

The Use of Sport as a Political Tool by AKP

How does the AKP use sport as a political tool to influence the society in Turkey ?

Ömer Onur HERTEM



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Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages,
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Abstract

George Orwell defines sport as ‘The war minus shooting’. Possible to say that, he exaggerated little bit, but definitely sport cannot be defined as a simple physical competition. Sport has two faces. What is visible on the field, is the first and more known face of the sport, the entertainment part, but there is another world behind the field. A world that has an enormous economic and political power. In today’s world, the final of UEFA Champions League or 100 metres race of Usain Bolt, which takes even less 10 seconds to watch, or NBA Finals bring millions of people in front of their televisions all around the world or to stadiums. This is only possible by sport and when there is a huge economic market and many people in the same sphere, the intervention of the politics into this field becomes inevitable. Already sport and politics were close to each other since the ancient times, but globalization and modernization brought this relationship to another level. This is also what happened in Turkey and by the time, politics and sports were intertwined. What is unique in the case of Turkey is the existence of a very dominant political authority, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / AKP*).

AKP is the single ruler political party in Turkey since 2002 and it is the longest period in the Turkish history since the country passed to multi-party political system. The aim of this thesis is showing the use of sport by AKP during these 17 years as a political tool to influence Turkish society. I tried to observe and analyze the intervention of politics in Turkey to the sport world, especially through the municipality sport services and supporting certain football clubs. Municipality services play a direct role in the connection between the party and the Turkish society and this connection has a crucial role in the success of AKP. Understanding the importance of sport in this connection can help us to understand the reason behind the huge sport investments of AKP in recent years. Supporting certain football clubs is the second phase of AKP’s intervention and it aims to keep football fans and the huge economy of football around itself. Since the politicization of sport reached to a very high level and regime backed teams started to play in the top divisions, AKP started to face with a strong opponent in sport arenas. This thesis aims to explain how AKP uses sport as a political tool to influence the Turkish society and how is the sport sphere in the AKP's New Turkey.

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I hope that everything will be fine for my beautiful home, Istanbul.-

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Abbreviations

AKP: Justice and Development Party / *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*

İMM: Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality / *Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi*

CHP: Republicans People Party / *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*

IOC: International Olympic Committee

FIFA: The *Fédération Internationale de Football Association*

TİCİ: Federation of Turkish Training Association / *Türk İdman Cemiyetleri İttifakı*

TSK: Turkish Sport Association / *Türk Spor Kurumu*

FILA International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles

YSK: High Court of Election / *Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*

IHL: Religious vocational high school/ *İmam Hatip Lisesi*

TRT: Turkish Radio and Television Corporation / *Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu*

TÜGVA: Turkey Youth Foundation / *Türkiye Gençlik Vakfı*

IAAF: International Association of Athletics Federations

WTA : Women's Tennis Association

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Introduction

Enes Kanter is a Turkish basketball player and currently plays in Portland Trail Blazers in NBA. This year, Portland had a successful season and reached the conference finals and at the time of writing this thesis, conference finals are still continuing. Kanter thus has a chance to be an NBA champion this year. What a proud moment for Turkish basketball society that a Turkish player plays in the highest level and can be a champion, isn't it? Actually, it is not and the situation is very different from being proud of him. It is not even possible to watch the games of his team in Turkish television channels because they have Kanter in their squad¹. Just to make it clear, since 1990 all the NBA Playoffs games were broadcasted in Turkish televisions alive and basketball, especially NBA, is very popular in Turkey. But what is the reason of this censorship and hate against him? The reason is Kanter's relation with Fethullah Gülen, who is the leader of the Gülen Movement which is a terrorist group behind the failed coup d'état attempt in 15th of July in 2016 according to Turkish state, or possibly to say according their 'good old friends' Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* / AKP). Kanter is not the only athlete who face with this kind of situation. Deniz Naki, Kurdish football player who played in Turkish for several years, was banned from 12 games by the decision of the Turkish Football Association because of a speech he gave after a game. Some days before the game, Naki talked about the Kurdish issue and said '*I don't want people to die. I want peace. We have no other than solution than demanding peace*' and also shared a speech in his social media accounts and said that '*We dedicate this victory as a gift to those who have lost their lives and those wounded in the repression in our land which has lasted for more than 50 days*'. After the Turkish Cup match, they won against Bursaspor². These words were referring to the operations made by the Turkish Army in the southeast part of Turkey in those days. Turkish Football Association claimed that Naki made an ideological propaganda by saying those words and banned him from 12 games. This is not the first and last time Naki or his team, Amedspor, faced with a decision like this.

¹Carlotta Gall, "Enes Kanter Is Playing, so Many N.B.A. Fans in Turkey Can't Watch." *The New York Times*, 15 May 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/05/15/world/europe/enes-kanter-turkey-tv-nba.html.

²"Turkish Player Handed 12-Match Ban for 'Ideological Propaganda' on Facebook." *The Guardian*, 5 Feb. 2016, www.theguardian.com/football/2016/feb/05/turkish-player-12-match-ban-ideological-propaganda.

At the time of writing this paper, Başakşehir football club is fighting to win its first league title in the Turkish league and in the worst scenario, they will finish the league in second place. This success will bring them to play in the UEFA Champions League next year, the biggest arena of football in Europe. It is a big success for a small club like Başakşehir but most interesting part of this ‘success’ story is the history and connections of Başakşehir. It is the former Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) football club which means that this club used all the facilities of the IMM until it has changed its name and became an independent club in 2014. But this independency is not visible in the real life as it is written in the paper. The chairman of the club, Göksel Gümüşdağ is the deputy chairman of IMM, sponsors of this club have close relations with AKP and Erdoğan himself clearly say he has founded this club. In this atmosphere, it is not easy to say that Başakşehir and AKP have no more relations. The list of these kind of examples can be longer and these issues will be analyzed in this paper. These are just clear examples of the current atmosphere of the sport world in Turkey and how sport is intertwined with the politics. This thesis aims to explain this relation between the sport and politics by addressing how political authorities, and especially the current biggest political power in Turkey, the AKP, use sport as a political tool to influence Turkish society?

Sport always has been a tool for the politicians. Main reason of this situation is the power of the sport on people. In different parts of the world, different sports take attention of the people, for instance in India cricket is the most popular sport, in New Zealand it is rugby and in Canada it is ice hockey. What these examples can show that in every different culture, there is a sport which bring thousands of people to stadiums, courts or at least in front of their televisions. Sport has a unique power to bring so many different people together. People from different cultures, backgrounds and parts of the society gather for one goal and it happens thanks to the unifying power of sport. Of course this power attracts the attention of politicians as well. Political ideologies aim to spread their messages to everyone in society and to the other countries and the sport is a great tool for this. Especially after the adaptation of new technologies into sport like satellite TV and the internet, the audience of sport events increased and this change also increased the power of sport. Millions of people watch the same thing all around the world at the same time providing a great opportunity to talk them directly, or sometimes indirectly. Politicians try to use every potential scene where there are people to talk and convince so the sport is obviously one of those areas, both in local and international sphere.

Organizations like Olympic Games, World Cups and other mega sport events have millions of followers all around the world and this makes those events very useful and unique tools for politics to reach millions of people in the same time. On the other hand when it comes to using sport as a political tool in local level, it is possible to see the intervention of politics to sport arenas, even at amateur levels.

Using sport as a political is not a unique way which is used by AKP but the case in Turkey has some particularities. First of all, AKP wins the majority in every elections since it was founded in 2002 and it is the single ruler party in Turkey since that time. It is the longest period in Turkish political history since Turkey established a multi-party system in 1945. It is a huge success in a country which most of the political parties couldn't keep the majority in two elections in a row. This success raises a lot of questions with itself as well. How did the AKP won all these elections as a pretty young party? What is the key of the success of AKP? When 2002 elections happened in Turkey, AKP won the majority as a new born party but the roots of the party were already very deep in Turkish politics. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, Bülent Arınç and Abdüllatif Şener, the four main founders of the party are the students of 'National Outlook' (*Milli Görüş*) ideology of Necmettin Erbakan. Erbakan who founded the 'National Outlook' ideology, which aims to combine the Islamic values with national development, is one of the most important politicians in Turkish history and the main founders of AKP were members of the his political parties, the Welfare Party (1983-1998) and Virtue Party (1997-2001). Even though, they decided to move out from the movement of Erbakan and establish a new path, Turkish society knew them very well. But how did they manage to get more votes than even their former leader Erbakan? AKP has done a very smart move and brought a new perspective to Turkish political life, something different than all the clichés which stuck to the left or right ideology. AKP tries to address the people who were not feeling themselves as part of this ideological conflict. Especially after the coup in 1980, politics was not a safe zone in Turkey and ordinary people in the street preferred to stay out of it. AKP directly talks to these part also and convinced them by staying out of the labels of right wing and left wing³. Famous words of Erdoğan 'Being the voice of voiceless masses' can sum up

³Volkan Yaraşır, and Tarık Aygün, 'Tanrı, Devlet Ve Medeniyet Siyasal İslam Ve AKP' Akyüz Yayın Grubu, December,2002. 147-148

the foundation dynamics of AKP⁴. By the time, the position AKP might have changed and shifted towards to more right wing but Erdoğan already earned a strong support and a very solid group of voters until that time. But how did it happen? How does Erdoğan stay very strong on the slippery ground of the Turkish political world? It is a very deep and long question to answer but what is important for this thesis is the role of strong ties between AKP and the society, and especially the role of sport in this connection.

Understanding well the AKP and also the values of Turkish society is one of the first and main important steps to answer this question. First of all, Erdoğan has drawn a different leader role than his opponents. He grown up in Kasımpaşa, slightly middle or lower middle class neighbourhood in Istanbul, he was a bus driver and also football player. Basically, he was not very different than the ordinary people in the street. He played ‘I am one of you’ card very well and this strategy worked. It remains as one of the main strategies of Erdoğan. In one way, he removed the distance between the leader and people. More important than this, Erdoğan knows the local dynamics and values of Turkish people very well and knows how to reach these people directly. This connection is a crucial factor behind the success of AKP and the party is ready to use any possible means to strengthen up this connection. Obviously, sport could not escape from the powerful influence of AKP and takes a part in this strategy. There are different actors such as municipalities, sports clubs and famous athletes who play important roles in the local level of this process. This thesis will analyze these factors. Who are these actors, how do they become a part of politicization of sport in Turkey and why does the AKP government use these actors? These questions will be answered in the next chapters of this research.

The local level is the one side of the story and the other side of it is the international level. It is a widely accepted fact that sport is a way to gain reputation for nations. In addition to that, the huge economic power of sport gives a chance to the countries to help their economies by mega sport events. There is much convincing research on the role of the sport in international level and reputation and economy is the common points of most of these works.

⁴“Prime Minister Erdoğan Calls on Protesters to Put an End to Demonstrations.” *Daily Sabah*, 10 June 2013, www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2013/06/10/prime-minister-erdogan-calls-on-protesters-to-put-an-end-to-demonstrations.

But what is important as much as the goals of the sport in international politics is the way to reach these goals. At that point, countries may follow different paths according to their priorities, values, economic conditions and sport culture etc. In the case of Turkey, it is possible to say that even though there are some similarities between the policy of AKP and BRICS countries, AKP drawn his own way. In recent years, both BRICS countries and Turkey hosted so many international sport events and were candidate for some others. These events became a tool for these countries to prove their capacity to the world, and earn a reputation; for some of these countries it is also a way to legitimise their political power. In that issue, what is different in Turkey can be the sportive results of these investments. Even though Turkey has highly increased its investments on sport in recent years, there is not any progress and even going backward in so many sports. But why did the investment not pay back? Success is not a direct result of investing a lot, it is more about how and where to invest. On the other hand success and efficiency of the investments and facilities are not easily measurable terms in this case because it is not possible to be sure about the goals of these investments. Government made all of these investments to increase the sport culture in the country, to raise successful athletes in future and earn sportive success in long term or are there different and less sportive goals behind these investments? Analyzing these investments, services and clubs can make it easier to understand the real agenda of the AKP's sport policy and after this analyze, success and efficiency should be questioned again

To sum up, this thesis aims to understand how the AKP uses sport as a tool at local level to strengthen its relations and ties with the people and to change the image of the country and legitimise the party's power at the international level. This is the question that stands at the core of this research. Findings and changes which can happen during the writing period of this work can bring this discussion to another level but one certain fact about the Turkey is that the sport is extremely politicized. This politicization is in every part of the sport. It is on the field, between the fans, in the media and even in the level of management. Looking at the historical development of this process can be a good start to understand the role of sport in Turkey. After that, analyzing the investments of AKP both in local and international level can draw a general picture of AKP's sport policy. Even though there are so many academic researches about the AKP, sport is not taking a big place in most of these works. Understanding how does the AKP use sport as a political tool by the municipality services, founding and supporting clubs or

create a control mechanism over sport is important for understanding both the success of AKP and also the importance of the sport in politics, especially in Turkey.

2. Sport as a political phenomenon

2.1 What is sport? Why and how sport is relevant to politics?

Sport is not a concept that has one clear and certain definition accepted by everyone. Different academicians, sociologists and experts have different ways to define what sport is. This difference has two main factors behind it. The first factor is the perspective. For instance, when one looks at any sport and see only the physical activity in it, there will be a definition focused on the activity. On the other hand, one may add the audience into the definition of sport and this definition can go very different from the one before. The borders of sport are not really thick and clear. Kurthan Fişek made four different definitions of sport from four different perspectives. According to his first definition: sport is a friendly competition arena, peaceful substitute of war and a peaceful safety valve for human nature. The second definition underlines the fact that sport is a tool, which provides physical and mental health to a person and a way to control the stress and the tension of daily life. The third definition uses the words of Ludwig Jahn: *‘Sport is an education tool which organise the national unification by the hands of the patriotic, hierarchical and authoritarian state’*. Fourth definition represents the Marxist perspective *‘Sport is the opium of people’*⁵. These four definitions show us that sport can refer to different meanings depending on one’s point of view. Even political ideologies have different perspectives on the definition of sport.

