



Nuovi Autoritarismi e Democrazie:  
Diritto, Istituzioni, Società

## **Patterns of Misogyny in Turkey's Contemporary Political Discourse: An Analysis of the Presidential Speeches**

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### *Abstract*

In 2010, R. T. Erdoğan publicly acknowledged that he does not believe in equality between women and men. Following the subsequent general election in 2011, Erdoğan has solidified his power first as Prime Minister and, since August 2014, as the President of Turkey. Thus, his patriarchal and Islamist discourse on women has become stronger and more visible. The more powerful Erdoğan has become, the wider his discourse on women has been appreciated by the society. His discourse has started to reinforce women's 'place' in society both in public and private spheres. This article examines Erdoğan's speeches between August 2014 and August 2019, focusing on International Women's Day (8th of March), Mothers' Day (second Sunday of May), and International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25th of November) using the framework of 'Logic of Misogyny' (Kate Manne 2019) to determine to what extent patterns of misogyny inform Erdoğan's discourse on women's rights, equality and agency. In order to deconstruct Erdoğan's discourse and analyse the relationship between discourse and misogyny, this article adopts feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) as the research method. In doing so, the article aims to contribute to the literature on both FCDA and misogyny with a study focusing on Turkey.

*Keywords:* Misogyny – Discourse – Turkey – Erdoğan – Gender Equality

**SOMMARIO:** 1. Introduction. 2. Literature Review. 3. Theoretical and Methodological Framework. 4. How do the Patterns Emerge? 4.1 Misogyny's Nest: Patriarchy. 4.2 Alienating feminism, othering feminists. 5. Conclusion.

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## 1. Introduction

«Democracy is like a bus ride. Once you reach your destination, you get off»<sup>1</sup>.

R. T. Erdoğan

So he did. Following the 2011 general election, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has solidified his power as a leader and shifted the political trajectory of his party, *Justice and Development Party* (AKP) to authoritarianism with an evident Islamic character<sup>2</sup>. In 2014, he was elected the president of Turkey and following the referendum of 2017, the parliamentary system has changed to an executive presidency. From 2018 onwards, Erdoğan has been the head of the executive and head of the state, while retaining his position as the leader of the AKP.

Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkish society has always assigned substantial power to its political leaders<sup>3</sup>. Their discourses are widely accepted by society, as political discourse is powerful in shaping the mindsets of people. Tekinalp stresses that political leaders give speeches not only to address electors in order to hold power but also to appeal to the electors' sociocognitive mental frame, cultural and ideological background, and current social situations<sup>4</sup>.

The extant literature covers previous studies examining Erdoğan's discourse on a variety of topics including the gender politics of the AKP while Erdoğan was still prime minister. However, to date there is no study using logic of misogyny as a framework and focusing explicitly on Erdoğan's presidential speeches concerning women. I argue that it is necessary to study misogyny and FCDA in countries where regimes have transformed into authoritarianism because women are suppressed on a different and deeper level than men by authoritarian regimes. Therefore, in this article, I aim to answer to what extent patterns of misogyny inform Erdoğan's discourse on women and their 'place' in society while Turkey goes through an agenda of authoritarianism, nationalism and Islamisation.

This article focuses on Erdoğan's discourses (August 2014 - August 2019) concerning International Women's Day, Mothers' Day, and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (VAW). To address the research question, 27 speeches by Erdoğan and press releases of the presidency on behalf of Erdoğan are analysed. Theoretically, I focus on the framework of logic of misogyny<sup>5</sup> and FCDA as the research method. This article has been structured into five sections: Section 1 consists of the introduction; Section 2 reviews the existing literature, looking at previous studies focusing on the AKP and gender; Section 3 sets out the theoretical and methodological framework; and Sections 4 and 5 present the findings of the research in the discussion and conclusion, respectively. The first subsection of section 4 focuses on

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<sup>1</sup> Online archive of the newspaper *Milliyet*, 14 July 1996, Page 20, <http://gazetearsivi.milliyet.com.tr/Arsiv/1996/07/14>.

<sup>2</sup> E. Özbudun, *AKP at the Crossroads: Erdoğan's Majoritarian Drift*, in *South European Society and Politics*, 19, 2, 2014, pp. 155-167.

<sup>3</sup> B. Kesgin, *Turkey's Erdoğan: Leadership Style and Foreign Policy Audiences*, in *Turkish Studies*, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Ş. Tekinalp, *How to Conceptualize a Culture of Support Through "Language Plus" Presented at the Right Time to the Right Audience*, in *International Journal of Communication*, No. 12, 2018, pp. 4313-4331.

<sup>5</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, Penguin Books, London, 2019.

the relationship between patriarchy and misogyny and how Erdoğan's discourse operates in upholding patriarchal order, while the second moves to describe in greater details *othering*, and forms a further relationship between Erdoğan's discourse and misogyny. In doing so, I aim to contribute to the literature on both misogyny and FCDA with a study focusing on Turkey. The study concludes that the patterns of misogyny are highly detectable in Erdoğan's discourse on women's rights, equality and agency.

## 2. Literature Review

Research on discourse and power has a long history; therefore, literature screening on the discourse of political leaders reveals a significant body of research. For example, some analysts have examined the rhetorical space of the Bush administration in the United States (US) following 9/11. Drawing on six speeches given by former US President George W. Bush, Merskin stresses "enemy construction" through using interpretive textual analysis<sup>6</sup> while Krebs and Lobasz traced the development of rhetorical coercion that left no space between Iraq and "the war on terror" while demonstrating a series of binaries such as evil/good, us/them, self/others<sup>7</sup>.

A large and growing body of literature has investigated discourse and gender politics under the various AKP governments: these include studies that focused on *gender policies and/or discourse on gender*<sup>8</sup>; *leadership traits*<sup>9</sup>; *discourse in party politics*<sup>10</sup>; *discourse in election speeches*<sup>11</sup>; *discourse on refugees*<sup>12</sup> and *discourse in mass media*<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> D. Merskin, *The Construction of Arabs as Enemies: Post-September 11 Discourse of George W. Bush* *Mass Communication & Society*, Vol.7, No.2, 2004, pp. 157-175.

<sup>7</sup> R. R. Krebs, J. K. Lobasz, *Fixing the Meaning of 9/11: Hegemony, Coercion, and the Road to War in Iraq* in *Security Studies*, Vol.16, No.3, 2007, pp. 409-451.

<sup>8</sup> S. Coşar – M. Yeğenoğlu, 'New Grounds for Patriarchy in Turkey? Gender Policy in the Age of AKP, in *South European Society and Politics*, Vol.16, No.4, 2011, pp. 555-573; D. Kandiyoti, *The Gender Wars in Turkey: A Litmus Test of Democracy?*, in *The State of Democracy in Turkey Institutions, Society and Foreign Relations*, Vol. 4, 2015, LSE Middle East Centre; A. Alniaçık, Ö. Altan-Olcay, C. Deniz, F. Gökşen, *Gender Policy Architecture in Turkey: Localizing Transnational Discourses of Women's Employment*, in *Social Politics*, Vol. 24, No.3, 2017, pp. 298-323; D. Cindoglu, D. Unal, *Gender and Sexuality in the Authoritarian Discursive Strategies of 'New Turkey'*, in *European Journal of Women's Studies*, SAGE, Vol.24, No.I, 2017, pp. 39-54; C. Erden – S. Koç, *Woman in Turkish Political Discourse "Woman's Representation in Political Celebration Messages on 8 March World Women's Day"*, in *Journal of Current Researches on Social Sciences (JoCreSS)*, Vol.7, No.4, 2017, pp. 39-64; S. Çağatay, *Women's Coalitions beyond the Laicism-Islamism Divide in Turkey: Towards an Inclusive Struggle for Gender Equality?*, in *Social Inclusion*, Vol.6, No.4, 2018; N. Mutluer, *The Intersectionality of Gender, Sexuality, and Religion: Novelities and Continuities in Turkey during the AKP era*, in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol.19, No.1, 2019, pp. 99-118.

<sup>9</sup> B. Kesgin, *Turkey's Erdoğan*, cit.

