UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

MAPPING GEOPOLITICAL IMAGINATIONS: TURKISH AUDIENCES & *VALLEY*

OF THE WOLVES-PALESTINE

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

NECATI ANAZ
Norman, Oklahoma
2012

MAPPING GEOPOLITICAL IMAGINATIONS: TURKISH AUDIENCES & *VALLEY OF THE WOLVES-PALESTINE*

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

BY

_____

Dr. Darren Purcell, Chair

_____

Dr. Patrick Meirick

_____

Dr. Laurel Smith

_____

Dr. Karl Offen

_____

Dr. Robert Rundstrom

DEDICATED TO

This dissertation is dedicated to a young geographer,

Mahmut Gökmen, who died on July 22, 2008, at age 27, in Norman, Oklahoma.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

This study explores how the Turkish film, *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine,* reflects the geopolitical imaginations of the Turkish people and how this political-action film is interpreted by different individuals in the post-9/11 world. To do this, I investigated three sites of the film: *production* includes film-making process and geopolitical conditions in which the film took shape; *text,* wherein geopolitical discourses are embedded, and; *consumption,* through which audiences make their meaning. I utilized a mixed-method approach, including interviews with one of the scriptwriters of the film and the Mavi Marmara activists, seven audience focus group discussions, analysis of online comments, and an online survey. The collected data, in general, showed that Turkish audiences' reading of the film is diverse, but some commonalities were found.

This study suggests that Turkish audiences had pre-conceived notions about Israel and its policies toward Palestinians before they had seen the film. In this respect, the film did not particularly affect people's opinions about Israel, but it served as a conduit to have their voice be heard. Turkish audiences acknowledged the importance of publicizing the human drama in Palestine and valued the indispensability of bringing it to the attention of international movie audiences. In particular, this study argues that the film, and consumption of the film, is as much about understanding the Palestinian struggle as it is about re-presenting and re-orienting Turkey and its geopolitical position in the Middle East.

Finally, this study highlights that 'negotiated', 'oppositional', and 'dominant' readership was also present in the meaning-making of the film. Some Turkish audiences

understand that the film is a cinematic challenge to Israel's Middle Eastern policies, while some see the film as an ethno-religious narrative operating within the limits of political economy and agenda setting. Also, a large number of people indicate that they understand the essence of the message in the film, which is to visualize the Palestinian drama, but they oppose the ways in which the message is represented.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

- He who thinks about his end cannot be a hero

(Polat Alemdar, *Valley of the Wolves*)

1.1 Introduction

In the twentieth century, influential continental philosophers (Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, French social theorists Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault) widened critical thinking in the conventional investigation of the genealogy of 'Truth'. Conventional (partially positivist) paradigms sought to reach grand and generalizable explanations for making a complex world more understandable and manageable. The purpose of this academic effort, which today is very deeply entrenched within western academic culture, was to formulate and codify the chaotic world (Wylie 2009). Assumptions such as establishing grand truths, making natural observations, and providing essentialist explanations (which dominated minds and methodologies of the conventional scholars) were viewed by the emerging continental scholars in a suspicious manner. Thinkers in this postmodern school of thought (they never claimed to be postmodern thinkers) mainly emphasized the disorderliness of modernity, the fluidity of space and the indeterminacy of grand theorizations which were embedded in every aspect of social, economic, and political life. These scholars came to be labeled as post-structuralists, whose intentions were to question the way in which social science dealt with social problems, spatiality, power, and knowledge production of/for academia (Popke 2003). This unorthodox way of conceptualizing social science greatly

influenced human geographers, particularly critical geographers. Critical, as used here, refers to the adaptation of a self-reflective perspective, conscious of the social and discursive nature of any research practice and acknowledging that the production of knowledge is someway related to a network of power relations (Ang 1996, p. 36). Scholars in this vein began revisiting relations between space, power, and knowledge and the way in which they are produced and reproduced (Harley 2001). Parallel to this mutual influence, several political geographers of the 1990s adopted post-structuralist approaches to reconceptualize and deconstruct discursive components of politics and geography by drawing from post-structuralist thought (Toal 1994). Besides the subjectivity of space and place, language as a discourse became a critical focus of geographical study in its role as the conveyer of meaning-making and communication within the socio-political realities of everyday discourses, specifically languages' role in the way in which the world is signified, represented and reimagined.

As I note throughout this dissertation, films form an everyday image-based language that can provide better ways of framing a radically-changing geopolitical world (Power and Cramton 2005). Even the most complicated and problematic issues of socio-political life can be expressed smoothly through cinematic narrations and artistic forms. Under the circumstances, cinema's indisputable ability to present events and social subjects in a compelling, and even propagandist, manner charms politicians and world states. Cinema, for that reason, has been and continues to be the concern of states and policy makers. Along these lines, Strada and Troper argues that "American foreign policy and film… track each other through time as compulsively as symmetrical sundials" (as cited in Power and Cramton 2005, p. 1). It is not surprising that following

the terrorist attack of September 11, Hollywood executives and White House advisors came together to establish a cinematic strategy to address the US's internationally declining image. Indeed, the connection the Pentagon has with the film industry is not new. In the late 1920s, the U.S. War Department created an office to act as a bridge between Hollywood and the Army (Greenwell 2006). The relationships between these two parties changes over time but it never withers away. In fact, after 9/11, this partnership became denser and more visible. Greenwell reports that "at the Pentagon's request meetings were set up between military officials and 30 Hollywood 'creatives' chosen at random who signed confidentiality agreements" (Greenwell 2006, Operation Hollywood section, ¶ 14). Scholars have studied these links, the work perhaps best exemplifies by Power and Crampton (2005). Their book, *Cinema and Popular Geo-Politics*, draws attention to the connections between cinema and international politics. Contributors from various disciplines interrogate how films work to crystallize states' international identities. For example, Power and Crampton argued that Hollywood films provide handy maps through which Americans imagine/position themselves in an uncertain geopolitical world. They note that "important questions can be raised about the ways in which geopolitical imaginations are expressed through film and about how different 'threats' and 'dangers' are constructed through various Hollywood narratives" (Power and Cramton 2005, p. 2). They continue, arguing films "reflect in various ways on common themes of national identity, gender and the construction of masculinity and ethnicity through film and seek to explore the importance of borders, boundaries to cinematic narratives" (Power and Cramton 2005, p. 2).

By looking at what films have been produced from 2002 onward in Turkey, these segments of theme can be seen: history and the present, ordinary people, superman, the ethics of globalization, and nationalistic (mafia, soldiers, police, and supermen) movies (Bayraktar 2009) not to mention everlasting television serials. As in the example of *Valley of the Wolves* cinema products, nationalism, heroic sacrifice, combating with 'deep state'[1] and missionary groups' dark organizations occupy much of the cinematic imagination. More noticeably (and will be explained in the following chapters), recent Turkish cinema (and TV serials) emphasizes three important developments. First, Turkish cinema has successfully expanded its subject matter to international topics in cases such as *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* (2006). Second, Turkish cinema has enlarged the geography of its audienceship, especially when Turkish cinema adopted Hollywood production techniques and digital editing (Ozkaracalar 2009), giving weight to quality and authenticity. Today, Turkish cinema and TV serials entertain and are viewed by millions of people in audiences from Arab countries to the Balkans. Since 2006, a total of 68 serials, films, and documentaries have been sold to the Arab countries; in turn, Turkish producers collected approximately 30 million dollars (Vatan 2010). Thirdly, Turkish cinema greatly enjoyed diasporic directors' new approaches to Turkish cinema, particularly German-Turkish director Fatih Akin (Bayraktar 2009). Akin's hybrid identity and cinematic skill unquestionably enriched Turkish cinema and made Turkish films more international than ever. Taking into account these aspects of new Turkish cinema, the need to investigate Turkish films and

---

[1] Generally the notion of 'deep state' refers to a state within the state, composed of high-level elements of state officials and non-state actors. The main goal of this illegal organization is to protect the state from internal and/or external attacks. For example, unsolved murders of the 1990s in the eastern part of Turkey are thought to have something to do with the 'deep state'.

their representations of nationalist themes is indisputable due to their enhanced importance in the film industry.

1.2 *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*

The political-action film *VWP* was released in Turkey and abroad by Pana Film Company in January, 2011[2]. Following the popular television series and cinema films which all carried similar names, *Valley of the Wolves (Kurtlar Vadisi)* (2003-2005), *Valley of the Wolves-Ambush* (2007-Present) the political-action films *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* (2006), *Valley of the Wolves-Gladio* (2009) and now *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* (2011) becomes part of a collection of James Bond type cinema serials. Pana Film owes its success to the television series *Valley of the Wolves* whose broadcast began in January 2003 and continues currently with different names and on different nationwide TV channels (see Table 1.1).

Table 1-1: *Valley of the Wolves* film and TV series products

Television Series	Year	Films	Year
Valley of the Wolves	2003-05	Valley of the Wolves-Iraq	2006
Valley of the Wolves-Terror	2007	Valley of the Wolves-Gladio	2009
Valley of the Wolves-Ambush	2007-Present	Valley of the Wolves-Palestine	2011

---

[2] Other countries: USA, England, Italy, Iran, France, Germany, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, China, Denmark, Armenia, South Korea, Croatia, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, Canada, Cyprus (Greek), Cyprus (Turkish), Hungary, Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine, Greece (Source: imdb.com).

The television series (*Valley of the Wolves*) and the films familiarized audiences with many values such as honor, duty, bravery, and love of country before any other concepts or messages (Yanik 2009). These cultural products similarly dealt with and engaged in domestic and international conspiracy theories and heroic sacrifice, heavily ornamented with nationalism, traditionalism and justified killing (Işık 2006, Demir 2007, Yanik 2009, Anaz and Purcell 2010). The producers of the *Valley of the Wolves* set their storylines in the day-to-day subjects of Turkish life such as fighting against the dark organization of the 'deep state', corrupt financial entities and external enemies' designs on Turkey and the region (Gültekin 2006). *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*, for example, brought the Iraq war into the cinematic reality in the same way. The film bases its narration on a series of events that allegedly took place in Afghanistan and Iraq from 2001 and 2006. The plots include: the 'Hooding Event' of 4 July 2003, Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse, American soldiers' random shootings during a Muslim wedding and shootings into a shipping container carrying civilian prisoners in Afghanistan, and a Jewish doctor's harvesting organs for international buyers (Anaz and Purcell 2010). This film challenges American and British hegemony in Iraq and Afghanistan[3] and produces a counter-geopolitical argument against what is known as American realist geopolitics that is mainly tied to the control of geostrategic resources and framing the world politics in a binary sense such as 'good versus bad'.

---

[3] Although Afghanistan is officially controlled by NATO, the film makers pay no attention to this nuance.

Figure 1-1: Actor (Necati Şaşmaz) who portrays the protagonist (Polat Alemdar), shaking the hands of Turkey's Prime Minister and the leader of AKP.
Source: Sabah, daily newspaper, January 16, 2011

Even though making another film similar to *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* was considered by Pana Film immediately after its release in 2006, the idea failed to take shape until the Israel-Palestine issue became a critical issue for the ruling party, Justice and Development Party, the AKP (see Figure 1.1). When AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan had acrid conversation with Israeli President Shimon Peres at the World Economic Forum in Davos, 2009 the idea was reconsidered. Right after the 'height of humiliation' occurred during a diplomatic meeting between Turkish ambassador, Ahmet Oguz Celikkol and Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon in Jeruselam in January 2010 (BBC 2010), *VWP* took shape. The subsequent attack by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) on the Mavi Marmara Gaza Flotilla in May 2010 (which resulted in nine deaths and the wounding of fifty Turkish citizens in international waters) gave the needed momentum for this political-action film to be realized. The plot of *VWP*, as with the previous film (*Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*), follows well-trained Turkish agents led by the protagonist Polat Alemdar on a quest for revenge against the cruel Israeli

general Moshe Ben Eliezer who was the prime planner and the executor of the Mavi Marmara raid. The film begins with the IDF's operation on the Turkish ship the Mavi Marmara which sails to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza and transport its humanitarian load to Palestinians. From the beginning and throughout the film, many shootings and killings occur during the Israeli soldiers' raids of Palestinian neighborhoods or when Polat and his men engage with Israeli soldiers. The film does not refrain for a moment from depicting IDF soldiers as ultimate killing machines of innocent Palestinian civilians throughout the film.

The film was banned in Germany for being an anti-Israeli movie and was heavily criticized for premiering on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27. After Pana Film appealed to the German court, the ban on the film was removed, but it was restricted to audiences 18 years old and older. Other European countries such as Netherlands, France and United Kingdom posed similar restrictions on the film by ruling that 16 and older could only view the film.

As in the previous Pana Film productions, this film inflamed international tensions and evoked many criticisms while the same time garnered national and international praise in various corners of the world. For example, Europe-based Jewish organizations appealed to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann to condemn the film and its glorifying violence and inciting anti-Israeli sentiments (JerusalemPost 2011). On the other hand, according to Ozdener (one of the script writers), this new film stands to be the biggest film in the Middle East. He says that the Pana Film will continue to bring out voices of oppressed to the big screen and continue to criticize Israel and says: "*VWP* will only depict what really goes on in

Palestine. Israel will be demonstrated as bloody hands, cruel, human slaughter, and disrespectful to human dignity" (Cengil 2010, Magazine section, ¶ 5). The producers emphasize that the film is an effort to draw attention to the 'human drama' of Palestine for the audiences of Turkey and other nations.

Whether the film can dramatically harm Turkey-Israel relations, which are already troubled more than they have been throughout history is debatable, but this film has significant potential as medium to project social, political, moral and cultural views to audiences in Turkey and around the world. *VWP*, being ostensibly an action and entertainment film, certainly employs novel forms of geopolitical representations and geographical imaginations for the audiences worldwide. As the film entertains millions in the dark rooms of cinema halls and in living rooms, it spreads out epic tales of the victorious Turkish and confirms Turkey's geographical and historical responsibilities as well as challenges orthodox geopolitical understandings of the Palestine-Israel conflict and territoriality.

In this context, I am interested in investigating the film *VWP*'s multiple representations of space, place, geopolitical events and people in the postmodern world. As I investigate this film, I pay special attention to the role of interpretative and active Turkish audiences in the making of their geopolitical imagination of self, other, and their place in the world today through cinematic signification with the film *VWP*. This is where the importance of the film *VWP* derives from. As I argue throughout this study, when using film, geographers' academic investigations are often limited to First World cinema or international products that are welcomed in the English speaking world. These efforts rarely engage Third World productions that provide alternative

geopolitical visions to western (US and the West Europe) geopolitics. Rarely are Third World audiences and their meaning-making processes given serious consideration, particularly the Turkish audiences. For these reasons, I choose *VWP* as the case study, given the film's stature internationally and its unique challenge to dominant geopolitical discourses.

1.3 Aim

The aim of this study is to analyze discursively and empirically, the role of the *VWP* as a popular production with a special emphasis on the Turkish audiences' geographic imagination and their utilization of the film to understand Turkey's geopolitical position in the contemporary world. By examining this film, its reception by Turkish people, and their everyday engagement with other media messages (e.g., TV, and internet), this study develops empirical and theoretical perspectives for understanding the geopolitical dynamics of audience interpretation and the process of making geographical-meaning in Turkey.

1.4 Research questions

The study explores two related sets of questions. The first set of questions include: what is the influence of popular cultural products (particularly the *VWP*) on Turkish people in terms of their understanding of the world and Turkey's role in it? What socio-cultural and spatial dynamics exist through which Turkish people have come to think about the world in a certain way and understand these geopolitical exchanges of meaning in everyday life via films and other forms of media interactions? What discourses are embedded in the film's storyline? The second set of questions includes: how can Turkish audiences' interpretations of popular culture (film) be conceptualized, signified

and classified? How can we explore the content and reception of the *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* as a source of knowledge and information about the Turkish people and their views of the people and places around them? What goals and intentions do the producers possess and how (and to what degree) do differently located and socio-culturally separated groups interpret *VWP*? How can their meaning-making be codified?

1.5 Research interest

The rationale for such a study is derived from the lack of engagement by critical geopolitics scholars with popular texts produced outside the Western world. Scholars, mainly from political geography and international relations, study how and to what extent popular cultural texts represent, produce, and reproduce events, places and people in constructing personal and collective identities (Said 1981, Sharp 1996, Shapiro 1997, Dodds 2006, Dittmer 2010). Similarly others have examined how practical geopolitics has been utilized through popular media productions in the goal of setting geopolitical agendas through the invocation of strategic narratives such as the 'war on terror' or the 'war on drugs' (Klaebn 2002, Antoniades, Miskimmon and O'Loughlin 2010, Lukes 2005), but they left two important lacuna in the literature that this dissertation addresses.

The first is that few scholars engage in audience-reception studies associated with geopolitical imagination embedded in popular culture, despite calls to consider the process of consumption and the creation of meaning specifically audience roles and reactions to the text (Sharp 1993, Dodds 2006, Toal 2007, Dalby 2008). Audience studies in geography increasingly follow the paradigmatic change called the 'cultural turn' of late twentieth century (Scott 2004, Peckham 2004, Dittmer and Dodds 2008).

Geographers began paying attention to incorporating everyday peoples' everyday experiences and interpretation of popularly consumed cultural products. However, geographers' incorporation of audience into geographic studies is limited and a recent development. The primary concern of film studies has been the discursive analysis and textual interpretation of selected films (Kennedy and Lukinbeal 1997, Dittmer and Dodds 2008, Zonn 2007). This study offers an extensive investigation of audience reception utilizing and combining important elements of qualitative and quantitative research techniques such as conducting a survey, organizing focus group discussions, including two semi-structured interviews and online surveying of viewer comments to better understand the dynamics of meaning-making process.

The other gap in the literature is that only a few scholars focus on geopolitical texts produced in the Middle East (Yanik 2009, Srinivasan 2006, Ghazi, Flint and Mamadouh 2006).[4] Popularly produced western products (films, magazines, journals, cartoons, etc.) have received significant attention from geographers while internationally produced productions are left out from scholarly examination and disciplinary attention. Even though a number of studies are devoted to internationally produced films, their point of analysis remained interpretative and did not include extensive fieldwork to bring audiences into the focus of meaning-making process. By this I mean only few scholars intensively engaged with filmic texts, and examined their viewers' experiences, which is a prerequisite to understanding the historical, cultural, social and technological dynamics of the society (Dittmer and Dodds 2008, Dodds 2006, Rose 2007). Therefore, *VWP* as an internationally produced and consumed

---

[4] Important studies on geopolitics of global media in the case of Al Jazeera also need to be mentioned.

popular cultural product should be considered an important example of non-western visual text worth of academic attention. Non-Western popular culture products by their very nature often contain alternative paradigms, messy narrations and chaotic chemistry that challenge and resist dominant Western ideologies and their often binary ways of explaining current geopolitical events. The Turkish film *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* (2006) and the Russian action movie *Strangers* (2008) are examples of film posing such a challenge (Anaz & Purcell 2010). Taking into account the lack of comprehensive study of non-western cinematic productions and their effects in the shaping of non-Western audiences' geopolitical imaginations, and their interpretations of current events, this study contributes to audience geographies and popular geopolitics.

1.6 Organization of dissertation

This study is organized into ten chapters. The first four chapters include an introduction, relevant literature reviews and cover the study's methodology. The next five chapters contain a critical reading of *Valley of the Wolves – Palestine*, audience analysis (both quantitative and qualitative), and a discussion of the results. The last chapter of the study combines the conclusions of each chapter and highlights the contributions of the study to the discipline. As stated, the first chapter introduces the research context, the problem statement, the research questions and reviews the existing literature on film geography and geographers' engagement with films in different places and for different reasons. Chapter 2 broadly examines the ideas of national cinemas, the Turkish cinema industry in particular and the features of Turkish media. As part of the literature review, Chapter 3 provides an overview of concepts such as visual turn, political geography, geopolitics, Turkish geopolitics, popular culture and audience geography. In the

Chapter 4, the methodology of the study is outlined. In this chapter, methodological strategies such as planning and implementing the study and evaluating the collected data are explained. Along with these strategies for executing the methodology, research problems and appropriateness of the mixed methods are also discussed. Chapter 5 includes the critical reading of the film *VWP* by highlighting the film's geopolitical implications. Chapter 6 brings two interviews (conducted with one of the scriptwriters and the Mavi Marmara activists) into the forefront of the discussion about the site of production in the defense of the film *VWP*. Chapter 7 introduces audiences' engagement with the film by including the descriptive online survey results. Chapter 8 observes *VWP* fans' engagement online. Chapter 9 investigates various Turkish audiences' interpretations of the film in focus group discussions. The final chapter summarizes and extends the findings and outlines the contributions of the study for the popular critical geopolitics literature and the audience geography.

1.7 General concepts and theories in film geographies

This section of the chapter reviews how geographers have analyzed film from the 1950s onward. I begin by discussing why and how geographers were interested in looking at films and why they were initially reluctant to include films as important aspects of geographical knowledge (production). Then I will review the early use of films in the teaching of geography. In this section, I will also review the political economy of the film industry and geographers' take on this subject. In this part of the chapter, I will include a brief summary of what is commonly known as the first, second, and third cinemas. But, the goal here is to bear various scholarly arguments and examples of films studies that demonstrate films are not only part of our lives for entertainment

14

purposes, but also they are our part of lives because we remake our geographies through films (Diken and Laustsen 2007).

1.7.1 The discussion of why and how film became important for geographers

Aitken and Zonn underline for emphasis the politics and places of everyday living in their investigation of representation and images, which are the earliest characteristics of art and theater, and real and reel (Aitken and Zonn 1994). In every aspect of film, there is a human factor. Humans produce films, shape them, act in them and consume them. For that reason, films are an important constitutive element of geographies wherein people, spaces, and places are embodied in the cinematic vision (Aitken and Zonn 1994). This is not to say that other disciplines such as communication, cultural, and film studies ignore cinematic representations of reality and audiences' viewing experiences. Indeed, comprehensive investigations of films and audiences stream forth from media and reception studies. For example, a well-known scholar on the sociology of the television audience David Morley's *Nationwide* study, Tamar Liebes's and Elihu Katz's *The Exportation of Meaning Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas*, Natalie Stroud's investigation on the political influence of Michael Moore's documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* and Janet Staiger's studies on audience reception are just a few exemplary contributions among the many (Morley 1980 , Liebes and Katz 1990, Staiger 2005, Stroud 2007). As I will discuss some of the works later in this study, these studies mainly highlight various effects of media on audiences and socio-cultural dynamics of media consumption in different societies.

Given the profoundly visual nature of film it is a wonder why geographers have not embraced it from the beginning. As a focus of geographic study, research on films first appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Aitken and Zonn 1994). Geographers started looking at films when the discipline took visual studies (including landscapes) seriously which began with humanist (cultural) geographers (Burgess and Gold 1985). Kennedy and Lukinbeal (1997) give four possible explanations for this late interest. First, landscape and place geographers mainly focused on textual literatures such as novels and biographies rather than paying attention to mass-media productions such as films and TV shows (Cosgrove 1984, Baker 1988). Second, geographers, like other social scientists, understood the film industry as only motivated by profit and nothing else. This reductionist view of film prevented geographers from seriously engaging cinema and films, and their significations with human and their environment. Third, geographers approached film as an object that was difficult to decipher and extract meaning. Films are considered to be largely a personal activity. By extension, the meanings people created were also understood as personal, and contingent on individual contexts. Finally, geographers showed little interest in studying films because they were challenging to make explicit geographical connections between images and the effects of those images on real locations (Lukinbeal and Zimmermann 2006). However, when one looks at locations where some of the Hollywood films took place, he/she can see that those locations became well-known tourist destinations for global audiences. This suggests that audience-location interactions are dynamic and more intimate than early geographers thought. Since scholars from different disciplines began considering day-to-day discourses produced by everyday people, geographers have followed by

investigating films -other popular culture products- and their roles in shaping everyday discourses.

Although geographers' contribution to film studies and their engagement with film can be traced back to as early as 1950s , a significant proliferation of articles on film by geographers appeared in the 1970s (Kennedy and Lukinbeal 1997, Johnston et al. 2000). Film geographers note that the earliest discussions of films appear in *The Geographical Magazine* highlighting the importance of national cinemas and their contributions to reflecting the nations' characteristics. (Johnston et al. 2000). For example, Manvell's articles in *The Geographical Magazine* about geography of film-making (1953), geography of documentary film (1956) and Robert Flaherty (1956) are worth mentioning. Main point of these articles are to recognize "the value of films as an aid to the promotion of geographical knowledge" (Manvell 1953, p. 640). But, as mentioned above, studies of popular culture, especially film, became a growing interest of geographers (Johnston et al. 2000). Behavioralist and humanistic geographers pioneered the first wave of geographic engagement with film. According to Kennedy and Lukinbeal (1997), geographers' engagement with film arose from two streams of thoughts: landscape and humanism studies, and socio-cultural studies. The former investigated media portrayals of landscape and place meaning. At its core, this approach used cognitive theory and mainly focused on individuals' responses and aimed to understand how individuals make sense of their places, and how places make sense for people in their everyday life (Tuan 1977). Personal writings, memories, and fictional productions enriched geographers' horizons in this area. In the latter, geographers were heavily influenced by cultural studies and sociology to understand what gives the

meaning to a place. These meaning-making processes can be associated to cultural politics; which is "the domain in which meanings are constructed and negotiated" (Kennedy and Lukinbeal 1997, p. 34).

Within both approaches, films have been investigated for their authenticity, functionality (effects) and construction of meaning from individual to societal scales (Burgess and Gold 1985). Nevertheless, geographers' approaches to films mainly remained within the bipolar framework such as "individual/societal, local/global, urban/anti-urban, [and] pristine nature/despoil nature" (Kennedy and Lukinbeal 1997, p. 34). What Kennedy and Lukinbeal (1997) find problematic with this binary thinking is that geographic investigation of film remains complex in its scope and resembles the blind describing an elephant. What they suggest is that geographers need to look at the film-phenomenon from the tenet of postmodernism which erodes bipolar thinking and the perspective of transactionalism which is "the study of change in people-environment interactions" (Kennedy and Lukinbeal 1997, p. 36). They note that a totalistic approach to film analysis makes the link between physical environment and social system "by placing humans as an 'integral part of the environment, rather than an object in it" (p. 36). Thus they highlight vitality of looking at film and research on film "from the perspective of a continuum –as a whole and as multiple" (p. 36). In their conclusion, Kennedy and Lukinbeal (1997) call for different theoretical frameworks to "link the multilayers of meaning, materiality, place, space, and scale in new ways" (p. 46), rather than looking at the phenomenon from a unifying theory. Furthermore, they suggest that the need for further "research within broadened perspectives of space, place and scale on the production and the dissemination of film, development of place image in film,

film tourism, and the effects of film on audience perception and behavior" (Kennedy and Lukinbeal 1997, p. 46). Therefore, their point of argument about approaching film phenomena from holistic and multiple points of investigation becomes central to this study.

Similarly Aitken and Dixon suggest we conceptualize film beyond the dichotomy of the 'real' (what the camera captures) and the 'reel' (what the image means on screen). They call for critical geographic appraisals that focus on landscapes (landscape as a medium, actor, and work and doing work), spaces/spatialities (a frame/setup), mobilities (moving images), scales (zooming in from a bird's eye view and local-global contrast) and networks (Aitken and Dixon 2006, p. 328). The emphasis here is on the false assumption of the 'real' that is believed to exist ontologically and represents a stable world. Likewise Lukinbeal and Zimmermann (2006) similarly argue that researchers need to move beyond this binary thinking (real-reel, material-nonmaterial), "because they hold little analytical power when examining the geography of film" (p. 317). Lukinbeal and Zimmermann suggest a new field of geography: film geography. With this, they outline four major areas for the future of film geography: geopolitics, cultural politics, globalization, and science, representation and mimesis. They conclude that because the existing body of work on film heavily emphasizes the textual reading of films, less attention is paid to materially grounded empirical research on "cinema's cultural power and the resulting influence on the perception of place and space" (Lukinbeal and Zimmermann 2006, p. 321). They argue that "film is more than just mere *re*-presentations of some ontological stable Cartesian space. Film, as a discursive formation, is a cultural commodity that is produced and consumed in a global

context" (p. 321). Cresswell and Dixon also point out that film is beyond being "mere images of unmediated expressions of the mind, but rather the temporary embodiment of social processes that continually construct and deconstruct the world as we know it" (as cited in Lukinbeal and Zimmermann 2006, p. 317).

Later studies on film furthered the argument that, unlike the realist cinema approaches[5]; a camera eye (gaze) hardly captivates objects, people and landscapes in their fixed, orderly, and realistic nature (Brunette 1985, Bazin 1971). In other words, film does not always reflect unruly, fluid and/or chaotic everyday life in a linear fashion for audiences. Therefore, film researchers quickly distanced themselves from this reductionist form of understanding cinema and embraced the idea that there is always an opening for multiple meanings and directions in communicating. This is to say that the production of cinema art is as socially constructed as the realities of everyday life.

On the lines of 'real' and 'reel' discussions, Hopkins argues that because of iconic images bombarding audiences via the screen, the psychological distance between film and spectator wanes. The real time and space fade away and viewer gives up "the notion of the 'suspension of disbelief' where the boundaries of real-time and space may become permeable and blurred" (Hopkins 1994, p. 48). Spectators move into a two-fold psychological image-event stage where simultaneous forgetting and not forgetting begin unfolding. Inside the dark rooms of cinema theaters, the real time and space portrayed

---

[5] 'The art of reality' in cinema is understood to be the form of film footage that is unmediated and unedited for the sake of authenticity. Underlying assumption is that captured material via camera should be 'there' on the screen (Brunette 1985). The word 'directly' is the key to understanding the realism in art. A film that produces the world without interpretation and intervention is regarded as a realist film. (see also Andre Bazin's book entitled *What is Cinema?* (1967) and Peter Brunette's article "Rossellini and Cinematic Realism", 1985.)

on the screen becomes insomuch imaginary as experiential (Hopkins 1994). To Hopkins, this is where the ideological effects of film are found: stereotyping, gendering, dominations, subversions, contestations and so on. Additionally, Zonn's call for investigating films along with their locations where cinema experience take place is crucial because, for him, "watching movies is about place and experience, and the myriad of possibilities and stories that surround them" (Zonn 2007, p. 64).

The most salient lesson from the literature discussed above is that a holistic approach to the film *VWP* is needed in order to understand the complexity of Turkish audiences' meaning-making processes. As highlighted, the goal here is to bear various scholarly arguments and examples of films studies that demonstrate films are not only part of our lives for entertainment purposes, but also they are our part of lives because we remake our geographies through films (Diken and Laustsen 2007).

1.7.2 The uses of film in geography classrooms

Beyond films' potential as the subject matter for academic analysis, geographers also engage with films in classrooms as supplementary to their conventional teaching tradition (see for instance: Smith 2002, Alderman and Popke 2002, Feeney 2003). They held that films would enhance students' ability to think critically, increase students' capacity to better understand the complex issues of the world and help them navigate their educational voyage in the dizzying flow of the info-age. Indeed this creative use of film in classrooms has roots in the history of film geography. The earliest film focused writing for the *Geographical Magazine* begins in 1950s (Aitken and Dixon 2006). Geographers' initial interest was to utilize films to explain geographic formation of landscapes and bring the experience of places to classrooms. In this sense, film's

mimeticism surmounts other visual forms of media such as photography because the moving picture would be able to capture motion and form, and that would better explain both natural process and the social (Aitken and Dixon 2006).

Utilizing visual materials such as maps, graphs, films, etc. in classrooms have always been an important part of geographic pedagogy because such an approach offers alternative perspectives on geographic subjects and eases students' engagement with complex, difficult, controversial and abstract topics (Staddon et al. 2002). For instance, physical geographers often used (continue to use) videos in classrooms to demonstrate how landscapes form and change their formations from time to time around the world. Similarly, human geographers used (continues to use) films to bring local and worldwide problems of human and environment to the attention of their students. What film topics are picked to be shown in geography classes vary from subdiscipline to subdiscipline. For example, Lukinbeal uses films to teach about historical geographies of American film production. He uses films in classroom to highlight how, "Hollywood juxtaposes multiple geographies of economics, production, distribution, consumption and the creation of meaning" (Lukinbeal 2002, p. 250). And this genuinely correlates and reflects social and cultural histories, customs and practices of the film industry and American market economy in general (Lukinbeal 2002). Alderman and Popke use humorous documentaries to generate discussions and overturn students' conventional ways of understanding geographic subjects. Feeney uses interactive multimedia for students with dyslexia to teach geography (Alderman and Popke 2002, Feeney 2003). In the result part of her experimental study she concludes that interactive multimedia helps dyslexic students learn geographic concepts with less frustration.

22

Most commonly and importantly, geographers utilize films in classrooms as a supplement to their conventional teaching because they are eager to foster their students' ability to think critically and analytically (e.g. Smith 2002; Alderman and Popke 2002; Feeney 2003). Possessing this ability is expected to guide students to face and handle the dizzying flows of information and the complexities of the deluge of data. As Naisbitt argues "we are drowning in information but starved for knowledge" (as cited in Lukinbeal and Craine 2009, p. 177). If knowledge is understood to be unorganized and scattered around with no anchor line attached. Thus, geography instructors feel obliged to guide students toward critical thinking skills, which will help them challenge traditional ways of knowledge production and consumption. Staddon calls this practice a 'radical doubt': "a pedagogy of radical doubt as one that denies authority and yields only to engagements about social phenomena forged through critical dialogue with others" (Staddon et al. 2002, p. 272). The argument enforces that classrooms ought to be converted into an open space for creating environment within which critical thinking and independently studying can become fundamental elements of learning. In this sense films can play crucial role creating alternative modes of communication and teaching in classrooms.

1.7.3 Political economy of film geographies

Geographers are interested in studying the political economy of the film industry and its spatial and ideological implications in addition to the uses of film in geography classrooms and the media portrayals of landscape and place meaning by cultural geographers. Geographers understand that the film industry closely relates to cinematic capital (labor, location, finance, and entrepreneur), modes of knowledge production and

distribution of manufactured imagination throughout the world (Lukinbeal 2002). All these economic aspects of the film industry intersect with the creation of images, symbols and identities via commodifying cultural products such as films, TV shows, and commercials at a global scale. Cinema, especially American cinema considering its reach, can function as the site of culture production and an important distributor of western ideologies to the rest of the world. The American film industry is financially and technologically capable of manufacturing cultural symbols and meanings for millions around the world. In this sense, Lukinbeal (2002) identifies three modes of production that relates to filmmaking phenomenon in North America. The first involves the economics of filmmaking and especially the capital, spatial and historical forces that influence where production occurs. The second involves the politics of production, which refers to the "explicit processes of contestation, negotiation, and bargaining…" (Lukinbeal 2002, p. 251). And the third aspect deals with the production of meaning and ideology. The complex process of creating cultural products involves visual narration and aesthetic negotiations.

To comply with these modes of production, the Hollywood cultural industry moves from location to location. The United States' cinema industry initially was located in New York and in other east coast states, but in the 1920s it was moved to the west coast to take advantage of a sunny, spacious environment and cheap labor while the financial centers of the industry stayed in New York. Following this relocation of production, American cinema focused on and produced films for urban dwellers and modern cinema-cities. Description of cities and its dwellers was the main subject of cinema films from this era. This important interaction between cinema and the city has

continued into postmodern times (not as much however, in many corners of the world) to please cinema viewers. Cinema and the viewers were together completing the formation of modernity of cities as camera walk through the streets of modern towns and neighborhoods. Many urban and cultural geographers study cinema's economic and political interrelations with cities. For example, an edited book by Leo Zonn devoted to the topic 'place images in media' including essays that are concerned with the portrayal, experience, and meaning of 'place' in different types of media (Zonn 1990).

Harvey, for example, draws attention to an important relationship between consumerist traditions of capitalism and popularly produced media by which landscapes are re-shaped for the need of the 'condition of postmodernity' (Harvey 1989). The media have the potential to reshape and manipulate the images of cities to ease commercial endeavors. Harvey examines two films, Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire* (1987)*,* to "illustrate how the themes of time-space compression" are represented in postmodern works (p. 308). As a science fiction film, *Blade Runner*, for example, sets postmodernist themes "in a context of flexible accumulation and time-space compression… with all the imaginary power that the cinema can command" (p. 313). Thus the "conflictual and confusing experience of time and space" through these films becomes essential features of the condition for postmodernity (p. 322). Harvey posits that both films offer the audiences "a mirror, which reflects 'many of the essential features of the condition of postmodernity;' namely, the fragmentation of time, space, history, and place" (Peckham 2004, p. 423). But what I am interested in Harvey's film investigation is that films in their very nature can become capable of reducing the complex interactions of daily life of the city into a

manageable, fixable jigsaw puzzle-like gamescape. They play fundamental roles in re-presenting cites in their new cultural forms, which are very much political and culturally subversive. The new forms of art and cultural artifacts that are associated with the postmodern interpretations are pushed into city life at all costs via films. Thus, for Harvey new crises of modernity created a suitable condition to set the stage for inserting filmic representations into cities. He notes that "if there is a new crisis of representation of space and time, then new ways of thinking and feeling have to be created" (Harvey 1989, p. 322). Film as a form of art and entertainment can manipulate and reconstruct this crisis of representation of space and time by representing powerful images that both illuminate and obscure stories and realities.

Rose, paralleling Harvey's argument, points out that geographers need to consider studying the cultural politics of place because the representational place is a cultural place that should be evaluated within relation to structural socio-spatial inequalities. Therefore, the question of representation of place inextricably becomes the question of ideology and that is very much intertwined with issue of social power and hegemony (Rose 1994). To highlight non-hegemonic place-image making practices, Rose examines two films made in the mid-1970s by local community groups in east London namely *Wapping Parents' Action Group* and *Fly a flag for Poplar*. Her interest of bringing these films into the discussion of cultural representations of place is to emphasize that both films are explicitly oppositional, setting out "to challenge the dominant image of the East End as a slum peopled either by chirpy Cockneys or pathologized degenerates" (Rose 1994, p. 49). By examining these films, Rose

highlights that dominant forms of representation can be challenged and alternative meanings over space can be reconstructed creatively and in diverse ways.

Similarly and as in the conversations took place in the 40th volume of the journal *Screen*, Karen and Massey point out important connections between city and films. Through these connections, places become the locations of transit and the arena of competing representations. Karen's and Massey's attention is on the sets of the 'mobility'- "massive mobilities of imperialism and colonialism" (Karen and Massey 1999, p. 230). They argue that cities are constantly on the move, made and reconstructed by films, and thus they are vulnerable to the politics of and subject to materialistic exploitation and locational hierarchy. Films make this spatial imagination available to everyone. Cities are where various flows all come together. Therefore the question here is not to ask how space 'is' but rather how it 'works'. Space is not as fixed as it looks. All space is constantly in some sort of mobility, connectivity and (in)fluence. Films make these social and spatial flows of exchange visible and comprehensible via their visual and aural capabilities. Filmic artifacts-the images, the screen, the building, and the audience- are also vital to understand the spatial significations of cities. Here is the oxymoronic part; if films are representations of spatial relations-mobilities, then to (re)present a place, films should capture and immobilize space. Massey in her response pinpoints this problem and says that any form of representation is a spatialization of sorts, of freezing the flow of experience (Karen and Massey 1999). Thus, films freeze space in favor of time meanwhile they mobilize and (re)present places in different times for different political and economic ends.

Table 1-2: Division of the global film industry

	Represented /geography/typified	Character/purpose
First Cinema	Hollywood/United States	Profit driven/advanced cinema technology/mass consumption/studios
Second Cinema	Post-World War II cinema/Europe	Neorealist/natural settings used/cinema as art/cinema of elite
Third Cinema	Third World/colonized states/Latin America	Ideologist/revolutionary/local and universal audience

Source: Table is adopted from Macdonald (1994).

Regarding political economy of film, what Macdonald finds vital is how the production-consumption matrix of cinema which is intimately connected to the global capital industry and movement of personal and ideas has close relations with cinema's geographic implications. Besides cinema's central role in the meaning-making processes, cinema also claims to be indispensable as an entertainment commodity of the material world by occupying a crucial place in the production, distribution, and consumption stages of the global cinema market. In this sense, cinema is no different than automobiles, computers, or soybeans (Macdonald 1994). From this departure point of political economy, Macdonald makes an important connection between cinema phenomenon (production, distribution and consumption) to three existing cinema traditions: first, second and third cinemas (see Table 1.2). First cinema is mostly typified with Hollywood. This tradition is dominated with materialistic incentives and global entrepreneurship. Therefore major film corporations' investments are highly observable and their investments are economically, technically and esthetically superior to any other cinema productions of the world. Hollywood cinema has been accused of colonizing all other national cinema markets and leaving no room for them to emerge.

This domination does not only include pioneering the image-making tradition worldwide, but also places Hollywood as the main site of manufacturing culture, (de facto) setting international standards of cinema in terms of production, distribution, consumption, marketing and cinema values (Higson 1989). What this means for other countries' cinema industries is that they should, first and foremost, reach the same standards of production, distribution, marketing and consumption of Hollywood (international cinema) to be considered as national. Higson (1989, p. 38) highlights this argument by stating:

> By Hollywood, I mean the international institutionalization of certain standards and values of cinema, in terms of both audience expectations, professional ideologies and practices and the establishment of infrastructures of production, distribution, exhibition, and marketing to accommodate, regulate and reproduce these standards and values...
>
> If we confine discussion of film production, it makes sense in this context to speak of national cinemas as non-standard and marginal activities. Part of the problem, of course, is the paradox that for a cinema to be nationally popular it must also be international in scope. That is to say, it must achieve the international (Hollywood) standard.

Higson's argument, then, forces us to ask this question: how integrative of global or transnational a local cinema (e.g. Turkish cinema) in terms of its techniques and practices must be in order to become national? This is to say that there are no clear boundaries of defining where (inter)nationality of a nation's cinema begins and ends. Regardless, what can the cinema do for a nation and what a nation do with cinema remain to be an important question.

Macdonald traces the second cinema tradition back the material and ideological re-compositions of the World War II. Second cinema emerged to fulfill material and social needs of emerging ex-colonial regions as an alternative to the first cinema. This

tradition was highly influenced by French neorealist school of thought where the discourse of the ordinary was a dominating factor. Film makers of this tradition preferred natural settings such as sunlight as background light, ordinary people as actors and stories of everyday life and events (Macdonald 1994). In other words, the second cinema came to be a valid alternative 'art cinema' to first cinema in its aesthetic form and alternative filmmaking techniques. Film-makers of this neorealist generation became vital for development of national cinemas of the Third World. Macdonald notes that directors, scriptwriters and producers applied their techniques learned in Europe "to the problems of the newly emerged states of the Third World" (Macdonald 1994, p. 33).

Third cinema, on the other hand, has deep roots in the colonization period. It was during the colonial period that the technology of cinema was brought to colonial spaces by investors from colonized country. Films of this time "were limited in numbers and tended to be ethnographic studies of the colonized" (Macdonald 1994, p. 35). This emerging cinema, in accordance with the originating country's socio-economic conditions, prioritized social change and transformation of society thorough cinematic pedagogy. Thus, third cinema (or some call it 'Third World cinema') criticized and challenged the status quo by engaging in revolutionary film practices (Wayne 2001). Films in this tradition mainly tell the story of the socio-economic conditions of the Third World, and causes of human misery and oppression. Especially socio-political changes of 1960s have an impact on filmmaking practices. Macdonald argues that films of this trouble times sought to direct political engagement with the audience (Macdonald 1994). It is this important facet of national cinema that government-imposed censorship on filmmakers became eminent. For instance, Yılmaz Güney's

films in Turkey should be accounted in this cinema trend. As explained in the following chapters, his left leaning films question and criticize geographical and social inequalities in Turkey during the 1970s and 80s. In this sense, *VWP* might not be classified in the Yılmaz Güney category (leftist or negotiating the Turkish identity), but it can be argued that it should be situated in third (world) cinema category for challenging and reproducing geopolitical representations of the first (world) cinema (and media) productions while defining national narratives and practices that would give voice to the geopolitical aspirations of Turkish state.

1.8 Summary

Chapter 1 briefly introduced the scope of the study and covered one of the major themes of this dissertation: why and how geographers engage with films. Film use in classrooms and films as political instruments and divisions of labor in the global film industry were reviewed to make an argument that films have been and continue to be part and parcel of our everyday life. But, more than this, I bring to bear various scholarly arguments and examples of films studies that demonstrate films are not only part of our lives for entertainment purposes, but also they are our part of lives because we remake our geographies through films (Diken and Laustsen 2007). Films are sociological, economic and political phenomena through which we seek to find orderliness in a chaotic world. They allow us to educate ourselves about our social realities, and contest political economies of first world projects by introducing alternative national cinemas.

In this sense, I devoted the second half of the chapter to explain what geographers made of films, how and why they analyzed films, and their geographical

implications mainly since the 1970s. The following chapter furthers the discussion by extending it to what nations do with cinema and what films do for nations. Particularly I focus on the history of Turkish cinema, its political traditions, and cinema's contributions to national narratives in Turkey. As I argue in the following chapter, these contributions are not always what the Turkish state desires. Some Turkish films famously question and problematize the Turkish nation and its narratives, in opposition to the Turkish Ministry of Culture's intent to maintain a modern, "Kemalist 'imagined community' through its film subsidies and censorship policies…" (Harris 2008, p. 77). However, some other films such as the *VWP* overtly reproduce and diffuse conservative concepts such as Turkishness, nationalism, Turkey's geopolitical importance in the world, and other national narratives. It offers these concepts for everyday use of the publics in the similar lines with popular and formal national discourses. Simultaneously, the same film continues to negotiate and problematize the first world's geopolitics and cinema (and media) representations of Turkey and the Middle East.

CHAPTER 2: NATIONAL CINEMA, TURKISH FILM INDUSTRY AND THE FEATURES OF TURKISH MEDIA

"When I think about 'cinema' and 'nationalism', I think of cinema's individualizing nationalism…"

(Meltem Toksoz, 2007, Istanbul)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates features that constitute the Turkish public media and its discursive rhetoric concerning the continuous process of nationality formation. Specifically, I focus on the modern Turkish nation and the role of national cinemas, Turkish cinema and Turkey's public media structures. Concepts highlighted in this chapter are the historical background of the Turkish cinema, the dominant political maneuvers influencing film making, and the distribution and financing of cinema as Turkey's geopolitical positions change in global politics. Discussed also are the particulars of Turkish cinema's didactical attempts at reshaping the society which was in the stage of rebuilding itself during the new republic. In the Turkish context the belief has always been that the public should be educated, modernized, and freed from the Ottoman past via societal bombardment with ideological messages that are manipulated for the public's health by state elites (Esen 2010, Iri 2009, Arslan 2011).

The expansion of scholarship examining the connection between cinema and nation is a comparatively recent intellectual effort (Williams 2002) although the use of cinema to maintain and disseminate national narratives date back to as early as the first use of the moving images for public screening (Burton 2007) and scholars note the connection since the 1930s (Armstrong 1933). Soon after the development of film technology, many states quickly embraced this medium as a means of educating the

public and promoting cultural nationalism. Through everyday consumption of films (fiction or non-fiction), selective remembering and forgetting became part of a vast intertextual mosaic of simulacra undergirding specific national narratives. In this sense, audiences engage in redefining and reimagining the past as they reconstruct their present and collective memory. As Burton argues, selected films have always been "explicitly used and appropriated, both positively and negatively, by politicians, media personnel, as well as by the general public in order to advance particular ideologically-loaded arguments about the present" (Burton 2007, p. 1). In this chapter, I review some of the debates about national cinema and its intimate connection with nationalism to better understand where the internationally-consumed Turkish film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* can be situated and how it can be better understood as a nationalist text, given the intertextuality of audience consumption and interpretations. As discussed later in this dissertation, Turkish audiences engage in reimagining and redefining their past while reproducing Turkish national identity (perhaps independently of the formal national narratives), as well as Turkey's geopolitical present through discussing the film. Thus, this chapter is written be a bridge for integrating the role of media to transmit intended messages supportive of Turkish cinema, ideas of Turkish nationalism in cinema discourses, Turkish regional geopolitics, and the audiences' interpretations and imaginations of *VWP*. To truly understand the audiences' interpretations of the film and Turkish geopolitics, one must engage the historical development of the Turkish cinema sector and its relations with current social-economic and political changes in Turkey. Therefore, a brief examination of national cinema and nationalized cinema becomes necessary. In this sense, *VWP* is an example of 'White Cinema' reflecting

conservative values aligned with an idealized Turkish nation. This genre becomes to be an important cinematic lens through which to understand Turkish nation formation. As discussed in the coming chapters of this dissertation, an important part of the Turkish audiences' conceptualization of *VWP* coalesces around the white cinema's constructions of history and national values. Thus, including literature on national cinema, Turkish cinema, white cinema, and the features of Turkish media becomes necessary. Given cinema's potential of educating national publics and the attempts of state sponsored media (e.g. the state TV) and non-state sponsored actors to shape national identity, the characteristics of *VWP* and its connections to the cinema tradition need to be explored.

2.2 National cinema and nationalism

National cinema is more than just cinema produced by a particular nation-state. Higson (1989) argues that the concept of national cinema has four important characteristics (see Table 2.1). First, national cinema refers to the domestic film industry and is strongly attached to the country that produced it. Ownership of production firms, distribution outlets and the exhibition chains becomes a crucial aspect in this category. Secondly, cinema's textual character becomes an important part of the tradition. The subject matter, the common style or world view shared and to what extent a film "engages in exploring, questioning and constructing a notion of nationhood in the films themselves and in the consciousness of the viewers" (Higson 1989, p. 36) become the defining factor in this second cinema tradition. Thirdly in Higson's description, national cinema is identified in terms of consumption such as who is watching which films. Fourth, Higson identifies a "criticism-led approach to national cinema" (p. 37). This approach

highlights cinema of elites and artistic productions that appeal to high-culture or "modernist heritage of a particular nation state" (Higson 1989, p. 37).

Table 2-1: The concepts of national cinema

Phase 1.	Production based: where are these films made, and by whom?
Phase 2.	Text based: What are these films about what world view do they share, etc.
Phase 3.	Consumption based: which films do audiences watch?
Phase 4.	Artistic based: how artistic are these films? What audiences watch these films: high-culture or popular audiences

Source: Table is adapted from Higson (1989).

The process of defining a national cinema "takes meaning in the context of a conceptual play of differences and identities" (Higson 1989, p. 38). A national cinema is imagined in the plurality of other nations' cinemas and involves the construction of self-consciousness. For Higson, therefore, national cinema "can only be understood as histories of crisis and conflict, of resistance and negotiations" (Hjort and MacKenzie 2000, p. 4). National cinema is a national communicative space that does not simply mirror or express the stable future of a national culture as films are, "but are themselves one of the loci of debates about a nation's governing principles, goals, heritage and history" (Hjort and MacKenzie 2000, p. 4). Thus, scholars who study nationalism and national identity, such as Smith (2000), Higson (2000), and Robins and Aksoy (2000) approach national films as a visual representation of a national identity "relying on its own visual culture, narrative traditions and capacity for artistic experiments" (Robins and Aksoy 2000, p. 210). Additionally, many nationality and national identity scholars state that national cinema is not the reason that the idea of national culture exists, but it

surely can be part of the process of a culture's maintenance and renewal (Schlesinger 2000, Williams 2002, O'Regan 2002, Harris 2008). Schlesinger notes that "the media therefore function as a categorical system: widespread public identification with the national space is held to be an effect of this form of cultural organization. Media are boundary markers, intimately related to the 'political roof' that caps a culture and makes it into a nation-state" (Schlesinger 2000, p. 22). He points out that Billig's argument of nationalism's banality has much to do with the question of nation-maintenance than Anderson's account of 'imagined community' (Billig 1995, Anderson 1991). In this account, Anderson is more interested in the question of nation-formation than that of nation-maintenance. However, films are vital to the argument that modern nations are 'imagined communities' and thus are part and parcel of the formative role of cinema's constitutive of the national totality. Smith argues that cinema and historical film can aid in the reconstruction of ethnoscapes in which "ethnic atmosphere is closely linked to the poetic landscape of distinctive ethnic communities (ethnies), or 'ethnoscapes'…so that the land comes to belong to a people in the same way as the people belong to a particular land – creating an ancestral 'homeland'" (Smith 2000, p. 55). Parallel to this argument, Higson highlights two central concepts of national cinema. For him, national cinema, on one hand, "[1]seems to look inward, reflecting on the nation itself, on its past, present and future, its cultural heritage, its indigenous traditions, its sense of common identity and continuity". On the other hand, "a national cinema [2]seems to look out across its borders, asserting its difference from other national cinemas, proclaiming its sense of otherness" (Higson 2000, p. 67).

Furthermore, Williams argues that development of nationalism is an ongoing process requiring recognition of the constantly renegotiated identities found in cinema (Williams 2002). There is little doubt that print-media played a crucial role in forming and disseminating the concept of nation and in turn yielded self-consciousness among similar ethnicities. However it is the ascendance of modern mass media (films in particular) that play a greater role in the process of reproducing, sustaining and redefining nationalism[6] as influenced by the socio-political conditions. In this regard, Williams highlights that "the cinema would be an essential part of a *process* of defining nations-and not solely in Anderson's last, multilingual phase of nation formation" (Williams 2002, p. 4, emphasis in original). In other words, cinema reflects national values, political tensions, and conflicts providing the backdrop for socio-political projects and understanding the current geopolitical events.

Additionally, cinema and the other forms of media can become a geopolitical arena where the contestations of nation and nationality take place. In the case of Palestinian (and/or Israeli) national cinema (a cinema of exile), for example, we see the ongoing negotiations of home/land and how the place identity become paramount as in the example of Michel Khleifi's film, *Fertile Memory* (1980). Stated differently, cinema not only sustains the nation-state but helps to essentialize a nation to a state, reactivating the constant struggle over the definition of a nation-state. In this sense, cinema sets the

---

[6] According to the instrumentalist view, nationalism is a political construction/project that seeks greater power and hegemony over a delimited territory and people. This project is deliberately engineered by elites, and legitimized and sustained by cultural products. Therefore, culture and politics are inseparable domains of nationalism and in the construction of national identity (Gellner 1983). Similarly Anderson argues that nationalism operates within the idea of 'imagined political community' wherein individuals believe that they hold certain histories, dreams, narratives, and myths in common (Mountz 2009).

stage for post-nationalist or counter-nationalist arguments yielding alternative definitions and practices. Ranganathan, for instance, investigates how "national identity that is based on differences or diversities undergoes subtle but significant changes with some exclusions becoming inclusive over a period of time" through Bollywood films (Ranganathan 2010, p. 42). In her study of popular culture as represented by and through an analysis of the Bollywood film *Swades* (2004), she concludes that Indian national identity is moving towards greater inclusiveness even though such "inclusiveness is still governed by some traditional beliefs and fundamental beliefs enshrined in the Indian Constitution" (p. 52). The argument here is that a national cinema can function as a medium to define, sustain, or contest concepts such as nation, nationality, and national identity, which in turn defines what we are and what we are not.

To further the argument, cinema, particularly in emerging countries, can function as an important visual-language (although Anderson emphasizes print-language) to formulate an 'imagined political community' while creating new ways of thinking about the past and present (Anderson 1991). In this regard, cinema allows states to disseminate nationalist ideas and traditional values supportive of conceptions of the nation as a solid community distinguished from 'others' but imagined as sovereign and limited. Although the (presumed) effects of cinema on audience attitudes remain unclear and problematic, some films can play an important role in the process of sustaining of national identities and informing the audience about their nationhood. Williams argues that if films "cannot by themselves mobilize nations and give them a new direction, they can, apparently, *reflect* and *keep in circulation* values and behaviors

associated with particular nation" (Williams 2002, p. 8 emphasis in original). In this sense, various national cinemas are "an integral part of the process of understanding the forces – economic, social, historical, geopolitical, cultural – that shape our present existence" (Jones-Martin 2011, p. 15). Thus, through national cinema productions, a cinematic thinking of the nation, history and present becomes possible. For instance, Jones-Martin highlights that contemporary South Korean science fiction films engage with the nation's emergence from a past under military rule in the form of renegotiating and reconstructing of its history. Similarly, Turkish cinema, which will be discussed in the following section, reproduces nationalism, national narratives, the nation's past and present that coalesce with ideal images of the nation intended by the nation builders. Drawn from discussions above about national cinema and cinematized nationalism discourses, this research situates the *VWP* as a geopolitical text that refashions national narratives and claims to become a major source of inspirations for the publics. Thus including literature on national cinema and conventionalities of nationalist discourses embedded in popular cinema aids this study to better understand the geopolitical implications of the film in Turkish context.

2.3 Turkish cinema

When the Turkish film *Recep Ivedik* (2008) was released in theaters, the Turkish Minister of Culture Ertuğrul Günay commented on the film saying that it was a "rezalet" (scandalous) film (Arslan 2009). The reason why he called the film scandalous was partially because the Minister of Culture did not like the ways in which a 'Turkish man' was portrayed in the film. The film failed to portray the country in a positive light to European viewers and misrepresented ideals of Turkishness. In the film, the *Recep*

Ivedik character is portrayed as "a hairy, bear-like and utterly uncivilized man with outmoded cultural traits"… representing the "archetypal Other of the Turkish elite or, possibly, the stereotypical migrant worker in Europe. In many ways he is similar to the Sacha Baron Cohen character Borat" (Arslan 2009, p. 93). The Minister's angry comments, among many other cinema critics' and commentators' attacks on the film, were focused on the idea that the nation and its people should only be represented positively and as modern as possible in order to demonstrate the Turkish people's level of culture and taste. Surprisingly, the public responded to this 'crisis of representation' by buying 4.3 million tickets, resulting in an all-time high for ticket sales, which stood until 2012.

In this section of the chapter, I provide a brief history of Turkish cinema and its connections with national narratives and state ideologies that have been employed in Turkish films (exceptions will also be discussed). It is the argument of this study that national cinemas, Turkish or otherwise, have close ties with states, state-favored ideologies and mainstream cultural values (in addition to financial relationships). Turkish cinema and its political fragmentations (e.g. white cinema) are examples of these relations. It is my belief that without reviewing the socio-economic and political developments relating to Turkish cinema, a complete understanding of *VWP* and audience interpretations of the film may be difficult.

According to Robins and Aksoy, Turkish cinema[7] "has been structured in terms of the progressive emergence of a distinctive national cinema" (Robins and Aksoy

---

[7] It is important to highlight that the term 'Turkish cinema' is problematic as well as the subject matter of an ongoing debate among cinema writers and academicians. Central to the debate includes Turkish

2000, p. 210). The desired image of the nation, in this case the Republic of Turkey whose ideals include the principles of Kemalism,[8] necessitated the emergence of a national cinema to reflect these ideals. Thus, Turkish censorship of Turkish cinema aimed to insure the protection and projection of the national culture was accomplished according to the state's wishes.

The first time cinema was introduced in Turkey corresponds to the Ottoman period in late 1890s, with a private screening of a Polish-Jewish-Romanian-citizen Sigmung Weinberg in the Yıldız Sarayı (the Sultan's court) in Istanbul (BYEGM 2010). In the developmental years of Turkish cinema, minorities and foreigners played a significant role, from opening up private cinema halls to educating future Turkish filmmakers. The first film made by an Ottoman citizen was a documentary, *Ayastefanos Abidesinin Yıkılışı (The Demolition of the Russian Monument at the San Stefano)* in 1914. Since many film producers were either foreign or minorities, little information

---

cinema's reductionist character in which different ethnic group's cinema productions and the multiplicity of Turkey's geography are ignored. For example an academician Fahrettin Altun argues that 'Turkish cinema' denies the existence of 'Kurdish cinema' and he adds that the term 'Turkish cinema' is as much imagined and fictive as the term 'Turkish nation'. Altun states that a German-Turkish director Fatih Akin, for example, belongs to both Turkish and German cinema (Altun 2011). Others, on the other hand, such as Cihat Arinc argue that unless it is not essentialized to exclude geographic and cultural diversity, the term 'Turkish cinema' can be used, referring to the cinema produced in Turkey by Turkish producers. However, he notes that cinema cannot be reduced to a nation's geographic borders. Thus, it is hard for one to claim that incomplete nation-states can have a complete national cinema. For this very reason, Arslan (2011) uses 'new cinema of Turkey' instead of 'Turkish cinema' to exclude Turkificationist, nationalist, and republican characteristics of Turkish cinema that can be disrespectful to the diversity of the country.

[8] "Kemalism, a synonym of Ataturkism, is a political philosophy that highlights western-style modernization and rationality (substituting reason for religion). Kemalism includes principles of republicanism, secularism, nationalism, popularism, statism and reformism which later became the main principles of the Republican People's Party, CHP. According to Heper, the CHP and the Kemalist civil bureaucracy converted 'Kemalism' from 'a way of rational thinking to a political manifesto –ideology- and considered themselves its guardian'" (Anaz, Keceli and Shelley, p. 166).

remains about films made before between 1914 and 1923 (Erdogan and Gokturk 2001). The new era of Turkish cinema starts with Muhsin Ertugrul's return from Germany. In this period, a number of films were produced based on well-known Turkish literary books such as novelist Halide Edip Adivar's *Ateşten Gömlek (The Ordeal)* (1923) and Muhsin Ertugrul's *Bir Millet Uyanıyor* (*A Nation Awakens*) (1932) dealing with the War of Independence. The 1940s saw an increase in film making in Turkey due to tax policies levying higher taxes on foreign versus domestically produced films. Municipal taxes on the earnings of domestic film productions were reduced to 25 percent while tariff on foreign films remained 70 percent. This was also the period that cinema laborers and other associates began organizing themselves in a professional manner marking the beginning of the institutionalization of Turkish cinema. From the 1950s until early 1970s, Turkish cinema boomed, producing an average of 200 films annually (Arslan 2009). These films mostly dealt with social issues such as consequences of mass migration to urban cities (mainly Istanbul) from the countryside, labor strikes, industrialization, poverty, and along with -and an always-appreciated subject- love (see the trend in Figure 2.1). Popular Turkish cinema of this era also created its Hollywood type cinema-locale called *Yeşilçam*[9] cinema (pine-tree cinema), referring to the street where film production companies were located and the labor was recruited (Mutlu 2005). This period's film industry was greatly influenced by political and economic

---

[9] *Yeşilçam* refers to the name of a street in Beyoglu, Istanbul. This street and the surrounding area are known for concentrations of minority populations and being the destination for art and cultural activities. Since the production of film-making reached to its peak around 1950s, *Yeşilçam*, commonly known as the 'little Hollywood,' became a famous site of film productions. In its heyday (between 1965 and 1975) the place was not only the site of many film productions, but also the place of an agglomeration of movie production as well as the offices of important popular cinema magazines and the center of cinema journalism.

developments. For example, the Democratic Party's leadership after Turkey developed a multi-party system brought relative freedom for private investments in the entertainment sector encouraged the diversification of films subject matter. The liberal environment that the 1961 constitution built also helped the cinema sector to revitalize itself as an art form. During this time, film makers attempted to use cinema to carry social problems into the big screen as part of social responsibility that they felt (Esen 2010). Even though the military interventions of the 1970s brought politization in social-realist cinema and human-rights problems in the country, critical artistic film making continued to be visible. A great example would be the Kurdish director, writer and actor Yılmaz Güney and his alternative cinema works. Güney critically examined the politics of everyday life and matters of the lower-class and then brought this into the cinema. His lower-class background and stubborn nature was greatly appreciated by audiences and earned him the nickname the 'Ugly King' of Turkish cinema (Suner 2010, p. 5). His 1970 milestone film *Umut* (*Hope*) and the most internationally known film *Yol* (*The Way*) (1982) caused Yılmaz Güney to be named one of the greatest male stars of all time in Turkey. His realist style and critique of 1980 military intervention did not escape from the eyes of the state and he was arrested several times until he escaped from prison for France. His critical and realist manner of addressing of social problems garnered his films decades of censorship by the Turkish state.