The second factor regards the changes in the world and sport. The fact that there are multiple definitions of sport and the emergence of new definitions shows us that sport is not a fixed concept. Sport is a variable concept and it is following the changes in the worlds. World is a very different place compare to even one hundred years ago, which is a short period compare to the history of humankind. Economy, social life, art, politics, everything in the

⁵ Mahmut Sert. “Gol atan galip: Futbola sosyolojik bir bakış”(a Sociological View to Football) Baglam Yayinlari, Istanbul, Ekim, 2000: Pp 31

human life experienced some changes. The sport was highly influenced by these changes as it is strongly connected to the all of these areas. There have been changes in the understanding of sports as a result of historical and social development and transformations, as well as important changes in the structure and functions of sports. Due to that, separating sport from social, cultural and even political structure is not really possible in today's world⁶. Sport became a 'power' which controls an enormously big market and brings millions of people from different parts of the world together. If there is a possibility to reach millions of people and control a massive economy, it is obvious that politics would like to take an important role in this equation. Mega events like Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup have enormous budgets and effects on the economies of the host countries. For instance, during the Olympic Games in 2016 in Rio, 541 thousand foreign tourists came to Rio which is almost 160 thousand more compare to the same period of last year⁷. With the strength and influence it creates on the masses, as well as the high financial potential that it has achieved with modernization, Sport is intertwined with politics and their most important common point is influencing the masses⁸. But this relation is not a one way relation which one side uses and dominates the other one without giving anything to the otherside. When politics use sports as a way to reach masses, on the other hand sport, for instance sport clubs or federations, can use the political power that stands behind them as well. It is possible to summarize this relation as politicians need sports to spread their ideas and directors of clubs use this need as a way to extend their power or budget. Personal relations between politicians, like mayors or deputies, and football club presidents in Turkey are obvious examples of this situation.

In today's world, making a general definition which can cover more or less all the other definitions can be more possible and accurate. One of the main reasons of that is there is an international standardization and qualification of the sports thanks to organization like International Olympic Committee (IOC) or The *Fédération Internationale de Football*

⁶ M.Yaşar Sahin & A.Faik İmamoğlu, "Akademisyenlerin ve Milletvekillerinin Spor Siyaset Etkileşime Yönelik Görüşleri." [Views of parliamentarians and academics for the interaction of politics and sports] *Gazi Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi* Nisan 2011, XVI (2); Pp 27

⁷How many tourist came to Rio 2016' <http://www.turizmdatabank.com/haber/olimpiyat-ve-turizm-rio2016yaka-turist-geldi>

⁸ M.Yaşar Sahin & A.Faik İmamoğlu, "Akademisyenlerin ve Milletvekillerinin Spor Siyaset Etkileşime Yönelik Görüşleri." [Views of parliamentarians and academics for the interaction of politics and sports] *Gazi Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi* Nisan 2011, XVI (2); Pp 29

Association (FIFA) other sport associations. These organizations decide common rules and norms for the sports all over the worlds. These organizations especially International Olympic Committee plays the rule-maker and government role in international sport world. The globalization and internationalization of sports has accelerated thanks to the efforts of these organizations like creating common rules and using new technologies in sport field. Also in today's world it is possible to say that these changes indirectly increased the effect and dominance of political power over the sport. This paper will try to show this increase by using examples and statistics.

Relation between sports and politics, or influence of politics over sports in different words, is not a new issue. History of the sport is full of the examples of this relation. In the ancient Greek societies, government encourage their citizens to make sport and staying fit and like that these citizens could be strong warriors in the battlefield. This situation was similar in the Roman Empire as well. Also in Roman Empire, elite groups organize sport events for keeping their soldiers fit and powerful and also keeping the society busy and under control, like organising gladiator fights in the arenas. The role of the sport in Ottoman Empire was not so different than Roman or Greek empires. Sport activities officially began with the foundation of the first the sport lodge in 1358, in Bursa by the Second Sultan of the Empire, Orhan Bey. Wrestling was the main practising sport in this lodge. By the time, Sultans like Mehmed the Second, or Murat the Fourth have opened more sport lodges in different cities such as Edirne, Manisa or Istanbul and added archery and horse riding to the practicing sports in these sport lodges⁹. These sports were keeping the soldiers fit and also preparing them to the battles. Having fit and strong soldiers was the main reason behind the foundation and development of sport lodges in the Empire. Also, most of the Sultans were practicing these sports as a personal hobby too¹⁰. These three sports were the most popular and dominant sports until the end of Empire. All these sports were improving the muscular strength and it was the main importance of these sports. But new technologies changed the structure of war and caused these sports to lose their importance by the time. Muscular strength was important in battlefields but guns and

⁹ Osman İmamoglu, Mehmet Çebi, İzzet İslamoğlu and Bade Yamak 'Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Spor Tekkeleri ve Kulüpleşme'' (Sport lodges and institutionalization in Ottoman Empire) *The Journal of International Social Research* Vol:11 Issue: 58 August 2018: pp 909

¹⁰ Haydar Gölbaşı 'Osmanlı Devleti'nde Spor Tekkeleri' (The Sport Lodges in Ottoman Empire) Iğdir University Journal of Social Science July,2018: pp 45

rifles took its place. Because of that, these sports lost their main *raison d'être*. When modernization and westernization began in the Empire, with the European political and social influences, modern sports also started to replace these traditional sports.

2.2 Beginning of Modern Sports in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey

In the last years of Ottoman Empire, it is possible to say that since the Tanzimat declaration, modernization and westernization started to be more and more effective in the country. Western values became more visible in politics, social life and of course in sports too. As a result of the increasing trade and interaction with the western world, cultural and social values has been imported as well. Western sports arrived to Ottoman Empire in the second half of the 19th century as a result of this situation. Sport lodges were controlling by Sultan which means basically sport was under the control of the authority but those new western sports were different, more liberal and free in the sense of political control mechanism. First sport which has spread quickly into society was football and first football clubs; Apollon and Gymnasio (Panionios), were founded in 1890's by Greeks who live in especially in İzmir and Thessaloniki. Greeks who live in that region had closer relations to the Europeans thanks to their professions, cultures and languages. Also the pressure of Sultan on Thessaloniki and Smyrna, today's Izmir, was considerably less compare to Istanbul¹¹. That's how, they became the bridge between Ottoman Empire and these modern sports. Even though there were some other new sports like basketball, cricket or rugby, football took the biggest attention of the society. Reason of this can be the simplicity of football. One flat field, a ball and basically two goals are enough to play football. In the first years of 20th century, Turks were not really active in the football as a result of the interdiction of football for Muslim Turks by the decision of Sultan Abdulhamid. But they were watching the games during the weekends in the main field in Istanbul called as '*Papazın Çayırı*' (can be translated as the 'Field of the priest') where the stadium of Fenerbahçe stands today. Even the name of the field shows that football was dominated by the minorities in these years. Even though Muslim Turks were not able to play, still football games were social activities for them as well. By the time, more football clubs had been founded and football games had been started to watch by more and more people. As

¹¹Dağhan Irak and Jean-François Polo. "Turkey." *The Palgrave International Handbook of Football and Politics*, 2018, pp. 660., doi:10.1007/978-3-319-78777-0_33.

already mentioned in this work, traditional sports like wrestling, archery etc were under the control of the Sultan but football was different. It was a sport and a social activity in the same time. In addition, Sultan probably saw this social activity that brings hundreds of people together as a potential threat to his power. That could be reason behind the decision of interdiction of the football for Muslim Turks, but this interdiction could not last forever. Even though it was forbidden for them, some Turks, especially highschool students, tried to establish football clubs. In 1901, 'Black Stockings' became the first Turkish team but they could only play one game. Some players were taken into the custody after the game¹². But it was a brave movement and after the short life of 'Black Stockings', Turkish people started to be more active in football and founded some famous clubs like Galatasaray in 1905 and Fenerbahçe in 1907. Foundation of these two Turkish clubs was the clear reflection of Turkish nationalism in football, or generally in modern sports. Main goal of both of these clubs was 'Winning games against non-Turkish teams'. Also, players of these clubs played active role in Istanbul or in battlefields during the Turkish independence war. Even today, these clubs use these nationalist stories quite often as a way to communicate with their supporters.

After the end of the Turkish independence war and foundation of Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkish state took the management of sport in its agenda. But before the foundation of the state, there were already some local efforts for establishing a national organization. In his detailed work, Kerem Toros divided the sport management history of Turkey into three main periods. First period is the non-organised efforts before 1922. Second period can be called as democratization and volunteer organization period with the foundation of Federation of Turkish Training Association (Türk İdman Cemiyetleri İttifakı- TİCİ) in 1922 until 1936. In 1922, TİCİ was founded by the main sport clubs Fenerbahçe, Beşiktaş, Altınordu etc. in Istanbul. It was the main control mechanism on the Turkish sport until 1936. Even though, support and influence of Republicans People Party (CHP) was obvious, TİCİ was an autonomous and independent organisation. After 13 years, TİCİ was resolved in their General Congress due to failures and inadequacies and replaced by Turkish Sport Association (Türk Spor Kurumu/TSK). The third period is the process of stateization which began with the establishment of this association in 1936. TSK was an official asset of CHP. All the athletes

¹²Kerem Toros 'Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Spor Tarihi' (Sport History of Turkish Republic) Gazi University 2015 pp 100

directly connected to CHP as well. Role model of this association was the Jugend (Youth) Organisation of Nazi Party. Some CHP members made observations in Germany and some Nazi Party members came to Turkey for giving ideas to the CHP about this system¹³. At that time, CHP was the only political party in Turkey and there was not a real line between the party and the state. Foundation of TSK and making it an asset of CHP was the end of independent sport management for Turkey¹⁴. This was the situation in Turkey, until the country passed to the multi party system. After this change, CHP has lost its undoubtful dominance on the state, but state kept its influence over the sport management. Parties changed, ideologies changed, politicians changed by the time but sport has always been a tool for politics in Turkey.

2.3 Sport as a political tool

Modern Turkey took the western world as an example and a level to reach and tried to similarise its institutions to the western standards. Sport was a part of this process too and the intervention of politics to the sport has increased day by day. ‘Winning against the non-Turkish teams’ was one of the main values of the first football clubs of Turkey and it indicates the nationalist image of these clubs. Especially during the occupation years after the First World War, these clubs played matches against the teams of the occupation armies and these games increased their political role as they were the national representatives against the French or British soldiers. After the foundation of Turkish Republic, with the foundation of national team and also establishing the Turkish league, the competition shifted to more local level in Turkey. Also economic conditions of Turkey were not good enough to make remarkable success in these years against the superpowers at that time. When the Turkish state was busy with its internal problems and struggling with economic and political issues in the 1930’s, dictators in Europe were already using mega sport events as a way to show their strength to the world. Mussolini’s Italy won the World Cup twice in 1934 and 1938 and the host country of 1936 Summer Olympics was the capital of Nazi Germany, Berlin. Second World War interrupted these mega sport events in the 1940’s and in the second half of the 20th century, politicization of sport, especially in the international level, started to spread out very fast. As already

¹³Ayhan Dever, Burak Cevahircioğlu and Bahadır Demir ‘Sports – politics relationship in Turkey in the early years of the republic’ *Turkish Journal of Sport and Exercise* 2017 Vol: 19 - Issue:1 pp 41

¹⁴Kerem Toros ‘Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Spor Tarihi’ (Sport History of Turkish Republic) Gazi University 2015 pp 62

mentioned in this paper, Modernization and globalization were the main factors of this change. Thanks to new technologies like the Internet and satellite TV, accessibility to sport events have enormously increased: for instance the final game of the UEFA Champions League in May 2014 aired live in more than 200 different countries and reached to 380 million viewers all around the world¹⁵. These numbers are not very possible for any other event than a sport competition because sport is a common culture and interest for everyone. Also thanks to the easier and much broader accessibility, national and international sport events get more and more followers from all over the world. As the sport's domain has expanded, the burdens on it and also its power has increased too. As a result of this change, politicization of sport became more visible in both local and international sphere. So many politicians, also dictators, who were aware of the power of the sport on the public, used sports for increasing their political popularities or spreading their political ideologies¹⁶. Famous quote of Karl Marx: 'Religion is the opium of the people' turned into 'Football is the opium of the people'. The 3F 'Fado (feast) Fadima (religion) and Futebol (football)' of Salazar is an obvious example of this situation. Salazar clearly said that he controlled the people of Portugal during forty years by using this system called as 3F¹⁷. Sport used as a control mechanism on the society by keeping them busy and also entertaining them under the surveillance of state. Also having good relations with the famous athletes increase the reputation of the politicians, especially during the election times. For instance, in the last elections, current president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro shared pictures with famous football players like Neymar, Ronaldinho etc. for using their popularities and increasing his support. Also, during the referendum, for changing the political system in 2015, in Turkey, famous football players like Arda Turan and Burak Yılmaz participated to the Erdoğan's propaganda by shooting videos and sharing these videos in their social media accounts. Having the support of famous players, especially the ones who come from lower or middle class, is a way for the politicians to show the society that they have common points with them. That's an example of using sport by politicians but this is not the way that this relation goes always. When the authorities can not use the sport for their own benefits, they

¹⁵'Worldwide reach of the Lisbon final' uefa.com

<https://www.uefa.com/uefachampionsleague/news/newsid=2111684.html>

¹⁶ M.Yaşar Sahin & A. Faik İmamoğlu, « Akademiyenlerin ve Milletvekillerinin Spor Siyaset Etkileşime Yönelik Görüşleri." [Views of parliamentarians and academics for the interaction of politics and sports] *Gazi Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi* Nisan 2011, XVI (2), 30-31

¹⁷ Mahmut Sert. "Gol atan galip: Futbola sosyolojik bir bakış"(a Sociological View to Football) Bağlam Yayinlari, Istanbul, Ekim, 2000: pp 31

take position against it. Prohibition of football for the Muslim Turks in the last years of Ottoman Empire is a good example to show how different can be this relation if football does not serve to the benefits of authorities. In the next chapters, there will be more examples of this situation such as making regulations on football game tickets or tracking the fans in the stadiums.

Using sport as a way to control and influence the society in local politics is one phase of this situation. Examples from the ancient Greek or Franco era in Spain were showing this situation clearly. The other phase, which is also visible and important as much as the local one, is in the international sphere. In modern world, sport became a peaceful way to defeat your enemies without using weapons. Countries who had problems between each other in the past always see the sport competitions as a way to get their revenge or a way to prove who is actually stronger. For instance, all the sport competitions between Soviet Union and USA during the Cold War era meant much more than ordinary games to these countries. Athletes always felt extreme pressure on their shoulders in these games, as it was a way for showing the world that who is the real superpower. Games between France or England and their old colonies had different meanings for the old colonies. Nationalism and independence are new and still hot topics in these countries. Reaching the success in the sport field, especially having a victory against the colonialist countries, was an important factor for keeping these values alive and a way to prove themselves to the world. Also games between Turkey and Greece always had a huge tension because of their historical rivalry.

