broader orientation was carried out through a variety of interconnected mechanisms, including reforms in education, shifts in media discourse, legal restructuring, and the systematic use of violence. In this context, violence may be understood not simply as a means of repression, but as part of a wider strategy aimed at reshaping social relations and curbing political subjectivities (Taşkın and Bora, 2001).

The systematic dismantling of civil society infrastructure appears to have left enduring vacuums, and the implications for Turkish democracy run deep. İleri's (2015) analysis reveals how this period marked a decisive shift in how society imagined the very possibility of political change. This research extends this understanding, showing how the regime's

systematic deployment of violence may have contributed to an immediate atmosphere of fear and persistent patterns of social disintegration, which appear to hinder democratic participation. The junta's actions appear to have significantly undermined society's confidence in its ability to bring about change through its own resources and preferences, as reflected in the narratives of those who lived through this period.

Thus, the lasting impact of the coup reaches well beyond its immediate political consequences. The findings, based primarily on activists' narratives, indicate that the regime's measures may have contributed to a comprehensive transformation of social relations, reshaping both the practical scope of political engagement in Turkish society and the underlying way political action is conceptualized. This transformation, as experienced and interpreted by participants, continues to shape contemporary political culture through both remembered trauma and the patterns of behavior and understanding observed among them. Whether and how these transformations affected subsequent generations remains an empirical question beyond this study's scope, requiring research with different participant groups.

6.2. Methodological Approach: Strengths, Limitations, and Insights

The research design, weaving together psychosocial analysis with in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, uncovered dimensions of how state violence transforms both individual consciousness and collective identity. The use of this integrated approach may provide useful perspectives for guiding future studies on political violence and collective trauma.

The psychosocial framework, anchored in Clarke and Hoggett's (2009) perspective, proved well suited to tracing how personal trauma and broader social transformation connect. The research design serves two purposes. While the psychosocial framework provides valuable analytical tools for interpreting participants' experiences, an equally significant contribution lies in the documentation of testimonies from individuals whose voices have been largely absent from official historical narratives of the 1980 coup period. This study creates a space where participants can articulate their lived experiences in their own terms, preserving their perspectives on historical events that might otherwise remain unrecorded. The value of these first-hand accounts extends beyond their function as evidence supporting analytical claims; they constitute an important historical record that enriches the understanding of this pivotal period in Turkish political history.

The choice to conduct intensive interviews with 23 former political activists who survived detention and torture yielded rich narratives. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000) demonstrate, this approach allows researchers to access explicit accounts, deeper emotional and unconscious dimensions of experience. The findings confirm this insight, revealing subtle patterns of meaning-making that more structured approaches might have missed.

Yet transparency about methodological limitations remains crucial. While the sample size aligns with best practices in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013), it necessarily constraints generalizability. Moreover, participation was self-selecting: those who came forward were people who felt able to return to these experiences in a research setting. This may have excluded those who found such discussions too difficult, and means that the findings are more likely to reflect the perspectives of those who have been able to integrate their experiences into a coherent narrative rather than those for whom such integration remains unachieved.

Beyond these sample size-related limitations, the sampling methodology itself presented specific challenges. The reliance on snowball sampling through activist networks, while necessary for building trust with this sensitive population, introduced its own complexities. This approach led to an uneven representation of political organizations, with nearly half of participants (11 of 23) coming from Halkın Kurtuluşu, while other significant leftist organizations of the period received minimal or no representation. This distribution does not reflect the proportional size or influence of these organizations during the pre-coup period. Though future research might benefit from more diverse sampling strategies that include a wider range of political affiliations, the challenges of accessing survivors of state violence should not be underestimated.

Despite these limitations in sampling and participant access, the analytical approach proved effective in processing the rich data that was gathered. Thematic analysis, employed through Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, enabled the identification of sophisticated patterns across narratives while preserving the uniqueness of individual experiences. The method's flexibility revealed both explicit themes and subtle undercurrents in how participants made sense of their encounters with state violence.

This dual attention to individual stories and broader social patterns emerged as a particular strength of the study's approach. Drawing on Brave Heart & DeBruyn (1998), insights into

how trauma operates, it is traceable how deeply personal experiences of violence became woven into larger patterns of social understanding and behavior. The temporal dimension of the research - interviewing participants decades after their direct experiences - brought into view both immediate impacts and the complex processes through which survivors made meaning of their experiences over time.

The sensitive nature of the research demanded careful attention to ethical considerations. Following Kvale's (2007) guidance, protocols were developed to create safe spaces for participants while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries. A commitment to reflexivity, guided by Wilkinson's (1988) framework, enabled navigation of the interpretive nature of this work while maintaining methodological rigor. This experience points several directions for future research. Incorporating multiple data collection methods could provide valuable triangulation and deeper insights. Including participants from different political orientations could clarify how state violence affects diverse segments of society.

The research design also surfaced the temporal complexity of political trauma. The methodological approach revealed how past experiences of state violence continue to shape contemporary political consciousness through direct memory and transformed patterns of social relationship and political understanding. The examination of both historical context and present-day meaning-making enabled the tracing of the ways political violence creates enduring transformations in social consciousness that span generations.

These methodological reflections have important implications for future research on state violence and trauma. They suggest the need for approaches that can capture individual and collective dimensions while remaining sensitive to ethical considerations and the challenges of researching traumatic experiences. The study demonstrates the value of integrated methodological frameworks that can make sense of complex interactions between psychological and social processes in the context of political violence.

6.3. Implications and Future Directions

The findings of this study have implications that extend beyond the Turkish context, offering valuable insights for understanding state violence, political repression, and social transformation in various settings. These implications span theoretical contributions, practical

applications, and future research directions, with relevance for both academic understanding and real-world intervention strategies.

The research makes several theoretical contributions to understanding how state violence drives social transformation. Building on Volkan's (2001) work on large group identities, the findings show how authoritarian regimes can turn large group symbols into instruments of psychological control. In the Turkish case, careful manipulation of large group symbols could create enduring ruptures between political activists and the core symbols of their large group identity. This is particularly evident in participants' accounts of how national anthems and Atatürk's speeches were systematically transformed into instruments of torture in military prisons. The impact of this transformation reached beyond leftist prisoners, as seen in Participant 7's observation about nationalist inmates in her ward expressing alienation from these symbols. While this observation cannot be generalized to broader right-wing movements, it suggests how the weaponization of large group symbols in torture could create psychological impacts across different political orientations among those directly exposed to such practices.

The study supports and reinforces the theoretical understanding of political identity's resilience under repression. Punamaki's (1996) and Başoğlu's (1994) works suggest that ideological commitment can serve as a protective psychological factor by providing a framework for meaning-making during traumatic experiences. The findings both support and complicate this understanding. While most participants experienced severe trauma from torture and imprisonment - evidenced by lasting psychological impacts like memory loss and ongoing trauma responses - their ideological commitments provided psychological resources for surviving and making sense of their experiences. Participants like 1, 9, 18, 23, and 12 explicitly described how their political beliefs helped them endure torture and understand their suffering within a broader political context.

This meaning-making function of ideology appears to have prevented complete psychological fragmentation while not preventing trauma itself. The persistence of political identities across decades - with only one participant (17) fully rejecting his former beliefs - suggests that ideological commitment may provide a form of psychological continuity even in the face of severe trauma. However, this continuity of political identity coexisted with significant transformations in how participants expressed and enacted their political beliefs, revealing complex patterns of both resilience and adaptation under repression. These findings suggest

the need for finer-grained theoretical frameworks that can capture how political identities simultaneously provide psychological protection while being transformed by traumatic experiences.

The findings reveal how trauma transformed participants' approaches to political socialization within their own families. Many participants who had been supported in their youth activism now actively discouraged their children's political involvement, a reversal in their own parenting practices. While theoretical frameworks on intergenerational trauma transmission (Danieli, 1998) suggest mechanisms through which such parental behaviors might influence subsequent generations' political consciousness, determining whether and how these protective strategies actually affected the political development of participants' children would require research with those children themselves, an important direction for future investigation that lies beyond this study's scope.

The research carries implications for human rights documentation and advocacy. Traditional frameworks focusing primarily on physical violations often miss the cultural and social mechanisms through which state violence achieves lasting social transformation. As evidenced in participants' narratives, the regime's dismantling of social support networks proved as devastating as physical torture in achieving long-term political control. Future documentation efforts must develop more comprehensive approaches capable of capturing these subtle but profound impacts on social relationships and political consciousness.

The findings also bear on relevant considerations for civil society development in post-authoritarian contexts. As Kaptanoğlu (2009) suggests, systematic violence generates persistent patterns of fear and mutual suspicion that cannot be addressed through institutional reform alone. In line with this perspective, participant narratives in this study suggest that the regime's use of surveillance and social isolation may have contributed to patterns of political avoidance, which some perceive as still affecting contemporary civil society. These observations indicate that understanding these psychological legacies could be important for efforts aimed at rebuilding trust and political engagement.

It should be noted that while some participants in this study had themselves taken part in historic revolutionary violence, they were very reticent to speak about these experiences. As this topic was not the primary focus of this research, it was not explored in depth. However, future researchers interested in examining this dimension of revolutionary experience should

be aware that such work would require a considerably longer period of trust-building with interviewees before they might feel comfortable discussing their direct involvement in violent actions.

While this study focuses on the depoliticization process following the 1980 coup, it is essential not to overlook the waves of mobilization in subsequent periods. The politicization of Kurdish youth in the 1990s-2000s (Bozarslan, 2003), the 2013 Gezi protests (Erkmen, 2025; Tuğal, 2013), societal reactions to the 2016 coup attempt (Gümrükçü, 2022; Kahvecioğlu, 2022), and mass demonstrations in 2025 after the arrest of Istanbul's mayor point to moments of episodic repoliticization. However, when evaluating these phenomena, a critical question must be asked: Does the existence of street movements automatically signify the reconstruction of an organized civil society?

With the exception of the Kurdish movement, most of these waves of mobilization have struggled to transform into sustainable organizational structures (Pelivan, 2020). This demonstrates the depth of the transformation wrought by 1980: Moments of reaction may emerge, but the organizational culture, ideological continuity, and collective identity formation of the pre-1980 left cannot be reconstructed (Erkmen, 2025; Yıldırım & Gümrükçü, 2017). Therefore, while this study acknowledges that depoliticization is not a final endpoint, it underscores that repoliticization is not a linear process either.

Looking toward future research, this study opens several promising avenues for investigation. Comparative studies examining different manifestations of state violence across various cultural contexts could reveal both universal patterns and context-specific variations in how political repression operates and transforms societies. The findings particularly suggest the value of research examining how different societies have approached healing and reconstruction following systematic state violence.

Methodologically, future research would benefit from approaches capable of capturing both immediate impacts and long-term transformations while remaining sensitive to ethical considerations when working with traumatized populations. By revealing patterns of trauma transmission, this study's psychosocial approach makes the case for integrated frameworks that can examine both individual and collective dimensions of political violence.

Additionally, further theoretical development is needed to better understand the mechanisms linking individual and collective trauma, particularly in how political identities maintain

resilience while adapting under repression. The findings chart promising directions for exploring how resistance and resilience manifest differently across cultural contexts, potentially pointing toward new approaches to supporting political activism under authoritarian regimes.

The implications of this research extend beyond academic understanding to inform practical interventions addressing legacies of state violence. The findings reveal that authoritarian control employs advanced mechanisms that influence both individual consciousness and the broader networks of social relationships and political activism. A thorough comprehension of these mechanisms is essential for both interpreting past traumas and tackling current challenges facing global democracy and civil society development. Future research must continue developing both theoretical frameworks and practical approaches capable of addressing these complex legacies while supporting healing and democratic development in affected societies.

7. References

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8. Appendices

8.1. English and Turkish versions of Participant information and consent form

Ref & Version: v2
Ethics ID number: 39008
Date: __/__/__



Participant Information Sheet

The title of the research project

Identity Transformation and Violence

Invitation to take part

Before you decide to participate in this research, it is important to understand why the research is done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the project?

The aim of this research is to understand the impact of political violence on group identity.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a participant agreement form. We want you to understand what participation involves, before you make a decision on whether to participate.

Can I change my mind about taking part?

Yes, you can stop participating in study activities at any time and without giving a reason.

If I change my mind, what happens to my information?

After you decide to withdraw from the study, we will not collect any further information from or about you.

As regards information we have already collected before this point, we will not include it to the research and upon the participants' request the data will be destroyed immediately up until to the point of anonymisation. Further explanation about this is in the Personal Information section below.

What would taking part involve?

If you agree to participate in the research, you will be expected to answer questions about your experience during your detention and your political activism style before/ after these experiences. At this time, an audio recording of your answers will be taken to be evaluated by content analysis later.

What are the advantages and possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits to you participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will shed light on the impact of violence on political behaviour and construction and transformation of large group identities.

Whilst taking part in this study, you may be asked to recall unpleasant memories which may cause distress, anxiety and discomfort.

As a result of this increase in anxiety caused by recalling unpleasant memories may trigger underlying conditions on participants with PTSD.

At the same time, to reduce those risks, there will be a psychological support service provided for the participants who might request. There will be a clinical psychologist (M. Can Hasates) who is going to provide therapy for a period of six months with necessary frequencies.

Please consider these before taking part in this study.

What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?

The interview consists of questions about your past and present political tendencies and ideological orientation. In addition to these questions, there will also be questions about your previous experience of political violence and ill treatment.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

The interview will be recorded. The audio recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and the transcription of the recording for illustration in conference presentations

and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

How will my information be managed?

Bournemouth University (BU) is the organisation with overall responsibility for this study and the Data Controller of your personal information, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it appropriately. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest, as part of our core function as a university.

Undertaking this research study involves collecting and/or generating information about you. We manage research data strictly in accordance with:

- Ethical requirements; and
- Current data protection laws. These control use of information about identifiable individuals, but do not apply to anonymous research data: “anonymous” means that we have either removed or not collected any pieces of data or links to other data which identify a specific person as the subject or source of a research result.

BU's [Research Participant Privacy Notice](#) sets out more information about how we fulfil our responsibilities as a data controller and about your rights as an individual under the data protection legislation. We ask you to read this Notice so that you can fully understand the basis on which we will process your personal information.

Research data will be used only for the purposes of the study or related uses identified in the Privacy Notice or this Information Sheet. To safeguard your rights in relation to your personal information, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible and control access to that data as described below.

Publication

You will not be able to be identified in any external reports or publications about the research without your specific consent. Otherwise your information will only be included in these materials in an anonymous form, i.e. you will not be identifiable.

Research results will be published as a phd thesis.

Security and access controls

BU will hold the information we collect about you in hard copy in a secure location and on a BU password protected secure network where held electronically.

Personal Information

Personal information which has not been anonymised will be accessed and used only by appropriate, authorised individuals and when this is necessary for the purposes of the research or another purpose identified in the [Privacy Notice](#). This may include giving access to BU staff or others responsible for monitoring and/or audit of the study, who need to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations.

Further use of your information

The information collected about you may be used in an anonymous form to support other research projects in the future and access to it in this form will not be restricted. It will not be possible for you to be identified from this data. To enable this use, anonymised data will be added to BU's online Research Data Repository: this is a central location where data is stored, which is accessible to the public.

Keeping your information if you withdraw from the study

If you withdraw from active participation in the study we will not keep information which we have already collected from or about you, even if this has on-going relevance or value to the study. This may include your personal identifiable information. As explained above, the data collected about you will be immediately deleted however after the point of anonymisation it wouldn't be possible to be deleted since your data can not be identified.

You can find out more about your rights in relation to your data and how to raise queries or complaints in our [Privacy Notice](#).

Retention of research data

Project governance documentation, including copies of signed **participant agreements**: we keep this documentation for a long period after completion of the research, so that we have records of how we conducted the research and who took part. The only personal information in this documentation will be your name and signature, and we will not be able to link this to any anonymised research results.

Research results:

As described above, during the course of the study we will anonymise the information we have collected about you as an individual. This means that we will not hold your personal information in identifiable form after we have completed the research activities.

You can find more specific information about retention periods for personal information in our Privacy Notice.

We keep anonymised research data indefinitely, so that it can be used for other research as described above.

If you would like to have a copy of the research after it is published, you may contact the researcher by email to bulucan@bournemouth.ac.uk.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact cyates@bournemouth.ac.uk and bulucan@bournemouth.ac.uk

In case of complaints

Any concerns about the study should be directed to the Faculty of Media and Communication, Bournemouth University by email to researchgovernance@bournemouth.ac.uk and to Prof Dinusha Mendis, Deputy Dean for Research & Professional Practice, Faculty of Media & Communication by email to dmendis@bournemouth.ac.uk

Finally

If you decide to take part, you will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed participant agreement form to keep.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project.



Katılımcı Bilgilendirme Formu

Projenin Başlığı

Kimlik Donusumu ve Şiddet

Katılım Daveti

Bu araştırmaya katılmaya karar vermeden önce, araştırmanın neden yapıldığını ve neleri içereceğini anlamak önemlidir. Lütfen aşağıdaki bilgileri dikkatlice okuyun ve isterseniz başkalarıyla tartışın. Açık olmayan bir şey varsa veya daha fazla bilgi istiyorsanız bize sorun. Katılmak isteyip istemediğinize karar vermek için zaman ayırın.

Bu projenin amacı nedir?

Bu çalışmanın amacı, politik şiddetin grup kimliği üzerindeki etkisini anlamaktır.

Katılmak zorunda mıyım?

Katılıp katılmayacağınıza karar vermek size kalmış. Eğer katılmaya karar verirsiniz, size bu Bilgi Formu verilecek ve bir katılımcı sözleşmesi formu imzalamanız istenecektir. Katılıp katılmayacağınıza karar vermeden önce katılımın ne içerdiğini anlamanızı istiyoruz.

Katılmakla ilgili fikrimi değiştirebilir miyim?

Evet, herhangi bir zamanda ve bir sebep vermeden çalışma etkinliklerine katılmayı bırakabilirsiniz.

Fikrimi değiştirirsem, bilgilerime ne olur?

Çalışmadan çekilmeye karar verdikten sonra, sizden ve sizin hakkınızda daha fazla bilgi toplamayacağız.

Bu noktadan önce topladığımız bilgilerle ilgili olarak, araştırmaya dahil etmeyeceğiz ve katılımcıların talebi üzerine veriler derhal imha edilecektir. Bununla ilgili daha fazla açıklama aşağıdaki kişisel bilgiler bölümündedir.

Bu çalışmaya katılmak neleri ıermektedir?

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, 1980 yılındaki askeri darbe ve junta yönetimi sırasındaki/sonrasındaki deneyiminiz ve politik aktivizm tarzınız hakkındaki soruları yanıtlamanız bekleniyor. Cevaplarınız bir ses kayıt cihazı ile kaydedilecek daha sonra ıerik analizi ile değeriendirilmek üzere alınacaktır.

Katılmanın avantajları ve olası dezavantajları veya riskleri nelerdir?

Projeye katılmanızın sizin için gorulur bir yararı olmasa da, bu çalışmanın şiddetin politik davranışlar üzerindeki etkisine ve büyük grup kimliklerinin inşasına ve dönüşümüne ışı tutacağı umulmaktadır.

Bu çalışmaya katılırken, sıkıntı, endişe ve rahatsızlığa neden olabilecek hoş olmayan anıları hatırlamanız istenebilir.

Kötü anıları hatırlamak ve bunlardan bahsetmek Travma Sonrası Stres Bozukluğu için tetikleyici olabilir.

Aynı zamanda, bu riskleri azaltmak için, katılımcıların talebi doğrultusunda psikolojik destek hizmeti sağlanacaktır. Gerekli görülen sıklıkta altı aylık bir süre için terapi sağlayacak bir klinik psikolog (M. Can Hasataes) olacak.

Lütfen bu çalışmaya katılmadan önce bunları göz önünde bulundurun.

Benden ne tür bilgiler alınacak ve bu bilgilerin toplanması araştırma projesinin hedeflerine ulaşmak için neden önemlidir?

Görüşme, geçmiş ve şimdiki siyasi eğilimleriniz ve ideolojik yöneliminizle ilgili sorulardan oluşmaktadır. Bu sorulara ek olarak, önceki siyasi şiddet ve kötü muamele deneyiminizle ilgili sorular da olacaktır.

Kaydedilecek miyim ve kaydedilen medya nasıl kullanılacak?

Görüşme kaydedilecektir. Bu araştırma sırasında yaptığınız etkinliklerin ses kayıtları sadece konferans sunumlarında ve derslerde illüstrasyon için kaydın analizi ve transkripsiyonu için kullanılacaktır. Yazılı izniniz olmadan başka hiçbir kullanım yapılmayacak ve proje dışındaki hiç kimsenin orijinal kayıtlara erişmesine izin verilmeyecektir.

Bilgilerim nasıl yönetilecek?

Bournemouth Üniversitesi (BU), bu çalışma için genel sorumluluğu olan kuruluş ve kişisel bilgilerinizin veri denetleyicisidir, bu da bilgilerinize bakmaktan ve uygun şekilde kullanmaktan sorumlu olduğumuz anlamına gelir. Araştırma, bir üniversite olarak temel işlevimizin bir parçası olarak kamu yararına gerçekleştirdiğimiz bir görevdir.

Bu araştırma çalışması, hakkınızda bilgi toplamayı ve/veya üretmeyi içerir. Araştırma verilerini kesinlikle Aşağıdakilere uygun olarak yönetiyoruz:

- Etik gereklilikler; ve
- Mevcut veri koruma yasaları. Bunlar, tanımlanabilir bireyler hakkındaki bilgilerin kullanımını kontrol eder, ancak anonim araştırma verileri için geçerli değildir: “anonim”, belirli bir kişiyi araştırma sonucunun konusu veya kaynağı olarak tanımlayan herhangi bir veri parçasını veya diğer verilere bağlantılar kaldırdığımız veya toplamadığımız anlamına gelir.

BU araştırma katılımcısı Gizlilik Bildirimi, bir veri denetleyicisi olarak sorumluluklarımızı nasıl yerine getirdiğimiz ve veri koruma mevzuatı uyarınca bir birey olarak haklarınız hakkında daha fazla bilgi vermektedir. Bu Bildirimi okumanızı rica ediyoruz, böylece kişisel bilgilerinizi hangi temelde işleyeceğimizi tam olarak anlayabilirsiniz.

Araştırma verileri yalnızca çalışmanın amaçları veya gizlilik bildiriminde veya bu bilgi sayfasında tanımlanan ilgili kullanımlar için kullanılacaktır. Kişisel bilgilerinizle ilgili haklarınızı korumak için, mümkün olan en az kişisel olarak tanımlanabilir bilgileri kullanacağız ve aşağıda açıklandığı gibi bu verilere erişimi kontrol edeceğiz.

Yayınlama

Özel izniniz olmadan araştırma ile ilgili herhangi bir rapor veya yayında tanımlı olmayacaksınız. Yani, bilgileriniz yalnızca bu materyallere anonim bir biçimde dahil edilecektir.

Araştırma sonuçları Doktora Tezi olarak yayınlanacaktır.

Güvenlik ve Erişim Kontrolleri

BU (Bournemouth University), hakkınızda topladığımız bilgileri basılı kopya halinde güvenli bir yerde ve elektronik ortamda tutulan BU şifre korumalı güvenli bir ağda tutacaktır.

Kişisel Bilgiler

Anonimleştirilmemiş kişisel bilgilere yalnızca uygun, yetkili kişiler tarafından ve bu araştırmanın amaçları veya gizlilik bildiriminde tanımlanan başka bir amaç için gerekli olduğunda erişilecek ve kullanılacaktır.

Bu, BU personeline veya araştırmanın yürürlükteki düzenlemelere uygun olduğundan emin olması gereken çalışmanın izlenmesi ve/veya denetlenmesinden sorumlu diğer kişilere erişim sağlamayı içerebilir.

Bilgilerinizin daha ilerde kullanımı

Hakkınızda toplanan bilgiler gelecekte diğer araştırma projelerini desteklemek için anonim bir biçimde kullanılabilir ve bu formda erişim kısıtlanmayacaktır. Bu verilerden tanımlanmanız mümkün olmayacaktır. Bu kullanımı etkinleştirmek için, ANONİMLEŞTİRİLMİŞ veriler BU'nun çevrimiçi araştırma veri deposuna eklenecektir: bu, verilerin depolandığı ve kamuya açık olan merkezi bir konumdur.