25000000

20000000

15000000

■ Male
■ Female

10000000

5000000

0

1975   1980   1985   1990   2000
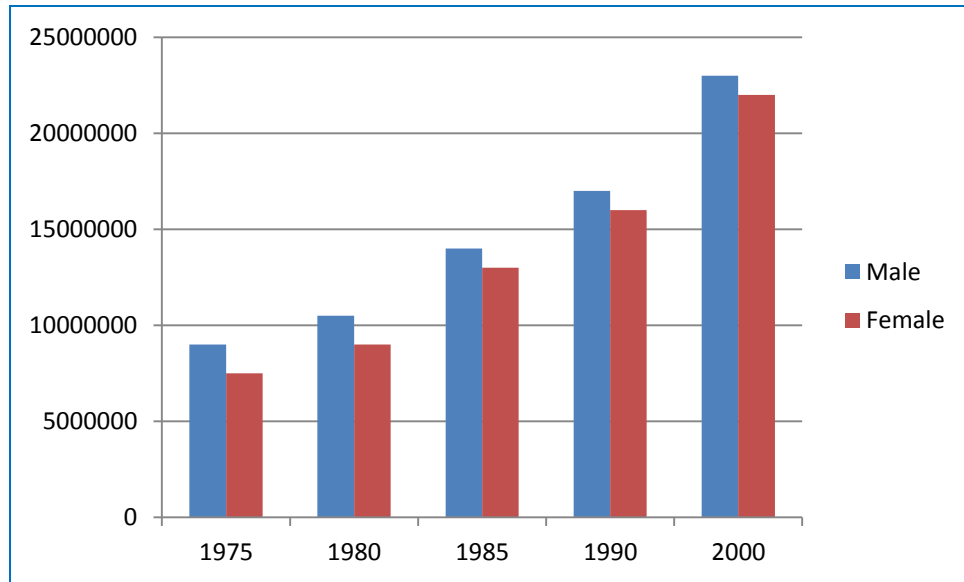
Figure 2-1: Urban population in millions in Turkey.
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute, TÜİK, 2004

In the late 1970s and the 1980s, to borrow Suner's words, "Turkish film turned into a joke, connoting bad taste and banality" (Suner 2010, p. 8) because of the factors such as the economic crisis of the 1970s and the ensuing economic hardship. This led to disappearing cinema audiences, film production firms shifting their investment into different and more profitable businesses, and the military coup of 1980 with concomitant state censorship of cultural productions (Suner 2010). During this decline, film producers aimed to reach Turkish immigrant workers abroad and the domestic young-male audiences by offering cheap pornographic productions. This period witnessed the growth of two different paradoxical directions in cinema: individually sponsored political films (as in the case of Yılmaz Güney films) and pornography. Cinema lost its diversity of spectators mainly because of the latter. Until the late 1990s, going-to-cinema could easily mean going to see a pornographic film. Thus cinema salons became the concern for public and the sites of immorality because of

pornographic shows. With cheap scenarios and pornographic pictures, film makers targeted only the young-male population in urban centers. As mentioned earlier, the 1970s when political and economic hardship hit the most the country, pornography became the site of entertainment and place of escape for young-male-urban audiences. Much of the hardship was because of the US's economic embargo on Turkey due to the Cyprus crisis and poppy production in Turkey (Arslan 2011). Because of this hardship, people in big numbers moved from rural areas to big cities for the search of jobs and young males were the first to migrate. As a consequence of this massive migration to cities and the economic hardship experiences, culturally mixed metropolitan people sought to temporarily escape from the reality of life and flooded in cinemas where pornography was shown. In television, the situation was no different than cinema. Soft-pornography was also available in the homes of millions. The state appeared to be unaffected by pornography which was perceived to be less dangerous than political films (Esen 2010). Furthermore, people were in need of entertainment, and this form of entertainment diverted their attention and caused them not to question political instability in the country (Esen 2010). On top of this vulgar film production of the 1970s, through the early 1990s, globalization and Turkey's opening its doors to foreign investors deepened this cinema crisis. In early 1990s, Hollywood film corporations' direct investment dominated the distribution network in Turkey. The numbers of national television and radio stations throughout Turkey increased and brought Turkish cinema to the brink of disappearing completely. During this time not only did the number of films produced decline precipitously, but the size of audiences declined as well (Esen 2010). Turkey's shrinking economy, lack of investment, and increase in

unemployment numbers throughout the country pummeled the Turkish film sector. Foreign companies such as Warner Bros. and United International Pictures increased their investment in better cinema technology which in turn resulted in increased ticket prices. This then brought down the number of cinema goers and made cinema once again the activity of educated, young, middle-and-upper-class city dwellers (Suner 2010).

It was during the mid-1990s when Turkish cinema garnered attention in the domestic and international markets. The first time a film successfully merged Hollywood-style editing technology with classical Yeşilçam themes was in 1996 with the film *Eşkiya* (The Bandit) (1996). This film attracted more than 2.5 million viewers to the movie theaters, a first in the history of Turkish cinema. Turkish cinema gained momentum after the late 1990s in the search of the idea of home/homeland. *Güneşe Yolculuk* (Journey to the Sun) (1999) can be a good example of a cinema that investigates concepts such as identity, home, urban life, and childhood memories. Suner explains films of this era: "revealed tensions, anxieties, and dilemmas around the questions of belonging, identity, and memory in contemporary Turkish society" (Suner 2010, p. 1). In the early 2000s, political and economic changes followed the AKP's successful integration negotiations with the European Union and consolidated Turkish cinema's domestic and international ascendance (Suner 2010, Arslan 2011). The AKP opened the doors for foreign and domestic investments in the cultural industry of Turkey. For instance, the Turkish Ministry of Culture increased financial and logistical incentives for the films that advertised Turkey's image abroad and helped consolidate Turkish culture and values at home. During this period, not only did the number of

cinema goers increase, but also the number of national and international awards given to Turkish films increased.

In the history of Turkish cinema movement, there are close connections between the state's economic, social and political conditions and the volume and characteristics of cultural productions. The cinema of a country in the center of Cold War politics such as Turkey is not exempt from this relationship. Cinema in Turkey, as in many other nations, has always been treated as part of indoctrination, teaching norms or negotiating established traditions. There were many movements that wanted to use cinema to convey their ideological messages. Among them, one movement commonly known as 'conservative cinema' was and remains one of the important cinema waves. In this wave we see Islamic ways of life and moralistic teachings reflected on the big screen. This cinematic representation of Islamic culture can be loosely traced to Halid Refiğ's *ulusal sinema*[10] (national cinema). *Ulusal sinema* is thought to be a movement as an alternative to the *yeni sinema* (new cinema) which was influenced from the French *nouvelle vague* cinema ('new wave' of 1950s and 60s in French cinema) and the wave of third cinema in developing countries (Robins and Aksoy 2000). However, loosely named conservative cinema movement lacks a clear definition or description. Many cinema writers associate this genre with conservative presentations and nationalistic ways of understanding socio-political events, often referencing the Ottoman period and the style and motifs of popular Anatolian culture (Robins and Aksoy 2000, Arslan 2011, Monceau 2000, Avcı and Kılınç 2009). Furthermore, Avcı and Kılınç argue that this

---

[10] "*Ulusal sinema* (*ulusal* is the modern Turkish word for "national"), which supported the Turkish dimension of national identity and *milli sinema* (*milli* is the old Ottoman word for "national") which promoted the Islamic dimension of national identity by emphasizing the Turkish-Islamic heritage of society and rejecting the influence of western cultural imperialism." (Monceau 2000, p. 1).

conservative cinema is more than just filming Islamic themes for audiences. This cinema movement also includes other Islamic literature and productions as well, such as Islamic novels and music sponsored by groups of investors contributing Islamic capital (Avcı and Kılınç 2009). Yücel Çakmaklı's *milli sinema* (Islamic cinema) also shares similar ideas and concepts of Halid Refig's u*lusal sinema* (national cinema) but predominantly emphasizes Islamic themes and ideas (see Table 2.2). For Çakmaklı, *milli sinema* identity "could only be achieved by producing films that reflect Anatolian realities, which [he maintained] embody the beliefs, national character and traditions of Muslim Turkish people…" (as cited in Robins and Aksoy 2000, p. 214). Çakmaklı argues that the narratives of Hollywood and Western cinemas in general don't tell "our stories, those of a Turkish-Islamic identity" (Arslan 2011, p. 128). Çakmaklı, similarly to Refig, desires a "national cinema placed against Western cinema, incorporating and reflecting the traditions and mores of Turks" (p. 128). As seen in his works (commonly described as conservative or white cinema), Çakmaklı's cinema is one that ultimately privileges the national unity and Islamic sensibility, connoting the essential, pure and original self in relation to cosmopolitan Western cinema, its 'otherness' and distance to Turkish values and national narratives (Arslan 2011).

Table 2-2: Films with Islamic themes on the silver screen 1989-1996

Year	Movie	Director	Work	Producer	Sponsor/viewers
1990	Yalniz Degilsiniz (You are not alone)	Mesut Ucakan	Ustun Inanc's novel	Feza Film	250.000 viewers saw the film in the first 4 months
1990	Alman Gelin (German Bride)	Mehmet Tanrisever	Abdullah Sadik's novel	Feza Film	
1991	Cizme (ilk Ezan/ezan gunu) Boot (the first Azan/the day of Azan)	Ismail Gunes	Omer Lutfi Mete's novel	Feza Film	
1991	Sonsuza Yurumek (Walking to eternity)	Mesut Ucakan	Ustun Inanc's novel	Atlas Nehir Yapim	YIMPAS (chain store)
1991	Sahibini Arayan Madalya (The Medal looking for its owner)	Yucel Cakmakli	Tarik Bugra' novel	Ajans 1400	Turkiye Diyanet Vakfi (Turkish Religious Affairs Foundation)
1993	Danimarkali Gelin (Danish Bride)	Salih Diriklik	Salih Diriklik (Film Script)	TGRT (Used to be a conservative TV station owned by Ihlas Holding. Now it is owned by Fox Broadcasting Company and called 'Fox')	
1993	Kelebekler Sonsuza Ucar Iskilipli Atif Hoca (Butterflies fly to Eternity: Atif Hodja from Iskilip)	Mesut Ucakan	Mesut Ucakan (Film script)	Atlas Yapim	403.000 numbers of viewers saw the film in the first 4 months.
1993	Garip Bir Kolleksiyoncu (a bizarre collectioner)	Nurettin Ozel	Nurettin Ozel (Film script)	Emel Film	Kombassan Holding (Islamic Capital)
1993	Besinci Boyut (The fifth dimension)	Ismail Gunes		Esra Film	
1994	Kanayan Yara Bosna (Bleeding wound: Bosna)	Yucel Cakmakli	Ustun Inanc (Film script)		Ihlas Holding (Islamic capital)
1994	Olumsuz Karanfiller (Immortal gillyflowers)	Mesut Ucakan	Mesut Ucakan (Film script)	Esra Film	
1994	Bize Nasil Kiydiniz? (How did you sacrifice us?)	Metin Camurcu	Emine Senlikoglu's novel	Esra Film	
1996	Son Turbedar (The last tomb man)	Yucel Cakmakli	Ahmet Efe Nurettin Ozel	Esra Film	Kombassan Holding

Source: Table is adapted from Avcı and Kılınç (2009).

Similar to Islamic and national cinema movements, a new approach known as 'white cinema' (beyaz sinema) emerged in the 1980s[11]. Şen who coined the term 'white cinema' argues that white cinema is inclusive but broader than both Refig's '*ulusal sinema'* and Çakmaklı's '*milli sinema'*. To him, white cinema is more than Islamic and national. White cinema deploys universal concepts and values. White cinema, to Şen, "is the intention of reflecting the main purpose of human disposition, accordance with needs of the time, into the white screen in an artistic and aesthetical manner" (Sen 2010, Culture section, ¶ 11). Further he explains white cinema as "cinematographic works which respect the religion, language, culture, traditions and customs of our people, which promote and protect lasting values to which we are faithful" (Monceau 2000, White Cinema section, ¶ 4). The conceptualization of white cinema is highly national, traditional and ideological. Thus cinema in this approach becomes a form of aesthetic work, Islamic propaganda, and a didactic tool. For that reason, it can be argued that the u*lusal* and *milli* cinema are part of the white cinema movement. A well-known (maybe the first) white cinema production is director Yücel Çakmaklı's *Minyeli Abdullah* (Abdullah of Minye) (1989). Adapted from well-known novelist Hekimoğlu İsmail's book (Minyeli Abdullah, 1967), this film sets a new nation-wide box-office record, attracting a half-million moviegoers despite many theater owners' refusal to show it because of its Islamic themes. The film narrates the suffering of a street porter, Abdullah. He dedicates himself to Islam and the film depicts his moralistic struggles during the reign of King Farouk of Egypt when conservative thoughts were despised,

---

[11] In this study, I call these three trends in cinema as 'conservative cinema' within which one can easily find general characteristics of Islamic, national and white cinema and for doing this I would not be the first to call 'conservative cinema' where is all the elements of these three types of cinema can be found.

disparaged, and banned while at the same time western lifestyle and philosophies were welcomed and enforced by the Egyptian government (Avcı and Kılınç 2009). The protagonist fights against the sabotage of Islamic values by both imported Western ideologists and corrupted Egyptian government officials. The film *Minyeli Abdullah* seeks to reorient Islamic values and attempts to educate illiterate and confused people of post-World War II Egypt. He becomes an exemplary Muslim within a hostile society in Egypt. Even though the stories in the film were supposed to have happened in Egypt, the Turkish government expressed strong displeasure at the depictions in the film and accused of the film of undermining the Turkish government and statism. Consequently, the film was censored for years.[12] The government censorship of critical cultural products, *Minyeli Abdullah* and other leftist films[13] caused these films to be reproduced, distributed and watched through personal contacts and away from the state's eye right after banning the film from public showings. In other words, people clung to these films and watched them passionately because they treated these films as a manifesto and the proper way to express what they believed. After the *Minyeli Abdullah* experience, conservative/white cinema directors such as Mesut Uçakan and Yücel Çakmaklı produced many documentaries and films that highlighted traditional values, along with humanistic and universal themes. Films such as *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (You Are Not Alone) by Mesut Uçakan and *Bize Nasıl Kıydınız?* (How Did You Sacrifice Us?) by Metin Çamurcu are other examples of conservative/white cinema of the 1990s. However,

---

[12] The author, Hekimoğlu İsmail, was also put in prison because of his book, *Minyeli Abdullah,* before it was adapted to cinema.

[13] Umut (Hope) and Yol (The Road) Yilmaz Guney films and Otobus (Bus) a Tunc Okan film are other few examples of censored films in Turkey.

when a general decline in production of quality films in Turkish cinema became visible, the conservative cinema production was also affected greatly. The main reasons for this decline were Hollywood's domination of the Turkish film market, increases in ticket prices, economic downturn, and the state censorship during the 1990s. It is only recently that cinema's socio-political effects have been rediscovered by conservative cinema producers and they have again begun to include Islamic and traditional topics in their films (Guven 2008). This new interest for making films about conservative and nationalist themes grew exponentially especially when Islamic and/or conservative business firms increased their market share in the Turkish economy and began investing in the art sector as they used to invest in religious structures and activities. These wealthy business people backed art forms that would highlight traditional values, enforce cultural unity and advocate for national togetherness as in the TV series *Kurtlar Vadisi* (*Valley of the Wolves*, 2003), *New York'ta Beş Minare* (*Five Minarets in New York*, 2010), *Hür Adam* (*Free Man*, 2010), and *Fetih 1453* (*Conquest 1453*, 2012). For example, the producer and the director of *Hür Adam,* Mehmet Tanrisever, is also a businessman and the owner of the Feza Film company which produced other conservative/white cinema films such as *Minyeli Abdullah I and II.* Tanrisever's return to cinema as a producer and director after 20 years of absence was because of his belief in cinema's role in educating people. Tanrisever stated this to a newspaper reporter about his recent film *Free Man:* "conservative business people now have money but they are hardly motivated to invest in art. I believe that cinema is the best tool to educate people… if I knew my film attracts no audience, I would still make this film" (Tokay 2010, Pazar section, ¶ 5). His remarks on the film's significance for a

production displays similarities to what the scriptwriter, Cuneyt Aysan, said about his film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*. Aysan in an interview with me said that "even if one person sees the film, it means a success for us. Quantity is not an important matter here; what is important is how successful we are able to present an alternative version of the story objectively if we cannot change the perceptions completely" (see Chapter 6). This demonstrates that conservative cinema producers have different agendas other than producing just art and entertainment.

This recent growing interest in conservative film production, in many cases, is understood to have connections with so called the light-Islamist party, Justice and Development Party, AKP. A commonly held belief is that the ruling party, AKP, supported conservative/white cinema-art sector because they both shared the same cause (Ugur 2010). For instance, Ugur claims that the director of *New York'ta Beş Minare,* a Mahsun Kırmızıgül film, enforces AKP-oriented international and national policies, and Fetullah Gulen's[14] tendentious world view. The notion that there is a connection between the AKP, its policies and number of films made recently by conservative film-makers is also brought up by focus group discussants in this study (see Chapter 9). Audiences of *VWP* in this study highlighted their view that if the AKP was not in power, the *VWP* phenomenon would not be as remarkable as it is today. Additionally, Table 7-19 in Chapter 7 shows that after combining the results of 'definitely agree' and 'somewhat agree', 41 percent of respondents indicate that the film

---

[14] Often referred to as 'The Gulen Movement' or 'The Fetullah Gulen Community', it is a social (Islamic) movement that originates in Turkey. The movement has millions of supporters in Turkey and hundreds of schools and cultural centers, many publication houses, and television stations all around the world. The leader of the community, Fettullah Gulen (Hodja Effendi), currently resides in the Poconos of Pennsylvania.

reflects the current government's Middle East policies. Ugur notes that Kırmızıgül finds no problem with including Turkish Minister Egemen Bağış's statement on violation of human rights in Turkey in which Bağış claims that there are no human rights abuses in Turkey. Ugur finds this propagandist insertion unsurprising because the Ministry of Culture financially supported Kırmızıgül's film. In addition to the state's support, conservative business people and firms were behind his film (Ugur 2010).

As in the *Minyeli Abdullah, New York'ta Beş Minare, Yalnız Değilsiniz, and Kurtlar Vadisi,* conservative cinema continues to depict Muslim and/or Turkish identities as pious, devote, tolerant, sacrificing, honorific, just, forgiving, patient, and generous. Thus, the need for conservative concepts in a national cinema is a key for conservative film-makers. Halit Refiğ, in one of his interviews, highlights this need for a national cinema culture as:

> In order to continue as a nation we need to have a national consciousness. In order to … protect our society from external and internal dangers, to maintain its unity and protect it from disintegration, we need to have a national consciousness. In cinema, this consciousness will be possible only through the existence of a conscious National Cinema (as cited in Robins and Aksoy 2000, p. 215).

As Refig indicates above, the need for including Islamic, nationalist, and traditional themes in films is an imperative, and in parallel with conservative cinema it will continue to become a dominant movement in the Turkish cinema-art sector. Often, films that narrate conservative views garner the attention of millions of viewers nationally and internationally as well as film critics and political actors. It is in this context that I examine the film *VWP*, an example of conservative cinema which harmonizes nationalism, heroism and moralism. Furthermore, factors such as changes in peoples' economic conditions, the development of Hollywood-style editing

technologies by film producers and the increasing diversity of film subjects positively affected the cinema sector in Turkey, resulting in an increase in the numbers of movie-goers and ticket sales. In other words, political economy of filmmaking positively affected Turkish filmmakers broadly and conservative film producers in particular.

As mentioned earlier, economic developments, improvements in people's purchasing power, the availability of technology, and the transnational movements of ideas and film-making techniques changed the landscape of cinema production in Turkey. In this atmosphere conservative cinema producers as well as other fractions of Turkish cinema found an entrepreneurial nest to put a signature on many films that would express old themes in new ways. These films are welcomed by many in Turkish audiences and ultimately influenced the way cinema is experienced and thought of. For example, the first time in Turkish cinema history that a film included a story that would be similar to that of what people would expect to see in James Bond or Rambo movies was the *VWP* predecessors *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*. The plot, which saw Turkish Special Agents conducting operations within a neighboring country was thought to be something 'new', an expression of potential extraterritoriality to Turkish audiences. Following the former film, *VWP* also attempted to transcend the aesthetic and thematic paradigms of classic *Yesilcam* cinema, "offering simultaneously a liminal perspective on Turkey and making Turkish cinema more relevant beyond the boundaries of the nation-state [but loyal to the nation-state] and a serious player on the World Cinema stage" (Arslan 2009, p. 89). Films such as these underscore and reproduce the national narratives and help to crystallize ways of thinking about Turkey's contemporary geopolitics and its strategic position in the Middle East. In other words, these

transnational, action-political films reintroduce a Turkey-centered geopolitical mode of thought as they reproduce geographies and histories of the Middle East. That said, films are not the only means of nation building or sustaining national narratives and cultural forms. As I will discuss in the next section, other forms of communication technologies such as television, the internet, print media, etc. can become important parts of the meaning-making processes in terms of nationalism. Indeed, the film selected as the subject for this study established its brand name as TV series first. *Valley of the Wolves* and its main character, Polat Alemdar, was a well-known phenomenon for Turkish audiences through television before this serial was made into movies. Additionally, it was the internet that helped to diffuse the Polat Alemdar character's philosophy, becoming the center for discussions about the film and its themes. Behlil confirms this saying "popular television series are uploaded online by channels soon after their initial broadcasting, allowing the fans to not only catch up or view shows repeatedly, but also to discuss them on the online forums" (Behlil 2010, p. 5).

I want to conclude the discussion of Turkish national cinema and its meaning within contemporary Turkish context by including Dorsay's description of it, beginning with a 1960s new-wave as cited in Harris's work. Dorsay describes Turkish national cinema as "the collective and subconscious search of the Turkish people for identity – a people who have been hearing for decades a nationalistic, militaristic and arrogant discourse, but which is constantly frustrated by a refusal of its acceptance into the European Community – a community which has been presented by generations of local politicians as a natural and inevitable 'promised land'" (Harris 2008, p. 83). This is to say that the debate about what constitutes Turkish national cinema will continue as the

process of refashioning of national identity and Turkish heterogeneous subjectivity continues within Turkish cinema.

2.4 The importance of selected Turkish mass media forms to *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*

There are several reasons to discuss Turkish media, communication technologies, their social use, and general characteristics. The first is that media (television in particular) have always been an important tool for nationalization processes within the country. For that reason and for years, the state did not allow any private media companies that might jeopardize the unity of the state and national togetherness[15]. Therefore, Turkey's national radio and television stations have not only been controlled and operated by the state, but the national guard has always physically guarded the buildings as well, highlighting the state's interest in media as a strategic asset. The second reason is that media are important source of information that shapes, informs, and mobilizes millions of minds every day. Television and the internet in particular are the most direct way to reach cinema productions making these mediums too important to discard. As I will explain later, millions watch movies either on television, computer or illegally-produced DVDs at home. Many of my focus group interviewees, for example, indicated that they watched the film *VWP* via illegally-copied DVDs at the same time when the film was still in theaters. Another reason why television needs to be included in this study is that television and popular cinema have maintained a partnership to retain their sizable audience and provide another means of financing film products in Turkey. There are

---

[15] Turkish Penal Code, 301, should be mentioned here saying that this legal establishment has penalized many journalists and thinkers for insulting the Turkish nation and nationality. Famed Nobel Prize-winning Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk is one of many.

many examples of renowned television stars and directors "who have found second homes in popular cinema productions" and the Polat Alemdar character highlighted in this study is just one of many (Harris 2008, p. 81). Polat Alemdar was and still is a popular television character before the production of *VWP*. Thus the advantages of doing cross-market strategies are that directors and actors bring the technology of film making and experience with them to another market. Harris points out that the top five all-time Turkish box office successes are films that whose actors or producers have a television background. For these reasons, I am compelled to include television's structure in Turkey, its contribution to affecting publics, and people's engagement with television media from different angles.

I exclude Turkish print media and radio from analysis in this study not because they are insignificant to this research; it is because focus of my investigation is set around television, internet and film technologies and the attendant narratives. Indeed, Turkish-language print and audio-visual media remain the main sources of information for millions of Turkish people in Turkey and beyond (e.g Turkish print media in European cities). Radio also continues to be the primary distributor of Turkish popular culture to mass audiences in Turkey and abroad. For example, the state-run Turkish Radio and Television's, TRT, international radio service *Türkiyenin Sesi* (The Voice of Turkey) broadcasts in 26 languages[16] all around the world (TRT 2010).

---

[16] Turkish, German, Arabic, Albanian, Azeri Turkish, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Dari, Persian, French, Georgian, Croatian, English, Spanish, Italian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Hungarian, Macedonian, Uzbek, Pashto, Rumanian, Russian, Serbian, Tatar, Turcoman, Urdu, Uygur, Greek, Armenian, and Kurdish.

2.4.1 Television

Television in Turkey is the most important medium for influencing public opinion and conveying information (Aksoy and Robins 1997, Hortacsu and Erturk 2003, Uray and Burnaz 2003). According to the Radio Television Supreme Council (RTUK), the average daily television viewing time per person is about 5.09 hours in the week days and 5.15 hours on the weekends (Baris 2010). 56.9 percent of households own one television set while 34.5 percent have two sets (see Figure 2.2) (RTUK 2010). Turkish state television, TRT, started broadcasting in 1964 and explains the main goals of broadcasting in its mission statement as:

> …to provide its viewers of various age, profession, educational and cultural groups with correct, unbiased, comprehensible and up-to-date news, producing programs that will promote their educational and cultural levels and their integration with the national culture, and raise the general educational level of the country. (TRT 2010, Mission statement section ¶ 8)

As indicated above TRT still continues to stick its purpose of existence. In the 1970s, TRT was very successful offering the news to millions with, entertainment and companionship in their home cheaper than any other forms of media. People were able to watch two cinema films a day which ultimately pulled out cinema goers from theaters. According to global media statistics, Turkish people are second only to the US when it comes to watching television per day. Only in 2007 Turkey's average daily television viewing was ranked in the 8th spending about 4 hours in front of television per day (Economist 2009). The German Integration Minister, Bilkay Oney, from the state of Baden-Wurttemberg in Germany, publicly announced that Turks in Germany watch television five times more than Germans (Semih 2011). This outlook in these

statistics is amazing because people watch television even with an increase in entertainment choices.
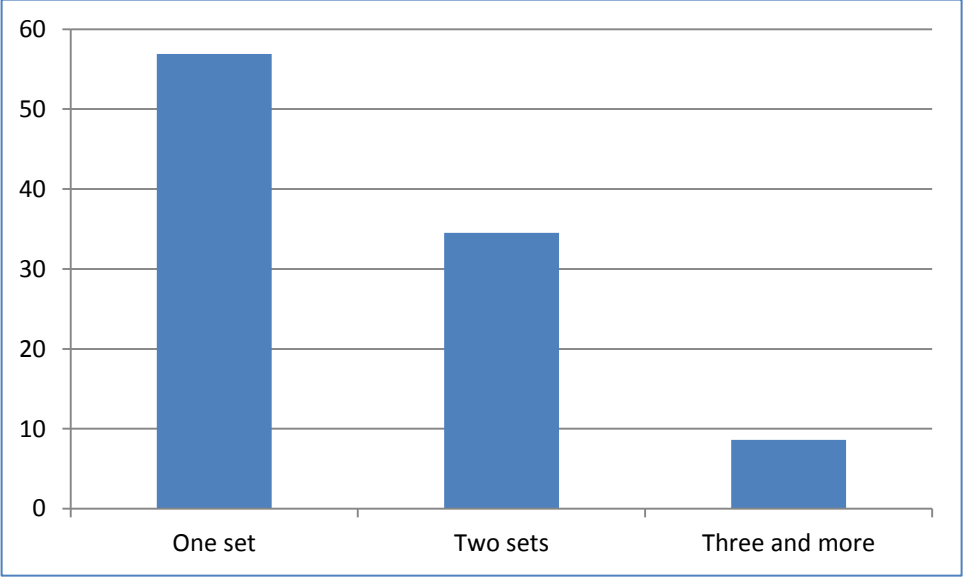
Figure 2-2: TV sets per household in Turkey as of July 2010 (%) Average: 1.52   N= 2.523.
Source: Radio and Television Supreme Council

The first private commercial television broadcast entered the Turkish market in 1990 through EUTELSAT satellite network in the city of Ludwigshaven in Germany. This broadcast company was Star 1, owned by Uzan Group and Ahmet Özal, son of Turkish incumbent Prime Minister Turgut Özal. Three years later, the Turkish government ended its monopoly in broadcasting and opened up its media market to private television companies. This led to the establishment of 24 national, 16 regional and 215 local stations. In addition to these national channels, there are approximately 60 cable TV channels including *BBC World*, *BBC Prime*, *CNN*, *TV5*, *RTL*, *MTV*, *Eurosport*, *National Geography* and *Discovery*. When the digital infrastructure is

completed, the number of channels on cable is expected to increase to 300. As in the case of the print media, the main television stations are owned by a few media groups (see Table 2.3). The table below shows what media groups own what type of media.

Table 2-3: Dominant Media Groups and their selected activities

Media Groups	TV Channels	Radio Stations	Print Media	Other
Doğan Group	Kanal D, Star TV, CNN Turk, Euro D	Radyo D, CNN Turk Radyo	Hurriyet, Milliyet, Daily News, Vatan, Posta, Radikal	Deutsche Bank
Turkuvaz Group	ATV, ATV Europe,	Turkuvaz Radio Enterprises Inc.	Sabah, Yeni Asır, Takvim	Forbes, Turkuvaz Mobile Services, Aktif Bank, Oil and Natural Gas
Çukurova Group	Show TV, Skyturk	Alem FM, Lig Radyo	Aksam, Tercuman, Gunes	Automotive, Construction, Chemicals, Textiles
Ciner Group	HaberTurk		HaberTurk (online)	Marie Claire, Bloomberg HT, Ciner Aviation Transportation
Doğuş Group	NTV, CNBC-e, NTVMSNBC, NBA TV	Kral FM, Radio N101		National Geographic, Automotive, Banking, Construction, Energy
Feza Group in collaboration with Samanyolu Yayin Group	Samanyolu TV, Samanyolu America, Ebru TV (in U.S.), Hazar TV (in Azerbaijan)	Burc FM, Dunya Radyo, Dunya TV (Kurdish)	Zaman, Today's Zaman, Aksiyon (weekly)	Education
Rubert Murdoch	FOX TV Turkiye, FOX Life/sport National Geographic Channel			

Source: WowTurkiye.com

However, the public broadcaster, TRT, still continues commends the attention of Turkish audiences inside and outside of Turkey with its 11 national channels dedicated to topics as diverse as culture, sports, music, and art to international news. For example, TRT's two established international channels can broadcast as far as USA and the Central Asia. TRT-TURK as one of the two can be viewed in Europe, USA and Australia, has used the motto, 'Watch the World in Turkish' since 2009. TRT-AVAZ on the other hand can be seen throughout the Balkans, Central Asia and Caucasus by approximately 250 million people in 27 countries and 13 autonomous regions (TRT 2010). TRT's latest move was to dedicate television broadcasting in the Kurmanchi and Sorani dialects of Kurdish and in Arabic. For this purpose, TRT-6 began addressing Kurdish audiences in 2009 with its relatively rich content that is "made up of children's, women's, health, economy, drama, documentary, history, nature, sports, music, news, culture and art, religion and entertainment programs" (TRT 2010, Televizyon section, ¶ 2). TRT-Ettürkiye in Arabic also aims to reach 350 million people in 22 countries in the Middle East since April 2010.

As highlighted, television, whether it is privately-own or the state-own, remains to be an important source of information that shapes, informs, and mobilizes millions of minds every day all around the world. In addition to television being the source of information, it continues to be the shortest way to reach cinema productions, entertainment shows and soap operas daily. However, more than anything, television continues to be an important tool to educate millions and import Turkish cultural norms, mores and values across different geographies and nations.

2.4.2 Internet

Since 2004 Turkey has heavily invested in internet and communication technologies to catch up with the developed world. Internet connectivity for individuals jumped from 7.5 percent of the population in 2004 to 34.5 percent in 2008 and 45 percent in 2010 (see Table 2.4).

Table 2-4**:** Internet users as percentage of population in Turkey

YEAR	Users	Population	5 Pop
2000	2,000,000	70,140,900	2.9 %
2004	5,500,000	73,556,173	7.5 %
2006	10,220,000	74,709,412	13.9 %
2010	35,000,000	77,804,122	45.0 %

Source: Internet World Stats: http://www.internetworldstats.com/eu/tr.htm

However, much of the internet access occurs in internet cafes and work-places rather than in homes where computer ownership is not high by standards in Western Europe. Internet users among 16-24 age group constitute the majority internet users. As of 2009, women in Turkey comprise only 7 percent of the internet users (as cited in Baris 2010). Given the demographic characteristics of internet users in Turkey, which will be discussed further in the following chapters, seeing a small number of internet users among women is not surprising (see Table 2.5).

Table 2-5: Age distribution of Facebook users in Turkey

Age Distribution	Women	Man	Total	Women %	Man %	Total %
Below 18	2,343,000	3,225,260	5,568,260	9.91 %	13.65 %	23.56 %
18-24	2,885,340	4,869,800	7,775,140	12.21 %	20.61 %	32.82 %
25-34	2,158,600	4,384,840	6,543,440	9.13 %	18.55 %	27.69 %
35-44	748,440	1,754,840	2,503,280	3.17 %	7.43 %	10.59 %
45-54	247,840	578,440	826,280	1.05 %	2.45 %	3.50 %
Above 55	122,260	313,860	436,120	0.52 %	1.33 %	1.85 %
Total	**8,505,480**	**15,127,040**	**23,632,520**	**35.99 %**	**64.01 %**	**100.00 %**

Source: http://www.socialmediatr.com/blog/facebook-uye-sayilari-agustos-2010/ (as cited in Kaya and Kimzan 2010)

There is no doubt that wide availability (or unavailability as in the case of YouTube for years in Turkey) of the internet affects the ways information is produced, distributed and consumed in Turkey. People now can reach any national and international news, cultural products, commercial items, and global online activities in any time with little or no cost. This is important because technological developments in the communication and information sector disturb, change, and challenge the status-quo in every society, including Turkey. These technological developments impact the traditional ways of understanding events, ideas and norms. Therefore, it is important to analyze what communication and information structures are available in Turkey, how

technologies operate and what changes they can bring into the lives of individual agents who adopt, reformulate, and negotiate technology's roles in the course of daily life.

However, these changes are not a linear progression of technological changes. In other words, new media does not cause to become obsolete the old media automatically. It is important to recognize that in order to understand the changes in society, place and space, we need to observe both the developing technologies and the new forms of communication in conjunction (Adams 2009). Thus, we must not fall into a trap that a certain technological advancement immediately replaces another. Rather, it bears resemblance to the metaphor of a tree that has many branches that are dying and many are growing simultaneously. In other words, YouTube is not necessarily capable of replacing cinema or the social networking site, nor can Facebook take over the face-to-face communication overnight (see Table 2.6). Turkey's official broadcaster TRT will continue to be watched by millions and as print media reach remote corners of the country perhaps faster and cheaper despite increase in entertainment and news choices.

As many commentators and critics around the world emphasize important roles of social networking sites during the 'Arab Spring', use of internet remains to be vital in Turkish society as well. Through the internet, particularly the social networking sites, Turkish people became more connected (see Table 2.4). Different political and ethnic groups in Turkey use internet to disseminate their political messages every day. For instance, via Facebook people can easily express their opinions and show their (dis)content over current news and events. It is also through Facebook that people reproduce their social life and share their likes and dislikes. Again, it is the internet that provides the space for the users to reconstruct and present who they are and they are

not. The internet becomes virtual space and medium where 'banal nationalism' operates (Billig 1995). In this virtual space, they form their own community and reinvent themselves. Internet users, often without giving their real names, exchange their thoughts freely with like-minded other internet users. Polat Alemdar and *VWP* film fan groups are examples of these online discussion forums that take place in virtual space. In these forums, film fans share their thoughts about characters, their performance, and plot of the film. This becomes important because this study takes seriously these online forum discussions wherein exchange of thoughts is freely expressed between anonymous *VWP* fans. This is also why I include the internet use in Turkey and its importance to this study.

Table 2-6: Top 7 countries with highest number of Facebook users in 2010

Rank	Country	Number of Facebook users 1st July 2008	Number of Facebook users 1st July 2009	Number of Facebook users 1st July 2010	12 month growth	24 month growth
1	USA	27,811,560	69,378,980	125,881,220	81.4 %	352.6 %
2	UK	11,171,540	18,711,160	26,543,600	41.09 %	137.6 %
3	Indonesia	209,760	6,496,960	25,912,960	298.9 %	12253.6 %
4	Turkey	3,464,640	12,382,320	22,552,540	82.1 %	550.9 %
5	France	2,461,140	10,781,480	18,942,220	75.7 %	669.7 %
6	Italy	491,100	10,218,400	16,647,260	62.9 %	3289.8 %
7	Canada	9,621,820	11,961,020	15,497,900	29.6 %	61.1 %

Source: http://www.socialmediatr.com/blog/facebook-uye-sayilari-agustos-2010/
(accessed February 24, 2011)

2.5 Summary

In an environment where the finance, labor, cultural material and intellectual accumulation in the film-making industry are so global, it is hard to talk about the concept of 'national' cinema. However, there are common grounds and cultural details that can distinguish films that are made in certain socio-cultural settings. Within these socio-cultural cinema settings, there are sub-cultures of cinema tradition in a given society. The conservative/white cinema tradition in Turkey is one example that this chapter briefly investigated. It is also noted that the film *VWP* a case study of this dissertation, can be situated within this tradition, emphasizing that the film rereads and reproduces national narratives, cultural values and Turkey's contemporary geopolitics in the Middle East.

Additionally, it was demonstrated that cinema tradition in Turkey is not completely independent from people's belief system, ways of seeing the world and the socio-political conditions that surround people and the state. In other words, cinema became a battle ground where political Islam, leftist movements and the state practiced their ideal approaches about how to shape the cultural landscape of Turkey. I explained that through dominating information and communication technologies, the state has manipulated the public in order to maintain national unity and modernize the country, while conservative cinema via films challenged Turkey's modernization progress as unhealthy for the people. In this framework, the features of Turkish media and their broadcasting borders are part and parcel of every day public informing and education. Thus this chapter should be understood as a foundational chapter highlighting the importance of media's ideological indoctrination function on the masses as deployed by

the state and non-state actors. It should also be pointed out that whether it is a conservative cinema (as in *VWP*) or radical/left cinema (as in Yilmaz Guney's films), one common denominator remains among these films and that is that each film attempts to privilege one or another political agenda in a top-down social engineering. As I will further demonstrate in the results chapters, Turkish film production firms have never cared about solely art or entertainment, rather they always aimed to educate, inform and direct audiences' political views. Thus, understanding the mindset behind Turkish cinema tradition is vital to understanding the film *VWP* and its interpretations in Turkey. This chapter also notes that changing socio-political, economic, and technological dynamics within Turkish cinema and Turkish society is crucial to the understanding of meaning-making processes, and in turn these changes inform the ways in which the cinema and popular culture are experienced and produced.

CHAPTER 3: UNDERSTANDING THE VISUAL TURN, POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY, POPULAR CULTURE, TURKISH GEOPOLITICS AND AUDIENCE GEOGRAPHY

- (Administrator to Polat) "You know you won't make it out of our Promised Land."
- (Polat) "I don't know what part of this land has been promised to you, but I promise you — six feet under."

(Dialogue from *VWP*)

3.1 Introduction

Earlier chapters briefly introduced geographers' engagement with film, national cinema, Turkish cinema and cinema's use for (re)inventing and sustaining of national (or alternative) narratives, which give us tools to understand the world and our positions within it. Films, as other forms of popular culture, are about narratives, and much of our knowledge comes from these constructed narratives. Therefore, a state's national and geopolitical narratives, which are highly intertwined, should not be separated from this meaning production system. Thus this study pays serious attention to national narratives embedded within popular culture that can be adopted, reproduced or negotiated thorough their consumption in different times and spaces. In turn, everyday consumption of national narratives informs and legitimizes certain actions and practices (of the state and other power dynamics). For this reason, this chapter highlights various but related concepts, approaches and discourses, (critical geopolitics, visual turn, post-structuralism, audience, etc.) and their importance to understanding and mapping of audiences' geopolitical imaginations in Turkish context.

In this chapter I discuss relationships between popular geopolitics and Turkey's foreign affairs in reference to audiences' meaning-making process. First, I introduce how and why political geographers became interested in popular culture and everyday discourses of popular productions and practices. Secondly, I briefly talk about what critical geopolitics is and what concerns it has about traditional ways of doing geopolitics. Then I explain Turkish geopolitics and Turkey's Israel-Palestine policies. Finally, I discuss Turkey's soft power potential in the Middle East, what constitutes audience, and how to conceptualize audience in reference to changing information and communication technologies.

3.2 The visual turn, political geography and popular culture

During the early 1990s, some political geographers began paying closer attention to the importance of language and culture in shaping people's opinions, their understandings of the world and their social interaction with the world. This was inspired by post-structural theoretical frameworks and through the lens of postmodernity (Dittmer 2010). Postmodernity here is understood to be the end of both meta-narratives and the orderliness of the Enlightenment-era project of modernity (Ang 1996). If the project of modernity is a belief within which "the possibility of a world singularly organized around the principles of universal reason, rationality and truth, then postmodernity signals not so much a radical end of the modern era… but rather an awareness and recognition of the political and epistemological limits of those principles" (Ang 1996, p. 2). Inspired by this outlook, (critical) political geographers began highlighting the impossibility of modernity's completion as a universal project and began challenging modernist ways of understanding the world. These scholars questioned the utility of

grand theories, the completeness of human civilization and traditional, predominantly masculinist, ways of producing knowledge that are normalized and naturalized thorough everyday discourses of popular productions practices. For critical (and) political geographers, e.g., Agnew, Toal, Sharp, Harvey, Jones III, Dixon, and McDowell, meaning and identity are presumed to be effects rather than causes. In this sense, these thinkers are essentially anti-essentialist and post-Kantian[17] (if not anti-Kantian). Political geographers are greatly influenced by philosophers such as Foucault, Derrida and Gramsci, among others, who are commonly linked with poststructuralist approaches and critical analysis. For instance, Foucault's study on how knowledge and power are put to work in and by institutions (ideology apparatuses) such as schools, correction facilities, and other government agencies for the purpose of controlling, studying, and disciplining their subjects, inspired political geographers to explore the ways in which geo-graphing was understood to be about categorizing, controlling, disciplining, and governing (Gregory 1995, Toal 1994). Integrating Foucauldian perspectives, political geographers began looking at the relationships between power and discourses, and how those discourses are institutionalized and operationalized upon socio-spatial subjects. Without doubt, discourse is a vital concept for political geographers because it constitutes a form of knowledge that shapes people, places and social structures and, in turn, people via social structures re-organize and re-produce (discursive) socio-spatial knowledge. Discourses are considered tremendously powerful because they carry a 'regime of truth' that leaves no room for subjects to question. They are embedded

---

[17] Kant is considered to be a pioneer of analytic tradition in philosophy which gave birth to (or influenced)   logical positivism and its offspring. Kant's philosophy, Harrison says, crystallized the Enlightenment by claiming the sovereignty of reason (Harrison 2006, p. 126).

everywhere, shaping our actions and inactions, both thinking and not-thinking. They mainly operate in an unrecognized nature and go unnoticed.

The political theorist Antonio Gramsci is one of the more influential figures in unveiling the ideological effects of discourses operating within the unconscious stage of human thoughts and everyday practices. His writings on hegemony and ideology paved the way for recontextualizing spatial politics and the politics of space in geography. Gramsci argues that hegemony is not limited to state apparatuses; it can also be operationalized through non-state actors such as elites, schools, churches, media, etc. because hegemony is about establishing ideological domination over marginalized peoples. As theorized, this subordination is not always bloody or violent. Plausibly, hegemony is fostered and deepened through consent or/and coercion (Gramsci 1971). Gramsci notes that the ruling class is capable of inculcating the masses with their ideology by embedding it in simple, 'common sense' statements that inform thoughts and beliefs. For instance, the Hollywood entertainment industry can play an important role in the shaping of the public's mind, disseminating elite's ideology, and justifying the state's actions/inactions through popularly manufactured productions such as blockbuster films, documentaries, and TV shows. These mass-produced productions provide a simplified geopolitical language enabling audiences to comprehend and internalize complex issues with ease, and to make understanding geostrategically-important concepts and conflicts similarly easy. These cultural fabrications not only inform and convince the citizenry about 'who they are' and what makes them 'who they are', but also alert them as to 'who they are not' and what differentiates them from 'others'. Practical geopoliticians (see section 3.3) are very much aware of this socio-

psychological process and continue to use this 'common sense,' easily-graspable language to explain the everyday politics of real-world affairs. For instance, when *Newsweek* or *Time* magazine frames the geopolitics of oil in language that seems to necessitate a confrontation between the US and China or Russia, people may suspend their disbelief about the validity of the news and adopt a position where US must do anything necessary not to let others' hands get on Caucasian or Middle Eastern oil resources. People may even become uncritical about the government's action so they start preparing for further sacrifices and hardships related to the (supposed) upcoming struggle. Here we see a great deal of ideological groundwork laid by popular culture that helps to link the goals of practical geopolitians with the actions and beliefs of the state's citizens.

Particularly for researchers in critical geopolitics, popularly-produced cultural texts have become important avenues of geopolitical investigation in the last twenty years. Drawing from poststructural theory, critical geopoliticians have re-examined traditional ways of producing geopolitical knowledge and its subsequent utilization throughout national and international political space. These scholars are predominately interested in exploring the question of how and why certain places, people, and cultures of the world have come to be known in a certain way (Said 1981, Dittmer 2010). How do we know them? Why do we study these political subjects? How can we re-read influential geopoliticians such as Mackinder, Kjellen, Haushofer, and Spykman, and interpret their perceived fixed world geography? These and similar questions sparked a wave of critical thinking in the subdiscipline of political geography. These critical scholars questioned the ways in which places, people and transnational events are

studied and inscribed with meanings. These writers not only tackled the use of state power, but also focused on the dynamics of 'power to' (something). Power that "traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (as cited in West II 2006, p. 282). Critical geopoliticians' take on power was not limited to blunt applications of force by state apparatuses. Rather they engaged "the subtle constructions of knowledge, the assumptions at work within that knowledge, and the decisions that are made based on that knowledge" (as cited in West II 2006, p. 282). Further West II states that the intellectual entrepreneurship later known as critical geopolitics has shown "a particular interest in how such dynamics of power/knowledge are woven through the way geopolitical actors represent and contest material spatial practices" (as cited in West II 2006, p. 282).

3.3 What is critical geopolitics?

Critical geopolitics concerns a reconceptualization of traditional ways of doing geopolitics, which can be found within accounts of justifying geopolitical actions like warfare, trade sanctions, or diplomatic negotiations (Dalby 1998, West II 2006). Critical geopolitics tends to question and develop criticism about jaundiced state actions and goals (West II 2006). In other words, critical geopolitics is about conceptualizing politics and political processes differently, moving away from and absolute focus on state-centered actors and considering things such as culture as drivers of political change. In terms of its theoretic and methodological basis, critical geopolitics is closely associated with poststucturalism and postmodernism as a way of understanding events, people, places and interrelations between them, but it does not necessarily claim a solid way of drawing its intellectual borders. Instead, according to Toal, critical geopolitics

"promises both a new degree of understandings of geography and a new degree of geographicalization to the study of global politics" (Toal 1994, p. 530). Critical geopolitics, thus, challenges traditional ways of framing world politics and concerns with conventional ways of inscribing people, places and events. It does this through deconstruction. It unweaves established truths and unveils accepted explanations through deconstruction. Therefore, critical geopolitics offers no remedy or any prescriptions. For critical geopolitical scholars, deconstructing geopolitics does not mean destroying or dissolving the meaning of geopolitics. For them, geopolitics and its claim to map the world and politics is understood to be the root of dominant discourse in need of radicalization so that the problem of studying and signifying our world can be revealed (Toal 1994).

Geopolitics can be broken down into three areas of practice for the purpose of analysis: Formal, practical and popular. Formal geopolitics is understood to analyze how places are observed, studied and categorized by scholars, think-tanks, political commentators, etc. For instance, as Toal notes, prominent American political geographer Isaiah Bowman, in his book *The New World*, surprisingly does not include a chapter about the United States (Toal 1994). This indicates that the United States is well known, and the central part of the world. To Bowman, political geography is what American geographers study. In his inscription of earth, his audiences constitute only the Americans to whom he provides a detailed map of the discipline through the god's eye view. Thus, Bowman's well-disciplined science (political geography) establishes a regime of truth, objective observation, spatial accountancy, and a hierarchy of political order (Toal 1994). As a consequence, studied countries can become the subject matter

of an American classification, (allies and foes, for example) control and governance. In accordance with these classifications, and from a jurisdictional standpoint, countries can then be certified, judged or punished. Practical geopolitics, on the other hand, is classified as a foreign policy making process including its institutional subculture, within which normatively-cohesive and secretive groups of people (foreign ministers, ambassadors, etc.) operate. Their job is very much of the persuasive and problem-solving type (Toal and Dalby 1998). It should be noted that there is not much scholarship in this vein perhaps it is due to the difficulties of investigating practical geopolitical processes. Popular geopolitics, however, occupies an important place in critical geopolitics. It tackles all stages of geopolitics in the drama of human history, from discursive analysis of texts to geographically-imagined identity-writing practices. Popular geopolitics researchers analyze popularly produced texts and interrogate the geopolitical understandings operating within mass culture such as films, cartoons, maps, comic books, magazines, etc. (West II 2006, Dittmer 2010). Its embeddedness and ordinariness in people's everyday lives provide a special language and culture of learning for the masses about the state's geopolitical vision and its positions in the world. As Foucault notes, geopolitical narratives give no truth, but truth *effects* (West II 2006). Their performativity and embeddedness in everyday practices are so amazingly concealed and entertaining that their informative functions and orienting mechanisms go unnoticed. Films, for instance, can function as influential dramas set for projecting the state's political storyline to audiences by normalizing and naturalizing what appears to be commonsense geopolitical knowledge (Toal 1994). Thus, many times the

inspiration and the dream of what 'Rambo' fights for in Vietnam can easily intersect with what Washington political elites envision.

Nyroos, in his article entitled *Religiopolitcs: dissident geopolitics and the 'fundamentalism' of Hamas and Kach,* brings a new approach to this trilogy of geopolitical reasoning by highlighting the importance of dissident counter-state discourses such as geopolitics of social movements (Nyroos 2001). The argument is that dissident geopolitics pertains to the potential to challenge the political and economic programs of states or international institutions (West II 2006). Although Nyroos's focus is more on geopolitical implications of religious organizations and their socio-political counter-state activities, the essence of his argument is more or less applicable with many popular texts produced alternatively to ideological world views. In this sense, post-11 September film productions (of course not all the productions) around the world can be analyzed as geopolitical both enforcing geopolitical narrations and challenging them. In this sense, the film *VWP,* as a geopolitical text enforcing Turkish geopolitical narrations and challenging western narrations, will be analyzed in Nyroos' account.

3.4 Turkish geopolitics and alternative paradigm

Turkey's geopolitics is situated between the West and East, bridging the two civilizations geographically and culturally (Fuller 2008). On one hand, Turkey bears its centuries-old historical and cultural identities of Muslim world and, on the other, desires to be seen as European since the Europeanization struggle of the 19th century (Unsal 1981, Yilmaz and Bilgin 2005/2006). This sometimes-paradoxical aspiration molded an important foreign policy of the state and imprinted it on Turkish citizen's geopolitical imagination of Turkey in the region. Turkey, arising from the ruins of the Ottoman

Empire, kept this 'in-between' identity and geographical positioning in pursuit of a global place in the world geopolitical system (Kalin 2009). Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, pushed Turkey's internal and external vision in the direction of full Europeanization by setting in motion several radical reforms such as abolishing the Caliphate (the supreme religious office for the entire Sunni world) and adopting the Latin alphabet, among others (Unsal 1981). Followers of Ataturk, especially the People's Republican Party, (CHP), consolidated his radical pro-Western reform in every sector of Turkish institutions and policies. During the Cold War period, Turkey continued to be the Western world's periphery and functioned as the primary buffer zone against communist expansion from the Soviet Union southward to warm seas. During this period, Turkey joined several European organizations such as the OECD, Council of Europe (1949) and NATO (1952). Turkey is also a member of Islamic organizations such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Developing 8 (D-8) (Dorronsoro 2002). For example, D8 membership was pushed through by the leader of an Islamic party, the Welfare Party (RP) and the incumbent Prime Minister Necmeddin Erbakan in Turkey. The objectives of the organization are to improve member states' position in the global economy. During the first summit meeting in Istanbul in 1997, the following principles were announced: "Peace instead of conflict, dialogue instead of confrontation, cooperation instead of exploitation, justice instead of double-standards, equality instead of discrimination, and democracy instead of oppression." (Aral 2005, p. 92)

The D-8 member states included Turkey, Pakistan, Nigeria, Malaysia, Iran, Indonesia, Egypt, and Bangladesh. From the Turkish perspective, the D-8 project aimed

to restore Turkey's long-neglected ties with the Islamic world, assigning itself the role of leadership in bringing Muslim nations together (Aral 2005). The former Prime Minister's initiatives, particularly the D-8 project to reach the Islamic world, should be seen as an example of Turkey's continuing orientation crisis following the failure of Turkey's attempt to reach the Turkic nations of Caucasus which will be highlighted in the following paragraph.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the disappearance of the bipolar world system, Turkey found itself facing an identity and geopolitical orientation crisis. Regional conflicts mushroomed in the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the Middle East, all areas of past Turkish ties. Tense relations with Syria (stemming from the harboring of Kurdish rebels) and Greece (a result of past conflict in Cyprus and over the Aegean Sea continental shelf), domestic turmoil in the wake of the post-1980 military coup, the Kurdish uprising, and economic crises plagued post-Cold War Turkey. Turkey needed a road map to get out of this confrontational domestic and regional foreign policy orientation (Alessandri 2010). Former Prime Minister (1983-89) and then President (1989-93) Turgut Ozal's opening of the Caucasus, done in the spirit of unifying all the Turkic states under the umbrella of Turkish-speaking states, failed, and Turkey desperately needed immediate solutions to its domestic and foreign problems. At the beginning of 2001, Turkey came to the brink of bankruptcy. Coalition governments mismanaged the economy and domestic affairs to the point that it weakened Turkey. This hurt the country's ability to pursue assertive, independent policies abroad. Turkey's relationship with the European Union (EU) was not strong due to human rights abuses in the southern flank of the state, the continuing occupation

of Cyprus, the Turkish military's growing influence in civil affairs, and the lack of institutionalized democracy (Lesser 2010).

Since its rise to power in 2002, the current ruling party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which is inspired by conservative and liberal elements (to some extend similar to that of Christian Democrat Union Party of Germany), brought new 'alternative paradigms' to many aspects of government. The AKP, compared to its predecessor governments, managed to stabilize the economy, develop independent foreign policies and implement European style democratization in the country (Anaz, Keceli and Shelley 2011). The country under the reign of AKP underwent radical reformation in areas ranging from foreign affairs to domestic politics. The AKP successfully managed opening negotiations for European Union accession in 2005 and pushed both political and institutional reforms to comply with Copenhagen Criteria. In its first term, the AKP focused on economic issues and financial sectors. During this period, the AKP administration stabilized financial institutions and worked on the privatization of state assets, making the country seventeenth in the world economy, just behind China, with its high production level[18] (Uygur 2010). In contrast to other political parties' and secular segments' assumptions, the AKP grew and dominated the next round of local and national elections. In its second term, the AKP initiated new reforms and policies addressing ethnic minorities and the military. Additionally, the

---

[18] In 1998 and 1999, Turkey was heavily impacted by the Asian and Russian economic crises. In this period, Turkey's economic growth was negative, combined with an inflation rate of over 60 percent. But then, Turkey's growth rate reached to 6.8 during the 2002-2007 after China which averaged 10.7 growth rates annually.

AKP government reduced the Turkish military's influence on civilian matters and jailed many generals involved in planning to overthrow the civilian government (Baran 2010).

Minority issues were also a focus of the AKP, as it launched a process toward the Kurds, removing obstacles for them to open their own institutions in Kurdish such as television stations and academic institutions. A confident position in domestic affairs is reflected Turkey's international policies. As the architect of Turkey's foreign policy, Ahmet Davutoglu[19], envisioned independent and assertive foreign policies. He pursued a policy that was "a proper combination of realism and idealism…" (Schleifer 2010, p. 2) incorporating some parts of Machiavelli and Rumi (a 13th century Islamic philosopher). His foreign policy vision stretches from Central Asia to Bosnia and from Ukraine to Africa and the Middle East, emphasizing Turkey's cultural and historical ties with other states and the advantages of its geographical location to pursue a more active foreign policy. This vision merged many notions: independence, nationalistic, Islamic, pan-Turkism, global and Western ideals (Schleifer 2010).

Davutoglu, in his 2001 book *Strategic Depth: Turkey's Place in the World*, refers to the mindset through which societies take active positions (geographical and historical consciousness of self) and discover their own ability (geopolitical capacity to act independently) in the dynamic international political structure. These societies turn their potential dynamism into a power parameter which derives from their geographic and historical depth in the arena of international dynamism (Grigoriadis 2010). According to Davutoglu, societies that obtain this self-confidence, itself reliant upon

---

[19] A former chair of the International Relations department at the Beykent University in Istanbul, senior foreign policy advisor to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his current Foreign Minister.

critical recognition of their own historical and geographical depth and the consciousness of their own identity and cultural dynamism, develop a proactive foreign policy commensurate with their geopolitical potentials (Davutoglu 2001). Davutoglu emphasizes that

> ...Turkey enjoys multiple regional identities and thus has the capability as well as the responsibility to follow an integrated and multidimensional foreign policy. The unique combination of our history and geography brings with it a sense of responsibility. To contribute actively towards conflict resolution and international peace and security in all these areas is a call of duty arising from the depths of a multidimensional history for Turkey (Davutoglu 2009, p. 12).

Davutoglu, as the driving figure behing the AKP's foreign policies since 2002, identifies two conditions for Turkey to move forward in its global strategic ambitions. The first involves domestic politics such as the Kurdish question, which includes treating such issues as regional autonomy, cultural recognition, political inclusion, etc., and bridging the growing rift between the Islamist and secularist elements of Turkish society (fear of islamization of the state, government intervening in people's lives style etc.). The second involves Turkey's relations with its neighbors (Grigoriadis 2010). Davutoglu believes that only a problem-free Turkey can harness its strategic potentials. Thus, Davutoglu tirelessly advocated for a Turkey that would resolve its bilateral problems with its neighbors and strengthen its ties with them via a road map that he calls 'zero problem policy with neighbors'. For this reason, it can be argued that his foreign policy agenda is no longer a nation-state agenda. According to Ibrahim Kalin, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Prime Minister, it "is a regional agenda… a global agenda" (as cited in Schleifer 2010, p. 5).

The AKP's active foreign policies in its southern border area from Syria, Iraq to Lebanon, and the mediating role between war-torn Pakistan and Afghanistan, (as well as Russia and Georgia) raised Turkey's position to a regional actor in the post-9/11 world. Further, Turkey as a country which embraces western ideologies, democratic institutionalism, universal human rights, and the rule of law, continues to occupy an important place in the Muslim world as an example state. Therefore, Turkey's peace overtures and economic investments in the Middle East and elsewhere are welcomed and supported by the European Union and the US. Of course, their evaluation of Turkey's activities in the region is not free from reservations. Turkey's potentiality to become a leading figure in the Middle East is controversial but regarded as possible. Paul Salem, director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, explains Turkey's potentials in the Middle East:

> Indeed, Turkey is well-placed to make a bid for a pre-eminent leadership role within the Muslim and Arab world. Egypt under Nasser set the standard. Since then, Egypt has faded. Iran has made headway, but it has been limited by its Shiite identity in a mainly Sunni world and by an increasingly dysfunctional and unattractive model of clerical rule. Turkey is the only country in the entire Middle East that has integrated with modernity. It has a functional and democratic political system, a productive economy, and has found workable balances between religion and secularism, faith and science, individual and collective identity, nationalism and rule of law, etc. No other country in the region, from Morocco through Pakistan, has succeeded in this way. Iran, Egypt and other Arab countries are not the future. Turkey might well be. As a large Sunni country with deep historical roots in the region, this could be the beginning of Turkey's century in the Middle East (as cited in Schleifer 2010, p. 6).