Sport became a way to gain reputation for nations and international sport events like World Cup, Olympic Games etc. are the best places for gaining this reputation. But success in the field is not the only way for the states to increase their reputations. Even being the host country of a mega sport event can be a way for this. First of all, host countries make huge investments for these events and being able to do this, these countries should have a strong economy. By hosting a mega event, this country shows the power of its economy and its capacity. These mega events have followers from all over the world and that makes them the best arenas for giving messages to the world. If one has one thing to say, the best would be doing it at the moment when everyone watching. In some examples like FIFA World Cup in Argentina in 1978 or Olympic Games in 1980 in Moscow, authoritarian states tried to use these

opportunities for improving their international image or legitimizing their political systems¹⁸. These examples were visible and in front of the eyes of everyone but sometimes these messages were hidden in the details. For instance Rıza Kayaalp, three times world champion wrestler from Turkey, carried the Turkish flag in the opening ceremony of 2016 Rio Olympics. He is one of the most successful athletes in the Turkish delegation and it looked like fair that he represented his country by carrying the flag. But there is one important detail about him. During the Gezi Protests in Turkey in 2013, Kayaalp shared racist tweets from his social media accounts against the protestors¹⁹ and suspended six months by the decision of the International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles (FILA)²⁰. Kayaalp deleted his tweets after the reactions and appealed to FILA. His ban lifted by the decision of FILA as it was not sure that these tweets were written by him. But he clearly said that he was the one who wrote those tweets and it was a ‘misunderstood’ when he gave an interview to the Anatolian Agency about these tweets. It is open to discuss if the decision of giving the flag to Rıza Kayaalp was just because of his success in the wrestling or it was an indirect way of supporting his ideas and standing behind him. All these examples can show that sport is not just a simple physical activity. It is an important factor for the economy and politics, as a result of its huge economic power and its influence on the people.

2.4 Literature Review

The sociology of sport became an independent discipline in the 1960’s and the definition of sport has continued to change since that time. Arıtan claims that the sociology of sport defines sport as a social phenomenon experienced by individuals living in a particular social and cultural environment through emotions and thoughts²¹. In today’s world, accepting sport as a part of social life is a common idea and this idea brings us to another level, sports-political relationship or the politicization of sport. In their article Sahin and Imamoğlu, try to show the level of this relation by asking questions to academicians and politicians. 93 per cent

¹⁸ ‘Jean-François Polo, « Turkish sports diplomacy in the service of renewed power? The uses and limits of Turkey’s “sport power” », European Journal of Turkish Studies [Online]: pp 2 | 2015,

¹⁹ Some of his tweets “*You just leave the streets to Armenians, you f**ing looters*” and “*F**k you traitors*”.

²⁰ ‘Turkish wrestler suspended six months for racist tweets’ *Hurriyet Daily News* August, 2013
<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-wrestler-suspended-six-months-for-racist-tweets-52320>

²¹ Canan Koca Arıtan, “Spor Sosyolojisi” [Sociology of Sport] Hacettepe Üniversitesi, *Spor Bilimleri ve Teknolojisi Yüksekokulu SBR 129 Spor Bilimleri ve Rekreasyon*, 2012: pp7

of the academicians and 70 per cent of the politicians who participated this research accept that there is a relation between sports and politics in Turkey²². This situation is quite similar in different countries but what is unique about Turkey is the current political ‘stability’. AKP is the single ruler party in Turkey since 2002 and it is a very long term for a democratic country. There are many different factors behind its political success and this success takes the attention of both local and international media and academia. In her article, Narlı claims that AKP has supporters from very different parts of society like urban poor, conservative business elite or new middle class²³. This explanation shows a general idea about AKP: it is a political party that understands well the dynamics, desires and values of Turkish society. As the role of politicization of sport becomes clearer in this relation, more academicians and experts started to work on this issue. It is possible to say that mega sport events, the political reactions of fans, especially after the Gezi protests in 2013²⁴, football teams with a political image like Başakşehir or Amedspor and AKP’s ‘short term success’ oriented sport policy are the main subjects of the actual works. I try to explain how these issues were explained in academic articles. I found what the common missing points of these works are.

The Gezi Protests can be seen as a milestone in the modern history of Turkey. Gezi was a unique experience for Turkish society in so many ways. Fans of Istanbul’s three enemy brothers’ teams, Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray and Beşiktaş came together in this protest and formed new group that they called ‘Istanbul United’. This can be quite normal for some societies but it is not an image you see very often in Turkey. ‘Istanbul United’ and the active role of the football fans during the protests took the attention of both the society and academia. In his numerous works, Dağhan Irak analyses the profile of these fan groups and their reactions especially after Gezi Protests. He claims that politicization of football fans began with the match-fixing operation in third of July in 2011²⁵ and Gezi protests brought all these people

²²M.Yaşar Şahin & A. Faik İmamoğlu, « Akademisyonerlerin ve Milletvekillerinin Spor Siyaset Etkileşime Yönelik Görüşleri." [Views of parliamentarians and academics for the interaction of politics and sports] *Gazi Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi* Nisan 2011, XVI (2): pp 30-31

²³Nilüfer Narlı, "Who Voted: Diversity in the Electoral Support for the Justice and Development Party (AKP)." *Insight Turkey* 4, no. 4 (2002): pp 13

²⁴ Gezi protest is civil movement that began as a environmentalist movement and turned to be a very big movement against AKP government and spread to all country. The roles of football fans in the protests will be analyzed in the next chapters of the thesis.

²⁵Important figures like Aziz Yıldırım, chairman of Fenerbahçe, sport director and coach of Beşiktaş and some other were arrested for match-fixing in 2011. This issue will be explained in the coming parts of the thesis

from different clubs together²⁶. In 2015, Amsterdam University Press published a book with this title *'Everywhere Taksim: Sowing the seeds for a New Turkey at Gezi'* and collected articles about the Gezi protests in this book. Irak's article in this book is directly about the football fans at Gezi but also most of the articles have some parts related to this subject, as football fans have played an important role in the movement. Interviews with the protestors and fans, statistics, reactions of media during the protests and social media are the main information sources for these researches and these sources provide useful informations for this subject.

The big clubs of Istanbul have millions of fans and there are strong networks between these fans both in real life and in social media. This popularity and accessibility make this topic easier to follow and analyse. Except the big clubs of Istanbul, Amedspor and Başakşehir football club take the attention of academia as well because of their political image. Başakşehir is the former Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality football club and Erdoğan clearly says that he founded this club and very happy about its situation nowadays²⁷. Amedspor is also the former Diyarbakır Municipality football club and changed its name to 'Amed' that is the name of the city in Kurdish and became a way to represent Kurdish identity in Turkish football. Dağhan Irak claims that this situation is similar to the other minority clubs in the world like Athletic Bilbao for the Basques and Barcelona for the Catalans in Spain or like FC Ararat Tehran for the Armenians in Iran²⁸. It is important to analyse these two clubs fans and players for understanding their real profile. Obviously, Amedspor, Başakşehir and fan groups like Carşı are important examples to show the level of political influence on sport but it is important to ask why Erdoğan wants to take a very active role in this field. What are the benefits for him? It is not easy to find certain answers to these questions but still they should not be ignored by the researchers. Football takes the biggest part in these researches as it takes the biggest attention of the society and media. It is understandable that football is taking the lion's share but on the other hand all the other sports shouldn't be forgotten.

²⁶ Dağhan Irak, "Istanbul United: Football Fans Entering the 'Political Field.'" In *Everywhere Taksim: Sowing the Seeds for a New Turkey at Gezi*, edited by David Isabel and Toktamış Kumru F. :pp 147. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015.

²⁷ "Erdoğan FC: A soccer dream deferred" *Al Monitor* published in February 2016 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/02/turkey-erdogan-dream-delayed-till-the-end-elections.html>

²⁸ Dağhan Irak, "Kurdish Identity and Sports in Turkey: the Case of Amedspor" *Society Register* vol 2, 2018. pp 65

Another important issue is the efforts for reviving the traditional sports. Especially in recent years, traditional sports like traditional archery, wrestling etc started to become popular thanks to the organizations of World Ethnosport Confederation. Bilal Erdoğan, son of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is the president of this confederation and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality officially supports the events of this confederation. Following these efforts and questioning their real agenda can show us how sports and politics intertwined in Turkey and also there are not enough academic works on that subject yet.

Another main subject for researchers who work on the sports-politics relationship, is the mega events such as Olympic Games, World cups etc. There are two main phases of these events to analyze. The first one is hosting the event and second one is the sporty success. Mega events are the biggest example of the power and value of modern sports and hosting these events means a lot to the host cities and even countries. Olympic Games always take the attention of researchers from different disciplines. Sociologists, economists, sport experts, geographers, political scientists and researchers from other disciplines try to analyse Olympic Games. For instance, Susan Brownell tries to analyse eurocentrism by using the Olympic Games as an anthropologist²⁹ and Zimbalist prefers to focus on the economical impact of the games in his article³⁰. These examples can show us that Olympic Games and all other mega sport events cannot be seen as the domain of a single academic discipline. These mega events have impact on a lot of different spheres such as economy, politics, social life and even human rights.

Erdoğan's strong interest and wish to host an Olympic Games in Istanbul has increased the awareness of society and also academicians on that issue. First of all, it is important to understand why a government would like to host an Olympic Game. Rose and Spiegel give answers to this question in their article, for instance gaining reputation and promoting the city and the culture³¹. After this question, the second one can be more specific and ask directly why

²⁹Susan Brownell, "The View from Greece: Questioning Eurocentrism in the History of the Olympic Games." *Journal of Sport History* 32, no. 2 (2005). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43610397>.

³⁰Andrew Zimbalist, "Going for Gold: The Financing and Economic Impact of the Olympic Games." In *Circling the Bases: Essays on the Challenges and Prospects of the Sports Industry*,. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bszsn.10>.

³¹ Andrew K Rose, and Mark M. Spiegel. "The Olympic Effect." *The Economic Journal* 121, no. 553 (2011): pp 653. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41236997>.

Erdoğan want to host the Olympic Games in Istanbul? Even though their work may answer so many questions, each country has its own dynamics and combining the findings of Rose and Spiegel with the current political and economic situation of Istanbul can give us a more accurate image about the candidacy of Istanbul for Olympic Games. For instance, Bilsel and Zelef explains the impacts of the mega events to the cities in their work by using the example of Istanbul³². In recent years, the amount of the articles about the candidacy of Istanbul for Olympics Games has increased as a result of popularity of this topic. On the other hand, Turkey hosted so many different events in recent years such as FIBA World Championship, FIFA U20 World Cup and applied for more in future. Olympic Games is clearly a bigger event than these event in the economic and cultural scale but hosting all these events and applying for more can show a lot about the sport policy of AKP. Another missing point, which takes an important place in this paper, is the sport investments of the municipalities. These investments increase each year especially in Istanbul, and it is very important to observe and follow these changings. What are the motives and reasons of these investments? Is it possible to see them as only sport investments or do they have a hidden ideological or political agenda? There is almost no research on that issue and that makes it difficult to find real datas and statistics but for the ones who want to understand the success and agenda of AKP, it is a crucial topic.

The relation between sports and politics, both in local and international level, has started to take more attention, in academia as sports became more global and effective but there are still some topics which could not take enough attention yet. In the case of Turkey, political influence on amateur sport, especially on amateur football, real motives of AKP for using the mega events, refreshing the traditional sports and sport investments of municipalities can be these topics. This paper tries to explain the politicization of sport in Turkey, especially under the AKP influence, by following these missing points.

³² Candaş Bilsel & Halûk Zelef "Mega Events in Istanbul from Henri Prost's master plan of 1937 to the twenty-first-century Olympic bids", *Planning Perspectives*, 2011, 26:4,

3.Methodology

Field Work

For making observations and interviews, I was in Istanbul from the first of February until the end of April. As it is my hometown, I didn't have any problem about accesbilty and communication in the city during my fieldwork. During this time, I tried to met with some professors, directors and trainers of the municipality sport facilities. Also I tried to contact with some high ranking municipality officers. I couldn't reach most of the academians but I could meet with two very important academians of this field, Cem Tinaz and Daghan Irak. Their comments and critics were very useful for giving a shape to my ideas. Almost all the directors and trainers I met, used similar phrases and couldn't have a lot informations except the number of users and working hours of the facility. But still these interviews were very useful to understand the general mindset of the municipality sport services. Also I had a chance to talk with the users of these facilities. These conversations were more in a friendly manner and just talked about the facility and if they were happy with these services. I tried to get brochures from each facility I visited, and tried to analyze the images and texts in these brouchers. As it was the local election period in Turkey, I had a lot of different sources to follow. Also there are not so many academic works I could use for the part about the municipality sport services, the election period provided me a lot of sources and a new point of view.

Difficulties

Language was not a barrier as Turkish is my mother tongue. Also it helped me to create a confidence especially when I talk with the municipality workers. Most important thing which happened during my fieldwork was the local elections in Turkey. This election had very positive and in the same time very negative effects on my research. In the positive side, there were meetings of candidates everyday in different neighborhoods so I had a chance to follow their agendas, especially their projects and ideas about sport. Especially in Ankara and Istanbul, sport one of the main discussion topics during the campaign. There were election bureaus, stands or buses of political parties everywhere in the city and I went to some of these places to talk with people and collecting documents such as brochures and journals about the candidate

and his/her projects. Candidates were in discussions in TV channels or in social media every day and following them was useful for my research. I tried to analyze their speeches for catching some hidden messages between the lines. Debates and discussion between the candidates provided me more informations than most of my personal connections. On the other hand, municipalities were always busy and it was impossible to find a high ranking officer to talk. They were always in some meetings or in campaign offices. At the end, cancelling the results and deciding to make a re-election caused me to lose all my meetings with municipality officers in April as most of these officers will continue to campaigns.