<sup>10</sup> A. Günes Ayata, F. Tütüncü, *Party Politics of the AKP (2002-2007) and the Predicaments of Women at the Intersection of the Westernist, Islamist and Feminist Discourses in Turkey*, in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.35, No.3, 2008, pp. 363-384; U. Korkut, H. Eslen-Ziya, *The Discursive Governance of Population Politics: The Evolution of a Pro-birth Regime in Turkey*, in *Social Politics*, Vol.23, No.4, 2016, pp. 555-575; N. Martin, *The A.K. Party and the Kurds since 2014: A Discourse of Terror*, in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.45, No.4, 2018, pp. 543-558.

<sup>11</sup> S. Aydın-Düzgüt, *De-Europeanisation through Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of AKP's Election Speeches*, in *South European Society And Politics*, Vol.21, No.1, 2016, pp. 45-58; T. Erçetin – E. Erdoğan, *How Turkey's Repetitive Elections affected the Populist tone in the Discourses of the Justice and Development Party Leaders*, in *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, Vol.44, No.4, 2018, pp. 382-398; Ş.

Certainly, this list is not exhaustive but illustrative to display diversity. However, to date there is no study looking at misogyny in the discourse of Erdoğan.

One salient study investigated Erdoğan's capacity to align his speeches to the place, time and culture of the audience<sup>14</sup>. Tekinalp's research, in line with Hall's hegemonic project that aspires to the remaking of commonsense<sup>15</sup>, exposed the ways that Erdoğan accomplished the framing of consent for his authoritarian ruling. The author clarified how Erdoğan used Islam and nationalism, which are the most sensitive cognitive mental frames of conservative people, to create a 'commonsense consensus' between two general elections in 2015<sup>16</sup> while we witnessed a discursive change in the AKP to redefine 'terrorist' as any opponent of the AKP<sup>17</sup>.

Güneş Ayata and Tütüncü have identified that the AKP increased the visibility of conservative and Islamist women, but only in terms of the headscarf debate and vote mobilisation<sup>18</sup>, whereas Coşar and Yeğenoğlu conceptualised this period as a new mode of patriarchy in the neoliberal, nationalist and religious discourse of the AKP<sup>19</sup>. In addition to the political context, recent evidence has suggested that the gender politics of the AKP has ensured their control of women's bodies and sexualities which also feeds into their discourse<sup>20</sup>. Likewise, another study by Alnıaçık, et al. focused on transnational gender policy discourses and the distance of state institutions to abide.<sup>21</sup> The authors claimed that Turkey repeatedly poured money into programs to support the idea that care work is home-based and women's responsibility, and to reproduce women's marginalised positions in the labour market<sup>22</sup>.

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Tekinalp, *How to Conceptualize a Culture of Support Through 'Language Plus' Presented at the Right Time to the Right Audience*, in *International Journal of Communication*, No.12, 2018, pp. 4313-4331.

<sup>12</sup> R. Karakaya Polat, *Religious solidarity, historical mission and moral superiority: construction of external and internal 'others' in AKP's discourses on Syrian refugees in Turkey*, in *Critical Discourse Studies*, Vol.15, No.5, 2018, pp. 500-516; D. Onay-Coker, *The representation of Syrian refugees in Turkey: a critical discourse analysis of three newspapers*, in *Continuum*, Vol.33, No.3, 2019, pp. 369-385.

<sup>13</sup> B. Gümüş, A. Baran Dural, *Othering Through Hate Speech: The Turkish-Islamist (V)AKIT Newspaper as a Case Study*, in *Turkish Studies*, Vol.13, No.3, 2012, pp. 489-507; E. Özcan, *Women's Headscarves in News Photographs: A Comparison between the Secular and Islamic Press during the AKP Government in Turkey*, in *European Journal of Communication*, Vol.30, No.6, 2015, pp. 698-713; S. Akyüz, F. Sayan-Cengiz 'Overcome your anger if you are a man': *Silencing Women's Agency to Voice Violence Against Women*, in *Women's Studies International Forum*, No.57, 2016, pp. 1-10; V. Boztepe, *Televizyon Haberlerinde Kadınlara Yönelik Şiddetin Temsili: Özgecan Aslan Cinayeti Üzerinden Bir İnceleme.*, in *İstanbul Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi*, No.1, 2017, pp. 39-66; Y. Burul, H. Eslen-Ziya, *Understanding 'New Turkey' Through Women's Eyes: Gender Politics in Turkish Daytime Talk Shows.*, in *Middle East Critique*, Vol.27, No.2, 2018, pp. 179-192; F. Avcı, A. Güdekli, *Toplumsal Cinsiyet Ve Medya İlişkisi: Yazılı Basında Kadına Şiddet Ve Kadın Cinayetleri Haberleri Üzerine Bir Analiz*, in *International Journal of Cultural and Social Studies (IntJCSS)*, Vol.4, No.2, 2018, pp. 475-506.

<sup>14</sup> Ş. Tekinalp, *How to Conceptualize a Culture of Support*, cit.

<sup>15</sup> S. Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, Verso, London, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Ş. Tekinalp, *How to Conceptualize a Culture of Support*, cit., p. 4314.

<sup>17</sup> N. Martin, *The A.K. Party and the Kurds since 2014: A Discourse of Terror*, cit.

<sup>18</sup> A. Güneş Ayata, F. Tütüncü, *Party Politics of the AKP (2002–2007)*, cit.

<sup>19</sup> S.Coşar, M. Yeğenoğlu, *New Grounds for Patriarchy in Turkey*, cit.

<sup>20</sup> D. Cindoglu, D. Unal, *Gender and Sexuality*, cit.

<sup>21</sup> A. Alnıaçık, Ö. Altan-Olcay, C. Deniz, F. Gökşen, *Gender Policy Architecture in Turkey: Localizing Transnational Discourses of Women's Employment.*, in *Social Politics*, Vol.24, No.3, 2017, pp. 298-323.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 316.

By drawing on the concepts that the AKP instilled, such as *yerli ve milli* (homegrown and national) values, Mutluer applied a discourse analysis of the shifts in policies and public statements of governmental and non-governmental actors<sup>23</sup>. The author concluded that Erdoğan and the AKP use discourse on gender and sexuality as an instrument to control the «neoliberal distribution of conservative values adopted by family, community and market»<sup>24</sup>. Similarly, the study by Cindoglu and Unal suggested a complex patchwork of regulatory narratives on women's sexualities generated by intertwining pro-Islamism, neoliberalism, authoritarianism and conservatism<sup>25</sup>. Whereas Özgür Keysan suggests that this is what makes the AKP's power unique; its capacity to combine conservative and Islamic values with neoliberalism in political discourse and also in practice<sup>26</sup>.

### 3. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The methodology of this study takes two approaches: it uses Manne's logic of misogyny as the theoretical framework while applying FCDA to Erdoğan's discourse. FCDA aims to unveil and defy discourses that still strengthen gendered social orders in various ways<sup>27</sup>. This study focuses on Erdoğan's discourse on women after he became president in August 2014. The aim is to assess the extent of the patterns of misogyny that informs Erdoğan's discourse on women's rights, equality and agency. To address the research question empirically, data in the form of 27 speeches by Erdoğan and press releases of the presidency on behalf of Erdoğan are analysed. The data is extracted from the official website of the presidency of Turkey<sup>28</sup>. Initial research has verified that there is no press release or speech on the website of the presidency that acknowledges the International Day for the Elimination of VAW. However, Erdoğan gave speeches at the International Women and Justice Summits of KADEM<sup>29</sup> that were organised in the same period, therefore these speeches are included in the analysis. The reason for focusing on these specific days is that they take place at a time when Erdoğan's discourse predominantly focused on women rather than any other contemporary topic.

Manne's study<sup>30</sup> encompasses the theoretical framework of the current study where I assess whether misogyny feeds Erdoğan's discourse on women and if so, to what extent misogyny informs his discourse. Manne starts her theory by explaining how the

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<sup>23</sup> N. Mutluer, *The Intersectionality of Gender, Sexuality, and Religion: Novelities and Continuities in Turkey during the AKP era*, in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol.19, No.1, 2019, pp. 99-118.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 101.

<sup>25</sup> D. Cindoglu, D. Unal, *Gender and Sexuality*, p. 40.

<sup>26</sup> A. Özgür Keysan, *Activism and Women's NGOs in Turkey: Civil Society, Feminism and Politics*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2019, p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> M.M. Lazar, *Feminist critical discourse analysis*. in *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies*, John Flowerdew and John E. Richardson (eds.), Routledge, London, 2017, pp. 372-387.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/>.