Of course, we need to keep in mind that the AKP's foreign policy initiatives eventually belong to a political party and the destiny of the party is unknown. Thus,

unless these policies become the policy of successor parties or the policies of the country, the sustainability of these policies will always be in question.

3.5 Turkey's Israel-Palestine policies

The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the longest conflicts of the 20th century and it continues without a comprehensive solution. Since the establishment of the state of Israel, Middle East foreign policy has been linked to these ongoing Israel-Palestine, Israel-Arab states, and Israel-non-Arab states conflicts. Mainly the conflict pertains to issues such as the nature of final settlements between Israel and Palestine, the return of 4 million Palestinian refugees, the occupied Golan Heights, the future of Hezbollah in Lebanon, terrorism, water disputes, the future of Jerusalem, the faith of Palestinian state, the security of Israel, and huge Arab oil reserves and religious disputes. In the history of the Israel-Palestine conflicts, there have been many peace initiatives such as the Madrid talks in 1991 and the Oslo Accord of 1993-5, but neither made any serious changes in real politics or the conditions on the ground which continue to be the concern of the regional and international communities (Fallah 2005). In this sense, the conflict is very political and geographical, where the consequences of war and peace have visceral implications in everyday life.

Looking at the causes and consequences of Israel-Palestine conflicts, the problem is bigger than what the two parties can deal with. Israel-Palestine has been and continues to be the key element of the Middle East peace process. Without making a comprehensive solution to the problem, it would be a highly improbable to see regional peace in the Middle East or unfeasible to expect the global terrorism comes to an end. Fallah argues that for a long-lasting peace, a 'land-for-peace' formula has to be

operationalized. This formula includes a two-state solution and the demand that Israel comply with UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which require that all signatories "withdraw from the territories conquered by military force in the June War of 1967, that is, the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas, including East Jerusalem" (Fallah 2005, p. 298). This compromise consists only of 23 percent of the land that was controlled by the British Mandate as a Palestine territory before 1948.

Turkey's relationship with this land and people is a vital one. Today's Israel and Palestine were under the control of Ottoman Empire from 1517 until these territories went to the control of the British Mandate in 1922. Following the declaration of independence in May 1948, Turkey, complying with the decision of UN Resolution 181, *de facto* recognized Israel, and *de jure* recognition came in March 1950. Thereby Turkey became the first Muslim state to recognize Israel. Turkey's relations with Israel more or less stayed neutral and balanced throughout the twentieth century. For instance, Turkey refused to support the resolution that demanded all the participants to end diplomatic relations with Israel at the Muslim nations' conference in Rabat in 1969 (Aras and Bicakci 2006). In the 1990s, Turkey-Israel relations reached a high point in terms of economic, military/intelligence and political cooperation (Szymanski 2010). The Turkish military's role in establishing quality relations with Israel is particularly significant. For example, for years Israel had absolute open air space to train its war pilots in the central Anatolia and Israeli companies were given privileged access to the bidding process for modernizing Turkish military equipment. Until recently, Turkey acted as a 'facilitator' in the Middle Eastern matters and became an important actor in contributing to the region's stability and for lasting peace. However, Turkey, as a

Muslim country and taking its domestic agenda into consideration, has always been critical of Israel's military actions and its aggressive treatment of civilians in Palestine. According to Aras and Bicakci, "Turkey pursued a policy line, from the early 1950s onwards, that the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including their right to establish their own state, was the only formula for the solution of the Palestinian question.… In fact, Turkey long defended the claims of Palestinians by voting in favor of them in the UN and in other international forums" (Aras and Bicakci 2006, p. 370). It is important to mention here that Turkey's official support of the Palestinian cause has always been congruent with EU and US policies. This position was taken during the conference known as the Declaration of Venice Summit which included the nine-member economic committee of the European Economic Community in 1980. In other words, Turkey and the EU consider the Israel-Palestine conflict as a threat to the region's stability, and both parties "agreed on the importance of the right of self-determination for the Palestinians, including Palestinian statehood and the Israeli right to exist" (Aras and Bicakci 2006, p. 371).

Turkey's attitude toward Israel continued to be progressive during the first term of the AKP government. But after a major crisis broke out due to Israel's offensive in the Gaza Strip in late 2008 and early 2009, Israel received harsh criticism from Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Later in Davos, the Turkish Prime Minister stormed out of the panel right after clashing with Israeli president Shimon Peres on the issues of Israeli air strikes and the invasion of Palestinian territories. In response, Israeli politicians signaled the possibility of recognizing the 1915 Armenian genocide and Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danial Ayalon deepened the crisis by humiliating the

Turkish Ambassador in his office[20]. Already-tense relations between Turkey and Israel escalated when a Turkish television serial called *Valley of the Wolves* pictured a Mosad agent as the murderer of a baby. The most severe threat to relations was the 2010 effort by humanitarian activists to break the blockade in Gaza, which resulted in nine Turkish citizens' deaths and the wounding of several more. To many analysts, the resumption of quality cooperation between Turkey and Israel appears to be unattainable, at least for the time being. For instance, a political analyst, Anat, is highly critical of the AKP's foreign policies. He states that Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu's theory - commonly known as 'alternative paradigms- will escalate tensions instead of reduce them and that the exacerbation of the problem, not the solution, is the new 'paradigm' of Turkey's Middle Eastern strategy, and the actual implications of the AKP's 'zero problems with neighbors' policy (Anat 2010). Despite criticisms such as Anat's, it must be understood that Turkey has already closed its Cold War chapter. Turkey has ended its long lasting, schizophrenic approach to its foreign policy in which a hard power dominated foreign and domestic policies as opposed to a soft power. Turkey has discovered the economic opportunities that a solid peace in the Middle East may bring forth. Alessandri notes that "economic opportunity and peace have become the driving force of its external action, allowing Turkey to greatly expand its trading relations and act as facilitator of dialogue…" (Alessandri 2010, p. 15). This means that Turkey can widen its trade relations to embrace approximately 30 million square kilometers of land

---

[20] This event refers to Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister's, Danny Ayalon, expression of his country's complaints about *Valley of the Wolves* television series' portrayal of Israeli soldiers as baby killer. At the meeting, Ayalon deliberately had the Turkish Ambassador, Ahmet Oguz Celikkol, sit on a chair lower than that of Ayalon. Ayalon, also asks Israeli TV news crew to pay attention to the flag on the table. He points out that there is only one flag (Israel) and he is not smiling at his counterpart.

and over one billion people in the Muslim world. If we consider the fact that the majority of the population lives in 10 primarily-agricultural countries, Turkey's chance of penetrating these markets is very possible. According to Joel Kotkin, cultural ties matter in business because they lower transection cost and supercharge communication (The Economist 2012). Kotkin reports that "more important still, no common 'tribal' link, as expressed by a shared history, language, or culture unites these countries and people. This link is fundamental to any powerful and long-lasting power grouping" (Kotkin 2011, NewGoegraphy section, ¶ 9). For example, Turkey's trade volume with countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) increased in 2008 from 18.9 percent to 24.7 percent (Sarrafoglu 2010). According to some financial commentators, Turkey (along with China and Brazil) was one of the several countries that dodged a bullet during the 2008 financial crisis. It is said that Turkey owes its economic survival to its trade relationships with OIC countries. Therefore, Turkey's growing economic ties with surrounding countries should not be ignored, rather it should be linked to Davutoglu's 'paradigm shift'[21] (Davutoglu 1993). Representing a country that was economically sound, relatively modernized, and democratic, Turkey's policy makers gained self-confidence in their ability to conduct successful regional policies from the Middle East to the Caucasus and from Africa to the Balkans (Aras and Bicakci 2006). Within this framework, in the next section I will highlight Turkey's potential to influence regional politics and relations in reference to language that soft power can produce. As noted earlier, popular culture (cinema particularly) can form an

---

[21] 'Paradigm shift' refers to Ahmet Davutoglu's alternative paradigm which is theorized within his book entitled *Alternative Paradigms: The Impact of Islamic and Western Eltanschauungs on Political Theory* (1993).

everyday image-based language can provide better ways of understanding a radically-changing geopolitical world (Power and Cramton 2005). Even the most complicated and problematic issues of socio-political life can be expressed smoothly through cinematic narrations and entertainment forms. Thus the following section is an emphasis that underlines the importance of soft power as an opportunity for Turkey to strengthen its ties with Middle Eastern states and nations.

3.6 Turkey's soft power

Nye defines soft power as a "country's ability to influence events through persuasion and attraction, rather than military or financial coercion" (Nye 2004, p. 6). He furthers his argument to the idea that soft power rejects military or coercive actions on other states. For him, soft power can be "developed through relations with allies, economic assistance, and cultural exchanges" (Nye 2004, p. 6). As noted in the case wherein after the terror attack of September 11, the United States government put more emphasis on Hollywood's possible contribution to the fight against 'global terror'. This was a realization of the incompleteness of military or hard power and a reaction to same.

Turkey as an emerging power in the Middle East and a peace-maker on the periphery of the international system seeks to influence former Ottoman nations and geographies in the form of economic and cultural exchanges (Aras 2009). There needs to be further investigation about whether Turkey's foreign policy enables such power to be implemented abroad, and it is noticeable that the spread of Turkish popular culture into the Balkans and the Middle East neatly falls into the strategy of the current Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu as outlined in his seminal book *Strategic Depth* (2001) (Bugdayci 2011). A Turkish TV-drama *Gumus* (known as 'Noor' in Arab

countries) would be a good example of Turkish popular culture's invasion of Arab televisions and everyday conversations. This TV drama is watched by millions and debated in many academic and religious platforms as to its suitability to Arab societies and whether it undermines family structures in Muslim communities (Buccianti 2010, Georgiou 2011). Since 2001, 65 Turkish TV series have been exported, garnering over 50 million dollars in revenue (Bugdayci 2011). A recent study shows that about 78 percent of respondents in the Middle East indicated that a person watched at least one Turkish television series recently (as cited in Bugdayci 2011). CEO of Calinos Inc. Firat Gulgen, in one of his interviews, explains how Turkish series dominated foreign serial programming in Arab countries such as Syria soon after the Prime Minister Recep T. Erdogan's scolding of Israeli President in Davos (Ersanel 2011). Gulgen notes that the number of TV channels in Middle Eastern countries is over 300, and about 60 percent of foreign programs watched on those channels come from Turkey. He explains that this popularity is mainly the result of Arab citizens being fed up with the glut of Latin American programs that had come to dominate Arab televisions. In those shows, he says, churches and other unfamiliar images and conversations occur while Turkish shows repeatedly bring Istanbul's historical silhouette with lots of minarets in the background. This geographical and cultural similarity attracted people's attention to Turkish series. Given the popularity of Turkish popular culture in the former Ottoman territories, Turkey is able to influence people's attitudes and bring Turkey's image to international audiences. This privileges Turkey to bring regional issues to international attention and in turn makes Turkey a vital actor in the peace process. Although I will discuss this subject in following chapters, it is important to highlight that Turkish soft

power is not limited to cultural exports. Istanbul, for example, has become a place of vacation and shopping for millions of Arabic tourists.

It is not a coincidence that the celebrity Polat Alemdar (known as Murat Alemdar in the Arab world) is second in popularity in the Middle East only to the Turkish Prime Minister (Kujawa 2011). This is not to say that Turkish television products are welcomed equally in every part of Middle Eastern society. In particular, ulemas (the doctors of the holy law) in Iran and Egypt, and some other conservatives around the Middle East, criticize Turkish television series because these cultural products are found to be threatening to the fundamentals of family and social relations in Muslim society through sultry images, depictions of adultery, and tales of murder and crime (Bugdayci 2011). Similarly, Iranian authorities rail against Turkish television programs that carry the potential to degrade the Iranian way of life and Persian culture. To protect Iranians from western-minded popular culture, Iranian police raid people's homes to deactivate and collect satellite dishes (CNNTURK 2011). To officials, these programs must be removed from Islamic soil because they show western-style haircuts, women with makeup, and romantic relationships among unmarried couples. However, Turkish television programs do not only get criticism from Islamic governments or religious authorities in the Middle East, but also from the Israeli government because of the problematic way Turkish series such as *Valley of the Wolves-Ambush* portrays Israeli soldiers as murderers, a depiction the Israeli government finds not only offensive, but also as a potential threat inasmuch such a depiction might make Israeli citizens targets for fundamentalist Islamist groups. In one of the episodes of *Valley of the Wolves*, Israeli intelligence agents were depicted as baby-snatchers. Right after this

infamous scene was aired on Turkish TV, Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon called the Turkish Ambassador to express his government's discontent with the TV series. During this meeting, Ayalon, not complying with standards for diplomacy, said this: "The main thing is that you see that he is seated low and that we are high ... that there is one flag on the table (the Israeli flag) and that we are not smiling" (CNN 2010, World News section, ¶ 7). Not unexpectedly, the TV series and its protagonist became more popular than ever among people in the Middle East. All of these events helped political and economic actors realize that Arab geographies are not as far away as it was thought to be before. In other words, popular culture became a vital asset for Turkey to become the 'soft power' in the region.

3.7 Contextualizing audience

The question of 'what constitutes audience' has occupied many scholars' intellectual curiosity (Gillespie 2005, Hay, Grossberg and Wantella 1996, Morley 1980). The argument of whether there is a self-selecting, naturally formed audience is a matter of scholarly questioning and continuing debate in academia. However, in many writings, it is said that audience(s) is/are somehow structured, made, imagined and niched by media institutions (or scholars for that matter) (Gillespie 2005). This way of explaining audience is open to critique as modern information and communication technologies open up new gates into the subject of 'audience' and necessitate new ways of investigating, contextualizing, and interpreting audiences. An individual as a subject of audience can play multiple roles and be the source of information production on one side, and the subject of consumption and an agent of information distribution on the

other side. An example that Gillespie (2005, p. 2) gives in her book, *Media Audiences*, is important to consider:

> My 17-year-old nephew appears to be able to watch a DVD film on TV while receiving and sending text messages on his mobile, and e-mails on the computer. He moves fluently between these activities, interspersing conversations with his friends about who's been thrown out of *Big Brother* [a television show], all the while practicing drum beats or guitar riffs….

This is to say that media is neither static as it is believed to be, nor the audience a fixed or passive receiver of messages. This anecdote demonstrates how problematic it is to conceptualize audience in the postmodern world. The idea of audience is also changing in response to new information and communication technologies. Given the changes, how to investigate audience is a matter of understanding the contemporary conditions of audienceship and, parallel to that, utilizing new qualitative and quantitative techniques. To propose such a methodology to investigate a new, active audience it is necessary to examine the history of audience studies as the field commonly known as 'reception studies'.

Audience studies began with the question of meaning-making processes (Rose 2007). Roughly after the Second World War, academic curiosity about how and to what extent a message is received by radio listeners or TV viewers became the backbone of reception studies (McQuail 2005). The early works on audience assumed that the sent message is received with no or little interruption, by the receiver, as intended by its sender (see Figure 3.1) (Livingstone 2005b).
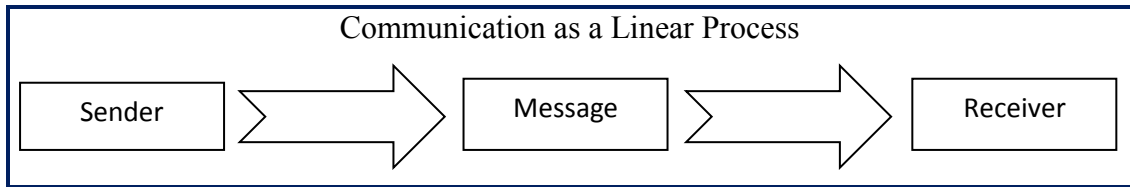
Figure 3-1: Transmission model

This linear model[22] of communication is problematized by scholars of cultural studies, and is known as the 'encoding and decoding model'. Stuart Hall (1974), the leading scholar in this area, argues that messages are not decoded as they are encoded. Hall challenges tenets of the traditional understanding of reception studies in two ways. First, he refuses to believe in messages' naiveté. He argues that producers of a text manipulate the language and supply it with an ideological and purposeful message (McQuail 2005). He calls this encoded ideology 'preferred meaning'. Hall states that "…rules of encoding were so diffused, so symmetrically shared as between producer and audience, that the 'message' was likely to be decoded in a manner highly symmetrical to that in which it had been encoded" (Hall 2005, p. 304). However, this is not to say that all meaning is fixed, single, or unalterable. "There can never be only one, single, univocal and determined meaning for such a lexical item; but, depending on how its integration within the code has been accomplished.…" (Hall 2005, p. 304) (see Figure 3.2). Since there is no necessary correspondence between the producer and the consumer, the encoder can only attempt to 'prefer' but cannot guarantee the intended

---

[22] The uses and gratifications approach needs to be mentioned here as well. This approach puts more emphasis on needs and the taste of individuals within which these personal preferences have a social or psychological origin. Audiences act in a wide field of needs, which might include the need for information, relaxation, companionship, diversion, or escape (McQuail 2005). In this model, the audience is more active and selective in their media uses relative to the linear communication models such as the 'transmission' model in Figure 3.1.

effect on the other end because the decoding has its own conditions of existence (Hall 2001). Depending on surrounding elements, meanings can remain polysemic but this should not automatically imply that meanings are unlimited when they are decoded. Second, Hall challenges the conventional treatment of audience, which has long been understood a passive decoder of a message. He disputes this notion by stating audiences are not passive or static; indeed, they engage with messages in a very active and conscious manner. They do this in three ways: they take the connoted meaning as encoded, negotiate (partially accept the message), or totally reject it (see Figure 3.3).
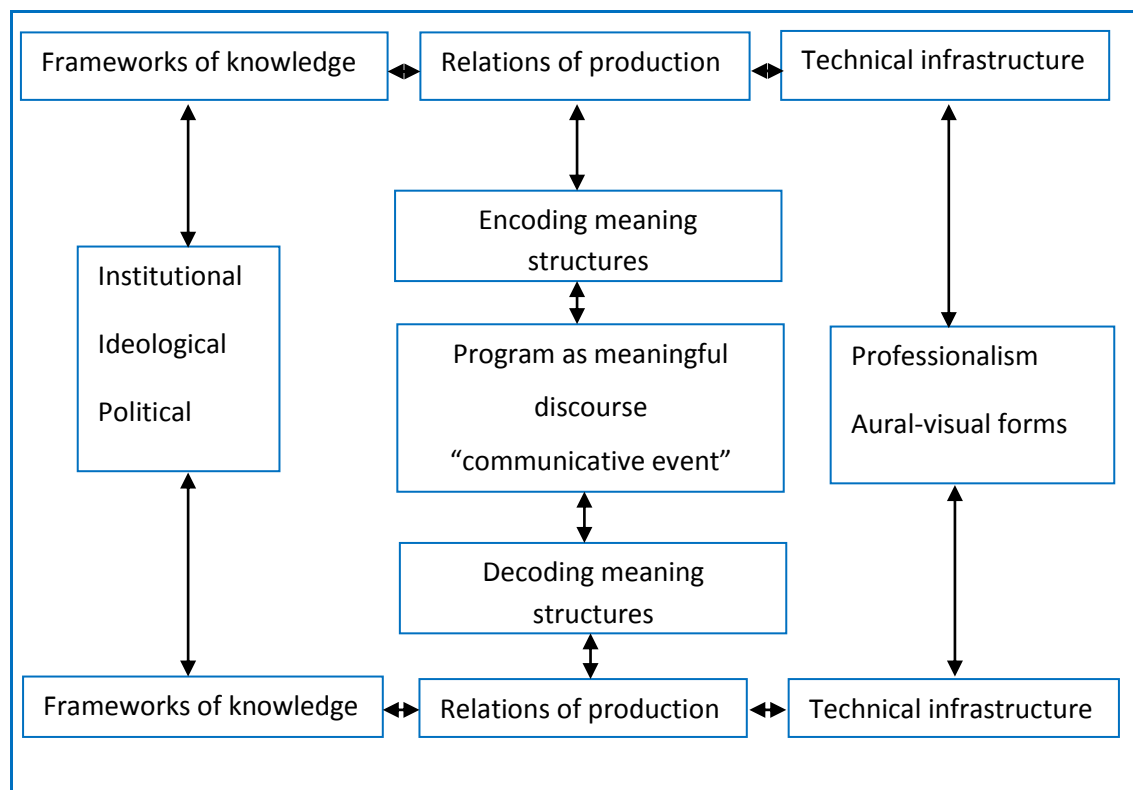
Figure 3-2: The encoding/decoding approach
Source: Adopted from Hall's model.
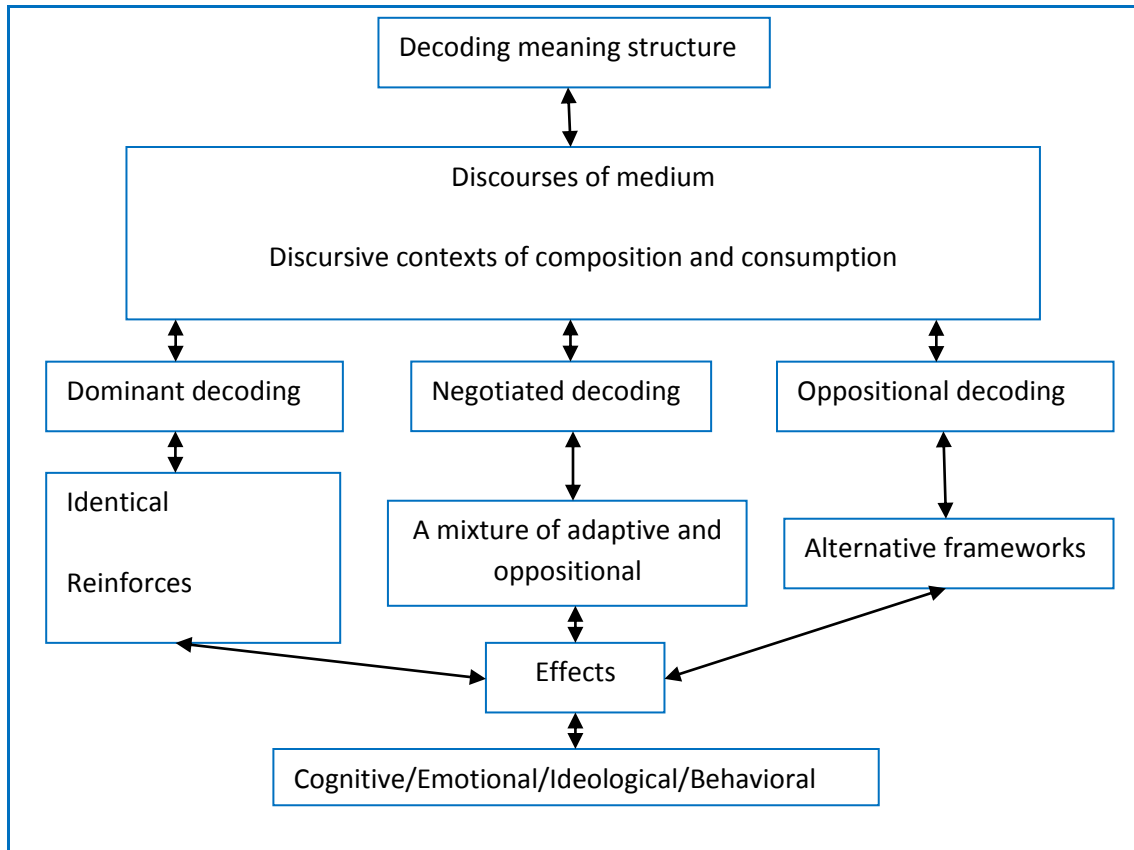
Figure 3-3: Process of communication
Source: Adopted from Hall's encoding and decoding model.

According to Hall, if the viewer takes the intended meaning from, say, "a television newscast or current affairs program full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the reference code in which it has been encoded" (Hall 2001, p. 515), it can be inferred that the audience is acting within the 'dominant' code. In other words, he is decoding the message as it is encoded. In the notion of 'negotiated' decoding, the viewer takes the position of a mixture of adaptive and oppositional stances. In Hall's words, the viewer "acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations, while, at a more restricted, situational level…" (Hall 2001, p. 516), he/she makes her own ground rules, operating with exceptions to the rule. For instance, in this study some viewers understand the need for

immediate action regarding the Palestinian cause in the Middle East, but are hesitant to see Turkey acts upon the case without securing the international community's consensus. In the third way of engaging with the encoded message, the viewer can decode the message in a totally   contrary way. He/she detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference. This notion of decoding is called 'oppositional' reading (Hall 2001).

The Figures 3.2 and 3.3, explain the complexity of encoding and decoding process in relation to external and internal forces that are expressed throughout the meaning-making processes as well as the production of meaning. The argument is that there are complex compositions of many variables that operate within the framework of the communication process. As argued earlier, visual texts are highly polysemic and open to many different interpretations. This should imply that audiences are not passive, but actively engaged with what they see. However, one should not fall in the trap where our readings of visual texts are understood to be unlimited. Social, political, economic, and cultural constraints operate to shape our interpretations of any given text (Schlesinger et al. 1992). From this point of view, the adapted position here is to say that the audience is active but operates within specific limits.

In addition to Hall's encoding/decoding model to understand meaning-making process, I briefly included a recent study on audience reception, which has contained three primary dimensions in its essence (Jancovich, Faire and Stubbings 2003). The first dimension concerns the audience as a market, focusing on how audiences are produced for cinematic consumption. Thus, audience preferences and audience demographics become an important issue. For instance, in Maltby's study (1999), Hollywood cinema

industry made an assumption that there was a significant difference between the cinema taste of urban residents and that of rural inhabitants. To comply with the taste difference, the cinema industries needed to readjust their production, distribution and exhibition strategies (Maltby 1999). The second audience approach examines the inter-textuality of film meanings. These researchers believe that "meanings need to be understood as the product of specific historical conditions" (Jancovich et al. 2003, p. 7). The problem with this approach to the audience is that meanings will differ in different time and space since the conditions for the text is not static and clear-cut. The third dimension in audience reception studies is the ethnography of film audiences. In this category, cinema-going or watching a film is not a simple consumption or a conscious engagement with the film texts. Rather, it is a social activity which can be studied utilizing ethnographies of film consumption. Thus in order to better understand how the Turkish film *VWP* cinematizes Turkish geopolitics and how Turkish audiences engage in the meaning-making process, I am compelled to include different ways of analyzing the discourse of online-fan communities formed by film viewers because their meaning making processes inform both encoding and decoding practices.

3.8 Observing online audience activities

Although this dissertation is not concerned with online ethnography per se, I still find it vital to talk about the concept of ethnography and its variations and applications in other platforms. While ethnography has been employed by anthropologists and sociologists for some time, audience ethnography only gained its momentum when scholars turned their attention to producing "insights into the social uses and rules of media and the interpretation of meanings in mainstream media texts" (Lindlof and Taylor 2002, p. 24)

and began critiquing the limitations of empiricist audience research. Ethnography's essence goes back to the idea of documenting the customs and beliefs of the 'native others' by observing their everyday practices and social settings (Deacon, Pickering and Golding 2007). To successfully describe and interpret observed relationships between social activities and systems of meaning production in a given location, a researcher needs to spend an extended period of time in the field as a participant observer and to conduct unstructured conversational interviews with informants. In conventional ethnography, the researcher spends quite a bit of time (months, if not years) trying to understand the culture of local people from their point of view (this claim has been criticized by many critical scholars for being the researchers' unattainable fantasy) (Moores 1993, Jancovich et al. 2003). An extended stay in the local setting is believed to give a researcher first-hand, shared experience with the people who are studied. Ethnographic studies on media consumption, however, remain problematic, since the amount of time spent in the local setting is relatively short compared to the traditional ways of doing ethnography (Gillespie 2005). From this point of departure, ethnographic study on audience has been questioned for its validity in academic inquiry. Moores (1993), in his book *Interpreting Audience: the Ethnography of Media Consumption* challenges this and notes: "My own feeling is that despite these clear differences reception studies can still properly be called ethnographies. It is true they are not based on extensive fieldwork in distant lands, but they do share some of the same general intentions as anthropological research" (Moores 1993, p. 4). Despite the problems of accessing local settings and documenting cultural observations, Moores's approach to audience ethnography is still valid and dismissing it altogether may not be very

plausible. In other words, ethnographic engagement with audiences provides the researcher "the immediate physical and interpersonal contexts of daily media consumption" (Moores 1993, p. 5) which stands to be the fundamental prerequisite to the reception studies.

There is always more to studying audiences in their social settings. For example, cinema should not be constrained to only viewing a film; it is more than just consumption. Cinema is an activity (Jancovich et al. 2003). To Morley, going to a cinema is always more than going to a film. It resembles "having sold a habit, certain socialized experience…" (as cited in Jancovich et al. 2003, p. 3). When Morley worked with television audiences, he was interested in investigating activities that people practiced even before they saw television shows and began engaging in interpretations of the text. He was aware that the process of the politics of domesticating television technologies and the practiced cultural politics during the consumption in the living rooms were more crucial for understanding than anything else. In many cases he realized that, ownership and usage of various forms of communication technologies mattered more than what media programs were consumed in the family. In his observations, television consumption for different genders meant different things. Even as simple as the detail about who had power over the remote control made a big difference in determining what programing is consumed or not at home.

Gillespie also argues that scholars need to study audiences but for different reasons, highlighting three important points. The first is that there is an important correlation between power and media. In this argument it is assumed that media are preeminently powerful cultural elements of mass manipulation, and are governed by a

few elites. That is why many early media effect studies focused on political, economic and social effects of media on the masses (McQuail 2005). These studies treated audiences as passive, tangible, and confined. In this sense, media's power relation with audiences is crucial to media-audience studies. The second important point is that "the media are cultural institutions that trade in symbols, stories and meanings" (Gillespie 2005, p. 3). In this argument, media are assumed to be shaping the forms of knowledge and ignorance, values and beliefs that circulate in any given society. Media are part and parcel of social life, and therefore too important to ignore. If we understand that media have powerful effects on how we conceptualize our socio-physical world, then, the primary question becomes how this form of shaping is worked through audience. Is it imposed from top to bottom, or negotiated by active audiences at the consumption level? To answer these questions we must consider Gillespie's third point. She asks us to understand the dynamics of media change and continuity. Media, as cultural and technological institutions, are changing in the contemporary world. Communication and information technologies are facilitating transformation and globalization every day. As these technologies shrink time and space, social responses to these phenomena are also occurring. And as these technological and social shifts take place, our values and beliefs, national and cultural identities, and political ideologies are also transforming. Thus, contemporary scholars studying audiences are compelled to approach this phenomenon from multiple positions. It is important to note that 'media' include *all* communication apparatuses, from public news channels to personal smart phone devices.

From this point of departure, in this dissertation I only include one film to be the main part of my investigation, but work to explore audiences' engagement with the meaning-making process via surveying Facebook users about the film *VWP*. I also include other forms of studying audience interpretations such as observing online fan activities and conducting face-to-face discussions with the film viewers. In other words, the internet constitutes a large portion of my data source. It is clear that the internet is a unique virtual space that can support users maintaining valuable connections and permitting them to keep in touch with their social network even though they are physically separate (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2007). Through this virtual connection, the internet "facilitates new connections, in that it provides with an alternative way to connect with others who share their interests or relational goals" (Ellison, Heino and Gibbs 2006, Method section, ¶ 1). The film, *VWP*'s online fans heavily communicate with each other to express and share their emotions, exchange information, and provide insights for each other to interpret films by relating the film dialogues to the current events of everyday life in Turkey and around the world. They participate in discussions that range from the artistic aspects of the film to international repercussions. These online discussion forums by no mean are inactive, one-sided, or filled with completely brain-washed followers. In a civil manner, the film audiences challenge the film's narration, credibility of its messages, and hazards of (mis)interpretations of the film in many levels. As I mention in another chapter, omitting such online audience interpretations and activities may yield incomplete conclusions. In other words, these online fan communities can help us understand this question: what do viewers do with the film *VWP*? Therefore, it is this dissertation's goal

to delve into this question and try to better understand what geopolitical narrations are presented, sustained and negotiated.

3.9 Summary

Popular productions are well suited for projecting political, social, moral and cultural views to their audiences around the world (Dodds 2000). For this very reason, political elites utilize cinematic productions to (re)form, maintain and market certain cultural viewpoints, national identities, narratives and ideological manifestations beyond the state's borders. For example, Dodds argues that the film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) played a significant role in constructing particular narratives about American national identities (Dodds 2000). Other nations around the world were also quick to discover the usefulness of cinema's potential to inform and shape public opinions and prioritize particular identities. Moreover, films such as *October* (1927), and the *James Bond* and *Rambo* series, do not only inform the audience about who the enemy is, but also establish geopolitical truth for the citizens' of the world. But not all films engage with maintaining the existing world order. Some independently produced or made films in the world, outside of the Western domain, challenge the dominant view of the world representation as in the case of *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* (2006). However, the reading of these movies' cultural messages will vary, depending on readers' socio-political, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Not all messages are decoded as they were originally encoded in texts. So, this chapter exclusively pays attention to these important connections between practicing geopolitics, popular culture and, contextualizing audienceship. This chapter also highlights the relationships between popular geopolitics and Turkey's foreign affairs in reference to audiences' meaning-making process. Given

the vital connection between popular cultural products and geopolitics, Turkey's soft power potential in the Muslim world is significant, thus a critical reading and analysis of *VWP* will have important implications for further geopolitical investigations.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Understanding meaning-making processes is a challenging task. They involve considerations of subjective ways of looking at images, and classifying them which are always personal and complex. To understand the power of images and the power of interpretations of those images, how images work, and what crucial provisions should be utilized for image interpretations is an important matter of this study. Borrowing from Gillian Rose's five major points to understanding the nature of working with visual images, this study pays serious attention to: images' 'own visual effects', 'ways of seeing images', visions of 'social differences', 'social context of viewing', and 'the visualities spectators bring' to their viewing (Rose 2007, p. 12).

This study aims to answer the question of how a Turkish film reflects the geopolitical imaginations of the Turkish people in the post-9/11 geopolitical moment within which a series of the global and regional events took place, and further, what do Turkish audiences do with such a film in this atmosphere. The study attempts to understand how *Valley of the Wolves- Palestine* constructs and creates codes of contemporary Turkish geopolitics in the region, how this political-action film is interpreted by different individuals, and what are the geopolitical consequences can be brought about from these mediated images. In this regard, this chapter broadly outlines the research design, data collection techniques, research issues and appropriateness of the methodology. Additionally, this chapter makes the connection between the selected methods of investigation and the literature review while providing justifications why such a mixed method is used for the study.

4.2 Locations of analysis: production, text and audience

Three sites of investigation are the focus of this study: sites of production (including the film-making process and the geopolitical conditions that triggered this new film's production), sites of the image itself (geopolitical discourses that are embedded in the film), and sites of consumption (audiences and their interpretations) (Rose 2007). These sites are investigated through their technological, compositional and socio-cultural qualities and attributions. In other words and reference to Rose's model above, the film *VWP*'s material condition, production and peoples' consumption of it can be better understood if it is investigated through the film's technology, composition, and social context.

This triadic approach to film analysis is not new. Others such as Rose, Dixon, Zonn and Bascom also investigate films within broader social conceptualizations rather than considering films an expression of the mind because it is thought that films are also social texts as well as material artifacts and technological entities (Dixon, Zonn and Bascom 2008, Wilkins 2009). In other words, "films are the product of, and in turn reproductive of, broader social relations of power" (Dixon et al. 2008, p. 25). As an object of inquiry, films should be analyzed within socio-cultural conditions embedded in their production, content, and reception. These scholars frame this approach to film analysis as 'Author-Text-Reader' approach similar to what Deacon, Pickering, Golding and Murdock term a 'critical realist approach' which is to understand "audiences as both actively engaged in the construction of their social reality and constrained by structural conditions, such as social norms, economic conditions, policies, and more, which themselves change over time as a result of social struggles" (Wilkins 2009, p. 5).

In this conceptual frameworks, Dixon, Zonn, and Bascom focus on the conditions surrounding film '*production*', an approach that can be presented within a political economic reading of 'reality and film's representation', '*content*', and a text-centered approach that assumes "the link between signifier and signified is active constructed and maintained by 'real' world social relations of power" (Dixon et al. 2008, p. 33) extracted by an expert reader, and '*reception*', a reader-centered approach where meanings are interpreted by audiences. In all these approaches, Dixon, Zonn, and Bascom illustrate that "critical analysis of symbolic texts must then revolve around the questions of which discourses are being developed, how they are being effectively transferred, and to the benefit of whom" (Dixon et al. 2008, p. 43). Therefore this study aims to mobilize several techniques of investigating social subjects which require a critical questioning of the 'production-text-reader' nexus utilizing comprehensive methodologies and developing analytical thinking.

4.3 Research sites

One of the data collection techniques organizes focus group discussions in Turkey about the film *VWP*. This component of the study was perhaps the most challenging. Conducting such a comprehensive study in order to understand complex public opinions of the film requires choosing carefully selected and relatively representative research sites. The first task is to identify locations that would be as representative as possible of the entire population which is, however, in its nature almost impossible to achieve. With the acknowledgement of difficulties of selecting investigation locations, three urban research sites were selected for the focus group study: Istanbul, Ankara and Van (see Figure 4.1).
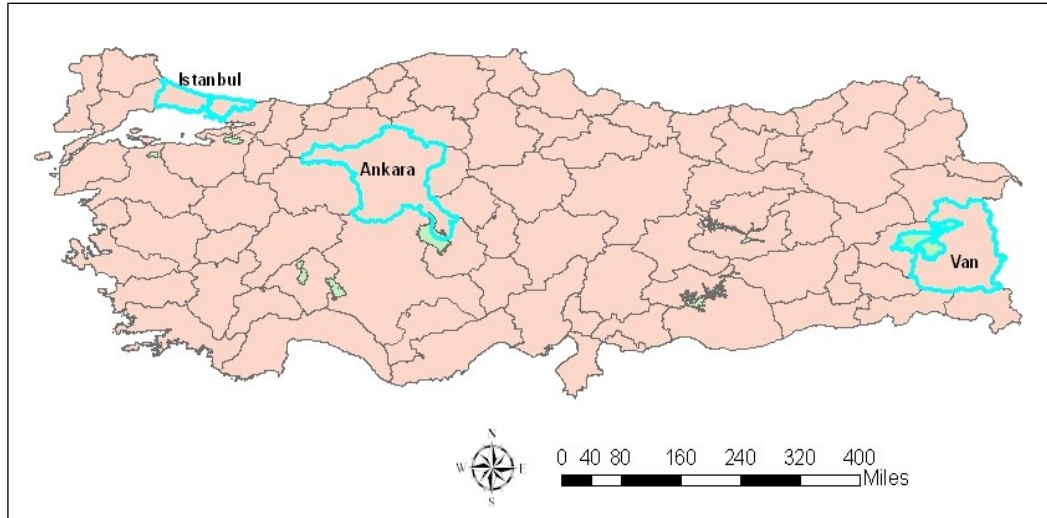
Figure 4-1: Map shows the research sites in Turkey.

These provinces are urbanized and populated enough to represent almost all aspects of Turkish population. Within these cities, there are neighborhoods that have Kurdish populations and other minority communities (Armenians, Greeks, etc.), low income populations, and various religious groups with secular segments which shape the geography where they inhabit. These sites comprise the heart and minds of the republic in many ways. Ankara is situated in the heart of Central Anatolia, where a conservative-nationalist worldview colors the mental map of the majority of citizens (see Figure 4.2) (Anaz et al. 2011). This city plays the role of melting pot in which migrants from rural places find the conduit for transition to urban life. Van, on the eastern part of Turkey, can be characterized as the periphery of the nation but the cultural and economic center of the eastern region only second to Diyarbakir. Bordering Iran and other Kurdish cities outside of Turkey, Van represents a unique culture in the eastern part of Turkey and stands out for its diversity and vibrancy. Istanbul on the other

hand is the biggest center of population[23], comprising to twenty percent of the Turkish population (see Table 4.1).
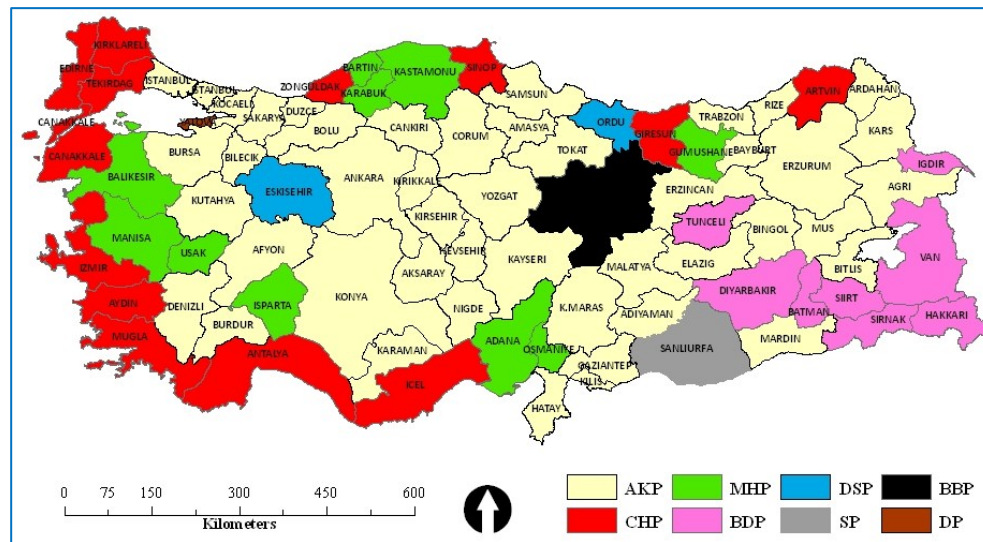
Figure 4-2: Map showing the distribution 50% or more party support in the elections of 2009.
Source: Produced by Anaz, Keceli, & Shelley

Of course there were difficulties and challenges to conducting such a study in these locations, not limited to these cities' size. However, being able to access to several personal networks in these cities, and the personal knowledge gained from living and staying in these cities previously played an important role in minimizing research difficulties.

---

[23] Istanbul also has the largest Kurdish population in sheer number but their contribution to shape the city's cultural landscape is limited due to the city's density and the spatial distribution of the Kurdish population.

Table 4-1: Population Distribution, 2010

Provinces	Population	Percentage Population
Istanbul	12,573,836	18%
Ankara	4,466,756	6.3%
Van	979,671	1.3%

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

4.4 Research design and data collection

4.4.1 Phase I: Planning

In the first phase, I aimed to establish close ties with my contact people in the research sites in order to build a network and with their help reach possible study subjects. This step was crucial because in order to acquire access to potential participants for focus group discussions, surveys and interviews, well-organized network settings became necessity. Also, to gain participants' trust and confidence, the pre-established networks were vital for completing successful research that deals with people and their social interactions with popular culture. These established networks were made possible by my friends of friends, providing the 'snowball' effects in the process of reaching possible audiences. The snowball method works when there is no determined list or identified institution to begin with. As in the metaphor of snowball rolling down the hill, my initial contacts suggested additional people who in turn brought more and more people into the research circle (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). This method of sampling is widely used when there is "either very closed or informal social groupings, where the social knowledge and personal recommendations of the initial contacts are invaluable in

opening up and mapping tight social networks" (Deacon et al. 2007, p. 55). Throughout this study I counted on local contacts' help because their knowledge of the social structure of their community yielded fewer mistakes and reduced potential serious misunderstandings between the researcher and the participants. My personal ties to Turkish society also enabled me to reach remote locations of investigation sites and eased the process of gaining peoples' trust throughout the study. My initial contacts were mostly composed of friends from my undergraduate years, friends of my acquaintances and friends of my extended family members. This pool of people, I believe, opened up the doors for a valid sampling and a representative investigation.

4.4.2 Phase II: Implementation

The second phase deals with data collection strategies. In this study, I utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data. I organized focus group discussions, collected online fan comments about *VWP*, and conducted an online survey about the film and conducted an interview with one of the script writers and activists of the Mavi Marmara flotilla. This goal compelled me to move beyond a simple exploratory and explanatory approach of visual images to cross-sectional comparisons, empirical categorizations, in-group discussions of narratives, and interviews with the text encoder. It is because understanding interpretations of visual images have always been integral to the social fabric of our daily experience, which is always embedded in different segments of social relations. Therefore, this study is obliged to include several ways of engaging with different audiences in different platforms.

5.3.2.1 Focus group

In this part of the study, individuals from different sectors of Turkish society were asked to participate in focus group discussions about the *VWP*. For this part, I used both a semi-structured questionnaire and follow-up discussion questions in a conversational manner. The protocol of asking questions in the focus groups ranged from general to specific such as "What do you think this film is about" to "What happened to Abdullah in the film." But responses did not always follow as planned, and in some circumstances, my questions followed respondents' previous answers. During the discussions, I did not dwell on anybody longer than several minutes or embarrass anyone for his/her seemingly incorrect reading or misunderstanding of the film in terms of factuality (we need to bear in mind that any misreading is also another reading). In general, the focus groups consisted of three to seven members and were moderated by myself. My initial plan was to include at least 5 people in each group, but for various reasons I ended up continuing with three or four participants. As I formed these focus groups, I made careful selections of individuals that would represent and include multiple aspects of Turkish society (income, education, age, ethnicity gender, etc.). I paid close attention to grouping people, thus I grouped them in accordance with either their education level or employment status and in one occasion, the grouping was done in terms of their gender and ethnicity. To the some level, these focus groups were mainly homogenous. However, this categorization did not go smoothly throughout the study all the time nor was there an urgency to do that. Indeed, artificially categorization of participants does not always correspond the reality of Turkish society because in practice people often consume entertainment products together within the family that includes –housewife-mother, grocer-father, teacher-daughter, lawyer-son, unemployed-

cousin and so on- to pass time or they watch films together as an activity. They eat together, talk and watch TV together. In other words, they consume things together. Thus, forming focus groups out of these social settings solely based on education or gender may be misleading. However, there are layers of society that form single-layered audience group where the consumption of entertainment shows similarities among these group individuals. One example of this group of media consumers can be the youth. Young college students who mostly live in different cities other than their hometowns and stay in dormitories or apartment buildings go to theaters together. For these individuals who may have a similar taste in cinema consumption, going to a cinema becomes a weekend activity and an escape from studying and solitude. Additionally, these college students also are the heavy users of internet and personalized media products (iPhones, laptops, notebooks, etc.) where they can download or watch instant films or TV series (gazete5 2012). When they engage in such activities, they become important consumers of popular culture and active creators of their own meaning and cultural practices. In other words, their consumption of popular culture is private and personal as well as social and interactive. Therefore, to read carefully this complex ways of performing mediated messages and practicing cinematic consumption by youth, I cared about including this section of Turkish audiences to map out what these people do with popular culture such as *VWP* and what the film does for them in their complex and dynamic lives.

Since the length of the film is longer than 100 minutes, I edited the film into twenty to thirty minutes sections to fit the purpose of the investigation so that the focus group members could recall what the main theme of the film was and its specifics

through viewing certain scenes from the film. This editing was set up in a way that it did not disturb (in my view) the general flow of discussion because selected participants for focus groups were composed of those who had already seen the film before joining the groups. The physical sites where these viewings took place varied. According to participants' current situation and their consent, gathering places were quiet-corners of cafeterias, business offices, or homes.

Regarding the focus group sampling, there were several issues that need to be addressed here. One was that I had a hard time grouping male audiences with female audiences and grouping female audiences within a single group. There are two primary explanations for this difficulty. One was that females did not feel comfortable joining groups dominated by male participants (for example, the ratio was 2/6); the second, there were few females contacted who saw the film or wanted to see it. In other cases, female participants tended to remain passive even if they agreed to join the focus groups. To minimize passive participation by female group members, I either increased the number of female participants in a group or formed separate focus groups that included female participants only.

The second issue in focus group sampling was the selection of participants which defined the representativeness of the research and ultimately shaped the outcomes of the study. To avoid this problem, I selected participants from a variety of social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Of course any selection is problematic and subject to numerous challenges of working with human subjects, but my preferred sampling was the 'researcher-constituted' one as oppose to 'pre-constituted groups' (Deacon et al. 2007). Researcher-constituted sampling refers, to the groups that the

researcher creates for research purposes. In other words, I did not automatically select a pre-constituted group that would include social and professional groups that already existed (for example, sampling employees in a firm). Despite the advantages and disadvantages of forming this type of grouping, I believe that the 'research constituted' sampling technique fit well for the purpose and nature of this study given the fact that film audiences are diverse, complex and less organized than professional groupings.

5.3.2.2 Online survey

The next step of the data collection included asking direct questions to people about their habit of individual media consumption, entertainment activities, their demographics, world views and opinions on Turkish politics and the film *VWP*. The goal of designing this survey was to determine: How do people define themselves? Are there any relations between who they are and the way they think? What communication devices do people possess and how often they use them? What do people do with the film? What are their attitudes toward Turkey's foreign policy? What relations do they see between the film and Turkey-Israel relations? What are people's social backgrounds? How do people make political maps in their minds? How do they imagine Turkey's geopolitical borders? With a highly structured questionnaire, I aimed to draw plausible conclusions on the basis of peoples' answers (see the questionnaire in the Appendix A). As described, this was a survey with the intention to collect data about people's demographic information and to shed light on why Turkish people behave, think and imagine the world the way they do. In other words, this survey was designed to bridge descriptively collected data with explanatory (analytical) and exploratory data to understand if there are relations between people's socio-cultural backgrounds and the

way they form their opinions and behaviors via popular culture. However, this technique of investigation is neither complete nor flawless. One disadvantage of this survey is that people may tend to give answers that they believe the researcher would like to hear or may provide what the respondents think is socially acceptable response since no question is asked in a social vacuum (Deacon et al. 2007, Berger 2000). An advantage of asking direct questions to people about their activities and their views is that people can be more honest with their answers because the structured questioning can limit the influence of human factors on the data-collection process. For instance, in the latter case respondents may become more honest and straightforward in their answers about their worldview when they are not interviewed face-to-face. Additionally, outcomes of a survey can give a better ways of categorizing the data than other forms of qualitative data collections.
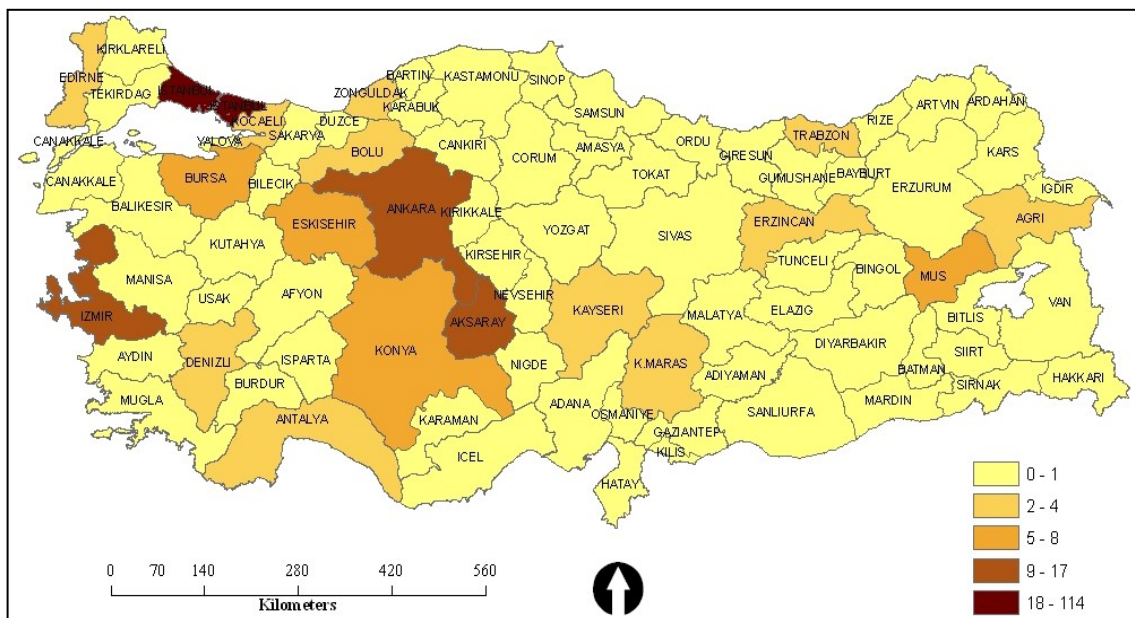
Figure 4-3: Geographical distribution of the survey participants in Turkey.

This survey was conducted in the form of the 'online self-completion questionnaire'. In other words, respondents were invited to go to a link that was created via the web-based survey company, SurveyMonkey. There, participants were given step by step instructions how to complete the survey in Turkish.   Once they entered the link, they found a letter of consent and sets of questions. Firstly, they were asked to read the letter of consent, accept the conditions and show that they understood the voluntary nature of the participation. They were then directed to go to the next section. In the next section, they were asked to answer questions that were designed to collect data a) about the participants' demographics and socio-political positions, b) about their engagement with popular culture (cinema, TV, Internet, etc.), c) about people's knowledge on Turkey's geopolitical condition, and d) to identify to what extent the film is transferred into people's everyday life and shaped their geopolitical imaginations, and how people evaluated the film *VWP*.

This online questionnaire was distributed in a snowball method among those who may or may not have seen the film (see Figure 4.3). The link of the survey was sent out through my Facebook contacts and several other online sites associated with the film. Such sites included the *VWP* Facebook-fan group and cinema sites wherein the film fans could share their opinions and news about the *Valley of the Wolves* TV and cinema productions as well as opinions of people in the film productions. As in other methods of investigations of peoples' opinions, online surveying has its limitations and benefits. One important benefit of conducting an online survey is that it is relatively convenient for both the respondents and the researcher in terms of accessibility and distribution, and less expensive to administer than in-person surveys. The use of the

internet in social research has been on the increase not only because it is a cheap tool to employ when conducting research, but also because it stands as being a prominent new tool to be included in social research if social research involves communication as in Hine's argument where she notes "the introduction of a new communications medium provides the occasion for examination of the new problems which might be occasioned by use of this new technology. Logically speaking, if social research always involves communication, then it is reasonable to ask if changing the mode of communication affects any methodological assumptions or practices" (Hine 2005, p. 3). Given the fact that today's Turkey is a highly internet connected country, online forms of data-collection appeared to be logical tools to use to capture ideologically and geographically diverse people's views.

Surveying online has limitations too. Beside the pitfalls of categorizing peoples' opinion in a mathematical way, online surveys also limit the research outcomes to the total numbers of internet users in a given population. In other words, the research excludes those who have no access to internet to participate in the study. In addition to this limitation, since the survey was distributed via my Facebook networks and other fan-driven websites, this research carried a potential risk of excluding many other film fans and audiences were beyond this network of contacts. Despite these limitations and pitfalls, I argue that not being able to reach every single viewer out in the field does not affect the overall validity of the research and the conclusions made. Indeed, electronic surveying served as a vital conduit for providing opportunities to include geographically unreachable samples and population in my limited time in the field. Additionally, online survey software allows replication of the study in different locations: towns, cities and

countries, facilitating comparison and contrast of different cultures and localities. Finally, it is important to recall that this survey was designed not to stand on its own, but to work with other forms of data, namely interviews and focus groups, in a comparative manner.

5.3.2.3 Interviews

Another important part of analyzing a visual text is to pay attention to its production site (Rose 2007). In order to answer the question of 'what can an image do?', one needs to delve into the image's author(s) be it a producer, a sculpture, or a painter. What is known as the 'auteur theory' examines the production site of an image to understand what its maker(s) intends to show. Although Rose and others argue that in a so-called postmodern era, how an image is understood (audience interpretation) is more important than what is intended to show (authorship). I argue that in order to grasp the full picture in a meaning-making circle, attention to the production side is necessary because the viewer as an active reader of an image is not completely independent of other modalities that give meaning to the text. It is commonly accepted that socio-cultural particularities to a sufficient degree influence the text-reader as well as the author and the text within the context.

Even though the site of production includes computerized technologies, production materials and location, finance and authorship, at this point I will talk about authorship based on two interviews that I conducted, one with the Mavi Marmara (the group that attempted to breach the Gaza blockade) activist and the scriptwriters of the *VWP*. This is important because the way the film is narrated, formed and/or edited makes enormous impact on its viewers. For example, the film's formation is vital to a

film production which indicates that its subject (people, place, and the story) is representative and corresponds to our experiences and expectations of how that certain subject looks. Additionally, a great movie, generally, means that two factors are in play: "a good script and a director's inspiration, vision, intelligence, and his/her supervision of all aspects of the film's production" (Barsam 2004, p. 33). Based on particular expectations from the scriptwriter or the director, we make our decisions to go or not to go to a movie. In the case of *VWP*, I wanted to know what intentions were put forward on the production side to attract viewers, and what messages were meant to be delivered in the film. Two interviews with one scriptwriter and an activist who provided information about what happened on the flotilla may not tell the whole story of the encoding, but it provides important clues for what messages were coded in the film, and allows me to compare and contrast what cinematic codes are encoded and what decodings are made by the viewers. For this reason, I completed a short interview with one of the Mavi Marmara activists who was on the flotilla sailing to Gaza, and was asked to provide details about the Israeli attack for the film makers. The other interview was an hour-long, semi-structured, face-to-face interview with Cuneyt Aysan, a *VWP* scriptwriter, about various aspects of the film and reasons behind making the film. These open-ended dialogues with the activist and the scriptwriter opened new doors to understanding of the site of production and the visual messages of the film. Although as an interviewer I established a good rapport with the interviewees, occasionally I felt that the conversation was quite often dominated by them and there was a feeling/impression that (especially the scriptwriter) they were not only talking to me, but they were also talking to a messenger who has ties with Western academics and audiences, and could

transfer the message to different receivers and audiences (this notion of sending messages to the outside world has been repeated in several other focus group discussions as well.)

5.3.2.4 Observing film-fans on internet fan sites

Rose talks about two aspects of the social modality of audiencing: "the social practices of spectating and the social identities of the spectators" (Rose 2007, p. 25). This means that "only certain sorts of people do certain sorts of images in particular ways" (Rose 2007, p. 25). In her example, Rose notes that she would decorate her college room with postcards of modern paintings picked up on her summer trips in Europe to show that her visitors would see that she went to European art museums. From this example, she comes to an understanding that some people chose to display certain images that they like and they also display those images in their room so that they know others will be looking at them. In this sense, as she argues, we don't only display only images; we display who we are and how we like to be known. In other words, images say something about "who we are and how we want to be seen" (Rose 2007, p. 26). Inspired from this piece of analysis, I included online-fan comments in this study to understand the practiced audiencing and viewers' negotiated spectatorship independent of the influence of structured examinations. How people interpreted the film, what meanings online-fans made through discussions of the film's messages (perhaps for others to appreciate) and what identities they practiced on the virtual space became an important component of this study. For this reason, I visited a well-known Turkish cinema website, sinemalar.com, to read viewers' comments for the film and for their comments of the other comments. I read several hundreds of comments that were put by the

viewers from couple months before the film was released to the year after it was released.

4.4.3 Phase III: Processing

The final step of this data collection included coding, translating and analysis of what was collected from the field. To analyze the data, I transcribed every statement in the audio recordings into a written version, and then I translated all transcripts that I found relevant to particular topics and questions into English. During this categorization stage, I paid careful attention to allow the text to speak for itself. In every aspect of data analysis, the awareness of my own reflexivity was present and stayed present during all my interpretations and translations. However, this is not to say that no mistakes were made. Indeed, I found it very difficult to translate cultural jokes, sayings, and other traditional phrases that may not have direct equivalents in the English language. Additionally, I have to acknowledge my limitations with English in translating Turkish documents into English. I believe that all these factors have to be acknowledged in order to highlight their possible effects on the study.

4.5 Appropriateness of the methodology

This study uses numbers and visualizations in addition to other methods such as focus groups, face-to-face interview and observations of online-fan activities which are mostly associated with qualitative studies which have been used by social scientists from different disciplines. Notwithstanding, situating this study in the realms of quantitative *and* qualitative geography is very problematic and complex. Therefore, there needs to be clear justifications for utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods in this study. In this regard, I discuss several reasons why this study utilizes

mixed-methods and why its mixed-method approach should be located at the intersection of critical and analytical geographies wherein the stimulation of dialog and an appreciation of insights can be woven together.

Criticism of using statistics and visualization in our discipline (geography, particularly the human geography) has a long history (Schwanen and Kwan 2009). Mainly such criticisms came from Marxist, feminist, and poststructuralist geographers against quantitative geographers for being essentialist, reductionist and objectivist (Rose 1993). The idea that science should be about representing or mirroring nothing but objective truth, which was the main premise of spatial analysis (a positivist approach), has been widely challenged and dismissed decades ago. Poststructuralist and/or postmodernist scholars strongly disagreed the idea that the real world is too chaotic to be captured with statistics and any means of visual models would not mirror the reality on the ground. The post-World War II moment became well known with its apolitical and mathematical explanations of social changes and problems. This positivist academic trend paved the way for a great division between academia and social realities. In the following decades when social and political life became more political, active and diverse than ever (for example, the civil rights and feminist movements, Vietnam War protests, consequences of OPEC crises, etc.), and communication technologies opened the doors to compress time and space, geographers –similar to other social disciplines- began questioning and dismissing the grand promises of positivist science and the objectivity of mathematical models that help to enshroud social inequalities and injustices in various communities, countries and regions (Harvey 1972).

Given this historical background, however, the interest in quantitative methods in geography has not died away. This study is no exception to this. Indeed, recent scholarship notes that utilizing quantitative methods can contribute to progressive social changes and human rights in many levels. In this sense, Schwanen and Kwan argue that both statistics and GIS can be a mobilizing tool for politically and socially progressive causes (Schwanen and Kwan 2009). Moreover, in their article Schwanen and Kwan reference various scholars from critical geography who have become concerned with (re)considering "the potential contributions of counting, statistics, modeling, and GIS to their projects from the perspectives of critical realism, pragmatism, and poststructuralism" (Schwanen and Kwan 2009, p. 460). Similarly, feminist scholars have become interested in the potential of quantitative methods such as descriptive statistics for critical goals and social changes. For instance, feminist geographers argue that since we live in a visual world and much of our knowledge comes from and is produced by visual materials, quantitative methods such as statistics and GIS[24] can be utilized to map out broad contours of inequality and oppression (Schwanen and Kwan 2009). If such quantitative methods are used in combination with qualitative methods and self-reflexivity is revealed when outcomes are interpreted and the embodied writing style is acknowledged, empirical research techniques such as GIS and statistics can be useful instruments to point out various social and spatial problems many places around the world face today. Additionally, critical geographers argue that their arguments –in this way- would not be dismissed because they lack from a scientific rigor or irrelevancy (Schwanen and Kwan 2009). For scholars such as (Schwanen and Kwan

---

[24] The debate on the GIS whether it is a tool or science or there is a third way to situate it in the academia, still continues today (Wright, Goodchild & Proctor 1997).