Ethical Implications

Two amateur football players who talked to me about the politics intervention to the amateur football wanted to keep their names anonymous. They didn't want to cause any trouble to themselves and their friends or teammates. Also I decided to keep some informations out of this thesis as these information may cause opening a case against some people and football clubs. Even though some of these informations are widely known and could be very useful for my research I had to keep them out. Except this one, I did not face with any ethical issue

4. The sport policies of AKP's 'New Turkey'

'New Turkey' is a term that has been used by Erdoğan very often in his speeches and it can be defined as reconstruction of the political, cultural, religious and social system of Turkey³³. Especially after important events such as coup d'état attempt in 15th of July or Gezi Protests, Erdoğan mentioned the construction and the importance 'New Turkey' quite often. He always indicates 2023 as a turning point for the future of the country but actually Turkey passed through very changes since Erdoğan came to power such as removing the title of 'Prime minister' and establishing a new political system called as 'Turkish style presidency'³⁴. This reconstruction is not only in the political sphere, but also in art, media, social life and sport too.

³³Raquel Santos Fernandes, and Isabel Estrada Carvalhais, "Understanding Erdogan's leadership in the « New Turkey »". *janus.net e-journal of International Relations*, Vol. 9, N°. 1, May-October 2018. pp 89

³⁴Fadi Hakura, "Turkey's Erdogan Is Creating a New Type of Presidency." CNN. December 14, 2016 <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/14/opinions/erdogan-turkey-president-de-facto-hakura-opinion/index.html>

In addition, what is important as much as making these changes, is convincing the people for them. This chapter aims to analyze the reconstruction of the sport sphere and also role of the sport as a political tool to influence the people during the construction of ‘New Turkey’. As AKP has different agendas for international and local sport policies, it would be useful to separate these policies

4.1 International goals of AKP’s sport policies

In recent years, BRICS countries made big investments for hosting mega sport events. They hosted some of the biggest sport events and also still fighting to get more in future. There is a little table showing the mega sport events happened in BRICS since 2008 and also future events.

B	Brasil	2014 FIFA World Cup 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio
R	Russia	2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi 2018 FIFA World Cup
I	India	2010 Commonwealth Games Foundation of Cricket Premier League in 2009 in India Potential candidate for 2030 Asian Games and 2032 Summer Olympics ³⁵
C	China	2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing
S	South Africa	2010 FIFA World Cup Candidate for 2019 and 2023 Rugby World Cup but couldn’t win ³⁶

³⁵Desk, League Sport. "India to Bid for 2026 Youth Olympics and 2032 Olympics." League of India. April 20, 2018. <https://leagueofindia.com/sports-league/india-to-bid-for-2026-youth-olympics-and-2032-olympics/>.

³⁶ Mick Cleary, “France Win Battle to Host 2023 Rugby World Cup in Shock Upset as Favourites South Africa Snubbed.” *The Telegraph* 7 Nov. 2018, www.telegraph.co.uk/rugby-world-cup/2017/11/15/francewin-battle-host-2023-rugby-world-cup-shock-upset-favourites/.

From the first impression, it is possible to say that Justice and Development Party's (AKP) international sport policy is not very different from the BRICS countries. Turkey followed exactly the same strategy and increased its investments on sport. For instance, constructed new stadiums, facilities and applied for hosting mega sport events such as Olympic Games and European Football Championship. Hosting a mega event, especially an Olympic Game, is a huge economic burden for the host countries but what does motivate Turkey and also BRICS countries for hosting the Olympics? Answer of this question is hidden in the effects and the power of sports and this event also. Hosting an Olympic, or another mega sport event, means earning reputation both in International and local sphere³⁷, increasing the national pride in the society, taking a step through the upper class countries and also to prove itself to the world, both economically and politically. Even though it costs a lot to host an Olympic Games, it also helps the national economy in long term if this country can use this opportunity well³⁸.

Sport can be seen as a quick and effective way for reaching these goals about the national pride and unification, international reputation and advertisement of country and long-term economic goals and politicians try to use this tool quite often. Istanbul applied for hosting the games for the Olympic Games in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2020. In all these applications, last one for 2020 Olympic Games has a different role and importance. In his article, Cem Tinaz, an academician and the director of Sport Management Programme at Bilgi University, claims that the first four trials were not really aiming to host the games but were trying to increase the awareness in the local level and making the advertisement of the city in international level by putting its name to the list. On the other hand, candidacy of Istanbul for 2020 was really aiming the Olympic Games. At the end, Istanbul reached to the final vote for 2020 Olympic Games but lost against Tokio in the final³⁹. Even though it takes the biggest

³⁷ Jennifer Chan, "More Than Just A Game: The Soft Power Politics of Sports and the 2018 Olympic Games." *MIR*, May, 2017. www.mironline.ca/just-game-soft-power-politics-sports-2018-olympic-games/.

³⁸ Sixth Tone. "Why Are BRICS Countries Hosting All the Global Events?" August 09, 2016. <http://www.sixthtone.com/news/1161/why-are-brics-countries-hosting-all-global-events>.

³⁹ Cem Tinaz, & Becca Leopkey, & Paul Salisbury, (2018). *Kaybederken Kazanabildik mi? İstanbul'un Başarısızlıkla Sonuçlanan Olimpiyat Adaylıklarının Çıktılarının İncelenmesi (Did We Win While We Lost? Examining Outcomes of Istanbul's Unsuccessful Olympic Bids)* pp 213

place in the agenda of AKP, hosting the Olympic Games was not the only goal. In recent years Turkey hosted so many different events such as 2010 FIBA World Championship, 2013 FIFA U20 World Cup, WTA Masters Tournament in Istanbul in 2011-2013, 2012 IAAF World Indoor Championships, Formula 1 Race from 2005 until 2011 and this list can be longer. In the website of the metropolitan municipality, all the sports events that happened in Istanbul is visible and that can give a brief idea about the amount of the investments⁴⁰.

Obviously, being active and visible with the sport events are positive factors for a city but hosting a lot of events and building facilities are enough to say that AKP has a successful international sport policy? Short Formula 1 journey of Istanbul can give an answer to this question. Istanbul was in the calendar of Formula 1 between 2005 and 2011, but is it a good idea to bring Formula to Istanbul? Clearly Formula 1 is the most popular and important motor sport but does Turkish society have this culture?

Cem Tınaz believes that Formula 1 was a wrong start for the beginning of motor sports in Turkey. Instead of that, making investments to the young Turkish racers and supporting local events could create a culture in the society and also increase the popularity of these sports⁴¹. Thanks to this culture, when Formula 1 race come to Istanbul one day, it would take more attention than it took before. But instead of putting long term goals for reaching the success in the sport field, politicians preferred to save the day for themselves. At that point, it is difficult to measure success as it is not possible to know what does success mean in the AKP's agenda? What kind of success does AKP aim to reach? If it aimed to create a sport culture, increase the popularity of Formula 1 in that example and also raising important drivers to represent the country in future, than it is possible to say that it was not a successful policy by looking at the results so far. On the other hand, if spending millions of liras and bringing Formula 1 race to Istanbul was aiming to use the popularity and reputation of this event as a political tool, than the criteria of being successful is totally changing. According to the realities of sport, losing its place in the calendar of Formula 1 is a clear failure but if AKP planned to use the Formula 1 during these years for a different goal, than it might be seen as 'successful' organization for them. For instance, in 2006, the winner of the race in Istanbul Park, Felipe Massa handed his award by Mehmet Ali Talat the leader of the Northern Cyprus (Turkish part of the Cyprus) at

⁴⁰ 'Sport Organizations of IMM' <https://www.ibb.istanbul/SitePage/Index/199>

⁴¹ Personal connection with Cem Tınaz

that time. This podium ceremony caused a little crisis between the Turkish, as Northern Cyprus is not officially recognised state by the international authorities. The *Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile* (FIA) decided to give the biggest financial penalty of the organization history, five million dollars, to Turkey as a result of damaging the political neutrality of the event mixing politics with sport⁴². In addition to this situation, number of spectators decreased each year in Istanbul and at the end, Istanbul stayed out of the Formula 1 calendar in 2012⁴³. This is a very clear example of the point of view of the AKP on mega sport events, using these events as propaganda tools or giving messages through these events, just like giving the Turkish flag to Rıza Kayaalp, wrestler who got penalty because of his racist speech, in the opening ceremony of the Rio Olympic Games⁴⁴.

Lost in the candidacy for the last Olympic and European Championship created a desperation in the society for the future events also but a big part of the society looked at these failures from a different point of view and found different reasons behind. This is not a surprise especially after some speeches of Erdoğan and other politicians after the decision of IOC. He claimed that the decision of IOC was not fair and this decision excluded 1.5 billion Muslims all around the world. Suat Kılıç, minister of sport, said that the opponents started to celebrate already and so many journalist found the Gezi Protesters and political opponents responsible of this failure⁴⁵. What is important to see here is that Erdoğan could use this situation in both cases. If Istanbul could become the host city of Olympic Game, Erdoğan would be the leader who brought this mega event to Istanbul and could use this event as a way to increase his reputation and legitimising his power in international sphere. On the other hand, when Istanbul lost, he used it as a way to create a 'victimization' by convincing his followers that being Muslim was the reason of this failure. Victimization is a tactic that has been used by Erdoğan quite often in his political life and he does not miss any opportunity to announce himself as a

⁴²Elveren, Muammer. "KKTC'yi Dünya Tanısın' Dediler, 5 Milyon Dolar Rekor F1 Cezası Yediler." Haberler. September 20, 2006. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/kktc-yi-dunya-tanisin-dediler-5-milyon-dolar-rekor-f1-cezasi-yediler-5114172>

⁴³"4 Yılda Bıktık!" Haberturk.com. May 13, 2008. <https://www.haberturk.com/spor/futbol/haber/73821-4-yilda-biktik>

⁴⁴Hurriyetdailynews.com. "Turkish Wrestler Suspended Six Months for Racist Tweets - Turkish News." Hürriyet Daily News. August 12, 2013. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-wrestler-suspended-six-months-for-racist-tweets-52320>.

⁴⁵"8 Gazeteden 14 Köşe Yazarı İstanbul'un Olimpiyatları Neden Kaybettiğini Yazdı." T24. <https://t24.com.tr/haber/8-gazeteden-14-kose-yazari-istanbulun-olimpiyatlari-neden-kaybettiğini-yazdi,239010>.

victim and gather his followers around this idea⁴⁶. This image of ‘being the victim of injustice and discrimination of the western world’ opens new doors to Erdoğan. Just as he showed Shanghai Cooperation as an alternative to the never-ending European Union membership process of Turkey⁴⁷, he uses the traditional sports and Islamic sport organizations as an alternative to the western oriented mega sport events. For instance, Turkey sent only 35 athletes to the first Islamic Solidarity Games, which was hosted by Saudi Arabia in 2005 and won only 7 medals. Just after 12 years, Baku hosted the third Islamic Solidarity Games and this time Turkey sent 350 athletes and became the second biggest team in this organization. National television of Turkey broadcasted the games and popularity of the games has increased in Turkey. More important than this, Minister of Sport and Youth, Çağatay Kılıç announced that Istanbul would host the upcoming Islamic Solidarity Games in 2021⁴⁸.

These kind of regional or cultural organizations can be useful to keep the local culture alive and to have better relations with the neighbours and culturally similar countries. But, on the other hand, it could be a big mistake to accept these events as alternatives to the events like Olympic Games or continental championships as there is huge a gap between the economies and sport qualities of these cultural events and mega sport events. Actually, AKP follows the similar strategy in the local level by using the traditional sports, which will be explained in detail in the coming parts of this thesis, and this strategy can be medup as covering the failures and weakness by using lower class and unrelated alternatives for impressing society. This strategy could work in a local level for a while but at the end, it would bring Turkey to a ‘lower league’ both in the economy and the sport. A country, with only 8 medals in the last Olympic Games, two of these medals which came from the “transfer of allegiance of athletes”⁴⁹, has to focus on the reasons of this unsuccessful result and make sport investments for the coming years. But instead of this, showing the medals in the Islamic Solidarity Games as an

⁴⁶"İstanbul'un Erdoğan'lı 25 Yılı: Mağduriyet, İcraat, Semboller Ve Rant - BBC News Türkçe." BBC News. March 28, 1970. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-47718667>.

⁴⁷Stepanov, Georgy, and Kommersant. "Erdogan Looks to SCO as Alternative to EU." Russia Beyond. November 22, 2016. https://www.rbth.com/world/2016/11/22/erdogan-looks-to-sco-as-alternative-to-eu_649919.

⁴⁸"İslami Dayanışma Oyunları 2021'de İstanbul'da." Al Jazeera Turk - Ortadoğu, Kafkasya, Balkanlar, Türkiye Ve çevresindeki Bölgeden Son Dakika Haberleri Ve Analizler. <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/islami-dayanisma-oyunlari-2021de-istanbulda>.

⁴⁹ Athletes who compete for a country different than the one they born in called as “Transfer of allegiance of athletes”

international success is creating a huge illusion in the eyes of the society. If, at first, this illusion can help AKP to maintain the image of a successful and strong country at the local level, this is only temporary and cannot last forever in today's world. Instead of exaggerating the small success and presenting it to the society as a big achievement, focusing on real long-term goals and making investments for these goals should be the sport policy of government but for the moment, like many other political actors, long term goals are not so attractive for AKP as well.

In general, AKP sees sport, athletes and sport events as tools to benefit from their popularity and power on the masses both in international and local level. All the efforts for hosting the mega sport events are aiming the similar goals than the BRICS countries such as increasing the reputation both in local and international sphere, legitimising its power and also helping the economy in long term. Earning an international reputation thanks to sports is the fact of today's world but the biggest difference of Turkey is that is not happening in the field. All these huge investments since 2002 show that AKP has an agenda on sport but there is any changing in the results yet. For instance, Turkish football teams are in extreme debt, the Turkish national football team has not been able to even participate to the FIFA World Cup since 2002, and the Turkish weightlifting federation was banned one year from international organizations because of a systematic doping issue⁵⁰. All these examples and more of them show that AKP's sport policy is not giving any good results in the field so far. Actually, it would be very unrealistic to expect a huge success, with the meaning in the sport, from this policy because spending enormous money for constructing big facilities cannot bring the success directly. But of course constructing a huge stadium is much easier and quicker than constructing a sport culture in the society and AKP prefers the easy way. This strategy might work and Turkey can host a world cup one day just like Qatar will host in 2022 but who knows when will be the next time Qatar will play in the world cup? It is all about the politicians' decisions, either permanent success that may come in the long term or temporary visibility or reputation, which is easier in the short term

4.2 Local goals of AKP's sport policies

⁵⁰Rfe/rl. "World Weightlifting Body Suspends Nine Countries For Doping Violations." RadioFreeEurope / RadioLiberty. September 30, 2017. <https://www.rferl.org/a/weightlifting-9-countries-suspended/28766338.html>.