Çalışmadan çekilerseniz bilgilerinizin durumu ne olacak?

Çalışmadan, çalışma sırasında ve sonrasında sizden toplanan veriler anonimleştirilene kadar çekilebilirsiniz. Çekilmeniz durumunda sizden toplanan veriler kesinlikle kullanılmayacak ve silinecektir.

Verilerinizle ilgili haklarınız ve gizlilik Bildirimimizde ([Privacy Notice](#)) sorguların veya şikayetlerin nasıl yükseltileceği hakkında daha fazla bilgi edinebilirsiniz.

Araştırma verilerinin saklanması

İmzalanan katılımcı sözleşmelerinin kopyaları da dahil olmak üzere proje yönetim belgeleri: bu belgeleri araştırmanın tamamlanmasından sonra uzun bir süre saklıyoruz, böylece araştırmayı nasıl yürüttüğümüze ve kimin katıldığına dair kayıtlarımız oluyor. Bu dokümantasyondaki tek kişisel bilgi adınız ve imzanız olacaktır ve bunu anonim araştırma sonuçlarına bağlanmayacaktır.

Araştırma sonuçları:

Yukarıda açıklandığı gibi, çalışma sırasında sizin hakkınızda topladığımız bilgileri anonimleştireceğiz. Bu, araştırma faaliyetlerini tamamladıktan sonra kişisel bilgilerinizi tanımlanabilir bir biçimde tutmayacağımız anlamına gelir.

Kişisel bilgiler için saklama süreleri hakkında daha spesifik bilgileri Gizlilik Bildirimimizde bulabilirsiniz.

Anonim araştırma verilerini süresiz olarak saklarız, böylece yukarıda açıklandığı gibi diğer araştırmalar için kullanılabilir.

Araştırmanın yayınlandıktan sonra bir kopyasına sahip olmak istiyorsanız, araştırmacıyla e-posta yoluyla iletişime geçebilirsiniz bulucan@bournemouth.ac.uk.

Daha fazla bilgi için İrtibat

Herhangi bir sorunuz varsa veya daha fazla bilgi istiyorsanız, lütfen bize ulaşın cyates@bournemouth.ac.uk ve bulucan@bournemouth.ac.uk

Sikayet Durumunda

Çalışma ile ilgili herhangi bir endişenizi;

- Bournemouth Üniversitesi Medya ve İletişim Fakültesi'ne e-posta ile yönlendirebilirsiniz researchgovernance@bournemouth.ac.uk
- Prof Dinusha Mendis'e, Araştırma ve Mesleki Uygulama Dekan Yardımcısı, Medya ve İletişim Fakültesi'ne e-posta ile yönlendirebilirsiniz dmendis@bournemouth.ac.uk

Son Olarak

Katılmaya karar vererseniz, Bilgi Formunun bir kopyası ve saklamak için imzalı bir katılımcı sözleşmesi formu verilecektir.

Bu araştırma projesine katılmayı düşündüğünüz için teşekkür ederiz.



Participant Agreement Form

Full title of project: "Identity transformation and violence"

Name, position and contact details of researcher: Begüm Elçin Ulucan, PGR, bulucan@bournemouth.ac.uk

Name, position and contact details of supervisor: Candida Yates, Professor of Culture and Communication, cyates@bournemouth.ac.uk

To be completed prior to data collection activity

Section A: Agreement to participate in the study

You should only agree to participate in the study if you agree with all of the statements in this table and accept that participating will involve the listed activities.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet (V2) and have been given access to the BU Research Participant Privacy Notice which sets out how we collect and use personal information (https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/governance/access-information/data-protection-privacy).	
I have had an opportunity to ask questions.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop participating in research activities at any time without giving a reason and I am free to decline to answer any particular question(s).	
I understand that taking part in the research will include the following activity/activities as part of the research:	
being audio recorded during the project	
my words will be quoted in publications, reports, web pages and other research outputs without using my real name.	
I understand that, if I withdraw from the study, I will also be able to withdraw my data from further use in the study.	
I understand that my data may be included in an anonymised form within a dataset to be archived at BU's Online Research Data Repository.	
I understand that my data may be used in an anonymised form by the research team to support other research projects in the future, including future publications, reports or presentations.	
	Initial box to agree
I consent to take part in the project on the basis set out above (Section A)	

Section B: The following parts of the study are optional

You can decide about each of these activities separately. Even if you do not agree to any of these activities you can still take part in the study. If you do not wish to give permission for an activity, do not initial the box next to it.

	Initial boxes to agree
I agree that BU researchers may contact my GP as described in the Participant Information Sheet	
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages and other research outputs.	
I do not agree that my real name can be used in the above.	

I confirm my agreement to take part in the project on the basis set out above.

Signature

_____ Name of participant	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Name of researcher	_____ Date	_____ Signature

Once a Participant has signed, **please sign 1 copy** and take 2 photocopies:

- Original kept in the local investigator's file
- 1 copy to be kept by the participant (including a copy of PI Sheet)



Katılımcı Onay Formu

Projenin Başlığı: “Kimlik donusumu ve Şiddet”

Araştırmacının ismi, pozisyonu ve iletişim bilgileri: Begüm Elçin Ulucan, PGR,
bulucan@bournemouth.ac.uk

Supervizörün ismi, pozisyonu ve iletişim bilgileri: Candida Yates, Kültür ve iletişim profesörü,
cyates@bournemouth.ac.uk

Veri toplama faaliyetinden önce tamamlanması gerekenler

Bölüm A: çalışmaya katılma Sözleşmesi

Çalışmaya yalnızca bu tablodaki tüm ifadeleri kabul ederseniz ve katılımın listelenen etkinlikleri içereceğini kabul ederseniz katılmayı kabul etmelisiniz.

Katılımcı bilgilendirme formunu (V2) okudum ve anladım ve kişisel bilgilerimin nasıl toplanacağını ve kullanılacağını belirten BU araştırma katılımcısı gizlilik bildirimine (Privacy Notice) erişim izni verildi. (https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/governance/access-information/data-protection-privacy).	
Araştırmacıya soru sormak için bir fırsatım oldu.	
Katılımımın gönüllü olduğunu anlıyorum. Herhangi bir sebep göstermeden herhangi bir zamanda araştırma faaliyetlerine katılmayı bırakabilirim ve herhangi bir soruyu cevaplamayı reddetmekte özgürüm.	
Araştırmaya katılmanın, araştırmanın bir parçası olarak aşağıdaki etkinlikleri içereceğini anlıyorum:	
proje sırasında ses kaydı alınacak	
sözlerim gerçek adımları kullanmadan yayınlarda, raporlarda, web sayfalarında ve diğer araştırma çıktılarında alıntılanacaktır.	
Çalışmadan çekilirim, verilerimi çalışmadaki kullanımından da çekebileceğimi anlıyorum.	
Verilerimin, BU'nun çevrimiçi araştırma veri deposunda arşivlenecek bir veri kümesinde anonimleştirilmiş bir forma dahil edilebileceğini anlıyorum.	
Verilerimin, gelecekteki yayınlar, raporlar veya sunumlar da dahil olmak üzere gelecekteki diğer araştırma projelerini desteklemek için araştırma ekibi tarafından anonimleştirilmiş bir biçimde kullanılabilirliğini anlıyorum.	
	Kabul etmek için isaretleyiniz
Yukarıda belirtilen temelde projeye katılmayı kabul ediyorum (Bölüm A)	

Bölüm B: çalışmanın aşağıdaki bölümleri isteğe bağlıdır

Bu etkinliklerin her biri hakkında ayrı ayrı karar verebilirsiniz. Bu faaliyetlerden herhangi birini kabul etmeseniz bile, yine de çalışmaya katılabilirsiniz. Bir etkinlik için izin vermek istemiyorsanız, yanındaki kutuyu işaretlemeyin.

	Kabul etmek için işaretleyiniz
BU araştırmacılarının katılımcı bilgi sayfasında açıklandığı gibi aile hekimimle iletişime geçebileceğini kabul ediyorum	
Sözlerimin yayınlarda, raporlarda, web sayfalarında ve diğer araştırma çıktılarında alıntılanabileceğini anlıyorum.	
Gerçek ismimin yukarıdakilerde kullanılabileceğini kabul etmiyorum.	

Yukarıda belirtilen temelde projeye katılma anlaşmamı onaylıyorum.

_____ Katılımcının İsmi	_____ Tarih	_____ İMZA
_____ Araştırmacının İsmi	_____ Tarih	_____

Katılımcı imzaladıktan sonra, lütfen 1 kopyasını imzalayın ve 2 fotokopisini alın:

- Orijinali araştırmacının dosyasında saklanacak
- Diğer katılımcı tarafından saklanacak (Katılımcı Bilgilendirme Formunun bir kopyası ile birlikte)

8.2.Ethics checklist

About Your Checklist

Ethics ID	39008
Date Created	23/06/2021 03:47:34
Status	Approved
Date Approved	05/08/2021 11:04:09
Risk	High

Researcher Details

Name	Begum Elcin Ulucan
Faculty	Faculty of Media & Communication
Status	Postgraduate Research (MRes, MPhil, PhD, DProf, EngD, EdD)
Course	Postgraduate Research - FMC
Have you received funding to support this research project?	No

Project Details

Title	IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION AND VIOLENCE
Start Date of Project	23/09/2019
End Date of Project	23/09/2022
Proposed Start Date of Data Collection	02/07/2021
Original Supervisor	Candida Yates
Approver	Research Ethics Panel

Summary - no more than 600 words (including detail on background methodology, sample, outcomes, etc.)

The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the impact of violence on large group identities. As the large group identities are suggested, they are derived from the common experiences of the large group and the important tragic or glorious events chosen by the group. As a result of this, it is possible to say that large group identities are not static and concrete structures, but rather are dynamic and reactive in nature. We can say that an experience of violence that traumatizes a considerable number of the members of the large group may affect the general behavioral pattern of the group. This transformative quality of the experience of violence causes us to see violence itself as a means of communication. Violence contains the power to change the recipient of the message and even the parties who witness this form of relationship. The group which is subjected to violence will make this tragic experience part of their songs, narratives and rituals and rebuild their large group identity around this event. While this increases the adaptation skills of the groups, it also makes them vulnerable to interventions and even manipulations from out-groups. This study aims to provide a new psychological understanding of how human rights violations during the military coup of September 12, 1980 and the 3-year junta period affected the identities of left-wing groups in Turkey. I will use a psychosocial methodology that combines social, political and psychological perspectives to reveal the complex dynamics of large group identities and the reactions of such groups to experiences of violence over time. Therefore, I will use qualitative data taken from semi-structured interviews with twenty of participants who were former political prisoners (victims of torture and ill-treatment) during the junta administration. And the data will be analyzed thematically with the application of psychosocial frameworks to examine the effects of the violence experienced by the participants on the characteristics of

their large group. In addition to these, written materials published by predetermined left-wing organizations before and after the coup will be analyzed using the critical discourse analysis method. In this way, the effects of the trauma experienced by the members of the left-wing groups in Turkey on the way they define and express themselves and their identities will be investigated.

Filter Question: Does your study involve Human Participants?

Participants	
Describe the number of participants and specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used	
Since the time, and travel limitations the sufficient number of participants for this study was determined as twenty. In general participant groups will consist of people who have been affiliated to, organically tied, or have been part of specific left-wing groups that have been ill treated while under the custody of law enforcement during the 80's coup process. The vast majority of the participants were part of two major groups (EMEP and DEV-YOL) during the 70's.	
Do your participants include minors (under 16)?	No
Are your participants considered adults who are competent to give consent but considered vulnerable?	Yes
If Yes, provide details (e.g. recipient of health or care services etc., cognitive impairment, prison inmates, BU students - see related help guide)	
Participants in the study will be former political prisoners detained or convicted and tortured during the junta period in Turkey between 1980 and 1989.	
Is a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check required for the research activity?	No
Recruitment	
Please provide details on intended recruitment methods, include copies of any advertisements.	
The snowball method will be used to reach a sufficient number of participants. In order to reach the participants who are members of the EMEP organization, I contacted Mustafa Gencay, who has been actively involved in this organization since the 1970s, and asked him if he could help me to find participants for the research by explaining the project. And to find a participant from the DEV-YOL organization, I contacted Hasan Sukru Ulucan, who used to be a part of this group in the 1970s. I got positive responses from both of these gatekeepers and the number of participants increased with the help of the people I have met through them.	
Do you need a Gatekeeper to access your participants?	Yes
Please provide details, including their roles and any relationship between Gatekeepers and participant(s) (e.g. nursing home manager and residents)	
Hasan Sukru Ulucan and Mustafa Gencay are assisting me to reach the participants. Mustafa Gencay is still actively taking part in EMEP (a political party in Turkey). Both of these people who helped me to find my first participants had an impact on my study, as they had access to people who belonged to my possible target group of participants because they were involved in various political organizations in the 1970s.	
Data Collection Activity	
Will the research involve questionnaire/online survey? If yes, don't forget to attach a copy of the questionnaire/survey or sample of questions.	No
Will the research involve interviews? If Yes, don't forget to attach a copy of the interview questions or sample of questions	Yes
Please provide details e.g. where will the interviews take place. Will you be conducting the interviews or someone else?	

The data collection will consist of semi-structured interviews which are take place in Turkey and I will conduct the interviews.	
Will the research involve a focus group? If yes, don't forget to attach a copy of the focus group questions or sample of questions.	No
Will the research involve the collection of audio recordings?	Yes
Will your research involve the collection of photographic materials?	No
Will your research involve the collection of video materials/film?	No
Will any audio recordings (or non-anonymised transcript), photographs, video recordings or film be used in any outputs or otherwise made publicly available?	No
Will the study involve discussions of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, criminal activity)?	Yes
Please provide details and measures taken to minimise risks	
The study includes some risks for the participants, as interviews will be conducted with people who were arrested and ill-treated during the Junta period on these experiences. In order to minimize these risks and the possible negative effects of the interviews, clinical psychologist Can Hasates will be ready to provide mental health consultation to the participants if any of them face psychological distress. Mr. Hasates will not attend the meetings with participants. However, he will be ready to support them against any mental problem that the participants may encounter during the study. While the participants will be informed about the possible risks before the interviews begin, they will also be informed that they can contact psychologist Can Hasates in case of any mental distress and that they can get help from him. Mr. Hasates' contact information will be shared with the participants and the participants will provide free mental health support upon their request.	
Will any drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) be administered to the participants?	No
Will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potential harmful procedures of any kind?	No
Could your research induce psychological stress or anxiety, cause harm or have negative consequences for the participants or researchers (beyond the risks encountered in normal life)?	Yes
Please provide details and measures taken to minimise risks	
In order to minimize the possible mental health risks that might be caused by the interviews made within the scope of this study for the participants and me, clinical psychologist Can Hasates will be ready to help the participants and me if any of us face psychological distress. Letters written by Mr.Hasates on this subject are attached to the form. Also, many of my participants have already given interviews to newspapers and magazines about their experiences and have written articles for magazines. And, one of my participants is about to publish the book she wrote on what she went through during her detention. Although it is a very sensitive and traumatic subject, studying the 1980 military coup in Turkey does not carry any political risk.	
Will your research involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	No
What are the potential adverse consequences for research participants and how will you minimise them?	
Consent	
Describe the process that you will be using to obtain valid consent for participation in the research activities. If consent is not to be obtained explain why.	
Participant agreement form and participant information sheet will be given to the participants prior to the study. And, before the interviews, the participants will be given information about the study vocally and they will be informed that they can withdraw from the study whenever they want.	
Do your participants include adults who lack/may lack capacity to give consent (at any point in the study)?	No

Will it be necessary for participants to take part in your study without their knowledge and consent?	No

Participant Withdrawal

At what point and how will it be possible for participants to exercise their rights to withdraw from the study?
Participants can stop participating in study activities at any time and without giving a reason.
If a participant withdraws from the study, what will be done with their data?
If a participant decides to withdraw from the study, I will not collect any further information from or about him/her. As regards information I have already collected before this point, I will not include it to the research and upon the participants' request the data will be destroyed immediately up until the point of anonymisation.

Participant Compensation

Will participants receive financial compensation (or course credits) for their participation?	No
Will financial or other inducements (other than reasonable expenses) be offered to participants?	No

Research Data

Will identifiable personal information be collected, i.e. at an individualised level in a form that identifies or could enable identification of the participant?	Yes
Please give details of the types of information to be collected, e.g. personal characteristics, education, work role, opinions or experiences	
Interviews will be audio recorded, therefore data will contain personal information. Participants' voices may uncover their identity through voice recognition.	
Will the personal data collected include any special category data, or any information about actual or alleged criminal activity or criminal convictions which are not already in the public domain?	Yes
If Yes, please give details of the information you will be collecting	
the interviews will collect data about participants past experiments of ill treatment in prisons during 80's junta administration. Although the criminal activity these individuals have been accused and the criminal activity towards them are already in the public domain. interviews might contain information about special category data where participants might disclose their political opinions.	
Will the information be anonymised/de-identified at any stage during the study?	Yes
Will research outputs include any identifiable personal information i.e. data at an individualised level in a form which identifies or could enable identification of the individual?	No

Storage, Access and Disposal of Research Data

During the study, what data relating to the participants will be stored and where?	Within the scope of the study, interviews will be held with the participants and audio recordings will be taken during these interviews. The collected audio recordings and transcripts will be stored in H Drive of the BU network.
How long will the data relating to participants be stored?	I will keep the information that has been collected from participants during interviews by voice recording after the completion of the degree. After that point I am going to erase

	the data set completely and irreversible.
During the study, who will have access to the data relating to participants?	Since the classification of information collected is confidential, the researcher and supervisory team will have access to the data relating to participants.
After the study has finished, what data relating to participants will be stored and where? Please indicate whether data will be retained in identifiable form.	I will keep the information that has been collected from participants during interviews by voice recording after the completion of the degree. After that point I am going to erase the data set completely and irreversible.
After the study has finished, how long will data relating to participants be stored?	I do not intend to store the data set after the study has ended.
After the study has finished, who will have access to the data relating to participants?	The results of the study will be publicly available since the study is going to be published as a thesis. In addition, I am going to prefer a transcription software rather than a transcription service from a real person, in order to protect data privacy therefore the data set will only be available for me and the supervisory team.
Will any identifiable participant data be transferred outside of the European Economic Area (EEA)?	No
How and when will the data relating to participants be deleted/destroyed?	The data set which is collected from the participant will be destroyed after the degree has been awarded.
Once your project completes, will your dataset be added to an appropriate research data repository such as BORDaR, BU's Data Repository?	Yes

Dissemination Plans

How do you intend to report and disseminate the results of the study?

Peer reviewed journals,Conference presentation

Will you inform participants of the results?

Yes

If Yes or No, please give details of how you will inform participants or justify if not doing so

Participants will be informed about how the data obtained from them will be used and Since the participants will already have my contact information, I will share the final product of the study with them via email if they request it.

Final Review

Are there any other ethical considerations relating to your project which have not been covered above?

No

Risk Assessment

Have you undertaken an appropriate Risk Assessment?

Yes

Filter Question: Does your study involve the use or re-use of data which will be obtained from a source other than directly from a Research Participant?

Additional Details

Please describe the data, its source and how you are permitted to use it	My study includes the data collected from the participants, as well as the critical discourse analysis of the texts published before and after the military coup by the predetermined left-wing organizations. All of the written material that is going to be used will be obtained from publicly available resources and they are open for access for everybody.

Filter Question: Will your research study take place outside the UK and/or specifically target a country outside the UK?

Additional Details	
List the European and/or Overseas country where the research will take place	
According to the announcement by the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Turkey on 1 June 2021; The second phase of the gradual normalization process, which will be implemented throughout June, has started. Within the scope of the second stage of normalization, shopping centers, pubs, cafes, restaurants and cinemas started to serve with 50% capacity. According to the announcement in June, there are no obstacles for people in Turkey to come together in public or private property. This announcement will be added to the form as an attachment. However, I plan to carry out the data collection process in a private and isolated garden setting while I am in Turkey to visit my family. I will minimize the health risk for myself and the participants by following the social distance and hygiene rules during the interviews. Since I am a citizen of the Republic of Turkey, I do not think that I will face any legal or cultural problems.	
Are you currently a resident of the country named above?	
Do you intend to remain in/visit the country named above to undertake the research?	
By participating in this research, are there any potential risks to participants?	
Does the country in which you are conducting research require that you obtain internal ethical approval (other than BU ethical approval)?	No

Researcher Statement	
JOURNALISM / BROADCAST RESEARCHERS: I confirm that I have consulted and understand the Research Ethics Supplementary Guide: For Reference by Researchers Undertaking Journalism and Media Production Projects (available on the Research Ethics page)	Yes

Attached documents
Interview.docx - attached on 23/06/2021 04:04:32
Haziran Ayı Normalleşme Tedbirleri Genelgesi.pdf - attached on 23/06/2021 04:05:15
officialletter1.pdf - attached on 23/07/2021 12:30:49
officialletter2.pdf - attached on 23/07/2021 12:30:59
KATILIMCI ONAY FORMU(Participant Agreement Form).docx - attached on 23/07/2021 12:36:02
Participant Agreement Form.docx - attached on 23/07/2021 12:36:12
KATILIMCI BİLGİLENDİRME FORMU(Participant Information Sheet).docx - attached on 26/07/2021 19:22:12
Participant Information Sheet.docx - attached on 26/07/2021 19:23:19

8.3.Interview guide

Sample Questions from Semi-Structured Interview

Step1

- 1.The participant will be informed about the duration of the interview. Interview length will be 60-90 minutes.
- 2.The participant will be informed about the study. Verbal consent will be received from the participant.
3. Background information will be given to the participant and personal information will be obtained.

Step2

Questions

1. In what kind of environment and family did you grow up?/ Can you tell me a little about your upbringing, family, parents' occupations, parenting style, relationship with siblings?
2. When and how did your first political ideas begin to form?
3. How did you see the situation in Turkey and the world at the end of the 1970s?
4. In which political organizations did you take part?
5. Which political organization or organizations did you take part in before the military coup? What was your position? \ What was the depth of the relationship with your organization?
6. How would you describe the ideological position of the political organization you were in?
7. Why did you choose this organization? How did you enter it?
8. Did you adopt every action and opinion of the organization in those years?
9. So what were your political interests, how would you describe yourself in those years, were you strong on the theoretical side - or were you more practical?
10. How long after the military coup did you get arrested? How long have you been detained? For what crime did you get tried?
11. What were your feelings that prevailed when you were arrested and in the process that followed?
- 12.
13. We know a lot about the prison conditions of the Junta period. For example, uniform dressing practice, citizenship and Kemalism lessons. Have you ever encountered such an application during your time in prison?
14. Is there anything in particular you would like to share with me about your experiences during your arrest?
15. What did you go through after you were released from prison\ who took you in\ what did you go through with your family\ how was your relationship with the party\ how

was your work life- how was your social life affected? When did you first share what you lived inside with other people\ What kind of reactions did you get\ How did it make you feel to share?

16. Are you currently interested in politics, if yes, in which political party?
17. How would you describe your political identity at the moment?
18. Do you think the military coup affected Turkey socially and politically?
19. Is there anything you would like to add?

*Note: Additional follow-up questions were asked, as appropriate, with each participant.

8.4. Gatekeeper Agreement Form

Ref & Version: v2
Ethics ID number: 39008
Date:
//___

Gatekeeper Agreement Form

Research Project Title:

Researcher:

Institution:

Contact Information:

Gatekeeper Name:

Position/Organization:

Contact Information:

Purpose of the Agreement

This document confirms the role and responsibilities of the above-named individual as a gatekeeper for the research project. The gatekeeper will assist in identifying and facilitating initial contact with potential research participants who meet the study criteria.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Gatekeeper

The gatekeeper agrees to:

1. Identify potential participants who meet the following criteria:
 - former political activists who experienced detention and ill-treatment during the post-1980 coup period in Turkey
2. Ask potential participants if they would be willing to be contacted by the researcher
3. Share contact information of only those individuals who have explicitly agreed to be contacted
4. Not pressure or coerce individuals to participate in the research
5. Maintain confidentiality regarding which individuals choose to participate or decline
6. Not share any information gathered during the research process with third parties

Roles and Responsibilities of the Researcher

The researcher agrees to:

1. Provide the gatekeeper with clear information about the research project
2. Supply information sheets for potential participants
3. Contact only those individuals who have agreed to be approached
4. Maintain confidentiality of all participants
5. Conduct research according to ethical guidelines approved by Bournemouth University
6. Keep the gatekeeper informed about the general progress of recruitment (without sharing specific participant information)

Limitations

- The gatekeeper will not be involved in the data collection, analysis, or dissemination processes
- The gatekeeper will not have access to raw data or individual participant responses
- The researcher will make the final decision on participant inclusion in the study based on research criteria

Agreement Duration

This agreement is effective from 20.08.2021 until 20.12.2021.