2009, Carter 2009, Madden and Ross 2009, Rose 2007) (to name few), quantitative methods can be used in social research as long as researchers do not engage with "essentialist categorizations, absolute notions of space and time, and linear causalities of more conventional spatial analysis" (Schwanen and Kwan 2009, p. 461). Carter, in her study about how "race, quantification, and raced quantification have been used and written about in geographies" (Carter 2009, p. 465), provides a good example of addressing the race issues in a quantitative geographical inquiry. Madden's and Ross's project combines "qualitative data of personal narratives with GIS technologies to explore the potential for critical cartography in the study of mass atrocity" (Madden and Ross 2009, p. 508) in Northern Uganda is another example, a piece of work that uses quantitative methods to explore the forced displacement and violence around the world.

Nevertheless, in this dissertation, I do not claim that statistics, numbers and visual techniques are well suited with critical approaches or they are completely comfortable with one another. Rather, I argue that these quantitative methods have the potential to illuminate matters that qualitative techniques may have difficulties to visualize. My assessment is that quantitative and qualitative methods are not mutually exclusive of each other nor entirely suited for another. However, I support the idea that without falling into the positivist trap, quantitative methods in combination with qualitative methods may be utilized for greater understanding of media and geopolitics but with caveats as to their application.

4.6 research issues

Doing research in human geography is complex and replete with numerous issues for the both sides, the researcher and the researched. This particular study is not immune from this reality. Some of the issues can be itemized as follows:

a. Issues related to selecting research sites

b. Issues related to reaching out optimal samplings

c. Issues related to positionality of the researcher

d. Issues related to power relations

I explain each of these issues in the following section.

4.6.1 Problems with selecting research sites/cities

For this study, three locations were selected. Selecting these locations particular logics followed. One was that their size in population. Istanbul, for example, contains more than 20 percent of Turkey's entire population. Considering the rapid internal migration to Istanbul in 1980s and 1990s from other Anatolian cities, towns and villages (Keskin 2010), this city represents a miniature of Turkey's demographic structure. For this reason, selecting Istanbul as a research site seemed reasonable. However, large cities present problems for researchers. Determining actual research locations within the city is a difficult and subjective activity. This was a matter of *who you knew where*. This is important to discuss as the selection clearly will shape the study data. One example would be that if I selected all my participants from the district of Fatih in Istanbul, a relatively a conservative/Islamist district, my conclusions would be very questionable. The same applies to other districts with varying political and cultural norms in Istanbul.

My other criterion for selecting these research sites (Istanbul, Ankara, and Van) was because their unique populations. It is relatively easier to find different ethnicity and world views in these heterogeneous cities. For instance, Istanbul contains every ethnicity of Turkish society while the province of Van in the eastern Turkey is one of the biggest Kurdish cities in Turkey. Again, these criteria are debatable and can carry many problems. One can never claim that doing a research in large cities such as Van automatically qualify one's research as representative. It is again about 'who you know where' that determines the outcome of your investigation. One can easily travel through the city of Van without even making a single conversation with local residents from its Kurdish majority. For example, there are many different groups residing in the city that are from former Soviet states and government employees who come from Turkish majority provinces serving in government institutions. In this study, I endeavored to include major ethnicities of Turkish demographic elements by putting extra effort to seek out better representative samples in these three different provinces but also I still acknowledge that every choice I made was personal and political in its nature.

As mentioned earlier, site selection and contact networks are an important consideration in audience research, and I understand that this inquiry needs to be intellectually justified. In this dissertation, as discussed, I used a snowball method to recruit my potential participants. Without having someone in research sites to help me, this research might not be able to reach an adequate number of participants for relatively different audience groups. Since, my contacts' role remained limited to only providing other contacts who actually organized the grouping of research participants; I argue that my samples are relatively representative and remote from the circle of

personal influence. This is not to say that I do not acknowledge possible problems of relying on my personal contacts (friends of friends) to base my assessments and arguments. This is to say that there is a thin line between where personal contacts can influence the outcome of a research. This is where personal judgment of the situation becomes critical. In selecting the research sites and my contacts, I paid special attention to this thin line to have relatively unbiased samples for this study. However, it should also be acknowledged that such research would not be possible if the researcher did not have personal local connections and contacts on the ground since contacting possible subjects cannot easily occur in a parachute sampling.

4.6.2 Sampling is not simple

A reasonable goal of a researcher is to reach diverse and representative sample of a population. However this goal is not always realistic for many reasons. My biggest challenge was finding a representative population that included samples of lifestyle, education, income level, occupation, gender, and ethnicity for the survey and focus group discussions. In either phases of sampling process (online-survey and focus groups), there was a lack of female and less-educated participants. In my survey, I was unable to exceed a 30 percent female participation rate. The study did not attract many female participants for several foreseen reasons: one is that had to do with my own gender. In the survey case, the starting point to the audiences was through my Facebook and similar websites. Even though I have diverse friends on Facebook, my Turkish male friends outnumber my female friends greatly (86 percent and 14 percent respectively). This snowball-effect as the survey link was shared led to the imbalance of sex. However, this does not provide the whole picture. The percentage of internet and

Facebook users in Turkey that are women is smaller (see Tables 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 for demographic distribution of internet and Facebook users in Turkey). To support this claim, I closely investigated the ratio of male and female participants for the film's fan-sites. It was evident that those who commented on the film's fan website appeared to be majority male. This is my estimation of their gender by reading their profile pictures and names. In the focus groups case, similar patterns were seen: women tended to not see the film while young males tended to show high interest in the film and formed the niche audience group for the film. Additionally, some conservative females declined to participate in other cases they were reluctant to participate in a group that had dominantly male participants. Because of all these factors, female participation was limited in my study but by no means, I argue, is this sampling is irrelevant or misrepresentative in its entirety. Many studies that investigated the *Valley of the Wolves* TV series came to the similar conclusion that female viewers were not attracted by a political-action film such as *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* (Yanik 2009, Celebi 2006, Anaz and Purcell 2010). Another study published in a Turkish newspaper provides similar results in terms of ratios of cinema goers between sexes. Kara reports that 30 million 397 thousand people went to Turkish cinemas in 2009. Sixty-nine percent of movie goers were single, forty-nine percent of them are female and fifty-one percent is male. The average age among these cinema goers is in between eighteen and thirty-nine which constitute eighty-eight percent of the total (Kara 2009). Again, the sex ratio among those who go to films such as *VWP* is much lower than that of the ratio in Kara's study (see statistics in Chapter 7).

4.6.3 Positionality and technology in interviews

There were two sides that were simultaneously effective and affected during my focus group discussions in terms of building trust between the researcher and the subjects. Being a male researcher, with a US university affiliation, and studying a political film with storylines about a very delicate subject matter created an environment where participants and I had difficulties building necessary rapport. From the participants' point of view, there were similar problems such as being a female and talking to an out(in)sider with a voice recorder on.

Generally speaking in Turkish men and women are separated in daily life. This space between genders is a cultural phenomenon but varies from region to region and within a region. In places such as province of Van and outskirts of Ankara and Istanbul, separation between men and women is more visible and any researcher who works in these areas must take this cultural factor into account, and generally, this social reality affects the composition of any social research that is conducted in Turkish society. In my effort to attract participants, several times female groups of university students in the province of Van and Ankara refused to participate because these students did not feel comfortable talking to a man while their voice being recorded. These students were from small Anatolian conservative cities and some of them were wearing headscarves. A conservative culture limited my research. For example, some of my focus group participants did not show up the scheduled discussions because I was a male and single according to my contact person. On the other hand, however, being a male eased the process reaching male populations, especially in Istanbul and Ankara.

Another problem encountered was the participants' employment status. Several government employees showed concern when I asked them to participate in focus groups or the online-survey where there would be some sort of documenting the answers. Their decision not to participate in my study was directly related to possibility of the government's monitoring of their interaction with me which they perceived to would jeopardize their employment since the topic of my research was deeply political. The same concern was shared by a group of people who would be identified as ethnically Kurdish. Finding a group of people who identify themselves as Kurdish was extremely difficult even though 20 million Kurdish people are believed to live across Turkey. I could only organize one focus group with people who identified themselves ethnically Kurdish. Regarding this issue, there are several reasons that may explain why I had such a hard time finding Kurdish people to participate in my study. One is that this film did not appeal to Kurdish people. When I traveled to towns known for hosting a quite number of Kurdish migrants from eastern Turkey, I found no one that had seen the film. The second reason is, I think, that people did not feel comfortable talking to me. They approached me in a suspicious way. For them, perhaps, I was a spy who could be very easily employed by the both governments the US and Turkey (this is not an exaggeration because I was asked several times –jokingly at least- if I was going to take these recordings to the CIA or if I was working for the US's greater Middle Eastern project). This type of political fear may not be very visible when one talks to a Kurdish citizen in Turkey, but when one asks him or her to talk about the Israel-Palestine conflict, and then start an audio recording, it then becomes noticeable. However, being a student in the US was not always a serious issue. Indeed, I found several groups of

people who were willing to talk to me because they thought that they needed to say something to and about the US through me so that I could transfer their messages to audiences in the US and elsewhere.

4.6.4 The relations of power

McDowell warns graduate students and other social science researchers to become more conscious about self-reflexivity and positionality as they/we engage in the social construction of knowledges and discourses and the relations of power embedded within them (McDowell 1992). She also asks researchers to consider how important is to be aware of "the positionality of [researchers] themselves and their subjects, and the relations of power between them [us]" (McDowell 1992, p.399). During every stage of this research, I was always self-conscious about the power that I possessed as the main constructer, executer and analyzer of this research. From design of the questions (for the survey, focus groups, and interview) to categorizing of participants' responses, my own way of interpreting and analyzing the results were present at all the time. This does not mean that I consciously favored certain responses while omitting others. Rather, this means that as the conductor of this research, I was aware of the possibility of favoring particular discussions, questions or people in the process of data collection, grouping and analysis of those responses and the data sources.

However, the power relations do not always interplay between the researcher and the researched but it can also play important roles between participants. During one of my focus group studies, there occurred the conflict of interest between an employee and his supervisor. The supervisor raised his/her voice when his/her employee dismissed his/her thoughts and critiqued his/her views. I was compelled to intervene in

the conversation so that everyone had a chance to deliver their opinions freely but incidents such as this occur very often in real life every day.

Finally to this, I have to include that I, myself, felt pressured during my interview with the scriptwriter of the film. As I entered the building, I went through several security checks and pre-questionings about what I do in the US and what purpose(s) my dissertation would have with studying Pana Film's productions. Also during the interview, the interviewee dominated the conversation and steered it to topics he wanted to discuss. Of course, this also had something to do with experience of dealing reporters and journalists. As an untrained graduate student, I felt powerless to ask questions that I would certainly ask in other contexts due to a perceived imbalance in power.

4.7 Summary

This chapter introduced the methodology of the study. I started off with locating the sites of analysis in which the literature and the results of this research can be situated. Then, I discussed three phases of data collection, which included planning, implementing, and processing. In planning, I discussed pre-execution stage of data collection and what methodology of sampling I used and why. In the implementing phase, I explained what data-collection techniques I utilized (interview, focus group discussions, online survey and online fan-comment analysis) and their possible benefits and downsides for the study. In the processing phase, I talked about coding, translating, and analysis of what was collected in the field. In the following pages of the chapter, I discussed appropriateness of the methodology and the research concerns and issues encountered during planning, implementing and data processing.

CHAPTER 5: GEOPOLITICAL REPRESENTATIONS AND CRITICAL READING OF THE FILM, *VALLEY OF THE WOLVES-PALESTINE*

- (Israeli Soldier to Polat) "Why did you come to Israel?"
- (Polat) "I did not come to Israel. I came to Palestine."

(Dialogue from *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses geopolitical representations of the political-action film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*. Here, I discuss three main readings that can be drawn from the film. These include (1) reading the film as a counter-geopolitical text which challenges the dominant perception of what is known to be Palestine and Israel state borders, (2) reading the film as a geopolitical text that formulates its own representation of space and territory, and functions within the realm of contemporary Turkish geopolitics, and (3) related to earlier points, reading the film within the genre politics and politics of vigilante hero which is often aligned with conservative statist political views.

Figure 5-1: The shooting of arrested Palestinian civilians by Israeli soldiers after Polat's men freed them from police buses.

As with the previous Pana Film productions (e.g. *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*) *VWP* also inflamed international tensions and evoked many criticisms while the same time garnered national and international praise in various corners of the world. For example, Europe-based Jewish organizations appealed to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann to condemn the film its glorification of violence and inciting anti-Israeli sentiments (JerusalemPost 2011). On the other hand, according to Ozdener (one of the script writers), this new film stands to be the biggest film in the Middle East. He says that Pana Film will continue to bring out voices of oppressed to the big screen and continue to criticize Israel: "*VWP* will only depict what really goes on in Palestine. Israel will be demonstrated as bloody hands, cruel, human slaughter, and disrespectful to human dignity" (Cengil 2010, Magazine section, ¶ 5). The producers emphasize that the film is an effort to draw attention to the 'human drama' of Palestine for the audiences of Turkey and other nations (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

Figure 5-2: The neighborhood where *VWP* was filmed.
Source: haberimport.com/kurtlarvadisifilistin

Whether the film can dramatically harm Turkey-Israel relations that are already troubled more than they have been throughout history is debatable, but this film has significant potential as a medium to project social, political, moral and cultural views to audiences in Turkey and around the world. This film, ostensibly an action and entertainment piece, certainly employs novel forms of geopolitical representations and geographical imaginations for audiences worldwide. As the film entertains millions in the dark rooms of theaters and in living rooms, it spreads out epic tales of the victorious Turkish, confirms Turkey's geographical and historical responsibilities and challenges orthodox geopolitical understandings of the Palestine-Israel conflict and territoriality. Hence, the following part of the chapter is an attempt to analyze some of the geopolitical implications of the film.

5.3 Territorial correction in *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*

Scholars from various disciplines such as geography, international area studies, communication and cultural studies consider popular productions' capacity to shape the opinions of millions of people and the way they understand the world (Sharp 1996, Dodds 2006, Power and Crampton 2007, Dittmer 2010). Among them, geopolitics scholars concentrate on popular culture's potential to influence identity construction and geographic imaginations of the masses. Further, they pay special attention to popular culture's ability be it in films, political cartoons, magazines, etc. to abridge the complexity of social interactions and to simplify disorderliness of world politics into a binary form such as 'us' against 'them' or 'good' versus 'evil'. Popular geopolitics writers argue that popular culture creates abstract and material environments within which familiar social, cultural and geopolitical meanings shape and are shaped by

millions of people who may have never met (Williams 2007, Dittmer and Dodds 2008). Hollywood, for example, almost always actively engages in making cultural and geographical representations of the West and the films that do not represent the West are produced with an orientalist mindset (Said 1978). In Hollywood films, American values such as individualism, sanctity of family, love of democracy, fighting for a right cause and the love of hard work are constantly re-produced and displayed for the interest of the world as the values of other nations are made secondary and 'other' (Toal 2007). Especially, during the Cold War and post 9/11, Hollywood's involvement in projecting one-sided political, cultural, moral and geographical views for audiences was celebrated more than in other historical periods. Films like *Rambo* (1985), *Top Gun* (1986)*, Saving Private Ryan* (1998)*, Black Hawk Down* (2001), and *Behind Enemy Lines* (2001) successfully brought to consciousness for millions, American exceptionalism and its geopolitical responsibilities that parallel to the conjectural policies of current administrations (Dittmer 2010). Through Hollywood films, America's geopolitical visions and imaginations are effectively and repeatedly coded, presented with little or no emphasis on alternative mappings. *VWP,* which is produced outside of the Western world, came out to present itself as one cinematic representation that contests the very fundamentals of geopolitical understandings and geographic projections of the Middle East. At the beginning of the film, Polat Alemdar contests the idea of the state of Israel's territoriality and the notions of belonging and non-belonging in Jerusalem.

Figure 5-3: Polat arrives at an Israeli security checkpoint.

For his audiences and the Jewish state apparatuses, Polat re-affirms where Israeli home and homeland begins and ends through the conversations he makes throughout the film. When the soldier who is in charge of the border control asks Polat what brought him to Israel, he answers him by correcting his question: "I did not come to Israel – I came to Palestine" (Figure 5.3). With this sttement, Polat verifies that Palestine does not belong to Israel and draws our attention to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. In this way Polat engages in territorial correction and geopolitical remapping of Palestinian geography. He surely and directly tells the audiences who is the occupier and who is the occupied. Polat's verifications of the geography of occupation show similarity to a statement that the Turkish President gave at Colombia University in New York about Palestinian territories. To answer one of the questions of the students about comparison between Turkey's Kurdish population and Palestine, the President, Abdullah Gul stated:

> These two are different. Kurds are the citizens of Turkey. We have been living together for hundreds of years. There are Kurdish people in the Turkish cabinet. We are the equal citizens of the Republic of Turkey. But, Israelis and Palestinians do not come from the same nation. They are not

the parts of the same nation. Gaza does not belong to Israel. Palestinian territories do not belong to Israel. The struggle in Turkey and the struggle in the Middle East are not the same (Yeginsu 2010, Diplomacy section, ¶ 17).

Perhaps, Polat reaffirms the President's geopolitical presentment as well as engages in making of territorial truth. Short, bold and precise to the point, conversations throughout the film continually convey important messages for the audiences. These conversations confirm a rhetoric that is vibrant in the minds of millions in the Middle East. For example, conversations that take place during a dinner in Palestinian Abdullah's home reveal important messages about the Palestinian struggle over remarking the territories and homes.

ABDULLAH: God willing, I am going to build the second floor in a few months.

HIS WIFE: We built this place six times and Israelis demolished it six times and he is still talking about building the second floor. They will demolish it again.

MEMATI: Brother! You studied engineering, established a business and made money in Lebanon. Why did you still want to come back here [Palestine]?

ABDULLAH: Brother! If I leave, he leaves, and they leave, then who is going to stay here. This is our home, homeland.

MEMATI: Some will fight while some earn money to support the fighters

ABDULLAH: I want to spend my money in my homeland. Freely!

POLAT: Abdullah, if you knew that they were going to demolish your home, why do you insist to build it again?

ABDULLAH's MOTHER: If you give up resisting once, Israelis never let any one of us live here again.

It should be noted the film is deeply concerned about informing viewers that continues resistance is the only way to survival in Palestine and retain Palestinian homeland. In this sense, one can easily argue that the film *VWP* is about territoriality which deals with the human activities exercised on space and activities of controlling, defending, excluding or/and including the demarcated area (Cox 2002). Thus the film engages in not only the defense of Palestinian resistance, but also highlights and frames discourses justifying why Palestinians belong to the land, and are entitled to control of their home and homeland. Therefore the film acts as a cinematic document conferring rights and privileges to Palestinians concerning the land. The film also acts as a project by which 'place making' through contesting and delegitimizing Israeli control of Palestine and legitimizing Palestinian resistance is articulated.

In the film narration, territoriality is an abstract notion. Indeed, it is a very active, contested, practiced, and socially constructed process. It is practiced everyday and everywhere. Thus territoriality is as much about the control over/of the territory as it is about definitions, identifications, and demarcations regarding those territories. In this sense, the film also contests and redefines widely used spatial definitions such as danger, fear, street, home and jurisdiction that are associated with everyday life of Palestinians. The film makers pay special attention to contested terms and reproduced

meaning. This is evident in the film because of the way it constructs alternative representations of people and places as being just as important as controlling the territories. For example, conversations between Ahmet (a disabled Palestinian child) and Simone (a Jewish-American tour guide, in Figure 5.4), and between Palestinian security forces and Moshe's soldiers tell the audiences about what it means to be a Palestinian in Jerusalem and what it means to be a child in the street of Palestine. The conversations highlight how fear and danger are intertwined the definition of everyday place and space.

(These conversations take place at Palestinian Abdullah's home where Polat, his men and Simone are sheltered after the fight at a check point)

SIMONE: I have to go. I will need to go to my consulate [US consulate] to report what happened today.

POLAT: They are looking for you too.

SIMONE: Don't worry! I will explain everyone that you guys are innocent.

POLAT: Outside is dangerous.

SIMONE: Thanks for the hospitality [to Abdullah's family].

AHMET: Don't go outside. They will shoot you.

SIMONE: Why would they shoot me?

AHMET: They shot me.

SIMONE: Why?

GRANDMOTHER: They shot him when he was coming back from his school. They said there was a curfew. They shot whoever was on the street.

SIMONE: [After a pause for a minute] I am really sorry. This violence and cruelty has nothing to do with us. A real Jew does not do this.

Figure 5-4: Simone looks around nervously, scanning the streets.

The camera moves along with her in the dark streets of Jerusalem until a gun fires and screams of Palestinians are heard from the corner at the other end of the street. Everyone runs for their life. It was Moshe's men shooting randomly and trying to maintain the order. Right then, Palestinian security forces move in and stop Moshe's men:

PALESTINIAN POLICE: What are you doing here?

MOSHE's MAN: There are terrorists here. We are here to take them away.

PALESTINIAN POLICE: This is Palestinian soil, you have no jurisdiction. Take your men out of here immediately.

MOSHE's MAN: We enter any neighborhood we want.

(Moshe arrives)

PALESTINIAN POLICE: This is our soil; you and your soldiers get out of here.

MOSHE: I decide when and where will become whose soil.

Moshe reaffirms that he is the law and the Israeli army is not bound by any restrictions to cross over a boundary (Figure 5.5). He kills Palestinian security officers and move on his search for Polat and his men. Meanwhile he kills more Palestinians on the way.

Figure 5-5: Moshe and his men kill Palestinian forces and move on in search of terrorists.

In the following scenes, Polat and his men again engage in making territorial correction for the audiences about where the Palestinian land begins and ends. Memati has this conversation with Palestinian Abdullah as they look over the map of Palestine and Israel (Figure 5.6):

MEMATI: Brother! Tell me now, where is Palestine and where is Israel?

ABDULLAH: [By pointing out the map on the table] here is Palestine and there is Israel.

MEMATI: Sure brother! But, isn't this Palestine an autonomous state? What are Israelis doing here?

ABDULLAH: They only gave the name, not the land.

Figure 5-6: Abdullah points the map of Palestine

In this dialogue, *VWP* reminds the viewers that Palestine not only exists on the ground, but it is also demarcated land on the map. The film takes the audiences into the world of cartography and suggests that Palestine is real and objective terrain because it can be mapped, and maps mirror reality objectively. The scene also reaffirms that the Palestinian cause is a struggle for survival and human rights because the land and

people of that land exist on the map and on the ground. In this sense, what the film attempts to do is to place Palestinians in their homeland by giving absolute locations of Palestine and pointing out the coordinates of Palestinians on the ground to establish a cartographic discourse by which Palestine and its people become unquestionable, scientific and natural elements of cartography.
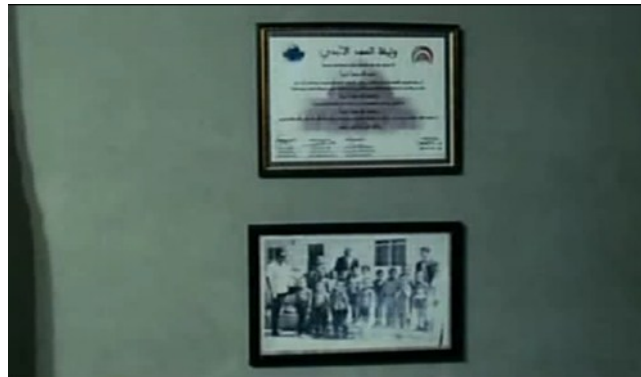
Figure 5-7: Camera captures selections of wall pictures from Abdullah's home.

The filmmakers continue reproducing Palestinian territories, but this time through the lenses of camera in addition to filmic conversations. Camera slowly, but not randomly, moves around the corners' of Abdullah's home. It captures children playing, sending a message that these children are the future Palestinians and cannot be erased from the Palestinian map or the land. Panning through the house captures pictures of Abdullah's family and a certification that confirm the certainty of the past and the continuation of the present in the same frame. Figure 5.7, for example, does not only register Abdullah's past, but also Palestine's and inseparableness of the two. Additionally, the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the background of the blurred certification above and the picture of Abdullah's family below it tells us that Palestine, as a homeland, comes first. In other words, this film rejects a country without a people and the idea of

emptiness of the land.   Through the images captured by camera, the filmmakers reaffirm that Palestine is not "a land without people for a people without a land" (Said 1992, p. 9).

Figure 5-8: The script says in Arabic: "I love you, Palestine". Translated by Rana Jawarneh.

Similarly, the key holder in Figure 5.8 remains to be one of the most important objects that camera captures in Abdullah's home. On the key holder, which is carved as a key indicating Palestinians' lost homes, it says: "I love you, Palestine". The key as a symbol tells the story of Palestinians' lost homes under the occupation and communicates with the audience that the story is still alive hoping that someday Palestinians will go back to their homes. The image of the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the handle demonstrates that Jerusalem (where the mosque is located) is a place where every Palestinian possesses the key for and, thus, has right to enter regardless of their distance. On the other side of the key, there is the figure of the child, Handala, who gives his back to us and belongs to a famous exiled Palestinian cartoonist, Naji Al-Ali. The figure is now the official logo of the Commission for Freedom and Justice Through Humor (najialali.com 2007). In Al-Ali's words this child, "is barefoot like many

children in refugee camps… an icon… and his hands behind his back are a symbol of rejection of all the present negative tides in our region" (najialali.com 2007, Work, Interests, and Philosophy section, ¶ 7). The camera does not capture these images (playing children, pictures on the wall, and the key holder) in a random manner. Along with other scenic documents, these images establish a framework in which the state of belonging and the ownership of the land are reproduced. Hence, every Palestinian has the right to live in and fight for their home/land.

In another scene, the film highlights Palestinians' emotional attachment and visceral connection to their land when Moshe orders Abdullah's home to be demolished on top of the disabled boy, Ahmet (Figure 5.9). After the home is demolished while Ahmet is inside the home, his grandmother pulls through the guards and crawls toward the rubbles as she helplessly cries out:

-Ahmet! My Ahmet! God is with you. You sleep in peace. Don't worry! Where you lay is a Palestinian soil.

Figure 5-9: A bulldozer is demolishing Abdullah's home his son inside.

The film continually accentuates this geopolitical discourse that the fight in Palestine is not only over the history (the Promised Land), but it is also over the geography (the Homeland). In this sense, the film continues to embody Palestinian land with memories, attachments and stories while it carries on the struggle against such a project of de-Arabizing and Judaizing the Palestinian territories.

However, *VWP* makes one thing very clear to its audiences: there are two types of people in Israel. This trope is seen in many other action/thriller cinema films. There are 'bad' Israelis like Moshe (corrupt and very cruel) and the 'good' Jews as in the example of Simone. Without depicting Israel as the place of torture and inhumanity in sweeping generalizations, the film parallels the genre politics of action/thriller films. It represents Israel as a state that is hijacked by religious fanatics with Zionist colonialists striving to establish the greater Jewish state where there is no space for non-Jews. According to the film, there are Jewish people who, in contrast, believe in universal human rights, Palestinians' rights to exist and the co-existence. A Jewish-American, Simone, portrays this exceptional part of Israel and Jews while Moshe is classified as one that respects no tolerance of non-Jews. (These conversations take place before Ahmet was killed by Moshe.)

AHMET: Grandma! Simone is scared.

GRANDMOTHER: Why is she scared?

AHMET: Because she is a Jewish. She thinks that she will be killed here [East Jerusalem] because of that [her identity].

GRANDMOTHER: Those who torture us are our enemy not the Jewish people. No one will or can touch her here.

The certainty and fortitude in grandmother's voice makes Simone to put her head down indicating that she is ashamed to be a Jewish or at least ashamed of how the Jewish state treats to Palestinians. The film makes the point that Israel is the one that ignores the human aspects of Palestinian geography and history. Indeed throughout the film, there is no single sign that implies Palestinians deny geographical and historical existence of Israel all together. There are even numerous references to defective work of some orthodox Jews who infiltrated in Israeli military in the film. This highlights that Israel is as legitimate an entity as Palestine is in the promised land. The film repeatedly makes the point that this land belongs to all occupants including Palestinians, Israelis and others, but the idea of 'promised land' is a false idea and an obstacle to the permanent peace in the region. To enforce this geopolitical statement, the film approaches the Sheikh's (spiritual leader of a Tariqah) knowledge and wisdom. Similar to the Wisdom of Solomon, the Sheikh characterizes the problem:

SHEIKH: I have been thinking for a long time about why these people [Israelis] are torturing Palestinians. I have realized that their fear has forestalled their rationality and conscience. They have gotten in a condition wherein they count all non-Jews as the enemy of Jewish people. Islam is a religion of peace. On the land that we live today, the Jews, Christians and Muslims have all lived in a harmony for centuries.

VWP also interrogates Jewish identity and opens it up for cinematic discussions in which the film attempts to redefine who is a 'real' Jew and who is not. Parallel to the binary thinking through which peoples, places and cultures are identified opposite of each other, this film reproduces the Jewishness in two forms: a good Jew and a bad Jew. Thus the ideal Jerusalem should resemble to that of Saladin's time when Christians, Muslims and Jews lived in a harmony under the reign of Islamic kingdom. In this sense, the film frames that the bad Jews are those who immigrated from Europe and elsewhere to establish the Greater Israel Kingdom, which stretches from the Mesopotamian Valley to the Sinai Desert at the expense of other nations and peoples at any cost. And what makes these bad Jews bad is that they exclude everyone, except those who believe that the world will fall under the rule of this new Great Israel as described in the Old Testament. Dialogues between Simone and Moshe reveal details of the film's binary thinking and question what Jewishness is and is not.

> SIMONE: I witnessed all the crimes that you committed. You will explain them in the court. I am going to watch you as long as I live. You must know that the half of my family are lawyers.

> MOSHE: Your parents should be ashamed that they have a daughter like yourself.

> SIMONE: You embarrass all Jewish people. Torah says 'do not kill'.

> MOSHE: Wrong! It says 'do not kill Jews'.

> SIMONE: I don't want to discuss Judaism with you. You are not a Jew.

MOSHE: You are an idiot who doesn't know how this country is established. You don't deserve to live but you are a registered Jew, so one Jew is one Jew. [To guards] Take her way so that she can learn Jewishness.

Certainly with these sorts of dialogues, *VWP* intends to uncover the presumed characteristics of current Israeli sentiments and some of the main intentions that are hidden from people by making a Jewish-American citizen (Simone Levy) talk. The film repeatedly makes this Jewish-American woman talk as an insider (and outsider) who has been able to witness the story of both sides. Through her conversations, the film attempts to define the 'state of Israel' which can be understood as a political unit, a democratic country in which all the citizens are equal as opposed to the 'Jewish state' which refers to the essentialization of ethnicity and religion. Hence, her job as an insider/Jew is to convince the viewers that not all Israelis are the same as Moshe and to make sure that she successfully differentiates the real innocent Jews from those bad Jews who do not compose the mainstream population. But, she is not very successful in completing her task:

SIMONE: Mister Administrator, you cannot hold me here [prison]. I am an American citizen. Please let my embassy come and get me out of here. If I am going to be trailed, I want to be trailed in my country.

ADMINISTRATOR: This is your country. Your last name is Levy. Don't you know what this noble name means?

SIMONE: I am not going to learn the history of my parents from you. If you know my last name, then, you should know who I am too.

ADMINISTRATOR: I know very well who your parents are. [Pointing a book] open the page 216. There, it is written what your grandfather went through in Poland, and it tells in what conditions he sent your father and mother to the United States.

SIMONE: My grandfather did not die just because you could kill people easily here. My grandfather was killed by murderers like you. Have you found any single Jew who was killed by an Arab in Poland?

ADMINISTRATOR: It is not easy to find a home to homeless Jews. Arabs don't want us here, here on our soil- the Promised Land.

SIMONE: It is a lie. Yes, before no one was recognizing Israel, but now everyone recognizes Israel. Those who live here are suffering only because of your actions [Figures 5.10 and 5.11].

ADMINISTRATOR: And they will suffer more. Even rats learn where to go and where not to go by suffering. Only animals learn by suffering.

It is noticeable that the lines between the good and the bad and between the facts and artifacts are very clearly drawn within the dialogues in the film. And it is also important to notice that conversations do not last long. Rather, they tend to be short, precise, simple and memorable for the purpose of delivering the message so that they are unequivocal.

Figure 5-10: Moshe's army moves in Palestinian neighborhood to capture Polat and his men and destroys everything that stands in between his targets.

Figure 5-11: Palestinians throwing stones at Israeli tanks.

The film *VWP* does more than make territorial corrections. It (re)negotiates and challenges the 'territorial truth' which tends to operate within the realm of imagined geographies of the Promised Land. As Quiquivix and Curti point out, Israel repeatedly engages in methods of producing 'territorial Truth' by applying imagined geographies of Israel to establish territorial legitimacy formulated within the rhetoric of the 'Promised Land' (Quiquivix and Curti 2011). In this writing, the Promised Land corresponds not only to the given geographic locations that stretch beyond the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan Valley, but the term also accentuates the divine

pledging of the land by God to the decedents of Jacob. Imagined geographies by no mean are fictional or fabricated, or as Said highlights, they are never the products of purely cognitive operations (Said 1978). Rather, they are concrete, substantial, and indeed real (Al-Mahfedi 2011). For Al-Mahfedi (2011), imaginative geography is in effect "a precondition for the politics of territorial conquest" (p. 22). Alone the same line of reasoning, referencing Nadia Abu El-Haj, Quiquivix and Curti pay attention to Israel's "obsession with uncovering Jewish archeological artifacts as a practice through which national identity-and national rights- have long been asserted" (Quiquivix and Curti 2011, p. 42). The authors cite Meron Benvenisti's study of early Zionist cartography and its production of 'white patches' on the mental maps of Jewish immigrants in Palestine, to argue that Israel often engages the politics of place-making through registering material and imagined productions over occupied Palestinian territories. In Al-Mahfedi's words, "such conquests of territory begin with the practice of inventing new meanings about territory and re-imagining systems of sovereignty on the landscape" (Al-Mahfedi 2011, p. 23). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for example, makes similar attribution to this material and its imagined production of Israeli territorial legitimacy during his speech at the United Nations in 2011. In his speech, he re-affirms the very Jewishness of the state and its people's right-to-exist, right-to-control the holy land, ancientness of the Jewish aspiration and registration over the Promised Land. He states:

> In my office in Jerusalem, there's an ancient seal. It's a signet ring of a Jewish official from the time of the Bible. The seal was found right next to the Western Wall, and it dates back 2,700 years, to the time of King Hezekiah. Now, there's a name of the Jewish official inscribed on the ring in Hebrew. His name was Netanyahu. That's my last name. My first name,

Benjamin, dates back a thousand years earlier to Benjamin -- Binyamin -- the son of Jacob, who was also known as Israel. Jacob and his 12 sons roamed these same hills of Judea and Sumeria 4,000 years ago, and there's been a continuous Jewish presence in the land ever since.

And for those Jews who were exiled from our land, they never stopped dreaming of coming back: Jews in Spain, on the eve of their expulsion; Jews in the Ukraine, fleeing the pogroms; Jews fighting the Warsaw Ghetto, as the Nazis were circling around it. They never stopped praying, they never stopped yearning. They whispered: Next year in Jerusalem. Next year in the promised land.

As the prime minister of Israel, I speak for a hundred generations of Jews who were dispersed throughout the lands, who suffered every evil under the Sun, but who never gave up hope of restoring their national life in the one and only Jewish state (Netanyahu 2011, at the United Nations).

The Prime Minister's talk surely confirms again the authenticity of the territorial claim and concreteness of the imagined geography of the Promised Land, which helps to legitimize the idea of the 'territorial truth'. The talk also indicates that Israeli authorities and geo-graphers do not only engage in the politics of place-making (re-writing the geography) in Palestine, but they also treat the Palestinian land as an empty land that has been awaiting Israeli occupation and ownership for centuries. Unless this Promised Land is fully Jewishinazed, this land will stay orphaned and unprotected. As Said notes, it is about struggle over Palestinian (in)visibility (Said 2003). Or as Dabashi highlights "at the core of the Palestinian historical presence is thus a geographical absence" (Dabashi 2006, p. 10). The *VWP* comes out to stir a discussion about the very Jewishness of the land and contests the idea of Jewish registration of Palestinian land as the Promised Land by trying to articulate a counter-narrative and counter-territoriality. It questions the legitimacy of the idea of occupied land and neutrality of the Jewish settlements on the Palestinian territories. For example, when Polat Alemdar is reminded that he could not make it out of the Promised Land, he replies: "I don't know what part

of this land has been promised to you but I promise you six feet under". Similar to this statement, *VWP* frequently states Israeli occupied land is a contested and unregistered place in the eyes of international community and underlines the politics of dispossession. Therefore this film can be presented as an attempt to remake and (re)document where the Palestinian and Israeli people belong. It is also a cinematic attempt to contribute to the Palestinian cause and help to justify Palestinians' struggle over the geography as well as struggle to take over the hijacked imaginations of the people of the land. Put differently, *VWP* is a geopolitical manifesto to reshape what is popularly known to be Palestinian and Israeli home-land. As Campbell and Yanik argue, this film successfully reproduces material and imaginative representations of border, threat, and danger (Campbell 2003, Yanik 2009). In this framework, *VWP,* as a private-sector cultural and commercial enterprise, reconstructs symbolic representations of the Palestinian borders and commits to decipher Israeli geopolitics by making territorial truth. It contests the very idea of the completeness of the state of Israel and its rhetoric over the Promised Land. Therefore, it surely challenges popular geopolitical imaginations of Palestine-Israel borders, and underlines the arbitrariness of the Promised Land and Israel's geographical registrations over the Palestinian land (Figure 5.12). Borrowing Massad's, words, the filmmakers have, in part, succeeded in deploying and instrumentalizing the film *VWP* as a weapon of resistance in the international arena and infiltrating this bastion of Zionist power slowly (Massad 2006).

Figure 5-12: The film mocks with the United Nations' attitude toward Palestine via messages on the walls of war-like scenes.

5.4 Turkish geopolitics in *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*

Since the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States and the US's involvement in the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Turkey's geopolitical position in the Middle East became more critical than ever. The west's war on terrorism and the ideology that feeds terrorism necessitated Turkey's involvement in any attempt to build global peace and fight against authoritarian regimes of the Middle East (Fuller 2008). After the current ruling party, Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002, Turkey went through tremendous changes. These included social, political, military, and economic changes. Inspired by conservative and liberal ideologies and supported by the majority of citizens, the AKP brought an alternative geopolitics in the Middle East and new philosophy of doing international relations with other nations. For example, in 2005 the AKP successfully managed to open negations for accession with the European Union and pushed domestic political and institutional reforms to comply with Copenhagen Criteria. The AKP administration also stabilized the financial sector and worked on privatization of the state assets making the country largest economy seventeenth in the world after China (Uygur 2010). These and similar domestic

159

achievements gave Turkey the confidence it needed at home and enabled it to transfer its domestic self-confidence to its international relations. For instance, as the architect of Turkey's recent foreign policy, Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, implemented foreign policies that were independent and more assertive compared to other countries in the region, pursuing a policy that was "a proper combination of realism and idealism" (Schleifer 2010, p. 2) incorporating some parts of Machiavelli and Rumi (Rumi is a 13th century Islamic philosopher). Davutoglu's foreign policy vision, for instance, stretched from Central Asia to Bosnia and from Ukraine to Africa and the Middle East, emphasizing Turkey's cultural and historical ties with other states and its geographic advantages to pursue a more active foreign policy. This vision in many cases merged independent, nationalistic, Islamic, pan-Turkish, global and Western notions (Schleifer 2010).

Diplomatically, the AKP administration has actively engaged its neighbors. Turkey has played a mediating role between war-torn Pakistan and Afghanistan, Russia and Georgia, and between the west and Iran in addressing the Iranian nuclear efforts. This brought the attention of the international community to Turkey's position in the Middle East as a pivotal state and a regional actor in the post-9/11 geopolitical world. More importantly, Turkey as a country that embraces western ideologies, democratic institutions, universal human rights, and the rule of law, is understood to have the potential to be an important role-model state in the Muslim world, incorporating both Western values and Islamic life style. Therefore, Turkey's regional effort to stabilize peace and security in the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Caucasus are welcomed and supported by the European Union and the US, particularly after the so

called 'Arab Spring' social disobedience against one-man regimes. However, this is not to say that other regional and western actors welcome Turkey's regional politics all together. Skepticism about Turkey's regional aspirations remains. Turkey has potential in the minds of its leaders and increasingly its citizenry, as the heir of the Ottoman Empire, to become a leading figure in the Middle East, Balkan Peninsula, North Africa and Caucasus as a Muslim, democratic, and economically strong country. This critical role for Turkey is thought to be a necessary one and not an optional. Turkey, at least in the eyes of Turkish people, has always been the natural actor in these regions and is culturally connected with the nations of these regions. The AKP's rhetoric about geographical and historical togetherness along with the people's and popular media's embrace of these geographies, created a new socio-political and cultural atmosphere wherein new Turkish geopolitics found a position. Popular culture consumed in the Muslim-Arab world and in other nations helps Turkey become a visible destination for new economic, cultural and social openings. For example, many commentators find strong correlation between the numbers of Arab tourists in Istanbul and the popularity of Turkish soap operas in the Arab countries (Cheviron 2009).

Figure 5-13: A Palestinian looks through a display of cushions featuring the faces of Turkish actors Noor and Muhanad in a shop in the West Bank town of Hebron.
Source: Expatica.com (AFP photo by Hazem Bader)

It should be noted that cultural productions do not only function as a tool for attracting tourists to Turkey but also functions as a medium for Turkey's geopolitical visions in the consumer countries. A film such as *VWP* is a great example of a popular production that can characterize, represent, and legitimize Turkey's recent geopolitical ideas through the circulation and reproduction of meanings in domestic and foreign film markets. In other words, this film expands Turkey's geopolitical affairs beyond the state's formal boundaries to perhaps the borders of the former Ottoman territories. By doing this, the film reproduces the geopolitical closeness between Turkey and Palestine and expands the zone of Turkey's geopolitical cultural influence into the Middle East. From that perspective, the Palestinian issue becomes no longer Palestinian or Arab. Palestine and its problems become internal problems for Turkey and Turkish people. In this respect, Polat's and his men's departure for Palestine, as Turkey's best trained special agents, should not be understood as a coincidence or be read to be motivated by

simple humanism. These men go to Palestine seeing Palestine as Turkey's backyard. In their journey, they never get confused or uncomfortable even though they have never been in Palestine. It is clearly demonstrated that this land is not a foreign land to Turks. Indeed, the film does not show Polat and his men nervously wandering around Jerusalem like tourists or asking anyone for directions. By contrast, they look very familiar with Palestinian streets, bazaars, people and customs. No one wonders who they are and what they are doing or even becomes suspicious about them. These people walk, talk and fight in the Palestinian streets as they walk, talk and fight in Turkey's streets. Israel's no-man's land becomes Turkish land. Even when Palestinian roads and streets become impassible to Palestinians, Polat and his men go wherever they wish, even if this requires killing many Israeli soldiers and results in many deaths among Palestinian civilians. If Israeli soldiers do not cooperate with Polat and his men, Polat finds another way to get what he wants because only these Turkish men can speak the language that Israeli forces understand, not the Palestinians. For example, when Israeli soldiers remind Polat and his men that on this land only Israelis have immunity and exceptions (when Abdulhey objects to the soldier's rejection of their entrance to Jerusalem because of their diplomatic passport and immunity), Polat and his men make their own exception and immunity to enter Jerusalem in their own way even when the roads to Jerusalem are closed to Palestinians.

Similarly to other television and film productions of *Valley of the Wolves*, the theme of this film is mainly about Turkey, Turkishness, and Turkish geopolitics more than it is about Palestine and the Palestinian cause. Through cinematic (re)presentation, this film highlights that Turkey is no longer a passive geopolitical actor in the Middle

East. Regardless of what Palestinians think, Turkey believes that Palestine is too important to be left to Palestinians and Arab states. Thus the idea is that Palestine is Turkey's business and Israel has to accept this fact. That is why the film pays greater attention to taking revenge on the Jewish general rather than voicing the Palestinian national drama, care for some conversations and random filmic scenes. In fact, Polat's and his men's mission is to kill the Israeli commander, Moshe, who was responsible for killing of nine Turkish activists, rather than to overthrow Israeli government or to re-galvanize the Palestinian intifada. More tragically, the overall characteristic of the narration in the film seems to be that Palestinian drama got caught in a camera accidentally. Therefore one cannot stop thinking that the film actively engages in the making of its own geopolitical meaning and often highlights the fact that Turkey cannot tolerate Israel's unilateral geopolitical actions in the region. Overtly the film makes the point that Palestine, as a geographical and historical entity, is more important and perhaps holier to Turks than the Palestinians who live in that geography and make the history. Otherwise, Polat and his men would not cause the death of so many Palestinian lives as they engage in heavy fights with Israeli soldiers to kill one man. In the film, more Palestinians die than Israeli soldiers while no Turks are killed. To be more accurate, I can argue that this film is more about Turkish drama (lost 9 people on the Mavi Maramara) than Palestinian drama (loses of men and women everyday). Hence, *VWP* is a filmic response to Israel's irresponsible actions and geopolitical aspirations in the Middle East. The film reminds Israel's practical geopoliticians that Turkey is no longer the country of post-World War I era and is no longer a passive actor dealing with its own domestic problems and striving to survive in a chaotic world order. In the eyes

of the film, Turkey naturally wants to come back to its glorious times to discipline hellions of former Ottoman subjects and secure peace on their/our land.

5.5 Vigilante hero and genre politics in *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*

Es, in his analysis of the film, *300* talks about 'vigilante hero' who is someone that embodies a character within which he/she takes the law into his/her hands to serve for a greater cause other than his/her own (Es 2011). He argues that vigilante hero is very often aligned with certain political ideas or politically ruling group. He further explains that how Leonidas in *300* embodies individualism vigilante behavior which draws parallel "with a neoconservative anti-statism combined with eugenistic superhero individualism" (Es 2011, p. 15). The vigilante hero engages in fictional activities within which borders between villains and heroes become visible to spectators. Moral codes and geopolitical visions of a country can be simplified and fitted for the viewers through the actions and positions of vigilante heroes. Es, referencing Miller's other works such as *Dark Night Returns* (1986), points out that vigilante heroes mirror neoconservative geopolitics by simplifying the moral universe in similar ways to that of neoconservative political groups. He notes the "caricaturized and reduced complexity of the 'real' world by neoconservatives resonates with the simplistic, clear-cut moral universe of Miller's comics" (Es 2011, p. 15).

Figure 5-14: Polat escapes a near-death.

In this framework, Polat Alemdar as the main character of *Valley of the Wolves* series and films embodies vigilante hero character that takes the law into his hands to fight against enemies of the state and fights for the greater mission while aligning, in part, with conservative political ruling groups. Even though the Polat-character was built when he was the main protagonist in earlier television series, his individualism, heroism, braveness and loyalty to the very core of Turkish state and the Turkish nation is remarkable in the film *VWP*. His sacrifice for the love of his country and people is one of a kind that resembles heroes of the past Turkish states (from Ottoman's Kara Murat to the Hun's Attila). He is always someone to be proud of and admired because he never fails the mission, harms the weak, or points the gun at his people or the state, and he forgives betrayers. In his world, life is about a struggle between the good guys and the bad guys and his job is make sure that bad guys are weeded out without disturbing the order. In order to stop bad guys from dividing the country and harming ordinary citizens, taking the law into his hands is necessary because, to put it simple, the good for the whole community is always greater than small benefits for individuals. As the tagline on the film *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* says 'those that think of their end

166

cannot become a hero', Polat never hesitates risking his own life for the greater public good (Figure 5.14). Indeed we learn from the *Valley of the Wolves* series that Polat Alemdar is the son of an evil mafia man but kidnapped by a Turkish intelligence agent to be trained to –slowly and from the inside- ruin the Secret Council ruling Turkey. To do this task, Polat undergoes several plastic surgeries to hide his identity completely. In doing so, he completely moves away from his past, friends, family and all acquaintances, which may have become an obstacle in completing his tasks. In the film *VWP*, it is not completely clear whether Polat and his men are sent by Turkish government to Israel to kill Moshe per se, but what is clear is that they always have some sort of attachment to the government. In this case, for example, they carry a diplomatic passport as they enter Israel. This tells us that even if they are not sent by Turkish government directly, as part of a self-assigned task, they go to Israel to kill Moshe. This should be interpreted as it is a mission to take fictional revenge on a non-fictional event during which nine Turkish activists on the Mavi Marmara flotilla (Figures 5.15, 5.16, and 5.17) were killed and many others wounded under the command of Moshe Ben Eliezer.

Figure 5-15: A view of the Mavi Marmara

Figure 5-16: Press conference on the deck of the ship before the attack.

Figure 5-17: Clash between Israeli soldiers and activists.

It is also important that we read the film with its political-action subgenre categorization in which the film can be positioned. Related to the first reading, the film should be read with the audience's expectations of the protagonist associated vigilante hero behavior in a fiction film. Generally, genre refers to the way the story is told and includes some sets of conventions such as recurring themes and situations (Barsam 2004). This is critical because the audience expectations of the protagonist, Polat Alemdar, can easily fit in this political-action film (Figure 5.18). As seen in an action film, cast within *VWP* rely on their physical abilities more than their skill in speaking.

Figure 5-18: Moshe loses; Polat wins. Another
action scene from the film**.**

There are few lines written for the actors, and these lines are generally to explain

the meaning of operations in the film and/or to underline the film's political messages to

be absorbed by the viewers. For example, when Polat says 'I did not come to Israel, I

came to Palestine', viewers can easily make visual connections between international

politics, geography and territorialization in the film. In this sense, we understand that

subgenre films can follow ideological and geographical conventions. As Barsam points

out, conventional genre film makers use "genres to arouse and then adapt audiences'

ideological expectations" (Barsam 2004, p. 46). In the film *VWP*, Polat and the

remaining characters reinforce cultural attributions, spatial stereotypes and gender roles,

fulfilling the expectations of the viewers. For instance, one of the main female

characters in the film, Simone Levy (Nur Aysan) fits this subgenre action film

categorization wherein Simone is portrayed as helpless and needing to be saved by

Polat Alemdar from being killed by her own nation's soldiers. In the film, she acts as an

ordinary Jewish-American citizen, guiding American tourists to visit historical sites in

Jerusalem until she is stopped at one gate where she meets with Polat Alemdar. At the

gate, she is refused entry to Israeli controlled Jerusalem and that is when she gets in

trouble with Israeli authorities. Her first reaction to this arbitrary decision is to take the border patrol officer's name to make a complaint with his superiors. But rational reaction is soon discovered to be an empty struggle because in Israel nothing is guaranteed and no one has privileges except real Israelis. From that point on her destiny is in the hands of Polat Alemdar. Through the eyes of Simone, viewers witness struggles that Palestinian women go through and what it means to be woman in Palestine. And in Palestine, a hybrid geography, is embodied in Simone's feminized, alienated, and distanced body. But Simone, similar to the trapped Palestine, cannot operate guns nor can she escape from trouble on her own. She needs someone to save her perhaps her Saladin from Zionist attacks. Polat, a Turkish Saladin, saves her, and once again Jerusalem becomes free of Moshe, a crusader. Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh's statement about Palestine's need for new Saladins therefore is not a random statement during his visit to Turkey. As explored more in the interview with Cuneyt Aysan later in this study, Polat emerges as the new virtual Saladin.

5.6 Summary

Borrowing Yanik's words, the controversy about *VWP* is long over, but its imprints on Turkish cinema and popular culture make this film worth writing about (Yanik 2009). To the best of my knowledge, until today no other Turkish popular cinema and television productions beside *Valley of the Wolves-Ambush, Iraq, Palestine and Gladio* have overtly emphasized geopolitical topics or heavily adopted nationalist elements in their narrations. Few other Turkish films utilized popular culture to set geopolitical agendas that problematize the regional geopolitical order in the Middle East. Moreover, no other political-action films produced in Turkey fictively adopted Turkish geopolitics

into their stories successfully to simplify Turkey's friends and foes for the audiences. In this sense, *VWP* is one of the most interesting pieces of popular culture used as both an entertainment apparatus and a political tool, in the history of Turkish cinema. *VWP* as a political-action film, incorporating geopolitical representations, helps "Turks envision themselves, their country's and other countries' place in the new global (dis)order, the issues that they perceive as a threat or danger, their yearnings and longings" (Yanik 2009, p. 167). In this framework, this chapter provided a reading of the geopolitical meanings and representations squeezed between the lines of conversations and between the scenes of actions in *VWP*.

CHAPTER 6: TWO INTERVIEWS: DEFENDING PALESTINE IN THE VALLEY OF THE WOLVES

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I bring in the voice of two interviewees. The first person is from the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) [25] organization. This organization was responsible for internationally organizing nine fleets of human rights activists including three from Turkey, two from England, and one from Kuwait, Algeria, Greece and Ireland, to break the Gaza blockade in 2010. An interview with the IHH activist is important because any investigation about a cinema product without including other factors that influence the site of production would be an incomplete study. However, it is impossible to complete a study to account for all factors of the production site. But considering that this individual was a first-hand witness for the Mavi Marmara attack and a consultant during the production of *VWP*, the interview certainly enriches this study. He was also one of those IHH activists who was asked to attend the premier of the film. I talked to him about cinema and what to make of a film that narrates internationally recognized human drama in Palestine and a film that highlights the codes of Turkish geopolitics in the Middle East.

---

[25] The IHH is an Islamic organization that is based in Turkey and is a member of many international organizations including the United Nations' Economic and Social Council and the Organization of Islamic Conference's Humanitarian Forum (however, some states such as the United States and Israel do not recognize this organization). The aim of this humanitarian organization is to deliver relief help following wars and natural disasters around the world. They build schools and hospitals in some poor African and South East states and provide first aid to communities that are hit by natural disasters. Haiti is one example of their humanitarian work after the earthquake of 2010.

In the second part of the chapter, I include an interview with one of the scriptwriters of the film *VWP*, Cuneyt Aysan. In doing this, I aim to better understand the production site of the film which constitutes an important part of the encoding of messages in the text. With this interview I expect to shed light on the production end of the film and how the scriptwriter understands Turkey's geopolitical role in the Middle East and the *VWP*'s role in mediating Turkish geopolitics.

6.2 Imaginations are rehearsals of realities

This interview highlights that cinema is one piece of an account that provides a map of Turkey's geopolitical vision in the world. As the interviewee notes in the following conversation, *VWP* production is one part of a series of events that give important clues about Turkish geopolitics and Turkish people's understandings of regional affairs. For him, developments in Turkish cinema, especially the conservative cinema, should not be investigated without taking into consideration other socio-political parameters that surround Turkey. As he highlights in the interview, Turkish cinema should be read parallel to the geopolitical and economic developments in the last decade in the world and the Middle East. To him, we can only understand cinema products when we read them in relation to regional and global developments that give inspiration to their production. Thus our conversation touched on various but related topics from authenticity of the film to the roles of non-profit organizations in the film production. Our conversation was not structured and interruptions were kept to a minimum.

> *Moderator*: Was the IHH asked to provide first-hand information about the Mavi Marmara attack for the film?

Speaker: Yes, some of our friends from the IHH were interviewed by the film team. During this meeting, one of the scriptwriters, Raci Sasmaz, highlighted that one of the biggest intentions of this film was to contribute to this Palestinian cause.

VWP begins with the Israeli Special Forces' operation on the main ship, the Mavi Marmara that was carrying hundreds of passengers from all over the world. The film uses helicopter-viewed images that the state of Israel provided to the world press. It is clear that the stories are told by the Mavi Marmara activists are filmed. The actual site of the filming partly took place on the Mavi Marmara, after it was brought back to Turkey from Israel. Filming (taking some camera shots) in the actual ship indeed helped create publicity for the film.

Following this question, our conversations moved to the relationship between the current AKP government's emphasis on an extroverted Turkey and the increase in the conservative cinema productions that no longer constrain themselves with national or local borders or subjects. In other words, they make films that are transnational in terms of their narration and physical site of production. For example, the film *Five Minarets in New York* (2010) which tells the story about two Turkish anti-terror agents' mission to bring back a very dangerous Islamic leader, Dejjal, to Turkey. It is partly filmed in New York City. To note, this used to be the other way around. Meaning, Turkey mostly Istanbul, would host the foreign film companies and serve as the geographical background for foreign films. Here the speaker addresses the AKP's affects on cinema talks about non-profit organizations' role in expanding the horizons of cinematic and geopolitical imaginations.

Speaker: Of course, these are not so separable from each other. But, Turkish cinema's openings to the outside the borders of Turkey should not be automatically associated with the current government's foreign policies only. Non-profit organizations' years-long works should be included as well. Through these organizations, Turkish society became aware of the outside world especially the geography that we were familiar with once. For example, our people went to Afghanistan, Bosnia, Africa, and so on. Our people always have been interested in Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa. Being the heir to the Ottoman Empire necessitated this interest. And Palestine is just one out of these places. If films such as *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* and *Iraq* are interested in these areas, it is because our people are interested in these areas. Jerusalem is no different than Istanbul in the eyes of Turkish people. That is also why people support organizations such as the IHH and films such as *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine.*

From this statement it can also be inferred that Turkey's relationship with the former Ottoman territories are diverse. It would be too narrow to think we tie Turkey's opening to the former Ottoman territories within the realm of practical geopolitics and diplomatic relations. Different sectors such as non-profit organizations, transnational firms, and cultural organizations are also responsible for connecting the historical and geographical ties between these places and Turkey. Thus, the non-state actors' role in providing the webs of connections with former Ottoman subjects living outside of Turkey's formal boundaries is vital and should be counted as part of the soft diplomacy.

Films, of course, for this mission are extremely valuable. In this regard, *VWP* only enhances these historical and geographical connections. The interviewee highlights the functionality and geopolitical implications of exported Turkish cinema products by sharing his experience in Nigeria.

> *Speaker*: In the past, at borders we would be questioned longer than any other nationals. But today, many countries around the world welcome a Turkish passport. And people like this [attitude] when they are welcomed and treated humanely. Let me share with you a story of mine. When I was in Nigeria, I stayed in a hotel that was owned by a Lebanese man. When he saw my passport, he asked me if I watch *Valley of the Wolves* television series. First, I did not understand what he was talking about until then he showed me the entire CD collection of the episodes. And this was a Christian man. I think along with non-profit organizations, Turkish popular culture shares is actively represents Turkey. In other words, what Hollywood has accomplished that is what Turkish popular culture is achieving abroad today like brand naming Turkey.

However, the speaker avoids holistic explanations of how the international perception about Turkish passport has changed overtime and the nature of this change in relation to international diffusion of Turkish popular culture. He highlights possible effects of other parameters such as Turkey's growing economy, political instability in the country and Turkish people's increasing mobility. But, interestingly our conversation kept coming back to the Ottoman factors. All those socio-economic parameters would not make an extraordinary change immediately if Turkey was any

other country in the region. This assessment also became a sort of an essential point in understanding Turkey's role in the Middle East for many focus group participants saying that along with Turkish soft power, Ottoman influence in the region is critical. Although this assessment is not more than nostalgic in the minds of many, Turkey's past becomes an asset and opportunity rather than a burden. Conversations below highlight Turkey's recent position in the formerly colonized geographies and Turkish non-profit organizations' contributions to representing Turkey in those places. To state the matter differently, geopolitical and cultural representations of the non-profit organizations and the culture industry should not just be taken as effects; rather their activities abroad should be taken as causes and push factors by which Turkey becomes an active and extrovert state. In other words, cultural efforts of these civil societies in Turkey should not be underestimated as influencing the state to become active in the region.

> *Speaker*: Turkey and Turkish non-profit organizations are active in many countries. For example, they restore historical buildings such as mosques and bridges, send humanitarian aid and organize cultural events together with local people in countries such as Bosnia, Kazakhstan, and Albania. These things were used to associate with developed countries like the US, England or France, but now Turkey is one of them. Passive and introvert Turkey has been agitating Turkish people for almost a century. Now people are excited to see active and extrovert Turkey. This means that people move beyond their material and mental borders.

Moderator: Can we say that *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* is a cinematic way of saying sorry to former Ottoman subjects? It is to say that we are sorry, because we have ignored this geography for so long but we have not forgotten about you. From now on, Palestinian cause is our cause.

Speaker: Imaginations are rehearsals of realities. In Turkey, there is this hope: To embrace and unite the people of all these familiar geographies. This is my expectation too. Because, I went to these regions and I saw people oppressed, exploited and in hardship as others enjoy their high life standards. And this upsets me. For example, I went to many parts of Africa. In those countries I saw 400-year-old roads that go to the ports. These are the only roads that people still use today. It still feels like slaves are being exported on these roads. Perhaps not slaves are moving on these roads today but this time their natural resources are moving as new commodities and goods are coming back for more exploitation [through consumptions of western goods]. Here, our people also see these people are still enslaved by these new incoming products and imperial economic policies. In this atmosphere, empathy emerges. This empathy feeds our imaginations. And our imaginations, first, are reflected in our collective culture such as art, cinema, music, and work of scientific investigations. Then these imaginations become realities. Therefore, *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* is the reflection of an imagination by the cinema, which is yet to be turned into the reality.

It is clear that the speaker understands the visual forms of art and popular culture such as *VWP* as the conditions of possibility for a visceral change and prerequisite of enhancement in conditions of human beings in the colonized world. He also sees that non-profit organizations are no different than cinema products in shaping Turkey's international openings and Turkish peoples' geopolitical imaginations that go beyond their mental and material boundaries. He understands that the focus should be paid to the subject, Palestine. But it is the lens of a camera that captures the subject and brings it to a focus of reality by the help of the light. In other words, reel and real are very much intertwined concepts in our visual world. Thus the activist values the camera when it captures the reality and realized the imaginations.