<sup>29</sup> Women and Democracy Association (KADEM) is the biggest GONGO association in Turkey of which Erdoğan's daughter is one of the founders. GONGOs are non-governmental organizations established by ruling regimes. They are loyal to the regime, and instrumental to promoting the ruling regime's agenda at a local level. Compared to NGOs, GONGOs receive immense funding from the regime so they can reach a wider audience through events including nationwide campaigns and conferences.

<sup>30</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit.

standard definition of misogyny is fundamentally insufficient to explain misogyny in the real world. The standard definition of misogyny, a naïve conception says Manne, views misogyny as a physiological phenomenon in men because it considers that misogynists hate all or most women because they are women<sup>31</sup>. Manne opposes this, explaining that we cannot expect even deeply misogynistic men to hate all women because there are women in their lives who stick to patriarchal expectations, who amicably serve these misogynistic men. For example, a man can love his mother and still be a misogynist. Throughout her analysis, Manne revealed distressing (potentially even triggering) cases from real life, clarifying that misogyny is not a psychological phenomenon but a materialisation of social norms, expectations and consequences of the patriarchal order. Thus, «misogyny primarily targets women because they are women in a *man's world* [...] rather than because they are women in a *man's mind* where that man is a misogynist»<sup>32</sup>. Stating it concisely, misogyny can be described as the «law enforcement branch of a patriarchal order, which has the overall function of *policing and enforcing its governing ideology*»<sup>33</sup>.

Manne constructed a framework that understands misogyny in terms of what it *does* to women. One's attitudes/behaviours count as misogynistic within a patriarchal social environment. To generalise: adults are insultingly likened to children, people to animals or even to objects. Infantilising and belittling, ridiculing, humiliating, mocking, slurring, vilifying, demonising, sexualising/desexualising, silencing, shunning, shaming, blaming, patronising, condescending, and other forms of treatment that are dismissive and disparaging in specific social contexts. This can also include violence and threatening behaviour. In other words, misogyny operates to keep women in line when they fail to «know their place»<sup>34</sup>.

Moreover, Manne proposed the give/take model which offers a way to unify the phenomena. The model anticipates that cases of misogyny can be brought under two headings. Firstly, women are obliged to give feminine-coded goods and services to «someone or other, preferably one man at least insofar as he wants such goods and services from her»<sup>35</sup>. Secondly, women are prohibited from asking for masculine-coded goods from men as long as they want to receive or retain them<sup>36</sup>:

«*Hers to give (feminine-coded goods and services)*: attention, affection, admiration, sympathy, sex, and children (i.e., social, domestic, reproductive, and emotional labour); also mixed goods, such as safe haven, nurture, security, soothing, and comfort»

versus

«*His for the taking (masculine-coded perks and privileges)*: power, prestige, public recognition, rank, reputation, honour, 'face', respect, money and other forms of wealth, hierarchical status, upward mobility, and the status conferred by having a high-ranking woman's loyalty, love, devotion, etc.»

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<sup>31</sup> *Idem*, p.32.

<sup>32</sup> *Idem*, p.64 (original emphasis).

<sup>33</sup> *Idem*, p.63 (original emphasis).

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*, p. 68.

<sup>35</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, p. 130.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, (original emphasis).

The focus of Manne's study is on Australia, the United Kingdom (UK) and the US. It offers an analysis of misogyny theoretically enlightening for studies looking at other parts of the world because it shows that misogyny in a social environment is metaphysically dependent on there being norms and expectations of a patriarchal nature<sup>37</sup>. Manne further explained that the framework she developed is indeed intended to be general, but that she deliberately focused on cultures in which she has been a political participant since she analyses culture and ideology<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, I argue here that the framework is applicable to analysing discourse in other patriarchal societies, including Turkey – an authoritarian (and gradually becoming Islamic) country, where I have been a political participant.

FCDA specifically focuses on interpreting the interrelationship between gender, power and ideology<sup>39</sup>. The mission of FCDA is to study «how power and dominance are discursively produced and/or resisted in a variety of ways through textual representations of gendered social practices, and through interactional strategies of talk»<sup>40</sup>. Thus, the mission is not only to deconstruct discourse using the logic of misogyny as a framework, but also to analyse the relationship between discourse and patriarchy. Therefore, FCDA is selected as the research method of this study.

So, discourse matters. Studying discourse mediates between society/culture/situation, cognition and discourse/language<sup>41</sup>. Lazar has argued that ideological assumptions are constantly re-enacted and circulated through discourse commonsensical and natural<sup>42</sup>. As a result, in studies of FCDA, the central concern focuses on discourses sustaining the patriarchal social order which can be defined as power relations that systemically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group<sup>43</sup>. Discourse is ideological and socially consequential; it gives rise to power and also reproduces unequal power relations between women and men<sup>44</sup>. Thus, it is imperative to focus on Erdoğan's discourse on women, and how and why it affects women's rights, equality and agency.

The data obtained in this study is in Turkish. The initial analysis included referencing every document in the data to include when, where, how and why the speech was produced. After initial coding, coding categories that have analytical significance were produced with the aim to identify how Erdoğan has used particular discursive

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<sup>37</sup> *Idem*, p. 67.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem*, p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> M.M. Lazar, *Politicizing Gender in Discourse: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as Political Perspective and Praxis*, in *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power, and Ideology in Discourse*, M.M. Lazar (ed.), Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2005, pp. 1-28.

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*, p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> R. Wodak, *Editor's Introduction: Critical Discourse Analysis – Challenges and Perspective*, in *Critical Discourse Analysis Volume I Concepts, History, Theory*, SAGE, 2013, p. xxxii.

<sup>42</sup> M.M. Lazar, *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis Relevance for Current Gender and Language Research*, in *The Handbook of Language, Gender and Sexuality*, M. Meyerhoff, J. Holmes (eds.), Wiley Blackwell, Hoboken, New Jersey, 2014, p. 186.

<sup>43</sup> M.N. Lazar, *Politicizing Gender in Discourse*, cit., p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> N. Fairclough, R. Wodak, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, in *Discourse as Social Interaction*, SAGE, London, 1997, pp. 258-60.

structures<sup>45</sup>. Through employing FCDA, the data is examined in terms of word order, metaphors, idioms, and vocabulary choice within the theoretical framework. The analysis of discourse fragments (like structures, procedures) and the findings are discussed next.

#### 4. How do the Patterns Emerge?

The Turkish language is a left-branching, agglutinating language. New words are formed by attaching an affix to the right of a root, which can be a simple root or a combination of a root plus suffixes, referred to as a stem<sup>46</sup>. The main word order is subject-object-verb while the main word formation process involves suffixing morphology that is influenced by vowel harmony and other morphophonological processes<sup>47</sup>. This means that vowels in almost all suffixes depend on the consonants or vowels that precede them<sup>48</sup>. For example, the plural suffix has two forms, *-lar* (as in *kadın-lar* “women”) and *-ler* (as in *feminist-ler* “feminists”). Erdoğan always uses possessive suffixes in addition to plural suffixes in his discourse.

Possessive suffixes usually correspond to the six grammatical persons. A noun phrase marked with a possessive suffix is understood as denoting a person or thing that is possessed. The possessive suffix indicates only whether the possessor is 1st, 2nd or 3rd person, singular or plural<sup>49</sup>. One interesting finding is that Erdoğan usually prefers to use 1st plural possessive suffixes when referring to women. This analysis revealed that Erdoğan addressed women 187 times using possessive suffixes. The grammatical structure of this is as follows<sup>50</sup>:

(1) *Kadın-lar-ımız*  
Woman-plural suffix-possessive 1PL  
“our women”

(2) a. *Genç kız-lar-ımız*  
Young girl-plural suffix-possessive 1PL  
“our young girls”

b. *Kız evlat-lar-ımız*  
Girl child-plural suffix-possessive 1PL  
“our daughters”

(3) *Anne-ler-imiz*  
Mother-plural suffix-possessive 1PL  
“our mothers”

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<sup>45</sup> G. R. Waitt, *Doing Discourse Analysis*, in *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p. 182.

<sup>46</sup> A. Göksel, C. Kerslake, *Turkish: A Comprehensive Grammar*, Routledge, New York, 2005, p. 43.

<sup>47</sup> F. Braun, *The Communication of Gender in Turkish.*, in *Gender across Languages: The Linguistic Representation of Women and Men*, Vol. I, M. Hellinger, H. Bussmann (eds.), John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 2001, pp. 283-310.