Signatures

Gatekeeper:

Date: _____

Researcher:

Date: _____

8.5. Participants' personal informations and political organizations

table.1

Participant	Gender	Organization	Duration of Detention
1	male	Kasabalilar/MIspb	11 years
2	male	Kasabalilar/MIspb	5 years
3	male	Kasabalilar/MIspb	90 days
4	female	Halkin Kurtulusu	90 days
5	female	Halkin Kurtulusu	20 months
6	male	TKP	90 days
7	female	Halkin Kurtulusu	2,5 years
8	male	Dev-Yol	45 days
9	male	Halkin Kurtulusu	7 years
10	female	Halkin Kurtulusu	14 months
11	female	Halkin Kurtulusu/TÖB-DER	3 year
12	male	Halkin Kurtulusu	7 years
13	male	Halkin Kurtulusu	1 year
14	male	Halkin Kurtulusu	1,5 years
15	male	Halkin Kurtulusu	4 years
16	male	Dev-Yol	1 year
17	male	Dev-Yol	45 days
18	male	Kasabalilar/MIspb	13 years
19	male	Kasabalilar/MIspb	6 months
20	male	Halkin Kurtulusu	11 years
21	male	Dev-Sol	6 years
22	male	DDKD	5 years
23	male	DDKD/TÖB-DER	13 months

8.6. Information on the political organisation of the participants

DDKD: The Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths (DDKO) were instrumental in the political differentiation process that occurred in Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s. This period witnessed the emergence of an urban Kurdish bourgeoisie, facilitated by factors such as intensive rural-to-urban migration and increased access to education. Initially integrated within leftist political movements, Kurdish youth and intellectuals progressively diverged from the Turkish left, establishing their own distinct organisations. The DDKOs can be interpreted as a tangible manifestation of this divergence. The founders of the DDKOs posited that the Turkish left insufficiently addressed the Kurdish question, perceiving it as an issue that would be inherently resolved with the advent of socialism. Consequently, they advocated for a more immediate and concrete approach to the Kurdish issue, which precipitated the formation of a separate organisational structure. The genesis of the DDKOs can also be contextualised within the framework of urbanisation, which engendered an anonymous environment conducive to politicisation along ethnic and national lines (Doganoglu, 2016).

Halkın Kurtuluşu: Halkın Kurtuluşu (People's Liberation) was a leftist movement that emerged in Turkey in the late 1970s and quickly gained a broad base of support. Breaking away from the tradition of armed struggle rooted in 1971, the group began publishing a journal in 1976 and adopted the name Turkey Revolutionary Communist Party - Preparatory Organization (TDKP-İÖ) in 1978, eventually forming an official party in early 1980. Following a Marxist-Leninist line, Halkın Kurtuluşu focused on principles such as party-led mass work and working-class leadership, organizing primarily among workers, teachers, and youth. Criticizing the Soviet Union for deviating from what it saw as the true communist path, the movement adopted a more radical Stalinist stance aligned with the views of Albania's Party of Labour. It advocated for an uninterrupted transition to socialism in Turkey through a revolution based on a worker-peasant alliance (Aydın, 2015).

Dev-Sol: Devrimci Sol (Revolutionary Left), commonly known as Dev-Sol, was established in 1978 by a group that split from the earlier revolutionary movement THKP-C. The split was driven by ideological disagreements, particularly a belief that the original movement had deviated from its revolutionary roots. Dev-Sol adopted a Marxist-Leninist ideology centered

on anti-imperialism, revolutionary violence, and the necessity of a militant vanguard to lead the struggle against what it viewed as a fascist regime in Turkey. Emphasizing armed struggle over mass organization, the group became known for high-profile attacks, including assassinations and bombings, especially targeting symbols of the Turkish state and Western—particularly U.S.—interests. Though suppressed after the 1980 military coup, it reemerged in the 1990s and later evolved into the DHKP-C, continuing its militant activities under a new name (Kenville, 2000).

Dev-Yol: Dev-Yol (Revolutionary Path) was a significant left-wing movement active in Turkey during the 1970s. Emerging from the Marxist-Leninist tradition, Dev-Yol advocated for concepts such as "people's power" and "democratic people's revolution." The movement adopted a populist discourse in an attempt to reach broad masses and aimed to address everyday problems of the people through local organisational forms such as "resistance committees." Unlike the traditional left, Dev-Yol endeavoured to develop a revolution strategy specific to Turkey, criticising approaches it perceived as "templated." The movement placed emphasis on anti-fascist struggle and aimed to unite individuals from diverse backgrounds within this struggle. Dev-Yol's ideological framework was characterised by its attempt to synthesise Marxist-Leninist principles with local conditions and populist strategies. This approach reflected an effort to adapt revolutionary theory to the specific socio-political context of Turkey in the 1970s. The movement's organisational structure, centred around local committees, represented an attempt to embed revolutionary activity within the fabric of everyday life and local communities. This strategy aimed to create a grassroots base for the movement and to address immediate social issues while working towards broader political goals. Dev-Yol's discourse and practices were reflective of and responsive to the socio-political conditions of the period. The movement's emphasis on anti-fascism and its attempts to unite diverse social groups under this banner were particularly indicative of the political tensions and polarisation characteristic of 1970s Turkey (Erdogan, 1998).

Kasabalilar: The "Kasabalilar" (Townsppeople) represents a localised political phenomenon that emerged in a small town in Western Anatolia, Turkey, during the 1970s. This movement was shaped by a group of young individuals influenced by the dynamic political atmosphere of the period. Unaffiliated with any established political organisation, these youth developed a unique organisational model based on their local dynamics. The Kasabalilar movement

tailored its actions and activities to address the needs and issues specific to their region, thereby establishing strong connections with the local populace. One of the most notable characteristics of the movement was its ability to unite youth with diverse political views, fostering strong bonds of solidarity and friendship among them. Through their efforts to intervene in local issues, organise cultural activities, and strengthen social solidarity, the Kasabalılar quickly gained recognition in their region. Their activities included addressing local problems, arranging cultural events, and enhancing community cohesion. The Kasabalılar phenomenon illustrates the potential for grassroots movements to emerge and operate effectively within the specific socio-political conditions of their locality. The development and impact of the Kasabalılar movement can be understood as a response to the broader political climate of 1970s Turkey, manifesting in a localised form that was particularly attuned to the needs and dynamics of a small Western Anatolian town (Turan& Almış, 2009).

TKP: The Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) is one of the oldest political parties in Turkey. Founded on September 10, 1920, in Baku under the leadership of Mustafa Suphi, it is recognized as the first political organisation in Turkey to adopt Marxist-Leninist ideology. Since its inception, the TKP has faced various forms of suppression and prohibition, compelling it to operate illegally for many years. The party has played significant roles in Turkish political history and has been influential in the development of labour movements and leftist thought. Following the military coup of 1980, the TKP continued its activities abroad. In 2001, the party regained legal status in Turkey. Throughout its history, the TKP has experienced periods of both legal and illegal operation, reflecting the changing political landscape of Turkey. The party's ideology and activities have been shaped by both international communist movements and local political conditions. Currently, the TKP continues to exist as a notable actor within the Turkish left. Its historical significance and contemporary role make it a subject of interest in studies of Turkish political history and the development of leftist movements in the country (Tuncay, 2009).

TOB-DER: TÖB-DER (All Teachers Unity and Solidarity Association) was an association established in 1971 that became one of the largest professional organisations for teachers in Turkey. Founded after the closure of TÖS (Turkish Teachers' Union), TÖB-DER rapidly grew to become an influential civil society organisation with over 200,000 members. The association advocated for the economic and social rights of teachers while also taking an

active role in educational policies and social issues. During the 1970s, TÖB-DER was considered a significant component of the left-wing movement in Turkey, which subsequently led to political pressure on the organisation. TÖB-DER's activities extended beyond professional advocacy, encompassing broader social and political engagement. This wider scope of activity positioned the association as a notable actor in the socio-political landscape of 1970s Turkey. The association was closed following the military coup of September 12, 1980. TÖB-DER is remembered as a significant representative of the teachers' movement and trade union struggle in Turkey's recent history (Koç, 2003).

8.7. Historical Glossary

1961 Constitution (1961 Anayasası)

The 1961 Constitution was introduced following the 1960 military coup and paradoxically combined unprecedented democratic freedoms with mechanisms for military oversight. Under this constitutional framework, Turkey experienced a remarkable expansion of political expression and organization, including extensive labor rights and civil liberties. The constitution fostered the emergence of the '68 movement and enabled diverse forms of leftist political organizing throughout the 1960s and 1970s. It was replaced by the authoritarian 1982 Constitution following the September 12, 1980 military coup.

1969 Bloody Sunday

A series of violent confrontations during student demonstrations in 1969 that marked an escalation of political tensions in Turkey. These protests, initially peaceful, devolved into violent clashes between student activists and security forces. The events demonstrated the deepening polarization between left and right-wing groups and the state's increasingly harsh responses to student activism. Bloody Sunday became part of a vicious cycle of repression and radicalization that would characterize the 1970s.

1977 Taksim Square Massacre / Bloody May Day

On May 1, 1977, hundreds of thousands gathered at Taksim Square in Istanbul to celebrate International Workers' Day in what would become one of the defining tragedies of the pre-coup period. During the demonstration, gunfire erupted from surrounding buildings, causing mass panic among the crowd. 34 people died and hundreds were injured, both from the shootings and from being trampled in the ensuing chaos. The perpetrators were never identified, and the massacre remains a contested historical event that marked a turning point in the escalation of political violence in Turkey.

1978 Kahramanmaraş Massacre

A large-scale sectarian massacre that took place between December 19 and 26, 1978, in the city of Kahramanmaraş, resulting in more than 100 deaths, most of them from the Alevi minority community. The violence was triggered by a bomb attack on a cinema and the assassination of two leftist teachers, events falsely attributed to leftists in a coordinated disinformation campaign. Right-wing nationalist militants mobilized under anti-communist and sectarian slogans, attacking Alevi neighborhoods, homes, and businesses over several days, while security forces largely failed to intervene. The massacre spread panic across the country, led to the declaration of martial law in thirteen provinces, and marked a decisive escalation in state repression and political polarization. It became emblematic of how sectarian violence and paramilitary mobilization were instrumentalized in the buildup to the 1980 military coup.

1982 Constitution

The authoritarian constitution introduced by the military junta following the 1980 coup, replacing the liberal 1961 Constitution. It established significant restrictions on political participation, including prohibitions on student party membership, youth and women's branches of parties, trade union affiliations, and rural political organization. The constitution declared loyalty to Atatürk's ideology as the sole guiding principle of the Turkish state and society, with no protection afforded to thoughts or opinions contrary to these principles. It fundamentally transformed state-society relations and remains influential in Turkish politics today, despite subsequent amendments.

12 March 1971 Military Memorandum / Intervention

The second major military intervention in Republican Turkish history, differing from the 1960 coup in that the Armed Forces issued a memorandum demanding governmental reforms rather than directly seizing power. The intervention selectively targeted political movements, being particularly harsh toward leftist organizations while relatively lenient with religious conservative groups. The aftermath included widespread detentions and the executions of young revolutionary leaders Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, and Hüseyin İnan in 1972, which became a watershed moment in Turkish political history.

12 September 1980 Military Coup

The third major military intervention in Turkish Republican history, led by Chief of General Staff Kenan Evren, which fundamentally reshaped Turkish society through systematic state violence and institutional restructuring. Approximately 650,000 people were detained, 171 people died from documented torture, and thousands were stripped of citizenship or purged from their positions. The coup differed from previous interventions in its comprehensive scope, aiming not merely at temporary political stabilization but at fundamental social transformation. Its effects continue to influence Turkish political consciousness decades later, with "12 September" (12 Eylül) serving as a benchmark for describing destructive events in contemporary Turkish discourse.

27 May 1960 Military Coup

The first military coup in modern Turkish Republican history, which overthrew the Democrat Party government of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. The coup leaders introduced the 1961 Constitution and established new patterns for military involvement in Turkish politics. Menderes and two of his ministers were executed in September 1961. This intervention positioned the military as the self-appointed guardian of Republican principles and modernization, creating a paradoxical relationship where the military simultaneously supported and constrained democratic institutions.

'68 Generation ('68 Kuşağı)

The generation of student activists and revolutionaries who emerged in the late 1960s, characterized by charismatic leaders such as Deniz Gezmiş, Mahir Çayan, and İbrahim Kaypakkaya. While sharing global anti-imperialist themes, the Turkish '68 movement developed its own distinct character, with influence extending far beyond university campuses to resonate with broader segments of Turkish society. Many of these leaders were executed or killed in armed conflicts in the early 1970s, but they became mythologized figures who deeply influenced the subsequent generation of activists. Their legacy continued to inspire political mobilization throughout the 1970s.

'78 Generation ('78 Kuşağı)

The generation of activists who came of age in the late 1970s and were directly affected by the 1980 military coup. This generation was heavily influenced by the martyred leaders of the '68 generation and participated in the intense political activism of the 1970s. Many members of this generation experienced detention, torture, and imprisonment following the coup. The term is also used to refer to organizations and associations formed by survivors of the coup period.

Adnan Menderes (1899-1961)

Prime Minister of Turkey from the Democrat Party who was overthrown in the 27 May 1960 military coup. He was subsequently tried and executed along with two of his ministers in September 1961. His execution left a lasting impact on Turkish politics and is remembered as a controversial moment in the country's democratic history. The memory of his execution is referenced in the thesis as a significant event that even affected politically diverse families.

Alevi

A religious and cultural minority in Turkey representing a branch of Islam, constituting a significant portion of the Turkish population. Alevis historically supported secularism and tended to vote for left-leaning parties like the Republican People's Party (CHP). In the late 1970s, Alevi communities became targets of sectarian violence by nationalist groups who denounced them as communists. Major massacres occurred in Malatya, Kahramanmaraş, Sivas, and Çorum between 1978-1980, resulting in hundreds of deaths and demonstrating the sectarian dimension of political violence in pre-coup Turkey.

AP (Adalet Partisi) - Justice Party

A center-right political party that dominated Turkish politics in the 1960s and 1970s under the leadership of Süleyman Demirel. The party formed several coalition governments during this period and represented conservative, pro-business interests. The AP government was in power during much of the escalating political violence of the late 1970s. The party was dissolved following the 1980 military coup as part of the junta's ban on all political parties.

Bülent Ecevit (1925-2006)

Leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP) who moved the party toward left-of-center positions and served as Prime Minister during critical periods in the 1970s. He won elections in 1973 and 1977 and formed a coalition government with the National Salvation Party in 1974, which declared an amnesty for those imprisoned after the 1971 intervention. Following the Kahramanmaraş Massacre in December 1978, Ecevit declared martial law in an attempt to control escalating violence. He later suggested that elements within the Armed Forces may have facilitated the escalation of violence to justify the 1980 military intervention.

CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) - Republican People's Party

Founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the CHP is one of Turkey's oldest political parties and traditionally represented Kemalist, secularist ideology. Under Bülent Ecevit's leadership in the 1970s, the party adopted "left-of-center" positions and won the 1973 and 1977 elections. The party historically received strong support from Alevi communities and secular voters. It was banned along with all other political parties following the 1980 coup, though it was later re-established.

Deniz Gezmiş (1947-1972)

One of the most iconic leaders of Turkey's '68 student movement and a founding member of THKO (People's Liberation Army of Turkey). A university student who became a charismatic revolutionary figure, Gezmiş led protests and eventually moved toward armed struggle. He was captured, tried, and executed by hanging along with Yusuf Aslan and Hüseyin İnan on May 6, 1972. His execution became the 10th most remembered event in Turkish history between 1900-2013 and profoundly impacted Turkish political consciousness, inspiring subsequent generations of activists and becoming embedded in collective memory and popular mythology.

Dev-Genç (Devrimci Gençlik) - Revolutionary Youth Federation

Originally the youth organization of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), Dev-Genç was established in the 1960s and became a major force in student activism. In 1969, following internal debates about revolutionary strategy, the organization changed its orientation and name to Dev-Genç (Revolutionary Youth). Many prominent leaders of the '68 movement, including Deniz Gezmiş, were active in Dev-Genç before founding armed struggle organizations. The organization served as a crucial training ground for revolutionary activists and helped spread leftist ideology among university students.

Diyarbakır Military Prison No. 5

A specially constructed military prison completed in 1981 specifically to house political prisoners following the 1980 coup. The prison became notorious for systematic torture and human rights violations, particularly against Kurdish political prisoners. Construction was rushed on orders from the military leadership to accommodate the massive influx of detainees. Diyarbakır Prison No. 5, along with Mamak, was selected as a "pilot" prison where

the military regime tested and implemented its most severe methods of political repression and attempted re-education of prisoners.

DP (Demokrat Parti) - Democrat Party

The political party that governed Turkey under Prime Minister Adnan Menderes until it was overthrown in the 27 May 1960 military coup. The party represented a shift toward multi-party democracy in Turkey but faced accusations of authoritarianism. Following the coup, the party was dissolved, and its leaders, including Menderes, were tried and executed. The memory of the Democrat Party and Menderes's execution remained significant in Turkish political memory.

Efraim Elrom Kidnapping (1971)

The kidnapping and subsequent killing of Israeli Consul General Efraim Elrom in Istanbul by the People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (THKP-C) in May 1971. This event triggered an intense crackdown on leftist movements, resulting in widespread detentions and interrogations. The kidnapping was an attempt to prevent the execution of Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades, but the government rejected the demands. This incident marked a significant escalation in the conflict between revolutionary organizations and the state.

Execution of Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, and Hüseyin İnan (1972)

The hanging executions of three young THKO leaders on May 6, 1972, which became a watershed moment in Turkish political history. The three men, all in their early twenties, were condemned for being members of an illegal socialist organization. Their executions occurred despite widespread protests and international appeals for clemency. This event impacted Turkish society and became the 10th most remembered event in Turkish history (1900-2013). The executions created martyrs who would inspire subsequent generations of activists and functioned as a "chosen trauma" for those with leftist identities in Turkey.

Grey Wolves (Bozkurtlar) / Ülkücüler

The militant youth wing of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), officially called "Ülkü Ocakları" (Hearths of the Ideal), whose members called themselves Bozkurtlar (Grey Wolves) after a figure in pre-Islamic Turkish mythology. Beginning in December 1968, they launched campaigns to intimidate leftist students, teachers, journalists, and politicians through violence. The Grey Wolves received paramilitary training in specially designed camps and were responsible for numerous assassinations and attacks on leftist activists and Alevi communities throughout the 1970s. Their mission was to "conquer the streets and campuses" from leftist groups, and they enjoyed protection from security forces, particularly during Nationalist Front governments.

Hüseyin Cevahir

One of the founding members of THKP-C (People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey) alongside Mahir Çayan. Cevahir was among the revolutionary leaders of the late 1960s and early 1970s whose ideas and activism influenced subsequent generations. He is mentioned in participant testimonies as one of the key figures whose political understanding shaped the activism of the 1970s generation.

Hüseyin İnan (1950-1972)

One of the three THKO leaders executed alongside Deniz Gezmiş and Yusuf Aslan on May 6, 1972. İnan was a university student and revolutionary activist condemned for membership in an illegal socialist organization. His execution, along with his comrades', became a pivotal moment in Turkish political history and collective memory. The three men's deaths transformed them into martyred symbols of revolutionary struggle, influencing subsequent generations of activists.

İbrahim Kaypakkaya (1949-1973)

Founder and leader of the TKP/ML (Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist Leninist), known for his analysis of Turkish society as semi-feudal and his Maoist theoretical approach. Kaypakkaya was particularly focused on organizing in south-eastern and eastern Anatolia and addressed the Kurdish question within his revolutionary framework. He was captured and tortured to death in prison in 1973. His death and his revolutionary legacy continued to inspire activists, and he is remembered alongside Deniz Gezmiş and Mahir Çayan as one of the martyred leaders of Turkey's revolutionary left.

Kenan Evren (1917-2015)

Chief of the General Staff who led the September 12, 1980 military coup and subsequently served as head of the military junta and later as President of Turkey (1982-1989). Evren orchestrated the restructuring of Turkish society through systematic state violence, mass detentions, and the implementation of the 1982 Constitution. He conducted extensive public speaking tours throughout Anatolia following the coup, constructing narratives that positioned revolutionary activists as "traitors" and "foreign elements." Despite the massive human rights violations under his command, he remained legally protected by constitutional provisions until amendments in 2010. In 2014, he was convicted of crimes related to the coup but died before serving his sentence.

Mahir Çayan (1946-1972)

Founder and leader of THKP-C (People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey), one of the most influential revolutionary organizations of the early 1970s. Çayan developed theoretical frameworks for armed struggle in Turkey and led his organization in kidnapping and armed actions aimed at preventing the execution of Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades. He was killed along with nine other militants in the Kızıldere incident on March 30, 1972, while holding hostages. Despite (or because of) his early death, Çayan became a legendary figure whose

ideas influenced the revolutionary movements of the 1970s, with organizations like Dev-Yol and Dev-Sol emerging from the THKP-C tradition he established.

Mamak Military Prison

One of the most notorious military prisons used to hold political prisoners during and after the 1980 coup, located in Ankara. Mamak was selected as one of three "pilot" prisons (along with Davutpaşa and Diyarbakır) where the military tested repressive measures even before the coup. The prison became infamous for systematic torture, forced military discipline, and ideological re-education programs. Prisoners were forced to sing the national anthem, recite Atatürk's speeches, undergo religious instruction, and submit to military-style regimentation. Any resistance resulted in severe beatings. Military marches were played constantly through loudspeakers, and the volume was increased during torture sessions to drown out screams.

Martial Law (Sıkıyönetim)

A state of emergency governance implemented by military authorities, first declared in thirteen cities in 1978 in response to escalating political violence, and then expanded nationwide following the September 12, 1980 coup. Under martial law, normal legal protections were suspended, military commanders assumed governmental authority, and detention could be extended up to 90 days without charge. The martial law system facilitated mass arrests, torture, and the comprehensive restructuring of Turkish society. It remained in effect in various parts of Turkey throughout the three-year junta period (1980-1983).

Metris Military Prison

A military prison in Istanbul completed in 1981 specifically to house the massive influx of political prisoners following the 1980 coup. Metris became the primary detention facility for political prisoners in Istanbul, part of the military regime's expanded prison infrastructure. Like other military prisons of the period, it was used not only for detention but as a site for systematic torture, forced ideological re-education, and the implementation of military discipline on civilian political prisoners.

MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi) - Nationalist Movement Party

A far-right nationalist political party whose paramilitary youth wing, the Grey Wolves (Ülkücüler), was responsible for much of the violence against leftists and Alevi communities in the 1970s. The party, led by Alparslan Türkeş, participated in "Nationalist Front" coalition governments between 1974-1977, during which its militants enjoyed protection from security forces. The MHP's ideology combined Turkish nationalism with anti-communism, and the party was particularly strong in cities where Alevi massacres occurred. The party was dissolved following the 1980 coup along with all other political parties.

Süleyman Demirel (1924-2015)

Leader of the Justice Party (AP) who served multiple terms as Prime Minister throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Demirel led various coalition governments during the period of escalating political violence and was in office during critical moments including the formation of the "Nationalist Front" coalitions that included the MHP. He later suggested, along with Bülent Ecevit, that elements within the Armed Forces may have anticipated or facilitated the escalation of violence to justify the 1980 military intervention. Despite being targeted by the coup, he later returned to Turkish politics and eventually served as President.