6.3 Encoding *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*

This section of the study is critical for several reasons. First, an interview with one of the scriptwriters of the film can help us understand the production site of the message. Second, without bringing the voice of the production site, I would not be able to compare and contrast what is conveyed, negotiated, or rejected about the film messages by solely investigating the consumption site. Thus this interview enabled me to better understand what is decoded by the audiences.

In the later chapters, I will give voice to the site of consumption of the film. In those chapters, I will spend a large amount of time on audiences' interpretations of the cinema text because, in the end, meanings are only meaningful when they are interpreted by the audience and recycled into the meaning-making system again. But, my curiosity does not end with the audiences' interpretations of the film. I want to go beyond the decoding process to see what geopolitical imaginations are employed in the

production of such film. Additionally, voicing the production site can help me better understand the model that scholars from cultural studies apply in analysis of meaning-making processes and give important clues about textual codes that are embedded in the film. In other words, conversations with the scriptwriter can illuminate dominant codes of the text that is argued "supports the existing political, economic, social, and cultural order" (Rose 2007, p. 19).

Figure 6-1: Polat Alemdar (left) and Cüneyt Aysan (right)
Source:http://www.panafilmforum.com/showthread.php/131
15-Cuneyt-Aysan

Following conversations with Cuneyt Aysan, who was one of the scriptwriters for the Pana film company, provide important clues about the site of production. Along with Raci Sasmaz and Bahadir Ozdener, he wrote several film scripts and action stories for television series such as *Valley of the Wolves-Gladio, Ambush and Palestine*. In this sense, he was very much qualified to speak about the site of production. My interview with Aysan took place in the main office of the Pana Film in Istanbul. Neither his

comments nor my questions followed a specific order or included any previous settings for the interview.

> *Moderator*: What was the aim of this film [*Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*]?
>
> Cuneyt Aysan: The film's priority is this geography, particularly the Middle Eastern geography and then the whole world. With this film, we wanted to take people's attention to the region's trouble spots [Palestine]. We believe that without establishing a stable peace in this part of the geography, there won't be a peace in the world. In addition to that, we believe that there is this human tragedy and genocide on this soil. And if this tragedy and the genocide continue, the world peace won't be possible or the negative perception of Muslims toward the West will not change radically. A little bit, this is what we wanted to illuminate in *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*.

The scriptwriter's announcement is crucial in a way because a possible parallelism can be seen in between what is decoded and what is encoded. As repeatedly stated by many focus group participants Turkish audiences draw similar conclusions about the messages that the film delivers which is to say that Palestine is the place of continuing human tragedy which affects the peace process in the Middle East. Thus for the Turkish audiences, this film aims to cinematize the Palestinian cause by utilizing the tools of filming and entertainment. Aysan's rationalization for making such a film can tell us that the political views of the production about the Israel-Palestine issues are

similar to those of the majority of the survey results of this study (see Figure 7.5) indicate that a majority of the survey respondents believe that the root of the Israel-Palestinian problem is the state of Israel. In this sense, I can argue that the dominant coding as Hall and Morley note is at play, meaning that media enforce existing geopolitical views and order. From this statement, another important argument becomes observable as Gramsci points out hegemony becomes functional in a society in relation to the culture industry (Gramsci 1971). In other words, the film *VWP* functions in a way that political, social, and cultural order, as well as collective memory and knowledge about Israel and Palestine, is maintained without operationalizing any coercive power by the state. This film in a self-serving manner, tasks itself to solve or at least direct various actors' attention to the Palestinian cause in parallel with public discourse that exists in Turkey and the Middle East.

Aysan also highlights the power of media and their ability to influence minds and perceptions of millions. He is very aware of this aspect of the culture industry and overtly acknowledges that through *VWP,* negatively framed Palestinian perception by the Western media can be changed or at least challenged. He believes that the public opinion about the Israel-Palestine issue is oriented and manufactured by certain media. That is why he thinks that his assignment as the image producer is to unveil different possibilities of Palestinian perception even if he cannot reverse the negative image completely.

Aysan: Media perception is also important. Media always have the power
of presenting the oppressed as the cruel and the just as the unjust. If you
pay close attention to the information established about Israel and

Palestine, you will notice that this information is slanted and manufactured. The West understands that the struggle in Palestine is between the terrorizer and the legitimate state. But we want to change this perception.

The scriptwriter does not hide the political agenda of the film. He employs a mission to his film and that mission is to make changes if not on the ground, it will be in the minds of millions.

Moderator: In this respect, is the film successful?

Aysan: Even if one person sees the film, it means a success for us. Quantitative majority is not an important matter here; what is important is that how successful we are able to present an alternative version of the story objectively [he claims that the Western media portrays the Palestinian cause subjectively] if we cannot change the perceptions completely. As I said, we made this film to explain the problems of the region because the Western media are not approaching this issue objectively. Their approach has always been in orientalist ways.

Moderator: Isn't this approach also the slanted one? How different would be your opinion from that of Fox news', for example?

Aysan: In the end, we, too, are the children of this land but our approach is not a Turkish approach. We believe that the problem of this geography is the lack of justice. But for centuries we brought justice to this geography. We had established justice on this land in the past, for example, during the

reign of Saladin. So what we are saying here is that why not we provide justice in Palestine again and end the oppression of the powerful.

In the following conversation, it is clear that in the minds of the film makers, the peace project should start in the leadership of Turkey. Cuneyt Aysan's reference to the glorious times in the past indicates that Turkey's socio-political policies about the Middle East have to be compromised in order to provide security in the region and a prosperous life for all. The implied message is that the region's well-being is contingent to Turkey's role. As an important geopolitical actor in the region, Turkey, then, becomes an inevitable new center of justice, security and regional mentoring. This supports the idea that this film aids Turkey in promoting an extraterritorial agenda in the Middle East. Since the filmmakers advocate for greater geopolitical imaginations broadened beyond the comfort zone of the film audiences, I furthered the discussion by asking if the geography of the audiences also expanded beyond Turkey's boundaries and Turkish speaking population.

> *Moderator*: Which audience community is prioritized in this film, Turkish, Arab, etc?

> Aysan: I certainly believe this idea: A powerful Turkey means powerful Muslims. A rich Turkey means rich Muslims. Turk here should not be taken as a certain ethnicity. It should be read as how Europeans understood: a combination of Turk and Muslim. The two cannot be separated. Now, there is this successful Turkish experience on this geography that we cannot ignore. For this reason, of course, our starting

point will be our people because we live here, and then the Arab countries, and ultimately the entire world. But, because the borders are so artificial and media further disrupted these formal boundaries, our natural borders then include the boundaries of Libya and Kazakhstan and between the two. In other words, there is no project that foresees only the area of 787 thousand kilometers [the border area of Turkey]. This project addresses the entire geography from Bosnia to China. But why I say the priority should be given to the people of this geography is because Turkey is the driving force. Arab brothers are newly recovering. More or less, Turkey has the experience of 80 years. This makes us one step ahead of them.

Aysan argues that Turkey's leadership in the region is inevitable. To him, Turkey is not a transient lodger of the Middle East, Balkans or the other familiar geographies. Turkey is the natural inhabitant of these geographies, if not the owner. For that, it is natural and perhaps necessary to centralize Turkey in the making of the Middle Eastern geopolitics. In the absence of Turkey, neither Palestinian nor the Middle Eastern problems can be solved. This idea of necessitating Turkey's involvement in the remaking of Middle Eastern geopolitics is not Aysan's alone. The survey conducted for this study reveals similar conclusions in which 55 percent of the respondents believe that in the absence of Turkey, a fair solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict cannot be accomplished. And more, 35.7 percent of the same respondents indicate that Turkey is the only international actor that can be a fair mediator between Israel and Palestine (see Figures 7.11 and 7.13).

However, the very root of the argument which highlights the necessity of Turkey's leadership in the Middle East and is promoted by the film *VWP,* to some degree, seems to be problematic. What the film portrays and narrates seems to be promoting Turkish heroism and invulnerability. Therefore I furthered the discussion by invoking the idea that the film employs Turkish heroism and nationalism more than a caring about the Palestinian cause.

> *Moderator*: I am forming this question from the comments that the film viewers made. Considering the story and the filmic actions of these immortal three Turkish heroes, some audiences think that the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* is not so much about Palestine as it is about Turkey.

Before Cuneyt Aysan answers my question, the third person in the room (he is one of the characters in the television series, *Valley of the Wolves-Ambush*) challenged my question by asking another one:

> *The third person*: Pardon me! Aren't there the same things in American films?

His defensive reaction to my question showed that he was very uncomfortable with the question, and his response to my question with another question indicated that he automatically counted me as someone who questions Turkish cinema and judges its characters negatively compared to those of Hollywood.

> Aysan: There is nothing about Turkey's leadership there, but there is oppression and in turn there is this objecting [visualizing via cinema] this

oppression. Illumination occurs wherever Polat goes. Before Polat's arrival, those places were in dark and unknown. When those places are lightened then the oppression will become visible. Why Polat? Polat is a hero here and in Arab countries too. To me, he is a virtual Caliph. People also accept him as a Caliph, and wherever he goes people think that there is oppression and the hero is going there to eliminate that oppression even he does this in the virtual world. He is honoring the places and the people of those places by going there, so to speak.

Moderator: As you know, there are James Bond series and in every series he has different missions. During the Cold War, he fought against Communism. After September 11 terrorist attack, he fought against the dark organizations of the East and international terrorism. So we see these geopolitical shifts in James Bond scenarios according to the changing geopolitics in the world. Similar to this, we saw *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* then *Valley of the Wolves-Gladio* and then *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*. Are these *Valley of the Wolves* cinema series corresponding conjectural changes in relation to Turkey's changing geopolitics in the last decade?

Aysan: If our products are seen at that level, we would be very proud. Turkey's problem has always been this: Being a big nation with a short horizon. Foreign policy actors have always been an open sore of this nation. During the Cold War, they all said that 'we are defeated. We are a small country and so we have to accept being a spare tire of big countries. We cannot produce policies independently'. These actors always

measured everything from the vantage point of military power. They ignored the ability of the soft power. This era has changed. Along with military power, soft power has become effective too. They [foreign affairs actors] thought that boundaries were drawn in 1923 and that set everything for us. No! Borders never end there and won't end in the future. Beyond the 1923 borders, there are collective history, sorrow, experiences and victories. The 1923 boundaries are artificial and forced. When these artificial boundaries collapse, everything will come to its natural borders.

The scriptwriter challenges Cold War psychology that has long dominated Turkish foreign policy and the minds of actors. As discussed in earlier chapters (3 and 5), Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu also puts emphasis on the invalidity of these material borders and Turkey's willingness to nullify these artificial boundaries. Indeed Davutoglu in one of his speeches about Syrian crisis signals about Turkey's de facto exterritorial jurisdiction on Syria and notes that Syria cannot be left to its own destiny announcing that "Syria issue is our issue" (Cihan 2011, Politics section, ¶ 1). Parallel to what Aysan highlights, Turkey's foreign policies in the last ten years have been increasingly active and inclusive of problems and matters in the former Ottoman territories and places where there are Turkish imprints. Thus it is not surprising to see this discursive marriage in the language used by both popular culture and practical geopolitics. As discussed earlier in this study, cinema is a vital language that can be used to simplify and signify geopolitical visions and events of the world for the viewers. Moreover, cinema language helps practical geopoliticians to codify foreign policies and geopolitical priorities for the public comprehensibly. Thus, very often codes of cinema

and the state overlap to idealize favored national projects in the eyes of the public. For years, cinema has successfully played its role in this regard.

In the following conversation, Aysan continually references Turks' military victories in the past and geographies of justice in the former Ottoman territories. To him, the world is about fighting between the good and evil. To be on the good side of the history, symbolic figures have to be reproduced and popularized. Polat becomes one of those immortal cinema figures inheriting the genes of undefeated historical Turkish heroes like Alparslan who opened the doors of Anatolia to Turks and allowing Mehmet II (another hero whose story is also filmed, *Conquest 1453* in 2012) to take control of Constantinople in 1453. Thus, Polat is not just an actor to entertain the viewers. He represents Turkey and naturally the entire Islamic world.

> Aysan: James Bond is not one man; he is a symbol. He is the symbol of Britain. Polat is the same. He is not a man, he is a symbol. First, he is a Turkish hero and then he is a hero of the Islamic world. When he enters Iraq or Palestine, he does not go there alone. He goes there in the name of the entire Muslim world. By doing this, he tries to say when Muslims fight together, no one can resist against that force. An important thing to note is that this unites these geographies. When this unification is formed, then no other state would intervene in any Islamic geography. Polat has undertaken this mission [to unite Muslims]. What is seen virtually is the reflection of this mission. To come back to the main point, attention should be paid to what is behind this [Polat] metaphor.

Aysan believes that lack of heroism in this part of the world for years has caused collective disorder and weakness of will to question policies and practices imposed. For him a solution necessitates a collective education and awareness. In today's dynamic population, what can provide this education and awareness is cinema productions -films and television series. As one participant of the focus group discussions brought up earlier, the aim is to fight against the enemy with their own weapons and tactics. In the example of cinematic heroes, this geography can get rid of invaders and establish authority and order. Polat has accomplished it in the virtual world, so will others in the real world.

> Aysan: We provide an idol for people and say that we can do this because
> Polat did it. This might be virtually correct but our real heroes have done it
> in reality in the past.

Polat is not a simple character in this case. He is the symbol of resistance and the brand name of the success. Unlike James Bond, his mission is to defeat fears and self-despair in the minds of millions first so that possibility of conditions for defeating real enemies in real conditions becomes probable. This way Polat transcends any given boundaries and becomes a universal hero: A hero of hope, the past, and the present.

> Aysan: Why do you think a kid in Libya, Bosnia or Kazakhstan wears
> Polat's T-shirt? Because he also thinks that Polat is his hero?

Putting it differently, *VWP* or other cinema products by Pana Film are not merely produced to entertain people or provide economic benefits only. These entertainment sets are made to become a bridge between the modern and the traditional,

present and past, today and tomorrow, and here and there. These products are not random choice of art productions; they are made out of necessity, responsibility and imagination. It is clear from the scriptwriter's conversations that *Valley of the Wolves* is a phenomenon that connects generations and traditions. From the producers' point of view, this entertainment set is not only an alternative to Hollywood's favored cultural importations, but also alternative to the locally produced popular culture. For them, eighty years of disconnection between generations and traditions should be brought to the fore front of the people. That is why, in the film *VWP* Polat not only does combat against the Israeli general, but also he goes to the invocation in a mosque. And, that is why Polat takes a moment during ongoing full-speed action scenes to eat and make conversations with local people showing the viewers that the message is not only to kill an Israeli commander, but also to show that Polat is as superhero as an everyday man. As an (extra) ordinary model, he can successfully integrate many -the past and the present, history and geography, modern and traditional, and heroism and ordinariness- in one. Therefore, Polat and *Valley of the Wolves* cinema products effectively lay out the reference codes for Turkish people to reconnect with their glorious past in order to dominate the future.

> Aysan: There needs to be found new ways of recovering the taste [of power, glory] lost in the last 80 years. And *Valley of the Wolves* television series and cinema films are one of the vehicles to do this recovery. Here particularly the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* is to fix this disconnection. It functions as a kind of cable to reconnect generational disunity in history, identity, and culture [reference here is to the Ottoman

time and lost years of the republic]. It reconnects the past and the present. Because of this, *Valley of the Wolves* films and television series have been very successful. People said this: 'I know this taste from somewhere'. That is what we wanted to give to our viewers with our cinema films and weekly television series.

6.4 Summary

This chapter introduced two important interviews. Even though the first interview cannot be situated within the site of production per se, it still reveals important insights about how cinema culture and social developments can give each other a helping hand. This is to say that a cinema cannot expand its horizons in a closed society or in an introverted political atmosphere. If Pana Film is producing such a film, which includes regional tension spots beyond Turkey's formal boundaries, it is because Turkish people's geopolitical imaginations, mentally and materially, expand beyond the borders of the state also. Therefore we see that the interviewed activist constantly highlights the point that socio-cultural changes among the people of a country correspond to the developments in that countries fantasy culture. In other words, any cinema product cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration the socio-political developments in a given place and *VWP* is not immune to this argument. The film *VWP* is not more than cinematizing Turkish people's geopolitical imaginations, which resumes being rehearsals of realities in the eyes of the interviewee.

In the second interview with Cuneyt Aysan, I aimed to seek out the voice of an insider to better understand the geopolitical codes and coordinates employed in a cinematic text. The conversations with Aysan highlighted to some extent geopolitical

coordinates and cultural codes that the film *VWP* employed corresponds to the same map that the many viewers drew from the film highlighted in this study (see Chapters 7, 8, and 9). In this regard, the message that the film has sent is mainly encoded within the area of dominant coding. This is to say that the Mavi Marmara moment and Turkey's active involvement in the Middle Eastern geopolitics helped Turkish audiences decipher the geopolitical and cultural codes in ways similar to how they are inscribed in the film *VWP*. Therefore, realizing that films are rehearsals of realities and the tools of geographical education, an interview with the author(ity) certainly enriches this study to better understand the site of production and consumption. Until now, I covered related literature on geopolitics of film and audience along with critical reading of the film. In the following three chapters, I aim to explore what the film means to the participants of this study utilizing online survey, fan comments and focus group discussion.

CHAPTER 7: ONLINE SURVEY: GEOPOLITICS 'FROM BELOW' AND *VALLEY OF THE WOLVES-PALESTINE*

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I examined the film, *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine,* from personal point of view reflecting my own interpretations and critical readings of cinematic scenes and dialogs, and included voice of the production site. Drawing on empirical data collected from an online survey, in this chapter, I explore the Turkish speaking audiences' interpretations of the politically-charged film, placing it within the discourse of geopolitical text wherein micropolitics of local/global interactions occur. To put it differently, this chapter focuses on geopolitics as practiced from below, that is, "by exploring the geopolitical perceptions and practices of broader segments of society, rather than those of state officials and elites alone" (Gokmen, Socio and Fallah 2008, p. 19). To do this, the chapter is structured in three parts: (1) demographic characteristics of the participants, (2) what Turkish people think about Turkey's relations with the Israel and Palestine, and (3) how the film is read in relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict and Turkey's position in the region.

7.2 Demographic characteristics of survey respondents

In this study, an online survey was conducted via the social networking site, Facebook, three months after the film was released in theaters in Turkey and abroad. This online questionnaire was distributed in a snowball method to those who may or may not have seen the film. The survey was distributed through personal Facebook contacts and several other internet sites associated with the film.

The survey was completed by Turkish speaking audiences from 38 provinces of Turkey and 15 countries around the world. 359 respondents started the survey and 333 people completed it. 226 people indicated that they did not see the film and 115 reported that they watched the film.
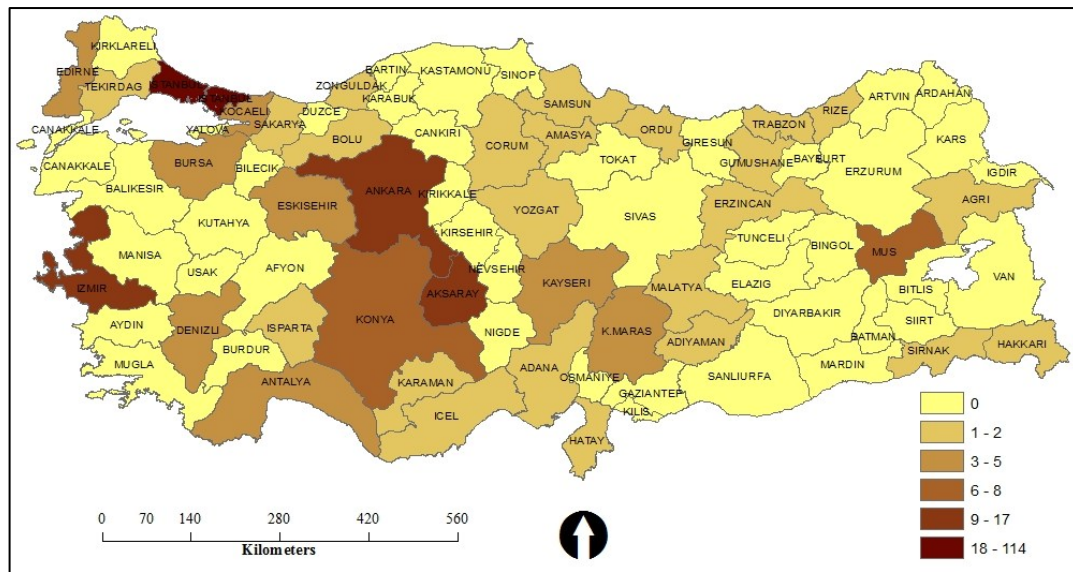
Figure 7-1: Self-reported locations of respondents in Turkey

As seen in Figure 7.1, participants are concentrated in regions with larger cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. However, there are several important points regarding the distributions of the respondents. One is that respondents group in metropolitan areas that are large in size and population, e.g., Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Konya. The second point is that respondents' geographical distributions positively correlate with the distribution of internet usage in Turkey, e.g., Izmir. For example, the availability of internet connection in western Turkey and provinces where there is at least one college is higher and naturally the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, though widely diffused, is more common in these well-connected areas.

Finally, taking into consideration the snowball effect, this map in Figure 7.1 moderately reflects general distributions of my personal Facebook connections in Turkey, e.g., Aksaray.
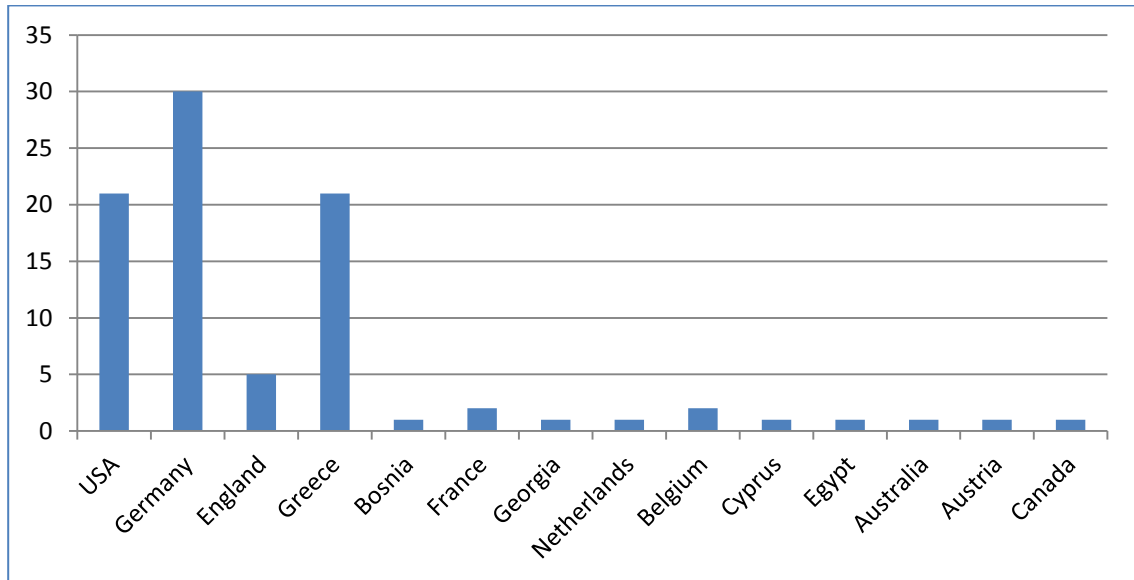
Figure 7-2: Locations of respondents around the world

As mentioned earlier, anyone who spoke Turkish was invited to participate in the survey. Therefore, quite a large number of people from other corners of the world took part in this online survey. Figure 7.2 shows the distribution of those respondents around the world in numbers and demonstrates some parallels with the distribution of my personal Facebook friends and the density of Turkish populations around the world.

Table 7-1: Gender profile of survey respondents

Gender	n	%	Skipped[26]
Female	108	30.2	
Male	250	69.8	
Total	**358**		**1**

Table 7.1 shows the gender profile of survey respondents. It is apparent that female participation in the survey is relatively low because of the limitations of the snowball method and general female distribution of internet users in Turkey (see Tables 2-4 and 2-5). In Turkey, internet usage among men is much higher than that of women (63 percent and 37 percent respectively) (see Table 2-5 for the details). Related to this, my personal Facebook connections are predominantly male. Thus, these two factors limited the numbers of female respondents in general.

Table 7-2: Marital status of survey respondents

	n	%	Skipped
Married	113	31.7	
Single	233	65.3	
Divorced	11	3.1	
Total	**357**		**2**

---

[26] 'Skipped' refers to respondents who did not answer the question.

Table 7.2 shows the marital status of survey respondents. Again the results correspond to the map of my personal contacts and general age distribution of the internet users in Turkey, which continues to be under the thirty-five-year-old demographic, which closely parallels the Facebook users in Turkey and abroad (see Table 2.6). Table 7.3, similar to marital status table, indicates that survey participants are generally under 35 years old.

Table 7-3: Age distribution

	n	%	Skipped
18-25	148	41.3	
26-35	173	48.3	
36-45	32	8.9	
46-55	5	1.4	
Total	**358**		**1**

Table 7-4: Education profile of survey respondents

Completed/current degree	**n**	**%**	**Skipped**
Middle school	6	1.7	
High school	35	9.9	
College (2 years)	62	17.5	
College (4 years)	150	42.3	
Master	82	23.1	
Doctorate	20	5.6	
Total	**355**		**4**

Table 7.4 shows the education profile of survey respondents. It is necessary to highlight that the education profile of survey respondents does not accurately reflect the general education distribution level in Turkey. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, middle school graduates (15,709,975 about 19 percent) comprise the plurality. High school graduates (11,374,336 about 14 percent) follow this number and then the college graduates (4,566,049 about 5 percent). However, what this chart correlates with is that Table 7.4 shows significant similarities with the table of internet users in Turkey according to their education level.
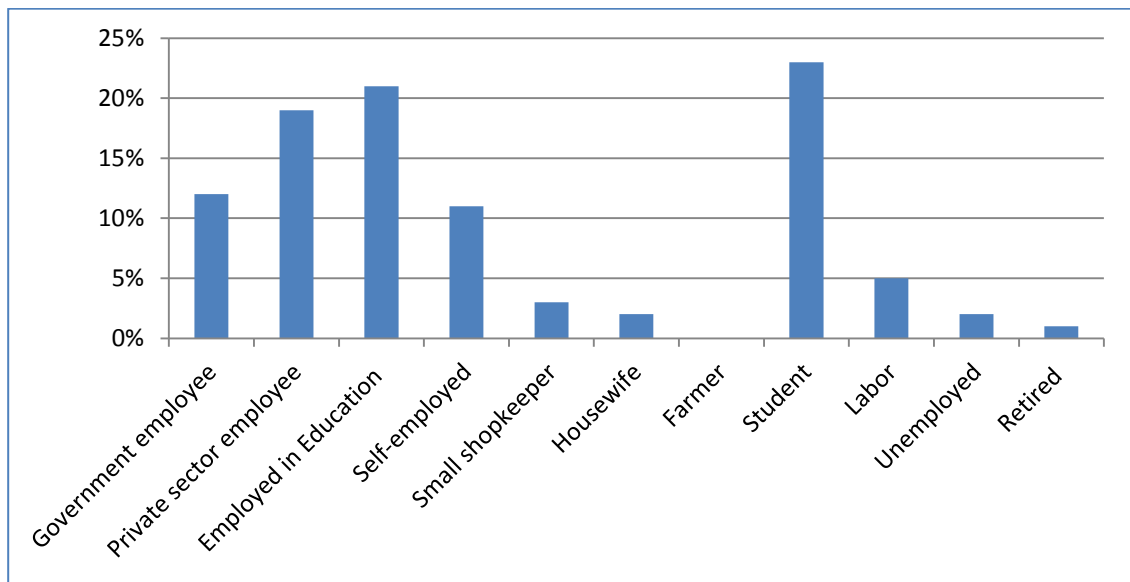
Figure 7-3: Occupation Chart

Figure 7.3 tells us that majority of survey participants hold at least some of level of college education. This result closely correlates with the sectorial map of internet users in Turkey.

Table 7-5: Ethnic description of survey respondents

Ethnicity	n	%	Skipped
Turkish	302	84.6	
Kurdish	16	4.5	
Turkic Republics	1	0.3	
Bosnian	4	1.1	
Arab	5	1.4	
I don't want to answer	5	1.4	
Other	23	6.4	
Total	**357**		**2**

Respondents' ethnicity, as seen in Table 7.5 and Figure 7.4, is diverse and colorful. However, the total number of Kurdish participants in this study appears to be lower than the relative estimated proportion of Kurds in Turkey. Possible explanations for such an outcome might be that people did not want to identify themselves as Kurdish or Kurdish people's access to the internet is limited compared to that of Turkish people. The snowball method may be another explanation for this outcome.

In addition, a possible answer can be found in the 'other' option that is given to the respondents to identify themselves other than my categorization. Figure 7.4 illustrates that people in Turkey do not easily go with simple ethnic definitions; rather they negotiate their identity, and produce alternative identities to categorize themselves differently. Figure 7.4 clearly indicates that some respondents define themselves in

ways other than their ethnicity. They either put forward their religious identity or show inclusive citizenship to reject ethnic essentialism.
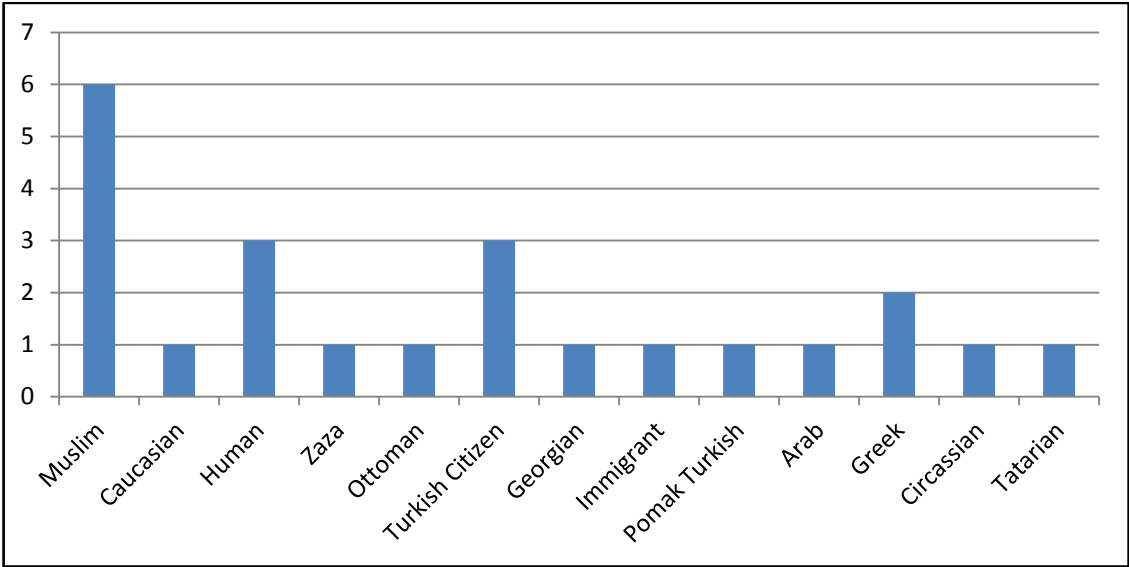
Figure 7-4: Answers that are given to the 'Other'
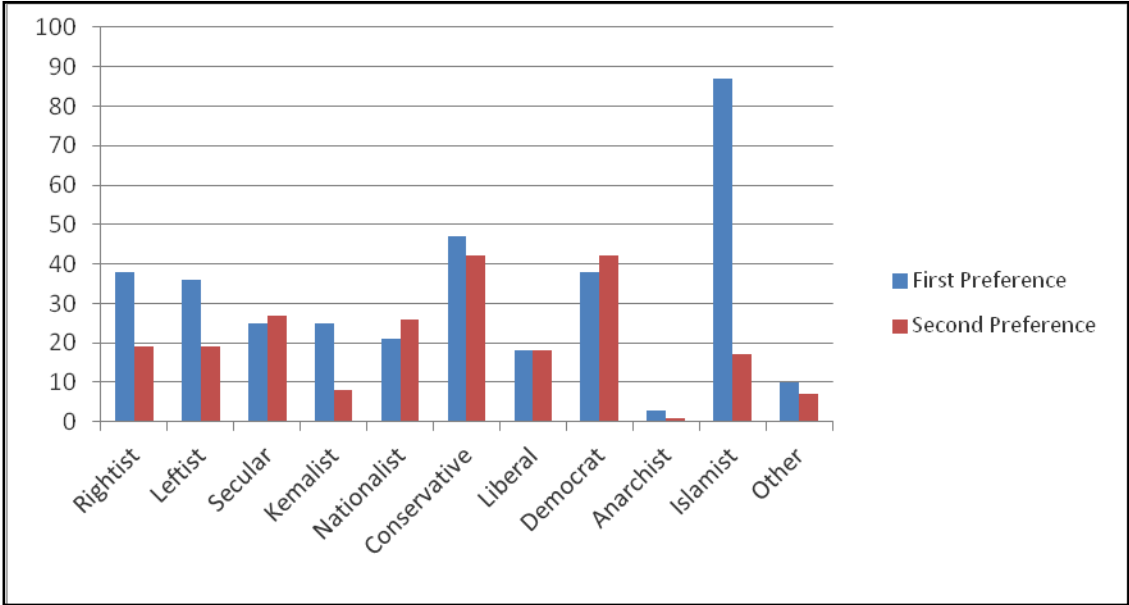
Figure 7-5: World-view profile of survey respondents

In order not to limit respondents' choices regarding their worldview, I adjusted the survey questionnaire in a way that respondents could find enough room to describe

their world-view. It is noticeable in Figure 7.5 that a fairly large number of respondents indicate their world-view is to the right-of-center which includes rightist, nationalist, conservative, and Islamist. This worldview map generally reflects the political composition of Turkey (GENAR 2011). However, one problem arises regarding identifying people's worldview, and that is how to define these worldviews and who defines them. In this respect, I provided more than several preferences and the 'Other' option for respondents to identify themselves independent of my selection. Additionally, I included some of the classified worldviews that GENAR Survey and Consultant firm uses for public opinion research in Turkey.

In addition to the demographic characteristics of respondents, I wanted to include respondents' entertainment activities, their frequency of accesing news and their rate of internet use. Table 7.6 demonstrates that a significant number of respondents either do not watch television or watch it less than two hours a day.

Table 7-6: How many hours do you watch television in a day?

	n	%	Skipped
I don't watch TV	81	22.8	
Less than 2 hours	174	49	
2-4 hours	88	24.8	
4-6 hours	9	2.5	
6 and more	3	0.8	
Total	**355**		**4**

This result does not quite correlate with the avarage time spent in front of television in Turkey. According to a study conducted by the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Researh (SETA), 26.5 percent of people watch television more than four hours a day in Turkey (SETA 2011). Considering other characteristics of the survey respondents, a possible explanation for this outcome would be that respondents, regardless of their education, can easily subsitute their television time for the internet. Indeed, according to SETA's recent report, 79.6 percent of people aged between 15-29 use the internet. 71.5 percent of these internet users connect at home and only 12 percent connect at their work place. The SETA report also highlights that the majority of these users connect to the internet for entertainment and communication purposes (SETA 2012, Suer 2011). Of course, accesibility to an internet connection remains uneven between cities and provinces.
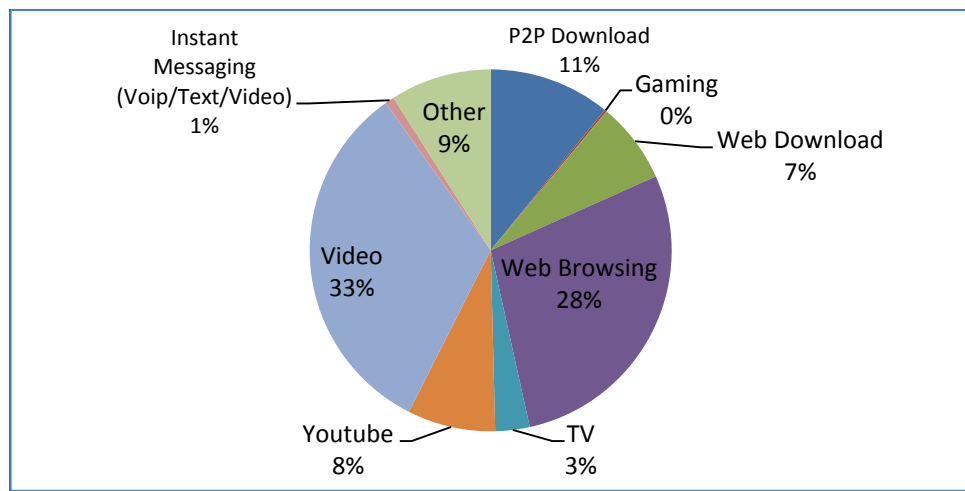
Figure 7-6: Distribution of TTNET's 6 million customers' internet traffic. Sources: shiftdelete.net

Table 7-7: How many hours a day do you use internet excluding work-related usage times?

	n	%	Skipped
Less than 2 hours	104	29.5	
2-4 hours	137	38.8	
4-6 hours	68	19.3	
6 and more	44	12.5	
Total	**353**		**6**

Table 7.7, however, demonstrates that almost 70 percent of respondents use the internet more than 2 hours a day beside their work usage. For the obvious reason, no participants of this survey indicated that they never use internet since this survey is conducted via online, but the [over all] volume of internet use beside work hours is reletively high.

Table 7-8: How often do you watch films (in theaters, on TV, internet, etc.)?

	n	%	Skipped
I don't watch films	21	5.9	
1-2 in a month	195	54.9	
1-2 in a week	94	26.5	
3-4 in a week	31	8.7	
5 and more in a week	14	3.9	
Total	**355**		**4**

By looking at the Table 7.8, we understand that a majority of the respondents watch films at least once every two weeks, and some of them indicate that they watch films every day. These consumption patterns are influenced by the market for illegal reproduction of films in Turkey. An average ticket for a film in Turkey is about 14 Turkish Lira (7 US dollars). An official DVD version of a film can be priced from 20 Turkish Lira to 30 Lira. This is beyond many people's entertainment budget. Underground organizations turn this economic reality into a profit by reproducing DVDs priced as low as 1 Turkish Lira (approximately 50 cents). Additionally, these black-market producers are very quick, and sophisticated enough to produce bootleg copies of a film almost at the same time of the film's official theatrical release. Moreover, if one does not want to pay that much money, he/she can always go online and watch any newly released or old film instantly with no charge, no credit card, or any other obligations. According to one estimate, 70 percent of CDs and DVDs that circulate in the market are produced by the blackmarket (Ozlem 2010). Taking this market reality into consideration, going to a cinema becomes more of a social activity. As I will discuss in the following chapters when I examine online audiences' comments, paying attention to online audiences becomes critical because many Turkish people now watch films through the internet on their laptop or wide screen television connected to the internet (see Figure 7-6). Therefore, analyzing online reviews becomes an important part of this study because viewers leave online feedback after they see the film. According to their reviews, other online film trackers decide to watch reviewed films or skip to other movies. Also on these sites, political discussions about the film take place.

Table 7-9: How often do you read news about the Middle East (from newspapers, internet, etc.)?

	n	%	Skipped
Everyday	126	36	
Several times in a week	140	40	
Several times in a month	66	18.9	
I don't read	18	5.1	
Total	350		9

By asking the question of 'how often do you read news about the Middle East', I aimed to understand how well the respondents are informed about the events that take place in the region. The results revealed that a significant number of respondents were aware of news that came out of the Middle East.

7.3 Audiences' responses: the nature of Israel-Palestine issues

Public opinions have been vital sources and forces in structuring national and international affairs. Turkey's relations with Israel have always been moderate until the Mavi Marmara raid by Israel Special Forces in 2010. The current Turkish governments' (AKP) international policies also played important roles in shaping the relations between Turkey and Israel (Tur 2009, Inbar 2010). As explained in earlier chapters, the AKP's 'zero-problem' policies with its neighbors necessitated good relations with the Middle Eastern states, including Iran and Syria (Ayhan 2009). In light of Turkey's economic, political, and cultural interests within the Middle Eastern states Turkey was compelled to support the Palestinian cause at the expense of its relationship with Israel. Israel's military actions against Gaza Strip and continued expansion of settlements in

the West Bank created a huge public outcry in Turkey against Israel, ultimately pushing the AKP government to change its policies against Israel. This policy shift against Israel became the turning point in Turkey-Israel relations as well as public opinion. The Mavi Marmara incident which saw Israel's killing of nine Turkish activists in international waters brought Turkey-Israel relations to a historical low.

In this part of the chapter, I will discuss survey results of public opinions about the Israel-Palestine issues and Turkey-Israel relations. Questions that highlight these issues were asked to every respondent regardless of whether they had seen the film. In doing so, I aimed to get a sense of whether the film *VWP* made a significant impact on shaping people's opinions toward Israel, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and Turkey-Israel relations.

Table 7-10: In general, which of the following terms best describes Turkey-Israel relations?

	n	%	Skipped
Allies	21	6.2	
Friends	19	5.6	
Shared interests	213	62.8	
Enemies	59	17.4	
Other	27	8.0	
Total	**339**		**20**

As Table 7.10 indicates, 62.8 percent of respondents define the relationship between Turkey and Israel as one that is based on shared interests. People believe that

there are common interests that bring the two states together. As seen in the same table, very few people think that Turkey and Israel are friends or allies. Moreover, the total number of people who think that the two states are enemies is higher than the number of people who think the two states are friends and allies combined. In the 'other' option, people demonstrated that their opinion on the relationship between Turkey and Israel is not limited to the given choices in the survey. Some of the respondents' answers included these statements: "they are two competitive countries that cannot tolerate each other but they are bound by their geography and politics", "Israel is the boss and Turkey is her tool", "to me they are enemies but according to the Turkish government, they are partners", and "from Israel's point of view, Turkey is an enemy country but from Turkey's perspective the relationship is a partnership".
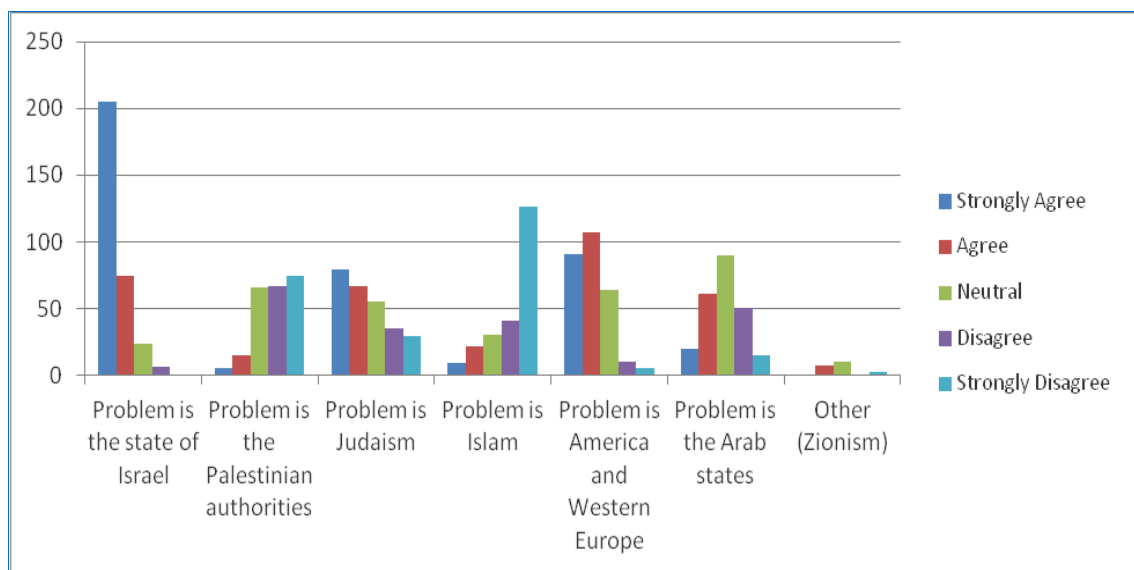
Figure 7-7: The nature of the problem regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict

When I asked what was the source of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, respondents clearly indicated that the state of Israel is the leading problem-making actor in this conflict. There are also significant numbers of people who think that the Western

world is also responsible for this conflict. In the 'other' categorization, Zionism is thought to be the leading problem for the conflict. Even so, quite a large number of people indicated that the Torah and its teachings are the source of this territorial conflict, with respondents referencing the Torah's 'Promised Land' idea. Other respondents blamed capitalism and globalization for widening the gap between the poor/weak and the rich/powerful. Several respondents, on the other hand, look at the root of the problem in terms of historical accounts claiming that the region is prone to the all kinds of conflicts because of Arab nationalism in the 20th century and the consequent Arab resistance against the Ottoman Caliph that was coupled with sympathy for the British occupation. Some respondents said that "the root of the problem is the British who gave the Palestinian land to Israelis and the Palestinians who betrayed Ottomans at the first place". Another respondent wrote this as the root of the problem: "If there was a Rashid [noble leader] Caliph, Palestine would not be as it is today". These are some of the important details of audience responses. These details are important because as I explain in Chapter 6, the production side of the film *VWP* also makes similar contentions about why Turkey (at least the Turkish cinema) should care about this part of the region, which is always understood to be culturally and politically qualified Ottoman territories. In the focus group discussions, this point will come up again.

Table 7-11: Which state or international organization can be a mediator to solve the Israel-Palestine problem?

	n	%	Skipped
The United Nations	40	11.7	
The European Union	6	1.8	
The United States	16	4.7	
Turkey	122	35.7	
The Arab states	4	1.2	
Russia	1	0.3	
China	0	0	
Israeli and Palestinian authorities only	54	15.8	
Israel and Palestine problem cannot be solved	99	28.9	
Total	**342**		**17**

Several important points can be drawn from Table 7.11. One is that the Turkish audience is not optimistic about possible solutions to the Israel-Palestine problem. 29 percent of respondents indicate that this conflict is destined to continue. Furthermore, significant numbers of people do not think international organizations are able (or have the power and will) to solve this problem. The EU, for example, does not seem to have that potential according to respondents. Non-western actors, on the other hand, have no authority to involve in this conflict in the eyes of Turkish people. A large number of respondents think that the problem can be solved only by the two parties working together. But, significant numbers of respondents think that Turkey is the main actor to solve the Israel-Palestine problem. This is not just a political answer. Indeed, as

discussed in earlier chapters, Turkey has long enjoyed being a moderator in the region. For example, Turkey has been the key negotiator between Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon, Israel and Palestine, and, until recently, between Western countries and Iran. From time to time, Western powers continue to offer Turkey the opportunity to become a moderator and role model in the Middle East as a secular-western and Muslim-eastern country (Kirisci, Tocci and Walker 2010). Recently Turkey also showed willingness to become a main actor in resolving regional conflicts in order to establish a secure and free trade zone that would ultimately serve Turkey's regional and global geopolitical interests (Taspinar 2008). Whether Turkey has the capability to do this is yet to be determined, however. Importantly, the people buy into this.

Table 7-12: Do you think Turkey should become involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict? And if so, how should Turkey become involved?

	n	%	Skipped
Turkey should support only the Palestinian side	185	54.9	
Turkey should support only the Israeli side	1	0.3	
Turkey should follow only the United Nations	42	12.5	
Turkey should follow only the European Union	8	2.4	
Turkey should stay neutral	101	30	
Total	**337**		**22**

To the question of which way Turkey should direct its support, significant numbers of people indicated that Turkey should be on the Palestinian side. Quite large numbers of people think that Turkey should stay neutral or follow the United Nations. Parallel to the question on Table 7-11, Turkish people have no confidence in European

Union to solve the Israel-Palestine conflict. The respondents do not even think that Europe has that power to push Israel to negotiate with the Palestinians. To follow up this question, I asked, 'if you think Turkey should become involved in the Palestine-Israel conflict, and why do you think Turkey should become involved itself in Israel-Palestine conflict'. I asked them to rank their answers from the most important reason to the least important reason. The result revealed that important numbers of people perceive the Palestine cause as a case of human rights (see Figure 7.8).
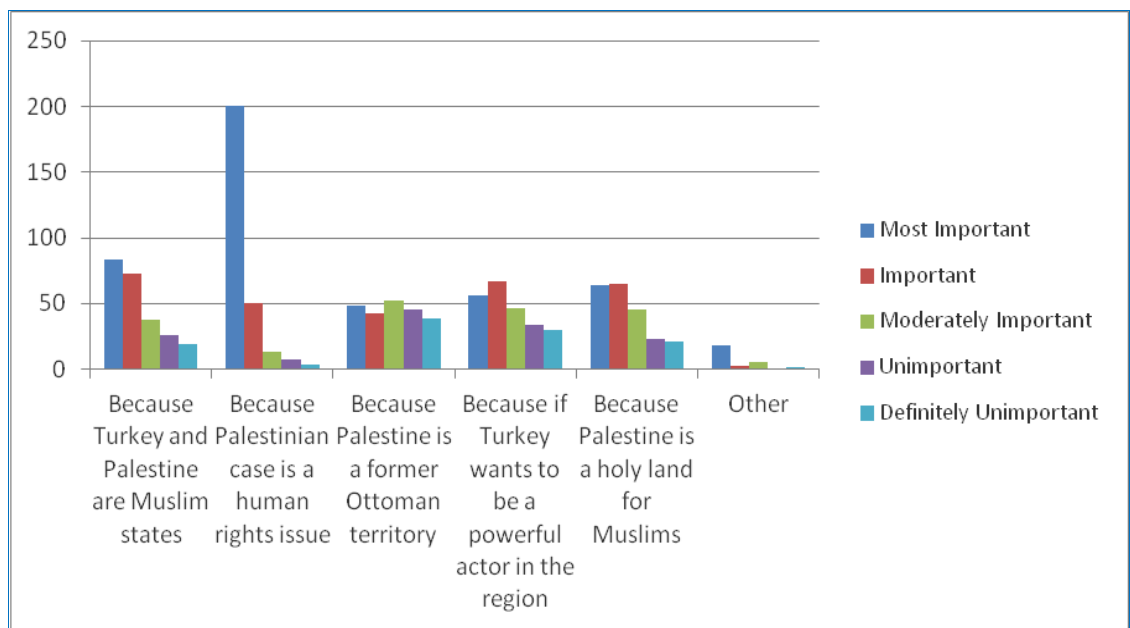
Figure 7-8: Why should Turkey be involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict?

73 percent of respondents agreed that if Turkey takes part in this conflict, it should support Palestine cause because it involves human drama and human rights. Those who think that Turkey should be a regional player in the region also support Turkey's intervention in the conflict. People who support this idea are too numerous to ignore. 52.8 percent of people indicated that this is a 'somewhat important' reason for Turkey to become involved in Palestine-Israel issues. A sizeable number of respondents

also think that Turkey should be involved in this conflict because Palestine is a holy land for Muslims, and it is part of the former Ottoman territory.

In the 'other' category, respondents' answers varied. Some insisted that Turkey should stay out of the Israel-Palestine conflict, as some indicated that what has been happing in Palestine is a crime against humanity. One respondent wrote: "If there is a human crisis there [Palestine], this should be the problem of all humanity that has rationality, conscience and self-respect. I am saying this without taking anybody's side –religion or race. If Palestinians had done the same thing to Israelis, I would have reacted the same way. To me, humanity is the essential here". As this quote demonstrates, participants closely follow the Palestinian conflict. It can also be inferred from this response that respondents negotiate geopolitical meanings created by different political actors about Palestine-Israel issues. They also question and negotiate options that I provided as possible answers. They find that my options are limited and therefore they need further explanations and arguments to express themselves.

Table 7-13: A fair solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict cannot be established in the absence of Turkey. Do you agree?

	n	%	Skipped
Definitely agree	101	29.4	
Somewhat agree	88	25.6	
I am not sure	43	12.5	
Disagree	81	23.5	
Definitely disagree	31	9.0	
Total	344		15

When I asked: 'A fair solution to Israel-Palestine conflict cannot be accomplished in the absence of Turkey. Do you agree?' More than half of the respondents agreed with the statement. However, people who disagreed with the idea of Turkey's involvement made up a large majority of respondents (see Table 7-12). This indicates that quite large numbers of people are still uncomfortable with Turkey's intervening in the conflict for different reasons. As shown in Table 7-11, 28.9 percent of respondents disagree with the idea that the Israel-Palestine problem can be solved. At the same time, 15.8 percent indicated that Israelis and Palestinians are the only authorities that can solve their problem.

Table 7-14: In your opinion, how do you describe the Mavi Marmara Gaza flotilla activists' sailing to break the Gaza blockade?

	n	%	Skipped
It was a human rights motivated movement	202	60.1	
It was a religious motivated movement	98	29.2	
It was a nationalism motivated movement	8	2.4	
It was a violence motivated movement	8	2.4	
It was an anti-Semitism motivated movement	20	6.0	
Total	**336**		**23**

Since the film, *VWP,* bases its story on the subject of the Mavi Marmara flotilla attacked by the Israeli Special Forces, I wanted to know how Turkish people saw this incident. Predictably, a majority of respondents agreed that the Mavi Marmara movement was a humanitarian one. Even the activists' counter-attack with knives and sticks on the deck of the Mavi Marmara did not change people's perception of the

incident from being a humanitarian-based movement to an activity motivated by violence. But, large number of respondents also thought that this movement had religious motivation.
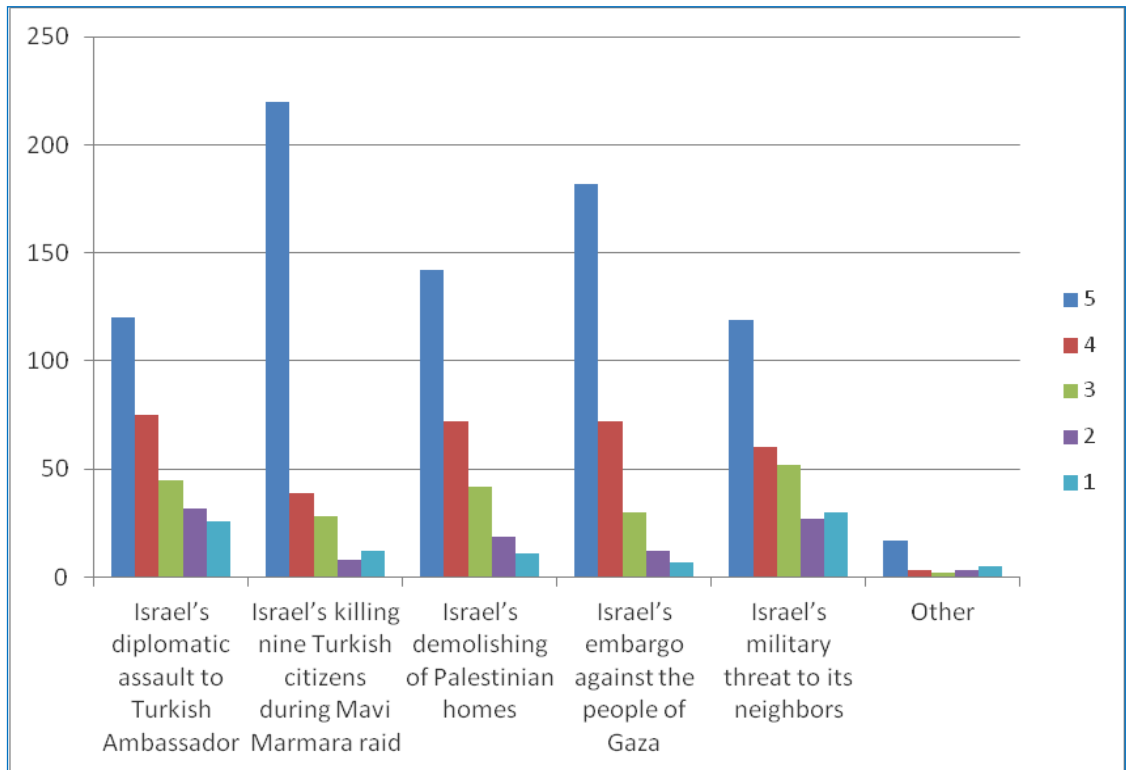
Figure 7-9: Effective events (5 is the most effective and 1 is the least)

I also asked what other actual events that took place before the film was released would affect their opinion about Israel-Turkey relations. A majority responded that, again, the killings of nine Turkish activists was the number one event that agitated Turks (see Figure 7.9). Since this question was rated by the respondents where 5 is the most effective and where 1 is the least effective, the second most important event that affected Turkish people's opinions about Israel was Israel's embargo against Gaza. In the 'other' option, respondents again discussed different agendas of theirs, from water

geopolitics to Israel's ignorance of the United Nations' resolutions on the settlements in the occupied zones.

Table 7-15: In terms of cultural closeness, where do you think Turkey belongs to?

	n	%	Skipped
Europe	21	6.2	
Middle East	86	25.4	
Caucasus and Central Asia	47	13.9	
Eurasia (Europe & Asia)	162	47.9	
Other	22	6.5	
Total	338		21

At the end of this survey section, I wanted to know where people would situate Turkey on the cultural map. As Table 7.15 shows, 47 percent of the respondents located Turkey in between Europe and Asia. The result correlates with Turkey's official rhetoric saying that Turkey is a 'bridge country' between Europe and Asia, between the East and the West. Those who only see Turkey as a European country seem to be insignificant in numbers. In the 'other' option, however, people renegotiate Turkey's cultural closeness in their own words. Some respondents indicate that Turkey "has its unique characteristics," while some define Turkey as a 'hybrid country,' synthesizing all, which is not so different than to say Turkey is a bridge or Eurasian country. The others reposition Turkey as being a country of Europe and the Middle East. These results demonstrate that Turkey's imagined geography is 'in between' places and

cultures, meaning that Turkey, with its material and mental borders, is a cross-road country in between Europe, the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

7.4 Film content: 'déjà vu all over again'

Questions on this part of the survey were directed to those who indicated that they had seen the film. Those who did not see the film were excluded from completing this part of the questionnaire. By doing this, I wanted to find out what possible roles the film played in and affecting people's interpretations of Israel, Turkey-Israel relations, and Israel-Palestine relations. Additionally, I wanted to find out what people make of a political-action film which was produced during a time when Turkey-Israel relations reached their nadir. Initial results indicated that the film did not affect people's perception of Israel. Turkish audiences already had ideas about Israel-Palestine relations and Israel's Palestine policies. To put it differently, people thought that the film was just repeating the known and familiar, déjà vu all over again' in other words.
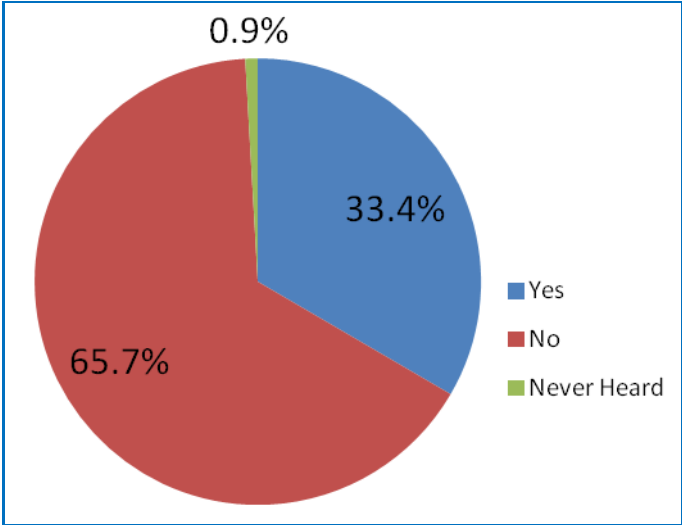
Figure 7-10: Have you seen the film *VWP*?

Figure 7.10 shows how many of the respondents indicated that they watched the film. Regarding Figure 7.10, one can easily conclude that compared to other cinema productions of Pana Films, *VWP* did not attract as many spectators as expected[27]. As the figure indicates, only 33.4 percent of respondents said that they have seen the film. Out of 33.4 percent, 78 percent were male and 40 percent had some combinations of primary, middle or high school education.

Several reasons might explain why this film did not attract many viewers. One is that people thought the film was too political, rigid, and unpleasant. At the time of the film's release, the already hostile relationship between Turkey and Israel was at its peak. Day and night, people were talking about Israel-Turkey relations (Dumanli 2010). Even though people supported the Palestinian cause and some of the Turkish government's political sanctions against Israel, they still did not want to spend 13 Turkish Liras on a film that was mainly filled with politics and hostility. As some focus group participants mentioned in another part of this study, this film is thought to be very ideological, addressing a certain social segment in Turkey. People who did not associate themselves with certain worldviews- namely conservatism, Islamism, or nationalism- preferred not see the film (according to some focus group discussants of this study). The second reason why this film did not attract a large audience might be that people did not want to go to theaters because they knew that the film's DVD would come out on the black market soon, so that they could watch it at home instead of paying 13

---

[27] If online comments provided by Polat Alemdar fans are investigated, it will be noted that the film fans' expectation from *VWP* in terms of ticket sales and publicity was higher than earlier *VW* serials. Despite this high expectation, approximately 2,023,000 people went to theaters to see *VWP*. Source: forummoral.com/showthread

Turkish Liras at the box office. And the final reason why many people did not go to this film is that during the release of the film, there were other thrilling and stimulating films in theaters, such as *Eyvay Eyvah 2*, which grossed about US$22,892,691 (*VWP* grossed about 10 million US dollars)[28].

As mentioned earlier, this part of the survey was conducted with 115 respondents who watched the film. The respondents had several options, such as to answer each question or skip to the next one. In some questions, they had an option to give their own answers other than given choices. In this case, they were asked to type in what they thought would be the best answer.

Table 7-16: After watching the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*, has your perception toward Israel changed?

	n	%	Skipped
After watching the film, my opinions toward Israel has changed negatively	12	11.4	
After watching the film, my opinions toward Israel has changed positively	2	1.9	
After watching the film, my negative opinions toward Israel has stayed the same	84	80.0	
After watching the film, my positive opinions toward Israel has stayed the same	0	0	
I have no idea	7	6.7	
Total	**105**		**254**

---

[28] Conclusions drawn in this section mainly comes from face-to-face conversations with focus group participants and my fieldwork observations.