<sup>48</sup> A. Göksel, C. Kerslake, *Turkish: A Comprehensive Grammar*.

<sup>49</sup> *Idem*, p. 151.

<sup>50</sup> As part of his populist discourse, Erdoğan uses possessive suffixes also in different contexts such as *şehitlerimiz* - our martyrs, *babalarımız* - our fathers, *gençlerimiz* - our young people. However, using ‘our fathers’, for instance, would have no consequence on men in a patriarchal society whereas using such rhetoric for women emphasises a relationship of possessiveness and causes immense impact on women’s rights, equality and agency. In other words, using such form when referring to women constitutes an action that is conducive to a social environment’s misogyny and, thus, cultivates patriarchy.



(4) *Hanım kardeş-ler-imiz*  
Lady Sibling-plural suffix-possessive1PL “our lady siblings”

Possessive suffixes emphasise the relation between people and *things* of a permanent nature or *considered* so by the subject. Interestingly, the Turkish language does not have any gender distinction in grammar (nor gender specific personal pronouns). However, patriarchy has been producing gender biases, gender roles and gender as a category that remains in the shadow of grammatical neutrality that is engrained in everyday life. In other words, the Turkish language seems structurally gender neutral while it is used to project patriarchy intrinsically.

Patriarchy does not hold women as mindless things or objects. Rather it expects a woman to owe her human capacities to particular people such as men in her family (or his children). Hence, women always have to be somebody’s someone; sister, daughter, mother, grandmother conductive but seldom their own person<sup>51</sup>. Likewise, in Erdoğan’s discourse, this is also evident; women are always somebody’s someone.

Further discussion of the findings is unfolded in the following two subsections focusing on *patriarchy* and *othering*. I have two aims in separating the discussion part. In the first subsection, I present how his discourse on concepts like culture, custom, and belief serve patriarchy. Following in the second, I unveil how this discourse feeds ‘appropriate womanhood’, and categorises and marginalises some women. Both subsections originate from analytically significant coding categories<sup>52</sup>.

#### 4.1 *Misogyny’s Nest: Patriarchy*

Patriarchy privileges men, creates hegemony over women and produces systemic inequalities based on gender. Patriarchy today, is so hegemonic that it does not appear as domination at all; it commonly seems «consensual and acceptable»<sup>53</sup>.

It is worth starting by stressing that Erdoğan’s discourse on women’s rights does not derive from gender equality, because he does not believe in the equality of women and men<sup>54</sup>. Erdoğan is a creationist and he frequently refers to the teachings of Islam and the Quran when referring to women’s rights. He states that the point of departure must be gender justice, not equality, when it comes to women:

«What do women need? Sometimes they say equality between women and men. The right way is equality among women and equality among men. However, what really matters is justice for women [...]. What women need is not equality, but rather equity, in other words, justice. You cannot place women and men on an equal footing; it is against their *fitrat* [purpose of creation] because women’s *fitrat*, nature and constitution are

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<sup>51</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit., p.173.

<sup>52</sup> G.R. Wait, *Doing Discourse Analysis*, in *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, pp. 163-191.

<sup>53</sup> M.M. Lazar, *Politicizing Gender in Discourse*, cit., p.7.

<sup>54</sup> Online archive of the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, *Buz gibi Sözcükler*, 20 July 2010, [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/164212/Buz\\_gibi\\_sozler.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/164212/Buz_gibi_sozler.html).

different [...] therefore we must adopt [...] gender justice<sup>55</sup> as our most important criterion, the most important point of reference»<sup>56</sup>.

Holsti has stated that political statements aim to «persuade, justify, threaten, cajole, manipulate, evoke sympathy and support, or otherwise influence the intended audience»<sup>57</sup>. It is important to recall Holsti's argument in discourse analysis because language use forms social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief in a way that helps to shape such aspects of society and culture<sup>58</sup>, by creating consent. So, what does Erdoğan's discourse aim to achieve?

Patriarchy demands women's subordination and oppression. It constructs a social environment that assigns gender roles and biases to ensure a hierarchy. It ensures that women internalise through means of education, religion, family and political discourse. Müftüler-Baç outlined the preliminary factors in Turkey that include patriarchy as the Mediterranean culture, Islam and Kemalism<sup>59</sup> which comprises legal discrimination, economic inequality, social inequality (as intangible forms) and sexual harassment, assault, insult, battery, rape, virginity tests, torture, and murder at the most extreme (as tangible forms)<sup>60</sup>. Erdoğan did not refer to patriarchy in the data but he referred 356 times to history, beliefs, culture, religion, Islam, (sacred) values<sup>61</sup>, civilisation, mores and traditions. Among these, religion, Islam and belief were mentioned a total of 143 times (40 percent). While history is referred to the most, mores and traditions are referred to the least, albeit that these concepts together serve to shape the everyday life of the society.

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<sup>55</sup> The concept of 'gender justice' repeats the 'gender equity' discourse of the Vatican at the Beijing Conference in 1995 in: P. İlkkaracan, *Vatikan'dan Kopya: Toplumsal Cinsiyet Adaleti [Copy from the Vatican: Gender Justice]*, in *Kazete*, comment posted January 2 2015, [http://kazete.com.tr/makale/vatikandan-kopya-gundemsal-cinsiyet-adaleti\\_1013](http://kazete.com.tr/makale/vatikandan-kopya-gundemsal-cinsiyet-adaleti_1013).

<sup>56</sup> R. T. Erdoğan, *Uluslararası Kadın Ve Adalet Zirvesinde Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, November 24, 2014), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/2959/uluslararasi-kadin-ve-adalet-zirvesinde-yaptiklari-konusma>,

<sup>57</sup> O. Holsti, *Foreign Policy Viewed Cognitively*, in *The Structure of Decision*, Robert Axelrod (ed.), Princeton University, Princeton, 1976, p. 43.

<sup>58</sup> C.A.M. Gouveia, *Assumptions about Gender, Power and Opportunity: Gays and Lesbians as Discursive Subjects in a Portuguese Newspaper*, in *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse*, M. M. Lazar (ed.), Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2005, pp. 229-250.

<sup>59</sup> *Kemalism*: 'The ideas and principles of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Turkish Republic, are termed Kemalism; Kemalism constitutes the official ideology of the state, and endured publicly unchallenged until the 1980s' in Mete Tunçay, 'Kemalism', *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0440>.

<sup>60</sup> M. Müftüler-Baç, *Turkish Women's Predicament*, in *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.22, No.3, 1999, p. 305.

<sup>61</sup> Values that are shared by the society (common values) is a vague concept that enables Erdoğan (along with other men who are in positions of power) to attract approval from various segments of the society. This vague concept generally has Islamic and conservative tones. A. Güneş-Ayata, G. Doğançün, *Gender Politics of the AKP: Restoration of a Religio-conservative Gender Climate in Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol.19, No.6, 2017, pp. 610-627.



«Even though they [women and men] come from different *fitrat*, they are integral parts of the same piece»<sup>65</sup>.

«Once you remove one part, the other is not a half – it vanishes, that is how God created us, in a balance»<sup>66</sup>.

Very often, he has stated that women and men are two sides of a medallion.<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, Erdoğan's discourse on complementarity rejects sexism, however, the way he structures his discourse unfortunately does not reveal who the sexists are. The grammatical structure of Turkish permits null subjects, which means clauses can lack explicit subjects via adding plural suffixes (*-ler, -lar*) to verbs to create null subjects as in *bakanlar* (ones who look) and *söyleyenler* (ones who say).

Erdoğan has claimed that he is against any kind of sexism, that sexist approaches do not comply with the values, history, and dynamics of social life in Turkey<sup>68</sup>. His approach to feminism and the fact that feminism rejects his complementarity approach could provide one possible explanation to whom Erdoğan refers. Feminists are sexists because they separate human beings as women and men as the quotes below suggest:

«God created us as humans, the most honourable creature; all differences are beyond this line, below this. When you sort any difference above all, particularly sex, problems arise. Neither our belief, our culture nor our history would allow this»<sup>69</sup>.

«Women and men are [...] complementary [...]. The ones who evaluate women and men only with a sexist approach, they miss the fact that they are human»<sup>70</sup>.

«We will never stop working to change the approach of those who look at women and men through sexist glasses, the ones who forget that they are humans first»<sup>71</sup>.