THKO (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu) - People's Liberation Army of Turkey

A revolutionary armed organization established on March 4, 1971, by student movement leaders including Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan, Yusuf Aslan, and others who had been active in FKF and Dev-Genç. The organization aimed to expand revolutionary struggle from a students' movement to include workers and peasants, taking inspiration from Latin American guerrilla movements. Unlike THKP-C, THKO was formed as a military organization rather than a political party and was particularly active in rural eastern Anatolia. Following the execution of its three main leaders in 1972, the organization's legacy continued to inspire subsequent leftist movements.

TİP (Türkiye İşçi Partisi) - Workers' Party of Turkey

Founded in 1961 by twelve trade union members, TİP was Turkey's first socialist party and achieved the historic milestone of entering parliament with 15 deputies in 1965. The party aimed to strengthen the struggle of the working class and establish socialism in Turkey. Internal debates within TİP and its youth organization (FKF) over revolutionary strategy, whether to pursue a National Democratic Revolution or Socialist Revolution, led to divisions that spawned numerous revolutionary organizations in the early 1970s. The party was closed down by the Constitutional Court after the 1971 intervention and later re-established, only to be banned again after the 1980 coup.

Ulaş Bardakçı

One of the founding members of THKP-C alongside Mahir Çayan. Bardakçı was among the young revolutionary leaders whose ideas and activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s influenced the political development of subsequent generations. He is mentioned by participants as one of the key figures whose political thought shaped their own activism and ideological formation.

Yusuf Aslan (1949-1972)

One of the three THKO leaders executed by hanging on May 6, 1972, alongside Deniz Gezmiş and Hüseyin İnan. Aslan was a young revolutionary activist in his early twenties who was condemned for membership in an illegal socialist organization. His execution, along with his comrades', became a defining moment in Turkish political memory, transforming the three

men into martyred symbols whose sacrifice inspired subsequent generations of activists and became embedded in the collective consciousness of the Turkish left.

8.8. Interview Transcription of Participant 14

Interview-14

Interviewer: Here we are. Thank you very much for agreeing to the interview.

Participant 14: I thank you.

Interviewer: As you know, you can withdraw from this study anytime without providing any reason, and you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to. I'd like to start from the beginning. Could you give us some information about your family life, the environment you grew up in, and your relationship with your parents and siblings?

Participant 14: My father's life was full of illness. Extreme poverty. There were seven siblings. So, my childhood passed in poverty.

Interviewer: How was your relationship with your father? What kind of a father was he?

Participant 14: Well, my father was a very gentle person. He didn't interfere much with his children. He wasn't inclined to violence. That's briefly it.

Interviewer: And how about your mother?

Participant 14: Of course, it was very hard for her to manage so many children. She would shout from time to time. It wasn't easy with so many children. We relied entirely on our mother, and she was under a lot of stress.

Interviewer: Was only your father working?

Participant 14: Only our father was working.

Interviewer: Did you also help out?

Participant 14: Yes, in our childhood we sold corn, soda, cucumbers. Then, at a young age, I became an apprentice to a tailor, then to a blacksmith, and later started working in construction as a child. I also worked as a waiter during my childhood. During my school years, I worked in various factories during summers, doing very different jobs.

Interviewer: Was it difficult balancing school alongside these jobs?

Participant 14: Of course, it was never easy because we couldn't get any help from home. I knew I didn't have the right to ask for money. That's how our lives went. We studied under very tough conditions and grew up in very tough conditions. Siblings helped each other, and siblings raised each other. That was our life.

Interviewer: How was your school life? By that, I mean your experiences at school, your interactions with your teachers... is there anything specific that stuck with you or deeply impacted you?

Participant 14: We grew up in worn-out clothes. After primary school, I was accepted into the Teacher Training School. When I first went there, they gave me new shoes, new clothes, and a new coat. I was very happy at that time. It was my first time experiencing something like that. My older brother even said, "We envied you when you came home on holiday from school."

Interviewer: How did your political ideas start forming, and at what stage?

Participant 14: Well, I really loved reading. For instance, in the fourth grade of primary school, I read the first volume of İnce Memed very eagerly. I think I finished that thick book in about three or four days, and it affected me deeply. Generally, it was because of my enthusiasm for reading. Also, I think because our world was very different from the world that wealthy people lived in, this influenced the formation of my political ideas.

Interviewer: Did this start during your high school years?

Participant 14: Actually, even earlier. Of course, at that time I didn't know what right or left meant, nor was I aware that the ideas I developed were leftist. I realized that later during high school.

Interviewer: What was your family's political orientation?

Participant 14: Actually, at that time, my father voted for the Justice Party, but he didn't have a strong political view.

Interviewer: Did your different political views from your father cause conflict between you later on?

Participant 14: My father was tolerant, but my uncles strongly opposed it.

Interviewer: Going back to those days again, when you first got involved with politics, during your first organized struggle, did you think a revolution was going to happen?

Participant 14: Yes, we thought a revolution would happen.

Interviewer: What made you think that?

Participant 14: Well, the '68 movement deeply influenced all young people and workers, especially young people. The execution of Deniz Gezmiş and others had a significant impact. Afterward, there was increased participation in organized struggles.

Interviewer: Which party were you affiliated with?

Participant 14: At that time, it was THKO, the People's Liberation Army of Turkey. It wasn't yet a formal party.

Interviewer: Were you active in different groups over time?

Participant 14: My stance never changed. The movement itself underwent a transformation.

Interviewer: Did the movement go through a major transformation at the beginning and end of the '70s?

Participant 14: Yes, the movement underwent self-criticism and transformed into the Revolutionary Communist Party of Turkey. Later, after the '80s, it became the Labour Party. The ideological line didn't change, but there was a significant shift in understanding.

Interviewer: I assume this was a shift towards class politics.

Participant 14: Yes, the party started getting closer to the class it defended.

Interviewer: Can we say the political position of your party was Marxist?

Participant 14: Yes. I already chose it because it was Marxist-Leninist. If it had been different, I wouldn't have stayed in this movement.

Interviewer: Did you have friends in THKO as well? Did their involvement influence your decision, or did your social circle form after joining the party?

Participant 14: During school years, I had friends from THKO, and certainly, their influence played a role. That interaction was why I joined that organization. Later, my siblings were influenced by me and adopted the same stance.

Interviewer: You studied at a teacher training school. During the interviews I've conducted, I've noticed that these schools were very politically active during those years. Their atmosphere was intriguing to me. They rapidly politicized the students, introduced them quickly to culture and arts, and made them engage with classic literature and leftist political groups. Was your school environment like this?

Participant 14: Of course, my school was a boarding school, and in boarding schools, people socialize much more. You're together with hundreds of students, always in communication. Of course, the school had libraries and external influences. Because of this intense socialization, people influenced each other greatly, creating a strong interaction.

Interviewer: Can teacher training schools be considered as continuations of the Village Institutes?

Participant 14: Yes, we could call them remnants of the Village Institutes.

Interviewer: How would you define yourself as a revolutionary during those years? Some revolutionaries have stronger theoretical aspects, others practical aspects. Some don't like to express their opinions much, while others prefer to stand out. How would you describe yourself?

Participant 14: I felt like someone who didn't enjoy being in the spotlight but was always forced to step forward.

Interviewer: Why? That's an interesting statement. Could you elaborate on that?

Participant 14: After becoming a teacher, it felt like a necessity for me in the environments I was in—to organize those around us. Yes, it felt like an obligation. If others had stepped

forward, I wouldn't have stood out as much. That's why I ended up being prominent in places where I lived, out of necessity. Otherwise, I'm a person who prefers to be ordinary, simply fulfilling assigned tasks.

Interviewer: But due to these necessities, you found yourself becoming a leader?

Participant 14: Yes, exactly.

Interviewer: If you don't mind saying, what was your position?

Participant 14: My position was something like a natural leader. I was well-liked in the places I lived. Wherever I went, crowds would form around me.

Interviewer: Were these people ordinary citizens, or just party members?

Participant 14: Ordinary people, teachers, students, youth, village youth.

Interviewer: So, were you close with the people? Can you give an example of this? How was this organic connection between revolutionaries and the public formed during that period?

Participant 14: I think because of the political context of the period, people had sympathy for revolutionaries. It was much easier to establish relationships, and this connection often developed naturally. For example, I went to a village in the İslahiye district of Gaziantep. There were two big cafés in the village. I wrote an announcement: "There will be a meeting at this time." The entire village showed up. At that time, the party had a land reform program, a peasants' program. I stood up and had everyone take a revolutionary oath. Everyone participated in the name of the revolution. Then, we discussed the land issue with the villagers. The entire village was there. Later, it struck me as very interesting: you write a simple note about a meeting, and the whole village gathers in front of the café, listening attentively.

Interviewer: Villages are usually quite closed off. They don't typically respond easily to an outsider's call.

Participant 14: Yes, exactly. But because I'd had small relationships with a few young villagers before, occasionally visiting the village, they must have trusted me.

Interviewer: But today, it seems there's a bit of distance between leftists, socialists, and ordinary people.

Participant 14: There is considerable distance. When I first became a teacher in Gaziantep's İslahiye district, an incident occurred: Fascists killed a democratic individual. I had quickly built relationships with 8-10 local youths. They informed me immediately. We quickly wrote slogans on cardboard signs and went to the funeral. We arrived at the cemetery just as the crowd was dispersing. In youthful excitement, I climbed onto a gravestone—I don't remember the exact speech—but I gave a brief agitation speech. The dispersing crowd gathered again. I led them, chanting slogans. Around 500 to 1000 people followed me. At the time, TÖB-DER elections were approaching, and a group of 25-30 teachers were watching. Seeing a young teacher leading the crowd, they joined in. When we reached the square, we recited a revolutionary oath, as was customary. The crowd dispersed afterward. During the TÖB-DER elections, we formed a group of democratic, progressive teachers and won the entire administration. TÖB-DER gained such prestige under our leadership that villagers began submitting complaints to us about problematic teachers, as if we were an official institution. They wrote formal letters saying, "This teacher did this, that teacher did that."

Interviewer: So, they began to see you as an alternative authority?

Participant 14: Yes, exactly. Sometimes boxes containing oil, rice, and syrup were left at my door. I never found out who left them. When I visited restaurants, they'd often say, "Your bill has already been paid." I never knew who paid. Many restaurants wouldn't accept money from me. Our relationship with the people was at this level.

Interviewer: How did you find out about the coup? Who was with you at the time?

Participant 14: I found out with my wife. We were in Soma at the time. We heard it on television. Honestly, I felt very uneasy. The coup was a sign that terrible things would happen. No coup has ever benefited the people. And then what happened, happened.

Interviewer: Were you teaching in Soma at that time?

Participant 14: At that time, due to my protests against the Kahramanmaraş massacre, I had been transferred from Gaziantep to Kırkağaç, while my wife had been transferred to Ağrı. We were literally on opposite ends of Turkey.

Interviewer: So how did you end up in Soma?

Participant 14: My wife's parents were from Soma. Our daughter had just been born, only one month old. Because of my situation, my wife was transferred to the city where I was working. After just a month there, while I was teaching in class, the gendarmes came and took me away from the classroom.

Interviewer: So that's how you were captured?

Participant 14: Yes, exactly. My detention happened about a year after the coup.

Interviewer: How long did you remain detained?

Participant 14: I was in custody for about two to two and a half months. Then, they sent me to prison. I was detained as a prisoner, and I was released after my first court hearing a year later. Then, they transferred me to Gaziantep. My wife was also detained because of me. They handcuffed us both and took us to Gaziantep since that was the alleged crime scene.

Interviewer: Did you experience any ill-treatment or torture during interrogation?

Participant 14: Of course, everyone experienced it, and everyone knows those stories. Torture was intense. It was particularly difficult with my wife present because they repeatedly threatened, "We'll assault your wife with a baton right in front of you. We'll all rape her." They wanted me to comply. This psychological torture was even worse than the physical torture.

Interviewer: What did they want from you specifically?

Participant 14: They mainly wanted me to confess that I was a member of the organization.

Interviewer: Regarding Gaziantep Prison, I'm not familiar with it, but I've heard about some common procedures of that period, such as uniform clothing, reciting the national anthem, reciting Atatürk's Address to Youth, and lessons on Atatürk's principles. Did you experience any of these?

Participant 14: Yes, I experienced these procedures.

Interviewer: Which ones specifically?

Participant 14: All of them. For instance, if someone looked away while singing the national anthem, they'd be beaten severely. If you misread even a punctuation mark in Atatürk's Address to Youth, they'd punish you harshly.

Interviewer: Were there resistances against these practices, such as singing the anthem?

Participant 14: Yes, there were resistances.

Interviewer: Did your experiences in prison affect your attitude towards national symbols after you were released?

Participant 14: Of course, it creates antipathy. For instance, Atatürk, the founder of this country, was being used as a tool of oppression by a regime that claimed to be Kemalist. Because these were enforced by the military regime, you naturally develop antipathy towards symbols like the flag and Atatürk himself.

Interviewer: Is there anything specific that deeply affected you during your time in prison that you'd like to share? I don't know much about Gaziantep prison.

Participant 14: I was in a military prison. Sometimes when asked to describe the September 12 coup, I give one or two examples. At that time, simply being in groups of three or wearing sneakers made you a suspected terrorist.

Interviewer: Was wearing sneakers common among leftists for comfort or practicality?

Participant 14: Sneakers were generally worn for comfort. They weren't symbolic. But the military authorities of that period thought sneakers were worn for easy escape after committing crimes. They viewed everyone wearing sneakers with suspicion. For example, they rounded up people wearing sneakers, put them into a minibus, and phoned headquarters saying they were bringing 14 suspects. One officer recounted and found only 13. Another officer counted again and again—still 13. Unable to find a 14th, they grabbed a kid playing football nearby to complete the number. This child, just 15 or 16 years old, ended up imprisoned for a year and a half without even appearing in court. That's what the September 12 coup was like.

Interviewer: What happened after your release from prison?

Participant 14: After my release, I was unemployed. Actually, right after release, I was detained again for draft evasion, spent time in police custody, then was taken to the recruitment office. These are long stories, but briefly, I completed my military service in Çatalca, Istanbul. After finishing my service, I was unemployed.

Interviewer: Was the military regime still in power during your military service?

Participant 14: Yes, it continued during that period.

Interviewer: What was military service like for you?

Participant 14: A military institution can never be democratic, even in the most liberal times. It inherently involves a hierarchical relationship. Lower ranks cannot criticize higher ranks, but higher ranks can insult or curse freely. That's just the nature of the military.

Interviewer: Was your political background known by the military?

Participant 14: Yes, of course.

Interviewer: Did this make your military service experience different from others?

Participant 14: No, not really. Because I had skills in writing, drawing, and painting, the barracks needed someone to paint signs, so I ended up having a relatively comfortable military service.

Interviewer: Did you ever think you were being monitored afterward?

Participant 14: I was always under surveillance. After returning to civilian life, I wondered what job I could do. I decided I could do sign-writing, wallpapering, and other decoration jobs, so I opened a shop. Two plainclothes police officers frequently patrolled my area. They even warned other shopkeepers, saying, "This man is a communist. Don't send him any business."

Interviewer: How long did that continue?

Participant 14: For quite a long time, but it didn't significantly affect me. It seemed natural—they were doing their job, and I was doing mine.

Interviewer: How was your social life affected afterward? Did your relationships with people change?

Participant 14: No, despite these conditions, I used my shop like an association. Young people regularly came and went. I continued my relationships with the youth around me. My social life didn't really change.

Interviewer: Are you still politically active?

Participant 14: Yes, I'm still politically active within an organized framework.

Interviewer: Are there significant differences between organized political activities before and after the 1980 coup?

Participant 14: There's a huge difference. The party I'm involved with now has theoretically become more integrated with the working class. But the entire left-wing movement today is disconnected from the people. The Labour Party also experiences this issue. Yes, we face various difficulties, and we're not able to keep up with the intense daily activism like we did in our youth.

Interviewer: What kind of Turkey did you find after the 1980 coup? What do you think was the biggest impact of the coup?

Participant 14: The biggest impact was that it crushed the opposition standing against reactionary political Islam, effectively paving the way for its rise.

Interviewer: Do you see revolution as imminent today?

Participant 14: Of course, we don't think as we did in our youth. Back then, we wanted revolution immediately. Now we know it depends on objective and subjective conditions. We can't predict when it will happen.

Interviewer: That concludes my questions. Is there anything you'd like to add? Thank you again for participating.

Participant 14: You're welcome.

8.9. Coding table of thematic analysis

Theme	Code	Description	Example
Family Structure and Influences	Structure	Family composition and dynamics	(P.2) My father was strict. Well, what can I say? I could say he had a very dictatorial personality. He was harsh. He always wanted things to be his way. Since we thought differently from him, we had many arguments, many conflicts. (P.4) Since my mother and father were illiterate, they wanted all of us to get an education. They believed that the only way out of poverty was through education, so they worked hard and did their best to send us to school. In the end, we all became something. One of my older brothers became a non-commissioned officer, another became a civil servant. I became a teacher. My youngest sibling was the only one who didn't pursue education. Other than that, we didn't have a very healthy family. Since my father abducted my mother by force, there were constant conflicts between them, and we grew up in the midst of those conflicts. My mother had a very aggressive, tense, and irritable nature. To avoid living like them, I chose to study despite all obstacles. I saw education as my way out. But now, looking back, I can see more clearly how much responsibility my mother had, that she couldn't handle it, and that she treated us harshly because my father had

		taken her against her will and she never loved him. But as a child, I couldn't see this at the time. (P.5) I am the third child in a family of six children. Well? It was a crowded family. We lived in a village. We grew up under difficult conditions. One of the biggest contradictions in our family was that my father was a university graduate, while my mother had only completed primary school. This created significant conflict between them, and we grew up in an unhappy household. Because of this, we also experienced periods of unhappiness. (P.6) My mother was someone who performed Friday prayers and recited Yasin. My father, on the other hand, came from a Bektashi family and had Bektashi roots; he had never set foot in a mosque in his life. So, I can say there was no religious pressure in our home. On the contrary, we were a family that socialized—my father would drink on weekends, we would visit family friends. When it came to academics, I never received any help from my parents because they were very inadequate in that regard. My father had only completed primary school and had lost both of his parents at a very young age. My father was very devoted to us, and so was my mother. To put it correctly, my siblings and I grew up in a very loving environment. I was the eldest son. My younger

		brother and I had a seven-to-eight-year age gap. I was also the first male grandchild on my mother's side, so they were very protective of me. But after I started becoming politically active, conflicts with my father began and gradually became more intense over time. (P.9) I was not very close with my parents. I even attended primary school away from home. During the summers, I would be in the village. But when I was there, my parents were always busy with farming, so we hardly saw each other. Since I was the only male child in the house, all the household chores fell on me. Because of this, I never liked the village and always wanted to leave. I saw education as my way out. I always thought, <i>I must study and leave this place</i>. That's why I worked hard and eventually found success. (P.10) I was born in Çağlayan Village, Yozgat. Çağlayan is an Alevi village. I specifically want to mention this because it has had an impact on my life. Alevis generally have a closed community structure. In our village, migration to cities began in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly to places like Mersin and Ankara. My family also moved to Ankara when I was about five years old. My family would always ask me, <i>Where are you going? Who are you with?</i> But I never lied to them about where I was going. I was never good at lying, so I would

		just say, <i>I can't tell you</i>. They wouldn't object too strongly. The real conflict started after I was imprisoned. (P.11) I was in closer contact with my mother. My father, on the other hand, was always busy with his work, so we were more distant. He wasn't home much. My mother would even complain about this and say, <i>He is the father of the federation</i>. My father was always actively involved in activities and was rarely at home. My mother was more attentive. Because of this, my relationship with my father was not as close. But he had this didactic attitude, something that is common in teachers. My father had it too. He would always approach things with the mindset that <i>things should be as they are supposed to be</i>. He often treated people like a teacher would. (P.12) My childhood was a happy one with my family. Despite poverty and the hardships we faced, we had a happy life. When it comes to relationships within the family, my relationship with my mother and father was very good. As I grew older, my relationship with my father became more like a friendship. For example, we could comfortably play card games at home. In the evenings, after work, my father would make an effort to spend time with the family. So, our relationships were good. But as I said, in the 1960s, we had the same conditions that a typical working-class

		family would have. There was poverty and difficult circumstances. But despite all of this, even though my father was a worker, he dedicated all his strength to ensuring his children got an education. He sent all of us to school. However, his life was not very long. He lived long enough to see me start university, but then he passed away. He died at a relatively young age—51. But no matter what, he wanted my siblings and me to receive an education. (P.15) My father was actually somewhat of a drinker and a gambler. My mother, on the other hand, was a bit irritable. The reason for her irritability was having to endure my father's troubles. (P.16) We were three brothers. I was the eldest. But it was a peaceful home. It was a household without many expectations, where we grew up without any major disturbances. We managed with my father's salary, but I never felt economic hardship. All three of us went to school. I became a teacher, one of my brothers became a mining engineer, and the other completed vocational school in Aliaga. Everyone built their life in a stable way. There was not much violence in our family. We had a peaceful life. (P.18) We were five siblings. We had a harmonious relationship. Both at home and in social life, we got along well. Since we lived in a village, our social life

		was structured in this way. We were a family without major conflicts, fights, or loud arguments. (P.20) Actually, my family was quite good. We were five siblings. One of my older brothers studied medicine and became a doctor. One of my siblings became a lawyer. Another completed a technical vocational school. I entered Ege University's Faculty of Agriculture. We had no issues within the family. We had a good family life—just a traditional, normal Anatolian family. (P.21) Of course, we had a traditional family environment, as expected. Since we were of migrant background, we had strong family bonds, and we still do. As siblings, we support each other both financially and emotionally. Our economic situation is also good. We used to have our own commercial taxi business. Later, we sold it and divided the earnings among ourselves. So, our financial situation is fine. My father is also in good health—he is still alive at 92 years old. Back in the day, he ran around a lot for us, especially when we were in prison. (P.22) My mother was an illiterate woman of Iranian descent, but she was very modern. We lost six of our siblings. Six of us survived—three boys and three girls. Çatak is a place with a population of around 2,000. Even though my father was a mosque muezzin, we did

			not live a conservative family life.
	Occupation	Parents' jobs and family's socio-economic status	(P.1) Well, my father was a Village Institute teacher. My mother was a housewife. (P.2) Economically, we were an upper-middle-class family. My father was a construction contractor. So, financially... well? I grew up in a family with a high income level. We owned a brick factory. (P.4) My father was a street sweeper at the municipality. My mother was an illiterate woman. She was a housewife but worked outside more than she did at home. She worked in agricultural labor. So, my childhood was spent in poverty and labor. I started working in agriculture when I was eight years old. During summer vacations, I worked in agricultural fields, and in winter, I continued school. (P.6) My father was a tradesman who owned a lathe and welding workshop. At that time, we were considered a middle-class family. We were two siblings. My mother was a housewife. (P.9) I grew up in a poor family, in a village. My father was a poor farmer. (P.10) My family used to go to Mersin as seasonal workers. When we first

		moved to Ankara, the apartment we lived in was in Anittepe. My father worked there as a building superintendent. (P.11) Well, my father was a village boy who graduated from a Village Institute. His mother was alive, but his father had passed away. After finishing primary school, despite his mother's opposition, he ran away from the village and enrolled in a Village Institute. He started from the middle school level and later graduated from the Higher Village Institute to become a teacher. (P.12) My family was a working-class family. My father was a railway worker, and my mother was a housewife. (P.13) I am the child of a military family. In terms of income level, we could be considered below middle-class by Turkish standards. (P.15) Even though my father had a good job, we struggled financially. Of course, this was because he spent too much money on drinking and gambling. To support the household financially, my mother did handicrafts, and we helped her. I felt sorry for my mother. For example, she would sew a dress on the sewing machine, and if a button needed to be sewn on, I or my older brother would do it. We tried to help her. My father was... well, a certain kind of man. Back then, he

			was a bit of a drinker and a gambler. He spent a lot of money on those things. (P.18) We were a farming family, and we had the means to sustain ourselves. (P.21) My father was a construction worker, and we worked with him. (P.22) I was born in Van, in the district of Çatak. My father was a mosque muezzin, but he was a democratic-minded person. He was very well-loved. Financially, he was a wealthy businessman. He used to help the poor a lot.
	Political view	Family members' political orientations and involvement in activism	(P.1) Well, from a young age, we always had <i>Cumhuriyet</i> newspaper at home. We followed the daily events of the 1970 movement, whether it was the THKO movement or the THKP-C movement, through the press. When a revolutionary was killed, there was sadness in the house, but when a revolutionary escaped from the police, there was joy. (P.2) My father was a devout man, a supporter of the Justice Party (<i>Adalet Partisi</i>), while my mother had little interest in politics. She prayed regularly. As for my siblings, my eldest brother became involved in leftist politics during his university years in the 1970s, having started in the late 1960s. That's how our political interest passed down from him to us. Of course, since our father had different political views, we faced many difficulties. There were

		many conflicts at home. My mother was very disturbed by this, but it was something we had to go through. (P.6) My family leaned politically toward the Republican People's Party (<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i>, CHP). All my uncles were involved in CHP, actively engaging in politics within the party. My eldest uncle was a member of the municipal council for CHP. In general, I grew up in a secular family. (P.7) My father established the local branch of TÖB-DER (All Teachers Unity and Solidarity Association) in our district. He was actively involved in organizing teachers, and at home, he reflected his worldview and beliefs in his interactions with us. He was a democratic person in his relationships with me, my siblings, and my mother. Despite being a housewife with only a primary school education, my father instilled in my mother a love for reading books. (P.9) My father was a CHP supporter. Since we were an Alevi family, and Alevi villages generally supported CHP, they voted for CHP. However, there was no active political participation or party membership in my family—they just voted, nothing more. Of course, Alevis have certain intellectual qualities due to their cultural heritage. Historically, since the Ottoman period, Alevis have never been in power in Turkey. They have always been in opposition, which naturally led them to develop a dissenting reflex. Since they never had the opportunity to benefit from being in power, they saw