Table 7.16 clearly demonstrates that the film did not greatly affect audience opinion. 80 percent of the respondents indicated that their negative view of Israel stayed the same. In other words, Turkish audiences had negative preconceptions about Israel and Israel's actions against Palestinians. Seeing a film about Palestine did not affect their views on the matter.

Table 7-17: In your opinion, do you believe that the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* reflected reality?

	n	%	Skipped
Definitely agree	30	28.6	
Somewhat agree	52	49.5	
Neutral	11	10.5	
Disagree	5	4.8	
Definitely disagree	7	6.7	
Total	**105**		**254**

When the respondents were asked whether the film reflected what they thought had been happening in Palestine, almost 78 percent of the respondents indicated that the film (somewhat) reflected what really goes on in Palestine. Reality here is based on news and information that come from media, and events that are internationally monitored, such as the Mavi Marmara incident. It is important to highlight here that similar results came from the focus group discussions conducted for this study.
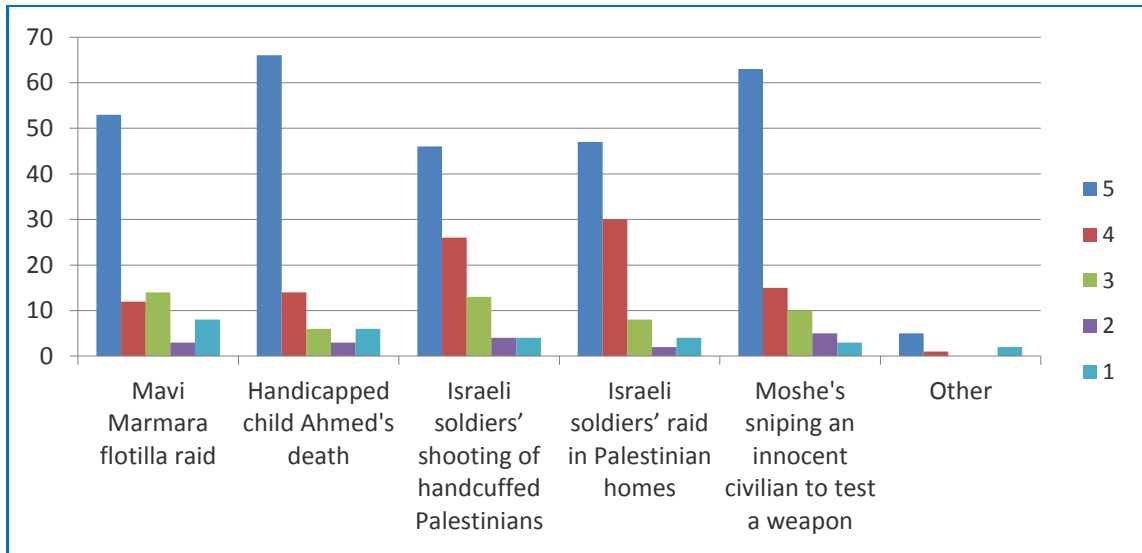
Figure 7-11: Please rate the following scenes in terms of affecting your opinions about Israel.

Figure 7.11 shows which film scenes were conceived effective by the respondents. These scenes were picked with no particular order in mind. But these filmic events were repeatedly pushed to the fore during my pilot studies as eye-catching scenes. I highlighted five of them for the survey and provided the 'other' option if the respondents had different ideas about film scenes that they think are more effective. As Figure 7.10 shows, the scene in which the handicapped boy, Ahmed, is crushed under the debris of his home in front of his parents captures the attention of the spectators the most. Since this question was rated as being the most effective scene (corresponds to the number 5) to the least effective scene (corresponds to the number 1), Moshe's testing of a special bullet on a Palestinian civilian is the second most disturbing scene according to respondents. The other scenes seem to be fitting with the film's genre of its own such as killing, shooting, and exploding. On the other hand, some important discussions were raised when the respondents were asked to put their own evaluations in the 'other' option. For instance, several respondents indicated that certain lines of

dialogue were very effective such as, when Polat said: "I did not come to Israel, I came to Palestine". But some other respondents were very skeptical about the film's effectiveness altogether, saying: "this film had nothing to do with Israel or Palestine. If there was, then, I missed it". Another viewer argued that "film is a film. It did not affect my views". However, when I asked if this film became the voice of Turkish people more than 60 percent said that the film reflected Turkish people's views (see Table 7.18).

Table 7-18: In your opinion, do you think that the film *Valley of the Wolves- Palestine* became the voice for Turkish peoples?

	n	%	Skipped
Definitely agree	23	21.9	
Somewhat agree	44	41.9	
Neutral	13	12.4	
Disagree	18	17.1	
Definitely disagree	7	6.7	
Total	**105**		**254**

23.8 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement saying the film did not become the voice of Turkish people.

Table 7-19: Do you believe that the film mirrors the current government's Middle East policies?

	n	%	Skipped
Definitely agree	13	12.4	
Somewhat agree	30	28.6	
Neutral	31	29.5	
Disagree	25	23.8	
Definitely disagree	6	5.7	
Total	**105**		**254**

Table 7.19 shows possible connections between the film's messages and the current AKP government's Middle East policies. By looking at the table, people's opinion about whether this film reflected the current AKP government's policies in the Middle East is unclear. The respondents' choice seems to concentrate in the middle of the diagram. 29.5 percent indicated that they are not so sure about the film-government relationship. However, after combining the results of 'definitely agree' and 'somewhat agree', 41 percent of respondents indicate that the film reflects the current government's Middle East policies.

Table 7-20: Who is your favorite character in the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine?*

	n	%	Skipped
Polat Alemdar	35	34.3	
Moshe Ben Elizer	9	8.8	
Memati Bas	10	9.8	
Simone Levy	5	4.9	
Abdulhey Coban	3	2.9	
Abdullah (Palestinian)	30	29.4	
Other	10	9.8	
Total	**102**		**257**

Table 7.20 shows the respondents' favorite character(s) in the film. From looking at this table two film characters seem to be the most liked in the film: Polat (the main protagonist) and Abdullah (Polat's Palestinian contact). It was surprising to see that Polat did not rate higher (34.3), because Polat is the central phenomena in these films and television series (Celebi 2006). When the respondents put down their own evaluations in the 'other' option, the Sheikh (spiritual leader) appears as one of the other liked characters in the film. But several respondents criticized the entire film team (film characters and the makers) because of their intimate connections with the current AKP government. One respondent notes: "I used to be a big fan of these people but when I see them getting closer to the AKP, I feel like spitting on their face". It should be noted that as viewers make their own meaning and reading, they negotiate and often challenge the dominant meaning in any given text. *VWP* viewers are no exception to this.
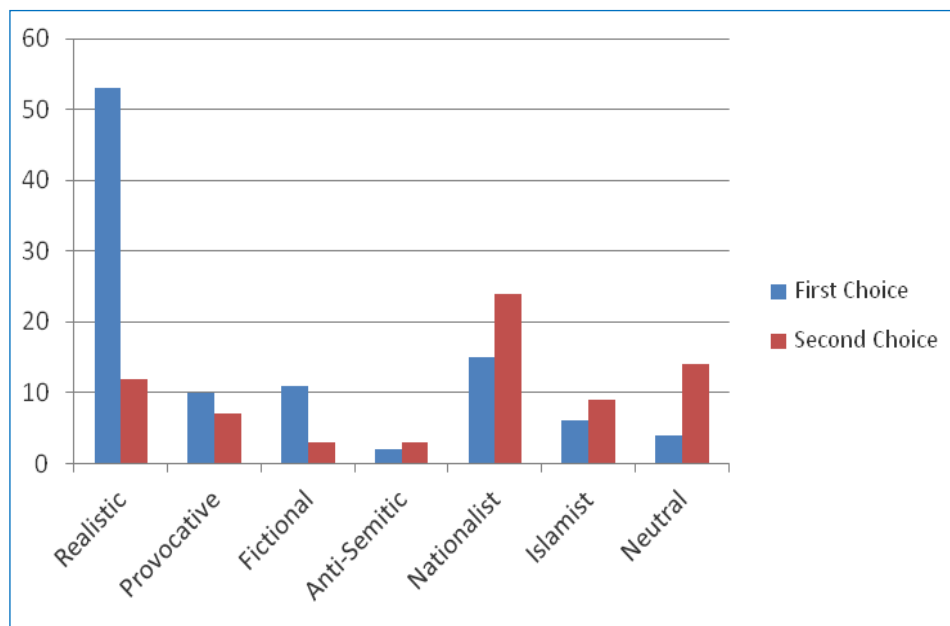
Figure 7-12: Overall, how do you describe the film?

At the end, when I asked respondents to categorize the film in terms of what cinema-political position this film can be placed in, a large number of people indicated that the film features some realistic presentations as well as nationalist and provocative ones. The question of what counts as realist representations depends on how people define the term 'realistic' within the politics of cinema. However, in the following chapters, some focus group discussions about the real and the reel will be able to shed light on this unclearness.

7.5 Summary

Results of the data reveal that peoples' opinion about Turkey's geopolitical role in the Middle East is complex and multifaceted, and the –perception of- effects of the film in shaping the audiences' opinions are insignificant. But the respondents' pre-existing

negative perceptions about Israel are firm. Significant numbers of people think that Turkey should be involved in Middle East politics but, on the other hand, they maintain their skepticism and pessimism about Turkey's capability to resolve the conflict between Israel and Palestine. However, taking into account the fact that 75 percent of people imagine Turkey in the east of Europe, public opinions about Turkey's involvement in the Israel-Palestine issues as an active mediator can be foreseen, and, expected to be more radical in the future. As seen in the results and detailed audience opinions in the 'other' sections, respondents is very dynamic (young), relatively well informed about Turkey's international affairs (SETA 2012), and active in reading about the geopolitics that surrounds Turkey (Chapter 9). In this sense, decoding filmic messages and making geopolitics from below constitute an important part of spatialized politics of audienceship.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a clear majority of the audiences demonstrated that they had pre-conceived notions about Israel and its policies toward Palestinians before they had seen the film. It should be remembered that this survey is designed to investigate if the film *VWP* influenced respondents' perceptions about the Israel-Palestine conflict. In this sense, I argue that the film's ability to change people's opinion about the conflict remained limited. For example, the study results suggest that 58.5 percent of those who did not see the film identified Israel as the prime problem of the conflict. Additionally, 67.8 percent of respondents who did not see the film indicated that Israel's Mavi Marmara raid influenced their opinions about Israel negatively while the same notion reached to 79.2 percent among those who indicated they saw the film. But, it is important to highlight that those who did not see the film

did not automatically identify Israel as the hostile state to Turkey. Viewers' opinions about Turkey-Israel relations remained moderately positive. 65 percent of them identified Turkey-Israel relations as 'interest-based relations'. In this respect, it can be argued that the film did not affect people's opinions about Israel, but it served as a conduit to have their voice be heard. Meanwhile, many people agreed with the idea that the film presented real events that supposedly really took place. To complement these findings and to better understand the factors that affect audiences' interpretations of a text and their meaning-making behaviors, critical readings of online audience comments and face-to-face conversations with the audiences in the following chapters will be provided.

CHAPTER 8: ONLINE AUDIENCE COMMENTS: ENGAGING *VALLEY OF THE WOLVES-PALESTINE*

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze online fan comments for the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*. The aim is to broaden critical readership of the film beyond the realms of controlled field of investigation. Earlier chapters exclusively focused on critically reading the film, the site of film production, and quantitatively classifying audiences' engagements with the film regarding the film's geopolitical nature. To supplement the survey and critically reading the film discussed earlier in Chapters 5 and 7, this chapter brings online film readership to the fore-front in order to shed light on online audiences' engagement with *VWP* while adding their critical reading of a text within their network(ing) context. To do this, Sinemalar.com -a widely referenced movie website in Turkish- is the source of audience comments. In this membership-only website, viewers freely leave their comments and respond to the comments of others. Viewers are not forced to use their actual identity or provide an actual picture of themselves to become a member. Two things immediately surface on this website to make their comments important for this study. First, comments are anonymous; there is no authorship associated with the comments because no real names are used which encourages people to speak freely with each other. Second, viewers on this internet site take films seriously and assess them critically for others (producers, viewers, etc.). They assess films by

discussing scenes, actors/actresses, and scenarios critically in addition to rating the films between 1 and 10[29].

Related to the recent developments in the communication technologies, these two characteristics of the site (Sinemalar.com) make boundaries between producers and consumers transparent, fluent and active. Through these changes, online audiences enjoy being both the author and the reader by critiquing and being critiqued. Thus, this constant dialogue continues between the viewers regarding many aspects of a film. The nature of online fans' activeness, then, forces us to ask the question of whether online fan groups should be counted as a community. This study is not about making this claim but it suggests that fandom in the age of well-connected world remains important. In this sense, Wiatrowski notes that "as technology progresses and participation increases in these virtual modes of community imagination, formation and maintenance one must wonder what is at stake for these newly minted online fandoms. It seems obvious that fans congregate online as a method for creating a space wherein they can cheaply consume, create, and share their culture, much as they had done prior to the implementation of online media only with a greater connectivity and speed" (Wiatrowski 2011, p. 1). In this chapter, therefore, it is my intention to highlight the online audience's comments as they are an important source to recognize in the reproduction of micro geopolitics in everyday discourses. The examined comments are taken out of a total of 2025, which were posted before and after the film was released. I only read and included comments that were long in length. From reading through

---

[29] *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine'*s overall score is 7.6 out of 10 rated by sinemalar.com viewers. This is slightly higher than those of *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq and Gladio* which both received 7.4 out of 10.

several hundred of these comments, I included the arguments that can mainly be categorized in two opposing groups: arguments that are in favor of the film and arguments that are against the film.

8.2 *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*: **A monument to bravery**

One of the immediate categorizations that can be drawn from reading these online comments is how people's appreciation for the film being bold and aggressive against Israel. This group perceives Israel to be hostile state toward the entire Muslim world, Palestinians in particular. Online comments on this online discussion board mirror those held by the survey respondents and focus group participants against Israel. One viewer shared the following comment after outlining several problems with the film:

> After all, there is one thing about this film that made me be happy about the Turkish cinema, and that is that this film brought different perspectives on understanding of the 'East' and the 'West'. For years, Asian people have been portrayed as hostile and belligerent by Hollywood and European cinema. In the history of Turkish cinema, this film reverses this perception by repeating catchwords between the lines over and over again without fearing from anything. Just because of this reason, I recommend everyone see this film (posted by TheManiac on 9/10/11).

Another viewer wants to draw people's attention to cultural imperialism. In fact, he/she does not only want to grab people's attention, but also he/she wants to inform and warn other viewers to be aware of this cultural imperialism trap. After giving a paragraph-long definition of what cultural imperialism is, and explanations of how indigenous cultures disappear while American culture dominates, he/she adds:

Why I am sharing this with you is just to say that one of the important vehicles of cultural imperialism is cinema today. Look at films. In them, white is always good and saves everybody's life. Was not the white who saved Japan in the *Last Samurai*? Therefore, when we watch films, we always have to have this consciousness in our mind first and foremost. And when we make films, we have to calculate this factor as well. In other words, the best strategy is to hunt opponents with their own weapon. Watch this film immediately with this piece of information in your mind (posted by Edipdemircan on 10/10/11).

One viewer uses a different analogy to support the idea of why this film should be watched by everyone. The poster wants people to check out a Turkish newspaper that talks about a critical session held in the European Parliament about *VWP*. He/she references the newspaper regarding the importance of the news and the film:

The European Parliamentary, Stefan Fule, gives resolution of a question about the danger that what *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* can cause in Europe. Fule wants the EU to discuss the matter of whether the film should be allowed to enter European countries or not. The impression I got from this development is that there must be something about this film that they don't like to see or are afraid of. Otherwise, Europeans would not be panicking like that (posted by Veronicasue on 8/10/11).

There are other viewers who congratulate Pana Film for even thinking about producing films such as this -very anti-Israel and bold in criticizing Israel. These

viewers think that Israel is the most influential state in the world with strong ties among networks of power around the world including governments, non-governmental organizations, media and commercial institutions. As observed during the focus group discussions, Jewish conspiracies remain a popular notion in Turkey which, in turn, feeds further anger against Jews. The viewers believe that it is almost impossible to confront Israel and its power networks. These posters praise the Pana Film as the only group bold enough to stand against Israeli power and welcome the film's representational and ideological confrontation with Israel. For example, one viewer expressed:

> I congratulate the team just because of their extreme courage for making such a film without worrying about the presence of Israel and its collaborators around the world (posted by hitm11 on 6/5/11).

In the same framework, another viewer blames Turkish diplomats and government officials for failing to follow the path of the Ottoman Empire and its mission. For the poster, this film, even though it has many cinematographic flaws, succeeds to glorify Turkey's name at the global scale. The viewer also congratulates the film for being the first anti-Zionist film in Turkey. He/she notes:

> Even though the film is terrible in its many aspects, it still should be watched just because of its ideological stance and how it cinematizes the story of an oppressed people. I don't think any other film company could have ever dared to produce such a film (posted by blade44 on 9/10/11).

8.3 *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*: **An exploiter and a heart hijacker**

The opposing point of view, highlights a series of serious criticisms of the film. Criticisms of the *VWP* look evidential and mature in nature. This means that viewers explain why they dislike this film in long paragraphs by questioning its authenticity recognizing its deliberate exploitations of emotions that were intensified immediately after the Mavi Marmara incident. In the following discussions, viewers highlight how the filmmakers exploit public sensitivity and how this sensitivity can be turned into profit. To note again, viewers in this discussion forum seem to be well informed about the Pana Film products and political economy that operates within the film sector. One viewer notes:

> Polat and his men finished America in Iraq [referring to the film *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*] and now they are heading to Israel to finish them without any casualties. They go to Israel to avenge the Mavi Marmara attack, so to speak. At first, they act like they are there to protect the oppressed but suddenly you see the art of killing [Figure 8.1]. Numbers of Israelis and of course many Palestinians are killed. What do they think? To kill several Israeli, they cause the death of hundreds of Palestinians. Palestinians die like pears falling down from the tree. Is this how they protect the oppressed? Is this what the cinema is for? And look at their dress. They dress suit and so called Palestinian scarf around their shoulder. Is this how much you know about Palestinians? No one in that region wears that kind of scarf if you want to know the fact. That scarf is Turkish made for Kurds in Turkey [Figure 8.2]. This film is nothing more than

stroking Turkish sensitivity and nationalism. The Palestinian cause should never be exploited like this (posted by mtiske on 10/30/11).

Figure 8-1: Polat in one of the shooting scenes.
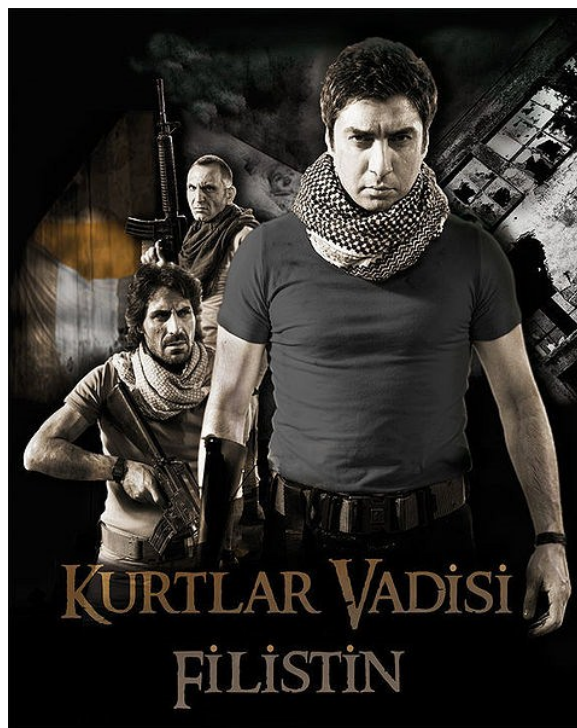
Figure 8-2: A movie poster showing Polat and his men.
Source: Yerlifilmizle.blogspot.com

Viewers who criticize the film note that the film inadequately addresses the point, which should be to vocalize the Palestinian cause worldwide. They argue that the

film contains no subject, no story and no point from the beginning to the end. One viewer says:

> This was the most absurd, ridiculous, dumb, aimless and subjectless film I have ever watched (posted by XlasisMatthew on 9/30/11).

Critics not only criticize the film and the film makers, but also critique the critics. They accuse posters for thinking ideologically, or viewing through a nationalistic lenses rather than rationally. It should be noted that viewers do not just write their thoughts randomly and fade away. They read each other's comments and respond to them with serious discussions. In this regard, viewers are not only the simple consumers of the text but also are the active authors. They affect others and are affected by others in these ongoing anonymous exchanges. They are not passive readers; they actively contribute to the meaning making of the text even if their participation in creating the original text is limited. The participants are well aware the power of such online discussion forms to influence other viewers' opinions. One viewer shares his/her thoughts:

> I read many comments. Except few of them, they were all written with this mindset of nationalism and chauvinism. The excuse is the film's ideological stand point and reflecting reality. What a nonsense excuse. What is stopping you from filming Palestinian realities? Do it. To me, what is described in this film is not even the tip of the iceberg. But, making a film about reality has nothing to do with making a watchable film. I criticize films from artistic and cinematic qualities. If the film lacks

quality, who cares about if the film mirrors the reality. You just cannot kill team of army with your 4 men. Is this how you reflect the reality (posted by Hijyenik on 09/27/11)?

In some other comments, viewers show impressive knowledge of Turkish contemporary cinema. They investigate, read related news and do background research about the film before they see it. It can be said that their comments can be qualified as mature reviews and their reading of current Turkish cinema trends is an instructive one. These viewers situate the film *VWP* in the conservative cinema tradition in which Islamic and nationalist world view is promoted. Even one viewer connects this tradition and the film to the currently increasing political Islam and the Fetullah Gulen movement. One viewer calls this film 'outrageous':

What kind of mind can write such a scenario? Why are people dying? What is the reason for? And why are Palestinians dying all the time? Why are they dying for Polat and his men? …here this is the end point of the conservative cinema. Here are the fruits of congregationalism in the country and the film industry. Why is there this desire to comfort nationalist sensations in this latest Turkish cinema film? Even exaggeration has to have its limits (posted by Tiensanli on 9/19/11).

As seen in the comment above, viewers are very critical of the film not because of its agenda but mainly because of unrealistic fictionalization of the scenario. They point out that neither art or aesthetic should be sacrificed in the name of publicizing human tragedy in Palestine. The two are not mutually exclusive. They also note that the

message of the film itself cannot qualify the film as watchable unlike other opinions which highlight that although the film is dramatized; it still addresses the heart of the geopolitical issue.

To see what expectations the film fans had from *VWP*, I gazed through viewer-comments posted before the film was released. From those comments, I came to the understanding that viewers' expectations of this film were higher or at least on part with what the earlier Pana Film production *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq,* represented to cinema-goers. Fans were expecting to experience at least similar pleasure from *VWP* since the producers invested more money in this film. One viewer shares the rumors:

> It is said that they were going to build a Gaza Plateau in the eastern
> Anatolia. They were going to spend more money than they did for *Valley*
> *of the Wolves-Iraq*. This means that they plan to spend more than 10
> million US dollars. Yeah! This film is going to be the best of the east.
> New records will belong to this film. (posted by alpagut01 on 1/17/2010).

As the comment above indicates, the viewers appreciated the quality and perceived realistic settings of *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* and expected even more as producers' gained expertise would be reflected in this new product. However, as this study indicates the *VWP* did not satisfy expectations of its fans.

8.4 Summary
This chapter mainly highlights two types of film readerships for *VWP* by analyzing online film discussions via sinemalar.com. From analyzing viewers' comments, there are mainly two opposite views of the film. On one hand, some viewers see this film as a

popular geopolitical text that defies the power of Zionism and as a text that restores and remake the Palestinian nationhood and territoriality. In this framework, viewers appreciate the story (the story of Palestine) *VWP* communicates more than how the story is told (filmic quality). Viewers dismiss their artistic and cinematic criticism just because of the film's boldness to tell such a story of human drama in Palestine and the Zionist oppression of Palestine. In this sense, the viewers believe that the film indubitably serves the purpose.

On the opposite end, viewers decry the film for being extremely political and to unrealistic with no decent story attached to it. They challenge the film producers for being chauvinistic and extreme in fictionalizing the Palestinian story. Viewers find no reason for being cinematic extreme in the geography of the film where no place is safe for Palestinians. They indicate that whatever the message might be, a film should never disconnect itself from the filmic reality even if the expectations of extreme actions from political-action subgenre films are high. Moreover, some of the viewers point out that a film should never be a vehicle for a certain political agenda if it wants to stay in the limits of cinematic taste.

However, what seems to be in common in both sides' comments about the film is that both parties share their discomfort about Israel's actions against Palestinians. Viewers acknowledge the film's necessity to publicize the human drama that continues to take place in Palestine and value the indispensability of bringing it to the attention of international movie audiences. However, as mentioned, what separates each view from one another is that the lack of film quality and the dissatisfaction with the fictional characteristics of the film versus the importance of the story. In other words, the core of

the online discussion comments centers around the arguments in which one side emphasizes the importance of the message while other is critical of the quality and factuality of (re)presenting the story. To put it differently, the online discussion comments mainly tackle with the question of whether the authenticity and cinema art should be sacrificed in the name of sending political messages. In this sense, the audiences' responses are contradicting and overlapping.

CHAPTER 9: FOCUS GROUPS: NEGOTIATED SPECTATORSHIP, MEMORIES, IMAGES AND ASSOCIATIONS

9.1 Introduction

The survey I conducted for this study suggests some confirmation of thoughts about the movie, *VWP* and its interpretations by Turkish audiences, but underscores the difficulty of researching audience reception of geopolitical texts empirically. For this very reason I was obliged to include face-to-face group interviews with various segments of the Turkish population in three cities in Turkey. As an important part of qualitative methodology, techniques using focus groups have several advantages (Philo and Berry 2004). The first advantage is that focus groups enable "the investigator to check the responders have really understood the questions and that the answers given do reflect what is actually believed" (Philo and Berry 2004, p. 205). A second advantage is that follow up questions and small details from the conversations can unveil related issues that can be pursued. Focus groups "enables a rapport or level of trust to develop between those taking part and the moderator, so that people become less guarded and more prepared to say what they really believe" (Philo and Berry 2004, p. 205). This is not to say that use of focus groups is immune to problems.

The protocol that I follow in this chapter is that I give extra voice to the focus group participants rather than cloaking their interpretations under my own analysis. In other words, I let people talk for themselves by adopting their full conversations and analysis in the chapter. On the basis of the participants' location and occupation, focus group conversations are organized into subgroups. These face-to-face group discussions

share important patterns in their interpretations and disclose unique particularities that should be analyzed together. However, this form of research presented challenges. I have to acknowledge that because of some logistics and various fieldwork issues, the number of groups in each research site and number of participants in each group varies. For example, there is only one focus group interview in the province of Van and three people in that group due to limited time I had in this city and several last minute cancellations by expected participants. Similar problems apply to female participation levels. As explained in the methodology chapter, last minute cancelations complicated the research. However, the overall number of participants in the study from various sectors of Turkish society provides important clues to understanding patterns of the film's interpretations. Apart from the concerns above, it should also be noted that this study of audienceship is different than the study of the film spectatorship derived from a cognitive perspective, which includes its own theoretical and methodological properties (Oakley 2003). In this study, I focus on geopolitical, social and cultural dynamics of the text interpretations within the practicality of meaning-making process. In the conclusion chapter of this dissertation, I will weave together the survey results, focus group discussions and critical readings of the film to explain possible patterns and understandings that can be drawn from these conversations and data collection.

9.2 A student group in Istanbul

This group was formed from students of different universities in Istanbul. Individuals' age ranged between 20 to 25 years old. Face-to-face conversations took place in one of the student's apartment at his invitation. The conversation was not structured and did

not follow a specific order. All participants indicated that they watched the *VWP* in theaters right after it was released in Istanbul.

When I asked them about their overall evaluations of the film, I received different answers from different individuals depending on their previous film experiences and familiarity with the *Valley of the Wolves* phenomenon. As discussed earlier, the *Valley of the Wolves* television series and the films that are made under the same name and thus already established certain forms of recognition and expectations among Turkish audiences. Many viewers already knew the limits (perhaps limitlessness) of Polat Alemdar and his men, and what they can do for their country in the virtual world. In other words, many spectators were familiar with the ultra-action scenes and immortal characteristics of the Turkish heroes before the release of the film *VWP*. Here the focus group participants talked about their expectations of the film and observations of other cinema goers during the interview.

> *First speaker*: In the beginning of the film, for example, when Polat made
>
> that famous exchange with an Israeli guard at the gate, -I did not come to
>
> Israel, I came to Palestine- there were applauses and bravos in the hall, but
>
> later on laughter began dominating the theater.

> *Moderator*: Why?

> *First speaker*: When there are big exaggerations; that is what happens.
>
> For example, when I saw *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*, I would jump in a bus
>
> that is destined to go to Iraq if there was such a service right outside of the

theater after viewing the film. But this film was not like that at all. I found this film very humorous, funny.

Third speaker: I had the reverse reaction. I had heard many conversations about the film such as how it was so exaggerated and fictionalized. People told me that how Polat became the Matrix and finished the entire Israeli military and so forth. So I went to the cinema with these expectations in my mind, but the film turned out to be not all that was said, but an effective one. I enjoyed it. And this was probably because my expectations were so low before going to the film.

Here in these conversations, we see how cinemagoers' expectations play important role in decision making. It is important to note that there are many variables to attract moviegoers to go to a certain film while avoiding others. For example, viewers are sometimes attracted by publicity, advertisements, reviews, and friends' conversations about the film or the genre that appeals to them. In this case, Pana Film's previous films played an important role for people to go to this film despite other viewers' discouragement.

Fourth speaker: This film was way different than the previous one [*Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*].

Moderator: How so?

First speaker: In that film, there was a story, for example. In *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*, there is no story. There is no beginning or a background. These three men are all of a sudden ascending at an Israeli

border and beginning to fight. I mean there are no clues why they are there.

Fifth speaker: I think that taking revenge was the basis of both films. In the Iraq-film, Polat and his men were taking revenge on an American general who put sacks on Turkish soldiers in Iraq and in Palestine-film Polat and his men are taking revenge of death of nine Turkish activists on the Mavi Marmara.

In the following passage, the participants engage in reading the film makers' mind by speculating why such political-action films are produced in Turkey dealing with Turkish military engagements abroad. These participants understood that films such as *VWP* have a functionality of (in)forming the public sensibility and populism. This group was also aware of propaganda politics and how the relationships between the state apparatus and the culture industry interplay and how these entities support each other. Another important nuance that needs to be highlighted here is that in almost all focus group discussions, participants hold the notion that the film affects everybody else. Discussants talk about how films affect this or that type of person other than themselves. Often, focus group discussants exclude themselves from being subjected by films when they talk about film effects on viewers. Hardly there is this inclusion of oneself, I think, probably because admitting the fact that film can affect oneself is a sign of weakness or uncertainty.

Fifth speaker: Here is why Turkish people like this film. The Turkish people could not do anything in Iraq or Israel, nor could Turkish

government. Meaning, the Turkish government could not enforce any sanctions against the US or Israel. This feeling of not being able to do anything has built a big social hysteria and trauma in Turkish society. Now, in these two films [*Valley of the Wolves-Iraq and Palestine*] the pressure that has been built inside the Turkish people is being released via these virtual revenges. So now, we are saying that Polat went to Iraq and Palestine and took our revenge and came back victoriously. In Israel, he killed the general Moshe Ben Eliezer and in Iraq, he killed the American general, Sam William Marshall.

Moderator: As an audience member, do you feel relieved?

Fifth speaker: No, because I was aware of this. For example, *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* was supported by the state [Turkish]. Many of the state officials went to the film's premiere and made supportive statements. What this means is that Polat went to these trouble zones and finished what we wanted to do as a state or people.

The participants then went into discussions about the film's possible anti-American sentiments. They argue that the film *VWP* is not so anti-American or anti-Israel as it has been publicly accused of. Participants note that the film elegantly makes this binary identity construction wherein the good guys and bad guys are defined very clearly.

First speaker: By giving such a role to Simone [Jewish-American], the film implies that Jews are not that bad people like the general, Moshe. I

think this is a success because the film makes the point that a Jew can also be a victim of another Jew.

Fifth speaker: As Israel was not portrayed badly in *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*; Americans are not portrayed badly in *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*. Even the Jewish-American woman is in a very positive role in the film. With this, the filmmakers want to send a message to the international audiences saying that: Hey look! We can see this nuance [not everybody is bad]. There might also be another message here to be extracted and that is this: Israel does not care about anybody or any country in the world when it comes to protecting Israeli interests. Even the Americans have to comply with demands of Israelis. Thusly, the Jewish-American woman's complaining about the guard at the gate becomes an empty struggle and the guard's ignoring of her demands proves the notion above.

Forth speaker: That is probably correct too but the important message in the film is clearly there which is to say that we are not the enemy of America or Israel. This is the message of the film for Americans and Israelis.

Authenticity has been a big part of any debate made about Pana Film's film productions. From there, participants move to the discussion of the film's depiction of real events in Palestine and the authenticity of *VWP* compared to that of *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*. There is one thing about these productions that a majority of focus group participants, survey respondents and online commentators also paid attention to. It is the

question of what is 'real' and what is 'reel' that had to be clarified and described. People think that the ways in which the film *VWP* portrays the filmic reality which is understood to be the collection of real events that are supposed to take place in Palestine is mostly fictional, unreal and exaggerated. But the story that the film bases its narration is mostly real and based on the real events that took place in Palestine and elsewhere such as the Mavi Marmara raid. In other words, Polat's and his men's Rambo-like operation in Israel is fictional (reel) but the cause that their mission is based on is factual (real). Put differently, the Palestinian drama is real but Polat and his superman-type actions are fictional. Of course, this is not something new. Films are fictions and human constructed socio-cultural texts in the end. What is important here is that many Turkish audiences concentrate on what is expressed (the message) in the film. In their judgment, the factuality of the message is (the Palestinian cause) overcomes the factuality of the actions (Polat's Rambo-like actions in the film). This is the same reason that Turkish audiences welcome the *Valley of the Wolves* television series. In these television series, everyday politics and current events are included in the series' weekly episodes. The viewers re-visit current political developments inscribed within these television texts. Through the intertextuality of the *Valley of the Wolves* television series, current political developments actually make sense for the viewers. In other words, the show interprets, visualizes and puts into context the current political developments for the viewers. Hence, Turkish audiences focus on the message inscribed in the film *VWP* instead of worrying too much about its construction/fictional logic.

Fifth speaker: I don't think that events take place in Palestine as described

in the film. They are much exaggerated.

Second speaker: Yes… the boy dies under the debris, Israeli soldiers opens fire indiscriminately on men and women and so on.

First speaker: Actually, I did look up the internet to see if what film portrays is true. What I found was that Israel has done crimes that are similar to what the film depicts.

Second speaker: I think the film *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* was more realistic and its story was more satisfying. In addition to that, as fictionalized in the film *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*, a well-trained Turk can go to Iraq and possibly accomplish the given mission in the film, but in *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*, there is not even a slight possibility for Polat to finish the given mission in Israel. In this film, Polat is transformed into an extraordinary Turkish figure which made him a comic Rambo.

First speaker: I mean to me, the scenes from the film looked similar to the scenes in documentaries on the internet I saw.

This argument can lead to another and that is how audiences negotiate and reconstruct the meaning of the cinema text. They do not automatically internalize the message. Rather, they reject some portion of the message while agreeing on the general idea. Of course, this is not to say that all audiences of this film can be categorized as the same. Some audiences reject the messages all together while some decode them in the same manner as they are encoded. The following section is an attempt to highlight the audiences' various interpretations of the film and interpretations of other interpreters.

As noted earlier, participants frequently talked about the film's possible geopolitical effects on the viewers and individuals in Turkey and abroad. According to the participants of this focus group, this film is an important instrument for Turkey's soft power in the Arab world and some of the formerly colonized countries. The participants make the argument that *VWP* and other Turkish cinema products can function as a substantial cultural link between the communities that were colonized by the Western countries in the past and Turkey, a country claiming to promote anti-imperialist agendas. The participants believe that what these cinema products attempt to accomplish in those countries, partially, correlate with the policies that Turkey has been pursuing especially under the Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu. The following discussions demonstrate that the audiences are aware of Davutoglu's active foreign policy discourse and his 'zero problems' rhetoric with the neighbors and how much geopolitical rhetoric appears in the narrations of Turkish cinema products. Participants signal their awareness of Turkey's regional aspirations and the AKP's rhetoric about how international relations should be applied in the Middle East and the Balkan Peninsula.

> *Fourth speaker*: If we take into account the fact that this film is also watched in other countries and if these countries are those countries that are Islamic or formerly colonized [by West], intimate relationships might possibly develop between the peoples of those countries and Turkey. We have to include this fact that Turkey is a country that sells popular television shows and soap opera products in the Arab states. This exportation of cultural productions should be counted as a 'soft power' of

Turkey and it should be noted that Turkish state is the happy partner from doing this business. This [Turkish cultural products' exportation to the Arab states] cultural exchange should enhance and diffuse Davutoglu's arguments in the region. For example, the other day I saw the news explaining why thousands of pictures of Recep Tayyip Erdogan [Prime Minister] are hung at homes and businesses of Lebanese in Lebanon.

Sixth speaker: This Tayyip Erdogan wave started after the Davos meeting.

Fourth speaker: Yes, but it became very noticeable after this film. There is also this possibility. The film eliminates the embarrassment that came with the Mavi Marmara defeat for the peoples of the region. In other words, through this film, unattained or incomplete results are completed and attained in the eyes of the people in the region.

Fifth speaker: It is again the policy of diverting the anger to something else.

Sixth speaker: *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*, too, functioned in the same way. Sacks were put on heads of Turkish soldiers, and then what happened? Nothing. But, then this film was introduced as a plan B. So because we are a very sensitive nation and people, these films helped us release our rage and put out the flames of anger safely.

The participants indicate that the film is a certain kind of statement of representation through which the Palestine issue no longer becomes simply Palestinian or Arab. The film fixes the issue as Turkish. Participants understood that films can be

an important conduit of message conveyance in international relations, in addition to formal channels. They believe that films can, in part, reflect and represent a state's official language, geographical imaginations and geopolitical visions. In this respect, this film remains a key geopolitical text mediating Turkey's geopolitical imaginations and culture. The following highlights this very functionality of the film.

Fifth speaker: In the *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*, the story was a Turkish story but in *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* the story is a Middle Eastern story.

Sixth speaker: It can also be said that via *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*, Palestine became Turkey's domestic issue in the eyes of Turkish people, an 82nd province of Turkey so to speak. The foundations have already been laid for this to become reality.

Fifth speaker: As a matter of fact, an event such as the Davos meeting of 2009 and the Mavi Marmara flotilla raid of 2010 were another way of saying to the world that Turkey must not be ignored in the region.

Fourth speaker: But Turkey was already an actor in the Middle East. Erdogan's mediating role in between Israel and Syria before the Davos meeting regarding the situations of Golan Heights is an important indicator that Turkey is an active player in the Middle East.

Later in the conversation, the film's Turkishness and its conservativeness dominate the discussion. To speak broadly, Turkish cinema and television serials narrate domestic socio-cultural stories. Mostly these stories tend to be conservative and

251

protective of cultural values, beliefs and norms. It is rare that Turkish cinema challenges state ideologies, formal rhetoric or fundamentals of Turkish culture except by some from the left-leaning cinema tradition. The *Valley of the Wolves* products are typical popular cultural examples that enforce traditional ways of life and the sanctity of the state in many ways. The group participants carefully read intentionally inserted political elements in the film and deconstruct genuine relationships between the state and the film making. In this sense, I have to acknowledge that this university discussion group is extremely well informed about the *Valley of the Wolves* cinema phenomena in Turkey. When I asked them if this film is nationalist cinema text, they responded that this film was not a nationalist but an Islamic one when compared to *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*.

> Fifth speaker: In the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*, there is no reference to Turkishness. But, in *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*, there is.
>
> *Moderator*: How about immortal Turks, Polat and his men?
>
> *Sixth speaker*: These three heroes are immortal and the audience is already conditioned to see them as immortal. If these three will go to Israel, they have to go and do whatever they need to do and come back with no harm. Death has to pass them untouched… in *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*, we were a nation of Islam but in *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* we were Turkish again.
>
> *Fourth speaker*: In addition to that, we need to look at the scriptwriters of these two productions. *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*'s scriptwriter was a

nationalist and statist. In other words, it was like he would do anything for the state type person. But the scriptwriters of the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* are conservative people, Islamist so to speak.

As discussed earlier, the group participants point out that the film *VWP* is more than just cinematizing geopolitical visions of Turkey or exploring Turkishness. It is also a kind of movie that transnationalizes Turkishness and becomes the voice for Turkish people in the Middle East. This film is also about 'perception management' by which audiences' emotions, motives, objective reasoning as well as their meaning-making processes are influenced (aimed to influence) in favor of one or more ideological narrations or geopolitical cultures. The following conversations shed light on these two arguments.

> *Fourth speaker*: One of my Arab friends made this comment about this film during the first week of release: 'if this film continues to pull millions into the theaters in the Arab countries, sincerely it can be said that people of these two geographies can come together and unite, and this can look small but be a big step at the end'.
>
> *Moderator*: Does this enforce the idea in which Turkey is presented as a regional player?
>
> *Fourth speaker*: Yes, this film facilitates such a perception. In general, films are about perception management. It does not necessarily have to happen physically. It is notional. For example, Rambo goes to Vietnam alone and wins the battle but in actuality the U.S. lost the war in Vietnam.

However, how many people know that the U.S. lost the war in Vietnam? This is a perception management. Cinema can do this, and it has power to do this. And this is what Turkey is taking advantage of.

The question of what sort of perception was at play here becomes an important topic of conversation. In the following conversation, the participants make clear references to Turkey's historical ties with the Middle East and they highlighted that Turkey is sort of obliged to be involved in the region's problems including the Palestine-Israel conflict, Iraq's territorial unity, and so on. Turkey's Ottoman past becomes the reference point as to why Turkey should take on such a mission.

Sixth speaker: I think the film points out this notion that the sons of a nation who had raced horses in three continents can intervene in a problem that occurs in one of its former regions [refers to Ottoman controlled territories] whenever it is necessary.

Third speaker: This has to be pointed out that Turkey could not ignore the Palestine issues as a successor country to the Ottoman Empire.

Fifth speaker: But there is no emphasis to Ottoman Empire in *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine.*

Sixth speaker: There is no emphasis but there is that implied reference. It creates the perception.

Participants not only emphasize moralistic and historical necessity to intervene in the Israel-Palestine conflicts for Turkey but they also make the point that

involvement in Israel-Palestine issues is critical for the current AKP government and contemporary Turkish geopolitics. To them, what the film highlights adequately correlates with what the AKP government has been pursuing since 2002.

> *Fourth speaker*: Both films [*Valley of the Wolves-Palestine and Iraq*] parallel the AKP policies.

> *Fifth speaker*: How is *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* parallel with Davutoglu policies?

> *Fourth speaker*: In this way: there is this country that does not want to be fall under any humiliation. Why was the bill blocked by the Turkish Grand National Assembly, because we were against the war in Iraq? And this parallels with Davutoglu's policies.

The bill mentioned above was sent to the parliament by the AKP government to allow the stationing of US troops on Turkish territory as part of preparations for the 2003 war against Iraq. The AKP majority parliament rejected the bill which unleashed a bitter reaction in Washington but was welcomed elsewhere.

Our conversation moved back to the topic of why *VWP* did not attract as many spectators as *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* did. Participants laid out several reasons why they thought *VWP* was marginalized. The first reason was because several other popular movies were released at the same time such as *Eyvah Eyvah 2*. The second reason was that reviews of this film were not that exciting or stimulating compared to the reviews of *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq.* Another reason according these focus group participants

was that this film was already characterized in the media as being Islamist, anti-Semitic and violent. I want to note here that the following conversations can shed light on some of the survey results discussed in Chapter 7 indicating that not many people were interested in seeing the film. A similar study conducted about *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq,* found that 68.5 percent of survey respondents indicated that they saw the film out of 292 sampled population in Istanbul, Turkey in 2006 (Anaz and Purcell 2010). An online survey that I conducted for this study shows that only 33.4 percent of the participants indicated that they saw the *VWP* out of 344 respondents among Turkish speaking people in 2011 (15 respondents skipped this question). These two studies confirm the lack of popularity of the both films *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine and Iraq* if not explaining completely why this film lacked attention. Here is what the focus group participants said about *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine's* unpopularity.

> *Third speaker*: There were other films that came to theaters about the same time with *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*.

> *Second speaker*: When the film *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq* was released, everyone told me that I should go to this film. But when this film came out, I heard no one telling me the same thing.

> *Fifth speaker*: For example, my uncle never cares about cinema but even he went to cinema to see the film *Valley of the Wolves-Iraq*.

> *Fourth speaker*: My grandmother, too, went to that film [laughing]. I am serious.

Sixth speaker: After the Mavi Marmara raid, there were so many demonstrations throughout Turkey. And when this film made this attack as big part of the scenario, people thought that the film was politicized too much. Plus, when you go to the film, you would see people with turbans, gown, and long beards. This automatically alienated other sectors of Turkish society. I mean at least this was the common perception. The film did not appeal to everybody. It seemed to be the political propaganda of a certain group. Therefore, the filmgoers did not go to film just because they did not want to be profiled as one of those religious people. There is also invocation ceremony in the film which I think enforces the idea that the film is very conservative one.

Fourth speaker: Even more, those other Islamic communities [this speaker refers to the Fetullah Gulen movement, and of course this is my interpretation of his reference] who did not support the Mavi Marmara movement did not support this film either.

Fifth speaker: This is also important to know that current television series [called] *Valley of the Wolves-Ambush* has lost its popularity which also affected numbers of movie goers greatly for this film.

From the conversation above, it becomes noticeable that the film *VWP* was stigmatized immediately after it was released. With the influx of certain type of cultural and religious symbols and dress styles into the theaters, this film became an Islamic film which in the end caused a decline in the numbers of tickets purchased. This

assessment may seem to be contradictory with the general human geography of Turkey wherein more than 60 percent of people identify themselves as conservative or rightist as this study highlights. But the nuance is that people in Turkey are also moderate and want to keep the fine line between what is extreme and what is not. Religious symbols such as wearing a turban for a man or a burka for a woman are not a common practice of Islam in Turkey for which one can easily be marginalized in various places and occasions. But as explained in different sections of this study, characterizing the film as an Islamic one is not the only reason why the film *VWP* failed to attract ticket sales. There were other factors at play.

With this focus group, I also wanted to delve into some of the survey questions that I posed to online audiences. In doing this, I wanted to find out (1) how accurate the information I received through the online survey was and (2) what possible explanations are there for such outcomes. As I mentioned earlier, this focus group participants were well informed and educated. Therefore their interpretations of the film and their interpretations of other people's interpretations remain were also valuable. My question in this regard related to commonly known as 'the Polat Alemdar phenomenon' (see Table 7.20). In this Polat phenomenon, the main character becomes a sort of iconic figure, a model and vigilante hero. He resembles American heroes (Rambo, Batman, Superman, etc.) but this one is more of a Turkish one and real because the filmic Polat lives among people just like anyone else. Some of the phrases he uses in television series and cinema films become vehicles of meaningful exchanges and ways of communicating among young (mostly male) audiences such as 'talking or walking like Polat'. There are other figures (Abdulhey and Memati) that are always together with

Polat and complete this Polat phenomenon that also requires mentioning. These secondary actors also have unique characteristics that attract different people for different reasons. For example, one of the speakers after the focus group interview said that he swapped his Facebook profile picture with Memati's just because he wanted to send a message to his girlfriend. And when I asked what that message was he said that in one of the scenes as these two were watching *Valley of the Wolves-Ambush,* Memati stared at a woman angrily and menacingly. Since then, this piece of scene and filmic memory has functioned as a meaningful exchange of expression between the two. He said that the message got across smoothly by replacing the profile picture with Memati's. Similar to this story, this focus group's participants note that people's decoding of the meanings vary from person to person. In other words, reproductions of meanings are personal and private. However, this does not mean that meaningful patterns cannot be formed. Indeed, my conversations with this and other groups' participants indicate that there are patterns for decoding the film and its characters. The following conversations mostly refer to the television series when *Valley of the Wolves* had been rated as a top show among many others in Turkey.

Third speaker: Everywhere was full of people who would dress and talk like Polat when the television series was very famous.

Fourth speaker: Polat became a phenomenon.

Moderator: Similar to James Bond perhaps?

Sixth speaker: Polat was a more realistic hero than American Rambos. For example, James Bond kills people and so does Polat but he also lives in the streets of Turkey like anybody else.

Third speaker: Additionally, Polat is not just a hero like the superman, rather he is someone who can be approached and imitated as a role model. In other words, no one can fly like the Superman but everyone can pull the trigger like Polat.

Fifth speaker: We used to go to Turkish café houses to watch *Valley of the Wolves* television series every week.

Third speaker: Streets used to go empty when the series was on TV.

Sixth speaker: People used to share phrases, stories and action scenes from *Valley of the Wolves* episodes on their Facebook wall.

Third speaker: There was a term like 'let's toss a valley' [meaning: let's download and watch a *Valley of the Wolves* episode together].

As demonstrated, the group participants continued using past tense when they talked about the Polat phenomenon because they think that things are much different these days. To them, the Polat phenomenon was very popular from 2003 to 2006. When I delved into what has changed since then, they highlighted that people changed and so did the mindset in the society. Around 2003, Polat was a vigilante hero, a very much appreciated role back at the time. But, they note that these days siding and working for the deep state does not sell well in Turkey.

Fifth speaker: People are more rational these days. They no longer appreciate social sentimentalism.

All the elements of societal change that this focus group's participants highlighted tie deeply with the results that I obtained from the online surveys. Those who said they watched the film *VWP* were not in great numbers and their education level tended to be lower than survey participants who said they did not watch the film. There is a possible pattern here and that would be that this film which is closely tied with the Polat Alemdar phenomenon did not get much attention from those who tended to have higher education and more nuanced ways of understanding the world.

On the basis of seeking some sort of confirmation between the focus group discussions and the survey results, I directed my questions to the nature of effects of the film on people. The responses the participants gave were supportive of the survey results (see Table 7.16). In other words, this film *VWP* did little to make a difference in changing people's mind toward Israel. Rather the film took advantage of the political atmosphere and the social sentiment that arose over the years against Israel.

Fourth speaker: There was no need for this film to be knowledgeable about what happened in Palestine. Actually the film situates itself on this collective perception about Palestine. First, there was this perception and then the film is produced enforcing that perception.

Sixth speaker: It is the *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* that wants to take advantage of this sentimental atmosphere that existed among the people.

Fourth speaker: As everyone knows, the film's scenario was reedited after the Mavi Marmara flotilla raid.

As seen in the participants' comments and similar to the survey results, the film *VWP* takes advantage of sensational moments that accumulated over the years against Israel and in favor of Palestine in Turkish society. An influx of information via different forms of media indicates that Turkish people are well informed about Israel and Palestine. Even so, it is almost impossible to say that the film's effects on shaping people's opinions are zero. In the following section, I delve into another survey question which interrogates the general characteristics of the political-action film.

Moderator: In general, how would you describe the film?

Fourth speaker: It is a film that is full of violence. The scenario in the film is performed under the shadow of guns if there was an identifiable scenario in the film.

Third speaker: I found it in very good quality. I mean the sound system, music, visual effects, and acting were adequate, and the scenes were also affective and agitative.

Fourth speaker: For example, the scene that showed the Palestinian-disabled boy is left inside by Israeli soldiers when they demolished the house was very sensitive.

Third speaker: I don't believe such an event can ever occur.

Fourth speaker: But just the other day when Palestinians were protesting on the Golan Heights, did not Israeli soldiers begin shooting at them even before they came close to the border? I mean the film scenes are possible.

Fifth speaker: Yes, but Moshe's gun testing on a civilian seemed to be little bit exaggerated.

Sixth speaker: Okay! But this is a cinema art in the end. And it is a scenario that is written to explain Moshe's cruelty.

Fourth speaker: The scene is to put emphasis on Moshe's character to say that how he is a psycho-maniac. In addition to that, I think the scene is there to say how he is out of balance and he is the guy behind this Mavi Marmara attack.

Fifth speaker: From this, it can be inferred that the target is not Israel; it is Moshe.

Fourth speaker: I don't see any anti-Israel approach in this film. Whoever is equivalent of Moshe character in reality; that is the person to whom this film is based on.

Regarding the relations between the real and the reel, participants highlight different points of view and contradictory opinions. Again, cinema form and expectations play an important role in reading film realities and tying that to the realities of everyday life. As discussed earlier, reality can be nicely embedded within unrealistic narrations as it occurs in this film *VWP*. The opposite can also occur. Imagined or more

complex representations of place, people and events can be formalized realistically in cinema forms for audiences. Here participants make clear distinctions between the genre realities (guns, killings, heroism, etc.) that are inserted in this action film and the everyday realities of Palestinians represented through the action scenes (cruel treatment of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers). This means, the participants do not completely embrace what the film depicts. Instead, they actively engage in negotiating the meaning and understanding what is the story behind those filmic representations. However, I do not argue that Fiske's model is operating here, emphasizing 'active audience' which is thought to be completely autonomous, free from institutional constrains or personal limitations in their reading of media products (Biocca 1988, Es 2011). What I do argue is that this focus group's participants are very active in making their own reading of the political messages that *VWP* attempts to convey. As Morley argues, there is no doubt that audiences are limited in their reading of media texts completely free from any kinds of internal or external constraints. Indeed he notes that audiences are limited in their own meaning-making capacity of media texts as media messages are embedded in some sort of "signifying mechanisms which promote certain meanings, even one privileged meaning, and suppress others" (Morley 1996, p. 282). It should be highlighted that these focus group participants understand the film and its messages in the realm of the general knowledge that exists beyond the cinema product *VWP* about Israel and Palestine and Turkey's role in the region. However, cinema products such as this film resume being a vital body of knowledge through which people shape their opinions and understandings about the world and geopolitical practices and representations.

9.3 A student group in Ankara

The commonality of this student group is that this group is comprised of students of different universities in Ankara. Their ages ranged from 23 to 27 years old. Face-to-face conversations took place in a coffee shop in Sakarya district. Conversations that we made were not structured and did not follow a specific order. At first, I started the conversation by asking how they found the film, *VWP* in general. Comments and opinions were freely expressed with little prodding by me. The goal was to get the essence of their thought without making them feel that there is an audio-recorder on the table and their talk is being recorded or interrupted. Participants in this group were also very informed audience about Turkey's human geography and political history. In this group, one thing was strikingly obvious and that was that participants were very skeptical about the film's highlighted messages and its purpose of production. Participants constantly questioned the quality of messages and searched for political-economic reasons behind the production.

Before I talk about audiences' skepticism about the film and geopolitics within the film, I revisit the *Valley of the Wolves* phenomenon as a television text in Turkey. For over ten years of operation, *Valley of the Wolves* cinema products (including both films and several television series) established a didactical framework through which public was informed about various subjects related to Turkey's geography, history and politics. The decade long television series interrogated current developments that no other popular production had ever attempted to incorporate. To name a few, these themes included underground working of the mafia, affairs of the deep state, ongoing court cases and international organizations' aspirations involving Turkey. Thus, the

audiences always found pieces of reality re-presented in these *Valley of the Wolves* productions which in turn led to the belief that the story in *VWP* may be exaggerated but everyday conditions on the ground in Palestine are more real and arduous than described -and maybe even modulated- in the film.

> *Moderator*: What do you think of the scenes in the film?

> *Second speaker*: The scene that shows the boy dies under the debris does not even reflect reality. Reality is more factual than that scene [meaning: conditions are harsher in Palestine than it is portrayed in the film].

> *First speaker*: Absolutely.

> *Second speaker*: We always hear things like that. We know that Israel demolishes homes top of the residents, kills children, and even drops bombs on people at the beach and so on. I was personally very happy that the film touched upon these subjects.

> *First speaker*: Think about this. If Israel can kill nine people in international waters and in front of the eyes of the whole world, the very same state can even do more horrendous actions against Palestinians when there are no eyes watching them. To understand this, one should not need to be that clever.

> *Second speaker*: *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* is showing an extraordinary scene like this to carry out a mission in which where the reality of the film is unleashed.

Third speaker: Yes and there are so many unrelated scenes in the film –I guess- just to show how cruel Israel is. But these unrelated scenes interrupt the story and audience. Then, the point of the film becomes showdown between Israelis and Turks.

First speaker: Correct. The story turns into a message to say that we, Turks, come and disrupt everything. So you [Israel] better watch out.

However, participants appreciate the film's attempt to redefine geopolitical definitions and practices. For them, the film bravely engages in redefining geopolitical terms and concepts such as national borders, locality, security, terrorism, violence, danger and so on. As argued in the Chapters 5, 7 and 8, the film's counter-argument about geopolitical representations and practices of Israel against Palestine is one of the crucial arguments of the film that is noted by the viewers. The film can be situated as an important anti-geopolitical text (or another geopolitics in its own right) that creates alternative ways of defining geographical and political representations in Palestine.

Second speaker: One of the messages that the film is giving and that is that it defines terrorism from the other way around. According the film's definition, the actions of Israel are the real act of terrorism. It says that Israel is the one who is committing the crimes. The film also guides our attention to the idea that Israel is going after the project of establishing 'the Kingdom Greater Israel'.

Fourth speaker: But in the remaining one and half hours, the film is showing how the three Turkish commandos devastate the Israel Special Forces. The film does this just to show that how Turks are great.

Third speaker: But in a virtual world [laughing].

In the following conversation, participants make the point that *VWP* in the end is a commercial attempt to make profits. For them, film makers take advantage of any political atmosphere to place their film at the top of the box office. Participants note that this film, like many others, functions in the realm of political economy of cultural production.

Second speaker: Essentially, the film includes current events like the Mavi Marmara raid to increase the numbers of filmgoers and to find excuses to kill Israelis, which by the way some people may like to see even if it occurs in a virtual world. I mean the impression I got was that the Pana Film was looking for ways of making some money. The Mavi Marmara raid provided that opportunity. In the end, Pana film is a commercial entity and built to make money.

One of the points that other focus group participants also made is that the film functions as a safety valve for releasing people's anger toward Israel because of the recent developments since the Davos meeting in 2009. Considering the public outrage and mass demonstrations against Israel in different Turkish cities after the Mavi Marmara attack, the film's timely release partially helped to quench people's anger and outrage through a safe mechanism. This is the point that following exchange makes.

First speaker: With the Mavi Marmara, people's anger toward Israel increased tenfold. This film helped to discharge people's anger by killing many Israelis in the virtual world. I don't think there is much of Palestine in this film. That is where the film's exaggeration starts. How many Turks went to Israel and killed a single Israeli? None. But Polat Alemdar kills many. This is very unreal. If more Turks and Palestinians died, then I would say this is more real.

Second speaker: But Polat cannot die.

Third speaker: Nobody would watch the film if he did.

The tradition in acting in Turkish cinema mostly has been an actor-character style. This means that an actor or actress establishes a certain character through one or two cinema products and then the built character continues to be the same character in the following cinema productions. The Polat character can be a good example to this actor-character style film making. There is a built character for Polat. He cannot unact his role, who he is, and what he does. He has to beat, kill, destroy and win at the end everytime and everywhere. The following conversation highlights the signature of Polatism in *Valley of the Wolves* cinema products.

Second speaker: Polat has to kill and kill in large numbers. He solves problems with guns. Otherwise people would not watch Polat.

First speaker: I have been watching *Valley of the Wolves* for about seven years. Now, this series has reached to a certain number of fans that are very fond of this Polat phenomenon. The creators of the *Valley of the*

Wolves will not easily give up on this audience pool. And there are people who like Memati's prototype, very Turkish and manly, or Abdulhey's hairs. Girls like them and boys like them for different reasons. Thus, they cannot die.

Second speaker: Abdulhey, for example, is a Kurdish. He cannot die. He is there to say that we are working for the state together [Kurds and Turks are together for Turkey].

First speaker: The image of Turkey in people's mind and the image that this film draws match. Many people believe that Turkey is in the center of the world politics. The *Valley of the Wolves* series and films draw a very dramatic picture in which only someone like Polat could succeed. In order to succeed in the world politics, solutions are embedded within having someone like Polat. In other words, we will need a Rambo which makes the film fictional and makes me believe that producers care more about keeping their audiences than giving messages. Of course, there are some messages too.

Moderator: Can we say that this film is disconnected from what is happing in Palestine?

Second speaker: No. The only disconnected part is where three men kill hundreds of people. Again, in the end this film is produced to make profit and entertain people. It is not simply made for art or politics.

First speaker: But not everybody sees it the same way. People perceive the world as it the film interprets.

In the following discussions, the participants pay attention to subjectivity of defining what is acceptable and not acceptable in the political-action subgenre film making. The second speaker, for example, questions what he sees as unfair criticism of *VWP* for being a very Rambo-like film. He contests the notion that why everybody accepts it normal when many Afghans or Arabs are killed in American action films but everybody talks about chauvinism when Polat kills Israelis. He acknowledges that in order to explain the reality in Palestine and to appeal to millions, *VWP* needed to include actions in the narration to make it a story of violence and political crime.

Second speaker: What this film does is instead of showing pieces of events and incidents from Palestine similar to news; it adds some dramatization and a story to make the whole thing watchable and entertaining while it squeezes some messages between the lines. Also, don't we watch Americans killing Afghans, Arabs and others in the name of fighting against terrorism? To be honest with you, I like when Polat and his men kill Americans and Israelis.

Fourth speaker: Let's not forget that the producers are coming from conservative and nationalist background.

In the following discussion, participants talk about the argument that highlights which affects what first: cinema products affect people or it occurs the other way around where cinema products take advantage of a pre-existing atmosphere to produce

films. In the end, participants come to a realization that this is an unending circle and difficult to identify. Indeed, the 'which comes first' question does not provide practical solutions to understanding the relationship between pre-existing notions and cinema products. But what is important to pay attention to is that the public discourse is formed, maintained and transformed during this interaction. Participants acknowledge their pre-existing negative notions toward Israel accumulated through years of public news coverage by Turkish media, but they also claim that their source of information about Israel and Palestine issues is accurate and this film serves to maintain this geopolitical perception. In this respect, as discussed in earlier chapters (see Tables 7.16, 7.17 and 7.18), this film functions as the voice for audiences who believe they have no voice but have more to say. This study reveals that many Turkish people believe that Palestinians live in unacceptable conditions and therefore their drama and miseries need to be heard. This film claims to be doing this in the eyes of Turkish audiences.