As a political party which has won the majority in the every elections since it has been founded in 2002, it is clear that AKP is a very successful political party, maybe the most successful one in the history of Turkey. As a result of its huge success, big effect both in local and international sphere and famous leader Erdoğan, there are many analyses and works about the success of AKP. These analyses find many different reasons behind this success like cultural factors, pressure era after the coup d'état in 1980 in Turkey, lack of the democracy culture etc. Together with all the other reasons, having strong and direct connection with the society, especially middle and lower middle class is a factor of the success of AKP⁵¹. It is important to keep this tie alive and strong and AKP follows a strategy based on using every tools for that goal.

The current situation of the Turkish media is a clear example of this strategy. There is a group of television channels, radios and newspapers, which are calling as 'AKP's Pool Media' by the opponents and this group has very close ties with the AKP⁵². It is quite often to see that, newspapers in this group use the same title as they received an order from a center⁵³. According to the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK), Turkish people spend 3 hours 34 minutes each day by watching television and it is almost 4 hours for the lower educated part of the society⁵⁴. AKP knows the importance of all these media organs for the society very well and uses them very effective as a way to contact people directly and manipulate them. Like the media, sport constitutes a big part of people's life, whether they are players or followers. It is a significant tool that AKP can use in order to influence the society, and strengthen its ties with it.

The second dimension of the AKP's sport policy is the local policies and this phase can be categories under two main title. First are the municipality sort services, and second, which took more attention in the academia, is the intervention of politics to the sport arenas throughout

⁵¹ Volkan Yaraşır, and Tarık Aygün. *Tanrı, Devlet Ve Medeniyet Siyasal İslam Ve AKP*. Akyüz Yayın Grubu, 2002.

⁵² Esra Arsan. "'Yeni Türkiye'nin Sistematik Yalan Üretim Merkezi: Havuz Medyası.'" Marka, Takva, Tuğra: AKP Döneminde Kültür Ve Politika Eds: Kemal İnal, Nuray Sancar, Ulaş Başar Gezgin: pp 3

⁵³ Solhaberportali. "'Manşetlerle Buraya Gelmedik' Diyen Erdoğan, Havuz Medyasını Unuttu Mu?" SoL Haber Portalı. May 03, 2015. <http://haber.sol.org.tr/turkiye/mansetlerle-buraya-gelmedik-diyen-erdogan-havuz-medyasini-unuttu-mu-115440>.

⁵⁴ <https://www.rtuk.gov.tr/assets/Icerik/AltSiteler/televizyonizlemeegilimleriarastirmasi2018.pdf>

the sport clubs, athletes and directors. The relation between sport and politics is a very visible and popular subject both for media and for academia but surprisingly the role of the municipality sport services do not take a big part in these works. Both local and international researches did not give almost any attention to this subject. Erdoğan's first important role in Turkish politics was the Mayor of Istanbul and as it is the city where he grown up, he mentions a lot his love and his interest to Istanbul. Definitely, this 'love' is not something only emotional, but it is also about the importance of Istanbul as the most crowded, developed and important city of the country. AKP controls the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) since 2004⁵⁵, and ruling the biggest city of a country for a very long period gives a huge opportunity to this political party. In these years, AKP made many big investments on transportation, social services and of course on sport services as well.

4.3 Sport services of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

First, sport investments of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) and local municipalities should be given for understanding the size of these investments and the importance of this sector for the municipalities. According to the datas from the website of IMM, there were twenty-three sport facilities in Istanbul under the control of the metropolitan municipality before 2004, the year of the first local election of AKP and since that time AKP controls the IMM. For the moment, this number has reached to one hundred five and also ten facilities are under construction⁵⁶. In addition to these facilities, also local municipalities have some services and facilities under their control such as swimming pools, tennis courts, athleticism tracks, and football, basketball and volleyball courts. In addition, the municipalities organize summer and winter sport schools, youth camps and scout camps. Just like in the international scale, increasing investments and services have a positive first impression but do these services have only goals about sport and are these for everyone who live in the city? It is not easy to give a clear correct answer to this question but analyzing the services and trying to understand the role of these services can give a better opinion.

⁵⁵ In the writing time of this paper this period could be over, as there will be a re-election in Istanbul in 23rd of June, 2019

⁵⁶ <http://www.istanbulsporenvanteri.com/tr/ibb-spor-yatirimlari.html>

It is useful to start with analyzing the facilities that were constructed after AKP won the local elections in Istanbul in 2004. In total IMM constructed eighty-seven facilities since 2004. According to the last local elections results, sixty-three of these new facilities are located in the neighborhoods under the control of AKP municipalities. It means, 71 per cent of the new facilities were constructed in these neighborhoods. On the other hand, only 9.5 millions of people, which is the 63 percent of the total population of Istanbul, live in these areas⁵⁷. People who live in the neighborhoods under the control of AKP municipalities profits from the sport services of IMM more than the others do. In other words, there is one sport facility of IMM per 125.000 people in the neighborhoods ruling by AKP municipalities and one sport facility of IMM per 190.000 people in the neighborhoods ruling by CHP municipalities. Adding the local municipalities sport services also does not change this huge difference very much. The difference is very visible and it should be underlined. The answer might be in one of the speeches of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, leader of the main opposition party in Turkey. In 2010, Kılıçdaroğlu made a speech after an appointment of a judge by the decision of the president of the era, Abdullah Gül, and he claimed that it was an example of clientelism⁵⁸. Even though, this appointment was not a great example of clientelism, Kılıçdaroğlu showed an important term to the Turkish society. Clientelism has different forms but political clientelism is the most suitable one for the subject of this thesis. Political clientelism can be define as the exchange of votes and support with the jobs and other benefits⁵⁹. In other words, treating the citizens differently according to their political preferences and giving advantages to one group inside the society. The inequality in the sport investments between the neighborhoods is an example of this situation. The statistics show that the AKP chose to provide more social services to the neighborhoods, which it has received more votes from. Political clientelism can be very visible and clear sometimes. For instance, just after the recent election, new elected mayor of 19th of May district in Samsun said that ‘The ones who voted for us will get all the services first’ and showed it as something so normal. In addition to that, the recent mayor of Istanbul, Mevlüt Uysal said that ‘Neighborhood which we had the higher votes will be our priority for our metro

⁵⁷ <http://www.istanbul.gov.tr/ilcelerimiz>

⁵⁸ Sukru Kucuksahin "Gül'ün yaptığı klientalizm." October 25, 2010- <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/gul-un-yaptigi-klientalizm-16124983>

⁵⁹ Luis Roniger, "Political Clientelism, Democracy, and Market Economy." *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 3 (2004): 354 doi:10.2307/4150135.

plannings⁶⁰. When the clientelism and discrimination is easily visible everywhere, it would not be realistic to think that sport would be out of this mindset. In addition to that, the discrimination is not only between the neighborhoods; also, it is between the people who live in the same neighborhood as well.

Building a facility is the first step, but second and more important is the way of using these facilities. Using them efficiently is the key factor but the efficiency is not easily measurable in that case. Almost all the facilities of IMM were being used actively by the society and again a big part of them has the maximum amount of members they can have. For instance, Yeşilpınar swimming pool in Eyüp cannot take any more members for this summer, as it is already full, even the substitute list⁶¹.

If the criteria of efficiency is making the facilities full, than these facilities are very efficient. However, is it only about the numbers? In a huge city like Istanbul, it is not difficult to make these facilities full. For instance, population of Eyüp Sultan is approximately 380.000 and Yeşilpınar swimming pool is the only swimming pool of the municipality in this neighborhood. When there is only one swimming pool for a huge neighborhood, it is normal that the member list of this pool is always full, but again is it a criteria of efficiency? These services should not be seen as only sport activities. For so many users, it is the first time they use facilities like swimming pools and it is an opportunity for them to socialize and learning a spor culture⁶². At that point, the efficiency is not only about the numbers also about creating a sport culture but when the politics involve in it, purposes of providing these services also change. Analyzing the practices and the rules of these facilities can give an opinion about their real goals and agenda. For instance, one of the main rules of the IMM facilities is the gender separation for everyone who are above 13 years old. In general, all the men and women who are above 13 years old, can use the facilities separately and there is no exception for families, parents etc. so a mom and her 14 years old boy cannot use the swimming pool in the same time. If there is only one swimming pool, like in Yeşilpınar, there are different days for women and men. It is not only for the swimming pool but also for all the parts of facilities like fitness

⁶⁰CNN "İBB Başkanı, AK Parti Arnavutköy Olağan Kongresi'nde Konuştu." CNN Türk.
<https://www.cnnturk.com/video/turkiye/mevlut-uyal-oceligimiz-en-fazla-oy-aldigimiz-yerler-olacak>.

⁶¹ Personal connection with a trainer in Yeşilpınar Swimming Pool

⁶² Personal connection with a trainer in the Boğaziçi Life Center

saloons etc. This rule is also a common rule for the sport facilities that are running by the AKP municipalities. According to directors of the facilities who accepted to give information about these services, using the services separately is more appropriate for Turkish culture and it is actually the demand of society. Nevertheless, clearly, that is an assumption and municipality did not make any survey or research about this issue. On the other hand, it might be true for some parts of the society who think that it is more appropriate to use it separately but a municipality should think about all the people who live in this city and serve them equally. For instance, making a schedule with some optional days or hours for using the facilities genderly mixed could be an easy solution. Instead of putting an option to the table, IMM, and local municipalities of AKP prefer to put their own rules and expect the people to follow these rules. Instead of giving a service to the all people of the city or even the neighborhood, addressing only one part of it is the second level of the discrimination.

Sport has an educative and connective power. Especially when it is about the gender issue, sport can be an operative education tool for young people. All the summer camps and youth camps are also genderly separated which means that during their maybe first days away from their parents, they spent time with only boys and girls. These camps are for children from 6 to 17 years old and these are great opportunities to teach them how to behave in a group of people, and also with the opposite gender as well. Statistics show that femicide rates, violence and sexual assault against the women are remarkable in Turkey. According to the annual report of 'We will stop the homicide' platform, man had killed 440 women in 2018 and in addition to that, 317 women were sexually assaulted⁶³. These are remarkable statistics and clearly show that there is a problem in the society. Sport services could be a tool for fighting against this issue but AKP prefers to make a gender segregation in these services as well.

This segregation, just like in the use of swimming pools or different facilities, might be the demand of a part of society but again it is obviously not the demand or the decision of all people who live in this city. Again, AKP prefers to provide a service to the ones who share the same mentality with them and ignores the rest of the society. In addition, when it comes to gender segregation, it is possible to see that sport fields are not the only place that deal with

⁶³440 Women Were Murdered and 317 Women Were Sexually Assaulted.
<http://kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/veriler/2870/440-women-were-murdered-and-317-women-were-sexually-assaulted>.

this issue. There are discussions and changings based on the gender segregation also in the public transportation services and even in education. For instance, there is a strong increase in the amount of the religious vocational high school (*İmam hatip lisesi / İHL*) and in these schools, education is given to the boys and girl separately. In 2006, there was only 455 IHL in Turkey but after nine years, this number reached to 1149. By different words, in 2006, only 5.7 percent of the total amount of high schools were IHL and in 2015, it reaches to almost 11 percent⁶⁴. Basically each year more and more students go to these schools and have non-mixed of education. Violence and sexual assault against women is a big problem in Turkish society and something must be realised in that issue but keeping boys and girls away from each other in sport camps, in schools or in even buses by creating the projects like ‘Pink buses or trams for women’ cannot be the solution. Once this separation begun, it can spread very quickly and already the atmosphere looks quite ready for it. At that point, it is the hands of the politicians, and mostly Erdoğan in the current image. All these little details about the sport services or the separation in the buses will give a shape to the future of this society. Looking at the decisions he gave and speeches he made until now, it is easy to say that Erdoğan wants to give a more ‘conservative’ shape to Turkish society and uses sport, as any other tool he can use, for reaching this goal.

At the moment of writing this paper, as it has already mentioned, Istanbul is passing through the maybe most complicated and controversial local election of its history. Two main candidates, Binali Yıldırım, candidate of People’s Alliance and Ekrem İmamoğlu, candidate of Nation Alliance were competing for being the mayor of Istanbul⁶⁵. According to the first official results, İmamoğlu won the election and he even had the *mazbata*, the official certificate, in the 17th of April and became the official mayor of Istanbul. However, after this decision, AKP made an extraordinary appeal to the results of Istanbul election. High Court of Election (*Yüksek Seçim Kurulu-YSK*) took the appeal of AKP into consideration and decided to renew the election, because of detecting some serious suspects about the election officials, as they

⁶⁴" Pınar Dağ, and Sadettin Demirel, "İmam Hatip Liselerinin Son 10 Yılı." (Last ten years of Imam Hatip Schools) Platform 24, November 25, 2016
<http://platform24.org/haber-arastirma/1883/imam-hatip-liselerinin-son-10-yili>.

⁶⁵ People’s Alliance is the alliance of AKP and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Nation Alliance is the alliance of CHP, Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) , Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti) and Good Party (IYI Parti)

were not state officers. New election will be held in 23rd of June and finally Istanbul will have its mayor, but even the campaign and appeal process can show the importance of Istanbul for AKP. Erdoğan does not want to lose the control of the biggest city of Turkey and tried everything to have it back. Of course, it is not just because he loves this city very much; it is because he knows the economic and social power of Istanbul. The budget of IMM for 2019 is 23.5 billion liras and this budget is bigger than so many ministries of Turkey. ‘Who wins Istanbul, wins Turkey’ is an old saying in Turkish politics and actually the economic statistics show that this is not a very unreal idea. Citizens of Istanbul pays the 45 percent of the total tax income of Turkey, there are 70 thousand workers under the IMM and its coworker companies and IMM has 30 big companies. Five of these companies are in the top 300 biggest companies of Turkey⁶⁶. Part of the sport investments and services in this budget is 577 million liras but the amount of social aids, donations and grants is more remarkable. IMM shares 1.2 billion liras to these spendings and approximately 400 million liras of this budget is financial aids and grants to the associations⁶⁷.