«The human being is the most honourable creature [...]. Any assault against women is against all humankind. With every femicide, all humankind is slaughtered. The ones who do not approach this issue through this point, have surrendered their mind to sexism»<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> R. T. Erdoğan, *HAK-İŞ Dünya Kadın Günü Programında Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, March 7, 2018), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/91665/hak-is-dunya-kadin-gunu-programinda-yaptiklari-konusma>.

<sup>66</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dördüncü Muhtarlar Toplantısı'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, March 10, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 'Dünya Kadınlar Günü Mesajı', (press release, March 7, 2018), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/basin-aciklamalari/365/91660/dunya-kadinlar-gunu-mesaji>; R.T. Erdoğan, *Dünya Kadınlar Günü Mesajı*, (press release, March 7, 2019), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/basin-aciklamalari/365/102317/dunya-kadinlar-gunu-mesaji>.

<sup>68</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dünya Kadınlar Günü Mesajı*, (press release, March 7, 2018).

<sup>69</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dördüncü Muhtarlar Toplantısı'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, March 10, 2015).

<sup>70</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar Günü Resepsiyonu'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 8, 2016), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/40095/8-mart-dunya-kadinlar-gunu-resepsiyonunda-yaptiklari-konusma>.

<sup>71</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dünya Kadınlar Günü Mesajı*, (press release, March 7, 2019).

<sup>72</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dünya Kadınlar Günü Buluşması'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 8, 2015), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/29790/dunya-kadinlar-gunu-bulusmasinda-yaptiklari-konusma>.

Erdoğan has rejected the argument that VAW is a systematic problem that stems from patriarchy. Instead, he believes that VAW is an individual problem of psychopaths or perverts<sup>73</sup>. He has also emphasised that a real Muslim person would not engage in VAW<sup>74</sup>. Erdoğan believes that the aforementioned concepts like history and civilisation have no contribution to VAW at all. On the contrary, these concepts provide the answer: respecting women. He believes that history, civilisation, religion, etc. bring about respect to women and that is the solution for VAW. Moreover, his imputative discourse accuses the people who see traces of VAW in these concepts as trying to vilify the nation's values and beliefs<sup>75</sup>. His understanding is in line with the standard definition of misogyny that views misogyny as a matter of the psychology of men<sup>76</sup>. However, neither VAW nor misogyny is a psychological phenomenon. They are about social norms, patriarchal oppression and expectations, which are very present in Turkish society.

In addition, Erdoğan has denied that there is gender discrimination in Turkey<sup>77</sup>. He defends *fitrat*, complementarity and gender justice while continuing to glorify culture, values, religion and civilisation. He has accused gender equality efforts as «torn from the reality» of the country, stressing that gender justice is the necessary approach for family (and women's) issues<sup>78</sup>.

It is interesting to observe Erdoğan's rejection of gender equality, and the frequency of his references to concepts like history and culture in order to form a different understanding of women's rights, i.e. humanising women. However, as discussed earlier, humanising women creates no progress for women's rights and agency. Rather, it means acceptance of 'hers-to-give' capacities at the state level. The alarming number of femicides portrays the point that his approach does not yield any progress<sup>79</sup>. Besides, his discourse on women's rights excludes feminism; he intentionally avoids saying women's rights, and focuses merely on the human status of women:

«I salute your fight to use your rights that derive from your status as a human being. In our civilisation, our belief, our culture, people are not dealt with according to their sex but their status as human beings because with us, humans are the most honourable creatures... There is no need for anything else to protect women when women are approached as human beings»<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *HAK-İŞ Dünya Kadın Günü Programında Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, March 7, 2018).

<sup>74</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Uluslararası Kadın Ve Adalet Zirvesinde Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, November 24, 2014).

<sup>75</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *HAK-İŞ Dünya Kadın Günü Programında Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, March 7, 2018).

<sup>76</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit., p.32.

<sup>77</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın III. Uluslararası Kadın ve Adalet Zirvesi Açılış Konuşması*, (speech, November 23, 2018), *KADEM*, <http://kadem.org.tr/cumhurbaskani-sayin-recep-tayyip-erdoganin-iii-uluslararasi-kadin-ve-adalet-zirvesi-acilis-konusmasi/>.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>79</sup> BİA, independent communication network, monitors male violence in Turkey, <http://bianet.org/english/gender/134394-bianet-is-monitoring-male-violence>.

<sup>80</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *HAK-İŞ 5. Uluslararası Kadın Emegi Buluşması'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 7, 2016), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/40060/hak-is-5-uluslararasi-kadin-emegi-bulusmasinda-yaptiklari-konusma>.

Erdoğan has insisted that women are humans and that once they are treated as humans, gender justice will be achieved. He has frequently underlined women's humanity whilst at the same time stressing that men's and men's *fitrat* are different; therefore, they are not, and cannot be, equal. In contrast to popular views on misogyny, which sees women as sub-human, non-persons or things, misogyny in effect considers women as humans but « all too human»<sup>81</sup>. So, what does this concept of *fitrat* involve for women? They are “human givers”. Women are socially positioned to owe their human capacities which are defined by feminine-coded human goods and services to men, the latter who are entitled to receive these goods.

Erdoğan has often highlighted that respecting women is part of the values, traditions and history of Turkey<sup>82</sup> and praises motherhood as the highest possible rank for a woman<sup>83</sup>. Even though he does not define what he means by respect, in his speeches he generally refers to women in terms of responsibilities, whether family, domestic work, motherhood, or as the first teacher of children<sup>84</sup>. There is no reference to women's agency or individuality in his speeches which ultimately feed a misogynistic social environment: «Women to be in the trust of men on behalf of god»<sup>85</sup>; «Our women that always have a special place in our hearts; that are the essential pillar of structure of our family and society»<sup>86</sup>; «All women who instil hope in humankind with their self-sacrifice, their love»<sup>87</sup>.

Furthermore, Erdoğan has constructed the discourse on appropriate womanhood in a way that embraces propriety and subordination. Such a role for women is in line with Manne's theory that recognises misogyny in terms of what it does to women. As the law enforcement branch of patriarchy, misogyny's function is to police and enforce its governing ideology<sup>88</sup>. Correspondingly, Erdoğan's discourse brings about the norms and expectations of patriarchy from women; his discourse on appropriate womanhood enforces the norms and expectations of patriarchy upon which misogyny in a social

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<sup>81</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit., p.169.

<sup>82</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dünya Kadınlar Günü Mesajı*, (press release, March 7, 2019).

<sup>83</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Uluslararası Kadın Ve Adalet Zirvesinde Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, November 24, 2014); R.T. Erdoğan, *Gaziantep Toplu Açılış ve Temel Atma Töreninde Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech March 7, 2015), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/32700/gaziantep-toplu-acilis-ve-temel-atma-torende-yaptiklari-konusma>; R.T. Erdoğan, *8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar Günü Resepsiyonu'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 8, 2016). Besides, again in 2016, Erdoğan said that a woman who rejects motherhood, who refrains from being around the house, however successful her working life is, is deficient, and is incomplete. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/06/turkish-president-Erdogan-childless-women-deficient-incomplete>.

<sup>84</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *HAK-İŞ 5. Uluslararası Kadın Emeği Buluşması'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 7, 2016); R.T. Erdoğan, *8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar Günü Resepsiyonu'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 8, 2016); R.T. Erdoğan, *Anneler Günü Mesajı*, (press release, May 12, 2018), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/basin-aciklamalari/365/93922/anneler-gunu-mesaji>.

<sup>85</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Gaziantep Toplu Açılış ve Temel Atma Töreninde Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech March 7, 2015).

<sup>86</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dünya Kadınlar Günü Mesajı*, (press release, March 8, 2015), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/basin-aciklamalari/365/29634/dunya-kadinlar-gunu-mesaji>.

<sup>87</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dünya Kadınlar Günü Mesajı*, (press release, March 7, 2017), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/basin-aciklamalari/365/72232/dunya-kadinlar-gunu-mesaji>.

<sup>88</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit.

environment is metaphysically dependent<sup>89</sup>. Moreover, such heteronormativity and expectation of family as the heterosexual union of women and men, restricts the very small space that the LGBT+ community has in Turkey. In such a misogynistic social environment, women are expected of “hers-to-give”<sup>90</sup> capacities, i.e. feminine-coded goods and services, are highly detectable in Erdoğan’s discourse:

«Women of Anatolia are like soil; they are stoic, maker, constructive, and always survivors. [...] She knows how to feed her family and raise her children in harsh conditions, she works tooth and nail and produces. She instils us with hope»<sup>91</sup>.