Second speaker: I saw people were applauding in the theater.

First speaker: This is because audiences' world view overlaps with that of the film makers.

Second speaker: We cannot say that the film is shaping audiences' opinion in a negative way.

Fourth speaker: There is this demand and the film supplying this demand in turn there becomes more reaction in public.

Second speaker: Now, there are opinions and beliefs in the society. These opinions and views are not easily put into words. For example, people

have strong opinions about Israel but they cannot express their thoughts all the time and easily. What this film does is to popularize these views and make them legitimate to be pronounced. Now, people are not afraid of expressing their thoughts and views. Even if they spoke before; their voice was short and barren. What *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* did is that it embraced those public opinions which I think majority shared and turned it into a cinema story. When people saw their thoughts were publicized, they grasped the film as their reference point or piece of evidence for their opinions.

First speaker: We hear lots of news about Israel and this news makes us hostile against Israel but we cannot do anything about it. Almost for a century, we could not do anything. Palestinians are dying but Turkish people are only watching. Because of this, there is grudge in Turkish people's mind. What this film is doing is that it is mitigating this anger and hostility among people. Thus we love when Polat kills Israelis and establishes justice in Palestine. In other words, Polat takes revenge for a hundred years of Turkish absence in Palestine. This might be very unreal to believe but people still like to see these things happen even if they are on the white screen.

In this portion of the discussion, participants agree that the film audiences also enjoy when their geographic imaginations and historical aspirations are reflected onto the big screen, if not into the reality. Up to now, not many Turkish cinema products pushed people's geographic imaginations beyond the official borders to include the

former Ottoman territories and its subjects. It is likely that this is the first time a film series explored Turkish possibilities in the Middle East and sets sail for geopolitical adventures along with Turkish people to the familiar territories. The film *VWP* offers Turkish people the chance to re-experience the glorious past and voyage to the familiar geographies. By doing this, the film also reminds the audiences about their historical responsibilities and geographic opportunities. It tells the audience that Turkey cannot stay away from its past or ignore the familiar geographies if Turkey wants to be the regional actor in the Middle East again.

> *Fourth speaker*: Also there is this imagination of being an actor in the region and transferring it into the white screen. People enjoy this too.

> *First speaker*: Of course, Turks would like to have influence in the region and want to have such foreign polices and military power so that Turkey advances in international politics. Especially Turks would want to dominate the region because they have successfully done this once. Of course, every nation can imagine but not every nation can achieve. We can hope this [possibility that exists for Turks]. For example, Saudi Arabia cannot do this but Turkey can because we dominated this region for about 600 years.

> *Moderator*: So we like this film because it fires our imaginations?

> *First speaker*: I like this film because it sends a clear message to Israeli officials about Turkish people's feelings. Now they understand what Turks feel about Israel and its actions. If I were an Israeli official, I would take

this message seriously and consider evaluating my relations with other countries. I think film sends more messages to Israelis than Turkish people.

Fourth speaker: Israel is very aggressive just because of this no-alternative situation.

First speaker: If Israel did not pursue its big Israel project, no one would bother Israel.

Second speaker: But if Israel does not weaken everybody around it by fighting, Israel cannot survive there.

As the exchanges above reveal, participants have strong opinions about Israel's position in the Middle East and are aware of its purported regional aspirations. In this respect, perceptions that Turkish people have about Israel as the trouble-maker state in the region parallel Turkish official rhetoric. Political discourse circulated by the officials also confirms the public contention toward Israel along with the *VWP*'s portrayal of Israel. For example, during his speech at the United Nations, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan fortified this argument by decrying Israel as the 'spoiled boy' of the region: "so far, Israel has always played the role of spoiled boy in the face of U.N. resolutions concerning Israel, thinking that it would carry on with this role" (Hurriyetdailynews 2011, Diplomacy section, ¶ 4). To further the discussion, attention should be paid to the ideological proximity between the current AKP government's foreign policies and the audiences of *VWP*. Indeed, the results of an online survey conducted for this study support this statement. In the survey, 41 percent

of respondents believe that the film mirrors the current government's Middle East policies while 62.8 percent indicate that the film *VWP* became the voice for Turkish people (see Tables 7.18 and 7.19).

9.4 Private sector employees in Ankara

This group consisted of private employees with a lower level of education (Middle school and high school) compared to that of the other focus group participants. Their age distribution is 24 and 45. Everyone in this group saw the film and indicated that they also follow *Valley of the Wolves* television series almost every week.

A lack of formal training in geography or international area studies did not prevent the group participants from engaging in topics that are considered to be core topics for classical geopolitics. The very heart of the conversations touched on terms and concepts that are counted to be very geopolitical such as territoriality, resources, international politics, technological superiority, military power, population, supremacy and geostrategic domination. This group's participants constantly compared and contrasted military and technological capabilities of countries and nations as they discussed regional politics and supremacy. Very often, they gave examples from their military experiences in Turkish army to make the point whether Turkey is capable of dominating the region. To them, international politics is all about diplomacy and military capability, and about who controls what geopolitical resources. Through this lens, Turkey seems to be a key country that has to stand on its feet freely. The participants argue that the eyes of the world powers are on Turkey, that these powers have secret agendas, and the country is surrounded by unstable countries that can jeopardize Turkey's long run leadership in the region. This is why *VWP* and rest of the

Valley of the Wolves productions are crucial to understand the geopolitics that is related to Turkey. Even though the film *VWP* is more or less about Israel and Palestine, the conversations that form this focus group often wandered off to other topics. However, Turkey remained in the center of the discussions because it was thought that Turkey is the central country in the Middle East and more often described as the last castle standing in front of the latest crusade, in the eyes of the participants.

The following conversation with participants brings about intense but disconnected exchanges of thoughts about Israel, United States, and Turkey and their geopolitical agendas in the Middle East. In their analysis, Palestine does not seem to be an independent actor. It is a land where wolves wander around similar to the terrains of those Iraq and Afghanistan. This means that the discussants implicitly count the United States in Iraq, Israel in Palestine and the coalition powers in Afghanistan as imperial actors pursuing their own geopolitical advantage in the Muslim geography. Throughout the discussion, participants sustained their tone about the US's and Israel's geopolitical practices in the Middle East. By doing this, participants also feminize these oppressed geographies (the Middle East) as vulnerable to immediate danger from the masculine West. Accordingly, more attention focused on the notion in which the United States is the main actor as Israel becomes the fifty-first state of the U.S.

Third speaker: Palestine is not Israel's soil.

Second speaker: It is the US's.

Third speaker: It would not be possible for Israel to occupy Palestine if America was not behind Israel. America has money and can buy anything

and anywhere. First, Palestine territories were bought then their residents were kicked out.

Fourth speaker: They [America] menaced Turkey too.

Third speaker: Yes. The Mavi Marmara and the sacking event [referring to the event when American forces put sacks on Turkish soldiers' head in Iraq in 2003] were all part of this threat.

First speaker: But you cannot do anything to America.

Third speaker: No.

Second speaker: Actually, this film tells us that we really want to do this to Israel but we cannot.

Fourth speaker: Because America is behind Israel.

First speaker: Yes, but in actuality if you assign everybody in Israel as a District Governor in Turkey, Turkey would still be in need of administrators. [This speaker is referring to the state of Israelis total population compared to that of Turkey, indicating that in the end number of soldiers count.]

The human resources and military capabilities of countries were constantly brought up in the conversation as the sign of geopolitical superiority. Related to that, Israel's military capability in the region is always thought to be attached the military capabilities of the United States. But some participants find the US military weak in its core. Speaker two supports this assumption:

Second speaker: Do you think the US soldiers fight if they are not paid? No. But our soldiers fight without asking anything because we believe in rising from the ashes but they believe in eternal death.

First speaker: When our soldiers die, we just say 'God bless our homeland'.

One participant invokes one of the famous quotes of the French commander Napoleon Bonaparte about Turks to support the idea that Turks are invincible.

Second speaker: They cannot defeat Turks. Remember Napoleon's words 'Turks are such courageous and virtuous people. That is why you can kill a Turk but you can never defeat them.' That is why they are trying to divide us from inside, piece by piece.

In his statement, 'we' refers to Turks but what 'they' represents is not so clear. What is clear is that discourse of 'they' vs. 'us' binary mindset is always at play when participants are asked to conceptualize geopolitics surrounding them. Anderson's (1991) conceptualization of a nation and what unites the nation applies to every piece of this conversation. Participants think that in a glorified Turkish past, Turks defended their land sacrificing their lives for the unity of their nation and they will do the same when it becomes necessary.

Fourth speaker: They [Americans and Israelis] have the technology but they don't have the guts.

Third speaker: Have you seen anybody killing himself in the West?

Fourth speaker: But Muslims happily give their lives to defend their homeland.

First speaker: They do not even have to watch this film to see Turks' heroism; they can investigate what happened in Dardanelle. There hundred times more of heroism will be found.

One participant again mentions a famous story of the Dardanelle that has been told from person to person and from classroom to classroom in Turkey. The origin of reference is believed to belong to Ataturk (founding father of Turkey). During the War of Dardanelle (1915-1916), one soldier approaches Ataturk and says: "Sir! We are pulling back because we are out of ammunition". He replies: "soldier, I did not order you to fight, I ordered you to die. Go back to your position". This piece of memory regardless of its authenticity tells how courageous and virtuous Turks are. The following conversations highlight that neither state-of-art machinery nor high-tech weaponry suffices to defeat Turks on the ground. In other words, participants make the point that Turkey is not Palestine or Iraq.

First speaker: And that soldier carries out Ataturk's order without any hesitation.

Second speaker: When the time comes and we have to do it [fighting], we do it even better [than those who fought in Dardanelle].

First speaker: You have to know that war cannot be completed with technology only. War will have to be ended after face-to-face fighting takes place as it happened in Iraq.

Participants in the following part of the discussion highlight the importance of the film's potential effects on public. They believe that films' effect on people is limited but they also believe that the message in this film is strong and well presented. For them this film is an important instrument expressing public's discontent against Israeli actions toward Palestinians. Since Israel is so connected to the US and Turkey cannot do anything against the U.S, people read this film as a Rambo-like Turkish revenge on Israel. Participants made it very clear that the film successfully voices many people's opinions and solidifies the distinction between 'us' and 'them' binary thinking via Polat's way. If Turkey cannot do anything, then, Polat will have to take the matter in his hands. Hence, Polat becomes a new friend of Rambo and James Bond.

> *First speaker*: Actually, we did nothing, except making a film about it [the
> Mavi Marmara raid] and that was sufficient enough for us.

> *Second speaker*: The film also explains Israel's cruelty on Palestinians. It
> shows Palestinians' desperation.

Participants, without any empirical support, began discussing the politics of Israeli real estate transactions in Turkey and Palestine. For them, the real danger is hidden from the public. Israelis are claimed to be buying up land in Turkey which will eventually lead to the establishment of the Greater Kingdom of Israel. Participants believed that since Israelis succeeded in buying up Palestinian lands and exiling them away, what will stop them repeating this in Turkey. From time to time, the conversations unleash collective fear of the participants about Israel and its secret plans in the region. However, Israelis are not the group that was a concern. Participants also

approached Arab subjects with strong skepticism, as they did for American or Israeli actions. For them, there is always some sort of connection between anything that happens in Turkey or in the Middle East and the state of Israel and the United States. As it becomes noticeable in participants' conversations, they constantly refer to hypothetical conditions and Israel-phobia when they talk about Turkish geopolitics in the Middle East.

First speaker: No, no! They [Israeli] are attacking because they fear.

Third speaker: Fear will not go away from them because these soils don't belong to them.

First speaker: But, Palestinians sold their land to Israelis too.

Fourth speaker: They buy up lands in Turkey to establish the Greater Israel.

Second speaker: They make plans to last for centuries, but we [Turkey as a nation] plan daily.

Moderator: What plans are you talking about?

Second speaker: The Greater Middle East Project. Ten years ago, father Bush tried to enter Iraq but he could not do it. Back then, Saddam was stronger. What happened? The US played with oil prices and put economic embargo on Iraq to weaken the country. Then the son Bush came and completed the mission. These are the pieces of long term plans.

Third speaker: Let's look at what is happening in Muslim countries. Muslims are killing each other. All these are part and parcel of the 'divide and conquer' strategies.

Second speaker: Israel captured water reserves and America took control of oil reserves. These were all part of long-term plans as well.

Participants further expressed their skepticism by accusing some presidents of Turkey, members of the parliament and high ranked military personals for aiding those masterminds of the Greater Middle East project.

First speaker: Who is behind all those murders; Turkish military and Israel?

The murders refer to the times when Turkey experienced many cases of political assassinations and ethnic killings which damaged the country's international reputation and domestic safety. Killings of Kurdish politicians in the 1990s are especially worth mentioning. But, in this case participants put more emphasis on murders of top Turkish engineers.

Third speaker: Israel is inside us.

First speaker: They are in our parliament.

Third speaker: I think Suleyman Demirel [9th president of Turkey] is clearly an Israeli. The other day, three ASELSAN [government-built firm to meet the needs of the communications electronics requirements of the Turkish Armed Forces] engineers died.

Fourth speaker: They were working on top-secret vital projects

Third speaker: They said that one committed suicide and the other two fell off their balcony. [It is implied here that Israel and the United States are secretly killing scientists who work on top projects that are extremely vital for the Turkish nation.]

Moderator: Yes, but how do you tie all these to *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*?

First speaker: We like this film because Polat kills everybody that we don't like. He kills Israelis and we like this [laughing]

Third speaker: This film is telling us about all these Israel and American plans. It warns us.

Fourth speaker: It deciphers the bad guys. If you watch *Valley of the Wolves-Ambush*, it shows you all these hanky panky politics in Turkey.

Second speaker: The film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* also explains Israel's cruelty on Palestinians. It shows Palestinians' desperation.

First speaker: The film also tells Palestinians not to be afraid because Turkey is behind them. But it tells this with only three people [laughing]. To be serious, after watching this film no one can say that Americans or Israelis are our friends anymore.

Second speaker: After I watched this film, I felt like taking a gun and doing something.

First speaker: Even though the acting was amateurish, people did not focus on those errors. Everybody is taking in the message.

Third speaker: The film is very realistic in terms of its message.

A recent research conducted by the Kadir Has University gives important clues about Turkish people's threat perception from 2010 to 2011 in parallel with the conversation above. According to this new study, in 2011, 69.3 percent of Turkish people perceive Israel as the prime threat for Turkey as opposed to the United States being the prime threat with the rate of 67.8 percent in 2010. In 2011, the U.S follows Israel with the rate of 58.4 percent and Armenia comes after the US with the rate of 53 percent (Aydin and Bulent 2012). This study shows that the U.S and Israel have a very negative perception in the eyes of Turkish people. However, the study does not tell us why people think the way they do and what factors led this to conclusion.

In the following discussions, participants paid attention to the geopolitical atmosphere wherein the real-world-events and reel-world-events are merged and processed meaningfully. In this area, viewers connect the flows of geopolitical information and cultural representations. Through these connections, they learn, understand and absorb new information with the help of pre-existing knowledge. Hence, *VWP* viewers cannot separate what they already knew about Israel and the United States from what they learned from the film. To put it differently, geopolitical information that the film presents cannot be comprehended without considering the pools of knowledge that exist beyond the film. The conversations that participants had here give important details about the notion that audiences' opinions do not exist in a

vacuum but are formed and shaped within/through what Foucault calls 'regime of truth'. Foucault explains it:

> 'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements…. 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it (as cited in Rider 1999, Writings section, ¶ 15).

Through the diffusion and consumption of popular statements and the simplified system of language utilized by cultural apparatuses (films, etc.), people learn and are informed about their world and, with that, become skilled at how to interpret ultra-complex geopolitical information. Even though the viewers are aware of the film's fictionality, they still believe that Israel is capable of executing such actions against Palestinians because in general the film messages do not contradict the 'truth' that existed before the film.

> *First speaker:* After watching films like this, if we were told that America or Israel did such and such things, we would automatically believe those statements without even questioning them and act accordingly. This is what this film made us feel.

> *Fourth speaker*: My views on Israel and America became even harsher.

> *First speaker*: People learn who our real enemy is and who is not after watching films like this.

Noticeably, the film *VWP* provides lenses and frameworks for the viewers to be able to make sense of what they see on the white screen and the real world within the contemporary social context. For instance, the film help audiences understand what (or

ought to be) Turkey's geopolitical visions are and what to make of political events that take place around them.

9.5 Private sector employees in Van

This focus group was formed in the province of Van in eastern Turkey. Due to personal reasons, half of the group did not show up so the discussion continued with three people. The participants said that they were employed in a private accounting firm and have Kurdish ethnic background. Participants' education in this focus group ranged between two years college and high school education. Conversations with this group were relatively short and focused on genre politics and messages in the film.

Regarding this private sector employee group, my initial goal was to bring socio-ethnic differences in the forefront of audience interpretations given the fact that these group members openly identified themselves as Kurdish. Whether they did not feel comfortable talking to me or for other reasons, they did not comment on the film's nationalist narratives or its legitimization of Turkishness. Perhaps, such expectation was mine as someone who is being sensitive about the politics of socio-spatial differences. For this reason, this study shows extreme caution claiming to include the voice of Kurdish population regarding their interpretations of the film. However, I still find their comments important on the matter as individuals who are employed in private sector in the eastern flank of the country.

One of the important underlying topics of this discussion continued to be audience expectations from sub-genre films such as *VWP*. Participants understood the fact that they had to curb their expectations of an action-political film. They indicated that *VWP,* similar to Rambo-esque films, prioritized action before anything else. As

with other groups, participants acknowledged that, action films employ political messages and this film includes messages that portray Israel as an oppressor state against Palestinian subjects. The participants also highlighted that the filmmakers included too many action scenes, which hijacked the intended message and turned the film into a tasteless comedy-action film.

> *First speaker*: Although the film did not get the message across properly, it shows the Palestinian people's victimization by Israel and the cruelty of Zionists to Palestinians. But this is not clear in the film. It seems like Polat is chasing Moshe for revenge. Even this is not very clear. Everything starts so quickly and never stops. Action after action, I was so tired of seeing scenes of explosions and shootings. Of course, those messages were there too.

> *Moderator*: Were those scenes realistic to you or similar to the images of Israel in your mind?

> *First speaker*: The film's visual effects were not that great. For example, the scene that showed Israel bulldozers demolishing a Palestinian home on top of a boy could have been made better. It was breathtaking scene but the presentation of it was not very professional.

> *Second speaker*: I think Israel is worse than how this film describes it.

> *Third speaker*: I, too, think that Israel is more cruel than portrayed.

Second speaker: This film only reflects a small portion of the reality. If this film represented true happenings in Palestine, it would become completely a different film.

Moderator: What is your source of information about Israel?

First speaker: The internet and other news media

Second speaker: We saw everything during the Mavi Marmara attack. People are trying to deliver aid to Palestinians but Israel attacked them in international waters.

First speaker: Many television channels broadcast the Mavi Marmara raid live.

Moderator: But you did not enjoy the visual effects of the film?

First speaker: No, everything started so quickly and happened one after another. Everything was mixed and confused. They suffocated the message in action.

Second speaker: For example, helicopter explosions were so amateur that one could easily see they were fake helicopters.

Third speaker: I did not worry about the helicopter explosions on the ground, but the ones that happened on the air were so obvious.

Moderator: Then why should one want to see a film such as this?

First speaker: To me, I first decide whether I want to go to a cinema or not. Then I pick a film, watch it and then evaluate it. Of course this film is different than others. Muslim people went to the cinema group by group [group of friends or group members of a certain religious or other communities].

Second speaker: People went to this film because of its messages. They went to the film to know Israel better. This is not a film of pleasure.

Third speaker: People also wanted to support this film against Israel.

Moderator: What do you think about the film's characters?

First speaker: With the Jewish-American character [Simone], the film wants to send a message that not all American or Jewish people are bad. If you look at the passengers of the Mavi Marmara, you will see that people are from everywhere and every religion.

Moderator: How about Polat and his men?

First speaker: They are a team sent by Turkish government for a mission. They represent Turkey. Why they are not dying is the screenwriters' business. They don't die in the television series either. This might seem irrational but there is this Rambo too. He also never dies and saves the world.

Third speaker: There is Jackie Chan, for example. Sometimes you say: 'Can this really happen?' but, they are the protagonists and the film is an action film. And Polat is our Jackie Chan.

Third speaker: Polat is a Turkish terminator. Sometimes the scenario is so exaggerated that a film becomes a comedy more than an action film.

Second speaker: But if there is Rambo, why should there not be Polat.

First speaker: I think a message is needed to be sent out about situations in the Middle East and that is what this film attempts to do.

Second speaker: The film wanted to focus Muslims' attention on Israel's cruel treatments of Palestinians. Naturally it exaggerates events and the story to convey its message. It is a film in the end anyway.

Participants in this group highlighted that the film's depictions of people and the story were exaggerated and its messages overshadowed by unrealistic action scenes. However, participants found the film's messages agreeable but they also believed that what the film portrayed does not completely reflect Palestinian reality on the ground. To their minds Israel's real actions against Palestinians are more severe than what the film presented. They indicated that they were aware of this because they also follow other sources of news about the Israel-Palestine conflict from the internet or other forms of news media. As in all other focus group discussions, I can conclude that these participants also possessed pre-conceived notions about Israel and Palestine issues before viewing and interpreting this film.

9.6 Government employees in Istanbul

The composition of this group differs from all other focus groups in terms of their employment status. This focus group included only male participants and their age ranged from 28 to 35. The participants of this group are highly educated and well informed about Turkish history and international politics. Being well informed about history and politics, these participants provided important clues about the film's world of meaning in relation to the current geopolitical developments in Turkey and the region. For them, the film *VWP* is a cinematic alternative paradigm, to borrow the title of Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's famous book, for the ideologies and paradigms that are set by the western film industry.

In the following discussion, it becomes noticeable that participants find strong relations between the latest cinematic developments in Turkey and Turkey's current geopolitical aspirations which are pushed to the forefront of the AKP's political agenda. For the participants this film is not only about the Palestinian cause, but it is also about Turkish geopolitics and the Turkish people's century-long regional ambition.

> *First speaker*: To me the film primarily portrays the Palestinian cause, and
> is produced by Necati Sasmaz [Polat Alemdar] and his team as an
> alternative [to common discourses that portrays the Palestinian cause
> differently]. Of course, there have always been economic concerns in film
> making.

> *Moderator*: Alternative to whom or what?

First speaker: To Israel-sided Hollywood movies. Look around you. Do you see any films that are produced anywhere beside the U.S? No. Everywhere is occupied by Hollywood films.

Third speaker: Because the Hollywood films are produced and distributed from the same center, you will always see these films presenting the same logic, mentality, Israel-sided scenarios and views.

First speaker: Seeing Hollywood films everywhere, of course, irritates Turkish audiences. Now and for the first time, there is this film [produced in Turkey] that is at the same standards with the Hollywood films in terms the sound and special effect qualities. But, what you don't see in this film is that there are no scenarios that we used to see or favor with America or Israel. Rather this film's storylines show Palestine and oppressed people in alternative ways to Hollywood productions. In this film, we don't see stories in which Muslim geographies are othered, humiliated and America always prevails and wins.

Third speaker: To me, the importance of this film is not because it uses Hollywood-level technology and special effects; it comes from because this film gives important subliminal messages to the audiences.

Fourth speaker: As an action film, it makes Israel to pay for its mistakes.

First speaker: Even it is a cinema product; this film gives people some sort of relief. People become happy. We used to watch films in which Americans would always win, their flag would appear at the end, and a

Rambo-like hero would go into somebody else's country and wreck the country's pride in 90 minutes. This has always been the case from 'Superman' to 'Rambo'. Now, for the first time a film is produced that is an alternative to the American film tradition or, to put it differently, it disrupts this tradition [the American way of seeing the world via Hollywood].

Moderator: But, isn't Polat another Rambo? What is the difference?

First speaker: That is right but they [Hollywood] taught us how to be a Rambo.

Fifth Speaker: Why would this be a problem [referring to my question: Polat as Rambo]?

First speaker: And of course this is our Rambo [laughing].

It is noticeable that along with other Turkish cultural products, *Valley of the Wolves* cinema series are important part and parcel of Turkey's soft power in the Middle East and other former Ottoman territories, especially the small Balkan communities and countries like Azerbaijan. Why Polat Alemdar films are welcomed in such communities is an important question to address. One possible explanation is because of the film's anti-American and anti-Israeli scenarios in which Polat defeats American and Israeli generals. This gives cinematic pleasure to the film audiences who have always seen Western victories over Muslim subjects.

Besides giving cinematic pleasure to the audiences, the *Valley of the Wolves* cinema products come with geopolitical messages. Messages in these cultural products include regionalism in the economy, politics, Islamic unification, Turkey's indispensible role in these culturally connected territories and anti-imperialism which paralells what Turkey has been advocating recently. What Arab or non-Turkish audiences make of these messages is yet to be explored but it surprised me when I saw a little boy wearing a T-shirt, Polat Alemdar's picture is printed on, in the streets of Skopje in Macedonia. At first glance, one can come to a conclusion that Turkish cultural products are an important tool to influence millions in geographies outside of Turkey.

> *Third speaker*: After the Mavi Marmara period, three people became noticeable in the Middle East: Recep Tayyip Erdogan [Prime Minister], Ahmet Davutoglu [Foreign Minister], and Polat Alemdar [known as Murat because of Arabic pronunciation].

> *First speaker*: When R. Tayyip Erdogan was in Northern Iraq, it was reported that he could not move through the street because of the crowd around his automobile. It took him more than an hour to get fifteen-minutes-long ride. Now, people in the Middle East see Turkey differently. They want Turkey to ensure justice, bring economic stability and security, not only in Turkey but also in the region.

It is still not so clear the alleged connection between the R. Tayyip Erdogan phenomenon and *Valley of the Wolves'* popularity in the region, but what is clear is that

both Erdogan and Polat Alemdar of *Valley of the Wolves* are the elite actors producing, and the production of the geopolitical atmosphere in Turkey and the Middle East. In other words, the geopolitics of art and cultural products go hand in hand with a country's geopolitical aspirations and international affairs. As one of my interviewees mentioned, this film could only be produced within a country that strives to reach beyond its material and mental borders. To some commentators, this is a 'new Ottomanism' and that is what this film is advocating for. Hence, *VWP* serves an important function for translating Turkish national interests, geopolitics, and culture wherever it travels.

> *Third speaker*: This film seems to me that it can only be the film of an extrovert country. A country that wants to say: 'I am also here' [active player of the chess game in the Middle East].

> *Second speaker*: When we look at the entire *Valley of the Wolves* concept, we will see that Turkey is pictured as a country that reaches out to assist other nations in the former Ottoman territories.

> *First speaker*: How can Turkey break away from its historical and geographical past? What constitutes your historical and geographical past is what your strategic values are. This is a power and if you cannot utilize this power, you will be in trouble. If you utilize this power, then, you will seize the power of ability to interfere international conjuncture dynamically.

Given their understandings of geographic and historical realities surrounding Turkey, participants make the point that Turkey cannot run away from its historical and geographic responsibilities. For example, consider the so called 'Arab spring or revolution' that started in Tunisia and spread to other states in the Middle East. Turkey's leadership and political responsibility as a Muslim and democratic country is often brought into the discussion saying that Turkey can become a role model and the leading actor for these Arab and Muslim states. In fact, Turkey was asked to be on board by the international community because Turkey's century-long experience in democratization and modernization is thought to be helpful in reconstructing these countries (e.g. Syria crisis). Turkey had to respond to this call because Turkey had century-long cultural and socio-political ties with peoples of these states. The current AKP government especially saw this call as an opportunity to reconnect with the Arab world and as a historical responsibility to correct years of long mutual ignorance. Here, it is noticeable to see this ambition and yearning in the so called 'the third balcony speech' of the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan delivered on the night of his party's third victory, securing 50% of votes and his third consecutive term:

> From here, Ankara, headquarter of the Justice and Development Party, with all my friends, I salute all of you. With love I salute 81 provinces and 74 million of citizens in 780 thousand kilometers of the Republic of Turkey. And, those who turned their faces to Turkey from Bagdad, Cairo, Sarajevo, Baku, Nicosia, and all other friend and brother soils, and wait for the coming news, I salute you from here with love. The results of the June 12, 2011 parliamentary election may bring happiness to our country, people, the entire geography and the world… A new leaf is now turned over for Turkey, a new and spotless page (June 2012, Ankara).

As far as I am aware, no other Prime Minister in Turkey gave such an inclusive speech or exclusively mentioned the names of capitals that are considered to be

extremely important centers for Turkey. Similar to the Prime Minister's speech and in a response to a question of a parliamentarian of the opposition party Republican Peoples Party (CHP), the Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu makes these remarks about Jerusalem:

> Dear Elekdag, Jerusalem is our problem. Why is Jerusalem our problem? As you thought, East Jerusalem is not Israel's territory. According to the international law, East Jerusalem is part of Palestine state and it lies under the occupied territories of 1967. Al-Aqsa Mosque is in the East Jerusalem and it does not belong to Israel and it never will be. And Jerusalem will become the capital city of the Palestinian state. When we look it from Turkey's perspective, let me explain why Jerusalem is our problem? First of all, even today, the religious institutions are administered by the established practices built during Ottoman time. There are no laws, no rules. Ottoman established practices are still the law there. Second, Turkey along with the US and France is the member of Palestinian council established in 1948 at the United Nations. This council is still there and active. We are member of this council and therefore Jerusalem interests us in this regard as well.
>
> …and I repeat again as I refer to Mister Prime Minister's statement, the destiny of Jerusalem, the destiny of Bagdad, the destiny of Bishkek, the destiny of Samarkand, and the destiny of Sarajevo is our destiny. If there is order in those geographies, then the Anatolian geography becomes the leader geography. If there is no order in those places, we cannot sit in Anatolian geography peacefully (Davutoglu 2011, Ankara).

As seen in these speeches, the Prime Minister overtly provides the geographical coordinates of the new hub center where the heart of the regional politics will beat in coming years. The Foreign Minister explicitly states that Turkey's destiny is tied to the destiny of former Ottoman territories. In his statement, it is clear that to position Turkey as the regional leader country, the region order must be established in these capitals. Without this, Turkey will not be the leader. This geopolitical psyche is well communicated to the public because unsurprisingly this is the point that focus group participants constantly re-visit and highlight. To put it differently, Turkish people's

geopolitical imaginations agreeably overlap with the practical geopoliticians' geographic imaginations. In this framework, it can be said that the film audiences interpret *VWP* as a rehearsal for a Turkey dominated geopolitical world and alternative paradigm in a cinematic form.

9.7 A family group interview in Ankara

This focus group had unique characteristics. First, the focus group discussion took place in one of the discussant's home. Second, participants consisted of several families who were invited by the host family. Their number was fifteen in total, including small children. Third, unlike other focus groups, this group watched the film together and then participated in the discussions. This group included husbands, wives, and children. The environment showed some sort of conformity where humor and laughter dominated the entire interview. The education level of this group was similar to the average education level of Turkish citizens in which high school graduates comprise the majority. All of the participants were self-employed individuals except for the housewives and children.

From transcribing about an hour long conversations and observing participants' instantaneous comments during the film viewing, I can say that discussions with this group shows similar patterns with other focus group discussions. But one aspect was more visible than others, and the act of seriously laughing as they viewed *VWP*. Laughter matters. It is probably the most important manifestation of response to a medium of pleasure. For this reason, quite a number of scholars (Harbidge 2011, Dodds 2007, Purcell, Brown and Gokmen 2009, Nerhardt 2007) are interested in analyzing moments of laughter and (non)laughter as both lead to fruitful discussions about negotiated spectatorship and popular geopolitics. As Rothbart argues, laughter arises

"'from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable, or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage, or as acquiring a sort of mutual relation from the peculiar manner in which the mind takes notice of them.'" (as cited in Rothbart 2007, p. 37). She also argues that perception of an incongruous or "an unexpected event may also lead to fear, curiosity, problem-solving, or concept learning" (Rothbart 2007, p. 38) In this sense, a singular focal point of analysis from this focus group discussion emerges. It is the participants' instantaneous response to the extraordinariness of the characters and the film scenes' comedic fabrications, the act of laughing out loud. However, when participants begin reading the text critically and analyze the possibilities of the conditions of the film realities, they immediately come to the understanding and confirmation about the seriousness of the film messages.

> *Moderator*: what is happing in the film?

> *First speaker*: The film is telling us how our Rambos destroy Israel [laughing].

> *Fifth speaker*: I don't think they can even be considered as a Rambo [referring Polat and his men's physical look] [laughing].

> *Second speaker*: Why not? If Rambo can destroy Vietnam, why cannot our three Rambos destroy Israel [defensive mood and seriousness dominates the room]?

> *Fourth speaker*: Actually, there is no indication in the film that they destroy Israel. This film is about taking revenge from General Moshe.

Fifth speaker: They are in Israel because they want to retaliate against the Mavi Marmara attack.

Third speaker: They are doing what Turkey cannot basically.

Participants talk about real-reel comparisons. For them, this film should be evaluated within its sub-genre and it should be noted that the impossible is always possible in action films. They understand and expect that there will always be moments of absurdity and actions that contradict the reality of human capability. To defend their position, they question Hollywood films and their normality. If Rambo-like American action films achieve impossibility, why cannot Turkish Rambo-like films do the same thing? To them, (ir)rationality should be universal and objective.

Second speaker: In the Rambo films, Rambo used to destroy everything with a bomb attached to the tip of an arrow. *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* will be a more realist film compared to *Rambo*.

Fifth speaker: [In *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*] the dead are coming back to life and the wounded are healing in five minutes [laughing].

First speaker: I think this film is produced to relieve people's anger because of the Mavi Marmara raid and also taking advantage of the moment to make some cash. Other than that this film is a full of fantasy.

Moderator: Are you relieved [laughing]?

Fourth speaker: Not really [laughing].

First speaker: We can say that with this film, we took revenge for the Mavi Marmara raid.

Fourth speaker: I think this is the Turkish people's cinematic answer.

Moderator: Where are Palestinians in this film?

Fourth speaker: There are no Palestinians here. They are decorations at the end of the film, throwing stones, running around, lamenting on their deaths, etc.

First speaker: Of course, Palestinians are there from the beginning. Turkey is saying that 'look if you [Israel] treat our brothers like this, we will have to intervene in the situation in Palestine'.

Second speaker: I don't think there is this Muslim brotherhood here. Then, why Turkey is so quiet for Afghanistan or anywhere else?

Third speaker: In here, there is this notion of standing for the oppressed.

Sixth speaker: The situation in Syria is not good. Let's see what Turkey is going to do about it.

Second speaker: I think Turkey wants to say that 'I am here' in the Middle East. And Turkey wants to demonstrate that it is an active player in the Middle Eastern affairs. Turkey wants to say that I am an actor along with the US and Israel.

Third speaker: Israel claims that the land stretches from the Tigris to Egypt is promised to them. They call it 'Promised Land'.

Second speaker: Who promised that?

Fourth speaker: Prophet Moses.

Second speaker: So, our prophet promises us Jerusalem. What are we going to do now?

Third speaker: These are the messages that the film reveals in every paragraph. This is what I think; I think that Jews are the headaches of the world since the beginning.

Second speaker: They look like the Cin Cin kids [laughing].

Moderator: I did not get that? Who are they?

Second speaker: Israelis [laughing].

They explain to me that Cin Cin is a commonly known neighborhood in Ankara where there is a high rate of violent crime, lawlessness, high pollution, and chaos. People do not go there unless necessary. When they go there, they never lower their guard. In this neighborhood, no one needs no reason to be harassed, beaten or ribbed. Being there is enough to be attacked. Rationality has no place in this neighborhood nor do the residents of this place recognize law and order. Hence, participants relate Israel's irresponsible behaviors (perhaps as the Turkish Prime Minister puts it 'spoiled kid') to that of Cin Cin residents.

The conversation, as in other focus groups, comes back to the military capability of Turkey and its use of military and diplomatic power to influence other state actors. The emphasis is that Turkey is not the same country as it was in the past. Turkey has progressed militarily, technologically and in economic matters. Participants think that Turkey may not be the only dominant actor in the Middle East but definitely it is a country that will not be by-passed by other states during any negotiations related to the Middle East. Participants also agreed that Turkey would not have become an active country if the AKP were not in power for several consecutive terms. Conversations led to a conclusion that participants find close links between the AKP's conservative ideologies and Turkey's current foreign affairs policies as evidence the attention given to Turkey's position in the Middle East. They see Turkey as the only country that has this capability to be a dominant actor and potentials to become a leader among Muslim states.

> *Second speaker*: For instance, Arabs cannot deliver the help that Palestinians need.

> *Fourth speaker*: Never mind intervention, Arab states cannot even give a simple condemnation statement about Palestine.

> *First speaker*: Let's not forget Recep Tayyip Erdogan effect.

> *First speaker*: Also we have to remember that when Israel annexes Palestine, all the natural resources will become Israel's. This will mean that Israel will be the most powerful country in the region, which will ultimately clash with the interests of Turkey in the region.

Second speaker: It is not just R. Tayyip Erdogan effect. Turkish people are also behind Turkey's Middle East policies.

Second speaker: I think the AKP government would not support this film, if such a support for the ruling party was not there. Pana Film supports the AKP government and AKP supports the film company.

Participants make connections between the filmmakers' decision to make such a film and the current AKP government's implicit support for such an idea. To them, this film would not be possible if the AKP was not in power. Next the following conversations highlight film's possible effects on the viewers. Again, interpretations vary and different people view scenes differently but their interpretations coalesce to form similar patterns to be evaluated.

Moderator: What scenes did you like the most or think were most effective?

Second speaker: When Memati[30] said 'hi' [laughing]. Polat's conversation with an Israeli soldier at the border [Soldier: why did you come to Israel? Polat: I did not come to Israel, I came to Palestine].

Fourth speaker: Israeli soldiers' shooting randomly toward Palestinians looked real and effective.

Moderator: Real means?

---

[30] Memati is a character that does not talk or smile. He communicates through his punches, shootings and killings. He has a very unique look on his face that fans say that he is definitely scary-looking even in the daylight. To many, he is a classic Turk, meaning that he is masculine and fights fearlessly.

Fourth speaker: I mean Israel does this all the time. They randomly open fire and kill people.

Fifth speaker: Demolishing a Palestinian's home top of the crippled boy.

First speaker: I think the most realistic scene of the film was when Israeli soldiers closed the gate and did not allow anyone to enter inside including Jewish-American woman. These are the sorts of news reports that we always associate Israel with every day. They ignore the law and the whole world. By this, Israel means to say that 'I am the law'. I let in whoever I want.

Moderator: What I understand from our conversation is that you have some preconceived knowledge about Israel prior to watching this film.

Fourth speaker: Of course.

First speaker: We know what Israel does to Palestinians. There are eyewitness videos on the internet. We don't need to see *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* to understand Israel's unjust treatment of the Palestinians.

Second speaker: This film is just reminding us about the situation in Palestine again.

First speaker: Additionally, not everyone can watch those eyewitness videos online because they are mostly very gross and violent. In contrast, this film explains the Palestinian drama with a watchable story. People

would not watch videos that are similar to those of the reality shows, but they watch narrated stories that are not so bloody or violent.

The first speaker's point is so valuable in a sense that effectiveness of news becomes higher when it is put in a socio-cultural context and decorated with background pictures and alluring sound system. Although, audiences can be skeptical about the film's story and the way the story is portrayed, the main message will always be there for audiences to internalize wittingly or unwittingly. Related to this point, if one decides to go to a film such as *VWP*, he/she already shows some sort of acknowledgement of a selective exposure for ideological messages that are scattered in the film. As highlighted earlier, people watch films such as this to maintain and/or manifest their opinions about issues in a cinematic world. People support such films when the messages overlap with their worldviews.

9.8 A female group in Istanbul

This focus group, in part, differs from other discussion groups. This group comprised of participants that were college educated and female. Since two other female participants did not show up, the group discussion continued with three people. This group brought new dimensions to the film discussions by highlighting the different aspects of the film. This new perspective might be result of the gendered culture that has been embedded in Turkish society for many years. Their interpretations of several scenes and dialogues differed from those of male participants' interpretation. They paid greater attention to emotional conversations and sensuous actions that were not brought up in other focus group discussions. Words like 'crying, worrying, sad, funny, children, women, violence, etc. overwhelmingly dominated the conversation. However, the difference in their

interpretations did not contradict the insights from other groups. Rather female participants touched on different aspects of audience reception complementing the other interpretations. Without essentialazing gendered differences in decoding cultural text, this group's comments enriched the study.

Emotional moments dominated much the conversation here. The following exchange was in response to my question of 'how did you find the film'? Participants immediately begun talking about a scene wherein the disabled boy gives his necklace to Polat and tells him that as long as he wears that necklace he will be protected (the boy believes that his necklace protects the carrier as it protected him). As it confirms the boy's prophecy, Polat escapes from a near-death situation but the boy cannot. And because of the flashbacks, these two events appear to be happening at the same time.

First speaker: Aaa! That scene was terrible. That is when I cried.

Second speaker: Polat escaped from a certain death when exactly the boy died.

First speaker: What happened to that woman [Simone]? I thought there was going to be a romance developing [between Polat and Simone] [laughing].

Third speaker: I thought the same. Maybe a kiss at the end [laughing].

First speaker: Did they arrive to Turkey safe? [The film does not include this part.]

Second speaker: They returned after they killed Moshe.

First speaker: I felt really sorry for death of Palestinian Abdullah too.

Second speaker: Even if he survived, life would not be too good for him.

Moderator: Why?

Second speaker: Because his mother died, the boy died; probably no one left from his family.

First speaker: Really, I felt sorry for the Palestinians. I cannot believe that Israel can demolish homes just like that without paying any attention to if there is anybody inside [Actually, film makes the point that Moshe wanted to kill the boy like that.]

Third speaker: I did not understand this 'Promised Land' concept. Is it lawful?

First speaker: The Promised Land idea is in their book. It is a religious order.

A disruption occurs and participants move on talking about Polat and his men's adventure as they rescue prisoners from the Israeli jail.

First speaker: What was that shooting in the prison? It was so funny.

Third speaker: With four people, they destroyed the whole army of guards [laughing].

First speaker: But similar scenes are in American films too.

Second speaker: Yes, there are. Why there should be a problem when there are shown in Turkish films?

First speaker: For example, I watch an American series, 24. The protagonists never die there either, and they save the world too.

Moderator: What message would you think there are in this film?

First speaker: This is a one-sided story. It tells what Palestinians go through every day, how Israel occupies Palestinian lands and how the human rights in Palestine are ignored by Israelis. However, I believe in the story that this film tells. Even though American and Israel media try to cover up what really happens in Palestine, leaks on the internet disclose the reality there. In this film, how Israeli soldiers beat Palestinian kids, how the soldiers demolish or burn Palestinian homes, and how they imprison Palestinian men, women and children indiscriminately are explained nicely.

Third speaker: To test a bullet, Moshe kills a driver. This scene was terrible. This was another way of saying that Palestinians are inferior, even lower than animals. It [Moshe's action] means to say that this land is ours and even whole world for that matter. I think this is the mentality by which a Jewish person is raised.

Conversation continues on the identity politics and perceptions of others by defining who Israelis are and people's relations to their holy book and geography. Participants make the point that how religion, politics and place all intertwined in the

conceptualization of the 'holy land'. The premise of the politics, hence, is to protect the land because it is promised by God for the people of Israel.

First speaker: They merged their religion into the political system. I don't think the real Judaism is like that but they are educated this way. For example, the entire Palestinian land belongs to Israelis. They can do anything they want to. Even if there are errors in the film, *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* successfully shed lights into the core of this issue. Israel is very successful with advocating the idea that Palestine belongs to Israelis all around the world. This film challenges this propaganda.

Second speaker: Israelis relate everything to their holy book, their geography, or history. I think the film objectively shows this problematic relationship.

Third speaker: They [Israelis] don't treat non-Jewish as a human being.

Second speaker: To my understanding, this Jewishness is beyond borders, books and the law. This film sophisticatedly explains privileges of being Jewish.

Moderator: Is this film about Judaism, then?

Second speaker: To me, this film is produced in relation to the Mavi Marmara attack.

First speaker: I evaluate the film in terms of being a part of the Greater Middle East project. This film points out the project in which America's

and Israel's framing about Turkey and the Middle East become obvious. This is what this film is trying to shed light on. When I watched this film, the 9/11 event, Iraq and Afghanistan wars and the Palestine conflict came to my mind.

Participants in the conversation above, like other group discussions, understand that filmic representations are parallel to the ongoing geopolitics in Palestine. It can be argued that the filmmakers closely monitor the world events to deploy them into the cinema products. This ultimately makes the viewers believe that the Pana Film's action-political films are factual and reflective of true events. The participants then make interesting connections between the cinema settings in the film and cultural reflections of those settings in real life especially concerning the place of women in the reel and real locations.

Moderator: Have you noticed gender roles in the film?

First speaker: Of course [laughing].

Second speaker: Men are macho and women worry about security [laughing].

First speaker: For example, that woman's [Simone] panicked behaviors and her untimely and improper demands perfectly match with our female characteristics. Her hesitant actions such as her walking out into the dark and coming back into the house, her crying out to get out of the car but being scared to do it, all, resemble us. I mean her indecisiveness and perfect ability to create trouble for others looks like us [laughing].

Third speaker: Also in Abdullah's home, women and men were sitting separately. One of the women was standing to serve, and men were sitting and eating separately from women. All these pictures remind me of the eastern culture.

Second speaker: We see this in Turkey too.

First speaker: Yes, but this sort of culture is mostly associated with the eastern part of Turkey. Women always work and men always eat type of culture [laughing]. For instance, Polat's ordering that woman to 'sit down' was so interesting [laughing]. I think we like macho men [laughing].

Second speaker: But Abdullah was a very nice father.

First speaker: These scenes are not so unfamiliar to us.

Third speaker: In our culture too, women are the ones who serve at home and nurture the family.

Moderator: Do you think that the Palestine issue became a Turkish issue now?

Second speaker: With the AKP government, yes! We can say that. Turkey supported the Palestinian cause in the past too, but this time it was the AKP that clearly transformed the Palestinian issue into Turkey's internal politics.

First speaker: I think the difference between this government and the others is very easily distinguished because the former strongly referenced

religion more than the latter. Of course, because of the new developments in the Arab states, it would be surprising if we did not see Turkey's footprints in the Middle East. The AKP would want to satisfy its constituency by focusing on the Middle East. We know that majority of those who voted for the AKP also support Palestinian cause actively, and they want Turkey to be a part of this cause. We all saw that R. Tayyip Erdogan's Davos scolding brought great support for the AKP in the last election. Of course, the AKP, too, sees this opportunity.

Moderator: How would you describe the film?

First speaker: There was no emphasis on Turkishness in the film.

Second speaker: First of all, this was an action film; of course, there were some politics.

Third speaker: It was not solely an action film. There were excellent messages too.

First speaker: I don't think this film was completely anti-Israel. It seems to be a film that tells about Palestinian lives.

Third speaker: It is a film that carries the Palestinian issue into the cinema.

Second speaker: There are these action and reality dimensions, but definitely there are funny parts to make it a 'hahaha film'!

First speaker: To me, the film's location settings look very realistic. For example, the Palestinian side looks so ruined and streets appear terrible.

This picture does not contradict the picture that I see on the news and the internet. I mean the film scenes matched with what I imagine Palestine in my mind eighty percent, if not hundred percent. In other words, nasty homes, dirty streets and the 24/7 presence of Israeli security check points are correct depictions.

Third speaker: But the Israeli side was very orderly: clean streets and beautiful homes. Even one house has a pool.

First speaker: Also there was sandy roads and dry climate like the real geography of Palestine.

Noticeably in the conversation above, the meaning of reality for participants is gauged by how similar the filmic depictions of place, people, culture and events are to those of the depictions on television, internet or in other forms of media. When the representations of places and events showed material and characteristic congruent with the participants' mental map of those places and events, then the film's scenes and stories are thought to be more authentic.

9.9 Summary

This chapter explores negotiated spectatorship by examining seven different groups within Turkish society to discuss the meanings drawn from *VWP*. Their interpretations of the film create an interesting map of spectatorship indicating that their engagement with the text was critical and complex. At the first glance, it can be said that audience reading of the film varied depending on their socio-cultural background and their level of exposure time to the *Valley of the Wolves* cinema products (both the television and

film series). For example, female focus group participants paid more attention to the emotional and sensitive aspects of the film settings compared to the mostly male focus group participants. Again, individuals who had followed the *Valley of the Wolves* cinema products for a longer time engaged in in-depth analysis and intertextual readings. Despite the participants' educational and location differences, some commonalities exist that support the idea of shared understandings within their readings. These readings suggest that the film's geopolitical messages overtly reflect of those of the current AKP government and the opinions of the public in general. People also display some pre-conceived views toward Israel that favor the Palestinian cause. Additionally, the discussions with different participants reveal that the rhetoric of the film can be closely identified with the rhetoric of the practical geopolitics, in terms of the relative power of the states and their interactions.

It should be noted that the participants' reading of the film is a critical and negotiated one, despite their varied educational and cultural backgrounds. Participants reject some of the encoded messages while welcoming others. It is also clear that in their meaning-making processes, audiences' engagement with the film was active and negotiated, indicating that the participants actively challenge the film's authenticity and representation of people, place and events.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

First and most, I must acknowledge that the study findings that I highlight here in this chapter should be read within the constraints of doing audience research. This means that, any sweeping generalizations made in this dissertation must be taken cautiously. In this study, I never claim to be capturing the essence of encoding and decoding processes in their totality. The conclusions of this study are subject to misinterpretations and the complexity of sustaining fluid audience interpretations thus lessons from this study should be taken limited in scope.

This chapter summarizes the findings of this study by joining the major conclusions of each chapter and analyzing the results in a broader context of the literature review on geography of film, critical geopolitics, and audience geography. Additionally, in this chapter the theoretical contributions and limitations of the study will be discussed in relation to the body of geopolitics and audience geography literature. There will also be a brief introduction to 'what is next'.

10.1 Geography of film: Revisited

Everyday, as the world becomes more and more visual and transparent, films becomes an important part of our socio-cultural life. Thus they are not only the elements of communication and entertainment but also the codes and reference points that contribute to our ability to understanding our world and what surrounds it. Films provide clues of how human experiences become meaningful. Therefore, they are powerful and convincing enough to re-present the reality of life (theater as life), and powerful and convincing enough to create reality re-produced from geographic

representations, imaginations and mythologies (life as image) (Duncan and Duncan 1992). As in other forms of arts, films can cleverly reproduce or liquidate the traditional values of the socio-cultural heritage and geographic representations. As films tell something about who we are (are not) and what the world is supposed to be, they simultaneously serve to strengthen, rationalize, or challenge the importance of our traditional values and social structures. In other words, as a medium of communication, films tend to deconstruct traditional values and the culture of imagining while simultaneously the naturalizing political dimensions of real life in the eyes of observers (Monaco 2009).

The theoretical framework of this study comes from critical geopolitical thinking, which has dominated the subfield of political geography since the early 1990s with work from scholars such as (Toal 1994, Agnew 2002, Sharp 1996, Dodds 2006, Dittmer 2010). These and other geographers' inquiry in popular culture and its representations of place, space and people derive mainly from post-structural perspectives. Geographers believe that popular cultural products such as films, cartoons, magazines, and books are an important part of geographical investigation. These cultural artifacts influence the way we think of ourselves, our relations with others, nature, and the way the world operates. In other words, popular culture informs us of who we are, how we got to be that way, and then provide clues to the answers. As Said notes, geography is not always about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginations (Said 1978). In the same context, ideas, images and imaginations have geographical consequences. Thus, through our everyday consumption of mass and popular productions, we engage with geographical

representations and spatial identity constructions, which, in essence, is very geopolitical. In this sense, the Turkish film *VWP* becomes an important geopolitical text that influences people, places, and events in multiple ways. Through the consumption of such geopolitical texts, Turkish audiences engage with different ways of place construction, identity formation, and geopolitical representations.

Through this research effort I sought to answer the question of what Turkish people make of the film *VWP*. Specifically, I wanted to explore how the film influenced their thinking about themselves and others, their geographic imaginations, and understanding of Turkey's geopolitical positions within the Middle East in the post 9/11 world. To do this, three sites of the film: production, message (text), and reception (consumption) were investigated. A mixed-method approach was utilized including two interviews, seven focus group discussions, internet comments from fans, and an online survey with 359 respondents. Collected data, in general, showed that Turkish audiences' reading of the film is diverse but some commonalities were found.

10.2 Geopolitical imaginations and geographical representations

Inspired from post-structural studies, critical geopolitics highlights the importance of language, culture and socio-political structures. All of these aspects are a constructed form of knowledge that helps us understand who we are (who we are not), our place in the world, and our relations with the surrounding world. This critical body of work emphasizes the way we think about our world and our relations with other places, peoples, and events   and how they are produced and shaped through everyday discourses and our practices. Film, in this sense, becomes the focal point for forming and reforming these everyday discourses, which, in turn, becomes a tool to help us

legitimize these socially constructed ways of looking and understanding the world. Needless to say, these everyday discourses and practices are primarily ideological, political and geographical, but by no mean they are neutral or natural. Therefore, cinema as a language and culture force us view places in the world through certain lenses that shapes our geopolitical imaginations and geographical representations. These discursive engagements, in exchange, have geopolitical implications and particularities. For instance, the film *VWP* tells more about Turkey and Turkish geopolitics than it does about Palestine and Palestinians or even Israel. A critical reading of the film reveals that in a cinematic meaning, the film is largely referencing Turkey and its animosity toward Israel. Regarding this point of view, in Chapter 5 I argued that the film *VWP* should be situated in three forms of analysis: as a geopolitical text, as a counter-geopolitical text, and cinema text wherein genre politics and a vigilante hero become dominant characters. The film favors a particular kind of geopolitical imagination of the Turkish people, and the government, which helps the audiences understand Turkey's geopolitical location in the current developments in the Middle East. Therefore, it is the influence of the images and identities in the film that help Turkish people orient themselves in a chaotic and uncertain world and assist to level the playing field for state apparatuses to inscribe their national narratives and regional policies. Thus the film and consumption of it is as much about understanding the Palestinian struggle as it is about re-presenting and re-orienting Turkey and its geopolitical position in the Middle East. Similarly, the genre of the film and the character Polat Alemdar becomes an indispensable factor that helps to reproduce Turkey's image at home and its geopolitics within the region. The politics and the character represented by Polat and his men,

immediately prioritizes Turkey's ethno-religious national identity (Turk-Islam) and either wittingly or unwittingly assist with legitimizing the current government AKP's conservative foreign policies and national narratives in the minds of everyday people. The film tells the audiences that these characters are the real heroes and their extraordinariness derives from being Turks and Muslims. Despite its nationalistic tone, the *VWP* also represents an important geopolitical text that overtly contests the legitimacy of Israel's territoriality and the concepts of home and homeland.   For instance, throughout the film Polat reaffirms where the borders of Israeli's home and homeland begin and end through his conversations. Polat also frequently verifies the notion that Palestine does not belong to Israel; it is Israel that occupies the Palestinian home and homeland. By doing this, *VWP* engages in territorial correction and attempts to re-draw the map of Palestine and its boundaries. The film is very critical, opposing dominantly produced and consumed geopolitical discourses about Palestine and Palestinians by different matrices of power (Israel and the West) other than Palestinians themselves. In Chapter 6, the interview with the scriptwriter gives clues regarding who might be part of this power matrix.

To further this study, the voice of the production site of the film was included to better understand the dynamics of the meaning-making process at different levels. To do this, two interviews were conducted. In both interviews, mainly, three important arguments were highlighted. First, both interviewees defensively argued that Palestine is the proverbial 'bleeding wound' in the middle of Muslim geography. They argued, little has been done to heal this wound. According to these interviewees, it is in everyone's interest, and obligation for that matter, to shed light on this global problem;

therefore, visualizing this human crisis is the right thing to do. Second, these interviewees agreed that understanding the vitality of popular culture as a 'soft power' is essential. Moreover, the importance of mobilizing this power for the benefits of Turkey and Turkish geopolitics in the Middle East as well as in different regions is a crucial task. Similarly, the third argument highlighted that cinema in terms of its choice of topic, technological aspects, politics of representations, and geographical limit should be understood within the given country's political, economic, and cultural conditions and positioning in the geopolitical world map. In this regard, Turkish cinema, particularly the conservative cinema, shows elements of ideological similarities with the recent developments in Turkey. They think that as socio-economic conditions in the Middle East and Turkey have changed in the last decade, Turkey became more extraverted, as well as, a more economically and politically self-confident country in relation to its culture of art and cinema. Thus, within these changing socio-political dynamics, Turkish cinema opened new horizons in the film-making and became a new wave of change not only within Turkish society, but also culturally familiar geographies. From this vantage point, *VWP* should be interpreted without isolating it from these changing social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics in Turkey in the last decade.

As indicated in Chapter 6, these two interviews provide geopolitical codes of meaning making and important clues to identifying media's role in Turkish society. These interviewees acknowledge that socio-political changes in Turkey greatly influenced what media, cinema in particular, can do and should do for societies in the current geopolitical conjuncture. With this, they generally desire to deploy a normative

task for cinema and popular culture. In other words, cinema for these people stands to be an important tool to enlighten people about their historical and geographical realities, to alter opinions and perceptions of millions, and to mobilize millions toward more ethno-religious political worldviews. For this reason, cinema is not and should not be understood as solely a form of art or a piece of entertainment. Rather, cinema should be more didactic, enlightening, and normative. Cinema cannot ignore nations' socio-political problems or turn its back to oppressed geographies of people. Indeed, cinema should not only visualize these socio-political problems, but also take sides to make visceral changes on the ground. If cinema cannot reverse these geographical inequalities and oppressions completely, it at least can inform millions about these problems. In the eyes of these interviewees, cinema is the rehearsal of realities and the materialization of geopolitical imaginations.

Chapter 5 is constructed to be a critical reading of the film text. In Chapter 7, I furthered my investigation of the film by conducting an online survey with 359 participants via Facebook to better understand the relationships between the text and the readers. In this chapter, descriptive results of the survey are laid out to get a sense of what common threads could be drawn out of the audiences' responses regarding their meaning-making process. This chapter also highlights the validity of quantitative methods in using audience interpretations in order to better understand general characteristics of readership and their interpretations of a text within a constrained environment. The results of this study reveals that deviation between quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group and online comment discussions) is relatively slight in terms of audiences' reading the filmic text. For example, the survey results

showed that the Turkish people's negative opinions about Israel are generally the same among those who watched the film *VWP* and those who did not. Similarly, comments from the focus group discussions and online fan comments indicated that, in general, Turkish people have a negative view of Israel regardless of their social background. Indeed, this negative image toward Israel among Turkish people has much to do with an already-damaged Turkey-Israel relationship stemming from the 2008 Gaza (Israel's offensive bombing of Gaza) and the events following. In support of this assessment, respondents to the survey, participants of the focus groups and the online film fans indicated that the *VWP* did not change their views toward Israel or Palestine. Participants in this study repeatedly and overwhelmingly expressed that their negative opinions toward Israel stayed the same. However, this does not mean that Turkish people's readings of the film are identical. Indeed, their reaction to the film and interpretations of Turkey-Israel, Israel-Palestine, and Turkey-Palestine relations differed in many ways. Again, perception of Israel among Turkish people did not greatly differ between those who saw the film and those who did not see it. This outcome supports the idea that Turkish people had pre-conceived notions toward Israel, its policies toward Palestine and its geopolitical position within the Middle East. However, I have to note that respondents did not need to see the film *VWP* to appreciate what the *Valley of the Wolves* is all about. This is one of the reasons that I needed to pay a serious attention to the television series establishing *Valley of the Wolves* and Polat Alemdar phenomena among Turkish public.

As mentioned earlier, a key data source for this research was gathered through fan comments, coordinated through an online discussion forum, sinemalar.com.

Audience readings within this online discussion forum can be categorized in two ways: those who embraced the film as a monument of bravery against the power of Zionism and as those who rejected the film in terms of its butchering the artistic side of the film-making at the expense of conveying political messages. It should be noted that the latter group did not discard the film massages completely but rejected the film-makers' mindset for not respecting cinema as a form of art. After closely surveying of comments on this online discussion forum, it should be also noted that the film fans possessed valid knowledge of the *Valley of the Wolves* phenomenon which has dominated the Turkish cinema culture for years. Their film readings and analysis of the film's conjectural roles in Turkish society were significant. Another important point that can be drawn from commenters' discussion is that some fans were uncomfortable the way the filmmakers portrayed Palestinians in the film. They were agitated by the fact that the film treats Palestinians as the Other while prioritizing Turkish bravery and heroism. In other words, the film implicitly (if not explicitly) engages in orientalizing Palestine, identifying the Palestinian case as the new white man's burden. In this respect, I can say that commenters did not easily adopt the film's goal (to visualize the Palestinian struggle) as a noble action, as the producers intended. In this sense, fan comments in this forum were exclusively enriching for this study not only because their comments were well articulated, but also because these comments were a part of audience interpretations that were made without any fabricated environment or any interference from the researcher.