		CHP as a leftist and opposition party during that period. (P.12) My family always voted for CHP. This went back to my grandparents, who were also CHP supporters. My mother and father were also CHP supporters. However, when I started middle and high school, I occasionally witnessed my father secretly listening to the illegal radio broadcasts of the Turkish Communist Party (<i>Türkiye Komünist Partisi</i>, TKP). (P.14) Actually, my father used to vote for the Justice Party (<i>Adalet Partisi</i>), but he didn't have a strong political ideology. (P.15) My father was not a conservative, at least not in the traditional sense. He was conservative in terms of family values, but he always had a stance against religious conservatives and right-wing ideologies. (P.16) My father was more politically engaged. He was a social democrat, a CHP supporter. My mother, on the other hand, was a devout woman—what you might call <i>namazında niyazında</i> (religious and observant). But she was still an intellectual. She loved Atatürk and was a Kemalist. She was never backward or fanatical, and she still isn't. (P.17) My family was definitely democratic. My mother didn't have much political involvement, but her family did. She had an uncle named Enver Aytekin, who was one of the defendants in the famous political trials of the 1950s. So, there was a leftist tradition in her family. For example, her

		older brother, Kasım Aytekin, was the Siirt branch president of TÖS (Teachers' Union of Turkey). So, there was a leftist influence from that side. My father, however, was more liberal. (P.19) We grew up in a family with a social democratic mindset. That's how we shaped our worldview. (P.20) Honestly, my family wasn't very involved in politics. My mother was a CHP supporter, while my father was a staunch Justice Party supporter—he was a <i>Demirel'ci</i> (a supporter of Süleyman Demirel). My father wanted my mother to vote for Demirel too, but she refused. They didn't fight about it, but they had friendly debates, which we found amusing. Back then, we didn't have much political awareness, but over time, we started forming our own views. That's how it was. (P.22) At the time, my family was a social democratic family. My father loved İsmet İnönü and Bülent Ecevit. Even though my father was a mosque muezzin, his shop had a large poster of Ecevit during the peak of his popularity in 1974. There was also a picture of İnönü. I used to get upset about İnönü. After reading about the Dersim rebellion, my reaction to İnönü grew stronger. I told my father to take his picture down, but he wouldn't. He and my uncle deeply admired İsmet İnönü, CHP, and Ecevit. (P.23) My family initially supported the Justice Party but later switched to CHP. However, they didn't support CHP because they admired it. They chose CHP primarily due to its

			stance on secularism and Mustafa Kemal. That was their political reasoning.
Political Activism Process	First Political Ideas	Initial exposure to and development of political consciousness	(P.1) This was influenced by Latin America, and our country also played a significant role in this. Toward the late 1960s, the political landscape underwent a complete transformation. Armed struggle became a tradition in our country. In countries like ours, overthrowing the government without armed struggle is simply not possible. (P.2) I would hear political discussions, we started buying and reading certain books. You begin to weigh the differences between the left and the right. Even at 15 or 16 years old, you start forming your own judgments. After that, our ideas shifted toward the left. We had a group of friends there as well. As I mentioned, we discussed these things outside too. (P.3) Of course, during adolescence, around the ages of 14-15, my political awareness started to take shape. In my social circle, we played football together. Most of my friends from football and vocational school were leftist. We already had a foundation, and my interest in the left had begun. (P.4) I was somewhat influenced by my older brother. He played a role in shaping my views. After finishing high school, I started reading

		revolutionary books while studying at the teachers' institute. (P.5) Around 1976-77, my older brother started making new friends, and different people started visiting our house. A music group called <i>Adiloş</i> was formed. Their conversations seemed different to me at first. Later on, my brother became more actively involved in politics. (P.6) I started reading socially conscious novels. By late 1973 and early 1974, a new association was established in Turgutlu: the Revolutionary People's Cultural Association. Around the same time, <i>Dost Kitabevi</i> (Bookstore) opened in Turgutlu. By visiting <i>Dost Kitabevi</i> and the revolutionary cultural center, I took my first steps into political life. (P.7) That was the general atmosphere of the time, but up until the first year of high school, I had already grown up with these ideas and thoughts. The turning point was the first year of high school. We could even go back further—teacher school boycotts had begun because our rights were being restricted. That's why I say, if we go back further, the real formation of the political environment and our first experiences with activism happened during that boycott. (P.8) For me, it started in middle school. Our teachers at school would talk about a

		different world. They introduced us to the concept of socialism. (P.9) After two years, I was appointed as a civil servant in Eskişehir. I worked as a civil servant there for about five years. Before that, I was already participating in protests. In fact, I had started attending demonstrations as early as middle school, in Divriği, fueled by youthful enthusiasm. I continued participating in demonstrations during high school and later in university. (P.10) During high school, we lived in a gecekondu (shantytown). Political activity began during my high school years, and I was inevitably influenced by it. In fact, I started becoming politically aware in middle school. When Kazım and his comrades were killed, I became interested in these issues. I started researching why he had been killed, buying newspapers—especially leftist newspapers. I didn't fully understand them, but I would sit and read for hours. The first book I ever read in middle school was <i>The Alphabet of Socialism</i>. After reading it, I went to my village and explained it to the people there. (P.12) The CHP-leaning structure in our family helped us develop a more democratic perspective on these issues. So, the influence of our family, uncles, and teachers played a role in shaping our political awareness. This

		became more pronounced when I started high school. (P.18) I joined the revolutionary struggle during my high school years. Later, in university in Istanbul, my participation, which had started in high school, continued into my university years. Eventually, I fully dedicated myself to revolutionary activism, leading to imprisonment and further engagement with socialist thought and ideological consciousness. (P.19) We started to see social democracy as insufficient. It couldn't address many of society's needs. Within the struggle, we began looking for alternative solutions. We started organizing among our friends. There was an association in Turgutlu where we were active. (P.20) I gradually became involved in politics during high school. Over time, my sympathies turned into solid ideological views. I started participating in mass protests, demonstrations, and political events within leftist movements. (P.21) I was 18 years old. My friends and I began reading books, particularly the classics of socialism. We constantly read them. (P.22) During that period, I was an avid reader, even from middle school. I finished high school at Van Atatürk High School. During that

			time, I slowly entered political life. By my second and third years of high school, I had started becoming politically active. I met and developed respect for Kurdish socialists and revolutionaries. (P.23) My political views fully took shape during my early years as a teacher. At the time, Behice Boran had a significant influence on me. Until I moved to Diyarbakır, I was a member of Behice Boran's party. Even after moving to Diyarbakır, I continued following her political ideology for a while.
	Effects of 68 Movement	Impact of previous generation's activism on participants	(P.1) In the 1970s, we started aligning with the political ideology of THKP-C, Mahir Çayan, Hüseyin Cevahir, and Ulaş Bardakçı, and this has continued in the same way ever since. (P.3) I can say this very clearly: Mahir Çayan's killing in Kızıldere and the execution of Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades deeply affected us. Even without any theoretical background, this created a serious inclination toward the left. Our interest in leftist politics grew from there, expanding further through social interactions. We tried to understand what was happening, and through our own research and curiosity, we started reading books. Without a doubt, I see it that way myself. The Kızıldere incident was a

		turning point in the 1968 movement, followed closely by the execution of Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades on May 6, 1972. This led to a deep sense of sympathy toward them. Over time, this sympathy evolved into a need to understand why they were executed, why they fought, and what their struggle was about. As we researched more, our political identity slowly began to take shape. (P.4) After the 1968 generation, the 1978 generation emerged strongly. I was part of that generation. (P.6) When it comes to politics, I remember that on the night of May 5, leading into May 6, 1972, Deniz and his comrades were executed. At the time, <i>Günaydın</i> newspaper was delivered to our home. Newspapers were distributed to houses back then. We actually used to buy <i>Yeni Ortam</i>, a left-leaning newspaper, but since martial law had banned it, we started receiving <i>Günaydın</i> instead. My mother was illiterate, but she tried to understand what was happening from the pictures. I had just come home from school—I was in middle school at the time. My mother asked, <i>Did they execute those boys?</i> I read it and said, <i>Yes, they did.</i> My mother immediately started praying for them. Then my father came home from work, very tense. He had heard the news about Deniz's execution at the shop. He was deeply upset. Since he was a CHP supporter and a

		social democrat, this affected him greatly. My father said something I will never forget. My mother's name was Nayile, and my father's name was Ali. My mother asked him, <i>Ali, they really did wrong to those boys, didn't they?</i> My father responded, <i>Don't even ask. These boys will be truly appreciated in the future. They did nothing wrong.</i> That newspaper is still kept as a memento. My father told me, <i>Keep this newspaper. This is a historically significant document.</i> That moment left a mark on me. (P.8) The public saw that another world was possible through the revolutionary actions of the 1970s—Deniz, Mahir, and İbrahim. These young people started a movement with the ideals of equality, justice, and freedom, and they paid the price with their lives. As a result, society inevitably embraced them, recognizing them with moral support. (P.9) In our village, even though people were often labeled as revolutionaries or anarchists, they supported the 1968 generation's leaders—Deniz, Mahir, and others—without ever seeing them. Let me give you an example. Deniz and his comrades had never been to our village, but there were legends about them. Some people would say things like, <i>Deniz came to our village, and our villagers fed them, gave them water, and even slaughtered a lamb in their honor.</i> These stories were

		exaggerated, but they created a sense of support. People talked about Deniz as if he were a folk hero. I remember this from my childhood. People believed that Deniz and his comrades were fighting for them, for justice. My mother even used to say, <i>All revolutionaries must be Alevi</i>. She believed that the state was killing them because they were Alevi and <i>one of us</i>. (P.10) I remember when Deniz was executed—I was in elementary school at the time. When I heard the name <i>Deniz Gezmiş</i>, I thought it meant a person who wandered around the sea. One of our relatives was also killed in Kızıldere. That was very significant for me and played a major role in my decision to become a revolutionary. I was first introduced to this rebellious identity in elementary school. Kazım Sinan Özüdoğru, my father's relative, was killed in Kızıldere along with Mahir and his comrades. I will never forget the moment my father looked at his photograph and cried. I don't remember the day Deniz was executed, but I remember when he was being hunted by the authorities. (P.11) Deniz Gezmiş was well-known, of course. He was captured and executed, and society was deeply aware of this. At that time, people would even discuss,

		<i>If Deniz Gezmiş came to our house, where would we hide him? That's how we saw things in those days.</i> (P.12) Deniz and Sinan were among the brightest students of their time. They abandoned their promising careers and walked toward their deaths. If someone gives up their entire future, climbs the mountains, or kicks away their own execution stool while shouting defiant words, it is a reflection of their consciousness and determination. We once visited a village in Kütahya—an Alevi village—where we were planning to hold a rally. When we arrived, the villagers said, <i>Deniz Gezmiş came here once</i>. We were shocked and asked how that could be possible. We were in contact with Deniz's comrades at the time, and they told us he had never been to that region. But he had become a legend. (P.13) As kids, we were always hearing about Mahir, Ulaş, and their comrades in the news. We questioned things—why were these young people doing this? Why were they dying? What were they fighting for? Our childlike curiosity led us to these thoughts. (P.15) Think about it—Mahir Çayan was from THKP-C, and Deniz Gezmiş was from THKO. They belonged to different organizations. Yet, Mahir went all the way to

		Kızıldere to prevent Deniz's execution and was killed in the process. You won't see this kind of tradition in later generations. (P.16) My father was devastated. <i>Damn it, they executed those boys</i>, he said. At the time, I didn't fully understand who <i>Deniz Gezmiş</i> was. Since the name <i>Deniz</i> wasn't very common back then, I thought it meant <i>someone who travels the sea</i>. I kept hearing on the radio, <i>Deniz Gezmiş did this</i>, <i>Deniz Gezmiş did that</i>, and I wondered, <i>Who is this man traveling the sea?</i> Back then, the word <i>anarchist</i> was used a lot. When we flew kites on the hills, we would jokingly say, <i>The anarchists are coming!</i> as if they were hiding somewhere and would suddenly appear. That was our childish imagination. (P.18) Our introduction to revolutionary ideas was largely shaped by the period of Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades. This played a crucial role in our political awakening. I was still a child at the time, but I remember sitting by the radio, listening to the news about Deniz Gezmiş. My father would talk about him with admiration. There were even myths about Deniz Gezmiş, such as the idea that he could ride his motorcycle across the sea. (P.19) In 1970-71, we encountered

		the ideas of armed struggle and political resistance, which strongly influenced us. For us, people like Deniz Gezmiş and Mahir Çayan became idols. This is why our political engagement accelerated. (P.20) I remember clearly—when Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades were executed, the entire country was affected. The morning of their execution, I was suddenly woken up. It was around 4:30 or 5:00 AM. My mother kicked my bed and said, <i>They hanged Deniz, and you're still sleeping!</i> She was just an ordinary housewife, not politically engaged. But even she was deeply affected. This shows how much their execution resonated with ordinary people. For many, these events reflected their own struggles and oppression. People saw their own grievances in Deniz, Mahir, and İbrahim's fight. This sympathy had a significant impact on the political consciousness of the youth at that time. The leftist movements of the 1970s and the increasing socialist leanings of the 1978 generation were heavily influenced by the 1968 leaders. (P.21) When we were 17-18 years old, trying to organize the people, older workers would come and tell us stories about Deniz Gezmiş. They spoke of his bravery. Some of them said

		they had participated in his march in Samsun. Others claimed that Deniz had passed through their village during his journey. People would share their memories of the 1968 leaders whenever they saw us. These stories helped us connect with the people, making the revolutionary struggle more tangible and relatable. (P.22) My father was a CHP supporter, and I remember how angry he was about Menderes' execution. He strongly opposed it. But I also saw him cry while listening to the radio when Deniz and his comrades were executed. One thing I noticed—having been involved in the 1978 generation's movement and as someone active in the 78'ers Association—is that the 1968 generation hid many details from us. When we talked with the older activists, they rarely told us about how Deniz Gezmiş escaped, how he was caught, or what happened to İbrahim Kaypakkaya in Diyarbakır. These details were not shared openly. In our region, Deniz Gezmiş was always remembered because of the bridge he and his comrades built in Hakkari. Everyone respected them. Among my peers, there was a strong awareness of Deniz and his comrades. People felt more

			connected to them than to the state. Personally, I believe that Deniz Gezmiş, his comrades, and İbrahim Kaypakkaya played a significant role in shaping the revolutionary struggle in our region. Their influence on us was profound.
	Reason for Politicisation	Key events or influences that led to political engagement	(P.1) I began my political engagement as a response to the economic, political, and social oppression imposed by the government. (P.2) Maybe it was the effect of our youth—we refused to accept oppression. There was family pressure, external pressure, and we reacted against all of it. That’s how we started. Then we began reading theory. Naturally, our thoughts started changing, our way of thinking evolved, and we became more involved in the struggle. Back then, many of us assumed we wouldn’t make it out alive. We always thought, <i>I might die</i>. (P.3) There was a deep injustice within the social structure. The children of workers were automatically destined to become workers themselves. We witnessed firsthand the hardships they endured. The wages they earned were not enough to allow them to live with dignity. This situation created severe fractures in society. We tried to express our views and fight for

		justice to eliminate this inequality. (P.4) For centuries, families like ours have believed that poverty was their destiny, something they had to endure. From a religious perspective, people thought that suffering in this world meant they would be rewarded in the next. But the books I read showed me that we didn't have to endure this. I learned that poverty was a systemic problem, that those in power used their influence over the people. My political views began to take shape slowly while I was studying at the teachers' institute, which is now a university. (P.5) From the start, I was inclined toward leftist ideas because of the awareness my father instilled in us. One of the first things I believed in was the importance of educating girls. Ideologically, I believed that people should live in a world where they were equal, free, and happy. That's what needed to be achieved. (P.7) There was always a lively atmosphere at home. Different people were constantly visiting; they were my father's friends and acquaintances. I grew up in an environment where the country's issues and problems were discussed and debated. My father treated us very positively. Even though we were children, he saw each of us as individuals. Any decisions regarding our

		lives or our family were made together. He always asked for our opinions. So, for as long as I can remember—since elementary school—I learned to make my own decisions. I gained my self-confidence in this family environment. (P.10) I was constantly questioning things. One thing became very clear to me: we lived in poverty, while others lived with much better standards. Yet, despite everything, in those days in Turkey, I could still play on equal terms with the other kids from the apartment building. When we went to school, of course, there were small differences, but there weren't yet major divisions between us. But I had a serious questioning process. Why was Kazım Abi killed? Why was he murdered? Why did my father cry? Why did the concept of a worker even exist? (P.11) Everywhere, injustices were happening, and we saw it. Some friend was killed by fascists or the police. Something else happened somewhere else. We were constantly attending funerals. So, at first, leftist struggle developed as a stance in favor of what was right and just. It wasn't about joining an organization and blindly following its directives. That's not how it started for anyone. That wasn't my

		experience in university either. I admired Deniz Gezmiş and the revolutionaries. They were good people, just people, and they were our friends. So, for me, there was no possibility of being a fascist. Do you understand what I mean? (P.12) The fundamental motivation was refusing to live in such a system. Socioeconomic conditions shape a person. You look around and see people driving luxury cars and dining in high-end restaurants, but you can't even afford to go there. We felt happy just going to the cinema once a month. I don't remember my father ever taking us to a restaurant. You see these inequalities firsthand, you see how unfair income distribution is, you see the struggles your father endures. A sense of class resentment begins to develop. <i>Why can't I have access to these things?</i> you ask yourself. <i>We are human, just like them.</i> And then there are the daily deaths—friends dying, people being killed in other countries. It all motivates you. You think, <i>No matter what, it's better to die than to live like this.</i> That's what drives people—how they live. (P.14) In fourth grade, I read the first volume of <i>İnce Memed</i> and was deeply moved by it. I finished that thick book in three or four days. That

		book had a huge impact on me. My enthusiasm for reading, combined with the fact that our world was so different from the world of the wealthy, played a major role in shaping my political ideas. (P.15) In middle school, we had a physics teacher who talked a lot about oil. He explained how Americans and the British came and took our oil for themselves instead of giving it to us. He told us to tell our fathers to buy fuel only from <i>Petrol Ofisi</i> and not from any other brand. That's how anti-imperialist consciousness took root in my mind during middle school. That teacher helped me develop a critical attitude toward foreign powers. (P.16) When you see an injustice, you feel a responsibility to act, and you realize that no one else will take on that responsibility. As we kept witnessing injustices and problems, we inevitably started organizing. That's how organizing began—people with the same concerns came together. (P.18) I always had a communal nature. I'm not saying this to praise myself, but I had a good rapport with people. I never looked down on anyone. I always wanted to help people. I recognized this trait in myself even when I was little. I liked solidarity. I believe this personality trait contributed

		to my development as a revolutionary. (P.19) We were involved in production—we worked with tobacco, grapes, and cotton. Even as children, we saw how large corporations took control of these products, how they left people hungry, and how they bought everything for next to nothing. A tobacco farmer, for example, works constantly but only earns enough to survive. There are no big profits. By the end of the year, he only has enough to sustain his family and start the next harvest. From a young age, we saw the impact of multinational corporations on Turkey. This made us believe we had to fight against them. We knew our struggle was just because we had lived through exploitation firsthand. We knew exactly what we were fighting against. That's why I got involved—I felt it deeply, and I knew we were on the right path. (P.20) The more you read, the more you realize that the reality of Turkey is different from what you were taught. You start becoming interested in the country's problems. You refuse to accept injustice and feel the need to fight against it. Because once you see, once you learn, your conscience compels you to act. Running away from the struggle feels like running away from yourself. It's like watching someone

			being beaten and not intervening. Later, you know the guilt you'll feel will be worse. You can't stay indifferent. It's a cycle—one thing leads to another, and you can't escape it. (P.22) I was one of three children, but because we were not part of the <i>sheikh</i> or <i>ağa</i> class, I was frequently beaten. Maybe because of that oppression, I found myself in this struggle. (P.23) I witnessed the suffering of the Kurds firsthand. In my region, 90% of the people were unemployed. I was both the district governor and the head of TÖB-DER there, and I was very active. I truly believed in the revolution. I saw firsthand how poverty and malnutrition affected people. I remember conducting the morning assembly at school and seeing children faint while singing the national anthem. I saw little girls passing out from hunger and malnutrition. If you have even an ounce of love for humanity, you can't forget these things. These were the moments that pushed me forward.
	The relationship between activists and the public	Revolutionaries' interaction with society and their efforts to build a popular base	(P.1) After the March 12 period, a strong sense of sympathy developed—this was the result of the struggles carried out by various organizations. This intense sympathy became

		organized by 1978 and 1979. (P.5) Later, I decided to leave the dormitory. Some friends opposed it, saying, <i>Don't go. As a student, you won't be as productive in the neighborhoods.</i> But in the end, it turned out to be a good decision. I saw life more clearly because I was the child of a working-class family. Communicating with those people was easier. These were poor people, people who had built their own slums (<i>gecekondu</i>), only to face the threat of demolition. We helped them study, supported them when they faced eviction, and tried to change their perspectives through discussion. That was our goal. Looking back now, at the age of 18-19, I realize how much trust people placed in us. They genuinely followed us. (P.6) There was a general tendency among the public to support whoever dominated the streets. For example, even though Turgutlu was a right-leaning town, about 300-400 people were actively engaged in street politics. At that time, Turgutlu's population was around 50,000. We believed we could take control of things. There was a level of respect for us among the public—respect mixed with fear. I don't know how much of it was genuine

		respect and how much was apprehension. (P.7) Unlike today's revolutionaries, we were not as distant from the people. (P.8) I believed in the revolution. Everyone did. We believed in a socialist revolution, that the contradictions between social classes in Turkey would be resolved, that class divisions would be eliminated, and that the people would take power. Everyone shared this belief. What made us so convinced that revolution was imminent? Perhaps it was the lack of easy access to information. Today, we can see everything instantly, but back then, nothing was clear. There was no internet, only a single television channel, and only a few newspapers. We didn't receive immediate updates on events. Despite this, organized people displayed resistance everywhere. There was resistance against attacks. (P.9) Speaking for myself, I had very strong ties with the people. In fact, revolutionaries had intense connections with the public. Let me give an example from Eskişehir—we organized almost all the workers in the city's factories. We led their strikes. We were active in poor neighborhoods and <i>gecekondu</i> settlements. We worked closely with the

		people, and they respected us. They bought the newspapers we sold. I remember in 1972, we organized demonstrations with 5,000-6,000 people marching together. (P.11) As teachers, we used to visit <i>gecekond</i> neighborhoods, either to sell newspapers or distribute leaflets. We would knock on doors and be welcomed inside. The families would prepare meals for us, protect us, and take care of us. There was a deep sense of solidarity. At the same time, there was a belief—starting from that period—that we needed to work in factories. Many people left their studies and took jobs in factories during this time. (P.12) Without grassroots support, how could young revolutionaries have emerged? Without a base, without people supporting them, this movement wouldn't have been possible. People viewed them with sympathy, of course. (P.14) I believe that due to the political climate of the time, the public had sympathy for revolutionaries. Establishing connections was much easier. These relationships formed naturally. (P.19) Before September 12, the relationship between revolutionaries and the public was very strong.