«A woman knows that she has to bring food to the table in any conditions and acts accordingly. She hides the distress she suffers, and protects her family, keeps her family together»<sup>92</sup>.

«Humankind would not survive if it weren’t for you, your self-sacrifice, your attention, affection, efforts, fights. Therefore, I salute all stoic women of Anatolia and Thrace»<sup>93</sup>.

Of course, there are women who do not comply with Erdoğan’s appropriate womanhood. They demand *his-for-the-taking* that women are prohibited from. They violate their “place”; they disobey patriarchy. Such women are likely to be labelled as «greedy, corrupt, illicitly entitled, and out of order»<sup>94</sup>. However, misogyny ensures women stick to their assigned patriarchal roles; women’s tasks are not only performing emotional, social, domestic, sexual, and reproductive labour – they must do so in a loving and caring manner or enthusiastic spirit, patriarchal norms and expectations have to operate on the down-low.<sup>95</sup> Erdoğan usually underlines that women have supported him since the early days of his political career, during his candidacy for mayor of Istanbul in the 1990s<sup>96</sup>:

«Since my candidacy for the mayor of Beyoğlu District in 1989, any area in politics that I took responsibility, I walked the path with our women. During my days as mayor in Istanbul metropolitan municipality, our women were at the forefront of social events [...]. I thank my lady siblings who were there for me in every struggle I had, who have supported my every

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<sup>89</sup> *Idem*, p. 67.

<sup>90</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit., p. 130.

<sup>91</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, ‘*Aynı Gök Kubbe Altında Gönül Dilimiz*’ Adlı 8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar Günü Buluşmasında Yaptıkları Konuşma, (speech, March 8, 2019), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/102426/-ayni-gok-kubbe-altinda-gonul-dilimiz-adli-8-mart-dunya-kadinlar-gunu-bulusmasinda-yaptiklari-konusma>.

<sup>92</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Aynı Gök Kubbe Altında Gönül Dilimiz*, (speech, March 8, 2019).

<sup>93</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar Günü Resepsiyonu’nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 8, 2016).

<sup>94</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit., p.132. Manne analyses misogynistic speeches about Julia Gillard, then prime minister of Australia in 2012, and the misogynistic smearing of Hillary Clinton during her campaign for presidency in 2016.

<sup>95</sup> *Idem*, p. 46.

<sup>96</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dünya Kadınlar Günü Buluşması’nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 8, 2015); R.T. Erdoğan, *Aynı Gök Kubbe Altında Gönül Dilimiz*, (speech, March 8, 2019).

achievement for approximately 40 years [...]. Like in that saying ‘it needs a woman’s touch’, Tayyip Erdoğan has survived until these days thanks to women’s touch»<sup>97</sup>.

But this raises the question of what role did these women play? Were they politicians involved in decision-making? Did we see an increase in the number of women politicians in the AKP? In their earlier work, Günes Ayata and Tütüncü revealed that women in the AKP had very little impact on increasing representation, or changing the rhetoric and programme, as well as not being close to positions of power within the organisational structure<sup>98</sup>.

Following the general election in November 2017, the AKP had only 34 women out of its 316 parliamentarians, accounting for just 10.76 percent<sup>99</sup>. Erdoğan has claimed that the AKP has 4.5 million women members<sup>100</sup> in its women’s branch, but what do they do? Do they have any authority in the AKP? As women are human givers of moral support and attention, not recipients<sup>101</sup>, women in the AKP are also responsible for providing support, affection, admiration, and sympathy - especially before elections:

«My lady siblings, I have a request. The election on March 31<sup>st</sup> is crucial. I want my lady siblings to get in every house until the election day...Ladies, are you ready to get in each and every house and reach every heart? [...] My lady siblings, are you going to help the AKP that has always been there for you to break a record in the election?»<sup>102</sup>.

#### **4.2 Alienating feminism, othering feminists**

According to Young, discourse is both constituted by, and ensures the reproduction of, the social system through forms of selection, exclusion and domination<sup>103</sup>. If we look at how Erdoğan uses forms of selection, exclusion and domination in his discourse on othering women, we see that misogyny joins forces with these forms. Manne explains that misogyny works via regular social-norm enforcement mechanisms, moralism, and other negative character-level generalisations, hierarchical social moves, and similar<sup>104</sup>.

Othering in Erdoğan’s discourse not only comprises women but any (hypothetical or real) opposition because of the grammatical structure of the Turkish language, because he chooses to use subjects in the form of pronouns in his discourse. Göksel and Kerslake define pronouns as expressions that are used to refer to people, things or states or affairs that have been previously mentioned, whose referents are obvious from the context or whose content is only partially specified<sup>105</sup>. However, the way Erdoğan structures his discourse does not allow for identifying the referents of pronouns. Since these pronouns are generally used in negative connotation to accuse or alienate, it is

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<sup>97</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Aynı Gök Kubbe Altında Gönül Dilimiz*, (speech, March 8, 2019).

<sup>98</sup> A. Günes Ayata, F. Tütüncü, *Party Politics of the AKP (2002–2007)*, cit., p. 384.

<sup>99</sup> KA.DER Association (for the Support and Training of Women Candidates), Statistics on Women, *KA.DER 2017*, <http://ka-der.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/kad%C4%B1n-istatistikleri-2017.pdf>.

<sup>100</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Aynı Gök Kubbe Altında Gönül Dilimiz*, (speech, March 8, 2019).

<sup>101</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit., p. 304.

<sup>102</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Aynı Gök Kubbe Altında Gönül Dilimiz*, (speech, March 8, 2019).

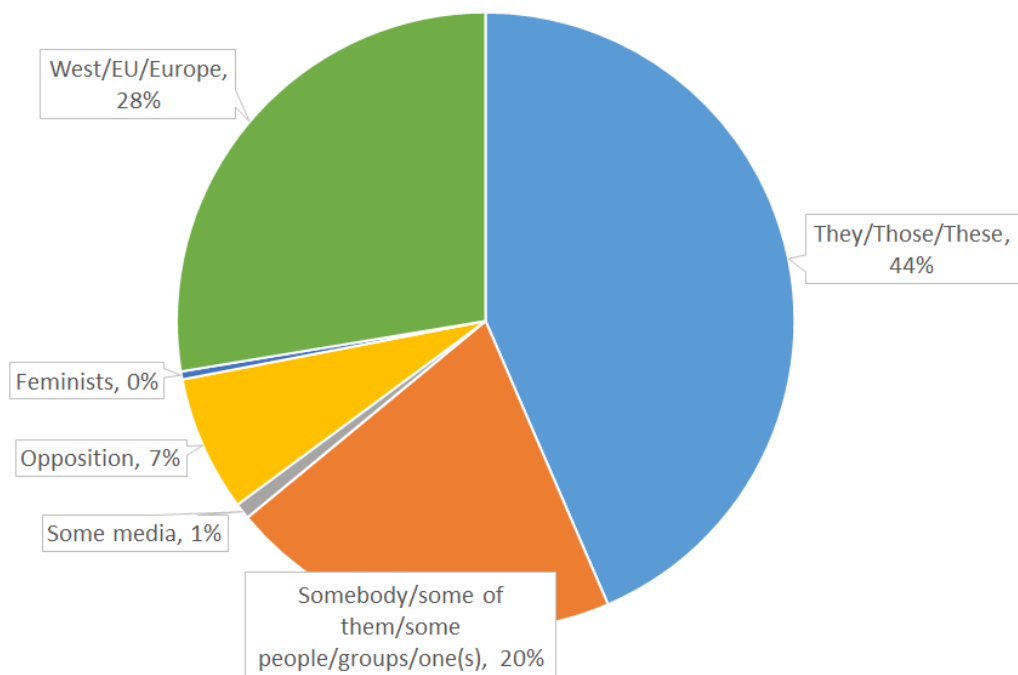
<sup>103</sup> R. Young, *Untying the text: a post-structural anthology*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston, 1981.

<sup>104</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit., p. 68-9.