The annual reports of IMM clearly shows how these aids and grants has been given to associations and organizations which have close ties with AKP and it is again a great example of the political clientelism in Turkey. For instance, according to the official report of IMM, Turkey Youth Foundation (*Türkiye Gençlik Vakfı/ TÜGVA*) has received 75 million liras from IMM until 2018 and Bilal Erdoğan, son of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is in the high advisory board of this foundation. Most of the foundations and associations who are in the list have really close ties with AKP the one which is most important for this research is ‘Archery Foundation’ (*Okçular Vakfı*) and again Bilal Erdoğan is the high advisory board of this foundation as well with other popular figures of AKP such as Haydar Ali Yıldız, current mayor of Beyoğlu. This foundation has a huge archery facility in Istanbul and organizes events and competition for society. Until that point, it sounds like a normal sport foundation but actually, the issue is not very different from the case of ‘Islamic Solidarity Games’. This foundation and the federation

⁶⁶"İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi: Türkiye'nin En Büyük Yerel Yönetimi - BBC News Türkçe." BBC News. May 08, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-48180564>.

⁶⁷"İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi'nin Mali Büyüklüğü Birçok Bakanlık Ve ülkeden Fazla." Ahval. <https://ahvalnews.com/tr/istanbul-buyuksehir-belediyesi/istanbul-buyuksehir-belediyesinin-mali-buyuklugu-bircok-bakanlik-ve?amp>

includes Archery Foundation and other traditional sport associations, ETNOSPOR, organize events related to traditional sports like traditional wrestling, archery, horse riding etc. These sports are part of the Turkish culture and history, and it can be nice for young people to know these sports and learn the history of their ancients. On the other hand, these associations should be aware of their activities and limits. Recently this foundation has extended its services and started give classes of Ottoman Language or Quran readings. These practices show that this foundation is expanding its activity zone thanks to the support it has received from IMM and trying to have new roles such as reviving the Ottoman identity in the society. This might be a very big claim that by showing the activities of only one federation but Archery Federation is only the sport side of this story. On the other side, there are other visible examples of this neo-ottomanism such as two of the most famous television series produced by the main state channel, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) ‘Diriliş: Ertuğtul’ and ‘Payitaht: Abdülhamid’.

‘Diriliş: Ertuğlul’ is about the foundation of Ottoman Empire and ‘Payitaht Abdülhamid’ is about the Sultan Abdülhamid era in the Empire. Both of these series show the strong, fair and of course the religious face of Ottoman Empire. Erdoğan and other famous faces of AKP visited the stage of these series and showed their love and support to these series. Religious images are visible in almost each scene of these series and it is possible to say that these series aim to change the image of Ottoman Empire in people's mind. One another detail about these series, it is quite often that they give hidden messages about the current political issues in their scripts. One recent example happened in Payitaht: Abdülhamid and Sultan talked about some old deputies who may stand against him and he threatened these deputies. That was either a big coincidence that in the same days there were speculations about foundation of a new party by Gül and Davutoğlu, two old member of AKP, or it was a clear message to them. In that scene, Sultan says ‘We give water to the rosewoods, but if it started to have thorns, we cut it off!’ and here is another ‘coincidence’ as rose means gül in Turkish⁶⁸. In addition to that, also TRT uses a huge budget for these series. One episode of Diriliş Ertuğtul costs 1.1 million

⁶⁸Milli Gazete. "Payitaht Abdülhamid'de Abdullah Gül Ve Ahmet Davutoğlu'na Gönderme." Milli Gazete. May 09, 2019. <https://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/2496441/payitaht-abdulhamidte-abdullah-gul-ve-ahmet-davutogluna-gonderme>.

liras and main state channel, TRT, pays this money⁶⁹. How fair is using the big part of taxes of people for television series which sometimes used as propaganda tools, is open to discuss.

In addition to its economic power, controlling all the services of municipality is a great and very quick way to reach people directly and sport services take very crucial part in these services. Already all the examples shown that how these services were used for political goals and Erdoğan does not want to lose this big influential power. In addition to these roles, operating all these facilities and controlling all these services means deciding everything inside this world such as controlling all the websites and social media accounts of municipality, deciding the new appointments to the important positions inside the municipality, publishing the municipality journals and even deciding the which newspapers will be on the shelves inside the facility. These details may look like not so important but what happened in recent years show that all of these could be used as propaganda tools.

To sum up the situation, AKP and especially Erdoğan himself gave many attentions to the local elections in Istanbul. He was very active during the campaign period and it was the first time in the Turkish history that the president of the state made meetings for local elections and asked vote for a candidate. After the first decision of YSK, AKP insisted on renewing the election and made an extraordinary appeal. At the end YSK decided to renew to election only for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and in 23rd of June, Istanbul will vote again for choosing its new mayor. Binali Yıldırım or Ekrem İmamoğlu, one of them will be the mayor of Istanbul but all these speculations, discussion and extraordinary appeals show how important is controlling the IMM. As an economic power, it is a very important tool to continue their clientelist strategy by giving projects to businessman who stand behind them and giving huge amount of financial aids to the associations like ‘Archery Lodge’. In the social side, ruling the IMM and operating all the municipality services is a way to reach people and touching their lives directly and this direct connection is a great chance to influence these people. When the

⁶⁹Solhaberportali. "Erdoğan'ın Dizisi 'Diriliş: Ertuğrul'un Bölüm Başı Maliyeti En Az 1 Milyon 100 Bin!" SoL Haber Portalı. November 16, 2016. <http://haber.sol.org.tr/toplum/erdoganin-dizisi-dirilis-ertugrulun-bolum-basi-maliyeti-en-az-1-milyon-100-bin-175940>.

budget of municipality is higher than so many ministries and the population of the city is higher than 15 millions, the idea of ‘Who wins Istanbul, wins Turkey’ sounds very logical

5. Turkish Football and Politics

The recent history of Turkish football can be a good start to understand the politicization of football in Turkey. As it has been mentioned in the first part, three big teams of Istanbul, Fenerbahçe, Beşiktaş and Galatasaray were founded in the last years of Ottoman Empire and their main goals were winning against non-Turkish teams. These teams were the reflection of Turkish nationalist to the football pitch. During the following years more teams were founded in different cities such as Ankara and İzmir and these teams gave the first shape to Turkish football world. Firstly, local leagues and after a national league was organised but during all those years, Turkish football were dominating by mostly Turkish players and the main reason of this was the economy. Foreign currencies were forbidden in Turkey because football was not broadcast on television, the economy was not big enough to bring so many foreign players. In 1971 first time in Turkey, a football match was broadcasted in television alive, the game between Karşıyaka and İstanbulspor⁷⁰.

The popularity of football was increasing in these years already, but in the same time, the country was passing through very problematic years. A big conflict between the right and left wing was almost bringing the country into a civil war. The conflict between the ideologies reached to a very dangerous level and it was possible to feel this tension almost in every part of the life. In 1980, the army carried out a coup d'état in and took control. This coup d'état is a very important milestone in Turkish history and it became a game changer for Turkish football too. Just before the coup, the government took an important economic decision, known as January 24 decisions, and gave permission to circulation of foreign currencies in country and began the free market economy. These decisions led big improvements and changes in football, as football clubs could be richer and bring more players from abroad⁷¹.

⁷⁰"1996'dan 2016'ya Türk Futbolunun Yayıncılık Tarihi." Al Jazeera Turk
<http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/1996dan-2016ya-turk-futbolunun-yayincilik-tarihi>.

⁷¹ Dağhan Irak, "Shoot Some Pepper Gas at Me!' Football Fans vs. Erdoğan: Organized Politicization or Reactive Politics?" *Soccer & Society* 19, no. 3 (05, 2017): pp 404. Doi:10.1080/14660970.2017.1333675.

After the coup, Turgut Özal, prime minister between 1983-1989 and president between 1989-1993, knew that sport, especially football was not really affected by this politic conflict in the country and decided to support this activity as an alternative to the politics for the society, especially to the youth. Politic was widely considered something ‘dangerous’ to think about those days. The famous words of these days ‘Ne sağcıyım ne solcu. Futbolcuyum futbolcu’, which means ‘Neither left Nor right wing, I am just a football player’ shows that football had a completeøy apolitical image in those years⁷². It was important for the state to keep the young people busy and also out of the politics, and it used football for that purpose. Broadcasting football games spread out quickly when it comes to second half of the 1990’s, and football clubs started to earn money from television broadcasting rights⁷³.

Clearly all these decisions expanded the football economy in Turkey and brought it to today’s level. But what happened in last thirty years and football became a strongly politicized area in Turkey? Football was a tool supported by the junta after the coup d’état as a way to keep people busy and out of politics, and ironically in today’s Turkey it is one of the most politicized sports. To understand this change, it is important to analyze the significant events that happened in Turkish football especially in the 21st century.

The evening of 17th of May,2000 was an extraordinary evening for Turkish football fans. Galatasaray was playing against Arsenal in the final UEFA Cup and it was the first time in the history of the country that a football team has reached to that level. Galatasaray won this cup and this is the first and, so far, last big success of Turkish football in the club level. The players who brought the cup to Istanbul, Hakan Şükür, Arif Erdem and others were greeted as heroe. But today Hakan Şükür escaped to USA and Arif Erdem to Greece and there are very serious accusations against them such as being part of a terrorist organization⁷⁴. This terrorist organization is the Gülen Movement and actually it is not a secret that these players were part of this organization even in 2000s. Just like Ömer Çatkıç, Uğur Boral, Zafer Biryol and so many other famous players, they were going to the meetings of the Gülen Movement and giving

⁷²Atilla Özalp, "Ne Sağcıyım Ne Solcu, Futbolcuyum Futbolcu!" *Aydınlık*. <https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/ne-sagciyim-ne-solcu-futbolcuyum-futbolcu>.

⁷³Dağhan Irak, "'Shoot Some Pepper Gas at Me!' Football Fans vs. Erdoğan: Organized Politicization or Reactive Politics?" *Soccer & Society* 19, no. 3 (05, 2017): pp 404 . Doi:10.1080/14660970.2017.1333675.

⁷⁴"Turkey to Seek Extradition of Footballer Arif Erdem from Greece." *Ahval*. <https://ahvalnews.com/gulen-movement/turkey-seek-extradition-footballer-arif-erdem-greece>.

financial support to the organization⁷⁵. It was a widely known fact in Turkey but the relation between AKP and Gülen was very well in these years and as a result of their good relation, being a member of this movement was not a problem. In fact, the movement opened a lot of doors to its followers thanks to their strong connections to government circles. After the failed coup d'état in 15th of July 2016, everything has changed, Gulen movement has been branded a terrorist organisation which is a treat for the unity of Turkey. But it is important to realise that politics were already very active in football. It is not a new issue that football is under the influence of politics. In those years, politics were using their influence on the field, between players. Since the politicization of football started to effect the fans, things started to change. Especially since the match-fixing operation in 2011 and the Gezi Protest, people started show their reactions against the Gülen Movement and the AKP. People realized that these groups would never stop expanding their power, if there is not an obstacle in front of them. Politicization and the uprising of football fans was a game changer for Turkish football and it happened as a result of some significant events.

5.1 Uprising of football fans

In the 3rd of July 2011, chairman of Fenerbahçe football club, Aziz Yıldırım, chairman of Sivasspor, Mecnun Otyakmaz, board members of Fenerbahçe, Şekip Mosturoğlu, İlhan Ekşioğlu and some other important figures of Turkish football were taken into the custody as a part of police operation about the match-fixing in Turkey⁷⁶. This case became the most famous and important issue of the country very quickly. The prosecutor of this case was Zekeriya Öz and it is important to remember this name as he will be one of the most famous figures by the time. After the arrest, on the 10th of July, Fenerbahçe fans organized a big protest on Bağdat Avenue in the biggest avenue of the Asian side of Istanbul and almost 400.000 thousands people came to this protest⁷⁷. The general belief of these people was this case was a conspiracy organised against Fenerbahçe and Aziz Yıldırım by the Gülen Movement wanted

⁷⁵Sputnik. "3 Büyüklerdeki FETÖ'cü Futbolcular için Soruşturma." Sputnik Türkiye. January 15, 2018. <https://tr.sputniknews.com/spor/201801151031807055-ugur-boral-feto-futbol-kulupleri-sorusturma/>.

⁷⁶İnanç Ergülen. "3 Temmuz 2011'den 9 Ekim 2015" <https://www.haberturk.com/yenimedya/haber/1138053-3-temmuz-2011den-9-ekim-2015e>.

⁷⁷İlker Aktukun, "Fenerbahçe, Cemaat Ve 15 Temmuz Darbe Girişimi" - Evrensel. <https://www.evrensel.net/yazi/77158/fenerbahce-cemaat-ve-15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi>.

to bring him down for taking Fenerbahçe under his control⁷⁸. This case and also this protest can be seen as the beginning of politicization of football fans in Turkey. This idea was a ‘conspiracy theory’ for so many people at that time but even during the trial period, Aziz Yıldırım said that this operation was not only about football. When he made his defence against the charges, he used these important words which became the slogan of his defence: ‘*Ne şikesi! Memleket elden gidiyor!*’ ‘This is not about match-fixing! We are losing the state!’⁷⁹. The protest in 10th of July turned to be a small riot after the police intervention but it is a very important date as the very big group of football fans came together against this operation, or it is possible to say against Gülen Movement. Fenerbahçe fans just pulled the trigger and this mentality started to spread out between them and also between different team fans too. Existence and the power of the Gülen Movement was a widely known fact and people were not really daring to stand against them but this feeling of unification, especially it is a strong feeling between the ultras, gave them this courage. It was just a matter of the time to see the effects of this movement and it didn’t take so long.

Two years after this operation, in 2013, the Gezi Park Protests began. To sum up very briefly, the Gezi protests began as an environmentalist protest against the decision of the government to destroy the Gezi Park in Taksim and build a shopping mall on the land. After the brutal reaction of the police and the provocative speeches of Erdoğan, the protest turned to be a riot and continued during approximately three weeks mainly in Gezi Park at Taksim, but it also spread out to the whole country and continued for a very long time in different forms such as civil resistance, neighborhood meetings etc. Ultimately the movement brought different groups together Ultras such as Çarşı, fan group of Beşiktaş, UltrAslan, fan group of Galatasaray and others became some of the most active actors of the protest⁸⁰. The match-fixing operation and the speculations about this operation had already created an antipathy for the Gülen Movement and to the AKP inside the Ultras. This protest became the breaking point for them⁸¹. What is important for this research is to know that Çarşı, UltrAslan and some other

⁷⁸ H. E. Cohen Yanaracak ‘The Last Stronghold: The Fenerbahçe Sports Club And Turkish Politics’ *Tel Aviv Notes* vol: 6 No:10 May 28,2012 : 3

⁷⁹“Yıldırım: Ne şikesi, Memleket Elden Gidiyor.” NTV. February 14, 2012.