		Every type of political organization had ties with the people, from those advocating armed struggle to those promoting nonviolent activism. Even the TKP (which we considered passive) had connections with the people. There were close ties between students and workers. That was also the era when trade unions were at their strongest in Turkey. It was a time when political organizations reached even the most remote villages. It was a period when the widest grassroots organization occurred in <i>gecekondu</i> neighborhoods. There was no separation between the revolutionary movement and the people. (P.21) The people were always on our side. In certain areas of İzmir, people were very organized and politically aware. They attended every demonstration and participated in every event. But their trust in us wasn't solely because of us—it was because of the love and respect they had for the 1968 generation before us. The people were deeply influenced by the courage of those who came before us. I believe the biggest reason people sympathized with us was because of the legacy of the 1968 generation. The people we invited to our gatherings and events were much older than us, yet they trusted us.

Violence Experiences	How did you find out about the coup	(P.6) It was September 11. I had gone to my family's home in Turgutlu because I had an exam the next day and was preparing for it. Around 2 AM, I looked out the window and saw movement outside. Military vehicles were passing by. I immediately woke up my father and said, <i>Dad, there's been a coup</i>. I could see the soldiers passing through our street. My father said, <i>May it be for the best</i>. I told him, <i>This coup was made for us</i>. We turned on the radio, and at 3 AM, we heard Kenan Evren's first statement. A curfew was announced. To avoid alarming my father, I made up an excuse and left the house to wake up my friend, who had come with me, and told him about the coup. There was a deep sense of fear. The first thing we did was try to plan what to do. I returned home and told my father that I had to leave. At any moment, they could raid houses. Later, I found out they had raided our house. As soon as my mother heard that I was leaving, she rushed over and brought me a leather jacket. <i>Son, she said, I don't know where you're going, but you'll be cold—take this</i>. I took the jacket, met up with my friend, and we walked out of Turgutlu. (P.7) We were in Ankara. I was arrested in November.

		During those two months, my father was constantly on edge at home. He had lived through past coups and knew what to expect. When we first heard about the coup, we were having breakfast. We heard it on the radio. I told my father, <i>This won't work. We are strong.</i> But my father disagreed. He said, <i>I was expecting this.</i> I responded, <i>Martial law didn't work, and this won't either. The junta won't last.</i> I clearly remember his answer: <i>Daughter, you're wrong.</i> For the first month or maybe the first 15 days, there was great tension in the house. My father lost sleep. He was very worried about us, but we kept telling him, <i>Dad, you're worrying unnecessarily. We'll get through this.</i> But soon, the operations began. Every day and night, houses in the neighborhood were raided, and people were taken. (P.10) I was at home, but I remember something clearly. There were rumors about an impending coup—not among the public, but among our organization. Our comrades in the movement had already predicted a coup. I remember when I first heard about it, my trust in our party grew. With my childish mind, I thought, <i>Look, our party knows everything! They predicted the coup!</i>

		I wasn't scared at all because I didn't fully understand what a coup was. I only knew one thing—that they could arrest us, take us to the police station, that all revolutionaries could be thrown into prison, tortured. That's all I expected. But I didn't grasp the full meaning of a coup on a conceptual level. Instead, I felt a sense of pride that our group, the <i>Dev-Yol</i> members, had predicted it. (P.12) The morning of the coup, I had gone out for a meeting—it was an organizational appointment. As I was walking, gendarmes stopped me. I was already a wanted person. I wasn't in Eskişehir; I was in Istanbul. The gendarme stopped me and asked, <i>Where are you going?</i> I tried to say, <i>I'm going to work</i>, but before I could finish, he said, <i>There's been a coup.</i> I didn't know. I had no radio at home, no news source—I was in the middle of making wedding preparations, moving into a new house. No one knew about it. I immediately rushed back home and destroyed anything that could be incriminating. I burned a few books—I wanted to minimize the amount of banned material in the house because we were living illegally, using fake IDs. We couldn't afford to have any so-called <i>criminal</i>

		<i>evidence</i> in our home. I cleaned up the house as much as possible and then waited for the next day. (P.13) It's interesting—I was in the military when the coup happened. I had been conscripted after being released from prison. On the day of the coup, alarms went off. <i>We've staged a coup</i>, they said. We all jumped up, wondering what was happening. Everyone grabbed their rifles and equipment and stood ready. A captain came and made an announcement: <i>Friends, the army has taken over the government</i>. So, when the coup happened, I was standing among the coup plotters. (P.16) I was at my late friend Reşat's house when we heard about the coup. We woke up in the morning and heard the announcement on the radio. After that, I quickly left and went home, making sure no one saw me. Yes, I first learned about it on the radio. (P.17) There was a traditional belief in Turkey—every ten years, there would be a coup. So, yes, we expected it. During the Cold War, with the Soviet Union as a looming presence, we always thought that if there was a perceived Soviet threat, a military coup would be inevitable. We

		expected it, but we weren't prepared. We weren't ready because the people weren't with us. On September 11, I was traveling to Adana. A revolutionary teacher, Ali Uygur, had died under torture, and we were going to his funeral. On the way, I was supposed to meet my girlfriend. We boarded a bus on September 11 and got off in Tarsus. There, the gendarmerie stopped our bus. They ordered everyone to get off. <i>What's going on?</i> we asked. They said, <i>There have been bomb attacks in 200 locations in Ankara.</i> They made all the passengers lie on the ground. Then they announced, <i>The military has taken control of the government.</i> Afterward, we managed to leave and took shelter in a house. We couldn't leave for nearly a week because there were constant clashes in Tarsus. Eventually, I escaped and returned to Izmir. At one point, in Tarsus, I thought, <i>The junta has taken over; but we will resist as urban and rural guerrillas.</i> That thought definitely crossed my mind. (P.20) Of course, I found out from the television. The military was making an announcement: <i>The army has taken control of the government.</i>

			After that, we gathered our friends and discussed what we were going to do next.
	When he/she Captured	Circumstances of arrest and initial detention	(P.1) Three months later... I was caught three months after the coup. (P.2) On April 8, 1979, there was a police station raid. We were arrested around April 10-12. (P.3) About five months before the September 12 coup, there was an armed clash in Manisa. Two of our comrades were caught, and a police officer was killed. Three officers were wounded. One of the captured comrades, one of those two, gave the names of some members of our organization operating in Manisa, Turgutlu, İzmir, and Saruhanlı. I was one of the names mentioned. During a major operation, I was arrested along with 74 others. Thirty-three of us were officially detained. We were sent to Manisa Prison. So, I was caught about five months before the coup. (P.4) After September 12, the police were conducting operations everywhere. The scale of the raids intensified. I was arrested on April 16, after the coup. The coup happened in September, and I was arrested in April. My wife and I had just gotten married. She was

		also wanted by the authorities. That day, I had to go to a lawyer's office. My wife dropped me off at the door and said, <i>Go inside</i>. I needed to ask a lawyer about a case involving a friend. I knocked on the door and walked in. There were two or three people inside. I looked for Mr. Zihni, the lawyer, but he wasn't there. I apologized and said I was looking for him. They told me he was in court and would be back soon. <i>Please, have a seat</i>, they said. But I was already suspicious of everything. There was so much happening everywhere that I somehow sensed they weren't well-intentioned. I suspected they were police officers. I said, <i>No, I won't wait. I'm coming from Uşak, and I have to buy some things at Kemeraltı. I need to visit my brother, so I don't have much time. I just wanted to ask Zihni Bey something on my way.</i> I turned around, reached for the door handle, and just as I was about to leave, one of them stood up and said, <i>We're plainclothes police. You're under arrest.</i> That's how I was taken into custody. (P.5) I was arrested 16 days after the coup. During those 16 days, we continued our normal lives. We even felt so confident that we

		decided to stage an illegal protest against the coup. As we had done before, we went to the people, spread propaganda, and called on them to join us. We told them, <i>At this place, at this time, we will hold a protest.</i> But the streets were full of plainclothes officers and soldiers. Despite this, we didn't change our tactics and continued as usual. On the day of the protest, the police swept up all the student groups in the area. We were arrested that day, and after that, we saw the real face of the coup. (P.7) The coup happened on September 12. I was arrested on November 4—less than two months later. (P.8) I was detained in 1983 while I was in my second year of university. Later, in 1986, I was arrested again for chanting <i>Down with American imperialism! End the gendarmerie oppression in the East!</i> at a rally. (P.9) I was caught a year after the coup. Before my arrest, we were still carrying out activities. We had reorganized according to the new circumstances and adapted to the situation. I was wanted and living underground. (P.11) I was arrested along with 153 students—I was the only teacher among them.

		First, we were taken to the Central Command (<i>Merkez Komutanlığı</i>), then transferred to Mamak Prison. Since January 1980, I had already been in prison due to the <i>Esenevler Listesi</i> case. I was released five days after September 12, but I was still living like a fugitive. It was obvious that the coup leaders would round people up again, so I couldn't stay at home—I was living underground. Later, I had a meeting with the <i>Patriotic Revolutionary Teachers Group</i> (<i>Yurtsever Devrimci Öğretmen Grubu</i>). That's when I was caught. I lived as a fugitive for about a month and a half. On November 8, I was arrested along with six others. After that, our case was merged with the <i>TDKB</i> (Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey) trial. So, I ended up serving my sentence as part of the <i>TDKB</i> case. (P.12) I lived under a fake identity until I was caught in 1981. The coup happened on September 12, 1980, and I was arrested on April 21, 1981—about a year and a half later. I had gone to a meeting with certain people, but the police had already discovered the meeting place. I didn't know that our rendezvous point had been compromised. I was arrested at a bus stop. (P.14) My wife and I had just had a daughter—she was only a month old. My wife had

		been transferred to my city because of her marital status. One day, while I was teaching in class, gendarmes came in and took me. I was arrested about a year after the coup. (P.15) I was caught on October 28—a Tuesday. We had made a decision: I was supposed to leave Tatvan and go to Istanbul. Some comrades were coming to our region from another area, and some of our comrades in Tatvan were heading to the countryside. We were preparing for guerrilla warfare in rural areas. We had even placed an order—150 weapons were supposed to arrive. A group was going to stay in Tatvan, while another group was going to different regions. On Friday, we were planning to hold a protest against the September 12 coup. But I was caught on Tuesday before I could leave for Istanbul. I was working at the Van Lake Workshop. I had even made preparations for our protest there. That morning, I went to work, and that's when they arrested me. No one really knew who I was. Even though it was a small town, people thought I was just an ordinary

		democrat. But they found me. (P.16) Immediately after the coup, on the second day, they rounded up everyone from Bergama. The first thing they did was force us to erase the slogans we had written. At the time, I was staying at my family's house. Of course, they were worried. I was also worried about them, but I wasn't afraid of being arrested. I thought, <i>What's the worst that could happen?</i> The worst-case scenario was torture. (P.18) I was caught about six months after the coup—maybe six or seven months later. I was arrested after someone who had been previously detained gave away our meeting location. (P.19) I was arrested while visiting a comrade in Mersin. Unbeknownst to me, the police had already raided his house and were waiting there. We didn't have phones or communication devices. We relied on small signs—like hanging something on the door—or pre-arranged meeting times. I went to his house without knowing he had been caught. Normally, everyone in our group would go

		there, as he was the one responsible for connecting people. When I opened the door, I saw a stranger inside. That shouldn't have been possible. The stranger was holding the door, as if waiting for something. The police had already surrounded the area. As soon as I realized what was happening, I shut the door and ran. But they caught me. They dragged me into their car. (P.20) I was in my final year of school, but I was arrested because of the September 12 coup. I was detained in February 1981—about five and a half months after the coup. They raided my house and took me. (P.21) After the coup, posters and banners with bombs were put up. We were caught while putting up one of those banners. The coup happened on September 12. I was arrested on September 26, just 14 days later. We had been resisting as much as we could—putting up banners, holding demonstrations. Eventually, someone saw me and reported me to the police. (P.23) I wasn't caught for two

			years after returning from Palestine. Then, while visiting my children in Bismil, a local guard recognized me and reported me. I was arrested about 10 kilometers outside Diyarbakır and taken to the central police station.
	Duration of Detention	Length of time spent in prison and detention centers	(P.1) 11 years. (P.2) They sentenced me to five years of imprisonment for being a member of an organization, based purely on inference. (P.3) My trial ended in 1984, but I was released in 1982. When the trial concluded in 1984, I was acquitted. According to the court's decision, I was not a member of an organization. (P.4) I was held in custody for 90 days. Then, when I was brought to trial, I was acquitted. (P.5) I spent a total of 20 months in prison. About six to eight months of that time was spent in a former teachers' institute that had been converted into a prison. The rest of the time, I was in Mamak Prison. (P.7) I was imprisoned for nearly two and a half years in total. I entered Mamak Prison in 1980 and was

		released towards the end of 1982. (P.8) I was arrested while I was a university student. My first detention lasted for 45 days. At the end of that period, I was tried and acquitted. I was prosecuted without being detained. (P.11) I was released in 1983, but my trial was finalized in 1985, and I was sentenced. The Court of Cassation upheld the verdict, and I was sent back to prison. I spent nearly another year in civilian prisons. That was a completely different world. Civilian prisons were an entirely different reality. (P.12) Yes, I was in Mamak Military Prison for about four years. After my sentence was finalized, I was transferred to Ankara Ulucanlar Prison for a month while waiting for reassignment. Then, I was sent to Çanakkale Special-Type Prison, where political prisoners were held. I spent nearly four years in Mamak while awaiting trial. Once my sentence was confirmed, I was transferred to another prison. In total, I served seven years. (P.14) I was held in police custody for about two to two and a half months before being sent to prison. I remained in pretrial detention. A year later, at my first trial, I was released.

		From there, I was sent to Gaziantep. My wife was also detained because of me. They handcuffed both of us together and took us to Gaziantep. (P.16) I was imprisoned from 1980 until July 1981. (P.17) When I went to trial, the first thing I said was that my testimony had been obtained under torture. As soon as I stood up, I declared, <i>I do not accept any of my statements—I was forced to confess under torture.</i> The prosecutor found my testimony valid, and the court dismissed the charges against me. I didn't stay in prison for long—just 45 days in solitary confinement. (P.18) I had been imprisoned before the coup. But when I was incarcerated again after the coup, I was released in 1991 under conditional release. In total, I must have spent around 13 years in prison. I had first been imprisoned in late 1978. (P.20) I was arrested in February 1981. I spent about 60 days in police custody before being transferred to Mamak Prison. From February 1981 to August 1991, I remained in prison—a total of approximately 11 years.

			I spent seven years in Mamak. After my sentence was finalized, I was transferred to Aydın Prison. I stayed there for a while before being sent to Nazilli Prison. In 1991, I was released from Nazilli Prison on conditional parole. At the time, death sentences were reduced to 10 years, and life sentences were reduced to 8 years. Since I had already served 11 years, I was released. (P.22) The entire process, from my arrest to my release, took about four to five years. When I got out, my daughter was five years old—she didn't recognize me. (P.23) I spent 13 months in Diyarbakır Prison.
	Offence and Penalty	Official charges and accusations against participants	(P.1) There were expropriation actions. Let's call them punitive actions—that's how I would phrase it. Because of this, we were already wanted. We were arrested on December 9, 1980. I was tortured for 116 days. After those 116 days, we were formally charged and sent to prison. I was sentenced to death. Later, my sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. (P.3) I was arrested due to information given by other comrades about me and the organization.

		(P.4) My partner was wanted for political crimes. We had nothing to do with weapons or anything of that sort. In fact, there were no direct charges against us... I wasn't sentenced. I was acquitted in court and never went to prison. (P.6) In the end, I was sentenced to six months for violating firearm laws. I was linked to an unlicensed weapon. During interrogation, I admitted the weapon was mine. (P.7) I was caught because a comrade I worked with in neighborhood organizing gave my name to the police. The police brought this comrade to our house, and that's how I was taken. He claimed that I was hiding the organization's weapons—not just one, but many. He testified that I had hidden multiple weapons. Of course, the police extracted this testimony through torture. He even took the police to our coal storage room, claiming that we had buried the weapons there together. But none of it was true. I didn't do it. It didn't matter whether it was real or not. The police

		weren't looking at it that way. For them, there <i>had</i> to be weapons, and their goal was to force me to reveal them. My comrade told them, <i>There are two or three Kalashnikovs, four or five pistols, dynamites, bombs...</i> Basically, he described an entire arsenal in my family's home. For the police, this was a huge deal. If they could find those weapons, it would boost their prestige. And if any actions had been carried out with those weapons, it would help them close multiple cases. So, for them, it wasn't about me being a member of an organization—it was about finding the weapons. (P.8) I was just a sympathizer. I hadn't actually done anything. But at that time, the police were arresting people everywhere—universities, factories—anywhere two or three people gathered. They were trying to blame us for unsolved crimes. By the 35th or 40th day of my detention, they had already written up a confession for me to sign. I refused to sign it. The police had confiscated legally published books by

		Bekir Yıldız and Aziz Nesin from our house. They displayed these books on a table and put us on TV. They also placed four guns in front of us. Those guns didn't belong to us—neither to me nor my friends. I was tried for <i>being a member of an armed gang</i>. Even the charge itself was insulting—<i>an armed gang member</i>. Not <i>a socialist</i>, not <i>a revolutionary</i>, not <i>a dissident</i>, but <i>a gang member</i>. Of course, I was acquitted. (P.9) I was tried for membership in an illegal organization. (P.13) I was tried for possession of firearms. (P.15) I was convicted of being the leader of an illegal organization. I was sentenced for being responsible for the Bitlis, Muş, and Van regions. (P.19) We were charged with attacking a police station—the Turgutlu police station raid. Also, bank robberies, jewelry store robberies, and a few other similar actions. Murder, attempted murder...

			We were tried with the death penalty. And we were sentenced to death. (P.20) At my first trial, I was sentenced to death. Under Article 146/1 of the Turkish Penal Code—attempting to overthrow the constitution. I received the death penalty in 1984. But in 1985, the Court of Cassation overturned the ruling and reduced my sentence to life imprisonment. It was strange—my death sentence was overturned due to <i>good behavior</i>.
	Prison Process	Daily life and conditions in prison	(P.1) In 1982, I was transferred from İzmir Buca Prison to Adana Prison. In Adana, certain regulations had already been imposed and were being followed by most of the prisoners. These included things like singing the <i>İstiklal Marşı</i> (Turkish National Anthem) and reciting a meal prayer. When I arrived, the military prison authorities said, <i>We will not accept this man here</i>. So, they sent me to a civilian prison. But the civilian prison also refused to take me. I was sent back to Buca Prison. At that time, the implementation of the uniform dress code hadn't fully begun. It had started, but not completely,

		especially for newly arrived convicts—mainly criminal offenders, not political prisoners. When I returned to Buca from Adana, they told me, <i>You will wear a uniform.</i> I refused. I asked, <i>Did my ward already accept wearing it?</i> They said, <i>No.</i> I responded, <i>Then I won't wear it either. If my ward wears it, then I'll think about it.</i> They insisted, <i>Send him to another ward. He must wear the uniform.</i> I replied, <i>I won't wear it. There's nothing to discuss. Call the guards and throw me in solitary if you want.</i> The guards were called. One of them said, <i>Are we going to deal with this guy now?</i> In the end, I was sent back to my ward. (P.2) After that, they started dispersing the political prisoners. There were many new arrivals from outside. At first, there were only three political wards, but they weren't enough. So, they started placing us among other prisoners—among the so-called <i>feudals</i> and common criminals. By doing this, they thought they were breaking us up. But in reality, they created an opportunity for us to organize even more. Eventually, they realized their mistake and decided to gather us back together again. In March 1982, during my second trial, I was released. We had gone about a year and a half or two years without even seeing a courtroom. We

		were imprisoned without trial—held as captives. At the first trial, two comrades were released. At the second trial, I was. (P.5) Our cells were sometimes single, sometimes for two people. They were tiny, about <i>one meter by one meter</i>. No windows. No windows at all. The only opening was a tiny slit in the door that could be opened and closed. Ankara Police Headquarters was near the train station. We could tell morning had arrived by listening to the traffic sounds. During the night, traffic was quieter. But in the morning, it became intense. Later, they transferred us to Mamak Prison. When we arrived, they placed us in prefabricated buildings. There were too many prisoners, so they needed extra space. The older part of the prison—the stone buildings—was where the male prisoners stayed. We were met with a terrifying scene. They were blasting the <i>Onuncu Yıl Marşı</i> (Tenth Year March) and other military anthems. The male prisoners had to stand at attention, heads straight, not looking up or down. They were forced to march in military formation. They were forced to sing the anthem. When we arrived, they wanted us to do the same. We refused. (P.7) We had to call any officer, regardless of rank,

		<i>Commander!</i> They would force us to scream it at the top of our lungs. If they weren't satisfied, they would make us repeat it—over and over again. What they put us through was far worse than what a conscript soldier experiences in basic training. This was done in every ward—both male and female. We were not allowed to lift our heads or look anyone in the eye. Never. (P.8) I should also mention—during that time, psychiatrists like <i>Ayhan Songar</i> and <i>Turan İtil</i> were working in the prisons. They acted as consultants to the government and the coup leaders. Their involvement was even covered in the press. They conducted psychological experiments on prisoners. They tested drugs on them. This was a comprehensive assault. The torturers were specially trained. (P.9) The ward conditions were horrendous. There were 80 to 90 prisoners in a single ward. Two people had to share a single bed. We revolted. We forced them to improve our conditions. Even in prison, we organized. Different leftist groups began collaborating. When they saw us supporting each other, they separated us. They wanted to break our unity.