<sup>105</sup> A. Göksel, C. Kerslake, *Turkish: A Comprehensive Grammar*, cit., p. 230.



reasonable to consider that this is why he does not refer directly to the people he means, i.e. whoever does not agree with his politics on the matters of the speech. To clarify, he regularly uses simple personal pronouns like: they (*onlar*) and someone (*birisi*); demonstrative pronouns (deriving from demonstrative determiners) such as these/those [people] (*bunlar/onlar*); pronominalised determiners as subjects like some of them/some people (*bazıları*); a noun phrase containing a quantifier: several (circles) (*birtakım çevreler*); and impersonal pronouns which can be negative, positive or interrogative ones (*kimse*). Occasionally he refers to feminists, media, opposition, and to Europe, the EU or the West directly (which is not in terms of geography but as pronouns with negative connotation in anti-Western discourse).



**Chart 2. 'Othering' in Discourse**

The analysis reveals a pattern of anti-Western and anti-feminist discourse in Erdoğan's discourse. Initially, he mentions women living in Turkey before moving to women in conflict zones (Syria, Palestine), and he justifies Turkish army operations through a discourse on supporting «the oppressed» (including women). Then he underlines the numbers of refugees in Turkey and how the West does not care. Through an accusing discourse, Erdoğan also claims that feminists in the West are not concerned with women in conflict zones, and blames them as ignorant people, ergo, they are not actual women's rights defenders:

«There is no point for the ones who are deaf to their pain and tears to discuss women's rights, human rights [...]. We know that those people are not actually bothered with women, children, victims or the oppressed. Their trouble is something else. We cannot look at this

matter like they do or behave like they do. Our belief and history would not allow such coarseness, unjustness, immorality»<sup>106</sup>.

«We witnessed the crocodile tears shed after tens of thousands of women and children were lost in dark Mediterranean waters. How could we believe that those who do not weep in sincere settings are advocates of women's rights? Can they be advocates of women's rights? They are just showpeople; they are absolutely not advocates for women's rights. Isn't calling for women's rights a great lie of those who do not mention the women who were the main victims of the tragedies in the Balkans, in the Caucasus in the last quarter century?»<sup>107</sup>.

Modernisation (Europeanisation or Westernisation) had been the main agenda of the Turkish Republic since its creation in 1923. However, Erdoğan has been utilising a discourse on “New Turkey”<sup>108</sup> that estranges from Western values and democracy. He insists that gender equality, as a western concept, causes a new kind of slavery for women:

«You cannot achieve any result if you try to cover our society with a different culture's perception of women»<sup>109</sup>.

«I believe that women, before anyone else, will oppose an understanding under the name of 'equality' that exposes women to any kind of exploitation and abuse»<sup>110</sup>.

«We put up this fight for our women because they deserve a life worthy of their human character, not a modern order of slavery that leads them to a new [kind] of slavery under the name of being liberated»<sup>111</sup>.

«We see that several circles persistently annihilate whatever makes women 'women' – their differences, beauties, privileges – in the name of so-called emancipation [...]. This dark mentality that brings whatever is foreign to this land and offers it as womanhood; that which humiliates women's beliefs and appearances is the enemy of women... What they understand of liberating women is making women slaves to their ideology, their world. The ones who call freedom the act of tearing women from women's families, neighbourhood, society, values, render women unguarded so that they can exploit women's labour and body, and [they] aim for our next generations»<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>106</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *HAK-İŞ 5. Uluslararası Kadın Emeği Buluşması'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 7, 2016).

<sup>107</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *HAK-İŞ Dünya Kadın Günü Programında Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, March 7, 2018).

<sup>108</sup> “New Turkey” is a slogan used by Erdoğan and the AKP to imply a break with the secularist traditions of the Republic, referring to their social and political order being maintained by a new set of norms and values. D. Cindoglu, D. Unal, *Gender and Sexuality*, cit.

<sup>109</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Yükseköğretim Kurulu'nu Ziyaretinde Rektörlere Hitaben Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, March 11, 2015), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/29792/yuksekogretim-kurulunu-ziyaretinde-rektorlere-hitaben-yaptiklari-konusma>.

<sup>110</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *HAK-İŞ 5. Uluslararası Kadın Emeği Buluşması'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 7, 2016).

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem*.

Even though Erdoğan generally uses demonstrative pronouns and impersonal pronouns, here he implies West/Europe/EU. Besides, he accuses gender equality of being foreign to Turkey and the product of a dark mentality that exposes women to exploitation and abuse.

In summary, Erdoğan's discourse on women embraces women as humans, and focuses on *fitrat*, gender justice and complementarity as the most appropriate means for his point of origin which are concepts like history, civilisation, and belief. Such discourse completely rejects equality, individuality and agency of women. It also dismisses feminist activism that accepts patriarchy is served by the very same concepts which Erdoğan defends. So, what happens to these women?

«Anyone who tries to justify VAW with our belief, culture, or traditions is fooling themselves. No one should dare to cover this violence using our sacred values. Likewise, no one should dare to attribute these wrongs to family institution under the name of 'defender of women's rights'»<sup>113</sup>.

«We never pay attention to marginal [people] whose *raison d'être* is exploitation; whose goal is nothing but battling against the nation's and religion's values»<sup>114</sup>.

They are alienated. Even if Erdoğan claims that he defends all women's rights<sup>115</sup>, his discourse proves that he divides the fight of appropriate women and others, i.e., feminists who take equality as their point of origin and refuse to provide hers-to-give:

«Humankind has to give women their due value for its future's sake. The way we defend the oppressed against tyrants all around the world, we also defend those women who fight for justice, for their honour, dignity, and rights until the end»<sup>116</sup>.

«Our religion [Islam] has defined a position for women: Motherhood. Motherhood is something else, beyond everything, an unattainable position. Some can understand this, others cannot. You cannot explain this to feminists because they do not accept the concept of motherhood, that's their trouble. However, the ones who understand are plenty for us. We continue our journey with those»<sup>117</sup>.

Misogyny is not against all women. Misogyny targets rule-breakers: if women deviate from patriarchal norms and expectations, they are punished. On the one hand, when women do not perform their task, or they ask for masculine-coded goods, women face subtly hostile, threatening, and punitive norm-enforcement mechanisms from life threatening violence to subtle social signals of disapproval<sup>118</sup>. On the other hand, while

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<sup>113</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dünya Kadınlar Günü Buluşması'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 8, 2015).

<sup>114</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *HAK-İŞ Dünya Kadın Günü Programında Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, March 7, 2018).

<sup>115</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dünya Kadınlar Günü Buluşması'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 8, 2015).

<sup>116</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *HAK-İŞ 5. Uluslararası Kadın Emeği Buluşması'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 7, 2016).

<sup>117</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Uluslararası Kadın Ve Adalet Zirvesinde Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, November 24, 2014).

<sup>118</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit., p. 47.

women that disobey the patriarchy are punished, women who abide are rewarded<sup>119</sup>. Hence, Erdoğan decides to continue his journey of ruling the country with these women only. When Erdoğan associates women with maternal functionality, and divides women as appropriate and not (i.e., marginal), women's NGOs often declare their discomfort<sup>120</sup> because his discourse feeds into the misogynistic social environment against women.

Manne defines an action as misogynistic inasmuch as it is a product of, and conducive to, a social environment's misogyny<sup>121</sup>, but how does Erdoğan's discourse on othering feminists reconcile with the misogynistic social environment? Because a social environment is misogynistic for a subset of women where they face «hostility of a kind that services to police and enforce gendered norms and expectations» within patriarchal order<sup>122</sup>. Manne's give/take model sheds light on what misogyny encompasses: various acts, from harm (verbal attacks to murder) to enforcement of practices in countless domains such as sex, motherhood, and man's proprietary spaces and positions<sup>123</sup>. Furthermore, misogyny involves common hostile themes like revenge, blame, resentment, guilt, punishment, betrayal, mistrust, hierarchical jostling, and many forms of shaming, disgusted, and 'ousting' behaviour<sup>124</sup>. In Erdoğan's discourse on othering women, patterns are discernible; the good things that appropriate women do, the bad things other/feminist women do. In doing so, Erdoğan's othering discourse aggravates the misogynistic social environment in various forms especially against the inappropriate women who are «the enemies of the nation».

«All we have now is the nuclear family. Some people cannot even tolerate that, they pursue methods, means to detract children away from families immediately. We will never allow such sort of a calamity»<sup>125</sup>.

«Some people perseveringly depict our mothers, our women inaccurately. Separating womanhood from the skill of motherhood means taking away her biggest privilege, it means disregarding her natural role as a teacher. Sometimes I say 'have at least three children' and some people get uncomfortable. Do you know why they feel uncomfortable? Because they are the enemies of this nation; that is why»<sup>126</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion

Speech is a mechanism through which unjust hierarchies persevere and thrive<sup>127</sup> because language helps to reproduce and maintain existing social identities, social

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<sup>119</sup> *Idem*, p. 72.