<https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/yildirim-ne-sikesi-memleket-elden-gidiyor,BzEvKlfxUWoM6tlpt4g4g>.

⁸⁰Dağhan Irak, " Istanbul United. Football Fans Entering the ‘Political Field’." *Everywhere Taksim*, 12, 2015: pp 139. Doi:10.1515/9789048526390-011.

⁸¹ Gezi Protests and participation of ultras to this protest is a very broad and important topic. For the ones who want to know more about this topic, Dağhan Irak’s recent book ‘Football Fandom, Protest and Democracy’ and the article of Deniz Koşulu, professor in Institut d’Etudes Politique en Aix en Provence, ‘When ultras defend

ultras such as *Vamos Bien*, *Sol Açık* and others were in the streets in these days and they carried the protest from the streets to the stadiums. The 3rd of July was the beginning of this movement and after Gezi Protests; it reached to the top level. Not only in football stadiums, but in basketball courts, tennis tournaments, volleyball courts, in every kind of sport organisations, there were anti-AKP slogans; An invisible wall was broken. As it has been already mentioned a few times, one of the key factors behind the success of AKP was its good and strong connection with the society. Media and sport were two important tools to keep that connection and during and after the Gezi Park Protests, both of these tools became useful for AKP's opponents as well. All the games, matches and tournaments were broadcast live on televisions and radios. All the slogans were reaching to the people home easily thanks to these broadcasts. News, discussions and all the political programmes could be manipulated but how to manipulate or stop the slogans of these fans? The decisions of the government after these protests started to be very loud and visible show that they asked this question to themselves as well.

Anti-AKP slogans were in almost all sport events but apart from the football events, the capacity and audience of the sports were limited and that's why football took the lion's share of the attention of authorities. In those days, Minister of Sport, Suat Kılıç was clearly threatening the fans and saying 'The ones who will bring the Gezi slogans to the stadiums will pay off'⁸² but it was too late. to try to keep football away from politics. In these years, political slogans, images or speeches started to be considered reasons to receive penalties. In one way, if the idea was keeping the football fields clean and out of politics, these penalties could be reasonable but practices and examples do not exactly say the same thing. For instance in Adana, a fan got banned from football stadiums because of carrying a banner which says 'Everywhere Taksim! Everywhere Resistance!'⁸³. Another example is the investigation which was opened into the Fethiyespor Football Club. Fethiyespor players wore T-shirts with the letters of 'Great Atatürk'

trees: framing politics through subcultural fandom - comparing UltrAslan and Çarşı before and during Occupy Gezi' are two of the good articles which explain this issues very deeply

⁸²'Kılıç'tan tribünlere mesaj: Protesto eden bedelini öder' August 11, 2013. <https://www.fanatik.com.tr/kilictan-tribunlere-mesaj-protesto-eden-bedelini-oder-328991>

⁸³"Stadyumda Gezi Pankartına Ceza Geldi." CNN Türk.

<https://www.cnnturk.com/2013/spor/futbol/09/09/stadyumda.gezi.pankartina.ceza.geldi/722718.0/index.html>.

in front during the warm up session of the game they played against Fenerbahçe in Turkish Cup⁸⁴.

Erdoğan, along with the Minister of Sport, Minister of Internal Affairs and several other important politicians said again and again the same thing, ‘Sport arenas are not the places for making politics’ and this was the reason behind these penalties and investigations⁸⁵. However, this rule clearly was applicable only to the ones who were against the government. The match between Konyaspor and Fenerbahçe on 17th of August in 2013 became the clearest example of the double standard of Turkish Football Federation on the issue of politicization of sport fields. Directors of Konyaspor and the deputy of Konya from AKP, Mustafa Akış, watched the game at the protocol tribune while wearing the scarves with messages in support of Mohammed Morsi and even a picture of him on it. Also in the match, captain of Fenerbahçe, Emre Belözoğlu, celebrated his second goal by showing the ‘Rabia’ sign, the sign used by the Muslim Brotherhood and its followers to protest the coup d’état in Egypt and also used quite often by Erdoğan in his meetings⁸⁶. How could football be used for more political messages than this? Nevertheless, the Turkish Football Federation did not open any case about these issues and all those politicians who talked after every slogans in the stadiums and said that football is not the place for making politics did not say a word on the celebration of Emre. This is just one of the many examples that can show that the real problem was not making politics in the football or different sport fields. It was making politics against AKP in these fields, or not even making politics just being loud and saying your problems. AKP is the political party that brought politics into every part of the life, into art, television, radio, literature and of course sport too. It is obvious that the use of sport as a political tool is not a problem or it is not something wrong for them. But after the match-fixing operation and Gezi Protests, sport arenas were no longer under their strong dominance and even more important than this, they became places for people to show their anger against the government.

Just a little detail about the third of July match-fixing operations. Prosecutor Zekeriya Öz claimed that there were strong suspicious about match fixing and corruption in some games

⁸⁴Ulusal Kanal. ""Yüce Atatürk'e Soruşturma!" Ulusal Kanal. December 06, 2013. <https://www.ulusal.com.tr/gundem/yuce-ataturke-sorusturma-h18988.html>.

⁸⁵"Kılıç Manisa'da." Haberturk.com. February 06, 2013. <https://www.haberturk.com/spor/diger/haber/817808-kilic-manisada>.

⁸⁶"Emre Belözoğlu 'rabia' işareti ile Mısır'a Selam Gönderdi." T24. <https://t24.com.tr/haber/ve-siyaset-futbola-girdi-emre-belozoglu-misira-selam-gonderdi,237193>.

in Turkish Super League and Bank Asya First League. Bank Asya was the main sponsor of the second highest league of Turkey at that time and the same bank had been shut down by the decision of Turkey in 2016 as it has linked to Gülen Movement. Even people who put their money to this bank were investigated⁸⁷. In 2015, Zekeriya Öz fled to firstly Armenia, than to Germany as Turkish authorities issued an arrest warrant for him. The crime was same, being a member of Gülen Movement⁸⁸. At the end, the judgement of the case of match-fixing in Turkish football was over in 2015 and including the chairman of Fenerbahçe, Aziz Yıldırım, all defendants acquitted over the charges⁸⁹. After these informations, it is important to remember the first defence of Aziz Yıldırım again, ‘This is not about match-fixing! We are losing the country!’ He said these words five years before the coup d’état attempt, that brought Gulen Movement and AKP against each other,

5.2 Passolig: a Security Concern or a Control Mechanism?

Establishing a new ticket system, Passolig, was one of the biggest changes in the Turkish football after Gezi. To sum up is this system, every single fan have to get one Passolig card for buying tickets to see football games in the stadiums. One person can get one card and only one ticket with this card, which means that all individuals have to get their own cards. Personal informations such as name, surname, phone number, address etc. should be given to get this card and also it gives a chance to authorities to track your seat in the stadium. According to the authorities, the main concern behind this changing was the security. Federation wanted to finish the violence between the fans and that’s why established this system. This was their explanation. On the other hand, this new system created a very big control mechanism on the football fans. Everyone who want to see a football game should get in this tracking system and establishing this system in 2014, just in the year after Gezi Protests, increased the suspicious about it. It is true that hooliganism and violence between the fans were some of the main problems of Turkish football but this system has nothing to do with it. For instance, in 2011

⁸⁷ Lianna Brinded, ‘Turkey shuts down the Islamic bank linked to the cleric blamed for the failed military coup’ Business Insider, July 18, 2016 <https://www.businessinsider.com/turkey-regulator-shuts-down-islamic-bank-aysa-2016-7?r=US&IR=T>

⁸⁸Ece Toksabay, "Turkish Corruption Prosecutors Flee after Arrest Warrants Issued." Reuters. August 11, 2015. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-turkey-prosecutors/turkish-corruption-prosecutors-flee-after-arrest-warrants-issued-idUKKCN0QG1KV20150811>.

⁸⁹Press, Associated. "Fenerbahce Chairman Acquitted over Match-fixing Charges in Retrial." The Guardian. October 09, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2015/oct/09/fenerbahce-chairman-acquitted-match-fixing-retrial>.

TFF forbid the derby games for away fans. Which means fans of four big teams (Fenerbahçe, Beşiktaş, Galatasaray and Trabzonspor) were not allowed to go to stadiums of each other. This decision took the reactions of fan groups and they stand against it but at the end it didn't change⁹⁰. This prohibition continued until 2016, almost two and a half year later than the establishment of Passolig. These derby matches are the most problematic and risky games and even after establishing a new ticket system, which aims to fight against hooliganism, this prohibition continued, than what is the *raison d'etre* of this system?

The only thing which has decreased since the beginning of Passolig is not the hooliganism, but the number of audience in the stadiums. In 2013-2014 season, 14.000 was the average of audience per match. In 2014-2015, the first season of Passolig, this number decreased to 8.000. The average of next season was also 8.600⁹¹. These numbers clearly show that football fans were not happy with this system. Lots of big fan groups and also individuals boycotted football games and refused to buy this card. First of all the card is not free. There is a fee that cardholder should pay every year, and it is 41 liras for the moment. This is not a very big amount but in total it makes approximately, 180 million liras and 92 million liras of this money went to the Aktif Bank as its profit⁹². Aktif Bank, is a part of Çalık Holding, of which Berat Albayrak, son in law of Erdoğan and current Minister of Finance and Treasure, was the CEO. This holding still has very close ties with AKP and still taking advantages of these ties⁹³. With this Passolig system, fans could get individual penalties as their seats are known by the authorities and it created a fear and made people nervous about being tracking all the time, especially after Gezi. Again, establishing this system when football stadiums became places for showing political reactions, made people to think that it was a caution taken against these sounds. Passolig and all the other regulations were the intervention of politics to the off-pitch side of the football but AKP is very active also in the field.

⁹⁰Eurosport. "UltrAslan'dan Yasağa Tepki." Eurosport. November 19, 2011. https://tr.eurosport.com/futbol/spor-toto-super-lig/2011-2012/ultraslan-dan-yasaga-tepki_sto3033310/story.shtml

⁹¹"Süper Lig - Seyirci Sayısı." Transfermarkt. https://www.transfermarkt.com.tr/super-lig/besucherzahlen/wettbewerb/TR1/plus/?saison_id=2014.

⁹²Rasih Bayhan, "Passolig Vurgunu." Yeni Şafak. February 10, 2019. <https://www.yenisafak.com/ekonomi/passolig-vurgunu-3445750>.

⁹³Can Uğur, "'Yürü Ya Kulum' Denen 6 şirket." BirGün Gazetesi. February 24, 2016. <https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/yuru-ya-kulum-denen-6-sirket-104583.html>.

5.3 New Turkey's new football teams

As it has already mentioned, football was forbidden to Muslims in the last years of Ottoman Empire. When it comes to 21st century, it is not possible to forbid it anymore but it is still possible to influence it, control it or use it for some goals. These are the bases of current strategy of AKP on football. Passolig was the part of this strategy which focus on the fans and off-pitch actors and Başakşehir Football Club is the most visible example of the product of this strategy on field. Turkish people's love to football is a very strong feeling, it is a passion sometimes it reaches to a dangerous level. For instance, when Trabzonspor lost against Fenerbahçe in 1996, and lost the title with this defeat, two fans of Trabzonspor committed suicide after the game⁹⁴. Since that time, all the games between Fenerbahçe and Trabzonspor are always very problematic and risky games. It is not difficult to see that Turkish people will not give up from their passion about football but on the other hand, Erdoğan was not happy with the situation of the football stadiums. His solution was proposing these people a different team to support. A team that he has strong influence and control over it so anytime it will not threat his power and regime. This idea might be the reason behind the investment and support to Başakşehir but before mentioning the current situation, looking at the history and evolution of Başakşehir can show its evolution.

Başakşehir began its journey with the name Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Football Club (IMM) in 1990⁹⁵. Nurettin Sözen was the mayor of Istanbul at that time and the founder of the club but today, Erdoğan says that he founded IMM football club⁹⁶. In fact, Erdoğan might be not the founder of the club but his touches and effects are visible in the club. Even the official website of IBB Sport, mentions that the club started its golden era in 1994, when Erdoğan became the mayor of Istanbul⁹⁷.

⁹⁴Ntv. "İntihar eden iki taraftarını unutmadı." NTV. May 05, 2016. <https://www.ntv.com.tr/spor/trabzonspor-20-yil-once-intihar-eden-2-taraftarini-unutmadi,ozPuI2ctRkm4jZY2RKwb8A>.

⁹⁵Kulüpler Birliği | Basakşehir FK. <http://www.kuluplerbirligi.org/clubs/istanbul-basaksehir-futbol-as/12>.

⁹⁶Halk TV. "Erdoğan Başakşehir'i Ben Kurdum Dedi, Nurettin Sözen'den Yanıt Geldi." Halk TV. February 05, 2019. <https://halktv.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-basaksehiri-ben-kurdum-dedi-nurettin-sozenden-yanit-geldi-360970h>.

⁹⁷"Tarih." İstanbul BBSK. <http://www.istanbulbbsk.org/icerik.php?id=35>.

In the first year, IMM Football Club played in the amateur level but it reached out to high levels very quickly and in the season of 2006-2007, IMM football club reached the higher division of Turkey. It takes only 16 years for them to reach this level and in normal conditions, this success would take the admiration of everyone. But it was different in this case, as seeing a club with the name of municipality in the first division was unusual for people. IMM Football Club was using the budget of municipality and one of the main source of this budget was the taxes of people who live in Istanbul. When the club reached the first league, people realised that fact but when the club was not successful in the first league, it did not take so much attention. It is possible to say that fans of other teams only started to complain and criticise IMM Football Club or Başakşehir, with the current name, when their teams fell behind it.