Focus group discussions conducted for this study also offer important insights for mapping out Turkish people's interpretations of the film and provide clues for why

the film should be situated within the geopolitical moments mainly shaped by the current Turkish government, AKP. Here, attention is paid to the intertexuality of the film and its readership. Semi-structured and intense conversations with various group of people showed that a cinematic text could be read in many different ways depending on the readers' social, cultural, educational, political backgrounds as well as socio-political conditions within which the film is produced. The socio-political conditions of the readership influenced their meaning-making process, which is also seen to be contingent to geographical and historical conditions that initially made the text possible. As a result, the audiences are influenced by socio-cultural dynamics of given time and space, but their readings are by no mean are inseparable or free from the social structures that give shape to Turkish society. For example, discussions made with student focus groups in Istanbul and Ankara showed that their engagement with the film and their understanding of what this film means in contemporary Turkish geopolitics, to some extent, varied from other researched groups' understanding. The student groups highlighted that the film should be interpreted within the changing socio-political context brought about by the current AKP government. They found a close correlation between the AKP policies and the messages of the film. Moreover, student groups focused their attentions to the Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's regional agendas and the possible influences of Turkish cultural products exported abroad mainly the Middle East. It should be noted that visible cooperation between the government and conservative cinema has been emphasized by other focus group discussants as well. Generally, people understood that this film could have not been made if the Turkish government was not under the control of Islamic-leaning AKP. The consensus was that

the political ideology of conservative cinema was supported by the Islamic-leaning capital in Anatolia (discussed in earlier chapters) and the AKP government whose political agendas overlapped and fed one another (cinema, government, and the Anatolian capital). Parallel to this statement, the survey response to the question "do you believe that the film mirrored the current government's Middle East policies?" showed that 50 percent of the respondents agreed that the government's Middle East policies are reflected in the film. This conclusion generalizes the viewers' familiarity with the intertextual frames: "a knowledge of film language at its present point of development and a understanding of appropriate narrative conventions" (Aitken and Zonn 1994, p. 5).

Students also highlighted that through this film, the Palestinian issue no longer became strictly an Arab issue. To them, this film demonstrated that Palestine is not just an official topic but part of the public discourse and geopolitical imagination. Additionally, the student participants understood that film *VWP* is a continuation of the conservative cinema that is often associated with being protective of cultural values, beliefs and social norms. For them, this film undertook the role to educate people about regional geopolitics and historical realities from a Turkish perspective, while enforcing traditional ways of life as well as legitimizing sanctity of the Turkish state.

The focus group research organized from private employees in Ankara and the government employees in Istanbul primarily discussed the particularities of Turkey's place in the Middle East. Private-sector-employees continually emphasized that Turkey holds a special position in the region in terms of its military, economic, cultural and geographic dynamics. For them, Turkey has always been apart of the chess game of

some 'other' external international powers. For this reason, a film such as *VWP* becomes critical for enlightening people about geopolitical dangers that surround the state and the region. Not surprisingly, this group, unlike other groups, continually referenced Turkey's military capabilities and the ability to mobilize its armed forces when needed. For this group, success means the ability of defeating possible attacks from (outside) states that have interests in the region. Therefore, a weak US or Israel means an advantaged Turkey, while a plausibly weak Turkey means advantaged 'others'. Furthermore, the private employees and to some extent the government employees, talked about various conspiracy theories that surround Turkey. For example, Israeli citizens' buying vast lands in the southeastern region of Turkey indicates that Israel is seriously committed to establishing the 'Greater Israel' soon. If this project does not take shape by force, Israel will complete it during peace times. The United States, as an important supporter of Israel, is behind this project and an active player of this secret plan. Thus, the collection of *Valley of the Wolves* cinema products actively seeks to uncover these secret projects and the codes of the geopolitical chess games played in the Middle East. To these groups, the film *VWP* should be read in terms of its messages and warnings given, rather than focusing on its artistic qualities. The film then becomes a great source of understanding Turkey's geopolitical visions. Beside its informative role, the film again becomes an opposing discourse against the Hollywood culture industry for the government employees. The film's scenario becomes an alternative to Israel-US favored scenarios with its Hollywood-level artistic qualities and filmic effects. The film for this group is a cinematic challenge to dominate representations of the Muslim geographies envisioned by the Western cinema.

A discussion with private sector employees in the province of Van revealed similar results with other discussion groups. But the noticeable argument of this group about the film was that the film turned out to be a tasteless, action-comedy film. To them, filmmakers sacrificed the filmic quality for the sake of getting the message across. This group indicated that they understood the intended message, but did not appreciate the exchange of quality with the message. These two fundamental elements of the film could have been achieved at the same time, but they said Polat and his men lacked this artistic quality. For them, the message is suffocated in exaggerated action scenes. Violent ways of representing the Palestinian cause was unnecessary and harmful. This group highlighted that no representation is better than a bad representation, and this film did an inadequate job. They concluded that they did not need to see this film to understand what really goes on in Palestine. Indeed, they noted that what the film portrayed was limited. They commented that Israel's oppression in Palatine likely exceeds the film-makers' imaginations.

Family group discussions, on the other hand, approached the film as seriously funny cinematic parody. The extraordinariness of the film's characters and comedic nature of conversations in the film became the first noticeable characteristic of the film by this group. As I was watching the film with this group, laughter became louder and louder, especially, when Polat and his men mutated themselves into the characters of the film *Matrix* (1999). Their laugh was not a mysterious one, at all. They laughed because Polat Alemdar character is portrayed in the film superior than Superman, tougher than Rambo and smarter than James Bond. He and his men became men of comedy as they seriously participate in serious actions in Israel. Focus group viewers

laughed as these men run from danger to danger similar to those of animation characters. However, the conversations became serious when I asked them about the quality of the film and its messages. They interpreted the film within its genre and found that the film is reasonable and justifiable as far as the action-film genre is concerned. The *Rambo* (1985) genre, for example, was brought up to be compared with *VWP*. After a critical assessment of *Rambo*, viewers found the film logical and Polat's extraordinariness and immortality fitting with the genre. Viewers also highlighted that the essence of the film, which is to portray what is going on in Palestine should be recognized. They argued that the film was essentially made to send political messages and that these messages were recognizable. Of course, this is not to say that the entire group of participants agreed on this aspect of the film altogether. Within each group, participants continued to challenge each other's assessments of the film as well as agreed on other matters.

Unlike the comments made by other focus group participants, the all-female group mainly circled around emotional aspects of the film's sensuous scenes and conversations. Words such as crying, worrying, sad, funny, children, violence, and love overwhelmingly dominated their conversation. This is not to essentialize social gender role in the meaning-making process; rather it is to pay close attention to the role of culture and emotional practices that are rendered in the filmic readership. Participants of this group were highly aware of women's cultural roles deployed in the film, but their reactions to these kinds of typifications were casual and absent from a serious criticism. For example, one of the participants made this comment referring to Polat's commanding voice to the women character in the film: "I think we like macho man".

Other participants responded to her by laughing. This anecdote can make us think that the filmmakers' choice to include such conversations in the film may not be completely irrational or irrelevant to what reactions female viewers recognize when a woman character is present in filmic life. I argue that this is frankly calculated inscription of gender relations aimed to maintain dominantly viewed socio-cultural relations between genders by the filmmakers. This is not a statement of *I know better*, but it is my observation that this film is another collection of many other Turkish films that portray women's subordination to culture and men (of that culture), and present these problematic relations as natural and everyday practicality of Turkish life.

10.3 Contextualizing audience: Cartographies of textual reading

This study broadly utilized Hall's encoding and decoding model, which is understood to be a theoretical criticism for the notion that mass communication is a structured activity, and as a consequence of it institutions which produce the messages do have power to set agendas and to define issues. As an attempt to take the reception studies forward, Hall's model highlighted that a) "the same event can be encoded in more than one way", b) "the message always contains more than one potential reading", which is not to say that the reader is left with unlimited reading of the message, but is to say that readings remain polysemic, and c) "understanding the message is always a problematic practice" (as cited in Morley 1999, ¶ 8), which means that different readings of the same text is always available and inevitable. According to his model, when audiences engage in reading the message they communicate the message in three different ways: audiences take the message in the same way as it is encoded, they negotiate the meaning, or they

read the message within some alternative framework of reference in oppositional manner.

Similar to Hall's framework model to formulate audience interpretations, this study highlights that 'negotiated', 'oppositional' and 'dominant' ways of readership is also present in the meaning-making of the Turkish film *VWP*. As discussed in earlier chapters, some Turkish audiences understand that the film is a cinematic challenge to Israel's Middle Eastern policies while others see the film as an ethno-religious narrative that operates within the limits of political economy and agenda setting. Also a large number of people indicate that they understand the essence of the message in the film, which is to visualize the Palestinian drama, but they oppose the ways in which the message is represented.

As discussed in several chapters in this study, Turkish audiences do not submissively internalize the message but they actively question the text and attempt to read it within current geopolitical conjuncture. Unlike claims of textual determination of earlier reception studies, this study notes that the viewers of *VWP* actively create their own meaning instead of waiting to be overcome by the elite-produced meaning, say, to dysfunction audiences' ability to read the text differently. Repeatedly, participants of this study indicated that they made their own interpretations of the film. However, this is not to mean that interpretations or decodings never reflect, or are not reflected by, "the code and discourses… [and] the socially governed distribution of cultural codes" (Morley and Brunsdon 1999, p. 134). As Livingstone notes, since people communicate through similar symbols, metaphors, and signs, even though they live in distance geographies, their textual interpretations and meaning-making process can show

similarities and overlap (Livingstone 2005a). For instance, conservative people in Turkey make sense of the film *VWP* differently than those who are not conservative. Cultural consumption cannot be an isolated activity nor can it be beyond socially produced cultural boundaries. As Dittmer argues, our experiences and interpretations of a text are always connected to our social networks and identity (Dittmer 2010).

As Dittmer states, studying audience and contextualizing the meaning-making process is complex and daunting. He points out that research conducted on audiences' engagement with cultural texts indicate two principle problems: theoretical and practical. He argues that interpretations are diverse and hard to pin down. As an example, he asks the question of how one can uncover this complexity and then generalize about it to draw conclusions (Dittmer 2010). Undoubtedly, his point of questioning the difficulties of contextualizing audience is valid and this study is not an exception. However, Dittmer's point should not be understood in the sense that interpretations of a text are infinite, or boundless. In this study I also make the claim that there are no unlimited interpretations of a text or audiences are completely imprisoned within already-produced message cells and are passive consumers of imposed messages. Furthermore, I argue that cultural consumptions of popular productions are our everyday practices and important vehicles of communicating messages, which are produced, circulated, and given meanings by sets of different socio-cultural experiences, including both structures and agents. Therefore, there are some levels of autonomy embedded within the act of consumption of popular culture that are private and personal. However, there are some levels of identical practices of consuming which are observable and can be investigated but with a very circumspect

manner when drawing conclusions. In other words, there is a finite amount of interpretations of the geopolitical messages because of audiences' geo-cultural dispositions and preconceived notions. Nevertheless, this study contains many lapses and limitations in terms of practicality of executing methodologies of interpretation, contextualizing Turkish audience, and mapping out people's geopolitical imaginations via investigating a single film.

10.4 Research limitations and contributions

This research acknowledges several limitations that are worth mentioning here. The first limitation of the study is that of investigating Turkish people's geopolitical imaginations via a single film. Although other cinema productions of Pana Film are included in the analysis to better understand audiences' engagement with the film *VWP*, the question of how much can be uncovered from studying audiences' interpretation and their meaning-making process through a single film remains challenging and difficult. A second limitation comes from the methodology of investigating audience geography. Determining what methodology is more suited to investigate one's interpretations of a film in a given time and space also remains problematic and thought-provoking. Even though I used mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative) to address this difficulty, I still believe that in order to reach a broader categorizations, it requires a careful re-evaluation and re-thinking ways in which the methodology is approached, especially when it comes to assessing individuals' opinions. Mapping out audiences' interpretations and their geopolitical imaginations is daunting because they are partially personal, private, and temporal. For example, this study is conducted within a year after the Mavi Marmara incident occurred. During this time, Turkish people's negative

reaction to Israel was at its peak, and the Turkish media's handling of the post-Mavi Marmara was very much sided. Given this political and emotional atmosphere, outcomes of a study such as this could change if the same study would have been conducted in a different time. Hence, drawing conclusions and making grand generalizations about viewers' film interpretations resemble walking through a minefield for students of audience studies. Another limitation of this study included determining the sample size and sectoral quantity of the participants. Although the question of 'how many is better' is another subject matter of debate, reaching out to a select number of people from various cultural, social and political backgrounds can affect possible outcome of the research. In other words, representativeness of the group sampling was a crucial task for this audience study. For this reason, this study included various group members from different backgrounds and geographies; however, for some focus groups, sampling was not adequate. In this respect, even one can argue that this study mainly is an attempt to map 'male' geopolitical imaginations given the weight of gender participation in the study. For this reason, further studies on audience need to balance gender inputs as well as other socio-cultural fragmentations in Turkish society.

Even with its limitations, this study offers several contributions to the literature in critical geopolitics, Turkish geopolitics and geography of film and audience studies in general. The first contribution of this study is that this research constitutes a more consumption-oriented (compared to a textual analysis of) film interpretation. Additionally, this research provides a recent geographical inquiry that investigates the interrelations between a film and geopolitical representations and imaginations. As

Aitken and Zonn note "the impact of a film on an audience can mold social, cultural, and environmental experiences. Clearly, a research direction focused on the production and consumption of space and place in cinema deserves serious geographic attention" (Aitken and Zonn 1994, p. 5). Hence, this research becomes a modest contribution to the inquiry of geographical representations of film, wherein people, places, and events are positioned with political, cultural, and social representations, ideologies, images, and imaginations. In turn, these representations, images and imaginations have geographical consequences and political implications.

The second contribution of this study is that this research puts more emphasis on utilizing empirical perspectives to understanding the geopolitical dynamics of audience interpretations and their geographical meaning-making process in Turkish context. Audience studies in geography are an increasing trend especially following the paradigmatic change called the 'cultural turn' of late twentieth century (Scott 2004, Peckham 2004, Dittmer and Dodds 2008). Geographers began paying significant attention to incorporating everyday peoples' everyday experiences and interpretations of the popularly consumed cultural products. However, geographers' incorporation of audience into spatial studies is a recent development and quite limited. Primary concerns with film studies have been to discursively analyze and textually interpret selected films. Thus, this study offers an extensive and comprehensive investigation of audience reception utilizing and combining important elements of both qualitative and quantitative research techniques such as conducting a survey, organizing focus group discussions, interviews and online surveying of viewer comments to better understand

the dynamics of meaning-making process. In this sense, this study remains to be an important scholarly contribution to the general body of geography of audience studies.

Another contribution of this study is that this research enriches a limited collection of scholarly work that has been devoted to focusing on geopolitical texts that are produced in the Middle East (Yanik 2009, Srinivasan 2006, Ghazi et al. 2006). Popularly produced western products (films, magazines, journals, cartoons, etc.) have received significant attention from geographers while alternatively and internationally produced peripheral productions are (inadvertently) excluded from scholarly examination and disciplinary attention. Even though a number of studies are devoted to internationally produced films, their point of analysis remained interpretative and lacked extensive fieldworks to bring the audience into the focus of the meaning-making process (Dittmer and Dodds 2008). Therefore, *VWP* as one of the internationally produced and consumed popular cultural products, should be considered an important example of visual texts for examination within this context while contributing to the literature in popular geopolitics and Turkish geopolitics.

10.5 Future research

This study examined a political-action film which is produced and circulated within particular time and space. Investigation of this film was limited to space with three Turkish cities with the exception of the survey portion of the study. Thus, future studies can extend both the duration of investigation and expand the geography of its consumption. For instance, the geography of consumption of the film *VWP* in Arab countries is yet to be explored. Given the volume of exportations of Turkish cinema products to Arab states, such an investigation surely would enrich audience studies that

highlight the interrelations between cinema and its transnational consumptions, geopolitical imaginations and representations. Of course, this may require academic collaboration.

This study would also benefit from broadening audience sample groups, formulizing questionnaires and reorganizing ways of conducting face-to-face discussions. Due to lack of resources and time constrains, this study included only limited number of focus group participants as a representative of the entire population from three cities in Turkey. In the future, both Philo's and Berry's surveying (structured questions) and face-to-face focus group (semi-structured) sampling techniques can be applied to better understand audiences' film interpretations. Structured questions help us understand the main dynamics of sample population in terms of their socio-cultural, political and economic backgrounds while semi-structured questions explore possible links between film, content of the film, and the nature of audience interpretations and beliefs. To do this, at least 13 focus groups should be organized, and each group should have minimum of 5 people organized as followed:

1. Low-income males and females (similar occupation and city & 5-8 people)

2. Low-income females (occupation/city & 5-8)

3. Low-income males (occupation/city & 5-8)

4. Students females (high school & 5-8)

5. Students males (high school & 5-8)

6. Students males and females (high school & 5-8)

7. Students males (college/city & 5-8)

8. Students females (college/city & 5-8)

9. Students males and females (college/city & 5-8)

10. Middle-class females (occupation/city & 5-8)

11. Middle-class males (occupation/city &5-8)

12. Middle-class males and females (occupation/city &5-8)

13. Elderly/retired males and females (occupation/city &5-8)

Criteria for selecting these participants would be more of a naturally occurring manner, meaning that these people would meet and speak with each other in the normal course of their lives. Again the rationale would be to identify the nature and source of audiences' film interpretations and to better understand their consumption of space and place within film over a given time and space.

Additionally, including interdisciplinary approaches and multidisciplinary scholars from different subject area of study would greatly enrich this study, and in turn, may promise much valid conclusions. Such cooperation can include cultural studies, broadcasting professionals, international area and film studies, etc. This means that different point of views will have to take part in the discussions and conversations which will ultimately lead to different ways of conceptualizing of audiences' meaning-making process and their role in materializing the competing geographical imaginaries in our geopolitical processes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, C. P. (2009). *Geographies of Media and Communication*. Malden, MA: Willey-Blackwell.

Agnew, J. (2002). *Making Political Geography*. London: Arnold.

Aitken, C. S. & E. L. Zonn. (1994). Re-presenting the place pastiche. In *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle A film Geography of Film,* eds. C. S. Aitken & Z. E. Leo. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Aitken, S. & D. Dixon (2006) Imagining geographies of film. *Erdkunde,* 60 (4)**,** 326-336.

Aksoy, A. & K. Robins (1997) Peripheral vision: cultural industries and cultural identities in Turkey. *Environment and Planning A,* 29 (11)**,** 1937-1957.

Al-Mahfedi, M. (2011) Edward Said's "Imaginative Geography" and Geopolitical Mapping: Knowledge/Power Constellation and Landscaping Palestine. *The Criterion: An International Journal in English,* 2 (3)**,** 1-26.

Alderman, H. D. & J. E. Popke (2002) Humor and film in the geography classroom: learning from Michael Moore's TV Nation. *Journal of Geography***,** 101 (6), 228-239.

Alessandri, E. (2010). The New Turkish Foreign Policy and the Future of Turkey-EU Relations. ed. I. A. Internazionali.

Altun, F. (2011) Sinemanın sınırları dilin sınırlarıdır *Hayal Perdesi*. http://www.hayalperdesi.net/dosya/76-sinemanin-sinirlari-dilin-sinirlaridir.aspx (last accessed 2/15/2012).

Anat, L.-F. (2010) Sinking Turkey-Israel relations. *The Jerusalem Post*. jpost.com (last accessed 1/15/2012).

Anaz, N., A. Keceli & F. Shelley (2011) Socio-Spatial Analysis of the Turkish Referendum and the Paradox of Modernity in Turkey. *The Southwestern Geographer,* 15 (1)**,** 143-170.

Anaz, N. & D. Purcell (2010) Geopolitics of Film: Valley of the Wolves—Iraq and Its Reception in Turkey and Beyond. *The Arab World Geographer,* 13 (1)**,** 34-50.

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities*. New York: Verso.

Ang, I. (1996). *Living room wars: rethinking media audiences for a postmodern world*. London Routledge.

Antoniades, A., A. Miskimmon & B. O'Loughlin. (2010). Great Power Politics and Strategic Narratives. In *CGPE Working Paper*. Brighton: Centre for Global Political Economy, University of Sussex.

Aral, B. (2005) An inquiry into the D-8 experiment: an incipient model of an Islamic common market? *Alternatives Turkish Journal of International Relations,* 4 (1&2)**,** 89-107.

Aras, B. (2009). Turkey's Soft Power. In *The Guardian*. London.

Aras, B. & S. Bicakci (2006) Europe, Turkey and the Middle East: is harmonisation possible? *East European Quarterly,* XL (3)**,** 397-381.

Armstrong, F. H. (1933) Hitler's reich: The first phase. *Foreign Affairs,* 11 (4)**,** 589-608.

Arslan, S. (2009) The new cinema of Turkey. *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 7 (1)**,** 83-97.

Arslan, S. (2011). *Cinema in Turkey A New Critical History*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Avcı, Ö. & B. Kılınç. (2009). Islamic ways of life reflected on the silver screen. In *Cinema and Politics: Turkish Cinema and The New Europe,* ed. D. Bayrakdar. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Aydin, M. & H. Bulent. (2012). Toplumun Gundeme Bakisi. Kadir Has University.

Ayhan, V. (2009) A New Period in Turkey-Syria Relations: High Level Strategic Cooperation Council. *Ortadogu Analiz,* 1 (11)**,** 26-34.

Baker, R. H. A. (1988) Historical Geography and the Study of the European Rural Landscape. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography,* 70 (1)**,** 5-16.

Baran, Z. (2010). *Torn Country: Turkey between Secularism and Islamism*. California: Hoover Institution Press Publication.

Baris, R. (2010). Media landscape: Turkey. In *Journalists working for journalists*. Amsterdam. http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/article/turkey/ (last accessed January 16, 2012).

Barsam, R. (2004). *Looking at Movies: an Introduction to Film*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Bayraktar, D. (2009). Turkish cinema and the new Europe: at the edge of heaven. In *Cinema and Politics: Turkish Cinema and The New Europe,* ed. D. Bayraktar, 118-132. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Bazin, A. (1971). *What is Cinema?* Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

BBC (2010) Israel rebukes Turkey over a television series. *BBC*. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8453694.stm (last accessed December 15, 2011).

Behlil, M. (2010) Close encounters?: Contemporary Turkish television and cinema. *Wide Screen,* 2 (2)**,** 1-14.

Berger, A. A. (2000). *Media and Communication Research Methods: an introduction to qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Biernacki, P. & D. Waldorf (1981) Snowball Sampling Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research,* 10 (2)**,** 141-163.

Billig, M. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage Publications.

Biocca, A. F. (1988). Opposing conceptions of the audience: The active and passive hemispheres of mass communication theory. In *Communication Yearbook,* ed. J. Anderson. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Brunette, P. (1985) Rossellini and Cinematic Realism. *Cinema Journal,* 25 (1), 34-49.

Buccianti, A. (2010). Dubbed Turkish soap operas conquering the Arabworld: social liberation or cultural alienation? In *Arab Media and Society*.

Bugdayci, C. (2011). The Soft Power of Turkish Television. In *Southeast European Times*. Istanbul.

Burgess, J. & R. J. Gold. (1985). Place, the media and popular culture. In *Geography The Media & Popular Culture*, 1-33. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Burton, A. J. (2007). Film, History and Cultural Memory: Cinematic Representations of Vietnam-era America During the Culture Wars, 1987-1995. Nattingham: University of Nottingham.

BYEGM (2010) Turkish Cinema.http://www.byegm.gov.tr/db/dosyalar/webicerik26.pdf (last accessed 1/10/2011).

Campbell, D. (2003) Cultural governance and pictorial resistance:reflections on the imaging of war. *Review of International Studies,* 29 (1)**,** 57-73.

Carter, L. P. (2009) Geography, Race, and Quantification. *The Professional Geographer,* 61 (4)**,** 465-480.

Celebi, M. M. (2006). "Valley of Wolves" as a Nationalist Text. In *Media and Cultural Studies*. Ankara: Middle East Technical University.

Cengil, Z. (2010) Bahadir Özdener: Orta dogunun en buyuk filmini cekecegiz. *Vatan*. http://www.sacitaslan.com/magazin-bahadir-ozdener-8216ortadogunun-en-buyuk-filmini-cekecegiz_19353.html (last accessed 10/14/2011).

Cheviron, N. (2009) Soap operas spark Arab tourist boom in Turkey. *Expatica*. http://www.expatica.com/be/life-in-belgium/lifestyle/Soap-operas-spark-Arab-tourist-boom-in-Turkey-_14830.html (last accessed January 04, 2012).

Cihan (2011) Davutoglu: Suriye halkini kaderine terk edemeyiz. *Cihan Haber Ajansi*. http://www.dursunbey.com/davutoglu-suriye-halkini-kaderine-terk-edemeyiz-h122948.html (last accessed December 27, 2011).

CNN (2010) Israel-Turkey tentions high over TV series. http://articles.cnn.com/2010-01-12/world/turkey.israel_1_israeli-intelligence-turkish-officials-turkish-embassy?_s=PM:WORLD (last accessed 2/01/2012).

CNNTURK (2011) Turk dizilerine Iran yasagi. http://www.cnnturk.com/2011/dunya/08/22/turk.dizilerine.iran.yasagi/626911.0/index.html (last accessed 1/12/2012).

Cosgrove, D. (1984) Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 10 (1)**,** 45-62.

Cox, R. K. (2002). *Political Geography Territory, State, and Society*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

Dabashi, H. (2006). Palestine: The Presence of the Absence. In *Dreams of a Nation on Palestinian Cinema,* ed. H. Dabashi, 7-22. London & New York: Verso.

Dalby, S. (1998). Geopolitics and global security: Culture, identity, and the POGO syndrome. In *Rethinking Geopolitics: Toward a Critical Geopolitics,* eds. G. Toal & S. Dalby. New York: Routledge.

Dalby, S. (2008) Warrior Geopolitics: Gladiator, Black Hawk Down and the Kingdom of Heaven. *Political Geography,* 27 (4)**,** 439-455.

Davutoglu, A. (1993). *Alternative Paradigms: the impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on political theory*. Maryland: University Press of America.

Davutoglu, A. (2001). *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* Istanbul: KURE Yayinlari.

Davutoglu, A. (2009) Turkish foreign policy and the EU in 2010. *Turkish Policy Quarterly,* 8 (3)**,** 11-17.

Davutoglu, A. (2011). Meclis Konusmalari. Ankara: TRT3.

Deacon, D., M. Pickering & P. M. Golding. (2007). *Researching Communications: a practical guide to methods in media and cultural analysis*. New York Hodder Arnold.

Demir, K. N. (2007) Elazığda Kurtlar Vadisi Dizisinin Alımlaması (The reception of Kurtlar Vadisi serial in Elazig). *Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 2**,** 251-266.

Diken, B. & B. C. Laustsen. (2007). *Sociology through the Projector*. New York: Routledge.

Dittmer, J. (2010). *Popular Culture, Geopolitics, & Identity*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc.

Dittmer, J. & K. Dodds (2008) Popular geopolitics past and future: Fandom, identities and audiences. *Geopolitics,* 13 (3)**,** 437-457.

Dixon, D., E. L. Zonn & J. Bascom. (2008). Post-ing the cinema: reassessing analytical stances toward a geography of film. In *The Geography of Cinema- A Cinematic World,* eds. C. Lukinbeal & S. Zimmermann. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Dodds, K. (2000). *Geopolitics in a changing world*. London: Prentice Hall.

Dodds, K. (2006) Popular geopolitcs and audience dispositions: James Bond and the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). *Trans Inst Br Geogr,* 31 (2)**,** 116-130.

Dodds, K. (2007). *Geopolitics: a very short introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

Dorronsoro, G. (2002). The EU and Turkey: between geopolitics and social engineering. In *GCSP Occasional Papers*. Geneva, Switzerland.

Dumanli, E. (2010). Medya, diplomasiye boyle yaklasamaz. In *Zaman*.

Duncan, J. & N. Duncan. (1992). Ideology and Bliss: Roland Barthes and the secret histories of landscape. In *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape,* eds. T. J. Barnes & J. S. Duncan. London and New York: Routledge.

Economist, T. (2009) Boxed in: Who watches most television? *The Economist*. http://www.economist.com/node/14252309 (last accessed 2/15/2011).

Economist, T. (2012) The Power of Tribes. *The Economist*. http://www.economist.com/node/21543487 (last accessed 2/15/2012).

Ellison, N., R. Heino & J. Gibbs (2006) Managing impressions online:Self-presentation processes in the online dating environment. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication,* 11 (2), [online].

Ellison, N., C. Steinfield & C. Lampe (2007) The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication,* 12 (2)**,** 1143-1167.

Erdogan, N. & D. Gokturk. (2001). Turkish Cinema. In *Companion Encylopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film,* ed. O. Leaman, 533-67. New York: Routledge.

Ersanel, N. (2011) Azerbaycan Turk dizilerini neden yasakladi? http://www.iyibilgi.com/haber.php?haber_id=192806 (last accessed 2/03/2012).

Es, M. (2011) Frank Miller's 300 civilizational exclusivism and the spatialized politics of spectatorship. *Aether: the journal of media geography,* VIII**,** 6-39.

Esen, S. K. (2010). *Turk Sinemasinin Kilometre Taslari*. Istanbul: Agora Kitapligi.

Fallah, W. G. (2005). Peace, Deception, and Justification for Territorial Claims: The Case of Israel. In *The Geography of War and Peace: from death camps to diplomats,* ed. C. Flint, 297-320. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Feeney, E. A. (2003) Using interactive multimedia for dyslexic students in geographic education. *Journal of Geography,* 102 (1)**,** 21-28.

Fuller, G. (2008). *The new Turkish republic: Turkey as a pivotal state in the Muslim world*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.

Gazete5. (2012). iPhone 4s satislari Turkiye'de rekor kirdi. In *Gazete5*.

Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and Nationalism*. New York: Cornell University Press.

GENAR. (2011). Turkiye sosyal, ekonomik ve politik analiz.

Georgiou, M. (2011) Watching soap opera in the diaspora: cultural proximity or critical proximity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 35 (5)**,** 868-887.

Ghazi, F., C. Flint & V. Mamadouh (2006) Just War and extraterritoriality: the popular geopolitics of the United States' war on Iraq as reflected in Newspapers of the Arab world. *Annals of the Association of American Geograhers,* 96 (1)**,** 142-164.

Gillespie, M. (2005). Audience: living with media. In *Media Audiences* ed. M. Gillespie. New York: Open University Press.

Gokmen, M., D. M. Socio & W. G. Fallah (2008) Geopolitics from Below: Student Perceptions of Contemporary U.S.-Turkey Relations. *The Arab World Geographer,* 11 (1-2)**,** 18-46.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. Lawrence and Wishart London.

Greenwell, M. (2006). Operation Hollywood and Hollywood and the Pentagon. In *SpinWatch Monitoring PR and Spin*.

Gregory, D. (1995) Imaginative geographies. *Progress in Human Geography***,** 19 (4), 447-485.

Grigoriadis, I. (2010). The Davutoglu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy. In *Middle Eastern Studies Programme*. Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy.

Gültekin, Z. (2006) Irak' dan önce: Kurtlar Vadisi dizisi. *Iletişim Kuram ve Araştırma Dergisi,* 2**,** 9-36.

Guven, A. M. (2008). Muhafazakâr sinema yazarı ne demektir? *Yeni Şafak*. http://yenisafak.com.tr/Sinema/?i=151840 (last accessed December 15, 2011).

Hall, S. (2001). Encoding, decoding. In *The Cultural Studies Reader,* ed. S. During, 507-517. London: Routledge.

Hall, S. (2005). The television discourse; encoding and decoding. In *McQuail's Reader in Mass Communication Theory,* ed. D. McQuail, 302-308. London & New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Harbidge, L. (2011) Audienceship and (Non)Laughter in the Stand-up Comedy of Steve Martin. *Participations Journal of Audience & Reception Studies,* 8 (2)**,** 118-143.

Harley, J. B. (2001). Deconstructing the map. In *The New Nature of Maps:essays in the history of cartography*, 150-68. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Harris, S. (2008) Turkish popular cinema: National claims, transnational flows. *The International Journal of the Humanities,* 6 (3)**,** 77-87.

Harrison, P. (2006). Poststructuralist Theories. In *Approaches to Human Geography,* eds. G. Valentine & C. S. Aithen, 122-135. London: SAGE.

Harvey, D. (1972) Revolutionary and counter revolutionary theory in geography and the problem of ghetto formation. *Antipode,* 4 (2)**,** 1-13.

Harvey, D. (1989). *The Condition of Postmodernity: an enquiry into the origins of cultural change*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Hay, J., L. Grossberg & E. Wantella. (1996). Introduction. In *The Audience and Its Landscape,* eds. J. Hay, L. Grossberg & E. Wantella. Oxford: Westview Press.

Higson, A. (1989) The Concepts of National Cinema. *Screen,* 30 (4)**,** 36-46.

Higson, A. (2000). The limiting imagination of national cinema. In *Cinema and Nation,* eds. M. Hjort & S. MacKenzie, 63-74. London: Routledge.

Hine, C. (2005). Virtual Methods and the Sociology of Cyber-Social-Scientific Knowledge. In *Virtual Methods Issues in Social Research on the Internet,* ed. C. Hine. New York: BERG.

Hjort, M. & S. MacKenzie. (2000). Introduction. In *Cinema and Nation,* eds. M. Hjort & S. MacKenzie, 1-17. London and New York: Routledge.

Hopkins, J. (1994). A Mapping of Cinematic Place: Icons, Ideology, and the Power of (Mis)representation. In *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle: a geography of film*, 47-69. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Hortacsu, N. & M. Erturk (2003) Women and ideology: Representations of women in religious and secular Turkish media. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology,* 33 (10)**,** 2017-2039.

Hurriyetdailynews, (2011) PM Erdogan decries Israel as 'spoiled boy'. *Hurriyet Daily News*. http://archive.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=pm-erdogan-decries-israel-as-8216spoiled-boy8217-2011-09-06 (last accessed 01/10/2012).

Inbar, E. (2010) Israeli-Turkish Tensions and Beyond. *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs,* 4 (1)**,** 29-30.

Iri, M. (2009). *Bir film izlemek: pop kulturu sokmek*. Istanbul: Derin Yayinlari.

Işık, E. N. (2006) Milliyetçilik, Popüler Kültür ve 'Kurtlar Vadisi'. *Doğu Batı* 9 (38)**,** 327-347.

Jancovich, M., L. Faire & S. Stubbings. (2003). *The place of the audience: cultural geographies of film consumption*. London: BFI Publishing.

JerusalemPost (2011) Germany gives adult rating to anti-Semitic Turkish film. *The Jerusalem Post*. http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=206195 (last accessed December 29, 2011).

Johnston, R. J., D. Gregory, G. Pratt & M. Watts. (2000). Geography of film. In *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 267-268.

Jones-Martin, D. (2011). *Deleuze and World Cinemas*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Kalin, I. (2009) Debating Turkey in the Middle East: The Dawn of a New Geo-Political Imagination? *Insight Turkey,* 11 (1)**,** 83-96.

Kara, M. (2009). Sinemaya en cok bekarlar gidiyor, 56 turk filmi 240 yabanciyi zorluyor. *Hurriyet* 13.12.2009.

Karen, L. & D. Massey (1999) Making connections. *Screen,* 40 (3)**,** 229-38.

Kaya, F. & S. H. Kimzan (2010) Online Social Network Users' View of Political Consumerism: A case study of Facebook. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice,* 9 (3)**,** 245-250.

Kennedy, C. & C. Lukinbeal (1997) Towards a holistic approach to geographic research on film. *Progress in Human Geography,* 21 (1)**,** 33-50.

Keskin, B. (2010). Kuresellesme Surecinde Goc Akislarinin Kavsak Yeri: Eminonu. In *TMMOB Istanbul Kent Sempozyumu*. Istanbul: Turk Muhendisleri ve Mimar Odalari Birligi Istanbul Il Koordinasyon Kurulu.

Kirisci, K., N. Tocci & J. Walker. (2010). A Neighborhood Rediscovered Turkey's transatlantic value in the Middle East. The German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Klaebn, J. (2002) A critical review and assessment of Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model. *European Journal of Communication,* 17 (2)**,** 147-182.

Kotkin, J. (2011). The New World Order: A Report on the World's Emerging Spheres of Influence Legatum Institute.

Kujawa, K. (2011) Turkey and democratization in the Arab World between an inspiration and a model. *The Polish Institute of International Affairs,* 12 (August).

Lesser, O. I. (2010). Rethinking Turkish-Western Relations: A Journey Withouth Maps. In *Analysis on Turkey*. Washington, DC: The German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Liebes, T. & E. Katz. (1990). *The export of meaning:cross-cultural readings of Dallas*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lindlof, R. T. & C. B. Taylor. (2002). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*. Londan: Sage Publications.

Livingstone, D. (2005a) Science, text and space: Thoughts on the geography of reading. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 30 (4)**,** 83-94.

Livingstone, S.(2005b). Media audiences, interpreters and users. In *Media Audiences,* ed. M. Gillespie, 9-50. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Lukes, S. (2005). *Power: A Radical View*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lukinbeal, C. (2002) Teaching historical geographies of American film production. *Journal of Geography,* 101 (6)**,** 250-60.

Lukinbeal, C. & J. Craine (2009) Geographic media literacy: an introduction. *GeoJournal,* 74 (3)**,** 175-82.

Lukinbeal, C. & S. Zimmermann (2006) Film geography: A new subfield. *Erdkunde,* 60 (4), 315-326.

Macdonald, M. G. (1994). Third cinema and the third world. In *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle A Geography of Film,* eds. C. S. Aithen & E. L. Zonn, 27-47. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Madden, M. & A. Ross (2009) Genocide and GIScience: Integrating Personal Narratives and Geographic Information Science to study Human Rights. *The Professional Geographer,* 61 (4)**,** 508-526.

Maltby, R. (1999). Sticks, Hicks and Flaps: classical Hollywood's genetic conception of its audience In *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies,* eds. M. Stokes & R. Maltby. London: Sage Publication.

Manvell, R. (1953) The georaphy of film-making. *The Geographical Magazine,* 25**,** 640-650.

Massad, J. (2006). The Weapon of Culture: Cinema in the Palestinian Liberation Struggle. In *Dreams of a Nation on Palestinian Cinema,* ed. H. Dabashi. London & New York: Verso.

McDowell, L. (1992) Doing Gender: feminism, feminists and research methods in Human Geography. *Transactions of the Institute of Britsh Geagraphers,* 17 (4)**,** 399-416.

McQuail, D. (2005). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. London & New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Monaco, J. (2009). *How to Read A Film*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Monceau, N. (2000). Muslim Identity in Turkish Cinema the Case of 'White Cinema'. In *Turkish Cinema and Transnational Imaginations Workshop National Film Theatre*. London.

Moores, S. (1993). *Interpreting audiences: The ethnography of media consumption*. Sage Publications Ltd.

Morley, D. (1980) *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding*. London: British Film Institute.

Morley, D. (1996). Populism, revisionism, and the 'new' in audience research. In *Cultural Studies and Communications,* eds. J. Curran & D. Morley. London and New York: St. Martin's Press.

Morley, D. (1999) Audience Research. http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=audiencerese (last accessed February 15, 2012).

Morley, D. & C. Brunsdon. (1999). *The Nationwide Television Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Mountz, A. (2009). Nationalism definition: an elusive yet powerful force. In *Key Concepts in Political Geography,* eds. C. Gallaher, C. Dahlman, M. Gilmartin, A. Mountz & P. Shirlow. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Mutlu, K. D. (2005). *The Midnight Express Phenomenon: The International Reception of the Film Midnight Express*. Istanbul: The Isis Press.

Najialali.com (2007) Naji Al-Ali: Immortal Palestinian Cartoonist. http://www.najialali.com/articles.html (last accessed March 17, 2012).

Nerhardt, G. (2007). Incongruity and funniness: Towards a new descriptive model. In *Humar and Laughter Theory, Research, and Applications,* eds. J. A. Chapman & C. H. Foot, 55-63. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Netanyahu, B. (2011). Netanyahu's speech at the UN General Assembly. Haaretz.com.

Nye, J. (2004). *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics*. New York: PublicAffairs.

Nyroos, L. (2001) Religiopolitcs: dissident geopolitics and the 'fundamentalism' of Hamas and Kach *Geopolitics,* 6 (3)**,** 135-157.

O'Regan, T. 2002. Australian Cinema as a National Cinema. In *Film and Nationalism,* ed. A. Williams, 89-137. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Oakley, T. (2003) Toward a General Theory of Film Spectatorship. http://www.case.edu/artsci/engl/Library/Oakley-TheoryFilmSpectator.pdf (last accessed December 22, 2011).

Ozkaracalar, K. (2009). Representations of imperialism in Turkish cinema a pendulum of nationalism and anti-emperialism. In *Cinema and Politics: Turkish Cinema and the New Europe,* ed. D. Bayraktar, 164-171. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Ozlem, P. (2010) Korsan kitap alanlar bu gercegi biliyor mu? *OdaTV.* http://www.odatv.com/n.php?n=korsan-kitap-alanlar-bu-gercegi-biliyor-mu-1304101200 (last accessed 12/03/2011).

Peckham, S. R. (2004). Landscape in Film. In *A Companion to Cultural Geography,* ed. J. J. N. S. Duncan, R. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Philo, G. & M. Berry. (2004). *Bad News From Israel*. London: Pluto Press.

Popke, E. (2003) Poststructuralist ethics: subjectivity, responsibility and the space of community. *Progress in Human Geography,* 27 (3)**,** 298-316.

Power, M. & A. Crampton. (2007). *Cinema and Popular Geo-Politics*. London: Routledge.

Power, M. & A. Cramton. (2005). Reel geopolitics: cinemato-graphing political space. In *Cinema and Popular Geo-Politics,* eds. M. Power & A. Crampton, 1-11. London: Routledge.

Purcell, D., S. M. Brown & M. Gokmen (2009) Ahmed the dead terrorist and humor in popular geopolitics. *GeoJournal,* 75 (January)**,** 373-385.

Quiquivix, L. & H. G. Curti (2011) "Nationality Undefined" the politics of place-making through spaced-subjects in Riklis's *The Syrian Bride*. *Aether: the journal of media geography,* VIII.B (Winter)**,** 40-56.

Ranganathan, M. (2010) Towards a more inclusive Indian identity? A case study of Bollywood film Swades. *National Identities,* 12 (1)**,** 41-59.

Rider, S. (1999). Michel Foucault: Truth and Power. http://www.wdog.com/rider/writings/foucault.htm (last accesed October 22, 2011).

Robins, K. & A. Aksoy. (2000). Deep Nation: the national question and Turkish cinema culture. In *Cinema and Nation,* eds. M. Hjort & S. MacKenzie, 203-221. London: Routledge.

Rose, G. (1993). *Feminism and geography:The limits of geographical knowledge*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Rose, G. (1994) The cultural politics of place: local representation and oppositional discourse in two films. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 19 (1)**,** 46-60.

Rose, G. (2007). *Visual Methodogies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. London: SAGE Publications.

Rothbart, K. M. (2007). Incongruity, problem-solving and laughter. In *Humor and Laughter Theory, Research, and Applications,* eds. J. A. Chapman & C. H. Foot. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

RTUK. (2010). Kadinlarin televizyon izleme egilimleri arastirmasi - 2. ed. Y. A. v. O. D. B. Kamuoyu.

Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Said, E. (1981). *Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Said, E. (1992). *The Question of Palestine*. New York: Vintage Books.

Said, E. (2003). Preface. In *Dreams of a Nation on Palestinian Cinema,* ed. H. Dabashi. London & New York: Verso.

Sarrafoglu, F. (2010) Türkiye İslam ülkelerini keşfetti. *Dünya Bülteni* http://www.haberpan.com/dosya-turkiye-islam-ulkelerini-kesfetti-haberi/ (last accessed 9/10/2011).

Schleifer, Y. (2010) Ahmet Davutoglu: a thinker in the halls of power. *World Politcs Review*. http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/5051/ahmet-davutoglu-a-thinker-in-the-halls-of-power (last accessed 10/11/2011).

Schlesinger, P. (2000). The sciological scope of 'national cinema'. In *Cinema and Nation,* eds. M. Hjort & S. MacKenzie, 19-32. London: Routledge.

Schlesinger, P., R. E. Dobash, P. R. Dobash & C. K. Weaver. (1992). *Women Viewing Violence*. London: BFI Publishing.

Schwanen, T. & M.-P. Kwan (2009) "Doing" Critical Geographies with Numbers. *The Professional Geographer,* 61 (4)**,** 459-464.

Scott, H. (2004). Cultural Turns. In *A Companion to Cultural Geography,* ed. J. J. N. S. Duncan, R., 24-37. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Semih (2011) turkler cok mu televizyon sayrediyor. *Metropol FM*. http://www.metropolfm.de/nachrichten/reportagen/t%C3%BCrkler-%C3%A7ok-mu-televizyon-seyrediyor.html (last accessed 2/12/2012).

Sen, A. (2010) Beyaz Sinema'nin isim babasi harbice konustu. http://www.haber7.com/haber/20101201/Beyaz-Sinemanin-isim-babasi-harbice-konustu.php (last accessed 10/09/2011).

SETA (2011) Turk halkinin 'televizyona' bakisi. http://www.personelmeb.net/yasam/turk-halkinin-televizyona-bakisi-h7911.html (last accessed 01/10/2012).

SETA (2012). Turkiye'nin En Buyuk Genclik Arastirmasi. SETAV.

Shapiro, M. (1997). *Violent Cartographies*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Sharp, J. (1993) Publishing American identity: popular geopolitics, myth and The Reader's Digest. *Political Geography,* 12 (6)**,** 491-503.

Sharp, J. (1996) Hegemony, popular culture and geopolitics: the Reader's Digest and the construction of danger. *Political Geography,* 15 (6-7)**,** 557-570.

Smith, A. (2000). Images of the nation: Cinema, art and national identity. In *Cinema and Nation,* eds. M. Hjort & S. MacKenzie, 45-59. London: Routledge.

Smith, L. (2002) The "cultural turn" in the classroom: two examples of pedagogy and the politics of representation. *Journal of Geography,* 101 (6)**,** 240-49.

Srinivasan, R. (2006) Indigenous, ethnic and cultural articulations of new media. *International journal of cultural studies,* 9 (4)**,** 497-518.

Staddon, C., P. Taylor, P. Beard, R. Kendall, N. Dunn, C. Curtis & S. Vreithoff. 2002. Using film as a tool in critical pedagogy: reflections on the experience of students and lecturers. In *Engaging Film: Geographies of Mobility and Identity*, 271-295. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Staiger, J. (2005). *Media Reception Studies*. New York: New York University press.

Stroud, J. N. (2007) Media effects, selective exposure, and Fahrenheit 9/11. *Political Communication,* 24 (4)**,** 415-432.

Suer, C. (2011) Turkler Internette Neler Yapiyor. http://shiftdelete.net/turkler-internette-neler-yapiyor-29466.html (last accessed 3/15/2012).

Suner, A. (2010). *New Turkish Cinema Belonging, Identity and Memory*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Szymanski, A. (2010) Crisis in Turkey-Israel Relations. *The Polish Institute of International Affairs,* 18 (94)**,** 182-183.

Taspinar, O. (2008). Turkey's Middle East Policies Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism. Canegie Endowment.

Toal, G. (1994) (Dis)placing geopolitcs: writing on the maps of global politics. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* 12 (5)**,** 525-546.

Toal, G. (2007). The Frustrations of Geopolitics and the Pleasures of War: Behind Enemy Lines and American Geopolitical Culture. In *Cinema and Popular Geo-Politics,* eds. M. Power & A. Crampton, 160-181. London and New York: Routledge.

Toal, G. & S. Dalby. (1998). Rethinking Geopolitics: Toward a critical geopolitcs. In *Rethinking Geopolitcs*, 1-16. New York, NY: Routledge.

Tokay, M. (2010) 'Hür Adam Said Nursi, en iyi dönem filmi'. *Zaman*. http://zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=1073013&title=hur-adam-said-nursi-en-iyi-donem-filmi&haberSayfa=0 (last accessed 10/03/2011).

TRT. (2010). ed. T. R. T. Kurumu. Ankara: TRT.net.tr.

Tuan, Y. (1977) Sight and picture. *The Geographical Review,* 69**,** 413-22.

Tur, O. (2009) Crisis in Turkey-Israel Relations: Davos and its Aftermath *Ortadogu Analiz,* 1 (11)**,** 34-40.

Ugur, A. I. (2010). New York'un Bes Minareleri mi? Yoksa Fetullah Gulen'i aklama filmi mi? In *Milliyet blog*. Milliyet.

Unsal, A. (1981). Ataturk's reforms: realization of an utopia by a realist. In *Seminar on Nehru and Ataturk*. New Delhi.

Uray, N. & S. Burnaz (2003) An analysis of the potrayal of gender roles in Turkish television advertisements. *Sex Roles,* 48 (1-2)**,** 77-87.

Uygur, E. (2010). The Global Crisis and the Turkish Economy. Penang, Malaysia: Third World Network.

Vatan (2010) Ortadoğu'da hangi Türk dizileri izlenme rekoru kırıyor? *Vatan Gazetesi*. http://www.medyafaresi.com/haber/32343/televizyon-ortadoguda-hangi-turk-dizileri-izlenme-rekoru-kiriyor.html (last accessed 02/10/2012).

Wayne, M. (2001). *Political Cinema The dialectics of Third Cinema*. London: Pluto Press.

West II, W. J. (2006) Religion as dissedent geopolitcs: Geopolitical discussions within the recent publications of Fetullah Gulen. *Geopolitics,* 11 (2)**,** 280-299.

Wiatrowski, M. (2011). The Dynamics of Fandom: Exploring fan communities in online spaces. In *The Fourth Annual Folklore and Ethnomusicology Joint University Conference*. Indiana University.

Wilkins, G. K. (2009). *Home/land/security: what we learn about Arab communities from action-adventure films*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Williams, A. (2002). Introduction. In *Film and Nationalism,* ed. A. Williams, 1-24. New Jersey: Rutger University Press.

Williams, B. (2007) "What South Park character are you?": Popular culture literacy, and online performances of identity. *Computers and Composition,* 25 (1)**,** 24-39.

Wright, J. D., F. M. Goodchild & D. J. Proctor (1997) GIS: Tool or Science? Demystifing the Persistent Ambiguity of GIS as "Tool" versus "Science". *Annals of the Association of American Geograhers,* 87 (2)**,** 346-362.

Wylie, W. J. (2009). Poststructuralist theories, critical methods and experimentation. In *Aproaches to Human Geography,* eds. C. S. Aitken & G. Valentine. London: Sage.

Yanik, K. L. (2009) Valley of the Wolves-Irak: Anti-Geopolitics Alla Turca. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 2 (1)**,** 153-170.

Yeginsu, C. (2010) Turkish president looks to future in speech at Colombia University. *Hurriyet Daily News*. http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=gul-looks-to-future-in-speech-at-columbia-university-2010-09-25 (last accessed December 31, 2011).

Yilmaz, E. & P. Bilgin (2005/2006) Costructing Turkey's "Western" Identity during the Cold War: Discourses of the Intellectuals of Statecraft. *International Journal,* 61**,** 39-59.

Zonn, E. L. (1990). Tusayan, the Traveler, and the IMAX Theatre: An Introduction to Place Images in Media. In *Place Images in Media Portrayal, Experience, and Meaning,* ed. E. L. Zonn. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Zonn, E. L. (2007) Going to the movies: The filmic site as geographical endeavor. *Aether: the journal of media geography,* 1 (October)**,** 63-67.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Popular Perceptions of the movie Valley of the Wolves – Palestine toward Turkey-Israel relations and Turkey's role in the Middle East: General public survey

1- Gender
   ☐ M   ☐ F

2- Marital status
   ☐ Single   ☐ Married   ☐Divorced   ☐ Other…….

3- Your age group

   a) 18 – 25

   b) 26 - 35

   c) 36 - 45

   d) 46 – 55

   e) 56 – 65

   f) 66 or older

4- Which city do you live in? (please write only name of the country if you live abroad)
   a) …………..

5- Which one of the below describes you the best?

   a) Turkish
   b) Kurdish
   c) Turkic Republics
   d) Armenian
   e) Arab
   f) Bosnian
   g) Other (please specify)
   h) I don't want to answer

6- Education level (If currently enrolled, mark the program that you are still in.)

    a) Primer School
    b) High School
    c) Two-year college
    d) Undergraduate
    e) Master
    f) Ph.D.

7- Employment status?

    a) Government employee
    b) Private sector employee
    c) Employed in Education (academician, teacher, assistant, etc.)
    d) Self-employed
    e) Small shopkeeper (retailer, etc.)
    f) Housewife
    g) Farmer
    h) Student
    i) Labor
    j) Labor without a contract
    k) Unemployed
    l) Retired (government or private sector)
    m) Other

8- Your world-view   First Preference   Second Preference

    a) Secular
    b) Kemalist
    c) Nationalist
    d) Islamist
    e) Liberal
    f) Conservative
    g) Democrat
    h) Leftist
    i) Rightist
    j) I don't want to answer
    k) Other -----------

9- How many hours do you watch television in a day?

    a) I don't watch television
    b) Less than 2 hours
    c) 2-4 hours
    d) 4-6 hours
    e) More than 6 hours

10- How many hours a day do you use internet excluding work-related usage times

    a) Less than 2 hours
    b) 2-4 hours
    c) 4-6 hours
    d) 6 and more

11- How often do you watch films (in theaters, on TV, Internet, etc)?

    a) I don't watch films
    b) 1-2 in a month
    c) 1-2 in a week
    d) 3-4 in a week
    e) 5 or more in a week

12- How often do you read news about the Middle East (from newspapers, internet, etc.)?

    a) Everyday
    b) Several in a week
    c) Several in a month
    d) I don't read

13- In your opinion, which of the following best describes the problems between Israel and Palestine? Strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1).

    a) Problem is the state of Israel   5 4 3 2 1
    b) Problem is the Palestinian authorities   5 4 3 2 1
    c) Problem is Judaism   5 4 3 2 1
    d) Problem is Islam   5 4 3 2 1

e) Problem is America and Western Europe   5 4 3 2 1
f) Problem is the Arab states   5 4 3 2 1
g) Other …………..   5 4 3 2 1

14- Which state or international organization can be a fair mediator to solve the Israel-Palestine problem?

     a) The United Nations
     b) The European Union
     c) The United States
     d) Turkey
     e) The Arab states
     f) Russia
     g) China
     h) Israel-Palestine problem cannot be solved
     i) Israel and Palestine authorities only

15- Do you think Turkey should become involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict? And if so, how should Turkey become involved?

     a) Turkey should support only Palestine side
     b) Turkey should support only Israel side
     c) Turkey should follow only the United Nations
     d) Turkey should follow only the European Union
     e) Turkey should stay neutral

16- If you think that Turkey should involve in Israel-Palestine conflict, why do you think Turkey should become involved in the Israel-Palestinian conflict? The most important reason (5), important reason (4), moderately important (3), unimportant (2), least unimportant (1).

     a) Because Turkey and Palestine are Muslim states   5 4 3 2 1
     b) Because Palestinian case is a human rights issue   5 4 3 2 1
     c) Because Palestine is a former Ottoman territory   5 4 3 2 1
     d) Because if Turkey wants to be a powerful actor in the region 5 4 3 2 1
     e) Because Palestine is a holy land for Muslims   5 4 3 2 1
     f) Turkey should not involve in Israel-Palestine conflict   5 4 3 2 1
     g) Other………………   5 4 3 2 1

17- A fair solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict cannot be established in the absence of Turkey? Do you agree?

   a) Definitely agree
   b) Somewhat agree
   c) I am not sure
   d) Disagree
   e) Definitely disagree

18- In your opinion, how do you describe the Mavi Marmara Gaza flotilla activists' sailing to break the Gaza blockade?

   a) It was a human rights motivated movement
   b) It was a religious (Islam) motivated movement
   c) It was a nationalism motivated movement
   d) It was a violence motivated movement
   e) It was an anti-Semitism motivated movement

19- In general, which of the following term best defines Israel – Turkey relations?

   a) Allies
   b) Friends
   c) Shared interests
   d) Enemies
   e) Other (please specify) …………………….

20- Please rate the following events in terms of affecting your opinion about Israel-Turkey relations. Where 5 is very negatively effective and 1 is not very effective.

   a) Israel's diplomatic assault to Turkish Ambassador   5 4 3 2 1
   b) Israel's killing nine Turkish citizens during Mavi Marmara raid 5 4 3 2 1
   c) Israel's demolishing of Palestinian homes   5 4 3 2 1
   d) Israel's embargo against the people of Gaza   5 4 3 2 1
   e) Israel's military threat to its neighbors   5 4 3 2 1
   f) Other (please specify)……………..   5 4 3 2 1

21- In terms of cultural closeness, where do you think Turkey belongs to?

a) Europe
b) Middle East
c) Caucasia and Central Asia
d) Eurasia (Europe & Asia)
e) Other

This section asks about your opinions regarding the film *Valley of the Wolves – Palestine*.

22- Have you watched the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*?

a) Yes
b) No
c) Never heard of it

23- After watching the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*, has your perception toward Israel changed?

a) After watching the film, my opinions toward Israel has changed negatively
b) After watching the film, my opinions toward Israel has changed positively
c) After watching the film, my negative opinions toward Israel has stayed the same
d) After watching the film, my positive opinions toward Israel has stayed the same
e) I have no idea

24- In your opinion, do you believe that the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine* reflected reality?

a) Definitely agree
b) Somewhat agree
c) Neutral
d) Disagree
e) Definitely Disagree

25- Please rate the following scenes in terms of affecting your opinions about Israel where 5 is very effective and 1 is not very effective.

a) Mavi Marmara flotilla raid   5 4 3 2 1
b) Handicapped child's death   5 4 3 2 1
c) Israeli soldiers' shooting of handcuffed Palestinians   5 4 3 2 1
d) Israeli soldiers' raid in Palestinian homes   5 4 3 2 1
e) Moshe's sniping an innocent civilian to test a weapon   5 4 3 2 1
f) Other (please specify) ………….   5 4 3 2 1

26- In your opinion, do you think that the film *Valley of the Wolves- Palestine* became the voice for Turkish peoples?

a) Definitely Agree
b) Somewhat agree
c) Neutral
d) Disagree
e) Definitely Disagree

27- Do you believe that the film mirrors the current government's Middle East policies?

a) Definitely Agree
b) Somewhat agree
c) Neutral
d) Disagree
e) Definitely Disagree

28- Who is your favorite character in the film *Valley of the Wolves-Palestine*?
a) Polat Alemdar
b) Mose Ben Eliyezer
c) Memati Bas
d) Simone Levy
e) Abdulhey Coban
f) Abdullah (Palestinian)
g) Other (please specify)

29- Overall, how do you describe the film?   First Reference   Second Reference
a) Realistic   0   0
b) Provocative
c) Fictional
d) Anti-Semitic
e) Nationalist
f) Islamist
g) Neutral

Appendix B

IRB Documents

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PROTECTION - IRB

IRB Number: 13281
Meeting Date: February 15, 2011
Approval Date: February 28, 2011

March 01, 2011

Necati Anaz
Geography
100 E. Boyd Street, SEC 684
Norman, OK 73019

RE: Popular Perceptions of the Movie Valley of the Wolves- Palestine Toward Turkey-Israel Relations and Turkey's Role in the Middle East: General Public Survey

Dear Mr. Anaz:

The University of Oklahoma Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the above-referenced research protocol at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 15, 2011. It is the IRB's judgement that the rights and welfare of the individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected; that the proposed research, including the process of obtaining informed consent, will be conducted in a manner consistent with the requirements of 45 CFR 46, as amended; and that the potential benefits to participants and to others warrant the risks participants may choose to incur.

On behalf of the IRB, I have verified that the specific changes requested by the convened IRB have been made. Therefore, on behalf of the Board, I have granted final approval for this study.

This letter documents approval to conduct the research as described:

Other   Dated: January 03, 2011 Appendix C: International Research Form
Consent form - Subject   Dated: January 03, 2011 English version-interviews
Consent form - Subject   Dated: January 03, 2011 Turkish version-interviews
Consent form - Subject   Dated: January 03, 2011 English-information sheet-online survey
Consent form - Subject   Dated: January 03, 2011 Turkish-information sheet-online survey
Other   Dated: January 03, 2011 English version-Facebook cover letter/Admin
Other   Dated: January 03, 2011 Turkish version-Facebook cover letter/Admin
Other   Dated: January 03, 2011 English version-letter to participants
Other   Dated: January 03, 2011 Turkish version-letter to participants
Other   Dated: January 03, 2011 English version-Facebook cover letter to Fans
Other   Dated: January 03, 2011 Turkish version-Facebook cover letter to fans
IRB Application   Dated: February 28, 2011
Protocol   Dated: February 28, 2011
Consent form - Subject   Dated: February 28, 2011 English version/focus groups
Consent form - Subject   Dated: February 28, 2011 English version/information sheet/focus groups
Consent form - Subject   Dated: February 28, 2011 Turkish version/focus groups
Consent form - Subject   Dated: February 28, 2011 Turkish version/information sheet/focus groups
Other   Dated: February 08, 2011 English version-letter to participants
Other   Dated: February 08, 2011 Turkish-letter to participants
Other   Dated: February 08, 2011 Turkish consent script for audio/focus group
Other   Dated: February 08, 2011 English consent script for audio/focus group
Other   Dated: February 08, 2011 English consent script for audio/interviews
Other   Dated: February 08, 2011 Turkish consent script for audio/interview
Other   Dated: February 08, 2011 Turkish verbal script for interviews
Other   Dated: February 08, 2011 English verbal script for interview
Survey Instrument   Dated: February 08, 2011 English/focus group
Survey Instrument   Dated: February 08, 2011 Turkish/focus group
Survey Instrument   Dated: February 08, 2011 English/interview Oklahoma 73069 PHONE: (405) 325-8110
Survey Instrument   Dated: February 08, 2011 Turkish/interview

Consent form - Subject   Dated: February 08, 2011 English/information sheet/survey
Consent form - Subject   Dated: February 08, 2011 Turkish/information sheet/survey
Other   Dated: February 08, 2011 English/email/survey
Other   Dated: February 08, 2011 Turkish/email/survey
Consent form - Subject   Dated: February 08, 2011 English-information sheet-interviews
Consent form - Subject   Dated: February 08, 2011 Turkish-information sheet-interviews

As principal investigator of this protocol, it is your responsibility to make sure that this study is conducted as approved by the IRB. Any modifications to the protocol or consent form, initiated by you or by the sponsor, will require prior approval, which you may request by completing a protocol modification form.

The approval granted expires on February 14, 2012. Should you wish to maintain this protocol in an active status beyond that date, you will need to provide the IRB with an IRB Application for Continuing Review (Progress Report) summarizing study results to date. The IRB will request a progress report from you approximately two months before the anniversary date of your current approval.

If you have questions about these procedures, or need any additional assistance from the IRB, please call the IRB office at (405) 325-8110 or send an email to irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Aimee Franklin, Ph. D
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board

Ltr_Prot_Fappv_B