<sup>120</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Dördüncü Muhtarlar Toplantısı'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma* (speech, March 10, 2015).

<sup>121</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit., p. 128.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>123</sup> *Idem*, p. 129.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>125</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Aynı Gök Kubbe Altında Gönül Dilimiz*, (speech, March 8, 2019).

<sup>126</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Kadının Güçlenmesi Strateji Belgesi ve Eylem Planı'nın Tanıtım Programında Yaptıkları Konuşma*, (speech, March 8, 2018), Presidency of the Turkish Republic, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/91787/kadinin-guclenmesi-strateji-belgesi-ve-eylem-planinin-tanitim-programinda-yaptiklari-konusma>.

<sup>127</sup> M.K. McGowan, *Just Words: On Speech and Hidden Harm*, Oxford University Press, USA, 2019.

relations and systems of knowledge and belief of societies<sup>128</sup>. It is possible to manipulate the masses through the usual forms of ideological discourse, for example emphasising good things *we* do and bad things *they* do<sup>129</sup>. Fairclough has emphasised that discourses are «projective, imaginaries, representing possible worlds which are different from the actual world, and tied into projects to change the world in particular directions»<sup>130</sup>. In other words, Fairclough suggests that discourse might have transformative effect. Accordingly, Erdoğan's discourse on women has become an important tool to reproduce and strengthen the patriarchal social order and patriarchal understanding of gender relations.

In Turkey, an authoritarian turn on the civil society discourse has begun following the 2011 general election<sup>131</sup>. A notable example of how Erdoğan's discourse on women has changed accordingly is the abortion right of women. Back in 2012, Erdoğan declared that «Each abortion is one *Uludere*»<sup>132</sup>. Here, he refers to the Roboski Massacre when the Turkish military murdered 34 Kurdish civilians in an air strike near the Iraqi border<sup>133</sup>. Wodak explained this kind of structure in discourse as recontextualization<sup>134</sup>. Erdoğan takes an argument out of context (decontextualization) and subsequently restates it in a new context so that it acquires new meaning. Even though legislation on abortion has not changed, the Turkish Ministry of Health has removed the code for abortion from the online entry forms of public hospitals, thereby effectively declassifying abortion as a medical practice in these hospitals<sup>135</sup>. Of course, hospitals might be doing this under coercion, but it still demonstrates that they have opted into the discourse even though there has been no amendment in the law. Further, Cindoglu and Unal support the point that the discursive regulation of women's bodies and sexualities is now a major tool for sustaining the hegemonic character of current political rule in Turkey<sup>136</sup>.

The distinction of this study is that it focuses on discourse from a theoretical framework of logic of misogyny using FCDA as a research method. Misogynist exploitation can work together in different ways<sup>137</sup>. However, this study has shown that Erdoğan's discourse on women are informed by misogyny in two forms: reproducing patriarchy through gendered norms and values, and alienating some women. Since

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<sup>128</sup> G.A.M. Gouveia, *Assumptions about Gender, Power and Opportunity*, cit.

<sup>129</sup> T.A. Van Dijk, *Discourse and Manipulation*, in *Discourse & Society*, Vol.17, No.2, 2006, pp. 359-383.

<sup>130</sup> N. Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse Textual analysis for social research*, Routledge, London, 2003, p. 124.

<sup>131</sup> A.Ö. Keysan, *Activism and Women's NGOs in Turkey: Civil Society, Feminism and Politics*, I B. Tauris, London, 2019, p. 84.

<sup>132</sup> J. Vela, *Abortions are like air strikes on civilians: Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Rant Sparks Women's Rage*, comment posted May 30, 2012, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/abortions-are-like-air-strikes-on-civilians-turkish-pm-recep-tayyip-erdogans-rant-sparks-womens-rage-7800939.html>.

<sup>133</sup> D.Gülel, *Feminist movement and law-making in Turkey: a critical appraisal from 1998 to 2018*, *Women's History Review*, Taylor & Francis online, 2019, p. 14.

<sup>134</sup> R. Wodak, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, in *The Continuum Companion to Discourse Analysis*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2011, pp. 48-49.

<sup>135</sup> U. Korkut, H. Eslen-Ziya, *The Discursive Governance of Population Politics*, cit., p. 562.

<sup>136</sup> D. Cindoglu, D. Unal, *Gender and Sexuality*, cit.

<sup>137</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit., p. 209.

patriarchy is misogyny's governing ideology, misogyny materialises as an amalgam of social norms, expectations and consequences in patriarchal social order. In view of that, when Erdoğan repeatedly refers to concepts including «history», «civilisation», and «belief» in his discourse on women, he continually reproduces a patriarchal understanding of gender relations and manipulates the masses. A likely explanation is the importance of repetition for propaganda. In his classic book on the theory of propaganda, Chakotin explains that repeating the same idea, the same injunction, always in the same form over a relatively prolonged period, acts on emotions and shapes conditioned reflexes so that repetition creates a state of mental fatigue in the masses favouring subjugation to the will of that political leader<sup>138</sup>.

The first major finding of this analysis is that Erdoğan's discourse on women's humanity and appropriate womanhood substantiates Manne's give/take model. In his discourse, it is evident that women are too human and their humanity and their personhoods are owed to men (and children) in the form of social, domestic, reproductive, and emotional labour. Erdoğan's speeches provide sufficient examples to prove the existence of patterns of misogyny within this framework. We see that women's humanity is implied through their obligation of providing *hers-to-give*. In other words, Erdoğan's discourse is in line with what misogyny does to women, and enforces patriarchy on women. In this context, I would like to underline that women have parallel responsibilities in the AKP as well: they provide loyalty, love and devotion (especially during pre-election times) to Erdoğan, but they do not obtain power, prestige, rank, or hierarchical status because those are *his-for-the-taking*<sup>139</sup>.

The second major pattern of misogyny in Erdoğan's discourse is how he utilises his discourse to alienate some women who defy patriarchy and their given roles. Misogyny retaliates against this class of girls/women, in one way or another, because they violate their "place". In this regard, Erdoğan completely dismisses them because they accept gender equality as their starting point, and reject *fitrat*, complementarity. They challenge patriarchal gender roles which conflicts with Erdoğan's discourse on founding «a new understanding of women's rights» consistent with «our history», «our culture», «our civilisation», and «our religion», which comprise the actual origins of historical gender bargain (see chart 1).

This analysis has verified that Erdoğan alienates feminists in his discourse. He segregates women as appropriate, whose fight he supposedly supports, and others, whose fight he is against. Thus, he obtains an anti-feminist (and anti-Western) approach when he disputes feminism. However, the way he structures his discourse generally does not allow one to identify the referents of pronouns as he often prefers not to use overt subjects (see chart 2). In the data, Erdoğan refers directly to *feminists* only one time. The rest of the data reveals that he prefers to use personal, demonstrative or impersonal pronouns in negative connotation (to accuse or alienate).

To conclude, this study has aimed to expand existing research on misogyny to an authoritarian regime, and to assess the extent of misogyny that feeds Erdoğan's discourse on women's rights, equality and agency. The study has shown that Erdoğan rejects gender equality that «derives from the dark mentality of the West, a stance that

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<sup>138</sup> S. Chakotin, *The Rape of the Masses: The Psychology of Totalitarian Political Propaganda*, George Routledge & Sons, London, 1940, p. 31.

<sup>139</sup> K. Manne, *Down Girl the Logic of Misogyny*, cit., p. 130.

diverges from reality»<sup>140</sup>. He perceives that women are in the trust of men, and fanatically defends that women have their own *fitrat* to follow. The study has also shown that misogyny does not mean hating all women, and it has further detected patterns of misogyny in Erdoğan's 'othering' discourse. Thus, the patterns of misogyny are vastly evident in Erdoğan's discourse on women's agency, equality and their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in line with Manne's "logic of misogyny" and give/take model.

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<sup>140</sup> R.T. Erdoğan, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın III. Uluslararası Kadın ve Adalet Zirvesi Açılış Konuşması*, (speech, November 23, 2018), *KADEM*, <http://kadem.org.tr/cumhurbaskani-sayin-recep-tayyip-erdoganin-iii-uluslararası-kadin-ve-adalet-zirvesi-acilis-konusmasi/>.