In 2014, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality took a decision and ‘sold’ the club to Göksel Gümüşdağ, current chairman of the club, who was the only potential buyer and who paid only 7 million euros, an extremely low price for a club in this division. After this sale, IMM claimed that Başakşehir football club and IMM had no more relations. Başakşehir Municipality offered a stadium that costed around 200 million liras as a ‘gift’⁹⁸. Başakşehir organised a friendly match for the opening of their new stadium and Erdoğan played in this match while wearing the shirt of Başakşehir, with some other popular figures such as Yıldırım Demirören, head of Turkish Football Association⁹⁹. Another important detail is that, Göksel Gümüşdağ is an active member of AKP and current first Deputy Chairman of the Municipal Council of İstanbul¹⁰⁰. This is his official political power and in addition to this, he is married with the niece of Emine Erdoğan, wife of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Selling the club to Gümüşdağ might therefore have been a solution for cutting the official ties between the club and municipalities but in reality it was obvious that they remained closely connected.

Erdoğan, himself did not try to hide this truth. Başakşehir, as a team with its supporters, directors, players and even with its name, drawing an AKP supporter image. This is not so

⁹⁸"Başakşehir Bedavaya Gitmiş... Akrabaya 'kıyak' Satış!" January 16, 2018. http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/futbol/905831/Basaksehir_bedavaya_gitmis..._Akrabaya__kiyak__satis_.html.

⁹⁹ Sibel Abdiu, Simon Glover, and Angjela Trajkovska. "Erdoğan's Ties To Top Turkish Club Revealed." Ananova. February 08, 2019. <https://ananova.news/erdogans-ties-to-top-turkish-club-revealed/>.

¹⁰⁰The President of Municipal Council and Its Committees. <https://www.ibb.istanbul/en/SitePage/Index/109>.

common to put a team as a whole behind a political party ideology but it is the situation in this case. The general mentality of the club is visible both in the field and outside the field as well. For instance, the main slogan of Başakşehir fans and even the club is ‘Çok olanlar değil, inananlar kazanır!’ can be translated as ‘It is not the numerous but the believers who win’. This slogan is in the scarves and T-shirts of the team and the club uses it very often in its social media accounts. Firstly, it answers to one of the main critics towards to club which is about having no supporters behind it. But especially after their game in 18th of March, it is possible to give another meaning to this slogan. 18th of March is the anniversary of Çanakkale, or Gallipoli War in Turkey and Başakşehir had a league match in the same day. The club prepared its stadium choreography in this image. What is written under the image can be translated as ‘Just as it happened in 18th of March 1915, So today, it is not the numerous but the believers will win.’



First of all, it is an extremely political image, as players were drawn as giving military salutes with the date of Afrin Operation, or Olive Branch Operation, on the right down side. This is one of the recent operations made by Turkish Army against the Kurdish forces in Afrin, Syria¹⁰¹. Another important detail is excluding Atatürk, the commander of the victory in Gallipoli from this image and again federation and politicians who claim that football fields are not places for making politics didn't say a word to this choreography. In the sport field, it is also very provocative to put Başakşehir in the place of Turkish Army and its opponents to

¹⁰¹"Syria: Turkish Ground Troops Enter Afrin Enclave." BBC News. January 21, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42765697>.

the place of enemies. One last thing is the use of word 'believer'. This word refers to both, the one who think that he or she will win, or the one who believe in God. This is also very dangerous and provocative discrimination to divide fans as believers or non-believers according to team they support. But why Başakşehir follows this strategy, or it might be more accurate to ask that why does AKP want to be very active and influential in the highest level of Turkish football? What are the benefits of this to AKP?

The position of Başakşehir and its relations with AKP is the most visible case in football fields as the team takes a lot of attentions because of its success but Basaksehir is not the only team which has support of the AKP.. Actually what is AKP trying to do is being effective and strong in almost every level of football. There are teams who have the support of AKP in the top division like Başakşehir but also there are even teams in amateur level who have this support. The biggest example of this case is Erokspor. Erokspor is the team of neighborhood where Erdoğan spent his childhood and teenage years and he was a player of the team between 1982-1984¹⁰². Since the 80's, Erokspor was a local team and played in amateur divisions but especially after the 2010's, Erdoğan started to give attention to this club and everything changed. Erdoğan clearly said that Erokspor is his second project after Başakşehir and that he hoped they would promote to second league this year¹⁰³. In 2015/2016, Erokspor was in the amateur league and at the end of this, they promoted to the regional amateur league. In their first year at this division, they regulated to third league, it was the first time for them to play in a professional division in their history. Just after one year in this vision, for the moment Erokspor is playing in the playoffs for promoting the second division.

Erokspor's success story is reminiscent of Başakşehir as both teams promoted from the lower divisions very fast. The main reason of this is the differences of the budgets and opportunities between these teams and their opponents. Netiher Erokspor or Başakşehir had any financial problems or problems in finding training pitches, which are the two biggest problem of the other teams in their levels. In addition to speeches of Erdoğan, also looking at the people who are in the board of Erokspor can show its ties with AKP. For instance, Osman

¹⁰² "Recep Tayyip Erdogan's years in Erokspor" <http://eroksporfk.com/recep-tayyip-erdogan-erokspor-yillari/>

¹⁰³ Evrensel. "Tayyip Erdoğan'ın 'himayesindeki' ikinci takım: Esenler Erokspor." Evrensel.net. March 19, 2019. <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/375886/tayyip-erdoganin-himayesindeki-ikinci-takim-esenler-erokspor>.

Savaş, the deputy chairman of the Board of Erokspor, is also the head of support services department of IMM. Head of the board of Erokspor, Zafer Topaloğlu was a member of the board of Başakşehir Football Club. Erokspor is the ‘amateur’ version of Başakşehir but it is possible to see them soon in the higher divisions thanks to the big political and economic support they have.

Here it is possible to ask the same question again in a different form: Why does the AKP want to be very active in the football world? My analysis suggests that a big part of the current power of AKP comes from its strong ties with society and its roots which spread almost every sphere of the society. These roots are very active and powerful in media, art, and business worlds, and have recently spread into the world of sport, too. Having these solid roots gives the AKP a control mechanism in all of these worlds. A Big part of the mainstream media is under their influence, enabling them to decide what society watches every day on television or reads in the newspapers. Erdoğan, especially after the Gezi Protests, brought this influence to another level in sport fields. In effect, he offers his followers a lifestyle. There are newspapers to read, television channels to watch, parks to go to, municipality sport facilities to use, series to watch and finally football teams to support. Erdoğan thus provides a way of living to his followers, and those who reject this lifestyle becomes an ‘other’.

Turkish society is clearly bipolarized and Erdoğan, with his speeches and his decisions, deepens this polarization. This is the one of the main critiques towards his policies but on the other hand, he might do this on purpose. Demonizing all the opponents is a way to keep your followers solid and loyal. The Presidential elections in 2018 showed that Erdoğan got slightly more than 50 per cent supporters in Turkey, but it looks like it is enough for him. Because instead of convincing the other half, he focuses on his supporters and uses all strategies and tools to keep his followers behind him. Sport became one of these tools easily and playing it role very well so far.

In addition to these social facts, economic power of football should not be forgotten. Football is a huge economic market and so many business people see football as an investment. Buying clubs and making profits from these clubs is one part of this business and it is a win-win situation both for the AKP and for business people who have ties with AKP. For instance,

Ciner Group bought Kasımpaşa football club in 2011. Kasımpaşa is an old and successful club from Istanbul, which has played in the higher division of Turkey for years. Also it is the neighborhood where Erdoğan grown up and that's also why it is a special place for him. Ciner Group has very close ties with AKP and buying this club is not only for making economic profits but also making these ties even stronger. On the other hand, AKP secures itself, as the huge income of the club will go to the people who stand behind their power. Main economic goal of AKP's interest on football is preventing its opponents to use this economy. There is a new group of businesspersons, which became the elite and rich class of AKP thanks to their connections in government and what is AKP trying to do is keeping them strong¹⁰⁴. Money brings power and Erdoğan wants to keep this power in the people who stand behind him.

5. Conclusion

'Sport is a war minus the shooting' according to George Orwell. This might be a very strong way to say but it is obvious that sport is much more than the physical action in the field. The goal of this thesis is to show that sport might be a very strong tool to influence people especially when it is under the control of one strong dominant actor. This actor is AKP in the case of Turkey and sport plays an important role in their agenda as many other tools. AKP follows a very active and dominant strategy in some domains for instance media is a great example to these domains. Journalist may lose their jobs because of their articles; so many journals come out with the same title after important events as if they have an order from a single cente. Some of the television channels never criticise any single word or decision of Erdoğan and directly making anti propaganda against the opponents of him and Turkey is the first country for journalists are in prison¹⁰⁵. These are just some of the most visible examples of AKP's policy and influence on media. Main reason of this strategy is being able to control every piece of information that people can get from these sources and showing them what actually is in benefits of the party. Controlling the circle of information in the society makes easier to control these people after a while. In the current sport atmosphere, it is more difficult

¹⁰⁴ Seda Demiralp, "The Rise of Islamic Capital and the Decline of Islamic Radicalism in Turkey." *Comparative Politics* 41, no. 3 (2009): pp 320-21-22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40599227>.

¹⁰⁵ The Economist "Turkey leads the world in jailed journalists" 16 Jan. 2019, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/01/16/turkey-leads-the-world-in-jailed-journalists>

to create a control mechanism very strong like it happened in media. Instead of this, AKP tries to create a new atmosphere and controlling this atmosphere since its foundation. Huge sport investments of the municipalities are the first step of the creation of this world. Gender segregation is the most visible issue in the municipality sport facilities but it is not the only one. Social media accounts and journals that are given in the facility are like brochures of AKP and it represents the values and ideas of the party not the municipality. Even though a political party won the majority in a neighborhood, when it starts to serve to the people, it has to focus on the whole community, not only the ones who vote for it but it is not the reality in Istanbul. Especially gender segregation is like a message to the people who live in these places like 'If you want to use this facility, you should follow our way'. These people pay taxes just like all other people and they have right to use these services as well. Of course, all facilities have certain rules, but if a sport facility has rules based on religious or ideological ideas; this brings the discussion out of sport, especially in a secular state.

Second dimension of the use of sport as a political tool is the intervention of AKP to sport throughout the clubs, athletes and directors. In one side, this is the continuation of creating a new sport atmosphere in Turkey. AKP knows well the daily life of an ordinary Turkish and tries to influence and control all of these daily activities. This ordinary person reads the newspapers, watches the news, maybe makes sports, and watches television series and more or less AKP has a very strong control mechanism on all these spheres. It proposes an 'ideal' lifestyle to the people but one thing missing in this list. Turkish people love to watch sport, especially football at home, cafes, restaurants or in stadiums. Football passion in Turkish society is widely known fact. If AKP wants to give a lifestyle to its followers, there must be a football team to support as well, especially when fans of the big teams of Istanbul took political position against the government. At that point, Başakşehir came to the scene. Former football club of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality changed its name in 2014 and with the political and economic support it has received, Başakşehir quickly became a very successful team. AKP, especially Erdoğan himself, provided a team to his followers to support. There are two reasons behind this strategy, social and economic power of football. Football games are like carnivals for the fans and also social events as well. People from different neighborhoods, different backgrounds and different parts of the society come together to support their teams so they unify under the flag of their teams. Some ultras, fan groups of the teams, like Çarşı, ultrAslan

etc. used to organize social events and campaigns like helping the schools or blood donations but they did not have a strong political position until a certain time. What happened in the Turkish football in recent years such as match-fixing operations and Gezi Protests resulted by the politicization of the football fans. When the political slogans get more and more loud in the stadiums, Erdoğan didn't want that his followers get affected by these 'dangerous' ideas. This is one the main reason behind to support certain teams like Başakşehir or Erokspor and establishing new ticket system, which allows tracking every fan in the stadium. The economic part of this subject is simpler. Football has a huge economic power and Erdoğan wants to keep this power behind himself. Holdings and businessperson, who are close with him, buy football clubs to use the benefits of this world and they do not want an emergence of a new rich and powerful class around football.

To sum up, sport is an indispensable part of the human life. People make sport, watch games and follow sport events. When the sport is that important and active in the daily life, seeing politics inside sport is an expected situation. In one interview, an old Nigerian football player who played in Beşiktaş, Daniel Amokachi explained the relation between sport and politics very clearly. The journalist asked him what does he think about the intervention of politics into sport in Turkey, and he replied 'It is very normal. We both play for public'. This is a very simple and good explanation of the common point of sport and politics: public. A political party is trying to convince them to get their votes and a football team is trying to entertain them to have more supporters and make more profit. A team without any fan who support them cannot really compete in the good levels just like a political party without any voter. At one point, this common goal bring them together and it is the current situation in Turkey. AKP has a strong dominance in every part of the life and their influence is getting more and more visible in sport as well. It is not a surprise to see a tie between sport clubs, athletes or club directors and politicians but in the case of Turkey, it is more like the use of sport as a political tool to influence Turkish and only by a certain group. AKP tries to create an 'ideal' order for Turkish society. In this order, television channels, journals, social media, academia and of course sport are under the strong influence or control of AKP. Municipality sport services, supporting some football clubs or even finding new ones, making regulations on the system of football match tickets and tracking all the supporters etc are the main efforts of AKP for the creation of the sport sphere of this system.

Politicization and reaction of the football fans was the first obstacle in front of the AKP's intervention to the sport fields but for the moment, AKP has a bigger problem. In the last local election on 31st of March, they lost two of the three biggest municipalities of Turkey, Ankara and İzmir, and there will be a re-election on 23rd of June for the biggest one, Istanbul. Losing all these municipalities can be the end of using the municipality sport services as a political tool for AKP. These services are crucial for AKP, for keeping its ties and connection strong with the society and losing these ties may lead to bigger changes in the future of Turkish politics.

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Personal connections:

Alper Yüksel Ecevit, 9th of April, 2019 via mail
Professor at Cukurova University

Arif Çetin, 22st of March, 2018 via mail
Chief of Foreign Relations at IMM SPOR AŞ

Cem Tınaz, 19th of March, 2019
Professor at Bilgi University

Dağhan Irak, 12th of April, 2019 via skype
Professor at Marseille

Director of Alibeyköy Sport Complex in Eyüp, 17th of April, 2019

Director of Tevfik Aydeniz Sport Facility in Eyüp, 5th of April 2019

Director of Yesilpınar Swimming Pool in Eyüp, 4th of April, 2019

Ebru Şule Canan Sokullu, 18th of March 2018
Professor at Bahcesehir University

Users of Yesilpınar Swimming Pool, Different days in April 2019

Trainer in Bogazici Life Center in Üsküdar, 21th of August, 2018

Two amateur football players (They want to keep their names anonymous)
In Istanbul, March, 2019