		(P.10) I truly <i>understood</i> revolutionary struggle inside prison. Before, it was more of an abstract, romanticized idea. Inside, it became real. The friendships forged there were unbreakable. We saw each other's true selves. There was nowhere to hide. (P.12) They played the military marches non-stop. Loudspeakers blasted them from morning to night. During torture sessions, they turned up the volume to drown out the screams. They also used psychological torture. One of the most important things in prison was <i>solidarity</i>. Despite the horrible conditions, we supported one another. The friendships built in those moments lasted a lifetime. (P.14) For example, if someone's eyes wandered while singing the <i>İstiklal Marşı</i>, they were beaten. If they made even a small mistake while reciting <i>Atatürk's Address to Youth</i>, they were beaten. (P.15) They started religious classes in prison. A Friday sermon was to be given. We were in the newly built <i>No. 4</i> prison, a high-security facility. When the preacher came in, we all turned our backs to him in silent

		protest. They immediately tortured us. (P.18) One day, they took us out to the yard. They ordered us to face the wall. We refused. The officers lined up soldiers in front of us and ordered them to <i>aim their weapons at us</i>. We still didn't turn. Then they sent in riot police with clubs. A full-on fight broke out. Both sides had casualties. Some prisoners and soldiers had to be taken to the hospital. (P.19) One of the biggest victories was winning the right to <i>open visitation</i> with our families. At first, they wouldn't let us see our wives, parents, or children. After years of struggle, we won that right. Seeing our families again, realizing they still stood by us despite everything, gave us strength. It made us more resilient. We refused to surrender. And that's what kept us going. (P.20) In <i>Mamak Prison</i>, every practice was designed to break you. As soon as you entered the ward, a soldier would come and say, <i>New arrivals, step forward!</i> Then the beatings would begin. They would ask ridiculous questions, like <i>Recite the İstiklal Marşı!</i> Or <i>Recite the fifth stanza of the anthem!</i> The thing is, even the officers didn't know the fifth stanza

		themselves. So, if you made something up and recited it with confidence, they might let you off. But if a superior officer was present, this trick wouldn't work. That's why people inside constantly tried to memorize the national anthem. (P.21) They kept up with the latest technological advancements. For example, in my generation, they didn't do this to me personally, but they experimented with drugs on prisoners. This was even reported in the newspapers. They conducted such experiments in Mamak, Istanbul, and Diyarbakır. (P.22) New arrivals were crammed into small cells. They would keep us there for about eight to ten days. Each cell was tiny—around <i>two square meters</i>. You had no space to sit or lie down. We had to stand while sleeping. There were seventeen people crammed into a single cell. When they brought us into a new cell, the officers looked at our faces and said, <i>You will be the cell leader!</i> I replied, <i>Commander, I can't do this!</i> At that time, we had to call every officer <i>Commander</i>. Before, we had to say <i>Sir</i>, <i>Colonel</i> or <i>Sir, Lieutenant</i>. Later, they made us just say <i>Commander</i>. The soldier looked at me and said, <i>You look the most religious among them, so you'll be the leader</i>. They didn't know I was Alevi. If they had known, I would have

			been finished. There was no way to resist. If you tried, they would take you for interrogation and torture.
	On Torture	Experiences of physical and psychological violence	(P.1) I was tortured for two and a half months every single day, without exception. And they didn't even know my real name because I was using a fake identity. For two and a half months, they tortured someone without even knowing who I was. The police had only received a statement about me. Someone had told them: <i>"This person is in the regional committee. He knows everything about all actions carried out by the organization."</i> So, the police tortured me for this reason. Until my real identity was revealed, I had no recorded statement. It happened because of someone breaking under torture. We know that some individuals who had not developed themselves ideologically, politically, or personally broke during interrogation to save themselves. I was in the Adana region at that time—what we called the Çukurova region. The police brought in comrades from Osmaniye and Ceyhan. I won't mention their names. Then, someone was brought in

		from Kadirli. Now, I had been using a fake identity that belonged to someone from Kadirli—his marriage certificate, ID, and other documents had been found. During the interrogation, my eyes were covered, but I could still see the person being questioned. They asked him: <i>"Do you know Mazlum Baştürk?"</i> (the fake name I was using at the time). He said, <i>"Yes, I do."</i> Then they pointed at me and asked, <i>"Is this him?"</i> He said, <i>"No, that's not him."</i> And just like that, my fake identity was exposed. Afterward, I revealed my real name myself, but they didn't record it for a while. Because people were dying under torture. A very close friend of mine died under torture, right next to me, shortly after this. (P.3) But I never handed over a weapon. Nor did I admit to any action. I was subjected to severe torture, of course. There were 74 of us in that mass arrest operation. I was one of the ones who endured the most torture. Later, I received a medical report stating that I was unfit to work for two months due to the injuries. I had suffered severe torture, but despite that, I did not

		confess to anything they wanted me to. (P.4) Every morning, they would throw us down the stairs. Not just me—everyone. Then, at sunrise, they would come in and start singing a Rumeli folk song to wake us up. Then they would call out names: <i>"Come here."</i> Like sheep being led to slaughter. Then the beatings, the violence, the questions would start again. <i>"Where do you live? Give us an address. Who are your friends?"</i> They already knew who was in which organization. Someone had given them my information too—one of my own close friends had broken under torture. It lasted about a week. Then, they took me to a lower floor. I realized that I had stopped menstruating. At first, I thought it was because of extreme stress. I told only one friend about it—someone from Halkin Yolu. She had endured a lot of torture too. There were also comrades from Dev-Yol. Many of them had already broken. (P.6) On the fourth day of interrogation, I finally admitted that the gun was mine. For the first four days, I resisted. I refused to confess because I believed my comrade would never give my name. But the police kept saying: <i>"You're</i>

		<i>hurting yourself for nothing. Your friend already talked. He named you."</i> <i>I said, "If my friend gave my name, bring him here and have him say it to my face."</i> So, they brought him into the interrogation room. I was naked, my hands tied behind my back. They gagged me but removed my blindfold. He was brought in with his eyes covered, but his mouth was open. And then he really did say my name. At that moment, my entire world collapsed. (P.7) When I was newly detained, I witnessed the death of İlhan Erdost (the well-known publisher). There was no way to avoid witnessing these things. Everyone had seen something horrific. İlhan Erdost was killed under torture. I met him at the police station, after his torture. Before being taken to Mamak Prison, they would bring us to the tenth floor for "rehabilitation." There, they would do basic treatment for wounds, bandages, painkillers. When I was taken to the tenth floor, it was the first time I had seen water in days. My chest was leaking pus. The soles of my feet were completely torn up. I was dragging my leg—I couldn't walk. (P.8)

			Even at the moment of detention, they would blindfold you, throw you to the ground, and handcuff you behind your back. Guns pointed at your head. You were just a student, an innocent student going to school. They subjected us to verbal abuse, insults, humiliation. They wouldn't let us use the toilet. They crammed 25 people into a 2-square-meter space, forcing us to sleep like sardines. They played mind games, forcing us to listen to the screams of our tortured friends. And we were always blindfolded. Always naked. It was a relentless effort to break our will and force us to submit. (P.9) They often raided our ward in prison. Our ward was considered the center of resistance in the prison. Whenever we chanted slogans, it spread across all the cells, and everyone joined in. Because of this, they targeted us more. I was hospitalized multiple times from beatings. They had singled me out as an example. (P.11) During the coup, the martial law detention period was 90 days. For 90 days, torture was routine. They used electrical shocks, falaka (beating the soles of feet),

		hanging (Filistin askısı), reverse hanging, and every imaginable form of humiliation and abuse. When first arrested, they took us to what was called <i>"the cage"</i>. This was at Mamak Military Prison. Every newly detained prisoner was kept there before being transferred. Some were kept for a day, some for a week. Everyone endured torture during this time. (P.17) The torture at the police station was systematic. They used electrical shocks, hanging, severe beatings, falaka—everything. But prison torture was different. It was more psychological, more designed to break you permanently. (P.20) When I first entered Mamak, I had just survived 60 days of intense police torture. I thought I would be able to rest in prison. I was wrong. The first night, they beat us with iron rods. Then they put us in a cage. For three days, we were displayed like animals in that cage. Not even monkeys in a zoo were treated this way. (P.22) I spent six months at the Van Brigade Command

			torture center. They sentenced me without even taking me to trial. In those six months, I endured every kind of torture imaginable. Electric shocks. Beatings. They shoved batons into my mouth and rectum. Hanging, drowning, starvation. I had no sense of time, no idea if it was day or night. I had already accepted that I would die there. One night, at 3 AM, a soldier came in. My body was swollen, my hands and feet were numb. I looked up at him, and he was crying. He whispered: <i>"Brother, just hang on for two more days. I'm with Devrimci Yol too. Just survive two more days."</i> And he was right. Two days later, they released me.
	Physical/psychological effects of violence	Long-term effects of state violence on participants	(P.1) I don't think I've changed. The same goes for police interrogations—it's all about resistance. One person can stand firm against all kinds of torture, while another might not be able to endure it. But failing to endure it doesn't mean that person has changed in a thoughtful way. It's purely physical, purely human. (P.2) The main goal of these methods is to directly

		attack a person's willpower. It's an assault on one's ability to think and act freely. They would beat you, and a person might forget that pain. But systematic torture, and the long-term psychological pressure inside prisons—those stay in your memory for a lifetime. That's why, when people were released, many asked: <i>"Why wouldn't they return to political struggle?"</i> (P.4) Torture is something truly horrible. You sit there with your eyes blindfolded, someone comes, calls out your name, and takes you away. You don't even know where the violence is coming from. You don't know who is cursing at you, humiliating you, stripping away your dignity. They can say anything they want. They feel they have the power to do anything. And you—you are completely helpless. That is one of the most devastating things for a human soul. (P.5) In prison, you see the true face of the system. It hardens you, it makes you more conscious, it deepens your commitment to the struggle. Fear and withdrawing from the fight—that's exactly what they wanted. That was their goal. So I wasn't afraid to continue activism afterward.

		(P.7) I don't feel affected anymore (his voice trembles here). But for the first ten years after I was released, I couldn't even talk about it without shaking. Every time I recounted it, my body trembled. But I got over it. It's been 15–20 years now, and I can talk about it without a single shake in my voice. At first, I felt the need to talk about it. I would relive it every time I spoke about it, but I never thought, "<i>Why did this happen to me?</i>" Eventually, I moved past it. (P.8) This was a trauma. Even if we say "<i>we weren't affected</i>", deep down, something was left behind—maybe anger, maybe hatred, maybe trauma. They made us feel it: <i>"You only have the right to live if you obey us."</i> That's what their behavior told us. That was their goal. Imprisoning a person is already a form of torture. But the worst part is psychological—to be treated as if you don't exist, to see everything you love and value erased. This trauma changed society itself. For a while, they succeeded in destroying hope. (P.9)

		The people who couldn't stand on their feet anymore—they gave up inside the prison too. There were those who had already given up before they even entered. When they were released, they were like fish out of water. Yes, we suffered torture, violence, and oppression. But the entire society was being crushed in the same way. Even people outside had already surrendered before ever being arrested. (P.10) I actually became a revolutionary inside prison. Before that, I was just a curious kid. Yes, the debates I joined and the class struggles I witnessed as a child had shaped me. I was always surrounded by leftists. So, I naturally leaned towards the left. But I had no real understanding of what it meant to be a revolutionary. Or what it meant to be a party member. I found my identity inside. The place where they tried to destroy me—that was where I rebuilt myself. (P.11) A common mentality emerged: <i>"We suffered, so let's protect our children from it."</i>

		<i>"We don't want our children to go through what we did."</i> Many revolutionaries of that time tried to keep their children away from politics. They themselves also stayed away from organized activities. Some completely withdrew. Some fell into hedonism, thinking, <i>"Now I just want to live my life."</i> Among those who weren't revolutionaries, life also became unbearably heavy. People lost the energy to resist anything. (P.12) The goal was to strip people of their personalities and political consciousness. They wanted to create a submissive society. They were telling us: <i>"You are our prisoners."</i> <i>"You will do whatever we say."</i> <i>"We can do whatever we want to you."</i> They wanted to break us away from our beliefs. To turn us into people who obey without question. Many people never psychologically recovered from that. I've heard stories about many of our comrades who still struggle with deep mental scars. (P.16) After the coup, we criticized ourselves:

		<i>"Why did we lose?"</i> <i>"Why did this happen?"</i> I had already said before—the base was broad, but the leadership was weak. The leaders were inadequate. The organization wasn't structured properly. That's why I never took responsibility again. If you enter organized struggle, you must take responsibility. And after that experience, I no longer felt capable of doing so. We thought about resisting the coup, but we couldn't. In reality, there was no practical way to resist. Everyone was divided. Everyone found themselves already defeated. The coup created a deep trauma in society. (P.17) I was arrested multiple times. But when I was detained during the coup, I thought: <i>"What the hell am I doing here?" "I was lying comfortably at a summer house, I had a girlfriend, I had a soft bed—what the hell is happening to me?"</i> And I wasn't alone. Thousands, tens of thousands, of others thought the same thing. That's why this wasn't a simple event. After the torture, I remember flinching at the sound of footsteps on the stairs. My mother would rush to my side whenever I did. After I was released, I never trusted the people again. I started to believe that for most people, political

		struggle just meant elections and the ballot box. (P.18) I lost many comrades in this struggle. Close friends of mine were killed. Some are still missing. Some disappeared while in police custody. I feel a deep sense of responsibility toward them. That's why, after being released, I never thought about abandoning the revolutionary struggle. I could never just build a life for myself and walk away. Because I always thought about the friends we lost, and the people they left behind. (P.20) Mamak Prison wasn't built to punish you for a crime. It was built to send a message—to terrorize everyone. Even after you were released, they wanted you to feel ashamed of yourself. They wanted you to not even be able to look in the mirror. We understood what they were doing. But many people never fully recovered. Some still believe the police are watching them. Some live in fear. But fear leads nowhere. Everything only gets worse when people surrender to fear. (P.22)

			I wasn't really a socialist. I wasn't really a Kurd either. I had only read a few books. But Diyarbakır Prison taught me what it meant to be Kurdish. The state tried to beat it out of us—instead, they taught us what it meant. If I had known how difficult this struggle would be, how much suffering it would bring, maybe I wouldn't have joined it.
	Use of large group symbols in torture	The use of large group symbols in the prison process and participants' attitudes towards symbols	(P.4) For example, from our childhood, we were mostly raised as Kemalists. Then, a national perspective was ingrained in our minds. Our hair would stand on end whenever the national anthem was sung. (P.5) As kids, we used to sing those anthems with enthusiasm. But even if someone forces you to listen to your favorite music, you'll end up hating it. I mean, this was a military junta we did not approve of. I truly felt hatred whenever I heard those anthems. (P.7) I have a funny memory—someone asked my friend's mother where her daughter was. She was an Azerbaijani woman. She replied, "Ay balam, how should I know where she went? Atatürk didn't finish the revolution. The kids went to finish it. Then Kenan Evren locked them up." It's actually a

		thought-provoking statement. In fact, the woman's analysis is something she heard from her revolutionary daughter or son. She's repeating what she heard about Atatürk and his revolutions. From this, we can infer that the left did not have a hostile stance toward Atatürk. (P.8) And on top of that, there was a bombardment of opposing values and symbols. I kept repeating it. They kept forcing us to sing anthems, beating us... When things are done with force and violence, people inevitably develop antipathy toward them. And this leads to lasting changes in their personalities. I witnessed this myself. Many of my friends experienced this kind of alienation. (P.10) I went to a meeting organized by the Atatürkist Thought Association. I really enjoy throwing in little barbed comments at these kinds of events. You know, they just can't praise Atatürk enough — it almost turns into Atatürk worship. Of course, Atatürk has an important place in this country. Of course, he has a place for me too, you know what I mean? But they almost fetishize him. Obviously, he was a leader — I can see that. He made certain changes, built a country, and so on. All of that is subject to debate, but he's not someone I

		personally fetishize. Anyway, during the meeting, they were talking — Atatürk did this, Atatürk did that, and so on. Then at one point, Halide Edip Adivar's name came up, and I said, "You know, it was Atatürk who exiled Halide Edip Adivar." I asked, "I wonder why he did that?" After all, Halide Edip had fought for the Republic, organized rallies, and so on. Why would Atatürk punish her? Then I brought up Atatürk's relationships with Fikriye and Latife, which are also quite controversial. And when I asked these questions, the whole room suddenly fell silent (P.12) They would force us to sing the national anthem and would even broadcast it through loudspeakers, turning the volume all the way up. They played things like "I would die for you, my Turkey," and the national anthem at full blast. Why would someone feel hostility toward their national anthem? Why would they be disgusted by it? But people are pushed to a point where they become enemies of their own national anthem. We never had a problem with the anthem, the flag, or the existing symbols themselves. Our issue was not with these symbols. But when you force someone to do something, a reaction is bound to emerge. It's natural for people to be reactive toward this now. Maybe I don't feel it anymore, but a lot of people still remember those

		events and are repulsed by these symbols. And these are all products of the September 12 era. These reactions to national values are its legacy. (P.14) An antipathy arises. For example, when the founder of the country, Atatürk, is used as a tool of oppression, and when a junta claims to be Kemalist and enforces this, it creates a backlash. It creates antipathy toward the flag, toward Atatürk. (P.17) Since Kemalism had a place in my mind, when I pushed myself ideologically, I thought about the contradictions of this country. Because I'm a historian, I know. I now know that this country has unresolved issues. There's unfinished business stemming from the Committee of Union and Progress, from the Young Turks, even from the Ottoman Constitution and the 1908–1909 constitutional changes. I know that a bourgeois democratic revolution never took place in this country. Because it wasn't completed, all the information and political lines became intertwined. This confusion also affected revolutionaries—we couldn't sit down and talk about what the real issue of this country was. What is the core issue of this country? (P.19)

			I don't feel particularly disturbed now. If the national anthem is being read and I'm obliged to stand, I do. But I don't sing it. Other than that, I don't let it bother me much. (P.23) Politically, my father was very devoted to the CHP and to Mustafa Kemal—so much so that this devotion made him claim Atatürk was the Mahdi. These ideas came from my uncles' time, from earlier generations. For example, my uncle would call him the Mahdi. The Mahdi, as you know, is the twelfth and final imam, the one who is supposed to change the world. That's how they believed, religiously. I was also very Kemalist—extremely so. But after my second year as a teacher, my political life began, and I became a socialist.
Post-Coup Process	After Prison	Immediate experiences following release	(P.1) So, we were released in 1991. Now, in 2021, it has been a 30-year period—a long time. The first ten years of this period were spent trying to build a life outside, but the state always kept its stick over us. They kept saying, "We are still here." They constantly monitored us, sometimes even coming to our homes. (P.2) Economic problems became much more pressing. Not everyone had financial independence, and without economic freedom, many things in Turkey

		became difficult. You couldn't go far. In our group, we didn't have any fear, but the biggest problem was communication. Back then, communication wasn't as easy as it is now—even finding a phone was a challenge. When I returned from military service, I had a friend in Ankara from TKP-ML, TIKKO. We lost contact, and I couldn't find him again. About eight or nine years ago, a friend came across him in Ankara. We had to ask around to reconnect. We finally exchanged phone numbers, and now we are back in touch. (P.3) There were no people left to continue political activities. Almost everyone was in prison. There were a few who had been released, like me, but we didn't have the means to continue the struggle. So, I decided to stay in the background—and I did. (P.4) I lived through terrible things. The real trauma for me wasn't what happened inside—it was after I got out. Because by then, the September 12 junta had silenced the people completely. Revolutionaries were tortured in prison—they were no longer around. Intellectuals, doctors, judges, scientists were all imprisoned, and the junta legitimized itself under the guise of stopping brother from killing brother. During the

		September 12 period, finding a job was nearly impossible. Employers would investigate every detail of your past before hiring you. It was a form of political persecution. Only those with power, those aligned with the regime, had access to jobs and resources. The rest of us had neither jobs nor food. (P.5) Especially my younger siblings—my sister, for example. The police went to her workplace and threatened her subtly: "Don't do what your brother did, or we will take all of you." Later, many absurd things happened. When I was taken again in 1990 to serve the remainder of my sentence from the 1980s, police would still come to my family's home. They would demand, "Give us your daughter's address—she's wanted." They already knew where she was. With just a single phone call, they could find out everything. But they still came, keeping up the pressure, reminding my family: "We are still here, watching over you." It was psychological intimidation. (P.7) I realized I was being followed, especially on public buses. The first time I noticed was when I was traveling to visit my sister or another relative. Every time I took a bus, I saw the same tall man at the back. At first, I thought it was a coincidence. But then I started seeing him in parks, in cafés. I knew I was being watched. They also came to

		my home in different disguises, knocking on my door. Eventually, I decided to change my environment, and a year later, we moved to Istanbul. (P.8) I never became paranoid about it, but there was always this one police officer—I still remember his car's license plate. No matter where I went, he would follow. (P.9) I was followed for three or four years. When I left my house for work in the morning, they would sometimes block my way and ask, "How are you?" or "What's new?" It was their way of saying, "We're watching you." A car was always parked in front of my apartment. When I got a job, they raided my workplace. It was an operation targeting the "October Group," but they asked about me even though I had no connection with them. People saw the police watching my home and labeled me dangerous. They assumed I was someone to avoid. (P.10) We were left alone. Completely alone. When I got out, I noticed something: families that were better educated and wealthier managed to save their children. Their kids found jobs, resumed their studies, or built lives for themselves. But for others—especially men,

		though some women too—life fell apart. Some turned to alcohol and other addictions. Some lost their minds. Some never managed to get back on their feet. (P.12) When I was first released, I had no idea what to do next. Many comrades had scattered, defeated. One of my biggest worries was: "How will I survive now?" At one point, I almost went back into an underground life, either semi-legal or illegal. (P.14) After I was released, I was unemployed. Then I was arrested again—for being a draft dodger. They kept me in police stations and then took me to the military recruitment office. That's a long story for another time. Eventually, I was sent to serve as a "risky conscript" in Istanbul, in Çatalca. After finishing my military service, I was still jobless. I thought about what kind of work I could do—I considered sign painting, wallpapering, or small-scale decoration work, and I opened a shop. But two plainclothes officers would constantly patrol my area. They even warned other shopkeepers: "This man is a communist. Don't give him business." (P.15) After being released, I regretted it. I locked myself in a room for a long time, reading and writing. I produced some good things, but then an incident

		happened in Ankara, and I stopped. I knew I was being watched, but I didn't care much. (P.16) They tormented my family as well. They raided their home at night. My little brother was constantly harassed: "Where is your brother?" He was just a child. It was traumatic for them too. This went on for five or six years. Eventually, we reintegrated into life. (P.18) After getting out, we continued working on legal publications. But we knew the police were watching us. At times, they approached my comrades and me with strange remarks. Once, an officer said: "Why are you staying here? Why don't you just leave the country?" At that time, revolutionaries weren't allowed passports, but the police told us they could make an exception—essentially telling us to get out. (P.19) I remember feeling incredibly alone. Many of my friends felt the same way. (P.21) I couldn't even start a business. I couldn't even set up a company. We had financial means—at one point, we wanted to establish a tomography center—but they didn't allow it. "You are politically banned," they

			said. "You cannot own a business." (P.22) Every comrade who got out of prison faced severe economic difficulties. I was lucky because my wife and mother had salaries, so I wasn't desperate. But still, I had to sell raw meatballs, manufacture things—I never wanted to be a burden to my family. Even recently, I was buying a copy of <i>Yeni Yaşam</i> newspaper from a vendor, and a police officer immediately came up and asked: "Who bought that newspaper?" The state already knows me in Izmir, but since I am less active in Van, they no longer follow me there. I don't fear the state. I don't even fear death anymore. (P.23) They got me fired by reporting me to the police. And I was left unemployed again. My father had no money, and I had no income. That was incredibly difficult.
	Social Support	Access to family and community support networks	(P.3) Apart from that, some of the people I spoke to were taken into custody. A few friends were among them. Of course, Turgutlu is a small place, so when word got out, they started testing you as well. The number of people willing to talk to you decreased. For example, when I went to a café and sat down, if my

		friends were playing a game, they would all disperse and leave when I approached. People were scared. They created a serious climate of fear. In such an atmosphere, it was impossible to expect people to engage in politics. (P.4) There was hardly anyone who helped heal my wounds. On the contrary, after September 12, there were many people who tried to reopen them. My family did not support me at all. We never had contact. When I was being tortured, Mustafa uncle had sent word to them. They knew I was being tortured. They didn't come. They didn't even come to look for me. They knew, they had heard that I was being tortured. All of them (the entire family). Out of fear, they didn't come looking for me. Neither my brother, nor my mother, nor my father. (P.5) At first, they hesitated. Because they were afraid. They feared that if they even said hello to me, they might be taken in as well. I actually learned from talking to people outside that life was even harder for those on the outside. Inside, we were all together. We were beaten every day, we were kicked every day. But being together gave us immense strength. Even families were left on their own, individuals were isolated, and that was one of the biggest advantages

		for the system post-1980—it isolated people. Of course, people were initially hesitant, but those of us who had similar experiences with our families stuck together. That solidarity was immediate. However, others were initially fearful, but over time, everyone adapted. (P.6) Both the public distanced themselves, and our opportunities were restricted. There was one incident that hurt me deeply. The reaction of my childhood friends. One of my closest friends had a girlfriend who was taken by the police. She had been interrogated for a month. I found her when she was released. The girl was, of course, paranoid due to the torture she had experienced. We were going to a friend's house to talk in a comfortable environment. As we were walking along the Second Kordon, we ran into three of my closest friends. When they saw me, they changed their route. This was a very common occurrence at the time. I will never forget it and I still mention it to them. They claimed they did it to protect me. I don't know how they thought they could protect me like that. (P.8) However, after I appeared on television, I was completely ostracized by my village, my school, my hometown, and my social

		circle. People didn't want to be seen with me. The climate of fear was so intense that people stopped even greeting me. People were genuinely anxious. But they cannot be blamed for it. This was a state strategy. After physical and psychological torture, they also socially isolate you. They push you out of society. (P.9) Outside, there was a silent society. They were afraid. People who used to greet me acted like they didn't see me. Even some of those involved in revolutionary activities would avoid us, change their routes. Everyone feared that the police might be watching us, that we were dangerous. But none of this was unexpected. (P.15) People you trusted deeply acted like they didn't know you. I will never forget—after my release, I went to Tatvan. Someone I had known well and protected was acting insincere, or turning his head away. I even saw people changing direction just to avoid talking to me. I saw people deliberately turning away just so they wouldn't have to speak with me. (P.19) Of course. Some of my friends distanced themselves from me. Then, everyone around me, people I knew, hesitated to be seen with me, to talk to me. They all kept their

			distance, stayed far from me. But slowly, they got used to it, and we started rebuilding our relationships. (P.23) After 12 years, when Articles 141, 142, and 163 were abolished, I was able to resume teaching. The period after that was much harder for me. I couldn't contact anyone for two years. I did almost nothing—I was practically in hiding from everyone for two years.
	Current Political Environment in Turkey	Views on contemporary political situation	(P.1) Turkey has been set back significantly in political, social, and economic terms, in every aspect of life. Today, for instance, the number of people driving cars has increased since the 1990s, and more people have become homeowners. But these things have no real significance. They do not reflect an actual reality of life. Capitalism provides these tools just to sell them; that is its business. It finds ways to do so, even by starting regional wars. It is not as if they genuinely care for people and want everyone to have a car or a house. (P.3) I have witnessed how the post-coup period created a serious sense of exhaustion among people. They lost their claims to political engagement. We were political prisoners, and we believed that we could protect our rights and

		freedoms, but after the coup, only a small number of people continued to think this way. The majority fell into despair. Therefore, in the aftermath of September 12, there was little resistance or organized action in prisons. They do not want people to participate in governance. You make your choice during elections, and that is it. Politically, that is the only role assigned to you. Beyond that, you cannot interfere with the system, you cannot criticize it. Thus, they have completely transformed our people into a society that does not research, does not question, does not read, does not participate in governance, and does not care about politics. They have created a human profile that aligns with the state's desires. I do not even call this a citizen profile. This is the continuation of a tradition inherited from the Ottoman era, where people were made into subjects rather than citizens. It is not even a modern concept of citizenship. This transformation has allowed the political rulers of the country to govern as they wish. For them, society is merely a group of subjects who will never object to what they say. They have tried to create such a society. Politically, the coup changed everything, but most importantly, it brought back the structure, character, and mindset of the Ottoman populace. It turned the people into subjects once again. People

		today do not even understand what social solidarity means; it has been eradicated. I see the destruction of the values that make a society a society. (P.4) Women in rural areas were particularly affected. They started solving everything through religion, by referring to the Quran. This made it easier for women to be confined to their homes and for men to exert greater control over them. It led to an increase in violence against women and heightened societal pressure on children. Because if women remain uneducated, society as a whole remains uneducated. This change affected everything, from people's lifestyles to their habits. At the same time, social solidarity disappeared. We lost that solidarity on September 12. It is a painful picture. The collapse of the country's intellectuals and revolutionaries into this state is tragic. You leave prison, and then you support the spread of reactionaryism. You call it a fight against communism. You establish religious orders and tolerate them. You push the country back by centuries. This was not just a trauma for me; it was a trauma for the people of this country. They stole the future of my students. The future of children was darkened by September 12. That is why I made sure to tell my students about September 12, so they would know. I did not say, "I personally experienced

		this," but I made sure they understood what had happened. (P.7) And now, the state of Turkey today. In my opinion, the AKP is a product of September 12. In the end, they privatized all public spaces, and all of this was done step by step. The best way for them to build the Turkey they wanted was by silencing society through the September 12 coup. Today, we experience its consequences every day. This brings us back to your initial question—why were there no women's issues, no environmental issues before September 12? Yes, they did not exist to this extent. Nature was not exploited so mercilessly, and there was no such ruthless assault on the environment. (P.8) Yes, society was significantly transformed by September 12, that is true. Meanwhile, capitalism took root. The capitalist production relations of 1980 and those of the 1990s were vastly different. As Halit Narin, the president of the Turkish Employers' Association, said, "Until now, workers have spoken; from now on, we will speak." This was true. The economic measures taken on January 24, 1980, and their implementation made this possible. In reality, the coup both entrenched capitalism in Turkey and further entrenched the state's ideology, the Turkish-Islamic synthesis. They aimed to bring people

		to a singular ideological line, and they succeeded in that goal. (P.9) However, compared to today, we are in a different period. When we look at Europe now, we see right-wing parties gaining strength. Look at the U.S., look at the U.K.—fascists are coming to power. As capitalism enters a crisis, it becomes even more reactionary. We are witnessing this across all European countries. And since our country is already a part of international monopoly capitalism, a collaborator in this capitalist system, it is even more affected by global events. If the West catches a cold, we suffer the flu. Therefore, we must recognize that the current era is not just different in Turkey but worldwide. (P.11) They cleansed us from the slums. And who moved in? Political Islamists. They filled that void, and the roads leading to today were paved from that point on. The path for jihadist Islamist movements was created by the military coup of September 12, 1980. (P.12) It used to be easier to communicate with the people. Now, we have to push harder to establish those relationships. In factories, relationships must be forced; right now, they can hardly be established at all. Of course, it would be wrong to say they do not

		exist at all. There are still strikes and resistance in various parts of Turkey. But, as I said, it requires conscious and repeated effort. In the past, we showed very little effort; now, an enormous amount of effort is needed. Society still has not shaken off the lethargy imposed by September 12. (P.14) The biggest impact of September 12 was that it crushed the opposition standing in the way of reactionary political Islam, paving the way for it. Today, all leftist movements are experiencing a disconnect from the people. The Labour Party (Emek Partisi) is facing the same issue. Yes, we are facing various difficulties. We can no longer engage in the daily hustle of activism as we did in our youth. (P.15) The coup of September 12 violently suppressed and eliminated the left. All organizations suffered. No one expected to take such a heavy blow. Almost all of their senior leaders were arrested. For a long time, no one could engage in any activities. In an effort to survive, many groups turned inward. I do not know if this was a direct result, but unfortunately, this is what happened in the post-1980 period, particularly after 1985, 1986, and 1987. (P.17)

			Culture, for example. Turkish classical music, Turkish folk music, Turkish cinema, and theater. Cultural life had a more secular, democratic, and diverse aspect before. After September 12, restrictions began. Films were banned, artists were banned. This kind of repression began. That is all I can think of off the top of my head. The bans started then. (P.19) Confidence has been shaken. Many of the leading figures of the people either died, went elsewhere, gave up entirely, or joined different political parties. This struggle lost its confidence because of this damage. (P.20) We were naive children. Now, I wonder—have we lost that innocence? Have we lost our faith? It feels like we have. (P.23) We must engage in self-criticism. If after fifty years, we are still below one percent in election results, then something is not working.
Ideological Transformation	Ideology-PAST	Political beliefs and commitments before imprisonment	(P.1) This struggle also needed to have a political line. We were mostly influenced by Latin American countries, or we shaped our own unique revolutionary model based on the country's position as a remnant of colonial and feudal

		structures. I was a member of an organization called the Marxist Armed Propaganda Union, affiliated with the Turkish People's Liberation Party-Front (THKP-C). (P.3) By defending the politically militarized warfare strategy ideologically presented by Mahir Çayan, I took part in an organization rooted in the party-front tradition. Therefore, it was an organization that fundamentally embraced armed struggle, and I was a part of it. Mahir Çayan was the one who analyzed Turkey's realities most accurately and ideologically presented the most correct way to revolution. Because of that, without any hesitation, we tried to continue the struggle as the successors of those who came before us. (P.5) For example, I experienced this: When the working class comes to power, I truly believe that a world where people live without classes, without exploitation, in brotherhood, will be possible. Yes, I really believe in it, because there is a class that exploits and oppresses us. And when the oppressed class rises up, and if their ideology truly materializes, I believe that these things will come true. (P.6) We were aligned with the Soviet school of thought, whereas the movements we

		called MLSP were mostly influenced by Latin American-style structures. (P.7) I was close to political structures that followed the Soviet Union's line. (P.8) I used to read the Devrimci Yol (Revolutionary Path) magazines. I was a sympathizer. (P.9) By the time I was working as a civil servant in Eskişehir, I had ideologically solidified my stance. I decided on the Halkın Kurtuluşu (People's Liberation) line. (P.10) At that time, I was close to a group that referred to themselves as the continuation of Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades, known as the Turkish People's Liberation Army (THKO). (P.11) There were serious debates at that time—on theories such as social imperialism and the Three Worlds Theory. These were major points of discussion, and choosing a side became more conscious and deliberate. By that time, theoretical awareness had solidified. For example, we later rejected the Three Worlds Theory. This created such a significant transformation within us because we essentially stopped following Mao

		blindly. The organization conducted serious educational activities internally to explain the reasons behind abandoning that theory. (P.12) The initial youth movement, influenced by the excitement of the worldwide 1968 events, lacked political consciousness. We acknowledged that we were ideologically underdeveloped and redirected ourselves toward socialism and Marxism. (P.15) I was someone who was influenced by Mahir Çayan, who sympathized with his ideology, and who took him as a guide. I began to prefer his ideology more. Beyond that, things just continued naturally. We only separated from Devrimci Yol during the division between Devrimci Yol and Devrimci Sol (Revolutionary Left). (P.17) Devrimci Yol had an ideology that rejected labels. It did not accept terms like "Maoist fascist" or "social fascist." We were in favor of leftist unity. (P.18) When I started the struggle, I was in an organization that defended armed struggle along Mahir Çayan's line. Ideologically, I see his position as an adaptation of Marxism and Leninism to contemporary global and Turkish

		conditions. I view Mahir Çayan's analyses as an adaptation of Marxism to today's world. In that sense, I also see Leninism as a contributing factor. (P.20) At that time, we were a movement that saw all socialist countries as part of the left and did not dismiss any of them. However, we viewed Cuba and Vietnam with more sympathy. We were a group that believed in the necessity of a democratic revolution before the socialist revolution in Turkey. In other words, we followed a two-stage revolution theory. The elimination of peasantry and feudalism was our priority. We planned to first secure certain democratic rights, and after this democratic revolution, to move on to the socialist revolution. (P.22) I am Kurdish, and I am a socialist. I respect the Kurdistan Independence Party (KIP), but I am not a member. At that time, under those conditions, I supported an independent and united socialist Kurdistan. I was 19 years old then. Look, today I am 66, and I have been involved in politics for 45 years. I have been clear and sincere about it. I do not fear the state. I have no demands from it. (P.23) Previously, when I was in Behice Boran's party, the socialism I read about there taught me about humanity.

			That is where I learned about socialism, about Turks, Kurds—about people, about women. That is where I started to change. Otherwise, I was a narrow-minded Alevi fanatic. That kind of thinking is completely useless. I remained in DDKD (Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Associations) until I was imprisoned. Because of that, I was detained several times—for being against the landlords and tribal leaders.
	Ideology-CURRENT	Current political views and how they've evolved	P.1 I still defend the same ideas I had in the past. I may not take political action, but the way I live within my family and the attitude I present to those around me should contribute something to others. What I thought yesterday, I still think today. Today, I try to live my life while overcoming past mistakes, personal shortcomings, organizational shortcomings, and societal shortcomings. I still read on this basis. I keep reading, still trying to fill the gaps. P.2 Honestly, politics is something I am not capable of doing. We tried it once with CHP and in other places too. There are so many loose and insincere things. People are not genuine, and that contradicts our nature. We cannot survive in such environments. That is why we step back. Normal politics is not something we can engage in. But my real political stance remains the same—Marxist, Leninist.

		The same as it was back then. P.3 I have never seen myself as utopian. However, I have always seen myself as a revolutionary with an infinite belief in revolution. For us, maybe it was a dream, and for others, it might have seemed very utopian, but we still hold the same beliefs. We still believe that the salvation of humanity lies in socialism. There has been no change in my thoughts. I still defend the same ideas. However, I believe that the era we live in has evolved significantly. P.4 For example, I was once asked: "Everyone has given up on being a revolutionary. Haven't you also moved on?" This was a question asked years later. My response was simple—I had done nothing wrong. I fought for many years within Eğitim-Sen for the democratic and economic rights of teachers. Until I retired, I was a member of Eğitim-Sen and actively fought within it. I have a clear conscience on that matter. Even now, when I see something wrong, I react. P.5 I still believe my ideological stance is correct, and I continue to support it with all my strength. P.8 I believe in socialism and its next phase, communism—a classless society. I have never had any doubts about this. If we want to live freely, in harmony with nature, peacefully with other

		people, other cultures, and other societies—if we want to live equally and justly—then I firmly believe that socialism is the way. However, I do not think it should be taken to a fanatical level. Some people approach this issue with fanaticism. I do not. P.12 I believe this world needs to change. And those who will bring about this change are the workers and laborers of this country—and not just this country, but the entire world. I believe that everyone has the right to live in such a world. Even at this age, if I am still fighting, it is because of this belief. If I am still engaged in the struggle, it is because this belief gives me strength. I think this belief will last until I die. Because change is necessary. We should not be condemned to live in such a world—we must change it. P.13 That is my political perspective. I have only worked on developing myself continuously. I have always tried to learn. And as I learned, I have been highly critical at times, and these critiques have been thoroughly discussed. But I have never changed my ideology. I am still the same as I was in 1976-77. P.16 My political ideas have never changed. Only my method of organization has. Because these ideas are not limited to us. The idea of socialism, the ideas of justice and rights, exist independently of individuals. People may

		make mistakes, but the idea itself was never wrong. P.17 I believe this country needs a bourgeois democracy. There are still old, reactionary institutions in this country that have not been abolished. For example, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). P.18 Until today, I have believed in the correctness of this line and have continued to walk on this path. P.19 I considered participating in indirect politics. Especially in the last four or five years, I have come to believe that a new democratic struggle must take root in Turkey. Social democracy must find its place in the country's politics. For this, an advanced democratic struggle is necessary. I believe in organizing for this—whether within CHP, another social democratic party, a union, or a factory, organization is crucial. P.20 After everything I have been through, of course, I have not abandoned my views. I have always stated that I am leftist. I never hid it—neither at work nor in social environments. As I said, I am leftist. P.21 In my view, the organization came under state control. I do not know how that happened. But I no longer wanted to be involved. However, I am still in contact with people from those days—we see each other out of respect for the past.

		P.22 However, I no longer want to see this geography divided—from Edirne to Hakkari. I want the Turks, Kurds, Yazidis, Greeks, Laz, Circassians, and everyone else who lives in this land to live together under equal conditions. It no longer matters to me whether I am Kurdish or not. This state no longer accepts my humanity. Whether I am Kurdish or Muslim does not matter. But after me, it will be your turn—they will call you a socialist, then a social democrat, then a liberal, and eventually, they will intervene with everyone one by one. P.23 In the past, more people wanted an independent Kurdistan. But after everything that has happened, hardly anyone does anymore—only a handful of people still do. Now, people want to live autonomously in a democratic Turkey. They still want a state, they want to live together. And I believe that is the right path.

8.10. Reflexive Notes

Notes on interviewing sensitive topics, (September-November, 2021)

The interviews for this study took place during a period of significant personal and professional challenge. As a researcher exploring politically charged historical events, I found myself working through difficult emotional ground, both my own and that of the participants. This reflexive section aims to elucidate the methodological and ethical considerations that arose during the data collection process.

Rapport and the interviewing environment

Establishing rapport with participants proved to be a delicate balancing act. Initially, I found myself striving to appear mature and intellectually capable. This approach, however, sometimes led to a mechanical style of questioning that hindered genuine engagement. As I gained experience, I learned to balance professionalism with authentic interaction, allowing for more meaningful exchanges.

Emotional challenges and ethical considerations

The emotionally charged nature of the research topic presented significant challenges. Accounts of torture, imprisonment, and loss frequently elicited strong emotional responses from both participants and myself. Maintaining appropriate boundaries proved particularly challenging when interviewing participants with whom I shared political ideologies or had prior acquaintance. In these instances, I often found myself struggling to balance empathy with professional distance. The familiarity and shared experiences sometimes tempted me to engage in more personal exchanges, potentially compromising the integrity of the research process. This dilemma brought home the importance of continuously reflecting on my role as a researcher and developing strategies to maintain a professional demeanor without appearing insensitive or disconnected. It also pointed to the need for clear ethical guidelines when researching within one's own political or social circles.

Ethical dilemmas arose when participants shared information about violent acts they had committed. These revelations challenged my preconceptions and required careful navigation to maintain a non-judgmental stance while acknowledging the gravity of such disclosures.

Methodological insights

The research process revealed intriguing complexities in how participants recounted their traumatic experiences. Contrary to initial expectations, participants generally demonstrated a remarkable ability to recall and articulate chronological details and specific events with precision. However, there was a noticeable reluctance or difficulty in expressing the emotional aspects of their experiences. This phenomenon seemed to stem from the nature of the trauma they had endured, which appeared to create a barrier to emotional engagement or expression. This observation was particularly pronounced among male participants, who rarely, if ever, shared their feelings about the events they described. This pattern of detailed factual recollection coupled with emotional reticence informed my analytical approach, drawing my attention to the need to consider not just the content of the narratives, but also what remained unspoken or emotionally inaccessible. It emphasised the importance of reading between the lines and considering the potential psychological mechanisms at play in the recounting of traumatic experiences.

Power dynamics and researcher positionality

Throughout the research process, I became acutely aware of the power dynamics inherent in the researcher-participant relationship. My position as a researcher investigating events that had shaped participants' lives created an uneasy mix of authority and vulnerability. Participants often held significant social and political capital, yet the act of sharing traumatic experiences placed them in a potentially vulnerable position.

I found myself constantly negotiating these dynamics, striving to maintain academic rigour while showing appropriate empathy and respect. This was particularly challenging when participants expressed political views that conflicted with my own. Maintaining neutrality while building trust required ongoing self-reflection and adjustment.

Cultural sensitivity and intergenerational trauma

The research process emphasised the complex interaction between personal narratives and the wider historical context. While the military coup and its aftermath have been widely discussed in Turkish society, including in academic research, media, literature, and even popular culture, individual experiences and interpretations varied significantly. This diversity

of perspectives challenged any notion of a monolithic narrative about this period in Turkish history.

Contrary to initial assumptions, discussing the military coup and its consequences did not appear to be taboo or dangerous for most participants. Many were quite open about their experiences, reflecting a societal shift towards more open dialogue about this historical period. However, the personal nature of these experiences still required sensitivity in approach and questioning.

The cultural context of political activism in Turkey during the period under study became increasingly apparent throughout the research process. Understanding and accurately representing this context while maintaining analytical distance presented an ongoing challenge. It required constant reflection on my own preconceptions and biases, as well as careful consideration of how to situate individual narratives within the broader historical and cultural landscape.

While intergenerational impacts were observed in some cases, it was not a universal theme across all participants. The varied ways in which participants had processed their experiences and chosen to communicate (or not) with younger generations about this period provided valuable insights into the complex dynamics of collective memory and individual coping strategies in post-conflict societies.

Concluding reflections

This research experience has impacted my understanding of political violence, collective memory, and the long-term effects of state repression. It has reinforced the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics. The process has revealed the limitations of traditional academic approaches in capturing the full complexity of lived experiences of political violence. It has exposed the need for methodological innovations that can better accommodate the emotional and psychological dimensions of such research.

Moreover, this study has brought to light the ethical challenges inherent in researching political violence. It raises questions about the researcher's responsibility in representing

traumatic experiences and the potential for research to either heal or retraumatize participants.

Future research in this area would benefit from interdisciplinary approaches that combine historical analysis with psychological and sociological perspectives. Additionally, developing more robust ethical frameworks for engaging with survivors of political violence remains an important area for methodological advancement.

In conclusion, this reflexive account demonstrates the transformative nature of qualitative research on sensitive topics, not just for participants but also for the researcher. It calls for ongoing critical self-reflection and adaptation throughout the research process.

8.11. Examples from Reflexive Diaries

The following excerpts from my reflexive diaries illustrate the emotional and psychological dimensions of conducting research on political violence and trauma. As detailed in the methodology chapter, maintaining reflexive diaries throughout the research process was important for examining my own positionality, acknowledging emotional responses to participants' narratives, and recognizing how my own subjectivity influenced data collection and interpretation. These entries capture moments of vulnerability, self-doubt, and emotional processing that informed my approach to subsequent interviews and data analysis. They demonstrate the intersubjective dynamics that emerge when researching sensitive topics, particularly when engaging with narratives of violence and its aftermath. By documenting these experiences, I aimed to enhance methodological rigor while acknowledging the inherently relational nature of qualitative research with trauma survivors.

Interview Notes 1: I was very nervous on the first day of the interviews. I was starting with a participant I didn't know personally. After meeting the participant and his wife who came together, we began the interview. However, due to my nervousness, I felt I was struggling to establish a genuine interaction with him. The participant was a well-known local activist who had agreed to meet me at the request of our mutual acquaintances. I was focused on appearing as mature and intelligent as possible. As a result, I started asking questions one

after another like a robot, without really focusing on what the participant was saying. During the interview, I couldn't even hear the participant's voice.

After the interview, while smoking, we all started talking about the old days, about when the participant and his wife were wanted by the police. I was surprised by how they recounted their careless and reckless behaviours from that time as funny anecdotes, and I couldn't help but say something UNFORTUNATELY stupid. I'm very regretful. I spoke as if I had been the one doing activism in the most dangerous times, as if I had taken all the risks, as if I knew the most - none of which was true. The implication behind my words was quite ugly. As if, had they acted a bit more wisely, would we be living in a different country today? When the surprised look on the participant's wife's face turned into a compassionate smile, I felt even more ashamed. But they were understanding of my excitement and inexperience and said a warm goodbye to me.

Hours after the interview ended, a word that had been echoing dully in my mind since I heard it became clear: "execution". The participant had said that some people were executed and that he was the one who executed them. I know this was extremely normal for the political atmosphere of the 1970s. I know that just before the military coup in 1980, 30 people were being killed every day. I've read enough about this period, I've heard similar stories many times. I don't understand why this word affected me so much. I wondered if this was the first time I had ever talked to someone who had killed a person. Very complex feelings... I couldn't understand why I was so interested in this. But then I realised something very silly, very childish. For some reason, I had thought until now that I would immediately recognize someone capable of taking a life. People who could kill should be very bad, disturbing, and strange... But the participant was quite the opposite, he was reassuring. I saw that he doesn't morally approve of the execution action today. He described it as "a wrong form of action". But I didn't feel that he had great remorse. Or he didn't trust me enough to open up all his feelings about this topic. As far as I understood, all that had happened had been rationalised in his mind, over the long years this event had found its place for him. I don't think he took pleasure or pride in the action. He talked about it so vaguely that for a while I didn't understand what we were talking about. He was probably ashamed but not apologetic. Killing someone is a big taboo. Until today, I thought it was something only bad and scary people did, but the participant didn't look scary. This somehow bothered me. I felt like a child who

had never encountered the grey areas of life, who had never been challenged morally and philosophically.

Interview Notes 2: I'm realising that interviewing female participants is particularly challenging for me, in a way I never expected. Female participants seem more successful at turning inward, listening to themselves, and more generous in sharing their feelings with me. Naturally, our conversations with them easily deepen. But beyond this, there's something about their gender in the mistreatment of women. Every time sexual harassment comes up, I can't stop thinking about it for the next few days. All female participants say the same thing: "Still, at least they didn't rape me." I keep repeating the same sentence in my mind, "At least they didn't rape you." How can I even listen to this?

Today, I had an unsettling moment with a female participant. I hope I haven't ruined everything. As the participant was describing how they crammed three people into a cell so small that even one person could barely fit, left in darkness for 10 days, taking turns to sit and rest, and using the same chamber pot, I was nearly vomiting. I couldn't control myself. I can imagine the expression on my face. The woman didn't react at all. I was so ashamed, so angry at myself, but everything happened so suddenly. I wasn't expecting to hear this. I'm grateful that she was understanding; the last thing I'd want is to make her feel bad about herself. Despite having just met today, I thought we were getting along well. At the end of the interview, while dropping her off at home, she invited me for coffee. She thanked me after the interview. I think she was happy to be part of the study.